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INTRODUCTION

In 1927, nearly six months before the opening of the Princeton University Chapel, the student magazine, the Princeton Tiger, published a cartoon that articulated the changing meaning of religious buildings on the American university campus (fig. 0.1). A child stands in front of the chapel asking, “Mummy, is that thing a white elephant?”¹ The mother, peering from the edge of the drawing, stares openmouthed at the enormous neo-Gothic facade, offering no response.

The child’s question and the mother’s silence speak to the transformative shift of religion in the modern American university. In the figure of the child, the cartoon calls into question the significance of the chapel—a seemingly absurd proposition for a brand-new, lavishly constructed religious monument—and suggests the possibility that it is a “white elephant,” a euphemism for an expensive but unwanted or useless thing. In the silence of the mother, the cartoon confirms the complexity of the situation. It is not obvious that religion is inconsequential to the university, but it is also not obvious that religion remains central to it. This questioning of whether an enormous, ornate, neo-Gothic chapel was a thing of importance reveals the mutable meaning that college and university chapels came to have by the twentieth century. Whereas religion had a prevalent and assured role in American higher education in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth



Figure 0.1. A 1927 *Princeton Tiger* cartoon depicting the Princeton University Chapel and the question, “Mummy, is that thing a white elephant?” From *Princeton Tiger* 37, no. 7 (15 December 1927): 34, Princeton University Archives, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

centuries, by the interwar decades of the twentieth century religion’s role was precarious and changing.

The mother and child also represent a significant generational divide in the perception of religion in the university in the early twentieth century. For many coming of age in the 1920s and 1930s, like the inquisitive child, the sense that religion’s role in higher education had declined

was palpable and even welcomed. Student-led campaigns had largely ended mandatory chapel policies—the requirement that students attend daily or weekly religious services—by the 1920s. The influx of students from a variety of backgrounds also challenged Protestant hegemony in American universities. Science, too, claimed a dominant voice in the university, offering new, and presumably better, ways to verifiable knowledge. For this generation and those that followed, university education did not need to include a religious education. In fact, to do so would make a university less modern and less progressive.

But for many university presidents, like the responsible adult in the cartoon, the possibility that religion no longer had a significant role in higher education was an unsettling sea change. University leaders still believed it was the duty of the university to educate moral citizens, even amidst an increasingly secularized American culture. They were loath to give up the idea of religion and morality in the project of higher education. Their backing of university chapel construction confirms their continued desire to see religion as a part of higher education. These university leaders employed a number of ways to inscribe religion in the physical campus, including using architecture to advance a religious identity. Yet even such attempts could not prevent the emerging view of religious buildings as white elephants.

The questioning of the Princeton University Chapel as a white elephant is a stunning example of how architecture manifested the changing role of religion in American higher education. This book examines the shifting meaning of religious architecture on the American university campus from the 1920s to the 1960s. It looks specifically at elite Protestant universities that had the choice of continuing a religious identity or negotiating a new relationship with religion in the modern era. It argues that college and university chapels, and other religious-like buildings on campus, attempted to broker a new role for religion. Although we now associate university chapels (when we actually think of them) with alumni weddings and the occasional service, in the early twentieth century these buildings were embroiled in a debate over religion’s place in higher education. The religious landscape in the physical campus records this struggle and the ultimate inability to keep religion as a core component of the university mission. By the 1960s, university

chapels had indeed become white elephants on campus relative to the principal aim of higher education.

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AND THE SECULARIZATION THESIS

The idea that American colleges moved from a focus on religious education—primarily intended for the training of ministers—to universities focused on science and the production of empirical truth is part of the much-debated secularization thesis. This thesis proposes that as societies become more technologically and socially advanced, religion becomes less influential, until eventually widespread secularism takes hold.² In the history of higher education in the United States, the removal of religion from a place of authority is particularly striking. Protestant interests had long controlled the American academy, in some cases for centuries, but by the mid- to late twentieth century conceptions of American higher education for nondenominational schools had almost nothing to do with religion. As the historians George Marsden, Julie Rueben, Douglas Sloan, Jon Roberts, and James Turner have contended, the advent of science, changing notions of truth, and even efforts by Protestants themselves gradually undermined the authority of religion in the academy.³ Recent scholarship has tempered the conception of the wholesale removal of religion from the university, rightfully arguing that the practice of religion remains vibrant in some university communities and has been resurgent in the past decade.⁴ However, the broad trend of universities turning away from their religious foundations remains a convincing part of American higher education's historical narrative, and the physical landscape of the campus bears out this transformation.

By the 1920s, religion in the university was markedly changed. Older institutions had once been tied to and supported by particular denominations. But by the late nineteenth century, historically Congregationalist Yale and Anglican King's College (later Columbia University), for example, were no longer under the control of these Protestant

denominations, though they retained their Christian character vocally.⁵ Newly founded universities made firm pledges of nonsectarianism. At its opening in 1876, Johns Hopkins University claimed no particular denominational affiliation, and although the University of Chicago grew out of Baptist support, in the 1890s it also proclaimed itself nonsectarian but Christian. Many universities removed the professions of faith requirement for professors and presidents. With the growth in the student population, the university no longer had a religiously homogeneous student body, making the assertion of one religious perspective problematic.

To skirt emerging theological divides, emphasis within the university shifted to a more generic religiosity and a focus on character. As James Burtchaell argues, calls to pietism in university education still reigned strong, but such calls were superficial. The promotion of good character had replaced dogmatic religion, and religion itself had become "only one element in the Whole Man, who was now understood as a paladin of civic virtues."⁶ George Marsden argues that because Protestants now located Christianity "in individual experiences and in public morality," "distinctive Christian theological principles" could not be maintained in universities that did not fashion themselves as specifically denominational institutions.⁷ Only a vague appeal to character and morality could.

The fervent belief that science was the path to a new, definite truth contributed to the decline of religion's authority within the university's intellectual life. With methods that produced verifiable and (supposedly) unbiased results, science held the promise of uncovering an unwavering truth. Initially scientific investigation was united with religion in purpose. Natural theology, which dominated scientific inquiry in the nineteenth century, provided an apology for religion by ascribing natural phenomena to God's grand design. Victorian beliefs easily aligned religion, science, and social reform. But as science became specialized, such a vague and large-scale conclusion as "God is the reason" grew unsatisfying.⁸ The search for more specific answers, along with an emphasis on objectivity, distanced faith from the scientific process. As quantitative, objective ways of knowing were privileged,

the academic community marginalized truths of “faith, religious experience, morality, meaning and value” precisely because they were not grounded “in accepted, potentially knowable reality.”⁹ Scientific inquiry “by its very nature undermined the status of the kind of belief, trust, and commitment that lay at the heart of religious faith.”¹⁰ By the early twentieth century, scientists replaced clerics in a “new order of sainthood” within the university.¹¹

Proponents of religion in the academy paradoxically aided this secularization process. Sloan suggests that churches themselves saw the progression of higher education as the purveyor of scientific knowledge as evidence of the arrival of the kingdom of God and of natural progress in civilization.¹² Marsden argues that the steps toward secularization were in fact benign. Even those of devout faith distanced religion from science in order to better the scientific process. Liberal Protestants, though attempting to reconcile religion and science, paved the way for secularization because they believed so strongly that science could offer a definite morality. This belief that science and religion were aligned lessened in some ways the anxiety about changes in the university’s priorities. Many university presidents and leaders optimistically believed that science and religion could be real partners in the modern university—an optimism that would be greatly challenged.

The American university in the interwar decades was an institution caught within this new landscape of an increasingly scientific culture. Those who believed that the university had a responsibility to attend to a religious and particularly Christian formation of their students sensed this threat. Their attempts to counter it created a university campus in which religion was both overtly and subtly inscribed.

RELIGION ON CAMPUS

While religious historians have acknowledged the importance of architecture in the changing place of religion in the university—an image of the Stanford University Memorial Church (1898–1903) serves as the frontispiece of George Marsden’s *The Soul of the American University*—this book takes an architectural history approach to understand what

the material campus reveals about the role of religion in the university in a forty-year period, from the 1920s to the 1960s.

This book is not an exhaustive survey of campus chapels in the United States. I have excluded chapels at denominational institutions as the natural expectation of religious buildings on these campuses masked the ambiguities about religion in the university that I am attempting to uncover. Similarly, I do not examine chapels on public campuses as respect for the separation of church and state often—but not always—led to the exclusion of religious buildings there.¹³ Rather, I focus on elite universities, most with a Protestant heritage, including Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, Princeton University, Yale University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. These universities ostensibly had a choice, without denominational pressure or legal restrictions, of whether and how to reframe their relationship with religion. What this book seeks to do is uncover broad themes of how the religious image was transformed and ultimately marginalized in the American university.

Chapter 1 explores the challenges to religion on campus, including the increasing dominance of science as the valued system of truth and the growing movement against compulsory worship services. It also details the ways university leaders still believed in the project of religion, especially through the lens of the “whole man” theory of education and the liberal Protestant hope for the reconciliation of science and religion. These leaders believed that the physical expression of religion on the campus could stem the tide of secularization and even spark a renewed religious commitment.

Architecture was fundamental to the attempt to retain religion in the university in four principal ways. First, chapels in the early twentieth century became ways to advertise religion’s enduring significance to the university, the focus of chapter 2. In the 1920s, advocates for a new, larger church on Harvard Yard claimed that the university “advertises” in the very size of the building the number of people it expected to attend services.¹⁴ The size of these chapels was indeed crucial to suggesting religion’s continued influence. A 1929 book on collegiate architecture described the neo-Gothic chapels at the University of Chicago and Princeton University, both seating about two thousand

worshippers, as “the most ambitious university chapels ever seen in this country,” just as those universities loosened their policies on required attendance at worship services.¹⁵ Paradoxically, as religion’s influence on the intellectual life and daily practice on campus was waning, religion’s architectural image on campus was at its strongest.

Chapter 2 also takes up a second method university leaders employed to retain religion’s relevance: the emotional appeal to religious worship, even if this went against Protestant tenets. In the 1920s, the architect Ralph Adams Cram with his partner, Frank Ferguson, based the design of Princeton University Chapel on pre-Reformation Gothic architecture. Their neo-Catholic cathedral drew its power from an evocation of emotion, from the traditional stained glass to the high, vaulted ceiling to the associated ritual—far from the austere Protestant meeting-houses focused on the spoken word. The chapel’s design infuriated those who located Protestantism within an appeal to the intellect rather than the senses, and yet for Princeton students the emotional appeal proved effective. While it is true that the choice to build chapels in the collegiate Gothic style also played on nonreligious associations with Britain’s Oxford and Cambridge Universities, many traditionally Protestant universities turned again and again to the Gothic-Catholic imagery in spite of the theological dissonance in order to draw students back to worship.

A third strategy was to place religion at the center of campus, the focus of chapter 3. Campus plans, influenced by Beaux Arts axiality, put a special emphasis on the center, the logical location of the buildings with the greatest symbolic meaning to the mission of the university. Many campus plans in the interwar decades juxtaposed the chapel and the library at the center to articulate religion and learning as the key components of higher education. While this was the ideal, in practice religion often failed to find its way to the campus core. Chapter 3 takes up the planning of Johns Hopkins University, Harvard University, and Yale University in their struggle—sometimes successful, sometimes not—to place religion at the center of the modern campus.

In a fourth strategy to keep religion relevant to the academic work at hand, university leaders and architects imbued nonreligious structures with religious meaning. Although the University of Pittsburgh

constructed a traditional chapel on its campus, the building that more strongly symbolized religion was the forty-two-story Cathedral of Learning skyscraper classroom. When the architect James Gamble Rogers’s proposed five-thousand-seat chapel for the Yale center was not realized, his Sterling Memorial Library became the university’s cathedral-library, reinterpreting religion at the heart of campus. The entrance hall of the library was a nave space with the card catalog placed in the side aisles. The confessionals in the narthex hosted the telephone booths. Visitors checked out books at the circulation desk-cum-altar under the guise of the *Alma Mater* altarpiece, whose figure made a direct allusion to the Virgin Mary. Chapter 4 examines the Cathedral of Learning and the Sterling Memorial Library in detail in their ecclesiastical metaphors, arguing that religion was transformed as a background to the work of the modern university. Yet this strategy created multiple interpretations, including the mockery of religion. The ecclesiastical metaphor proved a double-edged sword.

These interwar examples were the height of the attempts to retain a strong architectural and visual presence of religion on campus. Following World War II, religion on the university and college campus looked markedly different, thanks in large part to the influence of modernism. But stylistic choice was not the only major distinguishing factor. A new sensitivity to other faith traditions also inspired a new era of ecumenical worship spaces. Chapter 5 examines one significant postwar example, Eero Saarinen’s Massachusetts Institute of Technology Chapel, which recrafted a New England meetinghouse on the common and used non-specific religious symbols to create a worship space that would accommodate Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish services. Importantly, Saarinen’s chapel also speaks to a significant shift in size. While MIT wanted to construct a chapel to remind its students of the responsibility of science to society following the dropping of the atomic bomb, the university did not see religion as a common, large-scale community exercise. The chapel seats only about seventy-five worshippers, exemplary of the postwar trend toward smaller university chapels. On campus in the 1950s, religion was transformed into a largely individual, voluntary, meditative, and nondenominational event. Religion was present within higher education but no longer held a central role.

The 1960s brought even greater changes on the university campus, with religion even more marginalized. Chapel building on nondenominational campuses slowed, and energies shifted to the construction of separate buildings for individual religious denominations—Catholic Newman Centers, Methodist Wesley Centers, Episcopalian Canterbury Fellowship Centers, and Jewish Hillels—on the campus periphery, whose architectural, cultural, and religious history remains to be written. For many American universities, the dominant image of religion on campus remains that crafted in the first half of the twentieth century. While these chapels were constructed with great optimism, over time the conception of the chapels and other religious-like buildings has become transformed. They remain beautiful structures, important to those who begin their married lives there, to those who find solace in meditation and prayer within their walls, and to those who in the midst of commencement ceremonies contemplate their futures. But they are no longer a place central to the university mission or identity. They are now white elephants.

CHAPTER I

THE CHAPEL
IN THE AGE OF
SCIENCE

A remarkable experiment performed in St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia University in 1908 made visible one of most important questions troubling the modern American university: What was the place of religion in an academic environment increasingly dominated by scientific ideals? Framed against three stained-glass panels in the chancel of Saint Paul preaching to the Athenians by the noted American artist John LaFarge, the thin steel thread of a pendulum anchored by a two-hundred-pound shell hung from the chapel's nine-story dome (fig. 1.1). The pendulum, named for its inventor, the nineteenth-century French physicist Jean-Bernard-Léon Foucault, demonstrated the earth's rotation as gravitational pull shifted the pendulum's course from a straight line to an elliptical swing. Once put in motion, Foucault's pendulum traced the outline of an ellipse in the chapel's central aisle. Nearly two thousand students and visitors came to St. Paul's Chapel to witness this scientific spectacle.¹

Foucault's pendulum represented the power of science to explain the world. Science provided concrete, repeatable, verifiable knowledge



Figure 1.1. Foucault's pendulum experiment performed in St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, 1908. From "The Foucault's Pendulum in St. Paul's Chapel," *Columbia University Quarterly* (March 1908): 194. Courtesy of University Archives, Columbia University in the City of New York.

that had special and growing importance within the university. As American universities shifted their mission away from the training of ministers and toward knowledge production, empirical knowledge garnered increasing authority and value over revealed, or religious, knowledge. This shift is what made the display of Foucault's pendulum so arresting. The experiment in the chapel made material the changing and as yet unresolved relationship between science and religion in the modern American university, powerfully suggesting the ways in which religion and science could work together while simultaneously visualizing the possibility and even reality of science overtaking religion in the university's mission.

For some visitors to the exhibition, the threat of science to religion was very real. In a letter of protest to the president of Columbia University over the display of the pendulum in the chapel, one alumnus and trustee named John Pine declared "that the Chapel should not be used for any purpose whatever, however proper in itself, which is in the least degree inconsistent with the religious character of the building."² Underlying Pine's protest was the anxiety that science was indeed replacing religion, not only as a dominant system of knowledge, but also as a dominant area of interest and practice in the university. Furthermore, for Pine, science violated the sacredness of the chapel itself. Secular knowledge, his protest implied, was separate from divine knowledge, and each required a separate environment for its understanding and practice. Religion in this view needed to be protected from the encroachment of science. While Pine may have granted the significance and veracity of science in itself, he sought to preserve the significance and sanctity of religion in the university.

For Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler, that such an experiment should be conducted in the chapel was far from problematic. Butler's response to Pine unified science and religion in the modern university. Butler argued that Foucault's pendulum, which he deemed "one of the most impressive experiments known to modern science," was in fact "a rather exceptionally appropriate use of the Chapel." Scientific experimentation and religious worship simultaneously inhabiting the same space moved toward the same end. Witnessing

the experiment generated “feelings of awe,” Butler claimed, which “associate themselves naturally enough with a religious building.”³

Butler’s answer brilliantly aligned science with religion. In characterizing the outcomes of science as awe inducing, he claimed that every search for truth, even by scientific means, was fundamentally religious in nature, leading to a fuller understanding of a world created by God. From this perspective, science, far from a godless pursuit meant to disprove the tenets of religion, in fact gave evidence of the divine. Such a view allowed the unfettered practice of science and yet preserved the enduring significance of religion. This rationale, rooted in the liberal Protestant tradition, was one used again and again by university presidents and leaders well into the twentieth century as a way to reconcile the American university as a vanguard in knowledge production and yet an institution still beholden to the moral formation of its students.

Of course, Butler’s view of the cooperation between science and religion was an optimistic one. Understood another way, this alliance put religion in the background of modern scientific work and in danger of being superseded by it. By the 1960s, religion was indeed relegated to the peripheral concerns of the university due, in part, to this earlier formulation of religion’s role. But in the early twentieth century, marrying science and religion to the idea of understanding God’s greatness in the world was deemed the best route to negotiating a new place for religion in the university. The display of Foucault’s pendulum in a university chapel spoke to the important role that religious architecture on campus was to play in this negotiation.

CHALLENGES TO RELIGION IN THE MODERN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

John Pine’s concern over the threat to religion in the university had a real foundation. The modern American university of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had become something much different from the college of antebellum America.⁴ In the antebellum college, religion was the central, authoritative, and cohesive force. Early American colleges were largely founded by Protestant denominations with a primary

mission to educate and train clergy. Columbia University (originally King’s College) was Anglican; Yale, Congregationalist; Brown, Baptist; and Princeton (originally the College of New Jersey), closely aligned with the Presbyterian Church. These denominations gave financial support to these colleges and governed their administration, rules and practices, mission, and course content. Clergy were often college presidents and assumed other leadership positions. Students were required to attend regular religious services (as was true of many early public colleges) and adhere to strict codes of conduct. The college curriculum emphasized the classical texts, and theology was also a curriculum component. In the early American college, religion held a pervasive and primary role.

Yet following the Civil War, the central role of religion shifted as a reform movement reshaped the American college into the more intellectually rigorous and progressive American university. Pivotal to this transformation was the influence of the German university model. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Americans studying at German universities returned to the United States imbued with the German ideal of pure research—the search for knowledge simply for knowledge’s sake—as well as increased standards for scientific research, a focus on faculty scholarship, the importance of graduate education and professional schools, and a model of academic freedom, including the elective system. Although universities in the United States transformed these ideals for their own ends, the German model formed the basis for the modern American university, which privileged the pursuit of verifiable truth over other aspects of education.⁵

The emphasis on research and empirical methods of inquiry displaced religion from the center of the university’s intellectual life. To pursue research to its own ends, scientists and others needed academic freedom to examine empirical evidence unencumbered, without the strictures of religious doctrine and belief. American universities took steps to ensure that freedom. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, private American universities had largely cut ties with their founding religious denominations, meaning that financial control, oversight of the faculty, and determination of the curriculum were no longer under the watchful eye of the church. The Carnegie

Foundation encouraged the distancing of universities from their religious foundations as a method of institutional reform, requiring in 1905 that universities renounce their denominational ties in order to receive pension support for their faculty.⁶ The transformation to the modern American university seemed to require a lesser role for religion.

