Building for God and Mammon: The Combination of Religious and Commercial Spaces in Chicago's "Methodist Church Block"[1]

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In the midst of the bustle of downtown Chicago stands a skyscraper of quite peculiar shape. What seems to be an office tower with identical window surfaces up to the 21st floor abruptly turns into a Gothic church steeple with a cross on its top. Puzzled and confused at the sight of such a combination of emblematic architectural codes the outsider cannot help but ponder: 'What's going on here?' Although dwarfed by the soaring heights of newer high-rises, the building's location at the corner of Washington and Clark Streets, facing the public square in front of the Daley Center still offers fairly good visibility of its entire Washington Street façade.

Fig. 1. Washington Street façade of the Chicago Temple. View looking west from Clark Street. Photo: László Mundeán

Standing on the square with the famous Picasso statue, the viewer can allow the texture of the façade to unfold its meanings. The inscriptions in golden letters inform us that the building is the home of the First United Methodist Church and is called the Chicago Temple—as it is inscribed above the Washington Street entrance. In between the two entrances the corner also provides space for Harris Bank the logo of which appears on black background underneath the golden letters of the First United Methodist Church attached to the stone façade. The accentuated division of the formal vocabulary of the steeple and the surfaces underneath generates a certain ambiguity as to the rhythm of the façade. On the one hand the steeple looks totally "out of tune" with the rest of the building for it disrupts the monotony of the surfaces underneath, yet it is absolutely "in tune" at the same time because it shares the grayish stone-cover of the lower parts and its buttresses seem to grow out of the delicate lines running vertically between the office windows below. This connection is further enhanced by the Gothic ornaments of the entrances on both streets that melt into the plain verticality of the upper parts in a gradual fashion and ensure a stylistic cohesion between the first floor and the steeple.

The combination of the emblematic architectural codes of the Gothic style and the identical window surfaces of the tall office building is also indicative of certain structural principles that the façade communicates. The verticality of the building draws attention to the actual load-bearing structure that makes the achievement of such a height possible. On the basis of its outside appearance, the monotonous repetition of windows suggests a steel skeleton behind the façade, whereas the steeple features pointed arches emblematic of Gothic masonry. The steel skeleton and the pointed arch denote two different forms of load-bearing structures that are "acted out" on the façade. In that both structures have been used to construct tall buildings there is an implicit continuity that is illustrated by the vertical lines of the façade transforming into the buttresses of the octagonal steeple. The "performance" of the formal elements that communicate these denotative functions is, however, complemented by certain connotative meanings that attest to yet another set of associations generated by the two kinds of load-bearing systems. The steel skeleton of the tall office building epitomizes the idea of maximizing office space and business efficiency, whereas the pointed arch is an attribute of the Gothic cathedral—the elevation of the soul out of the realm of the profane. By this rationale the connotations of the steel skeleton and the pointed arch highlight binary oppositions such as sacred vs. profane, metaphysical vs. physical. Both represent milestones of technological advance and have become icons of the paradigms that they signify—medieval spirituality and 20th century modernity. In between the two the tower stands as a central metaphor.

For all the diverging connotations that such combination entails, it is this central metaphor that accounts for the uncanny feeling of continuity that the Temple's language of form communicates between the Gothic cathedral and the tall office building. The façade offers a stage for the performance of the conflict between the metaphorical entailments of the two icons and allows architectural form to communicate

the holographic effect of continuity and discontinuity of details.

The Grid and the Center

Zooming out of the corner occupied by the Chicago Temple and taking a bird's eye view of the city one can see a network of streets laid out in a geometrical fashion. The geometrical layout, be it concentric, radial or rectangular, is traditionally conceptualized as the spatial manifestation of order. Among the various forms of manifestations, however, there are differences as to the identification of the center. Whereas in radial and concentric arrangements the center is "encoded" in the geometry, the logic of the equal blocks of the grid does not yield to a focal point that easily.

