

The Unification Cheon Won Gung: The Function of Contemporary Religious Architecture - The Cheon Won Gung Temple

Ronald Brown
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The complex features the Sanctum, a seven-story stone building in a "reinterpreted Renaissance architectural style," a palace with a grand ballroom, a Genealogy Center, administration offices, living areas, educational centers, an outdoor plaza resembling that in front of St. Peter's in Rome, a hall celebrating or the life and work of True Parents, a lake with daily cruises and an assortment of other structures.

The temple is a new chapter in faith for Unificationists. For many pioneering Unificationists, the temple is an unnecessary extravagance since they see themselves as part of an organic movement and not 'just another religion'. For others, the Temple feels like a watershed, a natural step in the development of the kingdom, and, in fact, represents the end of a providential era and the beginning of a dynamic new phase.



Ronald Brown

The traditional functions of Religious Architecture

From the time of Stonehenge, Göbekli Tepe and other Neolithic stone places of worship, monumental religious architecture has played a central function in world religions. The complex of Angkor Wat, the Temple of Solomon, the Pyramids of Teotihuacán, St. Peter's in Rome, Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, the Pashupatinath Hindu Temple in Nepal, and St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue, have all served different and often changing functions in their respective religious communities and broader societies.

Solomon's Temple for example, proclaimed the military conquest of the Land of Canaan and the **political** unification of the 12 tribes under one king, one nation and one God. The Berliner Dom the Masjid al-Haram and the prominent synagogues and churches in the

Americas and Europe served a similar function.

St. Patrick's Cathedral defiantly proclaimed the arrival, success, and power of the despised Irish **immigrant** Catholic masses. In a similar fashion the Islamic Culture Center, Temple Emanuel and the Ganesh Hindu temple in Flushing, Queens, proclaimed the success of their respective immigrant groups.

The ever more elegant Vatican, in turn, served as a vehicle to announce the **spiritual** primacy of the Catholic church over the various Protestant heretics. Temple Emanuel and the Islamic Culture Center confirmed the primacy of German Reform Judaism and Sunni Islam.

Social success is also a very central function for religious groups climbing the social and economic

ladder. The original Low Church Calvinist rejection of statues, organs, paintings, figurative stain glass windows, ornate altar tables, and pulpits was gradually eroded as the members of the Dutch, Scottish, Reformed, and Huguenot Churches achieved social and economic success

Of course, a prominent Fifth Avenue St. Patrick's Cathedral, centrally located Notre Dame in Paris, opulent Berlin Synagogue or mosque in India, and even modest houses of worship of all religions often become **targets** during periods of social, political or economic upheavals. The Jewish Bible instructed the Israelites to "tear down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their Ashe'rim with fire". The Protestant Reformation and French Revolution were marked by the destruction or repurposing of Catholic churches. During the Russian and Chinese Marxist revolutions, houses of worship were destroyed as incompatible with the atheistic ideology. The desecration and destruction of the Ayodhya and other mosques in India by militant Hindus were integral to the quest to "Make India Hindu Again." Defacing mosques and synagogues in the United States was commonplace during the various Jewish-Muslim wars.

Without a doubt, houses of worship will remain a central feature of world religions. Even Hollywood sci fi films such as Jedi, universally that the future will be profoundly religious and places of worship will figure prominently.



Coruscant Jedi Temple – Star Wars

steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?l=brazilianandid=1240448436

The Functions of Monumental Religious Architecture in the 21st Century

Architectural Awe

Both the Cheonwon Temple, the Coruscant Jedi Temple, and most of the religious centers of contemporary new religious movements serve similar functions in religious architecture in the 21st Century and maybe even the Third Millennium. They all feature **Striking architecture**. HJ Global News featured a broadcast on 12/17/2022 that stated that after visiting the Cheonwon Temple, the visitor would declare, "I must also join in with this providential effort, I also want to become a Cheon IL Guk citizen. Julien Grey added that they will want to "Sign memberships as they depart."

The 1977 Buddhist Dharmakaya Cetiya complex in Thailand leaves the visitor with the same conviction. Its futuristically designed hemispherical dome is 108 meters (354.331 feet) in diameter and surrounded by concentric sloping terraces. The visitor is overwhelmed by the 300,000 Buddha images enshrined on the exterior dome and an additional 700,000 Buddha images inside.

Equally striking is the headquarters of the Mexican movement, La Luz del Mundo, founded in Eusebio Joaquín González. Literature writes about their central church in Guadalajara as "The building is the message." The monumental avenue leading to the sanctuary enhances the towering multi-levelled pyramid that soars over the neighborhood.