Religion was becoming displaced from the university's intellectual life in other ways. With the PhD a growing prerequisite for teaching, the university professoriate became the purview not of clergy but of highly trained academics. And whereas the American college had focused strongly on the moral, spiritual, social, and intellectual development of undergraduates, in which religion had played a central part, the modern American university gave greater emphasis to graduate education. In the classroom, theology was substituted with morality and secular humanism, leading William F. Buckley Jr. to claim in the 1950s in *God and Man at Yale* that religion was no longer part of the curriculum and that students' religious beliefs had been marginalized in the classroom.⁷ While scholars have appropriately argued the need for nuance in understanding exactly to what extent religion was relegated to the margins of the university's intellectual life, the fact remains that religion's sway in the modern American university was transformed by a new culture dominated by research and science.

WANING WORSHIP ON CAMPUS

Just as the place of religion was changing in the university's intellectual life, so too was the landscape of religious worship on campus. Required daily or weekly worship had been a traditional component of the American college and had driven chapel building on American campuses. Corporate worship served the mission of the university in several respects. First, it reinforced the Christian, though nonsectarian, identity and aims with which many colleges and universities still associated. Second, compulsory chapel brought students together for regular worship services that not only inculcated religious teachings on an individual level but also fostered a sense of and duty to community. But by the late nineteenth century, the mandatory chapel requirement came

under attack. Dissatisfied with the poor quality of the services and the chapel buildings themselves, resentful of being compelled to worship, and fed up with getting out of bed early, many students challenged the value of mandatory chapel in the formation of religious belief.

By many accounts, mandatory services had become dismal events. At daily chapel at Yale University in the late nineteenth century, a tradition since the school's founding in 1701, students arrived at chapel ten to fifteen minutes late, some only half dressed, with overcoats over their pajamas. Some read the newspaper and completed their homework during the service.⁸ At Princeton's mandatory chapel services, newspaper reading also commonly occurred, and long services and prayers were met with protests of coughing fits.⁹ A 1905 cartoon in the *Princeton Tiger* lampooned the intimation that one could earn a halo simply by collecting "chapel checks" that proved attendance (fig. 1.2).¹⁰ Compulsory chapel implied that students became religious by passively attending worship services irrespective of their real belief, sincerity, or participation. In 1926, Frank Butterworth, Yale alumnus and football hero, wrote in a petition to end Yale's compulsory chapel, "Our chapel has lost too much of its atmosphere of a church. Its pulpit has been occupied too frequently by some one who takes his turn at a chore of that day and inspires no reverence. Its service has become too unimpressive and ordinary to be defended or to be a beneficial religious occasion. There it ought not to be." More pointedly, he opined, "The system of compulsory chapel is tending to do more harm to religion than good. Our chapel is more a mockery of a religious atmosphere and service than a reality, and so hurts."¹¹ Furthermore, the increasing religious plurality of the student body diminished the significant religious content of the services. The former chairman of the *Yale Daily News* argued that the services had lost most of their meaning in an effort to not be offensive to any religion.¹²

The arguments made against compulsory chapel by students, alumni, and some faculty proved effective. Harvard was the first to end its compulsory services in 1886. Yale followed forty years later, in 1926. At about the same time, the University of Chicago dropped the compulsory chapel requirement, just eighteen months before the completion of its immense, 2,500-seat chapel in 1928.¹³ Though students still

teach theology on an undogmatic basis, an idea not without humor; and we cut out religious worship altogether.¹⁴

Cram and others who believed in the higher purposes of education found the corrective to this perceived corruption in the British “whole man” theory of education. This theory returned the focus to the undergraduate and sought to cultivate students’ entire development—intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social. Subscribers to the theory found its exemplar at Oxford and Cambridge. The Oxbridge educational system seemed to produce the ideal gentleman student, possessed with a sound liberal education, widely read, and well mannered. American educators took Oxbridge as their literal model, building residential quadrangles in an appropriation of the English educational model. Harvard’s undergraduate houses and Yale’s colleges, constructed largely in the 1920s and 1930s, were a direct emulation of the Oxbridge ideal of placing students in close proximity to their teachers. Within these quadrangles students dined in common, played in common, and lived in communion with a faculty master. Such environments humanized the educational experience in the midst of specialization and scientific production, promoted esprit de corps among the growing university population, and preserved and even heightened the sense of academic tradition within the newness of the university identity. In replicating Oxbridge, presidents found ways to cope with the dramatically evolving nature of the American university. While the modern American university persisted in following the German model with an emphasis on research and graduate education, the countervailing whole man theory, based on the British model, sought to hold onto traditional ideals in undergraduate education that privileged the development of character and morality.¹⁵

The whole man theory promoted the shaping of students into moral, responsible citizens willing to serve causes larger than themselves. University leaders believed that it was the responsibility of the university to produce graduates who would become the next leaders and stewards of the greater community, as Princeton University president Woodrow Wilson affirmed in the 1890s with his famous empha-

sis on service to the nation. Promoting moral and religious values was a way to instill this sense of selflessness and community service. Moreover, scientific advances called for morally and religiously conscious graduates who would use new knowledge in a responsible manner, as the dramatic end of World War II underscored. As Cram claimed, “We have pretty well learned by this time that there is no effective education that is not interpenetrated by religion at every point.”¹⁶

Proponents of the whole man theory often overlapped with the liberal Protestant view of the alliance of science and religion in the university. Modern American university leaders did not wish to deny science’s value to university work. Empirical research, adherence to the scientific method, and academic freedom had raised the status of the university and moved it into new, fruitful paths. And yet these leaders were also loath to embrace the idea that religion and the development of the moral student were no longer part of higher education’s mission. Liberal Protestantism provided a path that could hold religion alongside science in the university mission. This explains why Butler at Columbia University, himself an adherent of liberal Protestantism, could optimistically proclaim that the Foucault’s pendulum experiment produced the same effect as a religious experience. Liberal Protestants asserted that scientific discoveries were at root religious in nature, irrespective of the challenges, such as Darwin’s theory of evolution, posed to religious tradition, because such discoveries revealed God’s immanence or presence in the world.¹⁷ In fact, liberal Protestants had great enthusiasm for science. They believed that by unlocking key principles science would lead to a higher, universal morality.¹⁸ In recognizing, accepting, and even promoting science’s importance, liberal Protestants maintained a Christian perspective within the scientific intellectual climate of the American university.

In arguing for a new chapel for Yale University in the 1920s, Chaplain Elmore McKee put forward a classic liberal Protestant argument that every search for truth in the university, including empirical investigation, was a form of worship. He claimed that “every legitimate phase of a university’s life, if pursued to its deeper levels, leads to worship.” For McKee, “the astronomer at his telescope, or the biologist at his

microscope, is asking the question, 'Is there a purpose in the universe and in life, which links together the stars or water-life and the personality making the investigation?'" This search for knowledge was fundamentally tied to a religious experience: "Now the instant a man is conscious of his search for an Order, a Plan, a Purpose beyond himself, he is at the threshold of worship."¹⁹ In framing all pursuits of truth against the background of revealing a larger purpose, liberal Protestants found a way to keep religion part of the university project and mission, important not only as the ultimate reason in intellectual pursuits but also to the formation of character and morality in the student. In the inter-war decades, the liberal Protestant reconciliation of science and religion was pivotal in the attempt to forge an enduring role for religion in modern intellectual life.

THE ARCHITECTURAL ARGUMENT FOR RELIGION

Religious buildings on the American university campus visualized the coordinated attempt to preserve religion within a changing intellectual and cultural landscape. Columbia University president Butler pointed to St. Paul's Chapel as evidence of the desire "to spare no effort to give religious influence, religious aspiration and religious service their appropriate place in the life of a great company of students who are spending years precious for the formation of mind and character in residence at the University."²⁰ Princeton University president John Grier Hibben would not entertain proposals to end mandatory chapel entirely until after the new Princeton University Chapel was constructed, ensuring the prominent presence of religion on the campus.²¹ These university leaders saw religion as having an enduring role in the academy. University chapels and other buildings that appropriated religious imagery mediated the relationship between religion and the emerging scientific culture on the university campus in architectural terms. Though science increasingly occupied the workaday life of the university, it did so in buildings that comprised the substance of the campus but not its symbolic core. The chapel building itself, often prominently situated at the

campus center, promoted the relationship between science and religion and between modernity and tradition.

Perceptions of that relationship, however, varied. To those who drove their construction, namely, university presidents, alumni, and patrons, many of whom were liberal Protestants and proponents of the whole man theory of higher education, university chapels were adamant statements that religion would remain a crucial part of university life even as empirical knowledge grew in stature. The chapels were to remind students of the ultimate purpose of learning; they were to be didactic tools in promoting Christianity; and they were to proclaim the respectful, complementary coexistence of science and religion. Yet to others, they were perplexing monuments of a Protestant culture caught in watershed change. To still others, they were white elephants of a tradition already surpassed by a secular, scientific worldview. As George Marsden has claimed, the chapels arising on the modern university campus were "monuments to a disappearing Christian ideal."²² Though these large, extravagant chapels were optimistic proclamations of religion's continuing importance on the campus *prima facie*, they also reflected the changing place of religion within the milieu of the modern university.

THE IMAGE OF UNIVERSITY RELIGION

University chapels constructed in the interwar decades of the twentieth century embodied a paradox: Just as attacks on mandatory chapel services were at their peak and the role of religion in the university mission was shifting, the architectural image of religion on campus was at its strongest. Lavish, large-scale chapel buildings projected a sense of strength, vitality, and permanence and conspicuously displayed the immense resources devoted to the project of religion on campus. This robust religious image in the face of shifting university priorities was no accident. University presidents, leaders, and donors enlisted architecture to argue that religion should and must retain its vital place in the formation of the whole student. They believed that an emotional appeal to religion could entice students back to worship, and they often turned to neo-Gothic forms to create sensuous worship environments irrespective of Protestant traditions. The university chapel in the interwar decades, through its lavish image, became a polemical tool to advertise, affirm, and revive religion's role in American higher education.

THE CHAPEL AS ADVERTISEMENT

At more than any other point in the history of American higher education, the chapels constructed on campus in the early twentieth century advertised the importance of religion to the university mission in their very presence and size. The conception of the chapel as advertisement became critical to the modern American university facing increasing challenges to mandatory worship. The construction of chapel buildings among new university equipment was used to refute the contention that religion's influence on campus was waning. Princeton trustee Edward Duffield claimed that the construction of the new Princeton University Chapel in the 1920s affirmed the university's commitment to religion even "when funds are still inadequate, when religious controversy is raging, when required Sunday Chapel is being attacked."¹ In 1930, the journal *Christian Education*, a publication of the Council of Church Boards of Education (later renamed the National Protestant Council on Higher Education), argued vigorously against the suggestion that student protests against compulsory chapel were a sign that "the college chapel as an agency of religious culture is obsolescent if not obsolete." The journal published pictures and descriptions of some thirty-nine college and university chapels in the United States, most of them recently constructed or planned, as evidence of a "renaissance rather than a retrogression" of the influence of the chapel in sustaining religious life.² The chapel building itself became an advertisement to proclaim the health of religion in the university even as undercurrents challenged this image of strength and vitality.

The very presence of a chapel building on campus conveyed the university's position on the role of religion. From the 1890s into the 1930s, construction on university campuses reached unprecedented proportions as well-established institutions like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton invested millions in new buildings to shape a university identity apart from their collegiate foundations and as new institutions like Stanford University and the University of Chicago created campuses de novo. Having resources dedicated to the construction of chapel buildings was an important signifier of the university's values. A new chapel among the new laboratories, libraries, lecture halls, and dormitories

signaled the university's commitment to religion even as it accommodated the needs of research and science. Conversely, the lack of a chapel seemed to suggest a negative posture on religion, even if this was not the university's stated position. One Yale University alumnus asserted that the fact Yale had not built a new, larger chapel as part of its extensive building campaign in the 1920s was evidence to the average undergraduate "of a steadily waning importance of the spiritual side of life in the estimation of the governing and teaching authorities of the University."³ By allowing the Victorian Battell Chapel and the antebellum Dwight Hall, renovated to include a small chapel, to be the enduring images of religion, the Yale campus communicated that traditional religion had been left behind in the nineteenth century, while the new residential quadrangles, graduate schools, and research library—even though themselves rendered in a historicist architectural vocabulary—assumed the focus of the modern university. Although Yale's administration under President James Rowland Angell was in fact supportive of religion, the campus itself communicated a contradictory message.

The immense scale of university chapels also advanced the idea of religion as remaining a central part of the university mission. The chapels rising on university campuses in the early twentieth century were quite simply enormous. In their 1929 book on collegiate architecture, the architects Charles Z. Klauder and Herbert C. Wise described the recently completed neo-Gothic chapels at the University of Chicago and Princeton University as "the most ambitious university chapels ever seen in this country."⁴ The Princeton University and University of Chicago chapels each accommodated over two thousand worshippers. The chapel James Gamble Rogers proposed for Yale in the 1920s was to seat an astonishing five thousand, which would have been the largest university chapel in the world. These chapels vied for contention among the largest university buildings. Of the buildings constructed between 1893 and 1932 at the University of Chicago, the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel (1928) nearly matched the size of the Harper Memorial Library and was only clearly overshadowed in size by the expansive medical campus.⁵ The financial and spatial resources dedicated to these chapel buildings signified the desire that religion remain a critical part of the university mission, even and especially as the long-standing

tradition of compulsory chapel came to an end. If university leaders could not stem the tide against mandatory chapel attendance, they could control the physical and visual expressions of religion on the campus.

The interplay of chapel presence, newness, and large scale in asserting religion's relevance within the modern university was central to the debate over a new church at Harvard University in the 1920s and 1930s. Advocates of a new chapel building argued that the size of the chapel advertised the importance of religion to the university. A 1925 report to the Board of Overseers of Harvard College noted that about one-third of the time the Sunday attendance at Harvard's 1853 Appleton Chapel exceeded its 870-seat capacity.⁶ The Board of College Preachers argued that the "University advertises by the size of this chapel" the number it expected to attend worship and that the chapel's smaller size limited "its invitation to the number it can accommodate." "The student estimates values by the standards before him," the report claimed. "As things are the average student is forced to the conclusion that there is no great desire on the part of the University that he should attend Sunday worship at the University chapel."⁷

For Harvard, a new, larger chapel was a statement that religion could be successful even with voluntary chapel policies. Harvard had been the first major institution of higher education to end its mandatory chapel policy in 1886. Professor Edward Caldwell Moore, former president of the Board of College Preachers, believed that Harvard, as the "inaugurators" and "still the most conspicuous exponents of the system of voluntary attendance and interdenominational administration," needed to set an example for those colleges and universities then engaged in the compulsory chapel debate. "It would be a pity," he wrote, "if those who are now perplexed should infer from our mere failure to follow up our success that we ourselves do not feel sure that we have taken the right course for religion in the educational world."⁸ A new and immense chapel would prove that the switch to voluntary worship had not harmed Harvard's religious life. Irrespective of the actual numbers of those who attended, the scale of the chapel would advertise the success of voluntary chapel at Harvard and counter its reputation for being "godless." Despite some protests from alumni saying religion on campus had in fact declined and therefore a new chapel

was unnecessary, a new and larger chapel was constructed in Harvard Yard. With room for twelve hundred worshippers—nearly four hundred more than the previous chapel—and a soaring spire, the new Harvard Memorial Church, dedicated in 1931, sent a strong message about the health of religion at Harvard in the interwar decades.

APPEALING TO THE EMOTIONS AT PRINCETON

If one strategy to affirm religion's role in the university was to build large-scale chapels, another was to construct worship spaces that appealed to the emotions. Architecture's sensual experience presented a powerful means to newly reengage students in religious worship. The alignment of religion with emotion also cast religion against science's cold rationalism. Among those who believed that religion's emotional appeal was the best and perhaps only way to save religion on the campus was Herbert Parrish, who penned an article in 1929 titled "Religion Goes to College" for *Century Magazine*.⁹ Although he signed his article with only his first and last name, Herbert Parrish was the Reverend Dr. Herbert Parrish, an Episcopal minister who had recently retired from a twelve-year appointment as rector of the Episcopal church in New Brunswick, New Jersey, less than twenty miles from Princeton.¹⁰ Published shortly after the opening of the Princeton University Chapel, Parrish's article used the new chapel as a way to talk about the need to return emotion to the worship services of American colleges and universities. Parrish, with stinging rhetoric, asserted that encouraging the right religious feeling was far more important than instilling the right religious dogma in college students.¹¹ While Parrish's Episcopalian identity put him in a position to desire sensual religious spaces and rich worship services more than someone from Princeton's Presbyterian tradition, he claimed that architecture and the accompanying ritual and atmosphere were essential components to foster religious feeling in the university setting in particular. Parrish's call for religious reform through emotional appeal was a twentieth-century reincarnation of the nineteenth-century British Cambridge Camden Society and Oxford Movement.¹²

Reverend Parrish was on the one hand optimistic that religion on campus in the 1920s was making a turn for the better, noting the construction of chapels like Princeton's as a sign that religion on campus was making a comeback. Parrish pointed to a number of markers to show that religion in higher education had declined since the late nineteenth century: the rise of nondenominational public universities created by the 1862 Morrill Act; the ending of compulsory chapel, beginning at Harvard in 1886; the publication in 1896 of Cornell University president Andrew Dickson White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, which pitted science against religion; and the attempts of the Carnegie Fund in 1905 to divorce colleges and universities from their denominational memberships in exchange for pension support. But "now suddenly religion is coming back again," he wrote, and none too soon, as "education without religion tended to put the sources of power into the hands of people who had no inhibitions, no morals, no prejudices." In a quip that conveyed the anxieties of many a university president and leader, Parrish warned, "A world of educated devils is not a pleasant thing to contemplate."¹³

While Parrish praised the steps being taken to return religion to higher education, he abhorred the kind of worship then prevalent on the college and university campus, saying it "suffered from the atrophied form of chapel worship that was both barren and dull to the limit." Echoing common complaints, he stated that compulsory chapel was so poor that it was "a small wonder that the boys come in looking like a bunch of convicts driven by their keepers, shuffling, reading books during the exercises, playing craps behind the seats with discretion, howling out the hymns as a relief to jaded nerves. The average chapel services are good for nobody."¹⁴

To save religion on the campus—to correct the damage done by spiritually poor worship services and uninspiring architecture—Parrish argued that universities needed to concentrate on the emotional rather than intellectual experience of religion. "In fact," Parrish wrote, "religion at college requires a very special treatment, if it is to survive, such as it has seldom had in America among Protestants." Parrish believed that religion in the academy needed to be regarded as "not merely a matter for study and reasoning" but also "a matter of emotion and con-

duct."¹⁵ He privileged emotion over any kind of rational understanding of religion for the university student, whose vulnerability to attacks on religion and theology heightened the need for an emotional connection to religion.