Similarly to the circular plan the structure of the grid is often referred to as a signifier of rationality which subdues the inherent geographies of the landscape to an all-embracing systemic division as a strategy of exercising power. In his book *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* architectural theoretician Richard Sennett regards the grid as a means of "neutralizing the value of any particular space" (48). When he argues later that "the grid seemed to render space meaningless" (57) Sennett seems to overlook the fact that the very act of the imposition of the grid already entails a process of signification.[2] Whether the grid yields to a center or shields itself against a center is a matter of planning that gives meaning to space. In his article "Cognitive Mapping: New York vs. Philadelphia" Jonathan Hale elaborates on the grid's neutralizing power and observes the layout of the two American cities in relation to two archetypal grid patterns, the Greek and the Roman:

> The Romans deployed the grid plan in their colonial expansion emblematically, as a fixed and finite form, as a reminder of their spiritual origins as much as an efficient organization of land use. [. . .] The military camp ground or *castrum,* with its two principal routes crossing at right-angles at the center, formed an emblem of the structure of the Romans' conceptual world. Each new town became itself a new "center" by reiterating the structure of the absent "mother country" through a diagrammatic idealization rather than a literal representation of Rome as it actually appeared—more a reminder of the perception of the original metropolis in its role as the "center of the world." (35)

The arrangement of squares and roads within the framework of the symmetrical grid is reminiscent of the logic of the circular plan in which the layout of streets and the formation of the city walls at once translate the idea of perfection into physical form, and function as defensive mechanisms in the fortified city. The symmetrical plan of the Roman castrum features a center that Hale finds a manifestation of in William Penn's plan for Philadelphia from 1682. In contrast to the fixed symmetry of the Roman model, the Greek plan seems to be informed by the forces of process and change as exemplified by open-ended grids of Miletus and Priene where geological features

pose the only limits to the grid.

> A flexibility of growth is built into the Greek system, restricted only by the need for military fortifications and the limits of the natural geography. This flexibility seems to be generated by a sensibility towards the principles of growth and change at the core of the Greeks' understanding of the cosmos—bearing in mind in particular the origin of the term *cosmos* in the processes of ordering, arranging and adorning. (34-35)

Although Hale uses the grid of New York to demonstrate this pattern, the 1830 plan of Chicago seems to live up to a similar flexibility in that it allowed the forces of commerce to identify the functions of the individual blocks. As Daniel Bluestone describes it in his book *Constructing Chicago*:

> The plan made no provision whatsoever for church location, but laid a rectilinear grid plan that deviated along the course of the Chicago River but otherwise remained uncompromisingly geometrical. Land along the river would clearly be lined with commercial structures. Beyond this, a public square offered the only real spatial distinction among the town's fifty-eight original blocks. Nothing in the plan suggested which lots would be taken up for residences, stores, warehouses, workshops, or churches. (64)

As a consequence, Bluestone reports, the first places of worship were usually buildings designed to meet rather secular functions: private homes, auction houses, even barns. By the 1840s, however, the various religious denominations built churches for themselves and Washington Street soon came to be known as the "street of churches" (65) and steeples defined the skyline of the city. This tendency was supplemented by the replacement of wooden churches with sturdier, brick structures that attest to the separation of the secular from the sacred and lead to a formation of a center signified by steeples. This center, however, is only legible in three-dimensional space as the blocks of the grid render it invisible on the map.

By defining the skyline the church steeples represent reference points and evoke the "significant is tall" conceptual metaphor demonstrating the centrality of religion in the city. In the middle of the 19th century, however, significant changes occurred in the cityscape. As a result of the unprecedented economic development the new commercial structures exceeded the height of steeples. The church buildings that formerly enjoyed space and visibility had gradually lost their superiority in the skyline and became dwarfed by the newly emerging towers. The characteristics of the Greek model that Hale describes seem to be at work here. Unlike the marked discontinuity between the sacred proportions of the church and the surrounding maze of streets characteristic of medieval cities, the equal size of the blocks on the map of Chicago does not render any one block superior or inferior to the other in size, yet they yield to the concentra-

tion of commercial activities that gave rise to the city for no block is entitled to any prescribed function in the plan.

The history of the Methodist church is illustrative of the above tendencies. The services were initially held in the log cabin of Reverend Jesse Walker, the first pastor of the Chicago Methodist community, and then transferred to a wooden frame church which was completed in 1834. Four years later the church was floated across the river to the present place of the Chicago Temple. In 1845 a brick structure with a steeple replaced the old wooden church but by 1850 it had already been eclipsed by commercial edifices. With no distinguished position in the grid plan the church steeples gradually appeared as losers of the competition for visual significance in the cityscape and succumbed to the irresistible forces of commerce. The members of the congregation had moved to the outlying residential areas in large numbers, therefore it is not surprising that most of the Washington Street churches ended up selling their property and followed their congregations to the suburbs. Such a reconfiguration of sacred and secular spaces involves new patterns of identification with urban space. Once the signifiers of the centrality of religion in the city, the church steeples relocated into the suburbs came to be associated with the domestic sphere, as opposed to the world of production and business indicated by the tall office tower. "The downtown part of the city," Bluestone concludes, "seemed increasingly inimical to certain valued experiences. If this were so, then to put religion on the periphery might be the only way to make it central" (82). Despite the fire of 1871 that razed the larger part of the city, the decentralization of churches and the concentration of high-rise structures continued. The Methodists however, did not go with the flow.