Dhammakaya Cetiya

[The Great Dhammakaya Cetiya](#)



La Luz del Mundo in Guadalajara

www.debate.com.mx/guadalajara/Bloquean-359-mdp-y-1.5-mdd-a-Luz-del-Mundo-y-esta-se-defiende-20200304-0202.html

Weaponization of Architecture

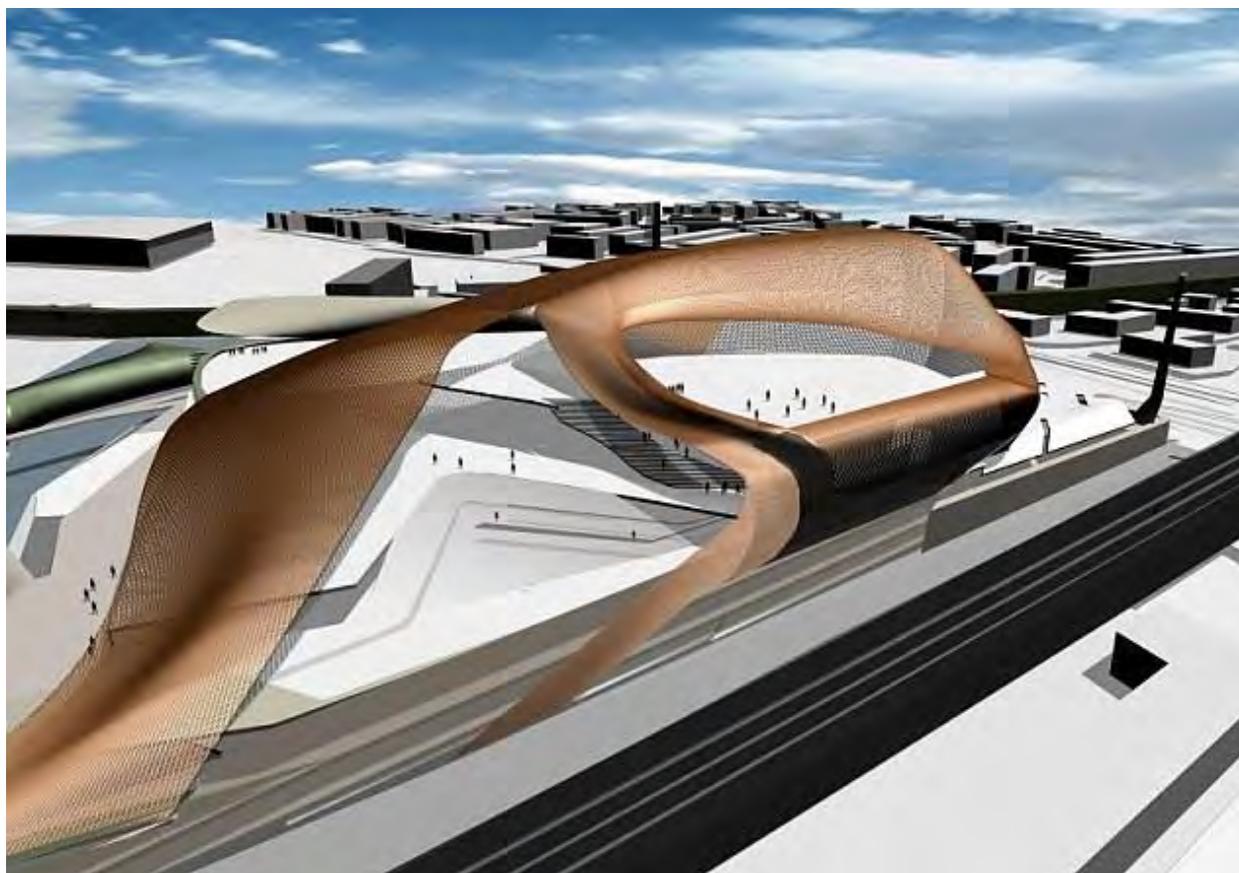
The monumental houses of worship of many NRMs employ architecture to celebrate their **victory** over vicious persecution. As the word "Unification" indicates, the Movement set itself against the multitude of traditional Christian denominations and groups. The arrest and imprisonment of their founder, persecution in many countries, arrest of missionaries and the recent crackdown in Japan could have well relegated the movement to a footnote in a history of world religions text book. But they survived the epoch of persecution and proudly constructed their monumental headquarters as a sign of this victory.