To stir the emotions, universities needed the right kind of religious architecture. For Herbert Parrish as for a number of university leaders and architects, the powerful sensual cues of Gothic architecture held the greatest promise for reigniting religious fervor and competing with secular distractions, more than other iterations of historical architecture like Colonial Revival and Beaux Arts. Gothic buildings, and those modeled after them, trafficked in a sense of history, permanence, and romanticism about the height of Christianity's reach. Parrish characterized Gothic architecture, the centuries-long "exterior symbol of spiritual things," as having "an inevitable emotional effect." The power of Gothic architecture lay in its architecture, its atmosphere, and its associated ritual. Spatially, its scale dwarfed the worshipper. Its extreme verticality forced observation upward, heavenward. Atmospherically, Gothic architecture reveled in a sense of mystery and the senses—sight, smell, and sound. The emotional effect was the sum of these experiences. As Parrish described it, "The iteration of certain phrases, the atmosphere of a sacred place, the association with a devout group, the frequent contact with an impressive ritual, the imposed inspiration of sights, sounds and odors redolent of holy associations" associated with Gothic architecture could not "fail to produce emotions and to move to action in the direction of ideas and ideals indicated."¹⁶

The new Princeton University Chapel provided just that kind of atmosphere (fig. 2.1).¹⁷ Following a 1920 fire that destroyed Princeton's Marquand Chapel, an eclectic Victorian confection designed by Richard Morris Hunt, architect Ralph Adams Cram with partner Frank Ferguson created a chapel whose architectural image was based "on that of the 14th century in England," though it was also influenced by the French Gothic.¹⁸ Its exterior buttresses, finials, and sculpture asserted a definite Gothic vision to the campus. In the interior, the nave walls followed the Gothic arrangement of arcade, triforium, and clerestory (fig. 2.2). A proposed chancel screen separated the nave from

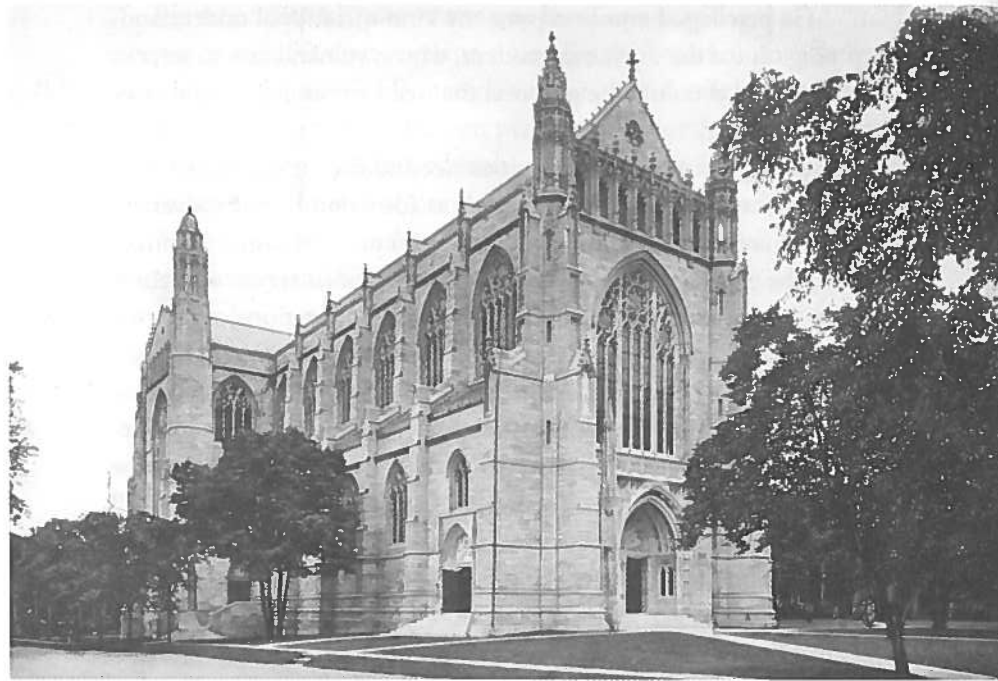


Figure 2.1. Princeton University Chapel, Cram & Ferguson, 1925–28, Princeton University. From box SP02, item 454, Princeton University Archives, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

the eastern third of the chapel, to be used as both a choir and as a daily chapel following the plan of Cambridge University's King's College Chapel, though the screen was not included in the final construction. As a concession to the importance of the spoken word to Protestant worship, one version of the chapel design positioned the pulpit at the very center on axis with the central aisle. However, the donation of an elaborate antique French pulpit caused the pulpit to be moved to the side, originally projecting into the first pew row. The altar at the back of the chancel became the terminal figure of the central aisle. Cram and Ferguson also asserted that the chapel "cannot be a bare and mechanistic auditorium," and they crafted an interior that included stained glass and ornament.¹⁹ So effective was Cram and Ferguson's design that



Figure 2.2. Interior view of the Princeton University Chapel, 1932. From box MP30, item 771, Princeton University Archives, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

one could easily mistake their chapel for an authentic Gothic cathedral in Europe. It seemed of another age and another land.²⁰

For Cram, the choice of the neo-Gothic style for the chapel served multiple ends. It provided the kind of atmosphere that Cram, a High Church Episcopalian, preferred, and it celebrated the golden age of Christianity. It reasserted the fundamental connection between education and religion or, in Cram's equivalent term, character. Cram was a leading practitioner and advocate of neo-Gothic architecture in

America, the leading member of the American Gothicists who, in the same vein as the nineteenth-century English critics Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin and John Ruskin, believed that a return to medieval architecture and art and craft could reform society.²¹ He was also a disciple of Henry Vaughan, the British architect through whom the Victorian Gothic of the late nineteenth century would be transmuted to the more mature, archaeologically correct neo-Gothic of the twentieth century in the United States. Cram believed that collegiate architecture (as opposed to Gothic architecture in general) had reached its pinnacle in the fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and early-seventeenth-century architecture at England's universities and schools. Though adept in designing in many styles, Cram advocated the use of Gothic style for university architecture because "it is the only style that absolutely expresses our new-old, crescent ideals of an education that makes for culture and makes for character."²² And for Cram, character included a strong religious and moral component—an essential, inseparable component of education vitally important to civilization—as he outlined in a 1912 address before the Royal Institute of British Architects:

The foundations of sane and sound and wholesome society are neither industrial supremacy, nor world-wide trade, nor hoarded wealth; they are personal honor, clean living, fearlessness in action, self-reliance, generosity of impulse, good-fellowship, obedience to law, reverence and the fear of God—all those elements which are implied in the word "Character," which is the end of education and which is the proudest product of the old English residential college, and of the old English educational idea that brought it into being, maintained it for centuries, and holds it now a bulwark against the tides of anarchy and materialism that threaten the very endurance of civilisation itself.²³

The neo-Gothic importantly aligned Princeton with the "old English educational ideal" of educating the whole person. As Princeton's campus architect, Cram had created a master plan in 1908 that imagined Princeton as the American Oxbridge. The chapel's neo-Gothic

architecture was part of an ambitious neo-Gothic building program for residential quadrangles, libraries, and classroom buildings. In 1896, during the sesquicentennial celebration that marked the official name change from the College of New Jersey to Princeton University, the Princeton trustees decreed that all future Princeton buildings would be in the neo-Gothic style, emulating the medieval architecture of Oxford and Cambridge. Neo-Gothic architecture simultaneously symbolized Princeton's new preceptorial program modeled after the Oxbridge tutorial system in which students worked closely under professors to "transform thoughtless boys performing tasks into thinking men, fit for the work of the world"; appropriated the prestige of Oxbridge; and, in Princeton president Woodrow Wilson's oft-quoted line, "added a thousand years to the history of Princeton."²⁴ So close had the image of the Princeton campus come to that of an English university that in 1925 the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* published a photographic essay comparing the buildings of Princeton and Cambridge University, including a comparison of King's College Chapel and the proposed Princeton chapel.²⁵ Indeed, at institutions like Princeton, Yale, Duke, and the University of Pittsburgh under the steady hand of such architects as Cram, James Gamble Rogers, Horace Trumbauer, and Charles Klauder, the American campus in the interwar decades was shaped into an idealized version of Oxford and Cambridge.

But for the Princeton University Chapel itself, the choice of the neo-Gothic had implications beyond the imitation of Oxbridge for pedagogical reasons: it had significant practical and theological implications as well. For historically Protestant universities, the focus of Reverend Herbert Parrish's writing, the prescription of an essentially Catholic or Anglo-Catholic worship space for the university audience was, for some, a dissonant and uncomfortable proposition. Protestantism set itself apart from the Roman Catholic tradition in its emphasis on the spoken word over ritual and a preference for austere worship spaces over sanctuaries filled with figurative paintings, stained glass, and incense. Although by the 1920s Princeton had nearly as many Episcopal as Presbyterian students, the desire to remember Princeton's historic Presbyterian identity remained.

Charles Candee, a Princeton alumnus and minister, was among those who believed a chapel modeled on Catholic churches contradicted Princeton's religious tradition. While Candee sympathized with the desire to create an evocative religious interior, he strongly disagreed that the proposed chapel could meet the functional needs of a Protestant service. He wrote, "I know how very well how much real 'atmosphere' is created by the material surrounding of the sanctuary and how greatly such an atmosphere assists in the making of the spiritual impression the minister desires. But this beauty must be in keeping with the purposes of the service and must not run counter to them."²⁶ From Candee's perspective, the proposed chapel did nothing to accommodate the preaching aspect of the Protestant service. He vigorously disagreed with Cram and Ferguson's assertion that the longitudinal, Latin cross form of the proposed chapel "naturally . . . gives the best practical results, both in point of seeing and hearing[,] . . . since the great churches of the Middle Ages were conceived and constructed with particular reference to great preaching services,"²⁷ arguing instead that the form of Gothic churches promoted ritual, not preaching.

Another alumnus wrote of the dissonant presence of an altar in the chapel plans and wondered what one was to do with it:

There is a place in this plan where there ought to be an altar. If we put nothing there, won't the whole thing look bobtailed? If we put a sodafountain there, it will look ridiculous. If we put an altar there, our preachers will have to regard it. Either they will make believe they don't see it, which will shock the Episcopal contingent, or they will pretend they are quite used to it, which will make them ridiculous. That is the difficulty with this plan; it will force us to shout aloud either for or against the Catholic Church.²⁸

Simply, the chapel that Cram and Ferguson proposed was strikingly out of sync with Protestant worship. As Candee wrote, "Our conceptions of religion and of worship are not exactly those of the 14th century. Princeton has been and is Protestant." Given the failure of the Gothic form to accommodate Protestant worship, he wondered, "what

right have we to build a chapel which is utterly unfit for the Reformed mode of service?"²⁹

One senior Princetonian, John A. Clinton Gray, put the distinction between Protestant and Catholic worship in terms of a stark opposition between the rational and the emotional. Gray asserted that the hallmark of Protestantism was its intellectual, rational appeal, while the hallmark of Catholicism was its revelry in mystery, emotion, and irrationality. To use a Gothic, Catholic environment for Protestant worship, Gray argued, confused the nature of Protestantism altogether: "Now if there is one thing for which a Gothic cathedral stands—and our Chapel is to be virtually a Gothic Cathedral—it is the mystery of religion, and if there is one thing for which Presbyterian Princeton stands it is Protestantism." The Catholic-associated Gothic style "stands for an appeal to the senses, and not to the intellect, which is Protestantism's chief claim to fame."³⁰ "For in a Gothic building," Gray continued, "the individual who seeks to express himself rationally is guilty of bad taste."³¹ The Princeton trustees of "bygone days" would turn in "their graves at the thought of the substitution of Popish splendor for the purposely unappealing conventicler [religious meeting] of Colonial America." Gray imagined the trustees asking, "How will the student be able to fasten his intellectual attention upon the sermon, or upon the common-sense prayer when the whole atmosphere of the place pleads for a forgetfulness of self in a state of absorption in the divine?"³²

This choice of the emotional over the intellectual engagement with religion was at the heart of Parrish's proposal. Anticipating resistance to his assertion of the primacy of emotion in religious worship as "mere self-hypnotism, an unintellectual substitute for right thinking," Parrish asked a central question about recasting religion on campus in emotional terms: "Why may not self-hypnotism, the deliberate stirring of the emotions, be quite as divine, as valid a method of influencing character and conduct as analytical thought . . . ?"³³ Parrish wrote that religion gave "hope, courage, peace, joy and contentment to multitudes," emotional qualities that were "powerful" and "invaluable" and should not be allowed to "evaporate into the thin air of critical intellectuality in our colleges."³⁴ For Parrish as for other Protestants, the

emotional appeal to religion was precisely the route to reengage students in worship in an era of cultural secularization: "Hours of talking cannot do what a glimpse will accomplish. Hence thoughtful people are realizing that the modern world needs something beside motion-pictures, needs cathedrals and Gothic chapels, to impress the imagination of susceptible youth and the masses."³⁵

Aligning religion with emotion also set religion apart from science. In the context of the university, religion could claim authority over what science could not: feeling. This idea that religion depended on the emotions rather than the intellect was a sea change in the early twentieth century. The historian Julie Reuben argues that by the 1920s American academics had accepted "that science excluded values and that morality was determined by feeling rather than intellect."³⁶ Rather than challenge science's authority over the intellect, Parrish wished to capitalize on religion's potential to reach students through feeling. Claiming the emotional life was one avenue for religion to reclaim some authority and even usefulness.

Herbert Parrish was not alone in this assessment that religion on campus was best served by appealing to the emotions. At the laying of the cornerstone at the University of Chicago's neo-Gothic chapel in 1926, the philosopher and professor James Hayden Tufts reconciled the place of emotion and religion with the dominant intellectual climate in the university. Though "religion in a university chapel may not forget the scientific spirit and mistake emotion for intelligent and resolute endeavor," Tufts reasoned, the appeal to the emotions through art had its proper place. Weary students needed "nothing so much as the deeper and ordered rhythms of noble music, the poet's imagery, the conflicts and stresses resolved, and all the influences transmitted through the arts which in such a building will find a fitting home." The feelings and senses that students absorbed through the experience of worship in a neo-Gothic church, accompanied by music and ritual, would "open a way to the experience of God."³⁷

The Princeton University Chapel did have this effect, at least for some students. On the chapel's opening, one Princetonian explained that the chapel was so beautiful, so spiritually satisfying, that the compulsion to worship was no longer necessary, confirming Reverend

Parrish's contention that the emotional appeal was more effective than the intellectual:

Given the new Chapel, he [the average Princeton undergraduate] is wondering whether the coercive measure will be rescinded, and whether the Chapel services will not be made so beautiful, in proportion to the new surroundings, that his own aesthetic sense will urge him to attend. For, after all, it must be admitted that the sensuous impressions to be gotten from the Chapel and all that surrounds it will be more influential in elevating the spiritual being of the average undergraduate than any doctrines which may be expounded therein.³⁸

Parrish saw the new Princeton University Chapel as a step in the right direction, but the worship services did not go far enough in exhausting the emotional possibilities. Parrish believed the chapel needed the addition of more color, lamps, shrines, religious images, and rich, ritualistic services but realized that "you cannot expect all this yet at a university where the Presbyterian traditions prevail."³⁹ Cram too called for reform of university worship services, claiming that "youth has a sufficient sense of saving humor to realize and resent the miscegenation of a chapel as beautiful as those of Oxford and Cambridge and a liturgy as empty and soporific as one finds in some moribund conventicle of the more Puritan persuasion."⁴⁰

What these university chapels rendered in a lavish Gothic image and in large scale did accomplish on their own was to reassert a stalwart physical presence of religion, one seductive to the senses and the emotions, even as religion on campus was being challenged.

LOCATING RELIGION ON CAMPUS

The buildings located at the campus center presented a moment to define, clarify, and proclaim the values the modern American university held supreme. In 1930, the values that the Yale campus conveyed made some people nervous. An enormous new library at the new campus center was under construction, and the university had also recently devoted large sums to a cathedral-like gymnasium. However, there was no new chapel. What did this communicate about the university's values? As Yale president James Rowland Angell summarized, a new chapel at the campus center would be "a natural completion to a scale of values" that those in favor of religion at Yale felt was "somewhat distorted."¹ The center, especially important in the context of Beaux Arts planning methods, was crucial to defining a university's values.

This chapter examines the development of the campus core at Johns Hopkins University, Harvard University, and Yale University to illustrate that campus planning was another critical tool in the attempt to craft a sustained presence of religion in the university. These campus plans also show the architectural and spatial connections often made between the chapel and the library at the center to communicate the university's desired scale of values. While science was a growing

power in the university's intellectual life, it was not represented directly in the campus center. Rather, the library stood as a proxy for empirical knowledge at the center, and for many it needed to be balanced by the chapel as a symbol of revealed knowledge to make visible the university's core beliefs. But these campus plans were realized with varying degrees of success. Harvard managed to architecturally balance the chapel and the library on Harvard Yard, yet this was contrary to the belief of many of its alumni that Harvard was in fact an institution divorced from religion. While Johns Hopkins and Yale imagined chapels at the center of their campuses, their failure to see such spaces constructed, whether for financial reasons or an implicit apathy toward religion, made visible the changing and declining influence of religion in the modern American university.

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

That there is no chapel at the center of Johns Hopkins University seems expected and even natural. Johns Hopkins, founded in 1876, claims the accolade as the first university in the United States to follow the German model of higher education—focused on rigorous intellectual and scientific inquiry and graduate education—that was the goal of reform movements of the American college in the late nineteenth century. Its association with the German research model implied that religious ideals were far from Johns Hopkins's concerns, and mid-twentieth-century historiography of American higher education took up this supposition. In his history on American higher education, published in 1962, Frederick Rudolph cast Johns Hopkins as prototypical of what happens to religion once research becomes supreme: "For the acceptance of revealed religious truth the new university in Baltimore substituted a search for scientific truth. For preparation for life in the next world it substituted a search for an understanding of this world."² Johns Hopkins's Homewood campus in Baltimore appears to confirm this interpretation. The monumental neo-Colonial library and academic building at the campus center and the absence of a university chapel

suggest that religion did not figure among Johns Hopkins University's priorities.

Such assumptions are wrong. The university charter required that Johns Hopkins be nonsectarian in keeping with the beliefs of the Quakers, who had counted benefactor Johns Hopkins among its members and who comprised a large portion of the university's board of trustees. But this did not exclude the practice of religion. Founding president Daniel Coit Gilman himself led the voluntary morning worship service at the school's original downtown campus, promoted the activities of the Young Men's Christian Association, and became president of the American Bible Society.³ Although some historians point to the opening ceremony of Johns Hopkins University in 1876 at which the noted agnostic and Darwin advocate Thomas Henry Huxley spoke and at which no prayer was given as evidence of Hopkins's eschewal of religion,⁴ in fact a prayer was offered at the inauguration of President Gilman in 1876, and the bishop of Baltimore gave a benediction at the opening of the new Homewood campus in 1915.⁵ Recent revisions to the history of Johns Hopkins in the canon of American higher education reveal that the university was not inimical to religion, as is often supposed.⁶ Hopkins's focus on science was not in itself a rejection of religion. Gilman even stated that Johns Hopkins University had always "been conducted as a Christian institution, not as ecclesiastical or sectarian on the one hand, nor as without religious character on the other hand."⁷

Religion was originally to have a prominent architectural expression in the new Johns Hopkins University campus. Though formal worship space did not exist in its original downtown Baltimore campus (a patchwork of buildings the university acquired over time), a chapel was intended for the university's new campus in northern Baltimore. In 1902, benefactors William Wyman and William Keyser gave the university the Homewood estate, which included the Federal-style Carroll mansion once owned by a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Charles Carroll. In 1904, Johns Hopkins president Ira Remsen, Gilman's successor, and the trustees held an architectural competition for the Homewood campus master plan. Of the five firms invited to

create the vision of the new Johns Hopkins, the Baltimore architects J. Harleston Parker and Douglas H. Thomas, in conjunction with the landscape architect Warren Manning, were chosen as the firm that had best positioned the buildings outlined in the competition guidelines.⁸ Those guidelines included a provision for a chapel with a “monumental character” — at least six thousand square feet and accommodating at least five hundred worshippers.⁹

The classic Beaux Arts arrangement of Parker and Thomas’s plan for Homewood reserved a place of special importance for the chapel. Their scheme organized the new Hopkins buildings on major and minor axes (fig. 3.1). The principal academic and laboratory buildings linked by a colonnade lined the plan’s major axis, running roughly north-south and parallel to fashionable Charles Street. An enormous library stood at the northern end, and a large museum anchored the opposite end. This axis was internal, visible only when the student or visitor stepped inside the campus boundaries. The shorter, minor axis presented the institution’s public face to the entrance orthogonal to Charles Street. As students and visitors came from Charles Street, up the circle drive known as the “bowl,” and past the Carroll mansion, they were to enter through ceremonial gates to the sight of an enormous domed chapel across an open quadrangle — a vision evocatively rendered by the firm in a drawing showing the dome of the chapel rising as a shadow behind the entrance gates (fig. 3.2).

