

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT,
LIFE OF THE MIND



ROCKEFELLER
MEMORIAL CHAPEL
AT 75

BY SARA MARGARET RITCHEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY ALISON L. BODEN



I N T R O D U C T I O N

AS THE SPIRIT OF RELIGION should penetrate and control the University, so that building which represents religion ought to be the central and dominant feature of the University group. Thus, it will be proclaimed that the University in its ideal is dominated by the spirit of religion, all its departments are inspired by religious feeling and all its work is directed to the highest ends. — Inscription at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel

If other University of Chicago departments, organizations, or institutions sometimes wonder what their mission is, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel never needs to. The intentions of the founding donor of both the University and the Chapel are literally chiseled in stone inside the Chapel's front door. Successive generations of Chapel staff members have not found this mandate to be limiting, circumscribing, inhibiting, or outdated, but rather challenging, broadening, and tremendously relevant. The 75 years since the Chapel's completion and dedication have seen significant changes in the religious commitment and complexion of the University. The approach

and method of promoting religious life has transitioned along with the decades; the builders of Rockefeller Memorial Chapel might recognize little of current programming and partnerships. And yet there is much that has stayed the same. The deepest complexities of University life, questions of fundamental meaning in life and in death, and the loveliness and challenge of integrating the life of the spirit with the life of the mind—these questions are as compelling today, 75 years after the Chapel was built, as they will be 75 years from now.

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER'S VISION OF RELIGION AT THE UNIVERSITY

The young biblical scholar from Yale, William Rainey Harper, was the unanimous choice of the Baptist founders, including John D. Rockefeller, to serve as the University's first President. Rockefeller and Harper seem to have resonated deeply with one another on many issues, particularly religion. Both were devout Baptists, and keen to see religion play a new and bold role in the new and bold university they were building. Religion would tie the institution to history, to foundational and impermeable truths. Meanwhile, the highly distinguished faculty that they were assembling would forge a new pedagogical path, light the way forward in human knowledge, and courageously challenge received information in each academic discipline. The combination of such rootedness and experimentation, such a rigorous life of the spirit matched with a rigorous life of the mind, would create a university without peers.

In 1904 the University of Chicago Press published William Rainey Harper's *Religion and the Higher Life*, a collection of his addresses to students. In his preface he laments,

BELOW

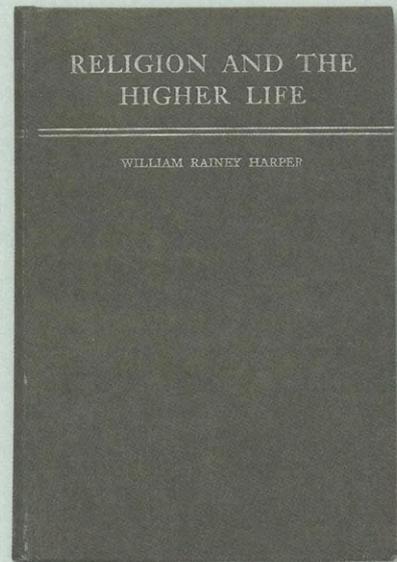
Perspective view of
Henry Ives Cobb's
1893 proposed plan
of the University, *Cap
and Gown '95*



“that the universities and colleges are not performing their full function in the matter of religious education,” and then notes a significant decrease in the “teaching of Christian truth.” He thought that “the least one can do is to present to the students of each scholastic period of four or five years the practical questions of religious life.” University life is so busy, he noted, that the religious life is frequently pushed aside. In one address he admitted that, with each passing year of his presidency, he found it harder and harder to find the time to contribute to students’ religious education. He added, “I have asked myself whether, as a matter of fact, it was growing more and more difficult to deal with subjects of this kind in a university atmosphere.” Some students, he observed, were succumbing to “infidelity” by drifting away from religious life and practice. They were choosing other vocations than the ministry, and they were neglecting to participate in church life after graduation from college (one wonders if they might have done so during college had chapel attendance not been mandatory). Harper’s advice for quashing such “infidelity” was the introduction of serious biblical scholarship in high schools and of biblical scholars of the highest caliber in universities, accompanied by gifted, dexterous preachers. He blamed not the students of the day for their ignorance and lapses but their elders who had, in the preceding 20 years, neglected formal and informal religious instruction. He identified the religious landscape as a shifting terrain in significant and perilous transition.

Harper was certain that the best women and men in every generation, those who had contributed the most to the “higher life” throughout history, were people “of strong religious character.” To Harper, the interweaving of religious and university life was not simply a good idea for the building of character and good citizenship among students, but crucial for the worth and integrity of the academic institution. “An institution of learning which does not possess a strongly pronounced religious spirit of some kind may do as much harm as good,” he said in one address to students. In another he proclaimed, “Our colleges may be less determined to support some peculiar view of God and theology, but

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ABOVE

William Rainey Harper.
*Religion and the
Higher Life*. Chicago:
University of Chicago
Press, 1904

they are producing men and women who are not content to live in a universe in which there is no God. . . . No man can be thoroughly educated who does not know the fear of the Lord.” Surely for Harper, a primary objective of a University of Chicago education was to foster deep spiritual reverence.

Voluntary humanitarian service was, for Harper, the single greatest indicator of the incorporation of one’s religion into personal life. Again, the University’s moral character was at stake in the issue. “Has the spirit of service been inculcated by those who have instructed you? If not, it would be better for the world if those instructors had not lived,” he said, alluding to Mark 14:21. A person’s entire university experience had failed if he or she did not become a person deeply engaged in the world, aware of others’ misery. Educated persons were fundamentally obligated to use that education and all the privileges it brought “for the advantage of others.” Any institution that failed to contribute

to the spiritual formation of students had abandoned its moral mandate. Harper wrote, “As with individuals, so with universities: the full religious spirit finds expression in maintaining a true worship, in cultivating a reverence for truth, and in putting forth strong effort for the upbuilding of humanity.”

William Rainey Harper was well aware of the great differences of opinion and of belief and unbelief that prevailed at the University in its first years. He called for unity among all factions and communities, a unity that he said could be cultivated by doing one’s own work well, by helping others with their work, and by achieving a common sense of “gratitude and reverence to the Power above and around us, to whom we are

indebted for all that we have and are.” Unity could be found at the University of Chicago in permitting freedom of opinion and belief, in lifting up the community and the world, and in doing justice (or, in his words, “establishing righteousness”).

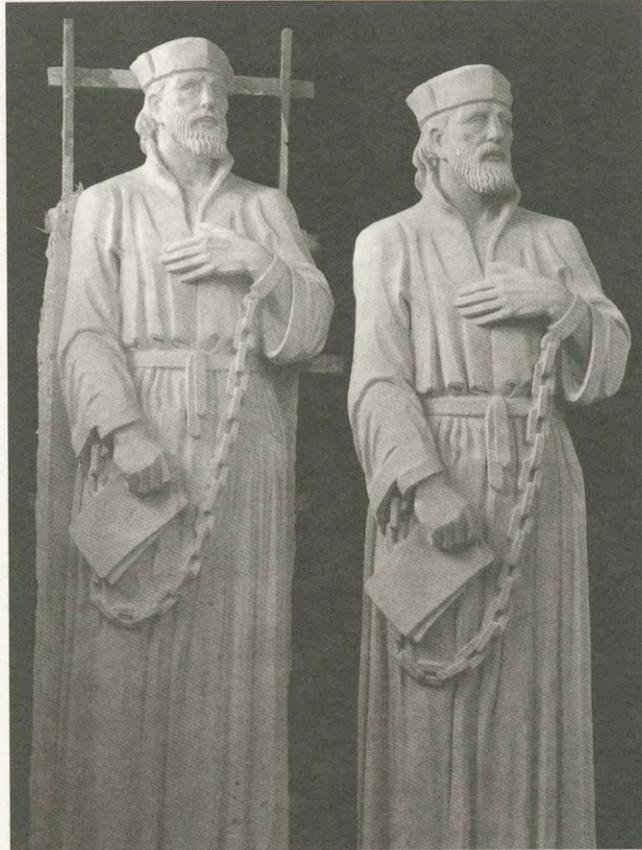
Religiously, Harper was very much a man of his age. As a pietistic, socially liberal Protestant churchman he was sure that, with the world in God’s hands, conditions everywhere could only continue along a path of positive progress. Scientific discoveries were enhancing the quality of human life, social institutions and agencies were helping the

BELOW

International News
Photos, Inc., “Second
Largest Bell in World
Arrives for University
of Chicago Carillon,”
July 26, 1932



most vulnerable members of society, and the Protestant churches were relatively unified in their theological positions and social engagement. Modern forms and methods of education were advancing auspiciously as well. Harper wrote, “Just as the modern conception of education is growing unscholastic, and is emphasizing life rather than information, so the religion of the educated man is becoming less based on theological philosophy, more based upon demonstrable truths, more determined to find expression in better social conditions and larger social sympa-



thies. It would be a most disastrous situation if the case were otherwise.” Like many others of his generation, William Rainey Harper was sure that, in the words of theologian James Cone, “the world was getting better and better.”

By the time the University Chapel would be completed in 1928 the religious perspectives of Harper’s successors had become significantly more complicated. For most, World War I nullified the idealistic notion that the world was simply getting better and better. The horrors of combat and the brutal reminder of humanity’s capacity for cruelty prompted deep revisions in the academic and practical theology of the churches. In addition, the Scopes “Monkey” Trial of 1925, concerning the teaching of evolution in public schools, deepened the growing cleavage between those Christians who called themselves Fundamentalists (after the volumes *The Fundamentals*, published between 1910 and 1915) and those who did not. As the cleft in the churches widened, so did the bids for power between the newly distinct conservative and liberal branches.

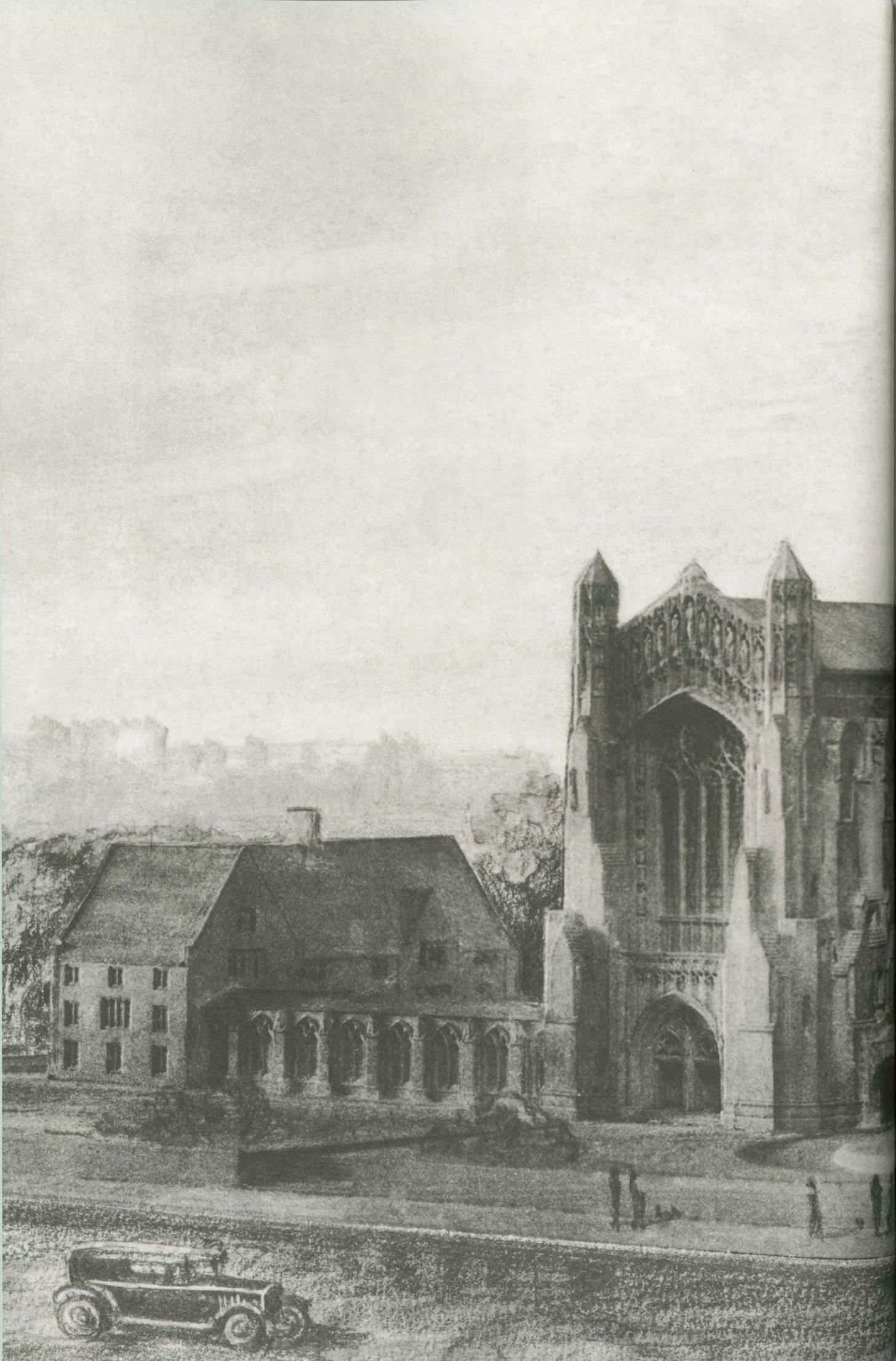
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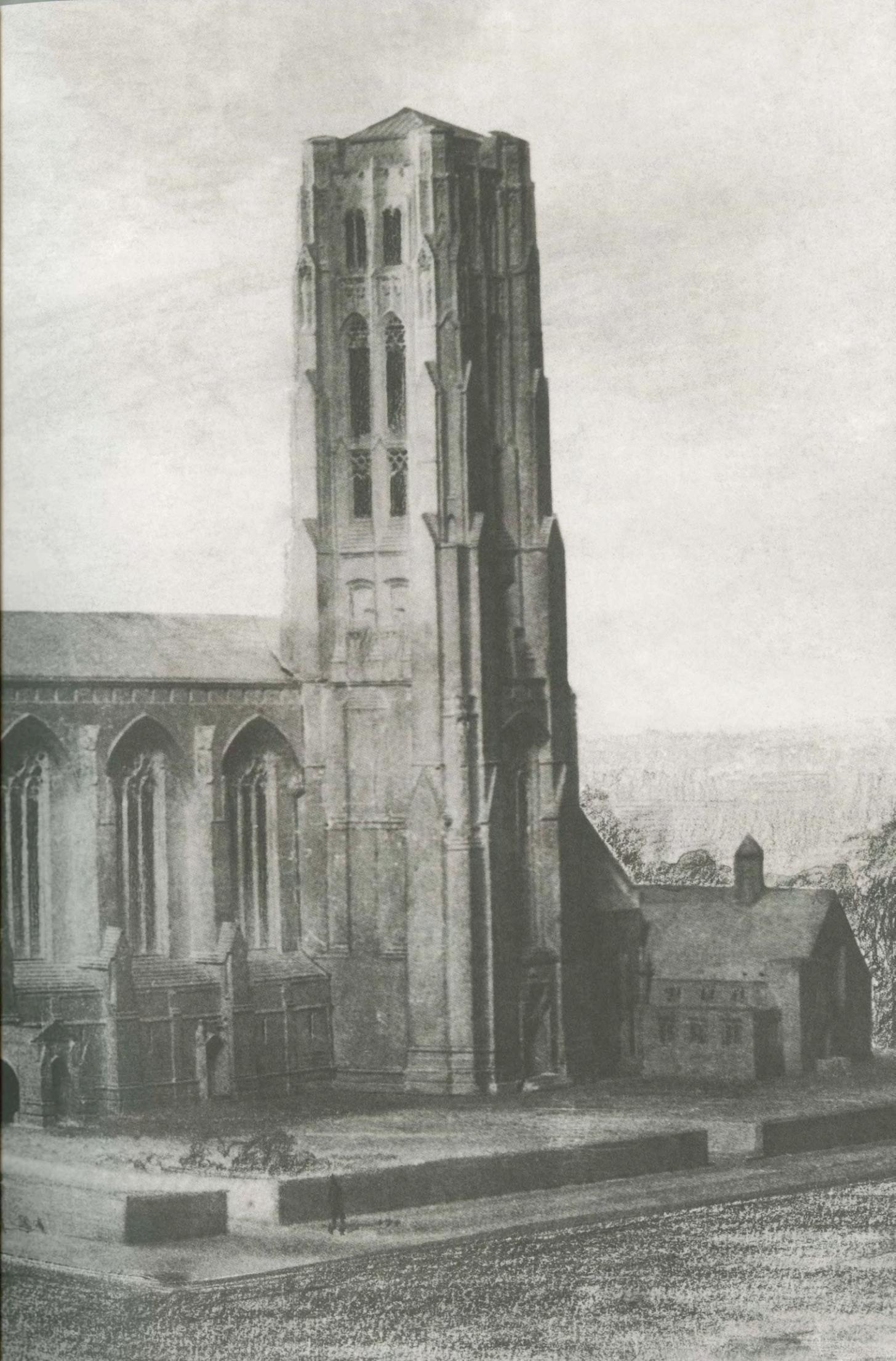
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Photograph of the model of the John Huss statue, University Chapel