"The Methodist Church Block"

Despite the prevalent trend of moving to the suburbs the Methodist congregation remained anchored to their downtown corner. According to an 1839 deed, if the congregation moved, the property would revert to the heirs of the original owners (Bluestone 96). In order to secure their survival in the sphere of business the Methodists resorted to a rather pragmatic solution. Long before the great fire the congregation was authorized to construct a mixed-use structure that combined the functions of church and commerce under the same roof. Designed by Edward Burling the new four-story Methodist building was completed in 1857 with the two lower floors serving business and commerce and the upper two housing the auditorium and the adjacent spaces of the church.

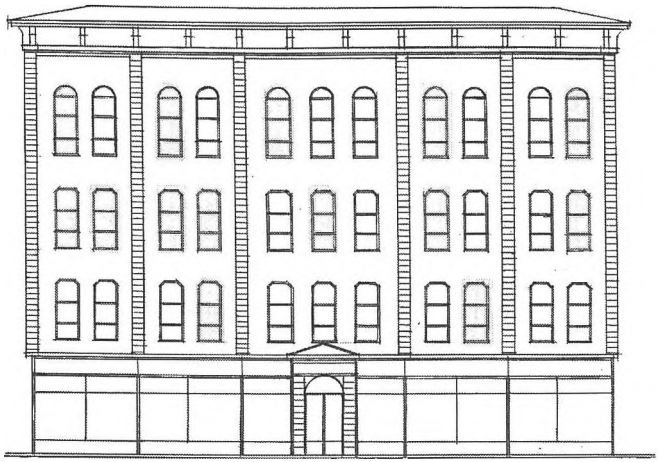

Fig. 2. First Methodist Episcopal Church, 1857. Reproduced by the author after photograph in Daniel Bluestone, Constructing Chicago (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991) 97.

The auditorium, which featured an amphitheatrical seating plan and elaborate interior decoration, occupied the whole area of the third and fourth floors, yet it was completely "camouflaged" by the outer façade that gave the impression of a "first class business structure," as a contemporary critic of the *Chicago Tribune* remarked (qtd. in Bluestone 96). An 1870 photograph of the Clark Street façade supports this observation, as the unadorned building appears to be blending perfectly into the downtown streetscape. Already known as the "Methodist Church block" the building came to represent a model solution to the problem of combining religious space with downtown commerce and set a precedent for future hybrid structures to be built in the "Methodist Church block style" (97). By joining in the dynamics of downtown turbulence the rental income was used to maintain the church's urban ministry. Although the dual function of the building is reminiscent of the multi-use structures that provided room for religious services during the early history of Chicago Methodism, it is important to note that the interior division of the building separates the secular spaces from the sacred. Nevertheless, the term "block" implies the land value of the space occupied by the building and postulates the Methodists as owners.

The great fire destroyed this structure completely but by 1874 a new building of similar divisions was erected in its place.

Fig. 3. First Methodist Church block, 1874 (reproduced by the author after photograph in Daniel Bluestone, Constructing Chicago (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991) 98.

A photograph taken of the new edifice at the turn of the century depicts apparent similarities with the old building, yet its language of form attests to some conspicuous differences as well. Tympanums dominate the façades on both sides of the corner and between the second and third floors the surface of the façade is divided by a protruding edging strip which runs around the two sides. Formally, this encircling line contributes to the horizontal dimensions of the building, yet, at the same time, it seems to communicate the functional division of the lower and the upper floors in the texture of the façade. However, this implicit denotation is only legible if one has preliminary knowledge of the divisions of the building.

