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## The Renovation of Miller Chapel

by JAMES F. KAY

*James F. Kay is Joe R. Engle Associate Professor of Homiletics and Liturgics at the Seminary and served as chair of the Miller Chapel Renovation Committee of 1995-1999.*

What follows is an account of the work of the Miller Chapel Renovation Committee that culminated in the rededication of the Chapel on October 9, 2000. It offers a record both to our constituency and for our posterity of the decisions reached by the Committee and the historical data and theological criteria informing them. This report is not exhaustive. It focuses on Miller Chapel, with only cursory mention of Scheide Hall, and, in regard to the Chapel, concentrates primarily on the worship space. (A companion article by Martin Tel addresses in detail the construction and installation of the Joe R. Engle Organ by Paul Fritts and Company, Organ Builders.)

Miller Chapel, completed in 1834 by architect-builder Charles Steadman, is the oldest house of worship in continuous use in Princeton.<sup>1</sup> Named in 1893 in honor of Samuel Miller (1769-1850), the Seminary's second professor, it is the second oldest building on the campus after Alexander Hall (1817). Essentially a Presbyterian meetinghouse, with an attached Greek Revival portico mustering six Doric columns, Miller Chapel expresses the founders' vision of "enlightened piety." A place where faith and reason meet, the Chapel's architecture weds the scriptural convictions of Reformed worship with the democratic ideals of the early American republic. Thus, Miller Chapel is an icon reflecting the values of the Protestant Reformation, the European Enlightenment, and the American Revolution. This rich architectural patrimony has been further textured by layers of transformation wrought in the major renovations of 1874 and 1933.

### I. THE COMMITTEE

President Thomas W. Gillespie on January 10, 1995 invited six members of the Princeton Seminary community "to serve on an ad hoc committee commissioned to explore the needs of Miller Chapel for serious renovation and remodeling as well as the construction of a chapel annex to house the offices of the Campus Pastor and Director of the Chapel and the Director of Music, plus attendant needs such a building might serve." All six persons agreed to serve. They were: James F. Kay (named chair), Joe R. Engle Associate Professor of Homiletics and Liturgics; Frederick F. Lansill, Vice President for Financial Affairs; Joel Mattison, M.D. (Class of 1954); Michael Livingston, Campus Pastor and Director of the Chapel; David A. Weadon, C. F. Seabrook Director of Music and Lecturer in Church Music; and Kathryn A. Johnson, Director of Student Relations. By February 1995 the Committee was augmented with Trustee Rosemary Hall Evans. (James H. Moorhead, Bridge Professor of American Church History, was also invited to serve but was precluded from doing so initially by his sabbatical leave and later by his new duties as editor of *Presbyterian History*.)

With the completion of phase one of the Committee's work, which produced the Architectural Program, President Gillespie reconstituted the Committee of six, this time including Rosemary Hall Evans. (Weadon, by then gravely ill, was released from the Committee.) All six agreed to serve again, with

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of Steadman's career, see Constance M. Grieff, Mary W. Gibbons, and Elizabeth G. C. Menzies, *Princeton Architecture: A Pictorial History of Town and Campus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 89-94.

Kay continuing as chair. In the absence of Moorhead, President Gillespie appointed to the Committee James C. Deming, Assistant Professor of Modern European Church History. Martin Tel, successor to the late David Weadon as Seabrook Director of Music, was named to the Committee in February 1997. Michael Livingston continued to serve on the Committee until his departure from the Seminary in January 1999. The remaining members served through the last (and ninth) meeting of the full Committee on February 16, 1999, thereby concluding four years of service.<sup>2</sup>

## II. THE CONSULTANTS

In consultation with the Administration preparatory to the first meeting of the Committee on May 12, 1995, Kay secured the appointment of Edward Anders Sövik, FAIA, of Northfield, Minnesota, as the liturgical architectural consultant to the Committee. Sövik was well qualified for this role. In the course of his distinguished career, he had worked on over three hundred church projects and served at various times as chair of the Committee on Religious Buildings of the American Institute of Architects, director and president of the Guild for Religious Architecture, director and secretary of the Liturgical Conference, and president of the Interfaith Research Center for Religion and Architecture. Recipient of numerous honors and design awards, he was the author of the influential book, *Architecture for Worship*.<sup>3</sup> He served as the principal drafter of the "Architectural Program for the Renovation of Miller Chapel and the Construction of an Annex," adopted by the Committee on September 8, 1995 and approved by the Board of Trustees in October of that year. He also advised the Committee in the appropriate protocols for the architectural competitions en route to the selection of the design architects on January 5, 1996. Sövik again returned to the Seminary early in January 1999 to tape a video segment on the history of church architecture for use in interpreting the work of the Committee to its several constituencies.