Parker and Thomas’s design for the chapel was an appropriate answer to the requirement that the chapel have a monumental character. A pedimented narthex fronted the rectangular sanctuary terminating in an apse. A cupola surmounted the tall dome ringed with columns, echoing the grandeur of the U.S. Capitol. This dome gave the chapel greater prominence in the skyline over the library’s low, Pantheon-like dome. Two museums to either side of the chapel formed the chapel forecourt. The plan emphasized religion’s importance to the university even to those who only passed by on Charles Street. It also uniquely balanced the importance of religion and learning to students and faculty, who would see the chapel on entry to the university but would focus on the library while coming and going from the laboratories. Far from ignoring religion, the plans for the new Johns Hopkins celebrated it.



Figure 3.1. First scheme of the Johns Hopkins University campus master plan by Parker & Thomas with Warren Manning, 1904. From box 1, “Homewood Campus Printed Material,” MS 137, Special Collections, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University.

Action on Parker and Thomas’s campus plan languished between 1905 and 1912 due to lack of funds. The financial situation forced a reconsideration of the university’s priorities in building the new campus in 1912. Academic and residential buildings received top priority; the architects Grosvenor Atterbury and Frank Miles Day, who served on the campus plan advisory board, classified these buildings as “immediately

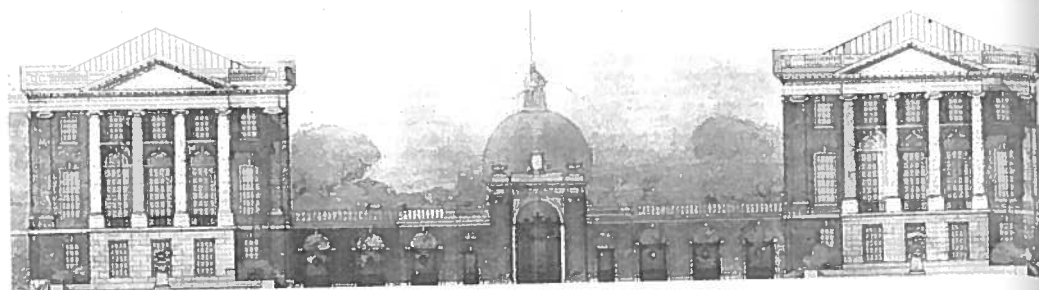


Figure 3.2. Drawing of proposed entrance to Johns Hopkins University showing the dome of the chapel in the background. From box 1, "Homewood Campus Printed Material," MS 137, Special Collections, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University.

essential." These essential buildings included, in descending order of importance, the power plant; the main academic building and library; laboratories for chemistry, geology, physics, and biology; and a student hall, dormitory, dining hall, and gymnasium. In a second group of buildings described as "desirable for the near future," the chapel ranked second behind buildings for the undergraduates but trumped such buildings as a president's house, a faculty club, an astronomical observatory, an administration building and assembly hall, a museum, and engineering buildings.¹⁰

The reordering of priorities for Johns Hopkins's campus plan, if for practical and financial reasons, displaced the chapel from the campus center. Rather than erecting a chapel to encapsulate the ideal of the university, the revised 1912 plan from Parker and Thomas, now with partner Arthur Wallace Rice, instead positioned Gilman Hall at the entrance axis to the university. The geology, biology, chemistry, and physics laboratories further defined the central quadrangle visible from Charles Street. Gilman Hall, named for the university's first president, combined academic spaces for the humanities, including history, philosophy, and languages, along with the principal library of the university. The building also assumed the memorial functions typically assigned to the chapel, including a room dedicated to the memory of Daniel

Coit Gilman. The building presented a monumental facade for the entrance to Johns Hopkins. Cast in the image of Independence Hall, complete with a 120-foot clock tower and classical portico, and with references to the Carroll mansion, Gilman Hall—the largest building on campus—was, as Johns Hopkins University librarian M. Llewellyn Raney described, "the capitol of the campus."¹¹

Although the new Johns Hopkins University campus would not have a chapel, the university did erect a building for the Young Men's Christian Association, Levering Hall. But even here the expression of religion was compromised. Whereas in the earlier plans of 1904 and 1906 Levering Hall was placed prominently in the bowl entrance to the university near the Carroll mansion, ultimately the structure was placed below and behind the central quadrangle. Architecturally, the Johns Hopkins University campus did not express the original desire to make religion a prominent part of its campus or visually affirm President Daniel Coit Gilman's claim that Johns Hopkins was a Christian university.

The lack of a chapel building reflected a more complicated revolution underfoot at Johns Hopkins. As George Marsden argues, though Gilman publicly proclaimed the importance of religion or a generalized morality especially with regard to undergraduate education and character building, the real experiment of graduate and professional education at Johns Hopkins University divorced religion from the search for empirical truth. In a process Marsden calls "methodological secularization," the isolation of certain questions or problems promoted mechanisms for solving them that had little to do with religious concerns. Therefore, "when entering the laboratory, pious Christians were expected to leave their religious beliefs at the door, even if they had prayed God to bless their work and came from their discoveries praising God for his work."¹² Such a division had powerful consequences even outside of the laboratory. "Since the laboratory became a key metaphor and model for all advanced intellectual work," Marsden contends, "this ideal was extended throughout the university."¹³

However, Gilman and others did not believe value-free science presented an attack on Christianity since scientific investigation often was undertaken in service to the greater good. Religion and science

were simply two different means to the same end. As Gilman said at his inauguration, "Religion claims to interpret the word of God, and science to reveal the laws of God," echoing the liberal Protestant belief that all discovery of truth revealed God and allied the work of the laboratory with worship within a chapel.¹⁴ While Johns Hopkins University's early leaders may have been confident in this belief in religion's endemic role to the work of the university, the fact that the campus does not have a chapel at its center conveys something else about the university's values. Despite what was intended, the library and laboratories instead of a chapel at the university center remain the enduring image of Johns Hopkins, leading many, like the historian Frederick Rudolph, to surmise that Johns Hopkins University valued religion not at all.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Where the absence of a chapel at Johns Hopkins belies the university's early attitudes toward religion, the presence of a large new church on Harvard Yard made plain the Harvard administration's desire to see religion at the center of campus despite vocal alumni opposition. For Harvard University president Abbott Lawrence Lowell, the new church was vitally important in properly balancing religion in the university. As we have already seen, the size of the new church was an advertisement of religion's continuing importance to Harvard's educational mission. From a planning perspective, the construction of a large new church also served to create symbolic balance with the hulking new library at Harvard's center. By constructing a church that could architecturally answer the grandeur and authority of the library, the Harvard administration in the interwar decades ensured that the heart of campus conveyed Harvard's values—at least as conceived by its leadership—to the Harvard community.

The construction of a new church at Harvard University as a memorial to Harvard's World War I dead provided a flashpoint for controversy in the 1920s. For some Harvard alumni, who were funding the war memorial, the idea that religion still held a place of importance at

Harvard was jarring. Harvard was the first institution to end its compulsory chapel services in 1886, a move that confirmed, they believed, that Harvard was a lay institution divorced from religion.

For President Lowell and supporters of the church, Harvard was not in fact divorced from religion. And no other proposed forms for the memorial—including a memorial shaft, a memorial auditorium, a carillon tower, a dormitory quadrangle, and a gymnasium—could express the sacrifice made by these Harvard men as strongly as a church. Lowell, a Unitarian, believed in the direct correlation between religion and serving one's country and the broader good, and a memorial church was the only appropriate articulation of this relationship in his view. As he stated in a letter published in the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* and such newspapers as the *Boston Evening Transcript*, "If the need of the American colleges, and the object of a war memorial, is to develop a stronger and more positive moral consciousness of the duty of public service, then it cannot be divorced from religion; and religion, as all the ages have shown, is, like everything else, assisted by an appropriate physical expression." The memorial church would embody "our aspiration towards moral character."¹⁵

President Lowell's support for the church was also in keeping with his belief that the university had a responsibility to instruct its students in the higher aspects of life. As World War I ended, Lowell argued that "among the strongest agencies" to prevent the "materialistic reaction" that often accompanied the end of wars "ought to be our colleges and universities, which should feel more than ever their duty to keep before the minds of young men the eternal values and the spiritual truths that endure when material things pass away."¹⁶ The university and the war memorial were the proper settings to remind students of these values and truths.

Yet as is evident in letters of strident protest in the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, some alumni believed a religious memorial was problematic from a number of perspectives. First was religion's relationship both to the war and to the teaching of morality. Several alumni balked at the assertion that religion had anything to do with the war or the patriotism that inspired the war dead to fight for the cause.¹⁷ When Lowell asserted that the church was to teach morality to the Harvard students,

some alumni responded that it was the classroom, not the church, from which the principles of religion and morality more broadly should be taught. Second was the issue of religious sensitivity and equality. Among the World War I dead the memorial was to honor were Jews and, presumably, atheists, making the proposed Christian and generically Protestant church incongruent with and insulting to their beliefs. One alumnus, an admitted non-Christian, wondered why the memorial had to stand for Christian principles among all others and challenged President Abbot Lawrence Lowell's very premise for the church that morality and religion were necessarily intertwined.¹⁸ Some alumni plainly refuted the arguments that Harvard needed a new church to provide more worship space.¹⁹ Simply, the opponents of the church saw no need for a new religious space on the campus. They argued against the very idea that a war memorial needed to have a religious meaning and that Harvard in particular and university training in general needed to have a religious connection.²⁰

Such vocal opposition to the church and to religion, however, came too late. The memorial church, first proposed by the Associated Harvard Clubs in 1924, captured the endorsement of the Harvard Alumni Association, the Harvard Board of Overseers, and the Corporation of Harvard College. By 1928, some 25,000 donors had given over \$750,000 for the memorial.²¹ After nearly a decade of argument among alumni and university leaders, the Harvard Memorial Church, to be completed in 1931, was chosen as Harvard's war memorial.

Lowell and others seized on the construction of the war memorial to implement a comprehensive plan for Harvard, which unlike most American universities in the early twentieth century had yet to execute a reordering of its campus. Lowell agreed with former Harvard overseer W. Cameron Forbes's colorful mandate that "we ought to have no more higgly piggly building at Cambridge," and he believed that, before the war memorial could be positioned, a "complete scheme . . . ought to be made, and adhered to hereafter as closely as possible."²² Other long-term plans for Harvard had been attempted but never carried out. In 1896, under the presidency of Charles Eliot, a subcommittee of the Board of Overseers commissioned Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot to design a master plan for Harvard. The firm provided a plan re-

plete with Beaux Arts vistas from Harvard Yard south to the Charles River.²³ The architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler suggested in 1909 that Harvard simply pick up and move its buildings like pawns on a chessboard to create the appropriate axial vistas.²⁴

But in spite of the popularity of Beaux Arts planning in university master plans of this era, Lowell believed these principles were not suited to Harvard. The "conventional boulevard and main axis" of the Beaux Arts plan, he said, would be "impossible here [at Harvard] without destroying practically everything that connects us with the past." Lowell believed "the principle of the cloister rather than the public park; the secluded precinct rather than the open approach" should be the guiding rule for Harvard's master plan.²⁵ In 1922, the university asked Charles Coolidge, whose firm Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbot became Harvard's house architects under Lowell and would design the new Harvard Memorial Church, to create a campus master plan along these cloistral lines.²⁶

If Beaux Arts was not to order Harvard's campus as a whole, it played an important part in defining the center of Harvard, where the library and the church—knowledge and religion—were to be positioned in rigidly axial and equal terms. The construction of Widener Library (1913–15) introduced an immense Beaux Arts building to Harvard Yard. A memorial to Harry Elkins Widener, a Harvard student who was lost on the *Titanic*, and designed by the Philadelphia architect Horace Trumbauer as specified by the donor, Widener's mother, the massive library presented an imposing classical facade to Harvard Yard (fig. 3.3). Its monumental flight of stairs led to a screen of twelve Corinthian columns protecting the enormous store of knowledge beyond. The new library announced Harvard's identity as a modern university, where the attainment of knowledge appeared limitless. The library was a temple of knowledge.

Widener Library made its counterpart across the Yard, Appleton Chapel, seem paltry by comparison (fig. 3.4). Erected in 1856 as the second freestanding chapel in Harvard's history, Appleton Chapel occupied the northern end of Harvard Yard. The chapel's main western entrance, marked with an off-center tower, was originally oriented to the Old Yard and specifically to the old Holden Chapel.²⁷ The chapel's



Figure 3.3. Widener Library, Horace Trumbauer, 1913, Harvard University. Courtesy of Harvard University Archives, HUV 49 (19–4a).

long nave elevation made little nod to the rear of Widener Library's predecessor, the Gothic revival Gore Hall, to the south. But within thirteen years of the chapel's construction, its siting was significantly compromised. The construction of the Thayer Hall dormitory in 1869 in front of Appleton Chapel placed the chapel's main entrance uncomfortably close to the back of the dormitory.²⁸ From the open space of Harvard Yard, the principal view of the chapel was not of its entrance but of the side of its nave.

The construction of Widener Library only exacerbated the poor siting of the chapel. Whereas the previous Gore Hall had ignored the Yard, facing outward to Massachusetts Avenue, Widener Library now



Figure 3.4. View of the southern elevation of Appleton Chapel (1853) facing Widener Library. Courtesy of Harvard University Archives, HUV 53 (1–1a).

turned inward toward the Yard. Widener demanded a commensurate architectural response from Appleton, one it could not give. Already maligned for its outdated aesthetics, Appleton had only a small shed over a single side door to its nave to answer Widener's massive, raised, twelve-column portico entrance (see fig. 3.4). In scale, the chapel shrank in the shadow of the library.

While the chapel supporters' arguments for the new memorial church chiefly centered on the fitting nature of a church for a war memorial, the architectural inequality between the library and the church—and the intimation that religion was second place—played an important role. Proof of the desire to create an appropriate expression of religion at Harvard was President Lowell's determination to place the new Harvard Memorial Church directly on the site of Appleton Chapel.²⁹ Lowell dismissed a proposal to position the chapel on the site of Quincy and Harvard Streets, which would have left the Widener-Appleton

quandary unsolved and positioned religion still farther from the center of Harvard, deeming it too noisy. He firmly stated, "I do not believe there is any other good site, except that where Appleton Chapel now stands."³⁰ For Lowell, the construction of a new, more monumental church at the center of Harvard, opposite the new library, was critical. A committee appointed by the Board of Overseers also championed the Appleton Chapel site, saying it "expresses admirably the ideal fundamental to the University, with the chapel and the library facing each other."³¹ University leaders wished to create the proper architectural balance of intellectual and spiritual life at Harvard in the twentieth century.

The firm Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott did not fail in their effort to create a church very much an equal to Widener Library. In the literature promoting the church, its design was advertised in terms that guaranteed it would meet Widener's architecture and even surpass it. A pamphlet proposing the church as Harvard's war memorial assured that "its spire will dominate the quadrangle of lawn and elms reaching southward to Widener library" and that its "massive columns will so strengthen the form of the church that it will not be diminished by the size of the library across the lawn."³² What the architects could not achieve, however, was a different orientation from that of Appleton Chapel. By the 1930s, the site was hemmed in by Thayer Hall to the west, Robinson Hall to the east, and the original Fogg Museum to the north.³³ In order to preserve the open space characteristic of this side of Harvard Yard, the architects were forced to place the new church in nearly the same footprint as Appleton Chapel, with its entrance facade facing Thayer Hall and its nave elevation fronting Widener Library (fig. 3.5).

It was with the architects' handling of the nave elevation that Harvard Memorial Church succeeded where Appleton Chapel had failed (fig. 3.6). The memorial function of the church provided the opportunity to more appropriately align the chapel with the library. The architects positioned the memorial room, dedicated to the war dead, orthogonal to the nave along its side to create a monumental entrance to the church that also answered the entrance to Widener Library. The memorial room became the building's defining feature. Slightly set off

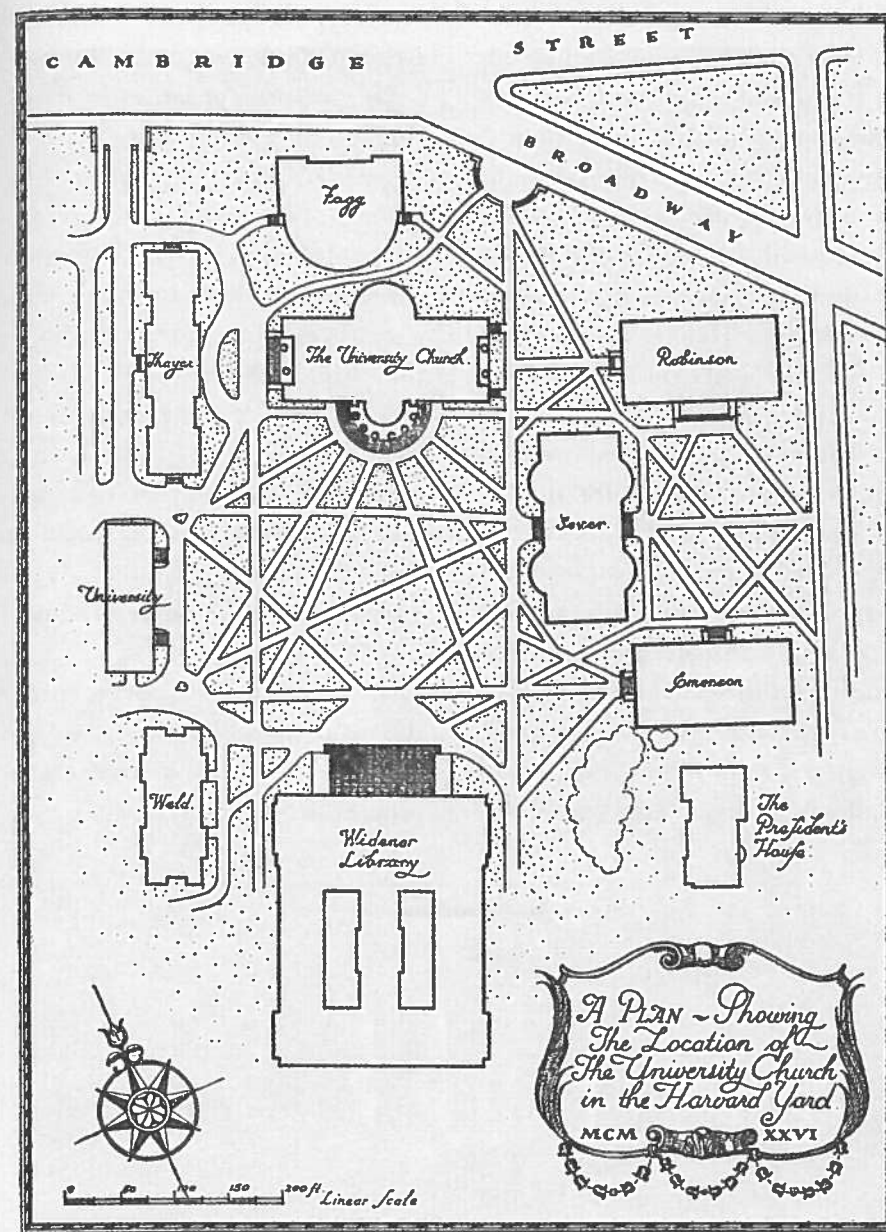


Figure 3.5. Plan of Harvard Yard showing location of proposed Harvard Memorial Church with projecting memorial room, 1926. Courtesy of Harvard University Archives, HUB 1555.2, box 1.