FOLLOWING PAGE

Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue and Associates, rendering of the University Chapel





THE UNIVERSITY BUILDS A CHAPEL

Although the theological waters were, if not troubled, certainly more complicated by 1928, it was in that year that the University of Chicago enthusiastically dedicated its new chapel. The religious leaders of the day were direct descendants of Harper, in terms of their spiritual disposition. Although impacted by time and world events they built their chapel, molded its programs, and formed their personal fellowship in keeping with the emerging liberal strain of American Christianity.

The construction of a chapel had been a goal for many of the University's original faculty. Charles Richmond Henderson, who served as the University's first Chaplain from 1892–1915, and who was Professor of Sociology and Head of the Department of Ecclesiastical Sociology, reflected the hopes of many when he wrote of the need for "a permanent sanctuary, where faith, hope, and love, the never-failing inspiration of striving spirits, shall be breathed into the culture of our community, with the ministry of the arts of music, eloquence, sculpture, painting, and architecture subservient to the divine honor!" Mandatory worship services for all students had been held first in an austere lecture room in Cobb Hall, then, after 1903, in the Gothic environs of Mandel Hall. There seems to have been agreement that Mandel Hall was a lovely venue, but one not designed for and dedicated to the

BELOW

Photograph of the construction of the University Chapel, August 2, 1927

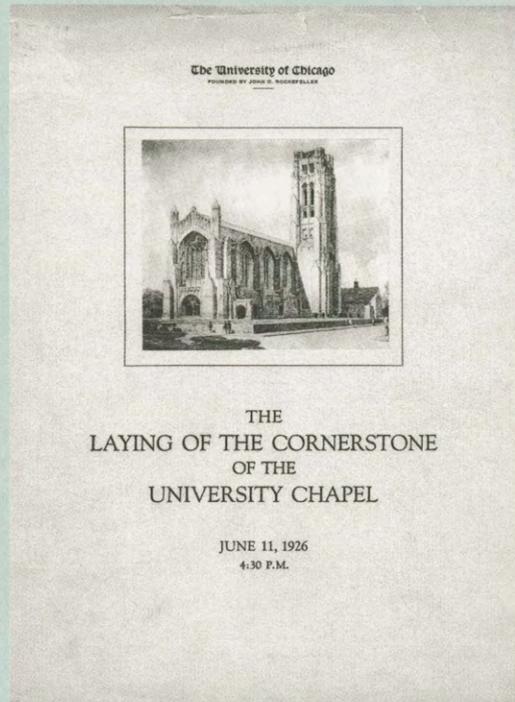


worship of God. It also was not large enough to hold the entire student body at one time.

The day on which the Chapel's cornerstone was laid, June 11, 1926, was one of terribly inclement weather. The handful of people with actual roles to play in the event huddled under umbrellas on the great stone foundation, while the large crowd of intended onlookers sought shelter in Mandel Hall. Braving the weather, the appointed speaker for the occasion, Head of the Department of Philosophy, Professor James Hayden Tufts, read his speech, describing the hopes and goals behind the construction of the building. The Chapel, he said, would be primarily for younger persons,

for students, who found themselves in the midst of "one of the most fundamental reconstructions of morals which the world has known." Communism in Russia, the massive wealth accumulated by some in the Roaring 'Twenties, changes in city life, "extreme reactions of political conservatism and religious conservatism in this and other countries," and the ongoing challenges wrought by the Great War were largely responsible for the moral turmoil. Young people might well be given to doubt religious and other received truths. Having seen and personally experienced so many changes they were nobody's fools. The Chapel, Tufts said, would offer these students a religion that "will emphasize open-mindedness to truth of every kind . . . infused by the same experimental spirit which animates the best work of a university in all fields. It will be slow to close any door. It will be sure of but one maxim, that there is more in heaven and earth than is dreamed of in our philosophies." Second, the Chapel would "present great problems and high tasks," refuting by example any idea that religion itself is superficial or easy, or that a life of value takes refuge in superficiality. Third, the Chapel would, through worship, "unite all the pervasive influences of art to bring in fuller measure joy, enhancement, and harmony."

Professor Tufts made note as well that new professions were absorbing many of the realms for which religion had always been responsible. Departments of medicine promoted healing, the social sciences addressed the alleviation of poverty, and the School of Social Service Administration sought to assist individuals in ways that had formerly been the province of "the cure of souls." "And yet," wrote Tufts, "society dares not trust any of its deepest interests completely and unreservedly to a profession." He continued:



ABOVE

"The Laying of the Cornerstone of the University Chapel," program, June 11, 1926



Perhaps it fears that head and heart may somehow become separate. At any rate, it has refused to intrust justice to the sole guardianship of the law, or health to the physician, or education to the teacher. It is only through the deeper unities, through sympathies and contacts of many types, that we supplement the abstractness of our special and partial pursuits. It is, then, our hope that in our chapel the spirit of service to mankind in its special forms will find reinforcement in common purpose and feeling; that our partial interests and sympathies will be broadened and deepened by contacts with those of like minds and hearts, and that the common purpose will find renewed vitality and ampler range as the ties which bind mankind are felt to be but manifestations of the larger life in which we share.

OPPOSITE

Photograph of a graduation ceremony held at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel

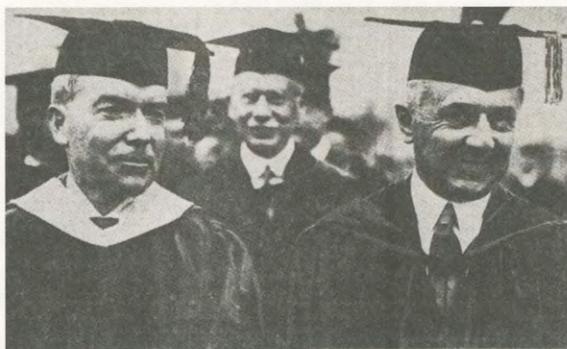
BELOW

"Notables Attended Dedication of University of Chicago Chapel," *Chicago Herald Examiner*, October 29, 1928

In the words of Professor Tufts's concluding, rain-drenched sentence, the Chapel was being built to "stir and satisfy the divine discontent" and to "open a way to the experience of God."

Like William Rainey Harper in his own day, Professor Tufts felt certain that Christianity was in a period of great transition—as he put it, "The whole system of ideas and imagery which has formed the framework and pattern of Christian doctrine for the Western world since Augustine's *City of God* is in flux." Tufts also continued Harper's emphasis on an openness at the University to all religious traditions. But while Harper was certain that Christianity was the highest of all religious expressions, Tufts was adamant that the Chapel would not be a church or cathedral. "Let us be clear," he said, "that it is the spirit of religion, and religious feeling that we are to foster; we do not commit ourselves to any formulations through which men in past ages have attempted to symbolize this spirit and feeling." The question of Christianity's primacy at the Chapel and University was itself in transition. That tension (or dialogue, perhaps) was evident in the Chapel's service of dedication, as traditional and newer perspectives alternated with one another throughout the liturgy.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., representing his father at the service, represented also the attitudes of his father's generation, including those of William Rainey Harper. His address testified to his own deep faith in Jesus, and to his conviction that there was nothing any less



TRIMBINE Photo.3
NOTABLES ATTEND DEDICATION OF UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO CHAPEL. Left to right: John D. Rockefeller Jr., Dr. Rufus Matthew Jones of Haverford college, and Frederic Woodward, acting president of the University of Chicago. (Story on page 1.)

vital about the Christian religion on that morning than in any previous age. He spurned the professor of any religious background who would make light of Christianity, saying that such a teacher “is unfit to be a leader of youth, is faithless to his trust.” Any student who would scoff at Jesus “is only giving evidence of his own limited vision.” “True religion in action,” he proclaimed, “is living the Christ life.” Rockefeller also lamented the strife between Christian denominations (a reference, most likely, to the pronounced and growing differences between conservatives and liberals). He thereby gave implicit testimony to the presence of those on campus who would have nothing to do with Christianity (and perhaps any other organized religion), to those who insisted that Christianity eclipsed all other religions, and to those on campus from other religious traditions.

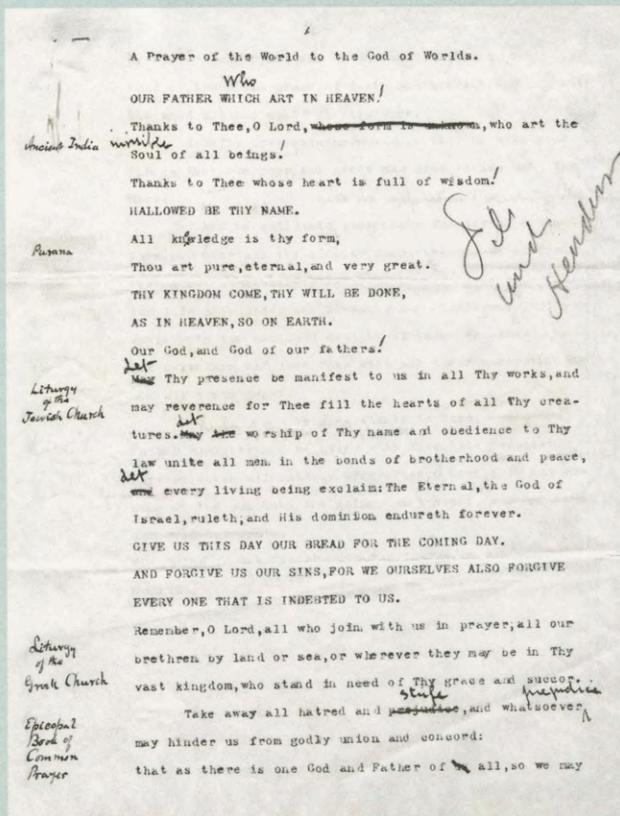
William Rainey Harper proclaimed in his decennial *President's Report*, “The position of the University of Chicago religiously has been definitely and professedly Christian.” He declared the University to be a Christian institution in the same way that the United States is a Christian country. Presumably he meant that the founders, the majority of the population, and the ethics that informed the values and actions of the community as a whole had roots in Christianity. Harper had shared in one of his addresses to students his conviction that Christianity had prompted the most progress through the centuries, and for that reason

it must be “the highest and most perfect form of religion thus far developed.” In that *President's Report*, however, Harper acknowledged the crucial donations from members of Chicago's Jewish community in the establishment of the University, as well as the presence of a few Jewish faculty and “large numbers of Jews” among the student body. The University of Chicago was, from its opening, more open to religious diversity in employment and in admissions policies than many comparable institutions.