Three members of the Administration also made invaluable contributions to the work of the Committee. Dean James F. Armstrong, based on his experience with the Luce Library project, urged early on the hiring of an architectural consultant who would assist in the preparation of the narrative building program and be distinct from, and independent of, the design architect(s). He later participated in the Committee's deliberations on the selection of the design architects. William O. Harris, Seminary Librarian for Archives and Special Collections, made available to the Committee documents such as blueprints (the oldest from 1906), photographs (the earliest of the exterior dating from the 1850s or 60s; of the interior dating from sometime after the 1874 renovation, with an interior sketch from 1879), and historical accounts, including a brief one of his own.<sup>4</sup> Joicy R. Becker-Richards, Director of Educational Media, together with her dedicated crew, oversaw the production of several videotaped presentations on Miller Chapel for use with the Seminary's various constituencies. In addition to the contributions of these administrators, Faculty Secretary Lois Haydu provided the Committee office support.

## III. THE ARCHITECTS

Following the adoption of the Architectural Program in the fall of 1995, the Committee proceeded to select design architects. Inviting some dozen firms to submit schematic drawings and proposals, three finalists made presentations on January 5, 1996. After careful deliberation the Committee selected the architectural firm of Ford, Farewell, Mills, and Gatsch, Architects of Princeton, New Jersey to plan the renovation of Miller Chapel and the construction of a companion building to house pastoral and chapel staff and to provide adequate music rehearsal space, all guided by the Architectural Program.

There were three compelling reasons for the selection of Ford, Farewell, Mills, and Gatsch. First, the firm had an outstanding, award-winning record in projects involving historical preservation, including the New Jersey State House in Trenton. Second, the firm had previously worked with the

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<sup>2</sup> Between the final meeting of the Miller Chapel Renovation Committee and the rededication of the Chapel, a period of about eighteen months, Kay, Lansill (and later, John Gilmore, his successor as Vice President for Financial Affairs), Mattison, and Evans continued to serve in an advisory capacity to the Administration. During the construction process, meetings of this group were coordinated and chaired by John Gilmore.

<sup>3</sup> (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> "Miller Chapel," 21 March 1995.

Seminary in restoration, including the exterior repair and repainting of Alexander Hall. Third, the Committee recognized that day-to-day communication between the contractors and the design architect would be essential, and the Princeton location of the latter was regarded as advantageous to this end. Moreover, since the boundaries of the Historical District of the Borough of Princeton obtruded over a portion of Miller Chapel, any renovation needed the approval of the Borough Historical Commission, a body with which this architectural firm had already worked closely on other projects. The Committee's judgment appeared confirmed by subsequent events. At the final meeting of the Committee on February 26, 1999 it was announced that Ford, Farewell, Mills, and Gatsch had been selected by their peers as Architectural Firm of the Year in New Jersey, and that Michael Farewell, principal design architect, had been elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

In addition to Farewell, the architectural team consisted of James Gatsch, administrative architect, Chris Boyer and Heidi Fichtenbaum, project architects, and Anne Weber, preservation architect. Michael Schnoering was project manager representing the architects, and German Martinez Jr. was project manager representing the Seminary. Haverstick-Borthwick Company served as general contractors.

#### IV. GUIDELINES FOR RENOVATION

At the Committee's first meeting on May 12, 1995 general discussion led to the emergence of five guidelines for the Miller Chapel renovation. These criteria provided a context for the Committee's subsequent discussions and decisions. Formulated on behalf of the Committee by its chair, and adopted by the Committee on July 24, 1995, the following guidelines (with commentary added here) were incorporated into the Architectural Program that subsequently guided the architects in their design proposals:

(1) *Renovation should be faithful to the historical and theological heritage of Princeton Seminary.* This first criterion indicates that the Committee would proceed in its deliberations by becoming thoroughly acquainted with the history of Miller Chapel and its previous renovations and by planning a renovation congruent with Reformed theological perspectives. This first criterion, stressing the importance of institutional continuity and identity, is essentially a conservative guideline; but it also served as a winnowing or reformatory guideline insofar as it called to account the adequacy of previous renovations in expressing the architectural implications of the Reformation.

(2) *Renovation is not re-creation. A chapel is not simply a museum but a house for the people of God today. Therefore, authentic restoration must take account of present needs: "What would the original architect-builder, Charles Steadman, do today?"*<sup>5</sup> With this criterion, the Committee signaled that it did not envision a return to the original 1833-1834 Steadman design, at least with respect to the tenor of the Chapel.<sup>6</sup> In the words of the Architectural Program, "That would give insufficient attention to Presbyterians of later generations; it would for instance, lead the Seminary back to the time when there was no choir and no musical instrument."<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the Committee placed itself squarely in the Reformed tradition by regarding the structure as a shelter for God's people at worship, and not as a "house of God" in the Gothic sense of sacred space marking the Divine Presence.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the present needs of the people assembled for worship (e.g., disability access, acoustics, and safety, to name only three) were regarded as worthy of serious attention.