Another photograph, which documents the construction of the classical colonnade of the City Hall at the opposite corner, also features a peculiar detail of the Clark Street façade. Taken from a second floor window of the Clark Street side of the Methodist block the photograph depicts a signboard jutting out so as to "advertise" the function of the two upper floors for passersby walking past the façade. With the times of preaching indicated under the title "First Methodist Church" the signboard denotes religious function in its content, yet the form of the signboard gives it a frame of advertisement melting into the downtown streetscape. In this respect, the "upper" function is communicated by the language of the "lower" function of the building, religious service is advertised as one service among the many services available in the commercial district. For the most part, this applies to the 1857 building as well,

where the inscription "First Methodist Episcopal Church" was placed in between the windows of the third and fourth floors yet, unlike the protruding signboard of the later building, it was visible from the other side of the street rather than the sidewalk at the entrance. With a background façade communicating a "first class business structure" rather than a place of worship, the inscription reinforces the commercial entailment of the term "block" and signifies the Methodist church as proprietor.

In his book *The Sacred and the Profane* Mircea Eliade highlights the symbolic importance of the door and the threshold that define the border between the sacred and the profane and constitute vehicles of passage between the two. It is this border that Jesus defines in terms of God and Mammon ("Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Luke 16:13) and asserts physically when he drives the sellers out of the temple court in Jerusalem (John 2:15-16). The border is traditionally communicated by a separate place in the urban space and a unique form of architecture that denotes religious function. In the hybrid structures of the Methodist block the place of worship stands both physically and metaphorically on the "foundations" of business. This arrangement simultaneously activates the conflicting source domains of "high" "foundation." The elevated position of the church renders the religious function superior to the commercial spaces of the lower levels, yet this higher position is contingent on the essential foundations of business, for the strength of the foundations ensures the upper position of the superstructure. This dependency on business is, at the same time, a prerequisite of survival in downtown. The pragmatic solution of the hybrid structures evokes yet another sentence of Jesus, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's" (Luke 20:25). In the Methodist corner, however, the structure yields to business *in order to* provide room for worship. This interrelation is illustrated by the metaphorical reading of the building's commercial "foundations" as well. The pastor of the 1857 building deemed the commercial floors "necessary" because they effectively lifted "the place of worship high above the street" (qtd. in Bluestone 97). By their presence in the tumult of commerce the hybrid structures of the Methodist corner offered an asylum *within* rather than a counterpoint *to* the materialistic world of downtown.

The Iconography of the Tower

We have seen that the concentration of the forces of business in downtown had led to the proliferation of commercial high-rise structures that gradually forced the places of religion out of the city center. The skyscraper, or, more precisely, the clusters of skyscrapers, became signifiers of urbanity (van Leeuwen 48). Richard Sennett identifies the skyscraper as the vertical manifestation of what he defined earlier as the neutralizing power of the grid (57). As such, the steel frame of the skyscraper turns the geometrical layout of the city into three dimensions and transforms streets into canyons. Similarly to the unbroken geometry of streets in the Greek model of the grid plan the steel skeleton of the skyscraper exerts its power by involving the potential of vertical growth. While the unprecedented technological feats of the steel skeleton and the

electric elevator render the skyscraper a modern icon of unrestrained progressivism, its language of form, paradoxically, often evokes rather familiar images. In his book entitled *The Skyward Trend of Thought* Thomas A.P. van Leeuwen finds the elements of ancient cities recurring in the American metropolis of the 1910s and 1920s.

> Skyscrapers with 'ziggurat' silhouettes and Assyrian-Babylonian—or as Tafuri suggested 'anti-European'—decorations were fashionable at the time and it seems an inviting thought that this smooth blending of archeological accuracy and architectural modernity were to be taken as proof of the genetic affinity between the paradigmatic Jerusalem/Babylon and the modern-time America. (53)

Besides their primarily pragmatic character the name 'skyscraper' entails the sense of aggressiveness and monumentality as an attribute of height which certainly accounts for parallels with the Tower of Babel or even with the medieval family "skyscrapers" of Bologna or St. Gimigniano. This binary effect of progressive modernity combined with the sense of *déjà vu* is quite similarly illustrated by some of the pointed tops of emerging office buildings of the period that give the impression of cathedrals in medieval cities. Towering above the buildings of smaller proportions the skyscraper provided a visual reference point that evoked the symbolic heights of Gothic steeples. Before returning to Chicago's Methodist corner let me take a detour to look at two skyscrapers that take the shapes of rather familiar designs anchored in European sacred architecture.