But by the time of the Chapel's dedication in 1928, the University's strong relationship to the Christian tradition seemed to be in its first stages of transition. James Hayden Tufts had pointed to such a transition at the laying of the Chapel's

BELOW

Charles Henderson,
“A Prayer of the World
to the God of Worlds,”
typscript sermon



cornerstone, and the address given two years later on the day of the building's dedication by its newly installed first Dean, Charles W. Gilkey, evinced an even greater departure. Indeed, the whole service of dedication that October morning was a kind of liturgical conversation between those rooted in the University's Christian origins, and those people (many of them devout Christians, it must be noted) who knew that the future of the Chapel and its



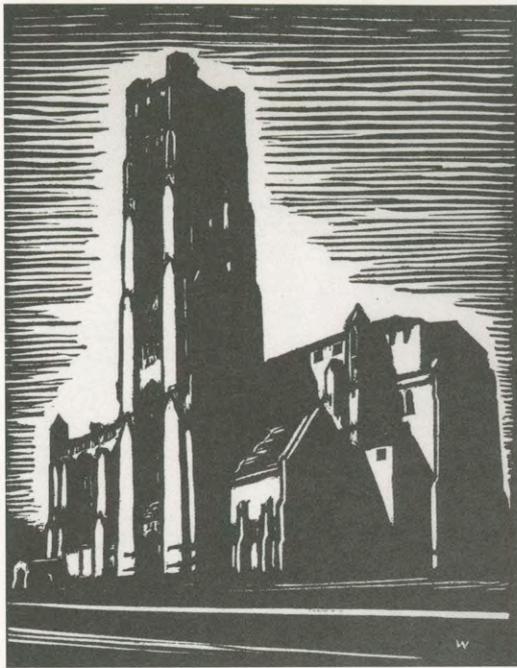
programs must be encompassing of, and relevant to, every religion represented on campus.

In his address, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., as noted above, made strongly preferential references to Christianity. Dean Gilkey's address referenced no particular religion. He said, "This Chapel must never be a rock from the hillsides of the past, that has rolled down into the stream of the University's life and turned it aside; it must rather be a channel through which that stream shall pour in fuller measure, and be directed toward the wheels that wait for spiritual energy to turn them." He mentioned Jesus on only one occasion, later in his long Prayer of Dedication, as an example of how to love. Acting President Frederic Woodward also spoke to the congregation, referring to "the things of the spirit," and the need for the Chapel's preachers to offer words "so intellectually honest, and morally courageous, so free from intolerance and superstition, so harmonious with our knowledge of life, so radiant with love," that students and others would be compelled to enter its doors. He made no reference to any particular religion. A call-and-response litany of dedication was lead by Professor of Physics Arthur Holly Compton. He read, "To the freedom of the spirit in the knowledge of truth, to the new commandment that we love one another, to the experience of abundant life; to the religion of Jesus," and the congregation responded in unison, "We dedicate this house." Compton read on, "To the contemplation of beauty, to the understanding of music, to the art of meditation, to communion with the Unseen and Eternal," and the congregation again resounded, "We dedicate this house."

As Dean Gilkey noted two months later in *The University of Chicago Magazine*, "During the three years of [the Chapel's] building the assumptions upon which it was planned had radically changed." In particular, Gilkey cites the University's decision to eliminate compulsory worship attendance some eighteen months before the building's completion. The scale of the finished building, he observes, reflects that earlier practice. He describes

ABOVE

G. W. Harting, photograph of the "Sage" and "Psalmist" stone lancets, University Chapel, January 17, 1927



ABOVE

Siegfried R. Weng,
"Rockefeller Memorial
Chapel," linoleum
block print

the "present religious situation in American colleges and universities" as one of "plasticity and sensitiveness." Some of the broader campus trends in religion included the understanding that religious responsibilities must not be confined to a weekly hour of worship. Social service and other activities were required components of a fully expressed religious life. In fact, in its first years the Chapel and its staff were quite involved in such efforts, including the running of a settlement house on South Ashland Avenue and also the maintenance of a fund to assist University employees who had been laid off during the Great Depression. Gilkey wrote, "a college owes

both its students and faculty something more in the way of religious guidance than mere maintenance of an old tradition at certain stated hours in the week." Gilkey also observed, in colleges and universities similar to Chicago, a new interest in creating a formal, full-time, high ranking and professionally trained person to cultivate religious life. In keeping with this new ethos, Princeton and Chicago had decided on the academic title of Dean; others opted for Chaplain.

As the decades passed, successive University presidents and administrators had weaker links to the Christian churches, and increasing numbers of non-Christians filled the ranks of the faculty, administration, staff, and student body. In the 1940s the Roman Catholic population at the University was large and organized enough that the Archdiocese of Chicago purchased property on University Avenue to establish a Catholic Center. In that same decade, the Hillel Foundation purchased a building on Woodlawn Avenue to provide a home for the University's significant and growing Jewish population (the campus chapter of Hillel had theretofore been located in the Chapel's basement). Also in the 1940s a home on the southwest corner of Woodlawn Avenue and 58th Street became Chapel House, a center for other religious organizations. That building was razed in the 1970s to make way for a proposed expansion of the Oriental Institute, an ill-fated project in the end, to have been financed largely by the Shah of Iran. The University's movement away from a Christian identity has a parallel in the Chapel's movement away from a Christian identity: this is perhaps a surprising transition for a cruciform building modeled on the great cathedrals of Europe. But, just as the University adapted to accommodate the evolving religious community and corporate spiritual sensibilities, so has Rockefeller Memorial Chapel.

In the end, the Chapel that would be built at the University of Chicago would be very grand because the founders' aims for the institution were very grand, and they believed that the University could not succeed in its goals without a strong, central role for religious life. Many people, both at this University and others, would now disagree with the founders. Religion, they might say, is a personal and not an institutional matter. For those whose academic work is enabled by personal religious practice, fine, but any notion of an institution's value must be separated from the idea of corporate religious sensibility. If, 75 years after its construction, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel still stands to enable "the spirit of religion" to dominate and control the University, how might that mandate be interpreted?

THE CHAPEL'S MISSION — THEN AND NOW

The Chapel's mission is carved in stone, but the interpretation of that mission is not. It is growing and changing, both leading and responding. Those of us who serve at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel think that the infusion of the "spirit of religion," what the University's founders had in mind for every department and unit, remains a noble and good mission but a flexible one to be translated by and for each new generation. The question of the role of religion in academic life is far from new. Tertullian (c.155–c.220) once asked, "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" William Rainey Harper, John D. Rockefeller, and the other shapers of the University were certain that the answer was "Everything!" Rockefeller Memorial Chapel has stood in stony but feisty agreement for the last 75 years.

In each decade and generation, the idea of "the spirit of religion" has been interpreted expansively, and not simply as mainstream adherence to the creeds and practices of major traditions. Those serving on the Chapel's staff have sought to enable people from every metaphysical perspective to explore their particular cosmology and soteriology, how these inform their view of themselves and other persons, the existence (or not) of a divine element in the cosmos, what value is to be accorded to specific human beings and on what basis, and which activities and opinions are "good" or "proper" or "just." If Mr. Rockefeller wanted the spirit of religion to penetrate and control the University, it certainly does, in a variety of moral, ethical, metaphysical, and sometimes downright religious schools of thought and practice. The role of the Chapel,

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BELOW

"Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Commemoration," program, January 19, 1998

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
BIRTHDAY COMMEMORATION



JANUARY 19, 1998 12:00 NOON

ROCKEFELLER MEMORIAL CHAPEL
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

then, includes the continuing challenge to the community and its individual members to name the belief systems by which they operate, and to keep the practice of religion a critical category of self-investigation, both individually and institutionally. The Chapel exists, on one level, to prompt the community to ask itself, "What religious or spiritual values *are* we practicing, teaching, and refuting? What ethical and moral imperatives do we assume, do we inculcate? What can each of us learn about ourselves, individually and corporately, in light of what we value? Are these indeed the things we wish to value, or is there a disjuncture between what we believe, what we say, and what we do? Where are the fault lines within our community, the ethical and moral disjunctures between individuals or groups on campus, and is any common ground possible?"

The role of the Chapel, then, includes the continuing challenge to the community and its individual members to name the belief systems by which they operate, and to keep the practice of religion a critical category of self-investigation, both individually and institutionally.

Just as President Harper and Professor Tufts were certain that they were seeing a significant and rapid transition in the religious landscape at universities (and also in Christianity), so are watchers and practitioners of religion on campuses today. Religious life in this University and country will likely always be in transition. While there were, at the beginning of the 20th century, some American scholars who predicted that organized religion would die of irrelevance before the 21st century began, the opposite has proven true. In most countries, both rich and poor, and in every region of the world, religion is asserting itself as a crucial factor with which to be contended in the shaping of societies and international politics. As for Christianity in the United States, its political and social power continues to be contested. Much attention is focused on conservatives and their political machinery, but the truly significant transition is in the demographics of Christians worldwide. The religion is growing fastest in the Southern Hemisphere, and Christians in those regions will soon outnumber (if they do not already) those in the north. Culturally and theologically, this is enormous, with implications for divinity schools, congregations, and even individual Christian university students and their teachers. And as for the total religious landscape on campuses such as the University of Chicago, everything is in flux. Currently, the fastest growing religious presence at the University is Islam, thanks largely

to patterns of immigration to the Chicago area from parts of the Middle East and South Asia. The University now enjoys the organized presence of religious groups from all regions of the world. The richness is an extraordinary resource for future growth and understanding, both religious and intellectual. The task for Rockefeller Memorial Chapel is to create avenues for dialogue within and between the groups, to enable each of them to flourish individually, and to create an atmosphere at the University where both the religiously affiliated and the unaffiliated can become larger souls and larger citizens from their exposure to them all.

The religious make-up of the University may have diversified tremendously since the institution's founding, but in several important ways the Chapel's mission remains the same. First, to be alive in this time as in any time is to live with exhilaration and grief, purpose and aimlessness, contentment and restlessness, with what it means to live with integrity, what it means to be just. As members of the University community wrestle with the profoundest questions of human living, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel's programs, personnel, and simple presence seek to deepen those reflections and to assist individuals in finding their answers (or just the right questions), whether or not such seeking is done in a specifically religious or spiritual key. The complexities of any life, and the particular practice of melding the life of the spirit with the life of the mind, prompt the kind of questioning and reflection that Rockefeller Memorial Chapel is uniquely situated to facilitate.

And second, the Chapel seeks to contribute to the total education of every member of the campus community. William Rainey Harper once declared to students, "The cultivation of this religious spirit is for us as serious an obligation as the cultivation of the body or the mind; for without this spirit, our life is as deficient as would be our body if it had no heart, our mind if there were no brain." And so the Chapel continues to attempt the formation of people who have not only intellectual mastery but spiritual maturity. As leaders in the new century and millennium they will be, one hopes and prays, people of expertise and conscience, skill and vision, proficiency and ethics. They will navigate the waters of an increasingly multi-religious society with knowledge and respect, both of them qualities borne of personal encounters with others and of self-examination. They will understand that, as Professor Tufts said (paraphrasing Hamlet), "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophies," and they will be assisted in discovering and naming those things for themselves. ☒

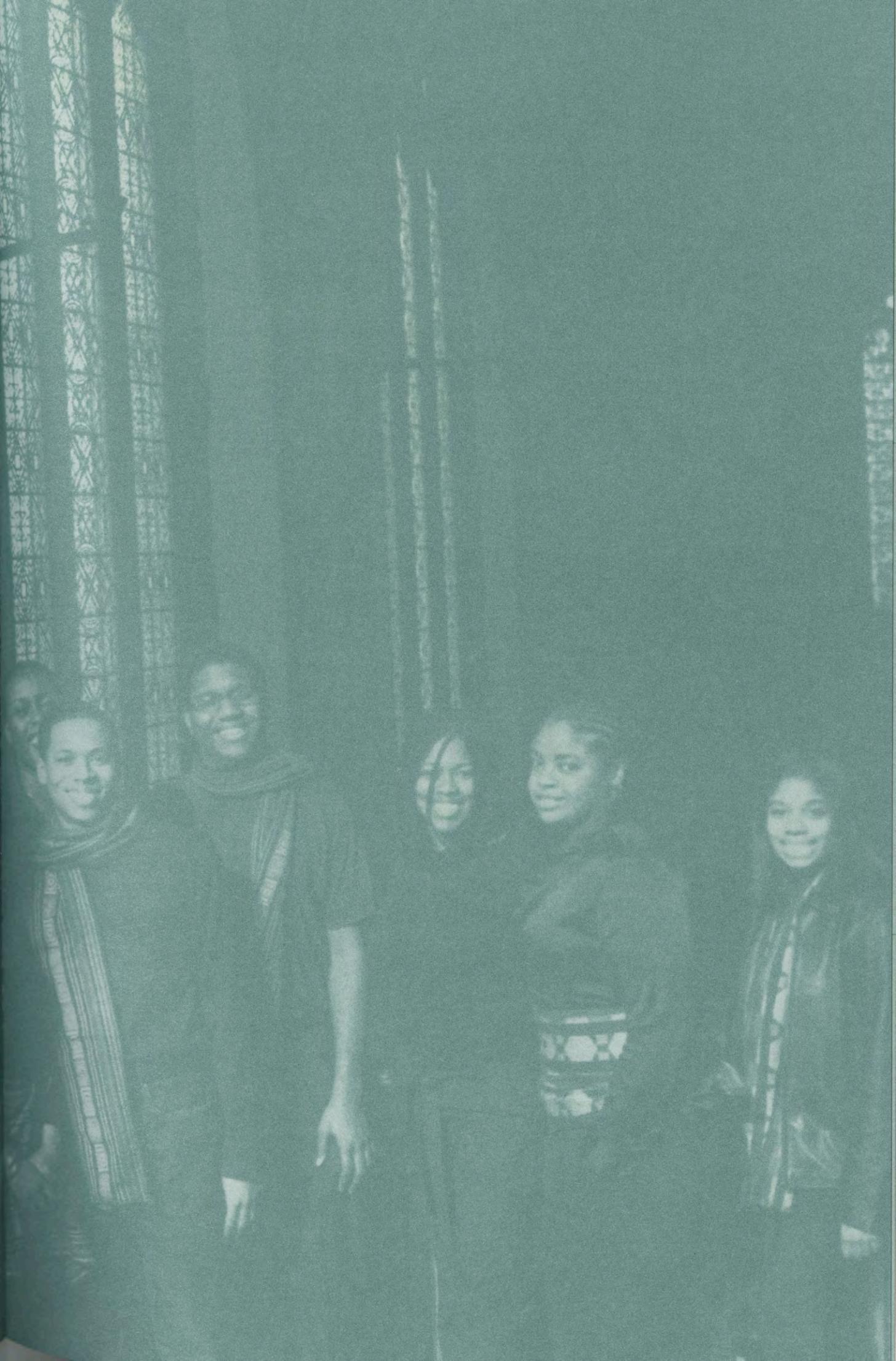
ALISON L. BODEN

Dean, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel

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Photograph of the student choir "Soul Umoja" performing at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Commemoration at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, January 19, 2004