(3) *Beauty should be a consideration, not simply as decorative ornament, but in relation to the Chapel's liturgical and communal functions.* Here the Committee recognized an aesthetic criterion. Throughout its deliberations, discussions frequently considered the aesthetic implied by Reformed

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<sup>5</sup> A similar question may have guided the 1933 renovation: "To Delano and Aldrich was given the task not only of restoration but of re-creation, perhaps of doing what Steadman would have done had he lived in 1933." (H. L. McGill Wilson, "Miller Chapel," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 43/3 [Winter 1950]: 26).

<sup>6</sup> "Although it is legitimate to have in one's worship some ancient items (just as one has an antique armchair among one's furniture) the cult is not a museum, and if it facilitates access to another world, it is not to a world that has gone by forever, but to a world that is to come" (Jean-Jacques von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1965], 97-8).

<sup>7</sup> "Architectural Program for the Renovation of Miller Chapel and the Construction of an Annex," Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Sövik, *Architecture for Worship*, 23-39.

iconoclasm, Greek Revival architecture, and the degree to which materials used in the construction and furnishings should be “true” to what they are, rather than disguised by artifice. The criterion of beauty enjoined that the forms in which the beautiful was expressed should be related to the functional requirements of the liturgical assembly.

(4) *Given unforeseen future needs, some built-in flexibility may be advisable.* This criterion is admittedly the most tentative of the set. It reflects the Committee's awareness that not every contingency can be anticipated by an architectural renovation. It also reflects the Committee's awareness that the Chapel also had functions (such as concerts) other than worship, while at the same time indicating the Committee's reluctance to allow the symbols of pulpit and table to be trivialized by daily reconfiguration. Therefore, this criterion served more to identify or tag the issue of flexible space as one inevitably requiring discussion in considering specific design proposals.

(5) *Any annex must enhance and not eclipse the architectural integrity and function of Miller Chapel.* This final criterion pertained to the construction of an “annex” or adjacent building and its relation to Miller Chapel. The Committee was most concerned that the integrity and function of the Chapel not be compromised in any way by an addition or proximate edifice of overpowering proportions. Suffice it to say that the eventual scale and location of Scheide Hall were largely determined with this criterion firmly in mind.

## V. LAYERS OF TRANSFORMATION

Since its original construction in 1833-1834, Miller Chapel has undergone, in the words of Michael Farewell, “layers of transformation.” These layers are much like stratified sedimentary deposits, one on top of the other, in temporal sequence. Historical research has enabled us to identify the contributions and infer the vision of the earlier builders and previous renovators, all of whom contributed to the composite architectural artifact known as Miller Chapel.

### *The 1834 Meetinghouse*

The original building was a 60 x 45 ft. brick, whitewashed structure that comprised a meetinghouse fronting originally on Mercer Street between Alexander Hall and the Alexander house. With respect to the interior, all that remains of the original building is the gallery, its four slender support columns, its parapet of five sections (each with its guilloche molding), the Stairs connecting it to the vestibule, and the pews in the gallery with their curved end rails and sunken side panels.<sup>9</sup> Investigation during the renovation determined that the original color of the interior walls was green.<sup>10</sup> The building was an auditory or “nave church,” essentially one room (opening beyond a small vestibule). While no sketches or photographs survive of the original interior, it is likely that it resembled the oratory of Alexander Hall, with its pulpit desk, and the one-room pattern of Nassau (formerly, First) Presbyterian Church, Princeton, which was also built by Steadman in 1836, shortly after the completion of Miller Chapel. There was no center aisle, since it eliminated the best seating space for hearing the word.<sup>11</sup> There is no evidence that the building housed a musical instrument or provided designated space for a choir.

The theological significance of the one-room meetinghouse can hardly be overemphasized. What is being instantiated is the Reformed understanding of the common priesthood, of the one people of God, in opposition to the two-room Gothic church, which assigns the baptized faithful to the nave, while reserving the chancel, with its altar, for the ordained officers (and their attendants), thereby dividing the body of Christ into two castes of clergy and lay, with “sacred spaces” reserved primarily for those in “holy orders.” The meetinghouse is thus an architectural embodiment of Reformed theology.

Steadman attached to his meetinghouse a portico in the Greek Revival style of the period with six

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<sup>9</sup> Constance M. Grieff, “Miller Chapel: A Documentary History,” September 1997, 2-3. The wave motif, simple, square balusters, hand rail, and newel post all indicate that the stair leading from the vestibule to the gallery is original. Similar team res are found on the stairs of 10 Nassau Street, where Steadman had his offices (p. 14).