Perhaps the best-known example of neo-gothic skyscrapers is the Woolworth Building in New York completed in 1913 according to the designs of Cass Gilbert. Unlike the Chicago Temple, Gilbert's structure was clad in Gothic ornament from the bottom to the top—hence its nickname "Cathedral of Commerce." The image of the Gothic cathedral that signified a center and embodied order in contrast to the maze of medieval streets, the Cathedral of Commerce, although surpassed all other buildings in its time, grows out of the grid of Manhattan and shares the same function of commerce as most of its neighboring high-rises. The iconography of the Woolworth Building suggests a combination of the Tower of Babel clad in the robes of medieval Gothicism thus idolizing the achievement of man and sacralizing the commercial function that takes place within its walls. Van Leeuwen offers a slightly different reading as well, by suggesting the compatibility of business and religion anchored in a cultural context:

> To most Europeans making money was an evil activity, which the Americans had pursued far beyond the acceptable limits of decency. According to the Scriptures, Christianity was predominantly incompatible with business, yet the Americans, thanks to their diverse interpretations of Christianity and the resulting multiplicity of opinions, treated the subject with great inventiveness

> and a conspicuous lack of dogmatism. (62)

Business success was, van Leeuwen argues, an attribute of the American archetype of the self-made man, and it was invested with a sense of moral responsibility which Frank Woolworth intended to live up to. The pelican-shaped gargoyle on the façade aims to symbolize Woolworth's commitment to charity and self-sacrifice portraying him as a Christ-like figure and rendering his building a memorial to that social obligation (69).

Another illustrative example of this commitment is the Metropolitan Life Tower in New York, designed by Napoleon le Brun & Sons in 1909. The tower mimics the form and the proportions of the campanile of St. Mark's church in Venice. In her article "The Corporate and the Civic: Metropolitan Life's Home Office Building" Roberta Moudry reports that Haley Fiske, president of the insurance company in the time when the building was completed, repeatedly referred to his tower as a symbol of Christian morality manifested in the company's insurance policy (128).

The Woolworth Building and the Metropolitan Life Tower are entirely devoted to business and commerce and fully dressed in forms evoking religious connotations. Returning to our observation point at Daley Center in Chicago, we can see that the skyscraper-church that replaced its low-rise predecessors lacks that formal unity despite the fact, or rather precisely because of it, that it harbors religious and commercial functions. In 1907 the Methodists approached the renowned architectural firm Holabird & Roche and proposed the idea of a mixed-use skyscraper. Due to height restrictions effective in the city the construction it was not until 1922 when the project was declared exempt from the zoning ordinance and the construction commenced in the hope of reclaiming superiority in the skyline. As an unidentified editorial from a Chicago newspaper reported before the completion of the building:

> The center of the city has high towers which are striking and command admiration, but they are architecturally designed to avoid that conical tapering which is the prerogative of the ecclesiastical spire.
> Now it is planned to have the highest building of all raise a tapered spire above the loop to remind the people of Chicago that religion is the most central and the loftiest thing in life and that it points men upward. The new spire will not necessarily be more uplifting than the city's other church steeples, but it will be more easily seen. (qtd. in Bruegmann 228-29)

Visibility is of ultimate concern in pastor John Thompson's last sermon in the old building: "A great temple will be erected. When you and I are gone, it will stand as a moral sentinel, stand as a watch tower, stand like a beacon keeping the light aglow through all the years in the midst of Chicago's restless, teeming life" (Grossman).

In the first section of this study I have interpreted the façade as a stage of an ongoing drama in which the combination of the plainness of the office levels and the

Gothic elements of the ground floor and the steeple attest to the holographic effect of continuity and discontinuity. The steeple of the Temple still proves to be the most "photogenic" part of the building. In a number of photographs and illustrations, including the website of the First United Methodist Church of Chicago, it appears on its own, without the office levels underneath. In a similar way, a photograph from the 1920s, taken by Raymond Trowbridge, features the contours of the tower dominating the skyline as though evoking the image of a medieval city. The steeple, as these examples illustrate, exerts its effect as an image; it is a synecdochic representation of the Gothic cathedral and, through its familiarity, it creates the illusion of a virtual cathedral underneath.

The September 1925 edition of the journal *The Architect* celebrates this illusory quality of the tower under the title "Building a Picture." Underneath the illustration which features a nighttime view of the illuminated Clark Street façade a short description reads: "Here the architects envisioned a picture, saw the modern office building in terms of the great art of the Middle Ages—and the result is a demonstration that the utilitarian structure, the modern office building of commerce may be as picturesque as it is practical" (Bruegmann 225). In the accompanying illustration the lights trickling out of the office windows clearly indicate the building's utilitarian function as they gradually fade into the mystic contours of the steeple that dominates the building.