OPPOSITE

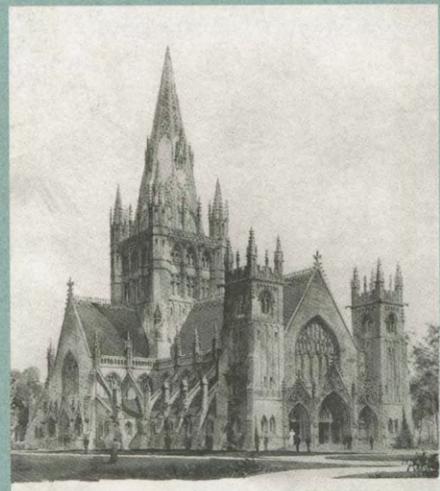
Leon Pescheret,
etching of interior of
University Chapel

BELOW LEFT

Henry Ives Cobb,
“Preliminary Study for
the Chapel of the
University of Chicago”

THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY CHAPEL

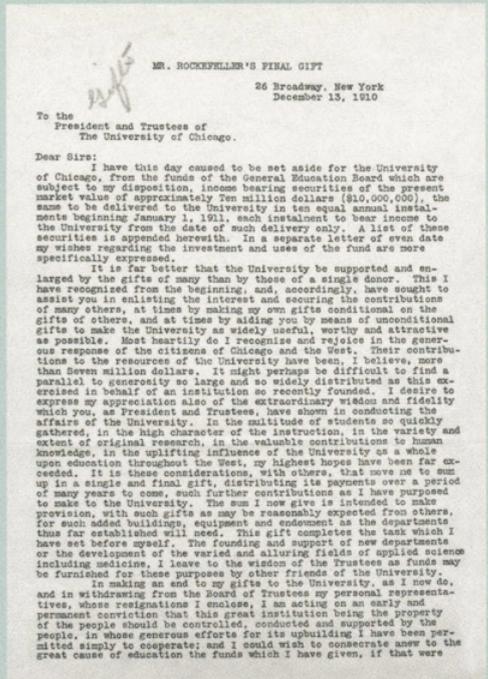
A CHAPEL SERVICE performed in the large, unadorned lecture hall occupying the north end of the first floor of Cobb Hall on October 1, 1892 marked the first official public exercise of the University of Chicago. Perhaps in response to the less than ceremonial environs, University President William Rainey Harper took advantage of the occasion to urge that “the University should have upon its grounds a structure which should be used only for ecclesiastical and the highest academical functions.” A University chapel in which a spiritual and intellectual quest for truth could be wed institutionally was essential to Harper’s University ideal. Campus Architect Henry Ives Cobb agreed and, seeing the university as a “city of learning,” included a chapel on the east end of the main quadrangle in his original 1892 sketch of the campus. These plans aside, the University would wait nearly 35 years to realize a Chapel that would fulfill Harper’s desire for the “most beautiful ecclesiastical structure in the Mississippi valley.”



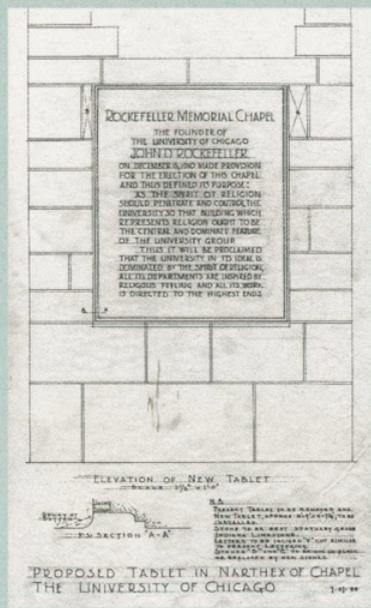
RIGHT

John D. Rockefeller to the President and Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago, transcription of letter, December 13, 1910

In the absence of a University chapel maintaining compulsory chapel services was a perennial difficulty, so much so that Charles Henderson, Professor of Sociology, Head of the Department of Ecclesiastical Sociology and University Chaplain, created a system where the junior classes attended chapel service in Mandel Hall on Monday, the senior classes on Tuesday, graduate students on Thursday, and Divinity School students on Friday. While he struggled to find space, Henderson established a pattern of religious practice



that shaped the future chapel both in form and in the programs it sponsored. Not tied to his own Baptist faith or to the University's close connection with the American Baptist Educational Society, Henderson's sermons drew on various religious traditions to reflect the University's interfaith commitments.



Efforts to erect a chapel were halted until John D. Rockefeller presented the University with his "Final Gift" on December 13, 1910. In his letter of designation addressed to the second University President, Harry Pratt Judson, and the Trustees of the University, Rockefeller outlined his specific wishes for the \$10,000,000 donation. In the past Rockefeller had given endowment funds rather than building funds, but on this occasion he requested that \$1,500,000 of the final gift be devoted to the creation and furnishing of a

ABOVE

Elevation of the proposed tablet in narthex of Chapel, University of Chicago Chapel, September 27, 1938

University Chapel. Echoing both Cobb and Harper, Rockefeller envisioned the Chapel as the "central and dominant feature of the University group." Its pre-eminence would indicate that the University is "penetrated by the spirit of religion, all its departments are inspired by the religious feeling, and all its work is dedicated to the highest end." The Chapel was to be an architectural masterpiece exemplifying the centrality of the spirit of religion in University life.

Although Rockefeller commissioned the Chapel's construction, it would be called the "University Chapel" until 1937 when the University Board of Trustees moved to rename it in Rockefeller's honor. The Trustees never explained their motivation, but the aura of

Echoing both Cobb and Harper, Rockefeller envisioned the Chapel as the “central and dominant feature of the University group.” Its pre-eminence would indicate that the University is “penetrated by the spirit of religion...”

Rockefeller, so closely linked to the University in everything but name, certainly bestowed a sense of legitimacy on the young University. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., son of the founder, responded to the Trustees’ motion:

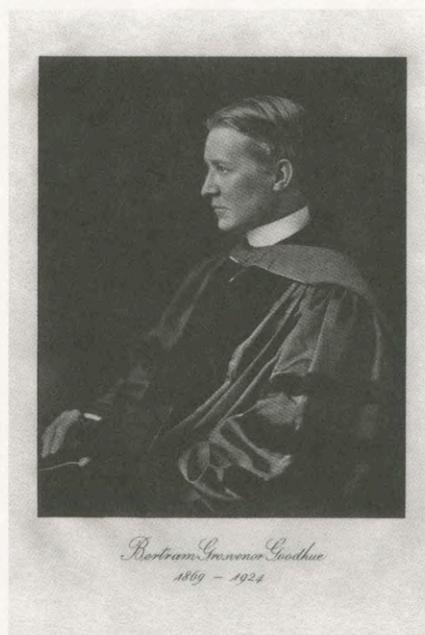
I note the desire of your Board of Trustees, as expressed in the June meeting, to name the University Chapel after my father and am cordially in sympathy with this desire which, it is needless to say, I deeply appreciate. In answer to the question which you raise, as to whether the name should be Rockefeller Chapel or Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, my preference would be for the latter, if for no other reason than that it would preclude the possibility of anyone thinking that the chapel had been named after my father during his life or at his insistence....

BELOW

Portrait of Bertram
Grosvenor Goodhue.
Book Decorations.
New York: The Grolier
Club, 1931

THE FABRIC OF THE UNIVERSITY CHAPEL

On July 15, 1918, University of Chicago Assistant Manager Wallace Heckman asked New York architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue to prepare designs for a University Chapel. At that time, Goodhue was best known for revitalizing Spanish Colonial architecture in his plans for the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 in Southern California’s Balboa Park. Never having attended college, Goodhue began work at the office of Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell in 1884, at the age of fifteen. He gravitated toward Renwick, the ecclesiastical architect noted for his design of Grace Church and St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York. After six years under Renwick’s tutelage, Goodhue left to form his own partnership, Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson. Among Goodhue’s noted buildings are the Cadet Chapel at West Point, begun in 1911 (which bears a striking resemblance to Rockefeller Chapel), and the Los Angeles Public Library. His

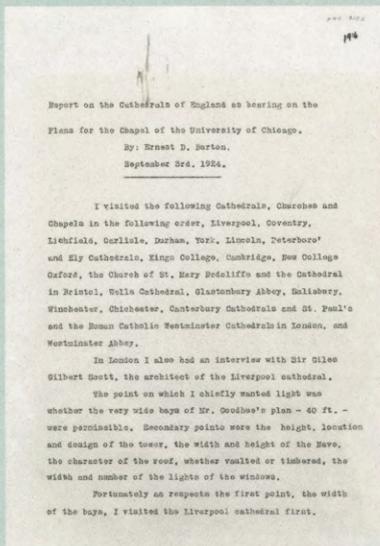


OPPOSITE

Photograph of the construction of the University Chapel, November 3, 1926

BELOW

Ernest Burton, "Report on the Cathedrals of England as Bearing on the Plans for the Chapel of the University of Chicago," typescript report, September 3, 1924



trademark features are best exemplified in his 1919 plans for the Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln (completed in 1932): a building that anticipates art-deco fashionings, yet retains neo-gothic elements. Goodhue was also a successful designer of ornamental book borders and the creator of the popular Cheltenham typeface.

Rockefeller's wish that the spirit of religion penetrate the University is materialized in the Chapel's grandeur of design. To symbolize religion's centrality, Goodhue sought a colossal effect through his arrangement of the main arcade arches, which combined two bays in each unit of vaulting. The specification to all future University Architects that no building be taller than the 207-foot tower guaranteed that the Chapel remain the "dominant feature of the University group." The 72-bell carillon, one of the largest in the world, ensures that even when not in view, the Chapel can still be heard. The stone sculptures that decorate the Chapel's exterior, including among Christian apostles and martyrs the likes of Plato and Zoroaster, convey the Chapel's commitment to the spirit of religious inquiry.

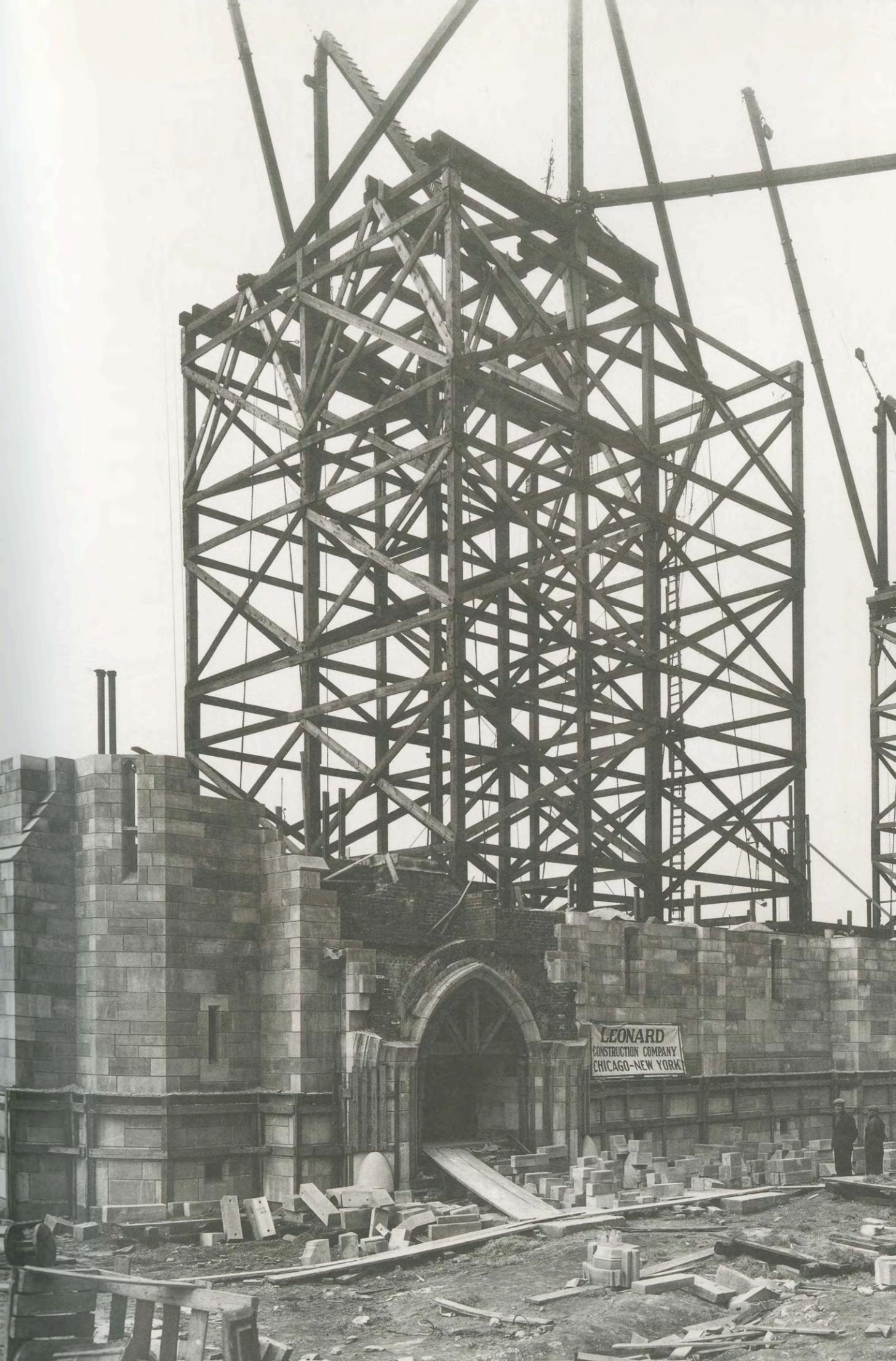
FROM DESIGN TO CONSTRUCTION

On January 8, 1924, University President Ernest Dewitt Burton met with Goodhue to discuss cost estimates for the Chapel. Goodhue's original estimates had been made in 1919, but an intervening period of inflation elevated costs. To remain within the allotted