<sup>10</sup> See the report prepared by Conservation Resources, Inc.: “Conservation Services For: Miller Chapel, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey,” June 1997, esp. 36-48.

<sup>11</sup> “Architectural Program,” 8.

fluted Doric columns executed in wood, The Doric is the most austere of the Greek architectural orders, and these columns stand as sentinels guarding the elevated entrance.<sup>12</sup> Behind them, the exterior portico wall was originally stuccoed with scribed lines suggesting stone blocks. The Chapel exterior, devoid of any “overt visual sign or symbol,” such as a cross, “had, and has, no ecclesiastical affectation; it is a secular style, and therefore appropriate for a 'secular religion.’”<sup>13</sup> According to Edward Sövik:

Charles Steadman, if we are to read his mind by studying his architecture, was a disciple of Vitruvius and Palladio, typical of the sophisticated architect-builders of the time. Beauty, according to Vitruvius, results in part from respecting conventions, custom and tradition. Its other source is the delectable, the visual pleasure of fine proportions and relationships.

The choice, here, of the Doric order followed Vitruvius' judgment for a building of this use, and the portico proportions are “correct.” Dimensional relationships were generally consistent with the clear orderliness of arithmetic ratios. In detail the austerity of the Doric was intensified by the omission of sculptures and decorative or symbolic motifs, suggesting that Steadman responded to the rational and coherent theology of Calvin and the discipline of Presbyterian piety.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, in the first architectural layer comprising Miller Chapel, we find fused the Vitruvian aesthetic of symmetry and proportionality, the chaste restraint and discipline of the Doric order, and an absence of religious affectation. Moreover, the one-room meetinghouse, as the architectural correlate of the undivided body of Christ, expresses a Reformed ecclesiology.

### *The 1874 Renovation*

The 1874 renovation of Miller Chapel, prompted by the Faculty, was the gift of John C. Green of New York, a wealthy benefactor, who hired architect William A. Potter to design the improvements.<sup>15</sup> Potter retained Steadman's one-room interior but, with the addition of a small, polygonal domed apse, converted the building into a proper, if small, basilica. In other words, the original meetinghouse now had, in addition to its front portico, a rear apse, thereby constituting a basilica.<sup>16</sup> As with the North American meetinghouses of the colonial and early national periods, so the basilicas of the Roman Empire were essentially secular buildings and not temples or “sacred spaces.” (Significantly, the earliest church buildings, erected by Christians in the fourth century, followed the basilica pattern.) Thus, despite the imitative Gothic fenestration of the 1874 renovation, replete with arches and colored glass, together with “frescoes” (apparently of geometric designs), Potter maintained continuity with the secular character of the original structure, leaving largely undisturbed the Chapel's one-room configuration. What offended the sensibilities of Victorians was not the one-room meetinghouse, but, if we can cite their own comments, its sparse decoration. In contrast to their own homes, the Steadman interior was characterized as “exceedingly plain and artless,” as well as “bald and uninviting.”<sup>17</sup>

The Victorians also brought a new, progressive notion into church architecture: comfort. They installed a central furnace, gas lamps, as well as carpeting and upholstered new pews (except in the gallery, now enlarged, where the old pews apparently remained in use). These domestic comforts of the rising middle class were now finding their way into America's public buildings, including churches. The first evidence of an organ also dates from the 1874 renovation. It was a small one in a freestanding case

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<sup>12</sup> We can only speculate whether the number six earned symbolic significance. In the Christian tradition, six is “a 'created' extension of three, since it is a sum of the first three integers (one + two + three).” Moreover, there were six days of creation, and, hence, Augustine could write of the “six ages of man.” See Gary Wills, “Augustine's Magical Decade,” *The New York Review of Books* (May 6, 1999), 30. Interestingly, the chapel of the University of Georgia at Athens, completed in 1832 in the Greek Revival style, also has a portico of six Doric columns. The exterior of this building bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Miller Chapel.

<sup>13</sup> “Architectural Program,” 6. See also, Wilson, “Miller Chapel,” 25-6. For the case that church buildings should serve “secular” uses, see Hugh T. Kerr, “Building the Reformed Image,” *Reformed and Presbyterian World* 27 (September 1963): 304-10.

<sup>14</sup> “Architectural Program,” 9.

<sup>15</sup> Harris, “Miller Chapel,” 2; Grieff, “Miller Chapel,” 3. Potter would later design the Seminary's Stuart Hall. For an account of his work, see Sarah Bradford Landau, *Edward T. and William A. Potter: American Victorian Architects* (New York: Garland, 1979) and “William Appleton Potter” in *Macmillan Dictionary of Architects* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), 467-8.