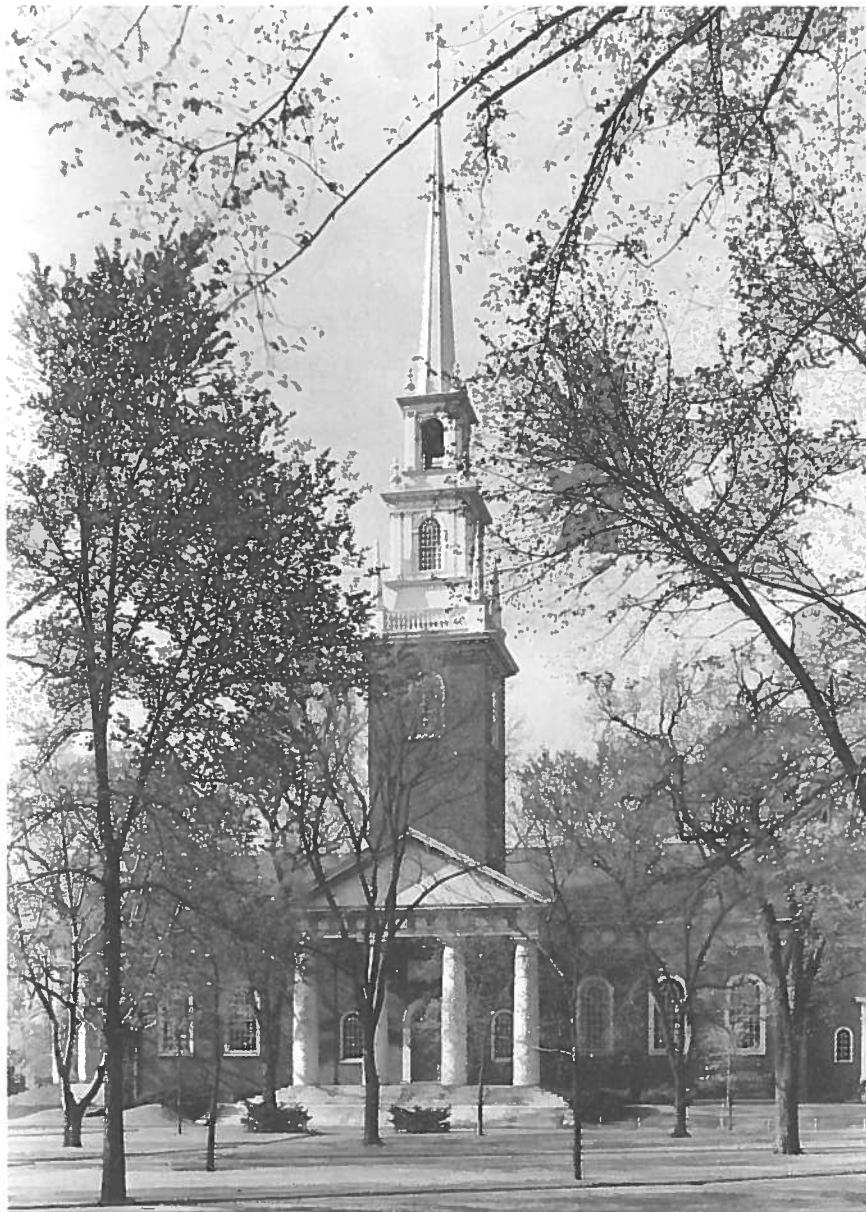


Figure 3.6. Harvard Memorial Church, Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott, 1931. Courtesy of Harvard University Archives, HUV 53A (6–7a).

in a projection from the nave wall, a pedimented, tetrastyle Doric portico announced the memorial room to the Yard. The memorial room and portico gave dimension to the nave elevation, provided a central focal point, and asserted the church into the space of the Yard. The stair to the memorial room's entrance elevated the church above the Yard and signaled its importance. The relationship between the church and the library is further visually exaggerated. The portico and door to the memorial room, which was to be the students' entrance and from which the nave can also be reached, directly align with the portico and door of the library. The sidewalk that runs from one door to another also exaggerates the visual connection between the two buildings. The 170-foot spire that rises above the church adds a vertical thrust to the otherwise low-lying building, leaving no doubt to the prominence of religion in the Harvard skyline, and gives a sense of massiveness that equals the hulking footprint of the library. That the monumentality of the church sought to balance the monumentality of the library is clearly discernible.

The church and the library together define the space of Harvard Yard. As the architectural historian Banbridge Bunting described it, the church and the library form the “*skene* and *cavea* of a great unroofed theater.”³⁴ The architects successfully created a monumental church on a scale large enough to answer Widener Library. At the center of Harvard, within its largest open space, and at the site of its commencements, knowledge and spirituality share an apparent equal footing. But this was accomplished by the will of President Lowell. Just how well the conception of the center of Harvard reflected the values and will of its students and alumni, even in the 1930s, is unclear. Harvard Memorial Church was an aggressive assertion of the vitality of religion at Harvard, and yet it can also be conceived as a desiccated symbol, a white elephant.

YALE UNIVERSITY

For Yale University, locating a chapel at the center of campus to emphasize the university's proper “scale of values” was long hoped for but

never achieved.³⁵ The ambitious replanning of Yale in the early twentieth century offered an opportunity to place religion at the very heart of campus, and architects conceived of a center with a chapel and the library balancing each other, just as at Harvard. The inability to locate a traditional religious form at the center of Yale placed a new layer of meaning on the neo-Gothic library, which became both library and chapel, and confirmed religion's shifting role on Yale's campus.

Religion figured prominently in Yale's early history. Yale's earliest buildings, forming a line called Old Brick Row, faced three churches on the New Haven Green, and the college itself had two freestanding chapels. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Yale began to move away from this linear conception of campus planning. In an effort to wall itself off from the city of New Haven and create an inward-focused campus, Yale implemented a building scheme to create a large quadrangle bounded by College, Chapel, Elm, and High Streets. The buildings placed at the edges of the block were to define the quadrangle, with a large green space reserved for the middle. Part of Yale's expansion to this quadrangle was the construction of the new Battell Chapel.³⁶

Timothy Dwight, a professor of divinity who would assume the presidency of Yale in 1886, saw a tremendous opportunity for the physical expression of religion at Yale with the construction of Battell Chapel in the 1870s. Dwight argued that the very middle of the quadrangle was the most appropriate location for the chapel. He believed that the chapel should be "as central as possible" so that "it may by its very position, remind every observer that all things in the education here are designed to lead the soul to that which is higher and better."³⁷ This proposal was intriguing: To place a chapel at the center, surround it with green space, and ring it with a wall of buildings would leave no doubt as to the prominence given to religion. As Dwight stated, "The placing of the house of religious worship for the university at the central point of all the other edifices will be one means of defending and preserving the true faith here. . . . [T]he turning and pointing of all things will be *visibly* toward religion."³⁸ But this vision went unrealized. The Victorian Gothic Battell Chapel (1874–76), designed by Russell Sturgis Jr., was instead shoved into the northeast corner of the quadrangle, subsumed into the line of the residential buildings. The apse was

the chapel's most prominent feature, and only this was visible on the outer, public side of the quadrangle.³⁹ Rather than highlighted as an essential building in Yale's program, Battell Chapel was, from a planning point of view, muted.

The replanning of Yale provided a new opportunity to prominently position religion among the university buildings. In 1919, a Yale alumnus, Francis Garvan, commissioned the architect John Russell Pope to create a master plan, which Pope published as *Yale University: A Plan for Its Future Buildings*, an extravagantly illustrated, large folio with drawings by Otto Eggers.⁴⁰ This master plan had enormous importance for Yale. Though Yale had announced its shift to university status in 1886, the idea of the university would come to maturity in the early twentieth century through its campus architecture.⁴¹ The campus plan inaugurated an ambitious building program for Yale.

Pope, who had been trained at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, created a plan that was the personification of Beaux Arts design. He proposed connecting the two parallel, rudimentary north-south axes in the Yale campus—one from the Campus (now Old Campus) to the Commons and the other from Sheffield Scientific School along Hillhouse Avenue—with a new east-west axis along Wall Street (fig. 3.7). This east-west axis, called New Campus and later renamed Cross Campus, was to become the new center of Yale. Pope proposed placing the largest of Yale's new buildings here at the most visible points. A new cathedral-like library with a massive tower was to be at the middle of New Campus, at the "centre of gravity, architectural and mentally, so to speak, of the University," and on axis with Old Campus.⁴² With the proposed demolition of Durfee Hall, a great vista would connect these two parts of Yale, with the library as the focal point. The library, conceived along the lines of Cambridge University's King's College Chapel, fused the library and chapel in one building (fig. 3.8). While a new traditional worship space was not part of Pope's reinvention of Yale, his proposal of a library in the image of a Gothic cathedral both anticipated and informed the library-cathedral that James Gamble Rogers would ultimately design for the campus center.

The Yale Corporation appointed three architects as an advisory committee to evaluate Pope's proposal for the remaking of the Yale

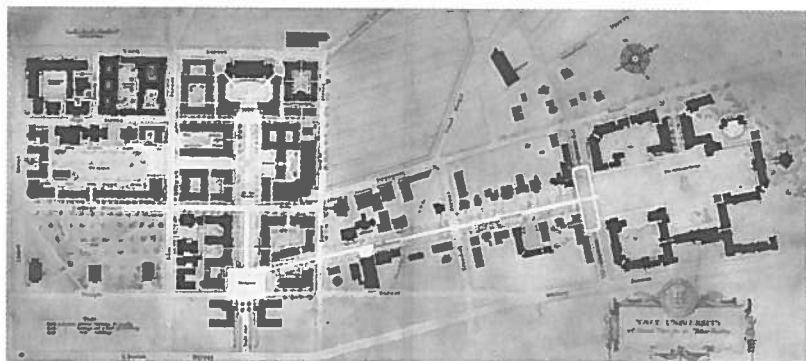


Figure 3.7. Proposed master plan for Yale University, John Russell Pope, 1919, with Cross Campus at center left. From John Russell Pope, *Yale University: A Plan for Its Future Buildings* (New York: Cheltenham, 1919), RU 703, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

campus. In February 1920, Paul Philippe Cret, also an École des Beaux-Arts-trained architect; Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, former partner of Ralph Adams Cram and future architect of Yale's new library; and William Adams Delano, a Yale alumnus who had also designed several Yale buildings, submitted their critique of the plan. Their evaluation reconsidered the new center of Yale. Whereas Pope envisioned a large Beaux Arts axis along Wall Street that connected the new campus to the Hillhouse Avenue corridor, the advisory committee recommended shortening the axis to extend only from High to College Streets. This shortened axis, though still providing a large central space, transformed the new center of Yale from a grand boulevard to an enclosed quadrangle, dramatically altering Pope's intended effect.⁴³

The advisory committee also reordered the buildings at the new center. Their recommendation was to put the library at the position of the gymnasium in the Pope plan and move the gymnasium to a secondary position to the south of the library. The library, then, would be located at a terminal end of the east-west axis of Cross Campus. More important, the architects advised that a new chapel be placed immediately



Figure 3.8. Drawing by Otto Eggers of John Russell Pope's proposed new Yale University library on Cross Campus. From *The Architecture of John Russell Pope*, vol. 1 (New York: Helburn, 1925), 39.

opposite the library. The juxtaposition of the chapel and the library in conversation with one another was an important communication of the values of Yale. As the Yale Corporation Architectural Plan Committee stated simply, “The buildings which represent most clearly and strongly the educational ideals of Yale are the new Chapel and the Library. For that reason, they should be placed in very prominent positions on the new Campus.”⁴⁴ Also to be included at the center were the administration building, the dining hall, and Woolsey Hall, the large auditorium building. Since these buildings “should express to the graduates and under-graduates and the outside world the idea of the unity of the institution,” they were to be “centrally located and near to each other.”⁴⁵ In conceiving Yale’s new center, the architects and planners gathered together the communal buildings of the university and also highlighted the two buildings that embodied the university identity: the chapel and the library.

The redesign and implementation of Yale’s master plan fell to Rogers, who was appointed consulting architect to the university’s general plan in November 1920.⁴⁶ From about 1920 to 1923, Rogers worked with civic leaders and Pope himself to produce a series of general university schemes in anticipation of nearly \$20 million in building projects.⁴⁷ Following the advisory committee’s advice, Rogers toned down the strong axial vistas of the Pope plan, retaining some views while closing off others. What Rogers’s plan lost in visually uniting the far reaches of the university it gained in creating a well-defined campus center that embodied the priorities of Yale.⁴⁸

Though Rogers produced several schemes for Cross Campus, the one most closely akin to its realization best articulates his complete idea for it (fig. 3.9).⁴⁹ At the westernmost end of the Cross Campus axis along High Street was the new Sterling Memorial Library. The large collegiate Gothic building, a memorial to Yale alumnus and benefactor John Sterling, was initially designed by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue and then taken up by Rogers after Goodhue’s death in 1924. The library stood at the head of a rectangular green space lined with symmetrically positioned dormitories and classrooms. A secondary and minor north-south axis cut through the middle of this green space, providing a visual and physical link with Woolsey Hall and the dining hall.

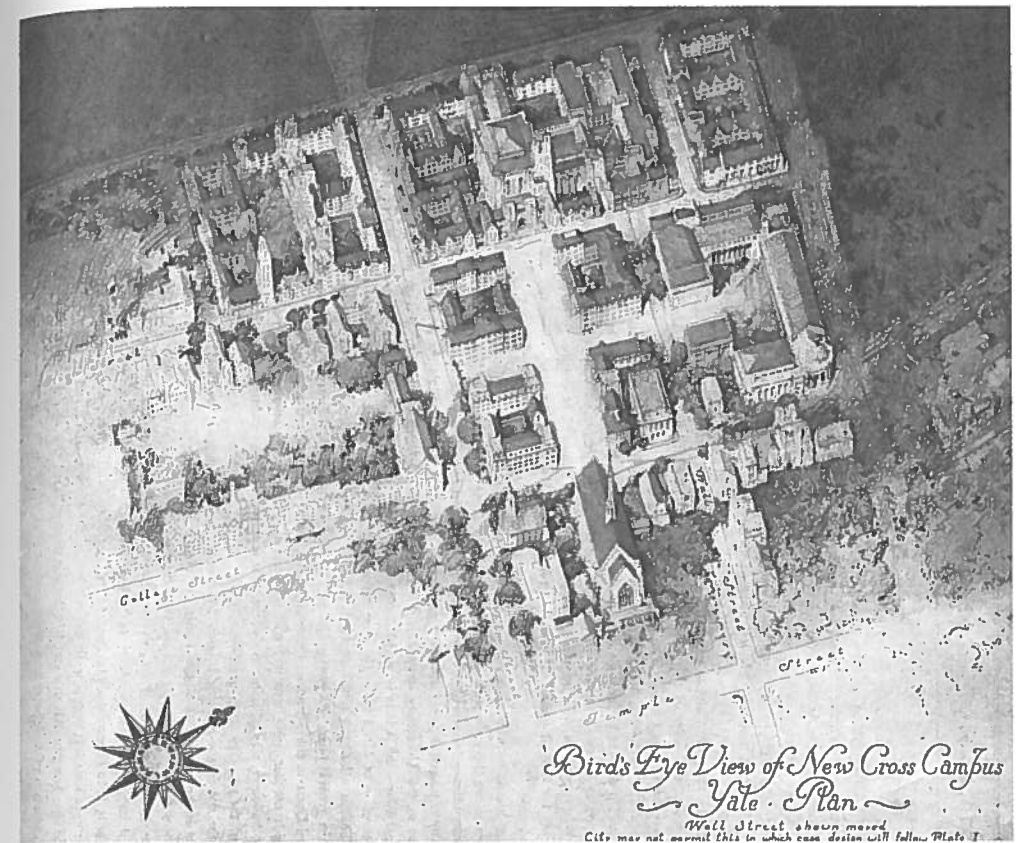


Figure 3.9. Perspective view of the proposed chapel (bottom) and library (top) for Yale’s Cross Campus by James Gamble Rogers, 1924. From “The Plan for the Physical Development of Yale University,” *Yale Alumni Weekly* (1 February 1924): 524, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Across from the library on Cross Campus was to be the chapel (see fig. 3.9). The chapel’s proposed dimensions were dizzying. Its footprint included a nave 351 feet long and 90 feet wide, far exceeding the size of the new Princeton University Chapel realized at 277 feet long and 76 feet wide. The chapel was to accommodate up to five thousand worshippers, significantly larger than the roughly two-thousand-seat capacity of similar chapel projects at Princeton and the University of

Chicago. The chapel was to have a vestibule and a nave of ten bays, a large crossing with transepts, and a three-bay chancel. In plan, the chapel's vast footprint, longitudinal form, and buttresses assured that it was to be in keeping with the other collegiate Gothic buildings of Cross Campus. The chapel was conceived as a central element of Cross Campus, a foil to Sterling Memorial Library, and the representation of religion at the university center.

While the chapel was a pivotal element in the eyes of the university planners, the difficulty of bringing the chapel plans to reality revealed a greater ambiguity of feeling toward religion at Yale. The controversy over compulsory chapel at Yale in the 1920s, which called into question the very role of religion on the campus, contributed to the apparent apathy to the new chapel. Rogers had positioned the chapel on Cross Campus to not only symbolize religion's importance in the university mission but also make the chapel a gathering place for the entire university. The abolishment of compulsory chapel in 1926 put in doubt the need for such a chapel. With religious worship now voluntary, the number of students expected to attend services was greatly reduced, making the investment in a new chapel structure appear unnecessary and Rogers's proposed five-thousand-seat capacity foolish.

President Angell and the Yale Corporation attempted to cast the abolishment of mandatory chapel in terms of saving religion, not abandoning it. Angell acknowledged that the ending of compulsory chapel suggested "the final secularizing of the college, its flouting of the clear words of its charter, its desertion of the old loyalties, and its definite commitment to the mammon of unrighteousness." Still, he argued, "the true interests of religion would be more effectively promoted if . . . men were left to decide for themselves in what way they would express their religious interests."⁵⁰ To counter the appearance that the ending of compulsory chapel also meant the secularization of Yale, Angell advanced the prospect of a new chapel as an example of how Yale would preserve religion. He intimated that with the compulsory requirement gone, "voluntary services, particularly if a beautiful chapel can be secured for them," along with other measures to support religion "will promote a finer religious attitude on the part of the undergraduates, and more than

compensate them for the loss of the ancient tradition of compulsory worship."⁵¹ Yet however much Angell and Yale's planners believed in the importance of a new chapel, especially in the post-compulsory worship climate, the chapel plans were to languish and ultimately fade. While donors like John Sterling, Edward Harkness, and John D. Rockefeller were funneling massive amounts of money into other building projects at Yale, no donor appeared to fund the chapel project.