\$1,500,000, Goodhue was forced to reduce expenses by altering his original plans. Accordingly, he produced a more somber design, with reduced sculpture and ornamentation, and the massive central crossing tower moved to the east end of the transept. Later that year, Burton toured several outstanding British cathedrals to determine firsthand if Goodhue's innovations, especially the great width of the bays and the transeptal tower, were too unorthodox to elicit the tradition associated with the Chapel's medieval forebears. Satisfied that there were Gothic precedents for both, Burton accepted Goodhue's plan. By connecting the most recognizable building on the University of Chicago campus, the University Chapel, to the 700-year-old educational traditions set by

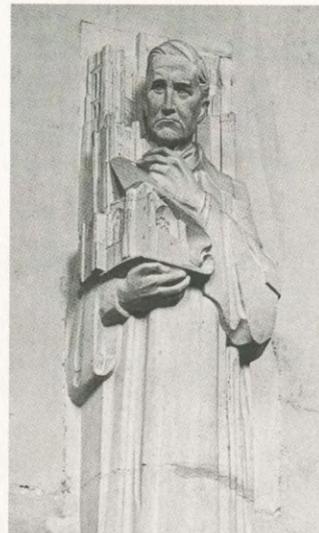
medieval cathedral schools and Universities, Burton strove to inspire immediate awe and instant credibility to the young institution with such grand ambitions.

Goodhue died on April 23, 1924, two years before construction of the Chapel began with the laying of the cornerstone on June 11, 1926. The contents of the cornerstone



LEONARD
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
CHICAGO-NEW YORK

included the following: a copy of the letter of John D. Rockefeller, dated May 15, 1889, contributing \$600,000 towards a University endowment fund; a copy of the letter conveying his "Final Gift" and request for a chapel; a copy of the letter of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. approving the Chapel plans; a photographic portrait of John D. Rockefeller by John S.



RIGHT

Photograph of the University Chapel statue of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue holding model of Cadet Chapel, West Point

BELOW

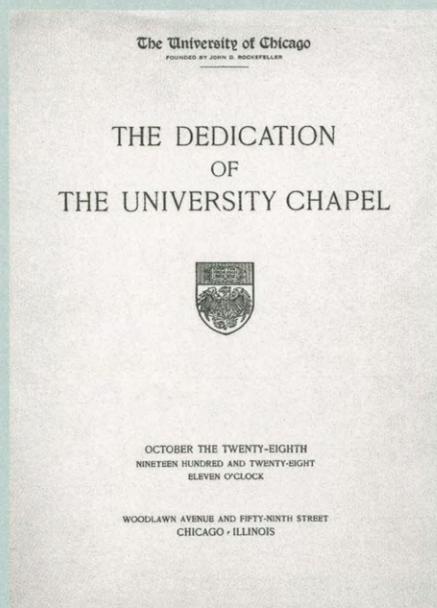
Photograph of the installation of the University Chapel cornerstone, June 11, 1926

Sargent; and the 1926 student yearbook, *The Cap and Gown*. The contents of the cornerstone box also emphasized the University's connection with the American Baptists by including its *Act of Incorporation* and a copy of the *Agreement with the University of the Baptist Theological Union*. Nevertheless, Professor of Philosophy James Hayden Tufts insisted on the Chapel's non-sectarian role in fostering the religious community of the University in his speech at the cornerstone-laying ceremony: "[we] must be clear that it is the spirit of religion and religious feeling that we are to foster, we do not commit ourselves to any formulations through which men in past ages have attempted to symbolize this spirit and feeling."

After his death, Goodhue's work was continued by a group of men in his office who organized themselves to complete his commissions, first under the title of the Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue Associates and then as Mayers, Murray and Phillip. When faced with the



task of completing several of Goodhue's other buildings, Francis Mayers wrote, "We have got a tradition so great as to make us almost tremble when we think of living up to it; but if our reputation is to be worth anything, it must be on the basis of showing to the world that our master's teachings have not been in vain." Goodhue's associates paid homage by perpetuating his likeness above the Chapel's tower door in the iconic "architect" statue, cradling in his arms a model of the Cadet Chapel at West Point. Their master's tradition aside, Goodhue's successors struggled to assert the distinctiveness of their own contribution to the design of the Chapel (most notably in the detailed design of the front and side bays), a struggle manifest in their resistance to sponsor a commemorative plaque to Goodhue. The University recognized the unique value of Mayers, Murray and Phillip's work, commissioning the firm to design the University's Oriental Institute, which opened in 1931.



THE CHAPEL DEDICATION

The Chapel was officially dedicated in a grand ceremony on Sunday, October 28, 1928. In attendance were John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and a large congregation of trustees, faculty, students and alumni representing a variety of denominations. The overarching message put forth in the dedicatory speeches urged nonsectarianism and tolerance. In his dedication address, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. announced a gift from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial of a \$1,000,000 endowment "to be used to promote religious idealism through the broadest and most liberal development of spiritual forces centering in and radiating from this Chapel." The Chapel was freed from denominational restrictions, a move that with John D. Rockefeller's "hearty concurrence" and has been carried out in practice: the five Deans who have served the Chapel during its first 75 years have emerged from four different denominations.

Acting President Frederic Woodward installed the first Dean of the Chapel at the dedication, the Reverend Doctor Charles Whitney Gilkey, who resigned the pastorate of the Hyde Park Baptist Church in order to accept the University office. The job of the new Chapel Dean was "to present to each student generation an interpretation of the Christian faith which will include an appropriation of our historic resources and a creative attempt to make explicit the relevance of this faith to the intellectual, moral, social, and educational

ABOVE
 "The Dedication of the University Chapel," program, October 28, 1928

problems of our day." Gilkey remained in the position for nearly 20 years during which time he laid the intellectual and spiritual groundwork for future Chapel administrators:

We have a task facing us that is strikingly similar to the problem which Goodhue so successfully solved in [the Chapel's] architecture. He did not slavishly copy the Gothic tradition, but used it as a well-attested foundation on which to build this original and creative work of his own, that derives plainly enough from earlier Gothic, and yet goes out beyond it. So likewise must we build our new program for his Chapel upon all that is well-attested in the religious experience that we have inherited; and yet we must be ready to adventure forth upon new and creative experiments in the reshaping of religious thought and tradition to meet the new needs and opportunities of modern University life.

OPPOSITE

Photograph of the interior construction of the University Chapel, August 20, 1928

ABOVE

Photograph of the statue models of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, University Chapel

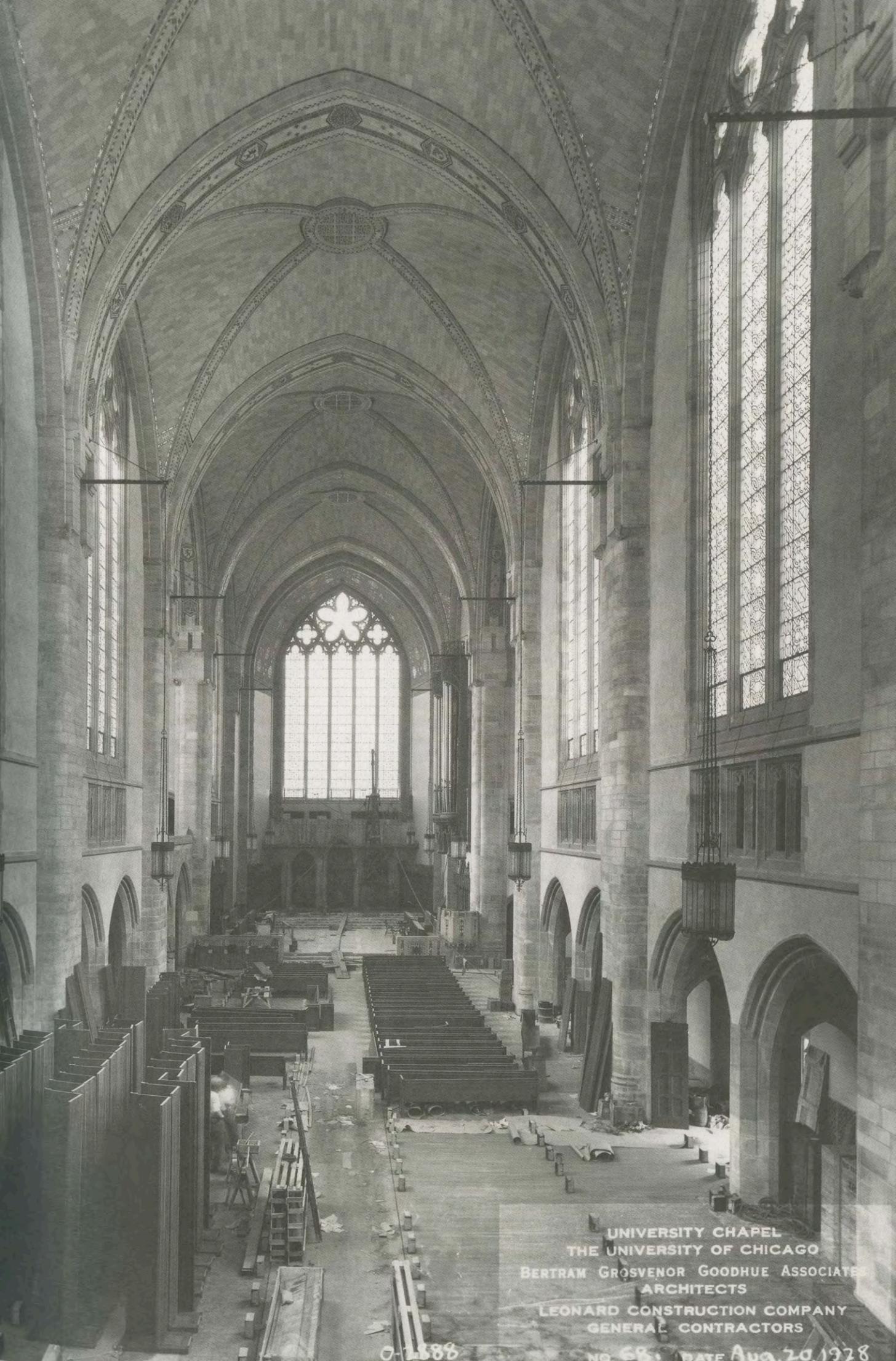
THE MARCH OF RELIGION: THE SYMBOLICS OF DÉCOR

Both the interior and exterior of the Chapel are adorned with symbolic decorative plastics that project the religious continuity of the present with the past, thereby asserting religion as *the* all-encompassing category of human thought and activity. The number and placement of the intricate carvings, representing figures from both modern and ancient history



from secular and religious contexts, was determined by Goodhue in collaboration with the Committee on Symbolic Figures composed of University students and faculty. Above the doorway on the south façade of the Chapel stands the Archangel Michael with sword and crown, signifying his rank as Prince of the Church militant, and with a scale symbolizing

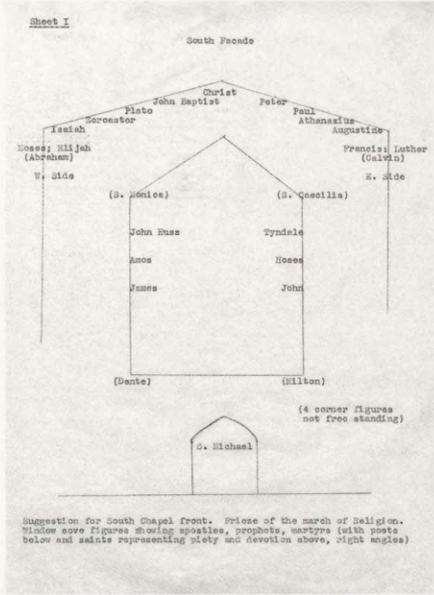
his place as a judge of souls. On the balcony parapet above the doors, eight kneeling angels alternate with the coats of arms of nine privately founded American Universities: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Chicago, Northwestern, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, and Stanford. These insignia, placed as they are above the entrance to a University Chapel, betray the University of Chicago's early ambitions to be among the best universities in



UNIVERSITY CHAPEL
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
BERTRAM GROSVENOR GOODHUE ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTS
LEONARD CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
GENERAL CONTRACTORS