<sup>16</sup> Sövik comments in this regard, “The interior was originally one room, modified by a small apse. This niche was probably an architectural reference to the early basilica, surely not an intentional 'holy place' for the clergy” (“Architectural Program,” 7).

<sup>17</sup> Cited by Grieff, “Miller Chapel,” 2.

that might have been found in a typical parlor. It was installed on recommendation of the Faculty.<sup>18</sup> The 1874 renovation further introduced memorial plaques, such as one might find in an English parish church, commemorating deceased professors of the Seminary. The plaques were hung in the new apse behind an axially centered pulpit and massive, dark (mahogany?) communion table. A sketch from *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* of 17 May 1879 indicates congregational seating on three sides of the pulpit and table, while a photograph from 1899 shows large, low-legged and high-backed, chairs for the presiding ministers. They are set within the apse, behind the pulpit and table, all on a platform raised two steps above the congregation.<sup>19</sup>

### *The 1933 Renovation*

In 1930, as the Great Depression began to grip America, the Seminary's Trustees considered demolishing Miller Chapel, replacing it with a new structure, and building a new dining hall. As Constance Grieff has commented, "poverty was the handmaiden of preservation" and, overtaken by the national crisis, neither the proposed dining hall nor a new chapel were built. Instead, Miller Chapel would be "restored."<sup>20</sup>

For this task the Trustees selected the architectural firm of Delano and Aldrich of New York. William Adams Delano and Chester Holmes Aldrich had established their partnership in 1903 and gone on to design a number of country homes for America's aristocrats, including the Rockefellers, Astors, Havemeyers, and Whitneys.<sup>21</sup> Delano and Aldrich proposed that the Chapel be rotated ninety degrees and relocated behind Alexander House facing west toward the green and aligned on an axis directly opposite of Hodge Hall. This was, in fact, done.<sup>22</sup>

The wholesale removal of the Victorian carpeting, upholstering, massive communion table, and arched fenestration conveyed the impression that Delano and Aldrich were "restoring" Miller Chapel "to its original colonial simplicity."<sup>23</sup> Nothing could have been further from the truth, and not simply because Miller Chapel had been built in the early national rather than the colonial period! In repudiating the Victorian interior design, it is true that "the clarity of the original interior was restored in clean surfaces and with clear blown-glass window panes (a faint lavender color was discernible)."<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the 1933 renovation did not restore the meetinghouse of a century earlier, but marked a major and radical departure from it. Delano and Aldrich converted the original one-room interior of the Steadman meetinghouse into a two-room church. This was accomplished (1) by extending the building some thirty-two feet, with an additional fifth bay of windows, thereby enabling the insertion of a large twenty-foot square chancel between the resulting "nave" and the former apse,<sup>25</sup> (2) by creating a center aisle or processional space running the length of the new nave, with subsidiary aisles retained along the walls, and (3) by separating the chancel from the nave. The latter was accomplished by raising the chancel three steps above the nave floor, by a crossbeam, and by a chancel ceiling slightly lower than that of the nave. The cincturing of the original interior into two rooms was further accented by narrowing the chancel's opening to the nave by means of dividing the chancel itself, with two flanking side rooms (vestry and sacristy) and antiphonal choir seating for twenty singers. The latter were separated from the nave by a large chancel pulpit balanced with a smaller lectern, each with its respective "modesty screens" further bisecting the two rooms. A small communion table was now moved as far from the congregation as possible, shoved up against the wall, a location more appropriate to a Gothic high altar.

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<sup>18</sup> Grieff reports that "by 1873 the faculty was recommending that the walls should be frescoed, the pulpit and pews modernized, the heating be improved, and an instrument of music be purchased" ("Miller Chapel," 3). Significantly, the purpose of the organ was "to assist the singing" (*Princeton Press*, 22 August 1874, cited by Grieff, "Miller Chapel," 4).

<sup>19</sup> Grieff, "Miller Chapel," 14, 20.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*; Wilson, "Miller Chapel," 26-7. See also Steven McLeod Bedford, "Delano and Aldrich," in *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, 1:538-9.

<sup>22</sup> Grieff, "Miller Chapel," 6.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 10 October 1933, 9:6, cited by Grieff, "Miller Chapel," 7.

<sup>24</sup> "Architectural Program," 2.

<sup>25</sup> What had been the apse was turned into a sounding chamber for a new, four-manual Gottfried organ, whose mechanisms and pipes took up six rooms of the Chapel basement (Grieff, "Miller Chapel," 9).