James Gamble Rogers, frustrated over the apparent end to the chapel project, remained adamant that the new heart of the Yale campus should include some presence of religion. If a new chapel was not to be located at this important site, something else signifying religion needed to be. The new Yale Divinity School could be an appropriate substitute. Just as Yale's other professional schools were expanding and jostling to position their new buildings in Yale's new campus plan, the Divinity School in the 1920s gathered enough funds to move from its old Gothic revival quadrangle north of Old Campus and build the new Sterling Divinity Quadrangle, designed by the architectural firm Delano and Aldrich. Rogers agreed with John Farwell, chairman of the Architectural Plan Committee, that positioning the Divinity School quadrangle opposite the new Sterling Memorial Library would "indicate the spiritual center of the university in balance with the library, at the other end of the Cross campus, expressing the intellectual center." Rogers said, "Of course, I never have given up the belief that a chapel should be in the center of our university," but he felt that "the divinity school very prominently located would express at least in a minor way that there existed in our university a little, anyhow, even if not enough of the spiritual side of our life."⁵²

Yet the new Divinity School was ultimately constructed nearly a mile away from the campus center, and a new chapel would also never find its way onto Cross Campus. Their absence from the center also left Yale's central quadrangle incomplete. Instead of engaging in a conversation with a new chapel or divinity school, the Sterling Memorial Library looks blankly to the opposite end of the Cross Campus axis toward Franklin Hall (1910), a red brick, Georgian revival building that is neither aligned with the library nor in keeping with the collegiate Gothic character of Cross Campus. For Rogers, an appropriate spiritual

expression would have to come in a more unconventional form. With no chapel or divinity school to balance the library, the Sterling Memorial Library, designed in the language of a cathedral and filled with religious images, itself fulfilled the spiritual role at Yale's center. Though the library arguably presented an even greater symbol of the university ideal by fusing knowledge and spirituality, it nevertheless signaled the decline of traditional religious forms and traditional worship at the center of Yale.

CHAPTER 4

NEW CATHEDRALS
FOR THE MODERN
UNIVERSITY

Among the attempts to retain an architectural presence of religion on campus, the interwar decades saw a more inventive melding of religion into the university's everyday work. At the University of Pittsburgh and Yale University, a skyscraper classroom and a library became new kinds of cathedrals on the campus. These buildings crafted a generically religious environment, rooted in neo-Gothic imagery, as a background to university life, learning, and research.

The use of ecclesiastical forms for other purposes on campus was not new. In the 1870s, the Victorian Gothic Memorial Hall by Ware and Van Brunt at Harvard University employed the form of a church in a building that housed a memorial, dining room, and auditorium. William Appleton Potter's Victorian Gothic designs for the Chancellor Green Library at Princeton and the Robinson Library at Brown University, both completed in the 1870s, also aligned religion and learning. These late-nineteenth-century buildings were early examples of a fusion of sacred and secular functions on campus, which Victorian Gothic architecture precisely captured.

Yet such religious imagery was distinct from that employed in the twentieth century. While the Victorian Gothic could communicate the easy relationship between religion and learning in the late nineteenth century, by the twentieth century this relationship on the American campus was more complicated. The use of the neo-Gothic in the twentieth century—now in more muted tones than the polychromatic Victorian Gothic and in more historically accurate forms—confronted a more complex picture. On the one hand, the neo-Gothic architecture of the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning and Yale's Sterling Memorial Library fit within the broader architectural programs on these campuses. More convincingly, however, their architecture and iconography, along with the stated beliefs of the university leaders who oversaw them and the architects who designed them, argue for an ecclesiastical metaphor that attempted to reframe religion for the modern university in an attempt to save its presence on campus. These quasi-religious buildings—architecture that trafficked in religious imagery while housing other functions—became the new cathedrals on the modern American campus. As mandatory chapel policies were ended and traditional religious services were no longer part of the corporate life on campus, university leaders found alternative ways to assert religion into students' daily experience. Such double-coded imagery also allowed for the religious references to remain in the background, surpassed by scientific and modern concerns.

THE CATHEDRAL OF LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

In the 1930s, the University of Pittsburgh constructed a traditional chapel at the center of its campus (fig. 4.1). Funded by the Heinz family, the 450-seat nondenominational though clearly Christian Heinz Memorial Chapel (1934–38) put forward an image of religion on the campus deeply rooted in neo-Gothic imagery. University of Pittsburgh chancellor John Gabbert Bowman argued that future generations would “respond to its feeling-tones, to its organ tones, and the rest, and become freshly aware that we are moving toward life of good will and



Figure 4.1. View of the Heinz Memorial Chapel (left) and the Cathedral of Learning (right), University of Pittsburgh, by the architect Charles Klauder. University of Pittsburgh Historic Photographs, 1884–present, University Library System, University of Pittsburgh.

toward a living experience of God,” echoing the emotional draw of such architecture that Reverend Herbert Parrish had found in the Princeton University Chapel.¹ The physical existence of the chapel building, irrespective of whether a student entered its doors, was to simply serve “by its presence” as a reminder of spiritual life on campus.² Like other university leaders, Chancellor Bowman believed religion had a necessary place in the education of American youth, and the chapel was intended to overtly signal these values to University of Pittsburgh students.

Yet on the University of Pittsburgh campus, there stood another building that literally and figuratively overshadowed the chapel (see fig. 4.1). Looming over the chapel across a 110-yard green was the transformative symbol of religion and modernity: the Cathedral of Learning, a forty-two-story Art Deco classroom building clothed in the imagery of the Gothic. The Cathedral of Learning dominated the university skyline and captured the imagination. It became the more important purveyor of the idea of religion in the modern American university, a new kind of worship space that infused a sense of reverence and spirituality into everyday learning and research. In this sense, the Cathedral of Learning effectively reconciled empirical and revealed knowledge. But ultimately, in creating a generic spiritual environment within a skyscraper form, the Cathedral of Learning placed religion in the background of the modernity it sought to recognize. While Chancellor Bowman had an optimistic view on this transformation of the material expression of religion on campus, it nevertheless allowed religion to be surpassed by other concerns.

Bowman inherited an institution underfunded and overcrowded when he became chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, then a private, nondenominational institution, in 1921.³ The university faced a debt of over \$1 million and an unbalanced operating budget.⁴ From 1916 to 1923, the university's student population had nearly doubled, from about 4,000 to 7,800.⁵ By the 1920s, students were elbow to elbow in a borrowed library space. The university's four primary buildings and even the temporary buildings constructed during World War I failed to meet basic needs, forcing some classes to be held outside in fair weather.⁶ To solve this crisis, Chancellor Bowman convinced Andrew and Richard Mellon to pay the university's debts, and he imagined a skyscraper classroom arising at the center of campus.⁷

For Bowman, the skyscraper classroom was to meet two clear and complementary aims: to express that the University of Pittsburgh was a modern institution, dedicated to the excitement and advances of a scientific age, and an institution still devoted to the spiritual dimension of education. Bowman did not see these as contradictory aims, and he sought an architectural form that would meld them together. Edward Purcell Mellon, the Mellons' nephew and the first architect hired to

design the new development on what was called Frick Acres, produced a scheme in 1923 that followed the Oxbridge model, complete with irregular quadrangles, Gothic styling, and a curious polygonal Gothic tower as the centerpiece. But Bowman rejected this Oxbridge-heavy plan, saying that Oxford University buildings "interpret an era that is gone." Bowman was searching instead for a design to "express its age—an age of creative, forceful energy directed toward usefulness."⁸ That age in education was dominated by empirical knowledge, knowledge that to Bowman was changing the world:

We live, however, in a new age; in an age that lies open for action. Science, for example, is no longer merely a receptive process of recognizing truth. It is a live thing, intent upon a creative, imaginative application of knowledge to human use. Transportation, steel, and power, as we know them today, are results of this, as are the aeroplane, the radio, and the Diesel engine. In medicine, chemistry, and biology, the same creative spirit has led to discoveries comparable to the discovery of a new continent. In the social sciences, again, the same process goes on, though less obviously, broadening our outlook and dispelling sentimental theories.⁹

But religion, spirituality, and moral values were not to be discounted in this scientific, progressive age. Bowman defined the spirit of the University of Pittsburgh as aligning with the virtues of intelligence, courage, and spiritual fineness, and he believed that the desired skyscraper tower, while not "[producing] in us courage, daring, or reverence [or] mak[ing] us 'good' would nevertheless activate those qualities." Bowman believed such a skyscraper would "stimulate a sort of kinetic and exalted thinking on the part of students and faculty."¹⁰ In imagining that architecture could symbolize a creative power alongside "exalted" thinking, Bowman was crafting a way to embrace science while bringing religion into the modern age.

The fifty-two-story building that the newly hired architect Charles Klauder delivered in his initial concept in 1924—and realized in forty-two stories—achieved just this combination. It was a modern skyscraper, influenced by the 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower competition

and the Art Deco tenets of a setback tower and uninterrupted vertical lines. In form, the Cathedral of Learning captured the vitality and spirituality Bowman desired. Klauder created a cathedral skyscraper that appeared to be forever reaching higher. Out of a low-lying base emerged a series of flat-roofed pseudo-buttresses of varying heights clustered around the tallest tower. These symbolic buttresses recalled the traditional forms of a Gothic cathedral without replicating their original structural purpose. Uninterrupted vertical lines on these attenuated forms emphasized the building's height, and multistory lancet arches organized tall banks of windows. The sole horizontal features of the building were the pseudo-buttresses' flat-topped roofs. Bowman, remarkable for his ability to connect ideals to their architectural manifestations, articulated what the unabashed vertical thrust of the skyscraper was to symbolize: "Force, daring, courage, achievement, all are there. Not measured, yet visible, greatness rises before us. The imagination starts. A rush of self-expansion comes and a feeling that we can go beyond our own limits."¹¹ The Cathedral of Learning captured the modern zeitgeist.

If these elements of verticality expressed the excitement of the modern age and the possibilities of knowledge and science, the building's ornament spoke to the spiritual dimension of education. These Gothic elements signaled the building's educational identity. To counter the supposition that a tall building necessarily signified "commerce, competition, and contest," Bowman explained that the building included ecclesiastical references to prove it fostered a "college life which has an indomitable spiritual value in it."¹² Pointed arch windows, trefoils and quatrefoils, and tracery adorned the building at select points. The "spiritual quality" of the building resided in these details, whose archetypal associations linked them with religious architecture. "At each corner of the tower, conspicuous by its position, occurs Gothic ornamentation," said Bowman. "The character of this ornamentation, here in contrast to the otherwise stern simplicity of the building, means to us, through association with church buildings, a mood of worship and reverence."¹³ An undated drawing compares the elevation of the Cathedral of Learning to those of the Notre Dame and Reims Cathedrals in France and the unfinished tower of Malines in Belgium, un-

derscoring its religious and Gothic allusions. Klauder's design melded a sense of invigoration, rushing forward, and limitless discovery with a spiritual sense underpinning these advances, thereby reconciling the modern and religious pursuits of the university.

The interior of the Cathedral of Learning furthers this appropriation of religious imagery. To again underscore the place of spirituality in education, the Commons Room on the building's main floor presented an image of a Gothic nave (fig. 4.2).¹⁴ The room, which Bowman called "the heart and soul of the building," was to produce the same effect as a church. "Put into the stone arches the spirituality that belongs with education," Bowman reportedly instructed Klauder. "Draw a room that will so grip a boy that he will never enter it with his hat on."¹⁵ The 175-by-128-foot room, made of Indiana limestone, possessed the hallmark forms of a Gothic cathedral: cluster columns, webbed vaults, more pointed arches, and stone tracery and ornament. At three stories tall, belying the mass over it, the room also recalled the height of a cathedral nave. Guastavino tile vaulting hushes sounds within the half-acre space, inducing a reverential demeanor in those who enter. Heavy oak furniture possesses a medieval and even religious intimacy. Against the stone piers are groupings of three chairs, one larger than the others with a high wood back suggesting a bishop's chair. An iron gate by Samuel Yellin proclaims to the students studying and meeting in the room, "Here Is Eternal Spring for You the Very Stars of Heaven Are New." And if students needed an even more explicit religious symbolism, on the higher floors of the Cathedral of Learning the pointed Gothic windows assert a religious presence in the workaday life of the university.¹⁶

In referencing the spiritual and the modern, the empirical and the revealed, the building was to "give unity to the whole idea of education" by bringing together the concepts of empirical and revealed knowledge. The Cathedral of Learning hosted the three-story university library, classrooms, laboratories, and research space, in addition to faculty and departmental offices. In total, the skyscraper contained some 750 rooms by 1937. Whereas separate buildings give students the "idea that these subjects are separate things and unrelated just as the buildings are," Bowman believed "the high building would give unity to the

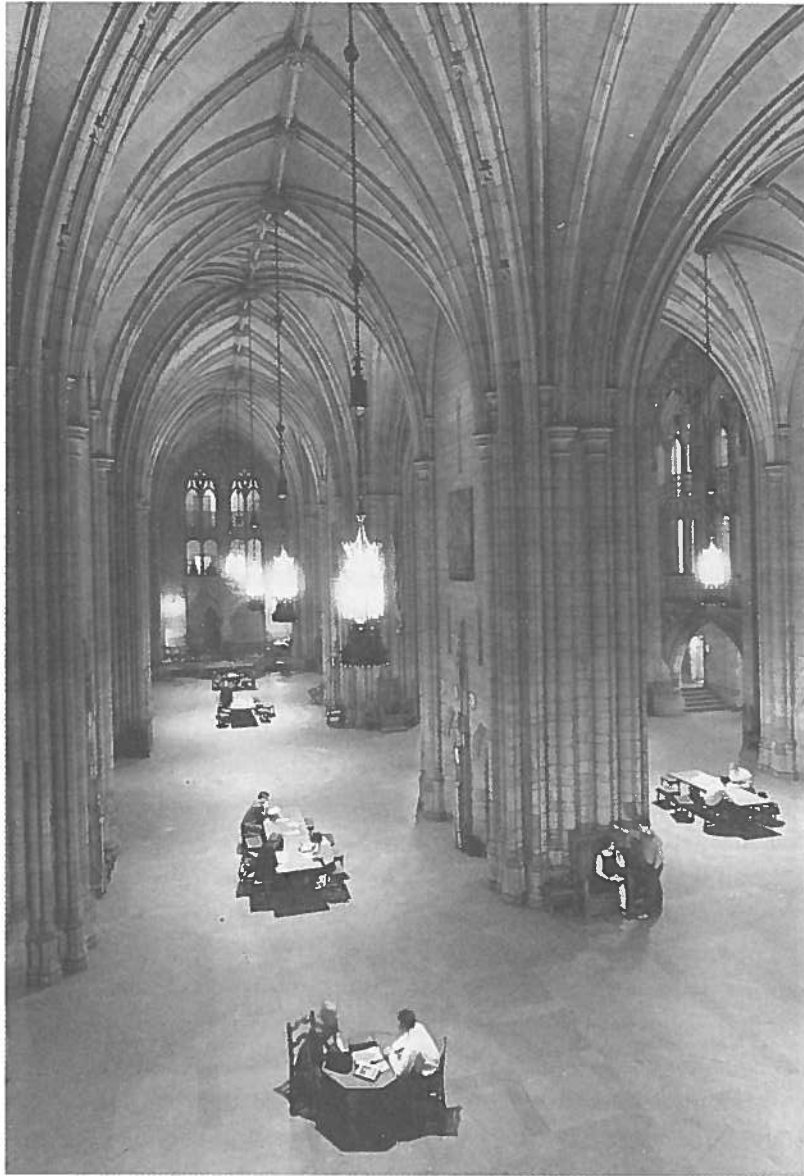


Figure 4.2. Commons Room, Cathedral of Learning. University of Pittsburgh Historic Photographs, 1884–present, University Library System, University of Pittsburgh.

entire university.”¹⁷ The discoveries made in the scientific laboratories, the knowledge gained in the library, and information received in the lecture halls were enveloped in a spiritual environment. A sense of reverence, worship, and spirituality governed all work that went on in the building. More than unifying the various parts of the modern university, the Cathedral of Learning was to unify the knowledge gained from science and from religion.

The building’s very name, the Cathedral of Learning, was an assertion of this intent. Although Bowman initially expressed his displeasure at the name, he came to embrace it, especially for its “great publicity value,” which was crucial to the ambitious public fund-raising campaign to pay for its construction.¹⁸ More important, the name promoted the spiritual identity of the skyscraper, transforming it from a commercial-type building into one with a higher purpose.¹⁹ The name called attention to the building’s Gothic ornamentation and height and suggested its identity as a new kind of cathedral for the university, one that assumed the prominence and centrality typical of a Gothic cathedral. As Bowman explained its meaning, “This name is suggested partly by the Gothic architecture and partly by the idea that the ‘cathedral’ is to be a *seat* or central symbol of creativeness and achievement in the Pittsburgh district.”²⁰ The appropriation of a religious name for the building signaled the idea that university education was affiliated with spiritual ideals.

Not everyone understood this melding. The pastor of the nearby First Baptist Church, Dr. Carl Wallace Petty, agreed with Bowman that the Heinz Memorial Chapel and the Cathedral of Learning exemplified the unity of knowledge but argued that empirical and revealed knowledge were divided between the two. “Chapel of Prayer and Cathedral of Learning—religion and science—altar and laboratory—faith and reason, these it seems God hath joined together,” Petty said. “We follow our highest institution and truest experience when in the heart of our city we place these two temples side by side.”²¹ Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, the Presbyterian minister who spoke at the dedication of the Heinz Memorial Chapel, also differentiated the functions of the two structures in saying it was “appropriate” that a university “would have

a chapel for religious worship side by side with its towering building devoted to other tasks.”²²

These ministers missed the real transformative meaning that the Cathedral of Learning came to have. As the iconic and dominant building at the University of Pittsburgh, literally overshadowing the chapel, it was the Cathedral of Learning—not the chapel—that was the university’s primary purveyor of spirituality. A striking photograph evinces this shift. Taken in the 1950s during the Christmas season, the photograph shows the image of an illuminated cross in the upper windows of the Cathedral of Learning (fig. 4.3). The image proclaims religion’s significance within the university and in the Pittsburgh skyline. It was a new cathedral, seeking to integrate religion in the modern era.