0-1888

NO. 681 DATE AUG. 20, 1928



ABOVE

Key to "The March of Religion," University Chapel, south façade

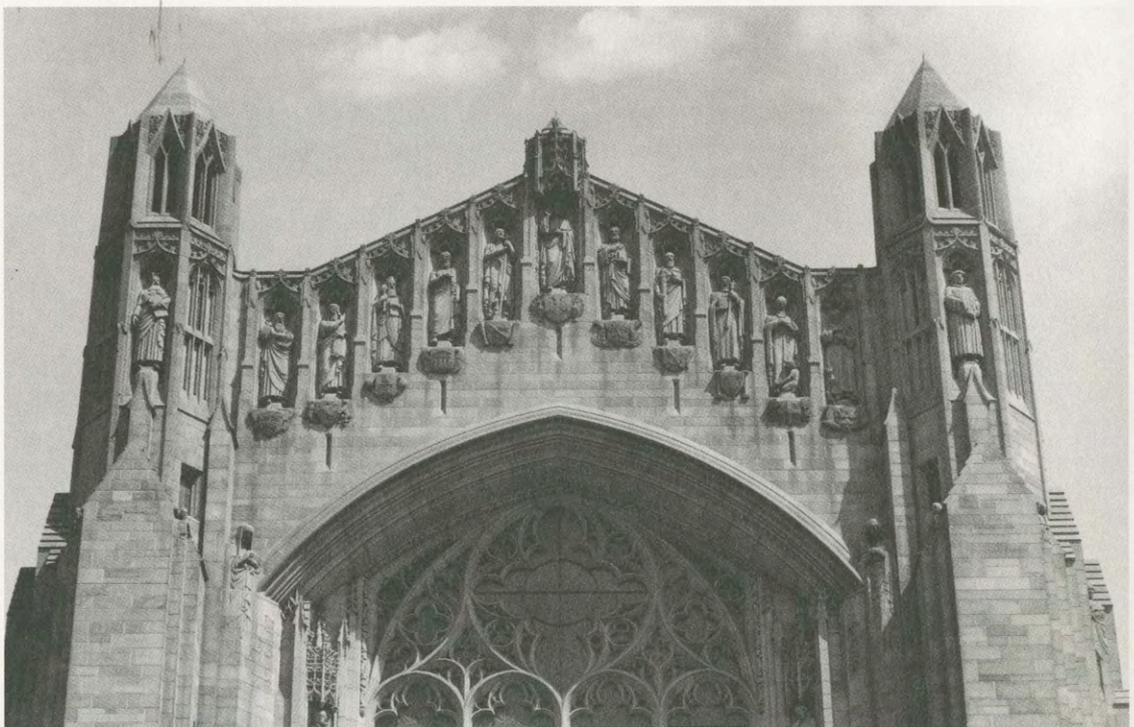
BELOW

Photograph of "The March of Religion," University Chapel, south façade

America. The insignia of Harvard and Princeton are repeated in the carving over the east transept door, adorning statues of their alumni, Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. To emphasize the Chapel's dedication to tolerance, the 14th-century Bohemian martyr John Huss and the 15th-century English martyr William Tyndale, both burnt at the stake for "heresy," stand in the company of the apostles James and John and the prophets Amos and Hosea above the insignia on the south façade. The whole south window is surmounted by a frieze representing "The March of Religion Across the Centuries," a veritable stone narrative of the

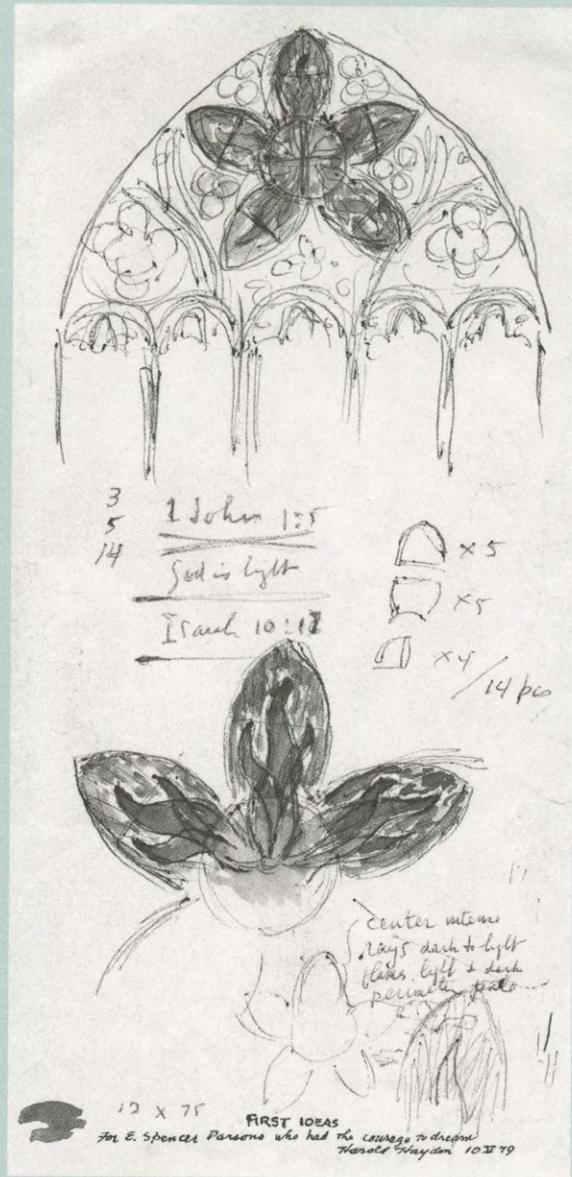
development of religious ideas in Western Civilization from Abraham to the Reformation. The Committee on Symbolic Figures chose an ecumenical arrangement of figures including non-Christian contributors to Western history to represent "the March."

The windows of the Chapel, some of the largest in the world, are filled with softly tinted glass in shades of mauve, amber, and periwinkle. By eschewing the deep tones and jewel-like effects of most stained glass, these windows avoid competing with the subtlety of the interior sculptures, woodworking and ceiling ornamentation. In 1973, the artist Harold Hayden introduced brightly colored stained-glass lancet windows to the east



and west aisles of the Chapel. This window scheme is entitled “The Foundation of Things,” and represents, among other things, “woman” in contoured shapes, and “works of the mind,” a glass rendition of Henry Moore’s sculpture “Nuclear Energy,” which marks the site of the first controlled nuclear chain reaction on what is now the west lawn of the University’s Regenstein Library. In 1978, the large, stained-glass cinquefoil at the top of the chancel window was dedicated, a galactic spiral of five petals composing “Fire and Light.”

The interior of the Chapel is distinguished by its tile-vaulted ceiling composed from over 100,000 pieces of Gustavian tile. The New York artist Hildreth Miere arranged the tiles into colorful panels and medallions representing St. Francis’s “Canticle of the Sun.” The chancel is furnished with a great marble lectern supported by two eagles constructed from gray marble. To the right stands the canopied pulpit with carved emblems of the Four Evangelists, the Angel, Lion, Ox, and Eagle. A carved stone reredos provides a delicate backdrop to the chancel. Tracery panels at the crest of the reredos display the Parables of the Talents. Behind the reredos, niches have been built into the wall to receive the ashes of the University Presidents (only two deceased University Presidents are not present, Max Mason and Robert Hutchins). Artist Alois Lang’s wood carving in the Chapel—the pews, stalls, canopies, and organ screens—is extraordinary for its lightness, best exemplified in the relief of the parable of the Sowing of the Tares.



ABOVE

Harold Hayden,
“first ideas,” sketch for
the Rose Window,
Rockefeller Memorial
Chapel, October 5, 1979

The whole south window is surmounted by a frieze representing “The March of Religion Across the Centuries,” a veritable stone narrative of the development of religious ideas in Western Civilization from Abraham to the Reformation.

SACRED SPACE, SACRED SOUND

A generous Choir endowment by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. granted in memory of his mother, Laura Spelman Rockefeller, helped to expand the Chapel's role on campus and in the Chicago community. Discussing his future hopes in October 1925, Choir Director Mack Evans reasserted the influential roles of the Chapel, and the University, when he wrote:

The architectural importance of [the Chapel] has already made it a center of national interest: its services will be open to a succession of visitors from this country and abroad. In the contemplation of this opportunity, the Chapel can do nothing less than to set up a musical standard on a level with the known scholastic standards of the University. It cannot afford to follow: it must lead.

Accordingly, Evans set about to make the Chapel choir the best in Chicago. The Chapel quickly made a reputation for the Choir by paying its members—a practice that drew several extremely talented musicians from the city.

The Chapel Choir's great scope was necessary to sing over the massive organ. Installed in 1928, the organ is a masterwork of the American organ-builder E.M. Skinner, considered by many to be one of the finest examples of 20th-century romantic organs. With this

model, Skinner realized a full orchestral sound with a complete collection of "voices" and an array of soft ethereal effects unique to organs of this period. The organ's bay of pipes, located in the chancel, creates a dramatic backdrop forming an integral element of the Chapel's interior architecture.

Topping off the Chapel's acoustical grandeur is the 72-bell carillon, dedicated on Thanksgiving Day, 1932. With its 18.5-ton *bourdon*, or brass bell, it remains the second largest carillon in the world, second only to the one at Riverside Church in New York City (also given by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in honor of his mother). Cast in Croydon, England, the carillon is considered to be the masterpiece of the Gillett & Johnston foundry, which devoted over three years to cast the 72 bells.

OPPOSITE

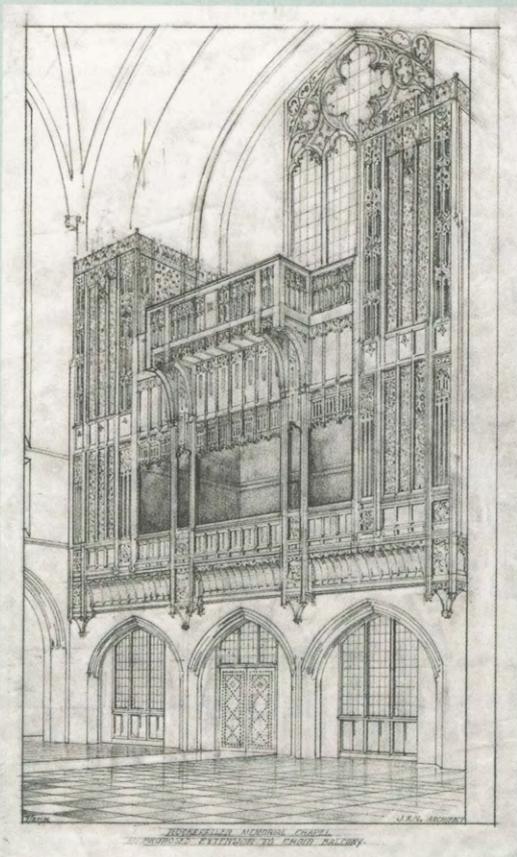
Photograph of the University Chapel organ

BELOW

J. R. M. Architect, drawing of the proposed extension to the choir balcony, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, July 25, 1956

FOLLOWING PAGE

International News Photos, Inc., "Bells for U of C Carillon Arrive," July 26, 1932









To cement its inter-religious ideals, in 1965, Spencer Parsons, Dean of the Chapel, removed all the Christian decorative trappings from the Chapel's non-architectural interior décor.

A PUBLIC HOLY PLACE

The next step after erecting and dedicating the new Chapel was to determine its uses and the particular nature of its services. The matter spurred new discussions concerning the intersection of religious faith and the specific academic tasks of the University of Chicago. Students were encouraged to participate in the functions and administration of the new Chapel, including singing in the choir, worship leadership, ushering, acolyte services, program planning and service projects.

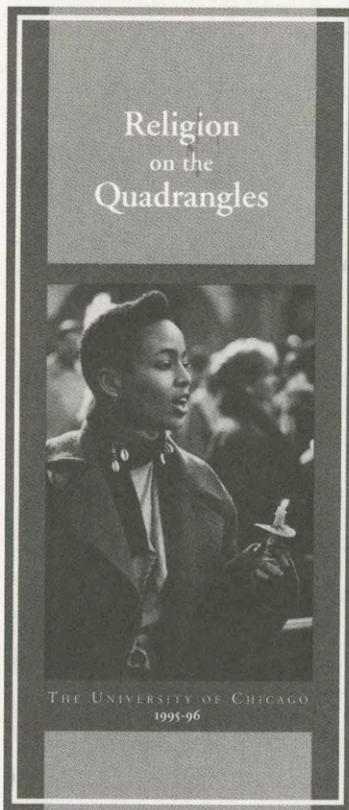
BELOW

Dean's Office,
Rockefeller Memorial
Chapel, "Religion on
the Quadrangles,"
1995-96

In 1928 the University Board of Social Service and Religion organized the Student Chapel Council, which consisted of forty members of the undergraduate student body appointed by the University President. The Council was charged with interpreting how the Chapel should function for the student body and the visiting public. The Chapel Council by-laws assured that the Chapel was not the property of any single University group,

but of the entire University. Because the student body represented many cultural and religious traditions, the Chapel became home to diverse inter-denominational, interfaith, and non-denominational activities. Although the majority of religious organizations sponsored by the Chapel remained Protestant, the Council nevertheless strove to make the Chapel a place for everyone, a place where even criticism and skepticism were welcome to probe the depths and limits of intellectual and religious belief. One way the Council accomplished this lofty goal was by hosting religious groups such as the Channing Club, which served the needs of those who had little concern for more orthodox religions. The Chapel has recently reasserted its commitment to being a resource for every religious group on campus by constructing an inter-religious center in the Chapel basement.

From its dedication in 1928, interchurch and interfaith cooperation was a special concern of the Chapel. That year an Inter-Faith Council for Cooperation in Campus Activities was established to promote "justice, amity, understanding, and cooperation among different religious groups" in an



July 13, 1976

Mr. John T. Wilson
President
The University of Chicago

Dear John:

Because Jonathan Kleinbard showed me the recent note from one of our Jewish students requesting that serious consideration be given to omitting the words "in the year of our Lord" from the University's diploma, I am sending you my unsolicited and, I trust, my unoffensive response.