What had happened in the intervening century separating the work of Steadman from that of Delano and Aldrich was the growing influence in America of two momentous architectural developments: the Gothic Revival and the so-called Colonial Revival, which was not so much “colonial” as an eclectic conflation of several periods and styles. Certainly, the restoration of clear surfaces obscured by the Victorian decoration was characteristic of the Colonial Revival. But Delano and Aldrich's new interior floor plan, creating a nave and “divided chancel” on a centered aisle, owed more to the nineteenth-century English Gothic Revival. Inspired by Augustus Pugin (1812-1857), an English architect and Roman Catholic convert, the fundamental principle of this architectural school was the conviction that “the Gothic structures of the Middle Ages were the only really appropriate patterns for what was called Christian architecture.”<sup>26</sup> By the time of the 1933 renovation the Gothic style had swept Princeton. Not only had neighboring Trinity Episcopal Church replaced its own Greek Revival structure with a Gothic building in 1868, but, by 1928, Princeton University itself had erected a monumental Gothic chapel designed by Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942).<sup>27</sup> Yet within fifty years, the two-room arrangement, undercut by the reforms of the Second Vatican Council,<sup>28</sup> was beginning to be acknowledged as anomalous for Miller Chapel. In 1974 “the first chancel riser was extended far enough into the nave to make room for a massive new Table within the space of the nave.”<sup>29</sup> The Reformed heritage was stirring.

## VI. RETRIEVING THE REFORMED HERITAGE

Quite early in its deliberations, and based on a preliminary draft of the Architectural Program prepared by Sövik, the Committee on July 24, 1995 approved “in principle” the recovery of Steadman's one-room design and “the placement of the choir in such a way that their performative role does not eclipse their liturgical role of leading the congregation, of which they are a part, in song and praise.”<sup>30</sup> The Committee, at this time, also approved the opening up of the “chancel/choir” area by eliminating the flanking side rooms and by extending the “nave” ceiling/roof forward so that the entire worship room would have a seamless contiguous veiling reinforcing the one-room character of the space. The fusing of the two rooms into one was strengthened further by the now completely contiguous side walls (which, fortuitously for the organ, angled slightly outward within the former chancel) and by a wood floor running uninterrupted for the entire length of the worship space.

As implemented in the renovation, it was determined that the Lord's table, the seating for the presiding ministers, and the seating for the choir (with the exception of one row on a riser) should all be on the same level as the worshipping congregation. “This is deemed fitting in that (1) the Table and the liturgical president and action will be visible without the need for a one-step elevation; (2) liturgical presidency occurs in the act of preaching and presiding at the Lord's Table; (3) the Table is for the whole company of the baptized and not only their ordained officers; (4) when not presiding, the ministers remain part of the worshipping congregation.”<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the removal of all “modesty screens” opened up the worship space to greater ease of movement and physical accessibility to the Lord's table.

Given the retention of the Gothic main aisle, emphasizing the centered axis of the worship space, it was determined that the Lord's table continue to be centered on this axis in the “basilica position.” Mindful of the Reformed heritage of the meetinghouse, as well as the 1874 renovation, it was further determined that there be one substantial center for the reading *and* the proclamation of the word, a pulpit elevated four steps (principally for acoustical reasons) and centered on the main axis behind the Lord's

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<sup>26</sup> Sövik, *Architecture for Worship*, 23. For more on Pugin and the Gothic Revival, see Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, bk. 2, *From Watts and Wesley to Martineau, 1690-1900*, vol. 4, *From Newman to Martineau, 1850-1900* (1962; reprint, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996), 26-33. For an interpretation as to how and why the Reformed succumbed to the Gothic Revival, see Howard G. Hageman, “Liturgical Place,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 56 (February 1963): 29-39.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Gambee, *Princeton* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 85, 194-5.

<sup>28</sup> See O. Söhngrén, “Der Begriff das Sakralen im Kirchenbau,” in *Bild in Verkündigung: Festgabe Hanna Jursch* (1962), 157-74, esp. 168.

<sup>29</sup> “Architectural Program,” 3.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes of the Miller Chapel Renovation Committee, 24 July 1995, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Minutes of the Miller Chapel Renovation Committee, 5 September 1997, 2.

table.<sup>32</sup> Word and sacrament were thus reunited symbolically and shown as central to the liturgical action. Around the table and pulpit the congregation could now gather on all four sides, with the choir understood and participating as part of the congregation.

The pulpit is a replica of that which graced Miller Chapel from 1933 to 1999. It is slightly broader than its model and is reached by a generous and graceful set of stairs. A movable lectern is attached, capable of holding both a large pulpit Bible and a sermon manuscript or notes. Thanks to the extraordinary acoustics of Miller Chapel, the spoken word by a trained speaker can be heard without artificial amplification. The pulpit can be placed into storage for those few occasions when the Chapel is used for organ recitals and musical or choral concerts. Nevertheless, it is not readily moveable, and this secure anchorage serves to symbolize the permanent importance of the word of God read and proclaimed.