THE STERLING MEMORIAL LIBRARY AT YALE UNIVERSITY

In the 1930s, Yale University also constructed a new kind of cathedral at its campus center (fig. 4.4). James Gamble Rogers, who oversaw the remaking of the Yale campus in the 1920s and 1930s, long believed that the center of Yale’s campus needed to have a religious expression. When plans for both a new chapel and a divinity school at the campus center were abandoned, Rogers preserved religion, or at least a version of it, at the Yale center by creating a new sacred space for the modern American university—a cathedral library laden with religious iconography (fig. 4.5).²³

The overt religious imagery of the Sterling Memorial Library was immediately recognized. In 1931, less than three weeks after its dedication, Yale senior and future journalist, William Harlan Hale, gave a vivid and scathing account of the library’s religious image in an article descriptively titled “Yale’s Cathedral Orgy”:

A library? You would never recognize it when you saw it. Enter it—pass through a bastard version of the west portal of an abbey. Continue down the main hall, which is a precise copy of a nave with

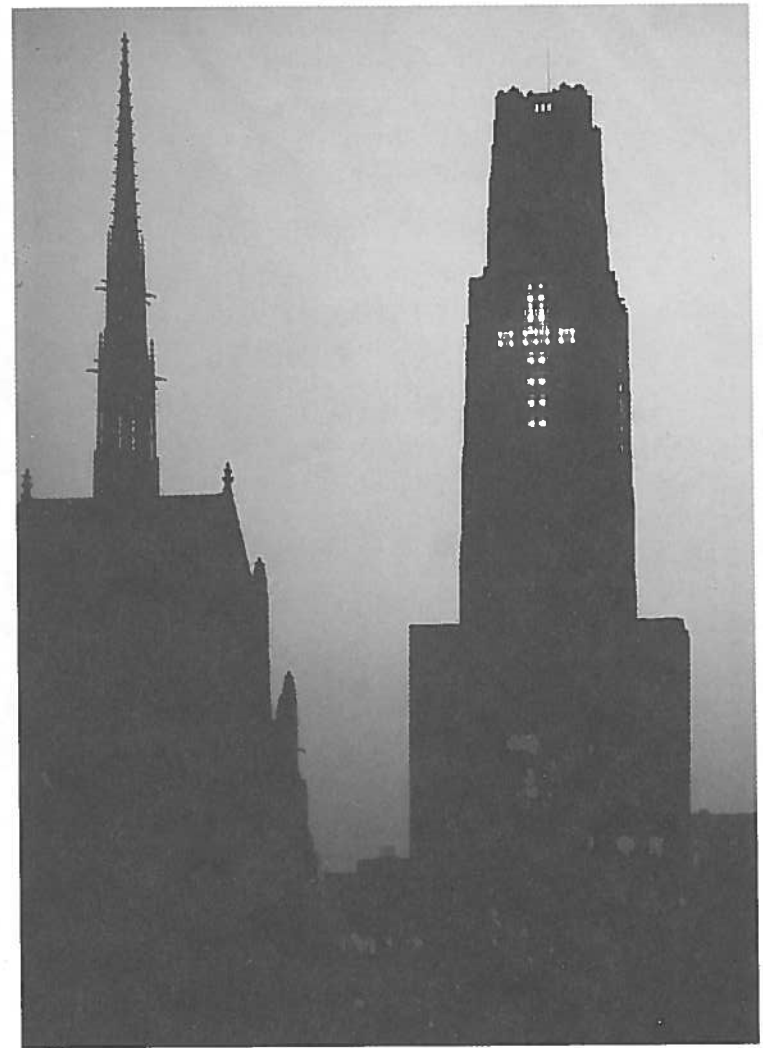


Figure 4.3. Cathedral of Learning at Christmas with the image of a cross illuminated in its windows. The spire of the Heinz Memorial Chapel is evident at left. University of Pittsburgh Historic Photographs, 1884–present, University Library System, University of Pittsburgh.

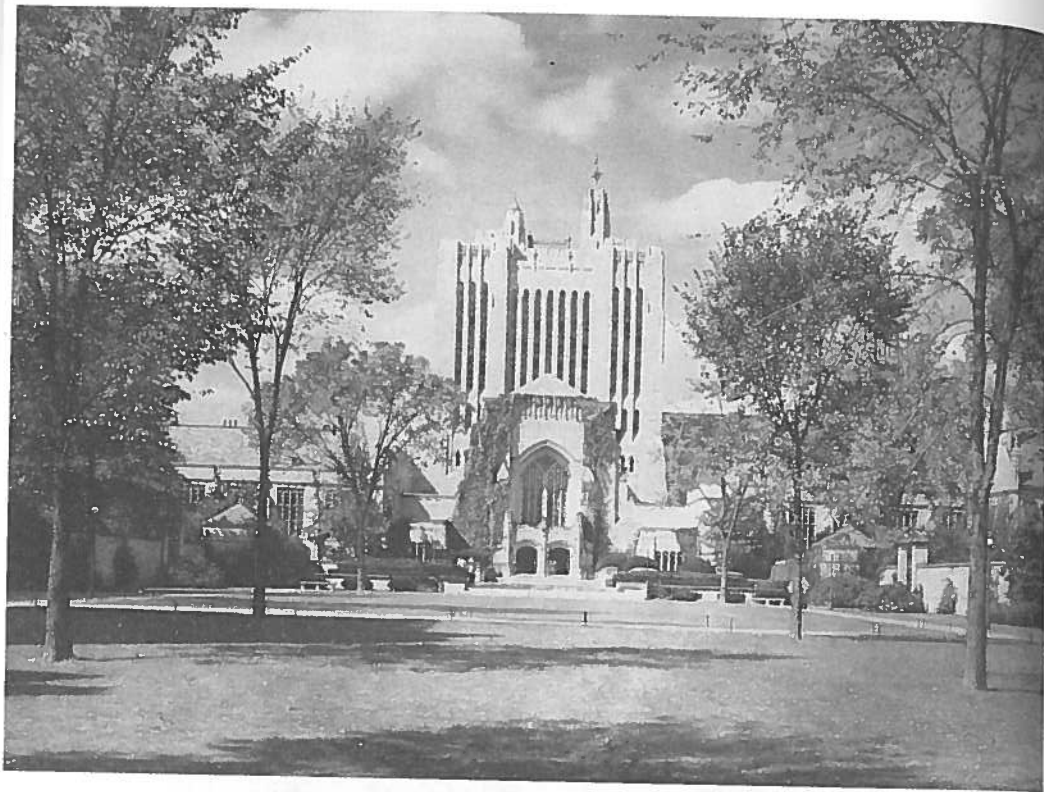


Figure 4.4. Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, James Gamble Rogers, 1927–31, pictured in the late 1930s. From RU 696, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

five bays. Observe the massive and unnecessary piers, the inconvenient but orthodox side aisles, the lofty transepts bristling with sanctity above and serial catalogues below. Advance to the high altar—a \$25,000 book-delivery desk; overhead, admire the rood screen, of utmost complexity and facility at catching dust, which has been cleverly placed to hide the important library clock from view. . . . Turn about and gaze at the triforium gallery above the vast nave; scan the splendid clerestory windows, heavy with tracery and mullions, highly effective in minimizing the light, and sealed hermetically shut. Pass down the corridors, and cry out in rapt adoration of more color,

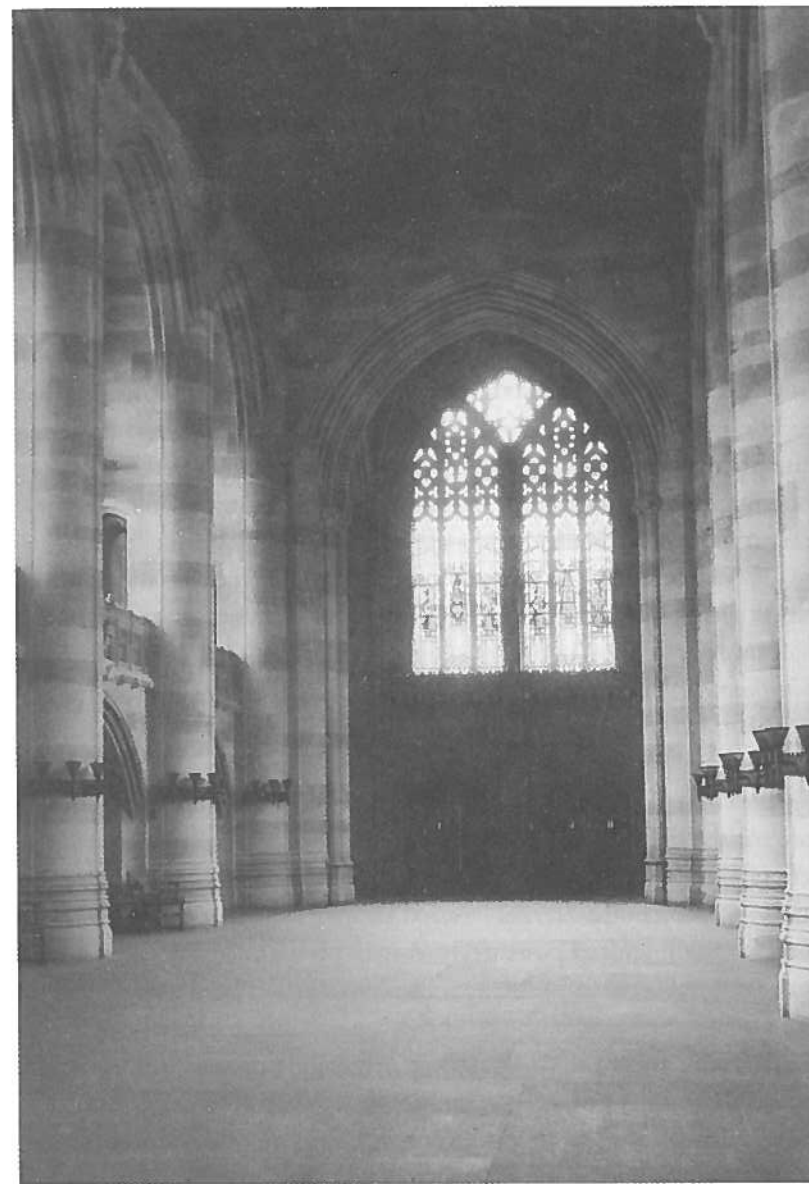


Figure 4.5. Entrance hall, Sterling Memorial Library. From RU 696, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

more carving, more corbels, more plaques, balconies, chandeliers, wall brackets (electric, in the style of ancient torch-holders), more sacred splendors! And, while at last laboring to find a book, bow your head in holy ecstasy!²⁴

Hale saw the Sterling Memorial Library as an affront to modern life. Its architecture was not even a neutral background; it was an active negative agent subverting the very aims of the library. Playing off Yale's motto, *Lux et Veritas*, Light and Truth, Hale famously remarked elsewhere, "There is not one suggestion of *Veritas* in the Sterling Library;—and for that matter there is a precious little of *Lux*."²⁵ Moreover, the building seemingly denied the modern knowledge produced and consumed within its walls. "A modern building constructed for purely modern needs," he scolded, "has no excuse for going off in an orgy of meretricious medievalism and stale iconography."²⁶

Hale condemned the library's architectural revivalism in the interest of promoting modern architecture, a movement that would gain widespread attention in the Museum of Modern Art's 1932 *Modern Architecture: An International Exhibition* just one year after Hale's biting review. But for Yale's leaders and the library's architect, James Gamble Rogers, the significance of constructing a library in the image of a Gothic cathedral overrode any desire to employ avant-garde architecture. At the library's dedication, Yale president James Rowland Angell articulated the building's ecclesiastical metaphor as a "temple of the mind" to protect the eternal "sacred lamp of learning" and the "holy torch of truth." Most powerfully, Angell proclaimed, "Here is incarnate the intellectual and spiritual life of Yale."²⁷ These carefully chosen words, combined with the library's neo-Gothic imagery, asserted that learning and truth possessed an everlasting connection to the divine even for those library patrons whose subject was scientific, whose research approach was empirical, or whose work otherwise appeared to have little connection with religious concerns.

By the interwar years in the twentieth century, religion faced an uncertain future on Yale's campus. It was no longer a dominant focus of academic inquiry, challenged by the emerging religious plurality of the student body, and yet still a desired component in students' moral

formation. The Sterling Memorial Library emerged at this crossroad in the making of the modern Yale. If religion could no longer be the central aim of higher education, it nevertheless could form the backdrop to all university work, a reminder of the ultimate aim of all human inquiry. In casting the pursuit of knowledge in a religious image, the Sterling Memorial Library became library *and* cathedral.

Yet however genuinely the Yale administration and Rogers believed that the cathedral library successfully preserved a place for religion in the modern university, the library's ecclesiastical metaphor, embodied in its cathedral organization, Virgin Mary-like "altar piece," and Gutenberg Bible relic, allowed multiple interpretations. For some, it reaffirmed religion's role amidst great change in higher education. For others, it mocked religion, confirming that religion belonged to a past no longer relevant to modern life. William Harlan Hale's irreverent marrying of "cathedral" and "orgy" attests to the growing ascendancy of secular over religious life. These divergent views of the Sterling Memorial Library reflect religion's tenuous position in higher education in the twentieth century.

Library as Skyscraper and Cathedral

The Sterling Memorial Library's organization reveals Rogers's attempt to meld multiple identities within one structure and acknowledge the tensions at work in the modern university: revealed and empirical, old and new, traditional and modern, conservative and progressive, divine and human. Yale University librarian Andrew Keogh identified such tensions when he stated the building was "as efficient as an up-to-date factory and as beautiful as a cathedral."²⁸ Wilhelm Munthe, a Norwegian librarian commenting in the 1930s, called the library "a combination of skyscraper, cathedral, and cloister."²⁹ These descriptions focused on the two outstanding features of the large library complex: the modern book stack tower and the ecclesiastical entrance sequence. These distinctive spaces both mirrored the tensions of the modern university and attempted to reconcile them.

The library's book stack tower, first proposed by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue in his original designs of the library and retained by

Rogers when he took over the design after Goodhue's death in 1924, celebrated rather than hid the stacks. At sixteen stories and 150 feet tall, the tower was a "book skyscraper," the library's most modern element.³⁰ Goodhue and Rogers drew on other architectural precedents to create this skyscraper library. The vertical organization of the tower's windows recalled Goodhue's entry in the 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower competition, which Rogers had also entered, as well as Goodhue's design for the Nebraska State Capitol.³¹ In addition to playing off the modern zeitgeist typified by the American skyscraper, the library tower became a leitmotif in collegiate architecture as universities struggled to house increasing numbers of books and collections. Klauer's Cathedral of Learning (1924–37) at the University of Pittsburgh, G. G. Scott's Cambridge University Library (1931–34), Henry van de Velde's book tower (1933) at Ghent University, and Paul Cret's University of Texas tower (1937) also employed the skyscraper model, although with different stylistic effects, as an innovative solution to accommodating the products of modern knowledge.³²

The Sterling Memorial Library's medieval stone cladding and picturesque roofline belied the rational, modern structure underneath. Hale relayed the story of a "well-known modern Swedish architect" who was crestfallen while visiting the university when he learned that the tower of steel girders, which he proclaimed as "something really modern at Yale," was to be covered with stone instead of glass.³³ Hale published a photograph of the book stack tower under construction in the *Harkness Hoot* as an example of what modern architecture at Yale could be: structure frankly expressed, with little ornamentation and certainly no historicizing cladding. Above his juxtaposition of this photograph to an image of the completed library was the mournful headline, "IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN."³⁴

The book stack tower further symbolized the ascendancy of the laboratory in the modern university. As one description stated, "The library is a working laboratory in the true sense of the word, and the bookstack tower is the heart of the structure, bringing readers and books quickly and easily together."³⁵ The tower housed three hundred study carrels as well as seminar rooms for students to discover, analyze, and invent in close proximity to their research subjects, and elevators

and pneumatic tubes carried materials from the tower to the delivery desk. The tower epitomized the production of new knowledge that the modern university had come to embody.

From this perspective, the symbolism the stacks carried was not of ages past but rather of knowledge's relation to modern life. Munthe asserted that the tower "overlooks the town as a symbol that the book is a power-factor in modern society."³⁶ At the center of Cross Campus, elevated for all to see, the vast store of human knowledge was celebrated. For the British librarian and sometime-playwright Louis Stanley Jast, the stacks rose above the messiness of modern life to proclaim humanity's collective knowledge: "Then hail! / Thou mighty pile of books, thou glorious thrust / Of learning above moil and rage and dust, / Wisdom's uplifted finger, soul of Yale!"³⁷

For all its external expressiveness, the book stack tower finds little acknowledgment in the library's interior; students reach the stacks by an inconspicuous elevator to the side of the delivery desk. Rather, the overwhelming experience of the interior is the sensory experience of library-cum-cathedral that William Harlan Hale's description so vividly re-creates. Rogers cunningly adapted the organization of a cathedral to the purposes of the library. The book stack tower visually recedes as the library patron approaches what Hale termed the "bastard abbey portal" in the library's smaller entrance tower on the Cross Campus lawn. From this dim, compressed entrance defined by arches and heavy carvings, students, faculty, and visitors are released into the neo-Gothic glory of the library's entrance hall. The walls of the soaring, five-bay nave, formed by robust stone columns supporting pointed arches, follow the customary cathedral division of arcade, triforium, and clerestory. The crossing and transepts complete the familiar ecclesiastical pattern, and the nearby cloister and courtyard suggest a monastic compound. Although hushed voices within a library are common, here the reason for a reverential demeanor has another dimension—a religious one. As *Scientific American* described it, "The Gothic architecture adapted to library needs gives a feeling of spaciousness and calm which has an excellent psychological effect."³⁸

Although the Sterling Memorial Library first appears as a cathedral, closer inspection reveals curious substitutions. In the narthex,

telephone booths are disguised as confessionals. Card catalogs nestled underneath the side aisles stand in place of pews. At the head of the entrance nave under fan vaulting, an elaborately carved oak delivery desk is in place of the altar. The reading room off the transept is in the image of a refectory, and the rare book room emulates a lady chapel.³⁹ The Librarian's Courtyard (now Selin Courtyard) recalls a monastic courtyard, complete with a central fountain in the manner of the monastic washing basin. Rogers had, in effect, placed the functions of a modern library within the shell of a neo-Gothic cathedral.

Descriptions of the library in the *Yale University Library Gazette* asserted that attempts were made to mitigate such ecclesiastical overtones: "[The library] avoids too churchlike a character through the introduction of leaded glass in which colour is largely supplanted by intricate patterning in leadwork," and "a painted wood ceiling of rather simple design helps to preserve a secular character."⁴⁰ Evidence to the contrary, however, overwhelmed this claim. Contemporary accounts, such as the one in the *Harvard Crimson* describing the library as having a "magnificent cathedral-like edifice," immediately picked up on the religious allusion.⁴¹ William Harlan Hale's fury underscored that the library enthusiastically embraced the ecclesiastical metaphor to the point of sacrificing practicality.

Alma Mater as Virgin Mary

The climax of the Sterling Memorial Library's cathedral orgy is the *Alma Mater* mural at the culmination of the entrance nave (fig. 4.6). Painted by Eugene Francis Savage, a Yale professor of fine arts, and installed in 1933, two years after the library's dedication, the mural is a religious allusion so strong it would have added considerably more fuel to Hale's fire had it been finished before the publication of his "Yale's Cathedral Orgy."⁴² Echoing President Angell's assertion that the library embodied "the intellectual and spiritual life of Yale,"⁴³ Savage envisioned his mural as symbolizing "the inspiration that directs the University's spiritual and intellectual efforts."⁴⁴ The *Alma Mater* mural, which the *Harkness Hoot* derisively deemed "the ideal altar-piece for a building which is in every respect also an absurd travesty of the Gothic style," plays with its overt

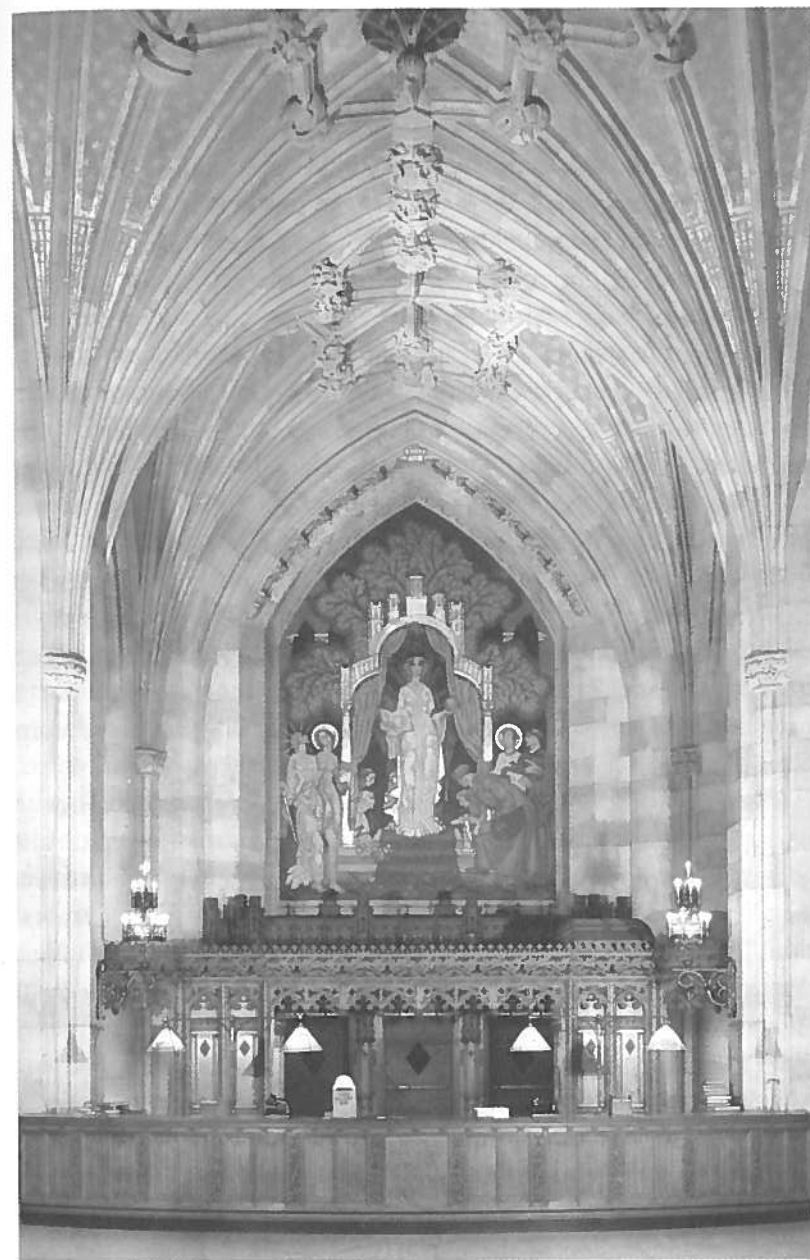


Figure 4.6. The *Alma Mater* mural (1933) by Eugene Savage in its location above the delivery desk in Sterling Memorial Library. From RU 696, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

religious iconography, fusing together ecclesiastical forms and secular content to allow a double-coded meaning.⁴⁵ This mural, working in concert with its complementary neo-Gothic architecture, is a key component to understanding the library as a complete representation of a Gothic cathedral and a total work of art.