I believe such a request should be honored for a number of reasons. First, we are no longer officially a Baptist, Protestant, or even Christian institution—we are a private university without sectarian commitments.

Secondly, our students represent many different cultural and religious traditions. Therefore it seems to me that for Muslims, Jews, or happy agnostics to have their diplomas granted with an explicit and totally unnecessary Christological reference is an affront to their sensibilities and a reflection on our lack of sensitivity.

At a time when men are becoming increasingly sensitive to their chauvinistic styles of speech and ways of acting, at a time when whites are increasingly aware of the sensibilities of blacks, and more recently, and belatedly, when Christians are becoming sensitive to the feelings of Jews and other religious groups, it behooves us not to persist in ways of speaking, writing and acting which reflect the religious imperialism of a very sorry past—as far as interreligious relationships are concerned.

The Roman Church dropped out of its sacred liturgy certain phrases which denigrated the Jewish community. I would hope that the University could now drop out the phrase "in the year of our Lord" which, while it doesn't denigrate anyone, it is a blatant reminder that they don't quite fit into "our scheme" of time. It occurred to me that many of the honorary degree recipients must chuckle—if not be a little annoyed with the phrase.

I face these issues constantly at the Chapel. For instance I insisted when I came that the cross and candles on the altar, and the pulpit falls with crosses be removed or replaced with non-sectarian symbols ~~as a non-sectarian~~
at University Convocations.

Furthermore, when any non-Christian occasion is scheduled in the Chapel, I have the specifically Christian symbols removed as a gesture toward making everyone feel welcome and at ease.

effort to "analyze and reduce intergroup prejudices." With this aim in mind, the Inter-Faith Council invited speakers and sponsored regular discussion groups. The Inter-Faith Council spread its ecumenism to embrace religious groups in the surrounding Chicago community. In 1948, when the Chicago Sinai Congregation needed meeting space, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel became the setting for Sinai's High Holy Day Services. To cement its inter-religious ideals, in 1965, Spencer Parsons, Dean of the Chapel, removed all the Christian decorative trappings from the Chapel's

non-architectural interior décor. Rockefeller Memorial Chapel is also a member of the Hyde Park and Kenwood Interfaith Council, and hosts its annual interfaith Thanksgiving service. The Thanksgiving program, which raises money for social services, epitomizes the Council's primary goals: building interfaith unity while serving the community on multiple levels.

THE CHAPEL IN CHICAGO CULTURAL LIFE

Not only did the Chapel open its spaces to the religious faiths represented on the University campus, it also opened its doors to the community of Chicago. By presenting an ever-widening spectrum of sacred music and arts, the Chapel invited Hyde Park and Kenwood and the rest of the City into its massive arcade. The Chapel Committee on Religion and the Arts sponsored a number of programs and performances in the Chapel. The morality play *Everyman*, T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and the London Company of Christopher Fry's *Sleep of Prisoners* have all been performed in the Chapel, as well as a series of lectures on Bach's *The Passion According to Saint Matthew*, *The Passion According to Saint John*, and the *B Minor Mass*. Beginning in the 1950s, the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel sermons were broadcast by WGN radio's "Faith of Our Fathers" program. And in the 1960s, the Chapel arts blanketed the region when radio station WBBM began broadcasting the "Sacred Note," a program of anthems by the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel Choir. The program aired worldwide when the State Department's "Voice of America" picked up the broadcast.

ABOVE

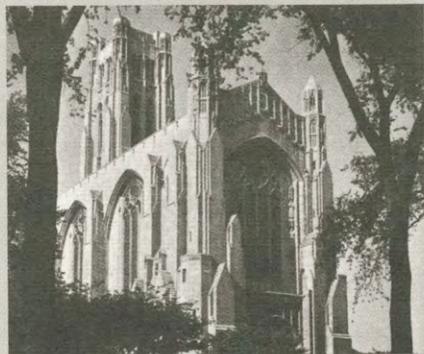
E. Spencer Parsons
to John T. Wilson,
typescript letter,
July 13, 1976



Duke Ellington

At Rockefeller Memorial Chapel

IN A CONCERT OF SACRED MUSIC



In its 75-year history, the Chapel has attracted a wide variety of speakers to its pulpit. William Faulkner, Jane Addams, Toni Morrison, Martin Buber, Susan Sontag and Angela Davis are just a few of the noted spiritual leaders and laypeople who have utilized Rockefeller Memorial Chapel as the site to address the world in sermons and lectures on

cultural and religious matters. Twice, in 1956 and 1959, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. served as minister of Chapel religious services. In both cases he articulated the Chapel's interfaith goals by insisting that true integration can be attained only when there are "true intergroups and interpersonal living."

A SOUTH SIDE CATHEDRAL

As a setting for special occasions in the life of Hyde Park and surrounding neighborhoods, the Chapel began to carve out a distinctive role in the 1960s as, what former Chapel Dean Bernard Brown would later call, "the Cathedral to the Black Aristocracy." It was at this time that Dean Spencer Parsons first opened the doors of the Chapel to host graduations of predominantly African American city colleges and high schools. The Chapel began conducting funeral services, commencements and weddings for a host of notable members of Chicago's African American community. In December 2000, the funeral of Gwendolyn Brooks, poet laureate of Illinois, was held in the Chapel. Such ceremonial events, in conjunction with the many outstanding Civil Rights leaders who have spoken there such as Martin Luther King, Jr., C.T. Vivian, Jesse Jackson, James Lawson, Jr., and Archie Hargraves, have maintained Rockefeller Memorial Chapel's centrality in South Side political and social life.

LEFT

"Duke Ellington at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel in a Concert of Sacred Music," program, October 15, 1967

OPPOSITE

Photograph of a crowd gathering at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel

BELOW

"Owens Believed that Athletes Should Go to the 1980 Games: Today at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel," Maroon, April 4, 1980

Owens believed that athletes should go to 1980 Games; funeral services are today at Rockefeller Chapel

This appeared in the Rocky Mountain News — Sunday March 2, 1980 Denver, CO. Copyright 1980, Independent News Alliance

Jesse Owens died of cancer on March 21, 1980. His funeral will be held this morning at Rockefeller Chapel. He will be remembered most for his triumph in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, as well as his many contributions to the world in which he lived.

By Jesse Owens

I can never adequately repay this country for what it has given me and I would never do anything that would be against the best interests of the United States.

Having competed in the 1936 Olympics, so heavily laden with politics, I understand why President Carter urges us to boycott the summer games in Moscow. I know what he is trying to do.

I also understand the Olympics and know what it can mean both to the United States and even more important, to what the United States is all about. A way must be found, I feel, to have our "boycott" and our Olympics too.

To find that way we must first know what the games were truly meant to be and what

Swimmers 3rd in conference

By John Condas

They should be, again. The Olympics never were meant to be contests between nations, only hot event visuals. Winning was never intended as the ultimate goal. That goal, as Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern games, put it in "withering one's full potential." The sweetest victory, in other words, is doing one's best.

Except for a small minority of misguided athletes who attempted to use the games as political platforms, the Olympics to the participants have been just what they were meant to be.

Because of this, the games are more than a great athletic spectacle. They are a spectacle of peace. Barriers of distance and language are broken in a few moments, a few hours at most. Lifelong friendships are made. Fierce rivalries are transformed into a beautiful brotherhood.

The Soviet Union is wrong, dangerously so, in doing what it is doing in Afghanistan. So is Iran wrong in taking and keeping hostages, and South Africa for its policy of apartheid.

Such aggressive, bigoted behavior should not be allowed to slide by unnoticed. Our athletes should boycott the perpetration of such acts. Not by slaying away, but by being there with the redoubts from other countries, thereby proving that they are not bigoted, that there is such a thing as peaceful competition.

In other words, the United States should publicly disavow any official role for itself in the Olympics while allowing its athletes to participate in the games as the free individuals they are.

In any event, it is not the U.S. government that sends our athletes to the Olympics. It is us and I who send them through our cus-

tomers. Tristically, it was one of his blood, blue-eyed Aryans athletes who helped do the best. I held the world record in the broad jump, 27m more than the sprouts it was "my event." Yet I was one jump from not even making the finals. I had failed on my first try and playing it safe the second time, had not gone far enough.

The broad jump preliminaries came before the finals of my other three events and everything, it seemed then, depended on this jump. Fear swept over me, and then

was that Hitler's "supermen" could be beaten. Tristically, it was one of his blood, blue-eyed Aryans athletes who helped do the best.

I walked off alone, trying to gather myself. I dropped to one knee, closed my eyes and prayed.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. I opened my eyes and there stood my "arch-enemy," Luz Long, the German athlete Hitler had kept under wraps for years while he trained for one purpose only: to beat me. Long had broken the Olympic mark in his very first try in the preliminaries.

"I know about you," he said. "You are like me. You need to do it all the way, or you cannot do it. The same thing happened to me last year in Cologne. I will tell you what I did then."

Luz told me to renege on my oath, place my feet six inches in back of the takeoff board and jump from there. That way, I could drive it and I had used for certain not to

We did, too. In the finals Luz would jump and break an Olympic record. Then I would jump just a bit farther and break Luz's new record. We each had three jumps in all. On his final jump, Luz went almost 26.5 ft., a mark that seemed impossible to beat. I went just a bit over that and set an Olympic record that was to last for almost a quarter of a century.

I was that day, but I'm being straight when I say that, even before I made that last jump, I knew I had won a victory of a far greater kind — over something inside myself, thanks to Luz.

Sports

The instant my record breaking win was announced, Luz was there, throwing his arm around me and raising my other arm to the sky. "Jesse Owens!" he yelled as loud as he could. "Jesse Owens!"

More than 100,000 Germans in the stadium joined in. "Jesse Owens! Jesse Owens! Jesse Owens!"

Hitler was there too but he was not clapping. He had lost that day.

Luz Long was killed in World War II and although I don't cry often I wept when I received his last letter — and knew it was his last. So he, he asked me to someday find his son Karl, and to tell him "of how we fought well together, and the good times, and that any day you can become brotherhood."

That is what the Olympics are all about. The road to the Olympics doesn't lead to Moscow. It leads to us city, no country, it

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, LIFE OF THE MIND

THE SOCIAL MISSION OF THE CHAPEL

The Chapel emphasized its social mission during the first religious service it held in 1928, when Dean Gilkey announced that the Chapel collections would be dedicated to providing emergency food and shelter for families in need. The Chapel's earliest involvement in specific social issues came in the 1930s with the outbreak of World War II. It served as a meeting place for generating and disseminating information to students in support of the isolationist position held by many in the University administration. In the 1950s, Chapel leaders became active public ministers, integrally involved in supporting issues both on and off campus. Second Chapel Dean John Thompson, for example, defied the University administration by actively supporting the unionization of University of Chicago hospital workers. His tenure was not extended. The inauguration of politically-minded Spencer Parsons as Chapel Dean in October 1965 resulted in the Chapel's renewed involvement

BELOW

Rev. William
Sloane Coffin, Jr.,
typescript sermon,
November 16, 1969

SERMON by

Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr., University Chaplain, Yale University
National Emergency Committee of Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam
Rockefeller Chapel, University of Chicago, November 16, 1969

Scripture Readings: I Kings 18:1-18 I Corinthians 11:23-26

Two weeks ago I took up the suggestion of Thomas Merton and Erik Erikson and others that non-violence badly needs redefinition. Not only should non-violence mean a refusal to do another physical harm, but a determination not to violate the integrity of any human being, our own integrity included.

According to this definition we all come out pretty violent and first of all toward ourselves. For we love policies of repression: self-denial in place of self-discovery and self-fulfillment; moralistic terrorism in place of ethical persuasion. Instead of bringing into the full light of day the ambivalences that are part of the human equipment -- in every relationship of love there is hate, in every expression of altruism some self-advantage is being sought -- instead of examining, we repress. But these policies of repression are wrong if only because the subconscious has no digestive tract. What goes down must come up, and usually does so in the form of displaced violence. Thus older folk who violently repress their sexuality become violent when they see the present permissiveness of the young. People who repress their ethical natures become violent when others make claims on their consciences. Middle class youth becomes violent toward middle class values because it cannot quite take leave of the class it forswears.

The result is disaster. As Freud once observed acidly, "It is a good thing men do not love their neighbors as themselves; if they did they would kill them." And that seems to be what we're up to a good deal of the time.

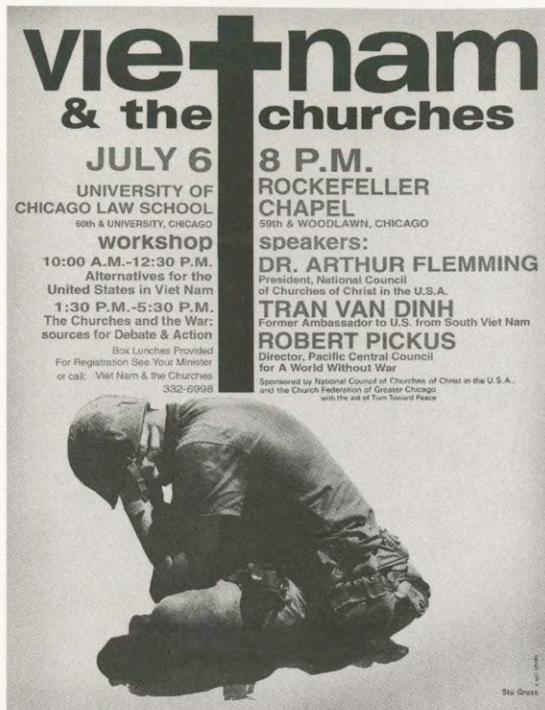
The point is that it is all right to have ambivalent feelings. It is wrong to pretend not to have them. It is wrong to have pretensions of innocence when in the sullied stream of human life holiness is man's only option. As "whole" and "holy" have the same root holiness can be defined as the effort to bring into one integrated and dedicated whole the sensual, logical and ethical aspects of our nature, our past present and future, race, nationality and class. And holiness is possible given the certainty of God's love. (O I know how hard it is to believe. Really it is too good to be true, we being strangers to such goodness.)