The Lord's table is a replica of a table that Wallace Nutting called "confessedly the most important in America," dating from the years 1650-1660, when it was used for communion at First Church, Salisbury, Massachusetts, and now part of the collection of the Hartford Atheneum in Connecticut.<sup>33</sup> James Becker, Cabinetmaker, of Wilder, Vermont, crafted the reproduction. At thirty-five inches, the table in Miller Chapel stands one inch higher than its venerable model in order to accommodate a standing eucharistic president. Significantly, it is still low enough to accommodate someone in a wheelchair who may preach or preside from the table.<sup>34</sup> On behalf of the Committee, Joel Mattison subsequently secured new communion ware for Miller Chapel to grace its substantial table. Boardman Silversmiths, now of Meriden, Connecticut, and a firm dating to the eighteenth century, crafted several solid silver pieces: a flagon (11 1/4" high), one large (10 1/4" high) chalice, four smaller (7") chalices, one large (16" diameter) bread dish, and two (12" diameter) bread trays. In addition, Mattison secured a turned mahogany tray (15" diameter), after an eighteenth-century model used at Williamsburg, Virginia. The chalices are all typical of early nineteenth-century American pieces.

The Committee discussed, at more than one meeting, the appropriateness of a permanent baptismal font for Miller Chapel. The argument was made that there would be both catechetical and pedagogical value in having the symbol of Christian initiation visibly present in the Chapel. It would reinforce within the Seminary the importance and ecumenical significance of baptism, and it would provide a place where students could be trained in how to administer the sacrament. On the other hand, Miller Chapel is not a parish church under the governance of a session, which, in Presbyterian law, is the court that admits persons to baptism and, thereby, to church membership. There was also a concern that the placement of a font in Miller Chapel would encourage the practice of private baptism at variance with Presbyterian doctrine. For this reason, no permanent font was installed in keeping with the theological heritage of the Seminary.

Discussion also took place on the degree to which the renovated Chapel should adapt to the demands of "contemporary worship," insofar as that term denotes the use of electronic media. Given the speed of change in which media technologies are "morphing," there was concern that anything undertaken at this time would be obsolete within a few years, if not months. There was also the concern that if the liturgy is overtaken by electronic media, then the chief criterion for worship becomes the quality of "production values." The Committee was most reluctant to embrace such a criterion, associated as it is with entertainment, without prolonged theological reflection and cultural analysis. There was also anecdotal evidence that the contemporary worship movement is a way station for many Christians who then "move on," so to speak, to more classical liturgical and musical expressions. For these reasons, the Committee did not proceed here with dramatic innovations. Nevertheless, provision was made for state-of-the-art electronic media and projection in the large, multipurpose second-floor room of Scheide Hall. A new Steinway concert piano, given by Dr. Sun Hee Kwak of the So-Mang Presbyterian Church in Seoul, Korea, also provides accompaniment in the Chapel.

The St. John's Celtic cross from Iona, Scotland, which had abruptly appeared in the Chapel by

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<sup>32</sup> Given the now longstanding Protestant enthusiasm for the Gothic divided chancel, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the Second Vatican Council envisioned a single ambo as the place where the scriptures would be read and the homily could be offered. See "General Instruction on the Roman Missal [1970]," in *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Austin P. Flannery (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 272.

<sup>33</sup> Wallace Nutting, *Furniture Treasury* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), fig. 811.

<sup>34</sup> E-mail communication from Rolf Jacobson to James F. Kay, 27 April 2000.



student initiative in the latter years of President John A. Mackay's tenure, presented its own problems. Meetinghouses of the Calvinist tradition generally eschewed crosses as “papistical,” and, to this day, none has surfaced at Nassau Presbyterian Church. Moreover, the Celtic Cross was too small to suspend or to hang on a wall, even if appropriate wall space were available. The solid metal cross was also too heavy to serve as a processional cross, even if such were desirable. Given these circumstances, the Committee elected to affix the Celtic cross to a pole inserted into a floor standard, enabling it to be placed appropriately according to the celebration. In this way, the renovation preserved yet another portion of Miller Chapel's complex legacy.