Although both emphasize the image-quality of the steeple, "Building and Image" in *The Architect* is nevertheless different from Trowbridge's photographic depiction of the building. While the latter uses the contours of the steeple to create an image of a distant cathedral in the center of the city, the former emphasizes its commercial practicality to which the steeple gives a picturesque quality. This reading can be related to the Woolworth Building Gothic vocabulary in which the tall office building is conceptualized in terms of the Gothic cathedral. The different implications of the two images attest to two different readings of the steeple.

Despite the vertical unity that the images suggest, the plain façade of the office spaces, as I have noted at the beginning, generate discontinuity as well. The flat surfaces that cover the usable office space of the lot denote the aim to maximize office space and define a square-shaped base for the octagonal steeple. For all the picturesque qualities of the Chicago Temple the Gothic form of the steeple seems to identify itself against the office façade and vice versa. John Root, who had worked for Holabird & Roche since 1919, had the following retrospective remarks of the steeple: "To tie a tower of that area in with the mass of the building is a difficult problem. The ordinance did not say anything about the parapet walls; so by developing the parapet walls into buttresses we were able to extend 15% area of the tower. The transition between the mass of the building and the tower is not successful" (qtd. in Bruegmann 229). Yet, perhaps it is the unsuccessful nature of this transition that keeps the holographic machinery of unity and disunity moving. Traditionally, the buttresses denote the function of support and contribute to the effect of spiritual elevation, yet, in the context of the building, the office windows underneath render this denotative function an illusion.

Likewise, the dynamics of synechdochic signification make the steeple "stand for" the cathedral, but it is the very same dynamics that present it as a fragment and signify the lack of the cathedral. By being referential to the whole, it implies the absence of its "proper" structural foundation and alludes to the steel skeleton behind its Gothic masonry as well. Aimed to reinstate the significance of religion through a medieval architectural setting, the symbolic form of the steeple asserts its role through the means of modern technology. Unlike the Woolworth Building, where the Gothic ornamentation of the façade gives a metaphorical expression of the frame, the pointed arches and the buttresses of the steeple of the Chicago Temple wrap the steel skeleton into a masonry disguise by actualizing the architectural language of the Middle Ages.

The implementation of the Gothic style might involve other factors as well. According to a mid-19th century illustration of downtown Chicago, the churches of Washington Street, including the 1851 edifice of the Methodists, had been built in the Greek revival style typical of public buildings of the era. Although the deliberately artless forms of neoclassicism harmonized with the principles of Protestant aesthetics, through Jefferson's influence it evolved into an "American style" (Bluestone 84). We have seen earlier that, by selling their downtown properties, many of those churches that followed their congregations into the suburbs could later afford to build more ornate structures. The Gothic revival was already in full swing in England when it appeared rather as an advent in the United States (Homan 119). Still, in contrast to the progressive connotations of Jeffersonian neoclassicism the historicist vocabulary of the Gothic revival evoked the bygone era of medieval cathedrals and, as Jeanne Halgren Kilde points out, "legitimized modern Christianity, particularly Protestantism, by historicizing it, by visually underscoring the connection between an idealized medieval Christian piety and modern congregations, modern worship" (76). The Gothic revival, by evoking the idea of Christian unity, proved essential in the time when churches competed for members to elicit the attraction of the congregation (Kilde 58). The appeal of the Gothic style seemed to work as a commercial motivation as well. F. J. Thielbar, who supervised the construction of the Chicago Temple, explained the business value of the spire when he said that "it is one of the things that are enabling us to fill offices with tenants of the same class as those who occupy the best buildings of LaSalle street" (Bruegmann 228). In this sense, the Gothic spire lends itself to a business function as well.

The New Jerusalem

The structural divisions of the two previous buildings of the Methodist corner provided space for worship on the upper two floors. Both buildings featured entrances that fit the style of commercial façades of the first floor, yet I do not have information on the structure of the staircases that might provide insight into how the passage from the secular to the sacred was organized in the interior space. In the new skyscraper-church the two entrances share the Gothic ornament of the steeple, yet their slightly different forms seem to indicate the functional difference between the spaces that they lead to.

The Washington Street entrance is off the central axis of the tower and features a embedded rectangular portal that frames the pointed arches above the doors. This is the entrance that provides access to the elevators going to the office floors. Just like the steel frame of the skyscraper, the electric elevator also attests to a metonymic representation of the tall office building. Yet the elevator lobby combines this effect with the pointed decorations of the stone cover. The elevator's denoted function of upward movement is here coupled with the connotations of a pre-modern stylistic context which makes the elevator doors resemble entrances to rooms.