In the mural, positioned above the library's delivery desk, pulled curtains reveal the female figure of Yale's Alma Mater standing frontally. A blue and white mantel covers her white Grecian garment, and a laurel wreath crowns her head. Engaging the viewer with her direct stare, she stands in front of the Tree of Knowledge under a trilobed arch, supported by Corinthian columns and adorned with the towers of a vaguely medieval city. She holds a book in her right hand inscribed with Yale's motto, *Lux et Veritas*, in Hebrew letters and the sphere of learning in her left.

Savage gave physical form to Yale's motto in two female figures at the left of the mural. Light, bearing a torch and adorned with a crown of light rays, and Truth, naked, holding a mirror and crowned with a halo, bring the six male figures of Music, Divinity, Fine Arts, Literature, Science, and Labor "to make grateful acknowledgement to Alma Mater." Each subject of knowledge and human endeavor is represented with its appropriate attributes. Divinity is garbed in a cross-covered robe and signaled with a halo. Literature is robed, with a laurel wreath crown, a quill pen and paper in hand, and hand over heart as if to give an oration. Music bows down to Alma Mater with harp in hand, while Fine Arts, clothed in a painter's smock and holding a palette, lays a figure of Winged Victory at the feet of Alma Mater. At Alma Mater's left, separated from the others, Science holds a microscope, and Labor, grasping a hammer and sickle, presents the fruits of the earth to Alma Mater.⁴⁶

The work is in many respects a very proper, straightforward allegorical mural celebrating the work of the university. The figure of Alma Mater personifies Yale. The blue and white colors of her clothing mirror the colors of the university. Her book displays the Yale motto, which is also embodied in the figures of Light and Truth. Laurel wreaths and Corinthian columns signify wisdom, and the sphere of learning represents the realms of learning available in the university. The Winged Victory statue, an imitation of the famed Greek Winged

Victory of Samothrace, symbolizes truth's victory over evil, and the fruits of the earth suggest an understanding and harvesting of the physical world. The mural articulates both the university's role in gathering knowledge and the higher ideals that govern that acquisition.

But like almost everything else in the Sterling Memorial Library, the mural also possesses a strong religious connotation. The immediate impression of the mural is of a religious icon. Alma Mater reads as the Virgin Mary or at least a saint; the blue in her garments is a classic Marian depiction, and the white signifies sainthood. Formally, the composition itself makes divine references. The trilobed arch above Alma Mater rings her head as if it were a halo, echoing the halos of Truth at the left and Divinity at the right. The three arcs within the arch evoke the Holy Trinity, as does the triangular, symmetrical arrangement of the three haloed figures of Alma Mater, Truth, and Divinity. The Tree of Knowledge, taken from the Book of Genesis, represents the knowledge of good and evil, and the medieval city suggests heavenly Jerusalem. If the mural is a representation of the university's role in producing knowledge, it is equally a representation of knowledge's divine origin.

The architecture of the library heightens the mural's religious associations. Positioned at the culmination of the entrance nave, above the "altar" and rood screen of the delivery desk, under fan vaults, and within a pointed arch, the painting appears as an altarpiece. The inscription on the extravagantly carved oak delivery desk, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4), from the Old Testament Book of Daniel, strengthens the religious association. As a modern, sophisticated equipment system of conveyor belts and pneumatic tubes worked behind the desk to deliver items from across the library, above the desk Alma Mater, appearing as a religious figure, guards, governs, and oversees access to the immense store of knowledge in the book stack tower beyond.⁴⁷

Within the Sterling Memorial Library, the *Alma Mater* mural combined with the library's procession made palpable knowledge's divine association. Entering through the bastard abbey portal, walking past the telephone-booth confessionals, visiting the card catalog in the side aisle, and processing to the circulation desk altar to present a book request under the gaze of Alma Mater was a ritual experience with intentional

religious overtones. Such visual and bodily cues indicate to the library patron religion's authority and relevance to the work ahead. As Sally Promey argued in her analysis of John Singer Sargent's *Triumph of Religion* murals in the Boston Public Library, the ritual purpose of Sargent Hall is an "orchestrated preparation for privileged intellectual activity."⁴⁸ The entrance hall of the Sterling Memorial Library similarly orchestrates a sense of knowledge's divine origin before a student or faculty member enters the reading room or ascends the stacks. As Rogers wrote, the "large and imposing" entrance hall was intended "to give the best first impression and the best last impression."⁴⁹ The *Alma Mater* mural intensifies this experience. Although the mural may be read as an allegorical representation of the university, the decided impression it gives is as an altarpiece for a cathedral library, albeit a shocking one for a historically Protestant institution.

Religious and Secular Iconography

In mixing secular and religious content, the Sterling Memorial Library's rich iconographic program fosters and reinforces multiple interpretations of the building's meaning. That its trustees sacrificed six tiers of book stacks in order to fund more ornament indicates the importance they assigned to the symbolic expression of the library.⁵⁰ Yale professors aided in the selection of the images and inscriptions, and a 1931 issue of the *Yale University Library Gazette* meticulously, even ponderously, recorded the sources of the decorations.⁵¹ For example, the entry for a Cro-Magnon image in the library reads, "Wall engraving of a bison and horse from Les Combarelles. Second phase. Aurignacian epoch."⁵² Such detail and classification reflected the mastery of modern scholarship and promoted the library's role in preserving knowledge.

Embedded in the neo-Gothic shell are images and words that variously describe the history of recorded knowledge, the history of Yale, and the tie between religion and knowledge. At the library's main entrance, a medieval scholar divides the portal, above which are carved a Mayan serpent, an Athenian owl, and a Roman wolf representing the European and American civilizations and Greek and Arabic inscriptions signifying the ancient. In the fan vaults over the delivery desk, carvings

of record-keeping implements range from the ancient chisel and hammer, sand shaker, and quill pen and scroll to the modern typewriter keyboard, telegraph key, and telephone.⁵³ Images of the previous Yale library buildings surmount the York Street entryway, and ten triforium panels in the entrance hall record scenes from the history of the Yale library, including the founding of Yale College. Words also reinforce the connection between religion and learning. The inscription over the door of the librarian's office from Shakespeare's *Henry VI* offers this moralizing message: "Ignorance is the curse of God / Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven."⁵⁴ An Arabic inscription taken from the Koran over the library entrance reads, "God! There is no God but he . . . He knoweth that which is past, and that which is to come unto them, and they shall not comprehend anything of his knowledge, but so far as he pleaseth."⁵⁵

And, as is often cited in descriptions of the Sterling Memorial Library, some images challenge the library's rarefied atmosphere. A bookworm in different stages of development enlivens the lanterns on the library's Wall Street entrance, and lest the purpose of the janitor's closet on the first floor across from the altar-like circulation desk be misinterpreted, inscribed within two very proper looking shields over the door are a mop and bucket and brooms.⁵⁶ A figure carved on a corbel studiously hunched over a book whose pages read, "U R A JOKE," greets the visitor walking through the cloistered exhibition corridor.⁵⁷ Such unexpected cheekiness within ecclesiastical forms challenges the expectations drawn from the library's architecture, opening up the possibility for new readings and allowing the building to be both a nod to a religious past and a modern, secular present.

Within this varied iconography, so dense that William Harlan Hale cautioned that it was "meaningless without a handbook," is a dual reading of Johannes Gutenberg and his invention that particularly strikes the traditional and modern, revealed and empirical, divine and human tensions the library embodies.⁵⁸ Like the *Alma Mater* mural, the display of Yale's copy of the Gutenberg Bible exemplified the fluidity in meaning the library as a whole fosters.⁵⁹ As a document of the Word of God, the Gutenberg Bible is the very definition of revealed knowledge: its passages contain messages from God, recount the life of Christ, and

instruct how one should live a moral life. Within the Sterling Memorial Library, the Gutenberg Bible was presented as a religious relic. At the end of the rare book room, positioned symbolically at the front of the library on Cross Campus, was, as one observer exclaimed, “a chapel in the corner for the Gutenberg Bible!”⁶⁰ James Gamble Rogers had indeed created a chapel-like space, a polygonal chamber set off by iron gates by Samuel Yellin, whose tall walls, pierced by lancet windows, culminate in fan vaults. Originally the Gutenberg Bible was placed at the center of this “Grand Exhibition Room,” displayed and protected under glass. Movement through the library to see the Bible in this protected environment created a secondary ritualistic event akin to a pilgrimage to venerate a relic. This reading of the Gutenberg Bible as a sacred object supported the interpretation of the Sterling Memorial Library as a sacred space, overtly Christian in tone and message.

Yet another, nonreligious reading of the Bible and its setting was possible. Made by German printer Johannes Gutenberg beginning in 1455 with his printing press, the Gutenberg Bible marked an early use of movable type, a revolution in printing and bookmaking that allowed for the mass production of books. Aside from its religious content, the Bible is an extraordinarily important document of the beginning of the modern transmission of knowledge. It was in this sense also a secular relic. Its guarded display in the library’s rare book room signaled its historical value and significance, especially to a library filled with the products of Gutenberg’s invention.

The depiction of Gutenberg and his printing press in the library’s courtyard further stressed the fine line between the secular and religious interpretations of the Gutenberg Bible. The theme of the Librarians’ Courtyard, landscaped by Beatrix Jones Farrand and itself a monastic-like space, paid homage to printing and the graphic arts. At the southeast entrance to the courtyard is an image of the Gutenberg press and below a pair of shields, one with the head of Gutenberg and the other an open book with the inscription, “In the beginning was the Word.”⁶¹ These suggest that Gutenberg and his invention heralded the beginning of the large-scale production of the printed word and the start of modern knowledge. But for those who could recognize its source, the inscription was incomplete. In full, the first verse from the Gospel of John reads,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The appropriation of the quote for Gutenberg, and the pairing of it with a relief of his image, suggests that modern knowledge—the entire range of human discovery shared with others through the printed word—possessed its own form of divinity. On the other hand, the quote’s implicit religious source suggested this new knowledge’s religious foundation and its sanctification.

Finally, the iconography at the very center of the library also directly engages this dual reading. Prominently displayed on the arch before the crossing of the entrance hall nave are eleven bosses taken from the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, a medieval manuscript presented to the school in 1715 by Elihu Yale, the patron who donated over four hundred books and gave financial support to the fledgling institution and after whom the university is named. The *Speculum*, translated as the “Mirror of Salvation,” used both words and images to show that events from the Old Testament prefigured those in the New Testament. Former Yale secretary, Anson Phelps Stokes, suggested developing the theme of the mirror from this manuscript in the library’s iconography “because the library reflects the world’s knowledge.”⁶² Images were drawn from both the Old and New Testaments: Jonah and the whale, fishermen drawing in their nets, the fiery furnace, Daniel and the lions, the adoration of the Magi, the creation of Eve, David and the beasts, Noah, the Baptism in Jordan, and the flight into Egypt.⁶³ The arch culminates with a depiction of the Nativity, illustrating the beginning of man’s salvation through Christ. These bosses reinforced Christianity as the path to salvation as library patrons passed underneath them in their procession to the delivery desk altar. From a strictly historical standpoint, however, these *Speculum* images highlight an important written source of religious instruction in the Middle Ages and pay homage to the university’s namesake. Like much of the library’s iconography, these images possess both sacred and secular interpretations.

Reception of Yale’s Ecclesiastical Metaphor

The ecclesiastical metaphor and even irony of the Sterling Memorial Library was not lost on its contemporaries at its opening. The library’s

appropriation of religious imagery sat uncomfortably for some. One visitor described the library's edifice as similar to one "in my memory of an old illustrated Bible for children" but wondered, "Was it the Tower of Babel, or a Babylonian palace?"⁶⁴ This tongue-in-cheek rhetorical question identified the building as either a supreme example of human pride and direct challenge to God's authority—an act for which God, in the story of the Tower of Babel, punished humans by dividing their language, a story perhaps appropriate to a library and a university—or so beautiful as to be like one of the seven Wonders of the World. A cartoon in the *Yale Record* depicted the interior of the library's entrance nave with a student asking an irritated adult, "Say, when does the feature begin?"⁶⁵ The library, or rather Tower of Babel or movie palace, recalled multiple images of fantastic spaces.

For a writer in *Commonweal*, the most striking part of the library was the cathedral-like entrance hall with its confessional telephone booths and massive columns. Most astonishingly of all, "The altar is the place at which books are dispensed!" The author got to the heart of the library's significance to a modern university in which scientific pursuits had superseded religion as the primary concern: "Thinking the whole thing over, one is torn between a tendency to find the whole affair just slightly ridiculous and a feeling that is quite unintentionally symbolic. After all, is it not science (of every form and order) to which innumerable moderns bring sacrifice and from which they expect help and solace?"⁶⁶ Here, the writer astutely identified the tensions and transformations at work in the university. As much as the Sterling Memorial Library sought to keep religion central within the minds of the faculty and students of the modern American university, a deep shift had already occurred in which religion played a secondary role. Although the altar-like circulation desk dominated by the guise of *Alma Mater* cultivated a religious atmosphere, those seeking books from the skyscraper beyond nevertheless increasingly sought the substance of science, not religion.

Other critiques took advantage of the Sterling Memorial Library's iconography and architecture to frankly mock the earnestness of placing religion at the center of the university. A suggested replacement for Savage's *Alma Mater* mural from Yale's humor magazine presented an

irreverent account of university life.⁶⁷ Whereas Savage sought to express the intellectual and spiritual life of Yale, the artist of this parody illustrated the sordid in student life, inserting alcohol bottles and dice into Savage's composition, just as the library inserted its own imagery into an ecclesiastical framework. The seemingly inebriated *Alma Mater* holding a mug of beer certainly contrasted with the pure image of a *Mary* figure in Savage's original. This parody is shockingly effective in its irreverence, precisely because the real *Alma Mater* mural reads so strongly as a religious image.

Another critique was a satiric defense of the library notably written in verse, in which the poet admitted that the "Library is anachronistic, / Revivalistic, mystic, and atavistic." Yet the poet reasoned that the library's religious image was secondary to its function:

I see no good reason why things pedagogical
Should not be allied to things theological.
If we are true Sons of Eli and bibliophiles,
Such minor details ought not to stir our biles.
A library's the place for intellectual concepts
Whether it be round or square or have a nave and two transepts.⁶⁸

This poem ironically captured the Sterling Memorial Library's intended purpose: It was to be the omnipresent religious background for the modern work at hand. From the perspective of Yale's leaders and James Gamble Rogers, if religion was no longer the central concern of university education, it nevertheless retained a rightful role in the university. The library crafted a place for religion in modern inquiry by appealing to the liberal Protestant notion of the unity of truth.

The library's ecclesiastical metaphor reinforced the deeper origins and outcomes of every search for truth. In employing religious imagery in a building frequented by students, the Sterling Memorial Library also cunningly created a regular religious experience without compulsion while emphasizing the religious dimension of education—thus taking over and even improving the purpose of the defunct compulsory chapel requirement. As the central gathering space for Yale, with space to accommodate over two thousand students and scholars at any given

time, the library subtly fulfilled the same communal role as compulsory chapel. Especially given the absence of a new chapel at the Yale center, the library's intention was to make all who entered its doors understand that all learning was sacred and the mission of the university in part religious.

The Sterling Memorial Library was not the first or only library on the American campus to appeal to the ecclesiastical metaphor. In addition to the antebellum libraries at Harvard and Yale, the Gothic revival persisted in such buildings as the William Rainey Harper Memorial Library (Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, 1912) at the University of Chicago; the Henry Suzzallo Library (Gould and Bebb, 1923–26) at the University of Washington in Seattle; and James Gamble Rogers's other neo-Gothic library, the Charles Deering Library (1931–33) at Northwestern University. Although perhaps the desire to signal adherence to the whole man theory of education was the principal reason behind the selection of the neo-Gothic for these libraries as well as for countless dormitories, dining halls, laboratories, and lecture halls, the widespread religious imagery on the American university campus in the early twentieth century also suggests an underlying attempt to reframe religion for the modern era.

This reshaping of religion is certainly true for the Sterling Memorial Library. Yet even as James Gamble Rogers and Yale's leaders intended it to negotiate an accord between religion and modern knowledge at the heart of the university, much like the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, the library could not escape its context as a building caught between the desire to preserve religion within academic life and secular concerns shaping the modern university. That the library's iconography could be read on a spectrum from sincere ecclesiastical emulation to a parody of a religious past points exactly to this transformative moment for religion on the campus in the early twentieth century. William Harlan Hale's attack on Yale's "cathedral orgy" for failing to meet modern conditions describes just how fragile religion's position in the university now was.

THE POSTWAR CHAPEL AT MIT

In 1956, the National Council of Churches named the chapels at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Illinois Institute of Technology among the eighteen best examples of modern church architecture in the United States since 1930.¹ The MIT Chapel (1950–55) by Eero Saarinen and the Robert F. Carr Memorial Chapel of St. Saviour (1949–52) by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe at IIT were a great departure from the monumental campus chapels of the early twentieth century (figs. 5.1, 5.2). The MIT Chapel, while positioned conventionally within the new campus center, appeals to a primitive image of a sacred space in order to accommodate Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish worship. The IIT chapel bears no external indication of its religious identity—no steeple, no cross, no towering height—and occupies an inconspicuous place on campus. Their small size—each chapel seats about one hundred worshippers—further evinced the shift from communal worship typically dominated by a Protestant or broad Christian tradition to individual worship respectful of different faiths. The strikingly modern forms of the MIT and IIT chapels, respectively christened the “gas tank” and the “God box,” challenged conventional chapel design and presented a new image of religion in the modern university.²