## VII. PRESERVING A COMPLEX LEGACY

What had become clear through historical and archival research was that Miller Chapel had indeed experienced layers of transformation throughout its long lifetime. Each architectural epoch had deposited its legacy, and each of the two major renovations in 1874 and 1933 had displayed both gratitude and impatience with aspects of its inheritance,

As previously noted, the Committee did not interpret its commission to “renovate” as meaning to “repristinate.” For that reason, each of the sedimentary layers deposited by previous generations, or the concerns or values represented by those layers, is at least partially preserved in the 1999-2000 renovation. For example, the Committee was most concerned to protect and restore the remaining Steadman artifacts, namely, the exterior portico and the interior gallery. Accordingly, the stuccoed front of the building with scribing simulating stone was restored, but there was actually a transposition of the original color scheme of the exterior. With the approval of the Historical Commission, the Doric columns were painted white, as in the Delano and Aldrich renovation, and the side exterior walls, which were originally whitewashed in 1834, were painted cream. Again, no attempt was made to restore the original fenestration of the building; it remained that of the 1933 renovation. While the gallery was retained and refurbished, its flooring was restored to that of the linoleum, so excellent for acoustics and similar to that used in 1933, while the installation of an elevator at grade for disability access to the basement and main floor required the removal of some gallery pews. Safety concerns and disability access also led to the enlargement of the vestibule, extending it several feet forward under the entire gallery.

With respect to the 1874 Victorian renovation, its decision to introduce an organ into the building was reaffirmed. The modest height of the Chapel, together with the sounding requirements of an organ, determined that the instrument be located in an area near the former apse rather than moved to the gallery. Again, a Subcommittee on the Memorial Plaques chaired by Kathryn Johnson, recommended, and the Committee approved, that at least the Samuel Miller and Charles Hodge commemorative plaques of marble, dating from the 1874 renovation, undergo restoration and remain in the Chapel, but moved to the vestibule, where they now hang flanking the exterior door to the portico. (Subsequently, the B. B. Warfield and the Hodge family plaques of bronze were also restored and affixed to the walls flanking the entry door to the worship space.) The Committee further recommended that the remaining memorial plaques be restored and installed in other campus buildings, especially Stuart Hall, a Victorian-era structure.

The Victorian concern for the comfort of worshipers is also represented in the new building. Miller Chapel is now fully air-conditioned, with a central hearing system, a state-of-the-art-sound and audio-taping system, enlarged restroom facilities (in the basement), and new recessed lighting with six neoclassical chandeliers accompanying the restored 1933 fixtures. A judicious use of carpet, limited to the basement and the Steadman stairs leading to the gallery, protects the Chapel's extraordinary acoustics,

Contemporary concern for public safety and accessibility find expression in a new “sprinklered” fire protection system and a new exit door and stairwell in the former apse leading to egress at grade, as well as the closing up of the steep “pit” entrance to the basement and its replacement by a more modulated entry below the vestibule opposite Scheide Hall. Hospitality to the disabled is better afforded by the new elevator serving grade, basement, and first-floor levels, by code-mandated restroom facilities, by the elimination of chancel stairs, and by the provision for wheelchair seating within the rows of pews.

The Committee's decision to return to the one-room interior of the original Steadman structure was

taken with the view that the Delano and Aldrich renovation of 1933 should remain in place with respect to the following: Gothic center aisle and subsidiary wall aisles, gallery flooring, wainscoting and detailing of the worship room, fenestration, two circular lighting fixtures in neo-classical style centered on the main ceiling, and two stately, yet moderately exuberant, Corinthian columns and companion pilasters majestically flanking the worship space at a point formerly marking the division of the chancel and the nave. In addition, the replica “Queen Anne” chairs for the presiding ministers, introduced in the 1933 renovation, have been restored, and new ones made by James Becker for a total of four. In this way, the Committee preserved most of the “Colonial Revival” interior of 1933, while retiring those Gothic elements of the floor plan at sharp variance with the theological heritage of the Seminary.<sup>35</sup>

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

All architectural witness to the word of God is, of course, penultimate, and renovation and reformation will again visit Miller Chapel in circumstances we cannot fully anticipate or imagine. When that time comes, our hope is that the Miller Chapel Renovation Committee of 1995-1999 will have left a sufficient trail of markers so that its intentions will be more than ciphers for those who follow. With joy and gratitude for all who have labored in planning, designing, building, crafting, and funding this project we say thank you on behalf of coming generations, and we release the work of our common labors for communal appropriation by the Seminary.

The hymn, “Father, Long Before Creation,” translated from Chinese by Francis P. Jones and set to the tune of “Miller Chapel” by David Hugh Jones in 1954, offers an appropriate conclusion, in its second verse, to the work of the Miller Chapel Renovation Committee:

Though the world may change its fashion,  
Yet our God is e'er the same;  
His compassion and His covenant  
Through all ages will remain.  
God's own children, God's own children,  
Must forever praise His name.<sup>36</sup>

To God alone be the glory!

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<sup>35</sup> The 1999-2000 renovation was also accomplished without breaking the “footprint” of Miller Chapel as had occurred both in 1874, with the addition of the apse, and, again, in 1964, with the enlargement of the apse to accommodate a Möller electro-pneumatic organ.

<sup>36</sup> In *The Hymnbook*, ed, David Hugh Jones (Richmond: Presbyterian Church in the United States, The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Reformed Church in America, 1955), 107.