The Clark Street entrance (where the signboard of the 1874 building once advertised the preaching hours) features an elaborately detailed Gothic gate with a pointed arch and a rose window. Compared to the rather low-key ornamentation of the Washington Street entrance, it renders the pointed framing synechdochic of a church entrance and thus denotes the religious function of the building. Unlike in the previous structures, the auditorium of the Chicago Temple is located on the first floor, accessible through the foyer behind the ornate Clark Street entrance. Although the elevator lobby and the foyer are connected by a small door, the absence of elevators in the latter signifies a horizontal passage to the sacred, whereas the former a vertical route to the profane. What used to be a tranquil place of asylum on the upper floors of the old buildings is here located under 17 floors of offices, hidden from the noise of the street, yet kept open for most of the day, welcoming everyone and giving expression to the church's commitment to urban ministry.

The auditorium reflects the undivided, theater-like interior of Protestant churches where the Gothic design gives way to the priority of hearing—as the name also suggests. The altar features a woodcarving, which, along with the artificially illuminated stained glass windows, was installed only after World War II. The later additions also comment on the iconography of the building. The carving depicts Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem. Underneath, the words from the Gospel of Luke read. "If thou hadst known."[3]

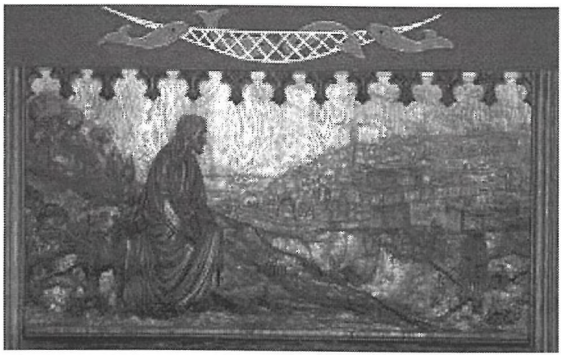

Fig. 3. Altar carving in the Auditorium. Photo: László Munteán.

As though in response to this central motif, the depiction on one of the stained glass windows on the west wall launches a typological mechanism. The city of Chicago appears on one of the panes with its characteristic bridges over the river and factories in the background. Although tucked among high-rise buildings, the spire of the Chicago Temple still towers above all the others in a similar way as the steeple appears in Trowbridge's photograph. It is important to note, however, that the height of the spire had long been surpassed by other downtown structures when the windows were made. Therefore no matter how realistic the depiction of the city might seem, it is to be conceptualized in a symbolic way. With the spire dominating the skyline, the image does not only recall the time period when the Chicago Temple was tallest in the city but reinforces the original function of the tower as a visible "moral sentinel" that John Thompson envisioned, and positions it within the idealized setting of Chicago. This technique of mixing the familiar with the ideal is reminiscent of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's Renaissance fresco entitled *Effetti del Buon Governo in città e in campagna* in which the idealized image of Siena appears as a demonstration of good government (Hajnóczi 33-34). This effect is accentuated by the reappearance of the spire on the right panel, without the office spaces, yet surrounded by images of educational and social institutions that the congregation helped found. Underneath the window the words from the Revelation give interprets the images: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven."[4] In this context the ideal city of Chicago is conceptualized as New Jerusalem, evoking associations to John Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630) in which he identifies New England with the "Citty upon a hill" (23) and echoing the words "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14) that also inform Winthrop's vision. Reverend Thompson's concept of the tower as a moral reference point that keeps the "light aglow through all the years in the midst of Chicago's restless, teeming life" also find their place in this context. Again, it is essential to note that the tower appears without the understructure, therefore it is identified solely by its religious connotations. By the same token, the tower's visibility, as well as its name "temple" simultaneously evokes the temple of Jerusalem ("Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise" John 2:16), the resurrection of Jesus ("Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" John 2:19) and the New Jerusalem ("And I John saw the holy city," Revelation 21:2).