But let us go on with this theme of non-violence and recognize that as with individuals so with social structures: they can be outwardly orderly yet inwardly violent. And if violence means violating human integrity, then without hesitation we must call violent any university, business, government, any social structure that condemns human beings to hopelessness and helplessness, to less than human existence. Further it is clear that people concerned with non-violence not only must show compassion for the victims of violence but a determination as well to change the structures of society that make

in the processes of radical change. During a decade of social unrest, Parsons made it his mission to ensure that the Chapel remained available as a forum for controversial student expression. Continuing in the tradition of Parsons, current Chapel Dean, Alison Boden, considers that the Chapel must involve itself in political quarrels because "the Chapel is about religion and religion is about politics because it is about ethics, otherwise religion makes itself irrelevant to the lived world."

The Chapel adopted a platform of vocal opposition during the years of the Vietnam War. The lawn adjacent to the Chapel was often populated with students protesting the War, providing Dean Spencer Parsons with the opportunity to make use of the Chapel's outdoor pulpit for communicating his own

thoughts about the War. Former Senator John Kerry, then head of Veterans against the War in Vietnam, spoke passionately against America's involvement in the diplomacy of foreign lands. Guest minister of the Chapel and Yale University Chaplain William Sloane

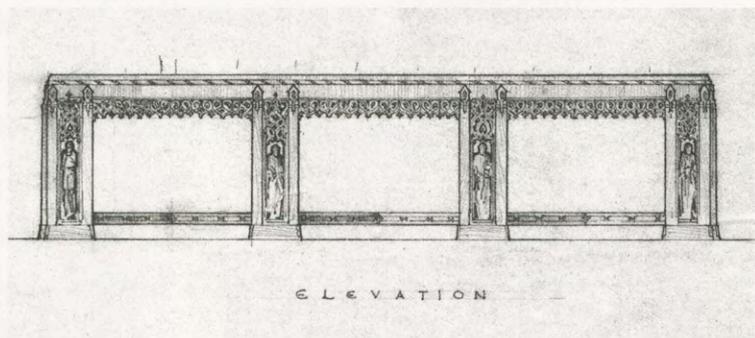


Coffin invited students to substitute their draft cards on the altar for the usual offertory. He preached: "if a man is opposed to the War in Vietnam he should naturally refuse to have anything to do with it and go to jail rather than enter the Army... for until the adversary in power knows that non-

LEFT
University of Chicago Law School and Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, "Vietnam and the Churches," promotional flyer, July 6, 1966

violent men are willing to suffer for their beliefs he will not be truly willing to listen to them." Dean Parsons organized a "Vietnam convocation" to honor students unable to graduate because they were in jail for protesting the War. These public statements against the War came at a cost: in 1967 Chicago radio station WGN reacted by discontinuing its broadcasts of the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel Sunday Sermons.

Rockefeller Memorial Chapel remained a visible and contested political site during the early 1970s when it became a locus for the controversies surrounding abortion law. Dean Spencer Parsons was the President of the pro-choice Chicago Clergy Consultation Service on Problem Pregnancies, which operated out of the basement of the Chapel. The Chapel's involvement in abortion rights advocacy did not, of course, thrive in the absence of criticism. It was regularly the target of right-to-life



ABOVE
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue Associates, elevation and plan for the proposed oak table for the Chancel

attacks, including for example, the spurious flyer sponsored by a group posing as the "University Feminist Organization," which announced Reverend Parsons's speech on "Spiritual Illumination through Abortion." Parsons was continually a legal target as well, twice appearing before a grand jury. When his personal files were put under a police search during a 1970 seizure of Chicago Clergy Consultation Service materials, Parsons chose to hide them in the oak table in the chancel, where they remained undiscovered by authorities.

WAR IN IRAQ

When war with Iraq seemed imminent in the Winter of 2003, Chapel Dean Alison Boden reasserted the Chapel's political and social role on campus by advocating its use as a space for students and faculty to commit themselves to non-violent responses to domestic and international problems, to learn more

about the situation in Iraq, and to share information and feelings about the impending war. In addition to inaugurating a series of discussions about religion and violence focused on war in Iraq, Boden also opened the doors of the Chapel to over a thousand protesters on March 5, 2003. The all-day student walkout against the war culminated in a teach-in held at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. In a brief speech introducing the event, Dean Boden

RIGHT

"Walkout against the War in Iraq," protest flyer, March 5, 2003

BELOW

"Abandon the Oppressed Iraqi People," spurious protest flyer, March 5, 2003

→ What are you doing to support Rape, Torture, Mass Murder, and Brutal Dictatorships?
→ **Join Students, faculty, and staff at universities across the U.S. as we**

→ **ABANDON THE OPPRESSED IRAQI PEOPLE**

Wednesday, March 5th

Join us for daylong actions:

- 24-hour Ego-Stroking SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS RITUAL at the Flagpole on the Quads
- Campus-wide CLICHED ANTI-AMERICANISM
- Propaganda tables and tents around campus spouting MARXIST DRIVEL, MORAL RELATIVISM, and WILD CONSPIRACY THEORIES

2:30 Inconsequential Hand-wringing session at Rockefeller chapel

Featuring:

Sundry Academics and a Union leader

→ **4:30 Rally For Saddam Hussein, The Butcher of Baghdad!**

Ask anyone with a BUSH = HITLER sign how to get to the Federal Plaza (Adams and Dearborn) for the Rally

**Let our Government know:
We don't care about Liberty in Iraq!**

What are you doing to stop the war?

Join students, faculty, and staff at universities across the U.S. as we

WALKOUT AGAINST WAR IN IRAQ

Wednesday, March 5th

Join us for daylong actions:

- 24-hour peace vigil at the flagpole on the quads
- Campus-wide creative resistance
- Educational tables and tents around campus

2:30 Teach-in at Rockefeller Chapel

featuring:

Susan Gzesh, Director, Human Rights Program
Rashid Khalidi, Professor, Dept. Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
John Mearsheimer, Professor, Dept. of Political Science
Ken Warren, Professor, Dept. of English Language and Literature
Salim Yaqub, Professor, Dept. of History
Richard Berg and Marcus Duell, Teamsters Local 743 Shop Stewards, U of C Hospitals
Lauren Cannon, Student, Chicago Theological Seminary

4:30 Rally Against the War

Join buses at Rockefeller Chapel heading to the 4:30 convergence at Federal Plaza (Adams and Dearborn)

Register your support for the walkout at:

<http://nowar.quadrate.org>

recalled the Chapel's use as a place for questioning the motives of the U.S. involvement overseas and for Civil Rights activism. Although Boden insisted that the Chapel is a resource for the voicing of all opinions, the legacy of the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel has been steadfastly liberal. Perhaps begrudging this tendency, mock flyers posted around campus on the week of March 5, 2003 were designed to look like those announcing the teach-in, but instead taunted, "Inconsequential Hand-wringing session at Rockefeller chapel."

...Dean Boden reasserted the Chapel's political and social role on campus by advocating its use as a space for students and faculty to commit themselves to non-violent responses to domestic and international problems...

THE CHAPEL TODAY

Religiously, all the world is at the University of Chicago. All of the major (and minor) religious traditions are represented in the faculty, staff, and student bodies. Rockefeller Memorial Chapel has always endeavored to be responsive to the needs of the religious communities present on campus. At the beginning of the 21st century, the mandate to offer support to every one of them requires a significant re-envisioning of how the Chapel's space is used and how programming is directed.

Because it was built to resemble the great cathedrals of Europe, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel is a distinctively Christian space. To meet the changing needs of many religious communities for prayer space, and to ensure that Rockefeller Memorial Chapel will be “a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56:7), the basement of the building is being renovated and will open in September 2004 as the Inter-Religious Center of the University of Chicago. Prayer rooms are being constructed. One will be the permanent home of the campus Muslim community, and another will house the Hindu community. The others will be available for use by any campus religious organization. The Center will also include a lounge and a large meeting room. It is hoped that having permanent prayer and meditation space will strengthen all religious organizations, and that by sharing common space each group will get to know the others better, forge stronger ties, foster inter-religious understanding, and establish a sense of a total or single religious community on campus that undergirds all theological and doctrinal differences. The Center will be a 75th birthday gift for the Chapel—the beginning of a new era of increased relevance and service to the whole University.

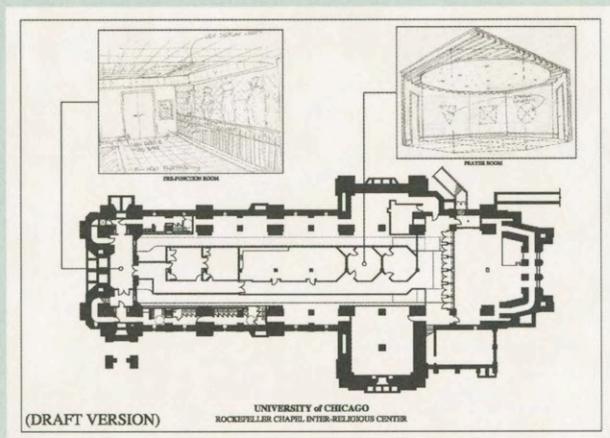
The religious make-up of the University has diversified tremendously since the institution's founding, but the Chapel's mission is the same. It seeks to contribute to the total education of every member of the campus community, helping to shape people who will be leaders in the new century—not simply because they have intellectual expertise, but because they have spiritual understanding, both of themselves and of those very much unlike them. In this way the desire of John D. Rockefeller may come to pass—that “the spirit of religion should penetrate and control the University... and all its work is directed to the highest ends.” ☒

BELOW

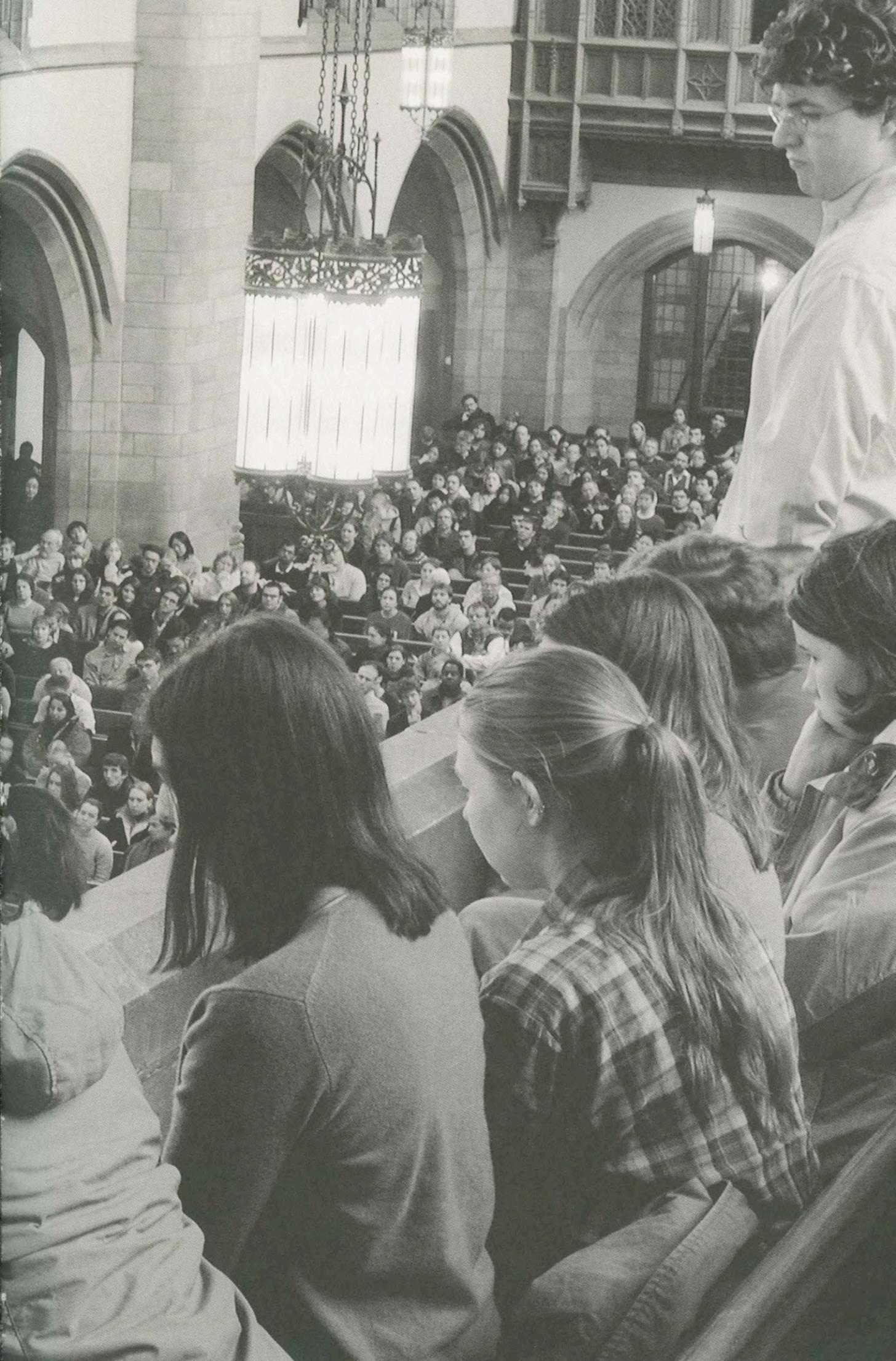
Nevin Hedlund Architects, Inc., plans of the proposed Rockefeller Memorial Chapel Inter-Religious Center of the University of Chicago

FOLLOWING PAGE

Photograph of a “Teach-in” held at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, March 5, 2003







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OF DÉCOR**

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SACRED SOUND**

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Life of the Spirit, Life of the Mind: Rockefeller Memorial Chapel at 75 The University of Chicago Library 2004

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