With this in mind let us explore how the chapel's iconography in the steeple comments on what we have seen so far. As it was mentioned earlier, the steeple was originally uninhabited and its sole function was visibility. After World War II the two lower levels were turned into a parsonage and on the top level a chapel was installed in 1952. It was dedicated as a memorial to Rudolph Walgreen, a famous Chicago businessman. In this sense, the Sky Chapel is a memorial at the same time; moreover, the realization of its function as place of worship is due to this fact. Its octagonal, wooden interior might offer allusions to the octagonal Methodist churches of eighteenth-century England that George W. Dolbey explores in his book *The Architectural Expression of*

Methodism: The First Hundred Years (99-115), however, it is important to note again that the octagonal layout of the tower was originally not designed to serve any interior function. The elevator—in accordance with the original divisions—takes visitors only to the top office floor. From here a smaller elevator goes to the parsonage level and then stairs lead to the chapel. We have already seen how the structural discontinuity between the Gothic buttresses and the plain cover of the lower office floors suggest a steel frame of the tower. Once inside, the skeleton of the skyscraper becomes visible in the form of X-shaped girders. This structural detail, which metonymically denotes the tall office building, also evokes the connotations of business and commerce. With the revelation of the steel skeleton upholding the masonry façade of the steeple, visibility that is ensured by the height of the tower, seems contingent on the commercial functions of the building. The beams, however, are enveloped in a wooden cover that not only camouflages the entailments of the steel skeleton but harmonizes with the decorations of the first floor auditorium as well. This dynamics of signification is supplemented by yet another connotation. The beams form St. Andrew crosses—a term used both in structural engineering and in the religious context. This connotative meaning anchors this structural signifier in the context defined by the Latin cross at the altar and the Greek cross of the ceiling. Such a syncretic application of the different kinds of crosses evokes the unifying quality of the forms of the Gothic revival (Kilde 58). This is also reinforced by the stained glass windows that depict the history of Chicago Methodism within the teleological continuity of the Old and New Testament, as well as "old world" and "new world" Christianity. After the symbolic image of the Reformation, for instance, we see John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church in England, the Mayflower that carried the pilgrim fathers to the new world, the first log cabin of the congregation and finally, having come full circle, the steeple of the Chicago Temple, resembling the depiction on the stained glass window of the auditorium.

The altar carving of the Sky Chapel shows striking similarities to the one in the sanctuary. In this relief, however, it is not Jerusalem but the city of Chicago that appears, and Jesus turns to it with similar sentiments.

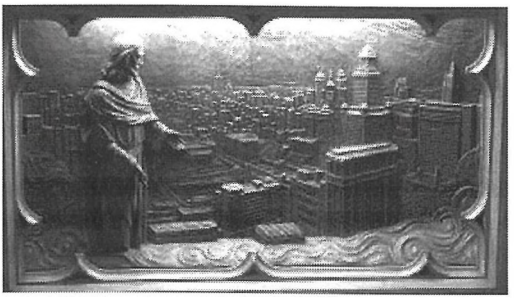

Fig. 4. Altar carving in the Sky Chapel. Photo: László Munteán.

Unlike in the street-level auditorium where an idealized version of Chicago appears with the visible spire of the Temple, here the immense structure of the Jewelers' Building, which was among the first to surpass the height of the Methodist skyscraper, is clearly identifiable. In this sense, looking out from the chapel's window one assumes Jesus' viewpoint in which the grim prospects of the city of Jerusalem is mapped onto Chicago. The city is identified by its towers for money. Jesus' act of observation recalls John Thompson' vision of the prospective skyscraper-church as a "watchtower" which evokes the hill from which Jesus sees Jerusalem, yet it also renders the tower a moral force standing in surveillance of the city and exerting its power through its own visibility.[5] Visibility is here accompanied by the act of seeing to which the iconography of the altar entitles metaphorical entailments. Jesus says, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke 19:42). Jesus' act of surveillance, represented by the steeple as a watchtower, is conceptualized as the capacities of *insight* and *foresight.* By this rationale the soaring heights of Mammon that eclipse the spire are conceptualized as impediments to seeing, and, instead of insight, they seem to offer *oversight*—with its contrasting meanings of supervision and the failure to see. These meanings are activated by the two major icons of Modernity that appear on the relief: the tall office building and the airplane.

NOTES

[1] I would like to thank the staff of the Nanovic Institute for European Studies at the University of Notre Dame for giving me support throughout my stay at the university as a visiting researcher. The valuable comments of Mary Johnson and Gerald Forshey in the Chicago Temple, as well as the exchange of e-mails with Anke Köth at the University of Dresden have been instrumental to my research.

[2] In his introduction to section 1 of *Sign, Symbols, and Architecture* Charles Jencks argues that meaning is inescapable in the environment (7).

[3] "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).

[4] "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:1-3).

[5] I use this term in reference to Michel Foucault's theory on Panopticism, which he

explicates in *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995).

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