The South Asian Islamic, Tablighi Jamaat movement claims 80 million members. Central to their mission is reclaiming non-practicing for Sunni Islam and proselytizing non-Muslims. Members are required to devote lengthy periods of their lives to spreading Islam, and has effectively weaponized mosque

architecture. The recent rise of "political" Islam challenged Western domination of the Middle East, the cultural supremacy of the West, the Israeli genocide of the Palestinians, President Trump's "Muslim Ban," and a host of other oppressive measures. The planned London mega-mosque has likewise encountered massive opposition since 1996, when plans for the mosque were first revealed. The famed Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid designed a mosque that would trumpet the victory of Tablighi Jamaat in the heart of the Western World, London. It would be three times the capacity of St. Paul's Cathedral and include a visitor and conference center, a residential school for 500 pupils, and a reception center for visiting VIPs with 20 guest suites. Groups such as the London Christian Peoples Alliance, the Waterman Environmental Council, and others opposed the mosque. Ken Livingston, the Mayor of London, lamented "the particularly vicious nature of the campaign against a possible Muslim place of worship in East London". The mosque remains a work in progress.

Another NRM that celebrated its survival against great odds was the Vortrekker Center outside Pretoria, South Africa. Every year, Afrikaners gather at the monument on December 16th to remember the Day of the Vow. Forced out of the Cape by the English "Pharaohs," persecuted in concentration camps during the bloody Boer Wars, and resisted by native Africans, the Afrikaners proclaimed themselves to be a new Chosen People of God, carved out their independent "Zion" in the north of South Africa. On those sacred grounds, they recite the Afrikaner vow, which reads: "We stand here before the Holy God of heaven and earth, to make a vow to Him that, if He will protect us and give our enemy into our hand, we shall keep this day and date every year as a day of thanksgiving like a sabbath, and that we shall build a house to His honor wherever it should please Him, and that we will also tell our children that they should share in that with us in memory for future generations. For the honor of His name will be glorified by giving Him the fame and honor for the victory."

Only through suffering and persecution will a people realize its spiritual and national identity and mission.



Proposed London Tablighi Jamaat mega-mosque

www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2243800/East-London-mega-mosque-4-times-capacity-St-Pauls-Cathedral-rejected-local-council.html



Afrikaner Vorotrekker Monument

The Elevation of the Founders

The Cheonwon Temple places the founder of the Unification Movement, Father Sun Myung Moon, and his wife, who succeeded him as leader, center stage in the Unification Complex. Documentation refers to the temple as the "Central temple of Heavenly Parent". A "Holy of Holies centered on the True Parents." The Exhibition Hall depicts True Parents' life course, "a space where the True Parents' love for Heaven and humanity is embodied." Few references are made to God or Jesus, although many followers refer to Mother Moon as "the only-begotten daughter of God". The Schedule for Great Works includes commemorating True Parent's Birthday, the Foundation Day of the Movement, the Holy Ascension of Sun Myung Moon, Blessings for Unmarried 1st Generations Spirits, and Ancestor Liberation events. The tradition of deifying founders of religious movements has gone into overdrive in these first decades of the 21st century.

The Brooklyn-based Jewish Lubavitch Movement, also known as Chabad, has gone so far as to declare their leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, The Rebbe" to be the Messiah. His tomb in Brooklyn has become a pilgrimage site for the estimated 100,000 devout followers and thousands of other devotees. They are convinced that the Rebbe was the promised Jewish Messiah and he would return to life in the near future. Considered by many Jews to be a Jewish cult or even heretical movement, the figure of The Rebbe continues to inspire and give hope to many Jews.



Tomb of Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson

www.google.com/search?q=lubavitchers+tomb+are+there&source=ecb9f147afa4a979&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS892US892&udm=2&biw=911&bih=405&sxsrf=ADLYWIIkR9KRGB_rrFASTv6ImINi_7WoeA%3A1735234412593&ei=bJNtZ7_0I5jIptQP1t-JoQM&ved=0ahUKEwi_2o72-

Eusebio Joaquín González, the founder of the Luz del Mundo Movement has all but been deified. Many followers declare that The apostle is a living God. His survival despite vicious persecution only strengthened the loyalty, donations, and love of their Apostle. According to the faithful, the charges against González were inspired by the devil and hostile Christian denominations. When church leader Naasón Joaquín García was arrested on charges of child sexual abuse in 2019, 600,000 followers gathered in front of church headquarters to declare his innocence and their continued loyalty to him. A giant picture of him dominated the grand avenue leading to the sanctuary.



Rebbe Schneerson as the Messiah

robert-ullmann.pixels.com/featured/1-messiah-is-here-robert-ullmann.html?product=poster



Apostle Naasón Joaquín, leader of La Luz del Mundo in front of his throne

english.elpais.com/usa/2021-02-19/the-underground-lair-of-la-luz-del-mundos-apostle.html

Apocalyptic Beliefs

Medieval churches of Europe employed the languages of statues, paintings, representative stained-glass windows, mosaics, and frescoes to communicate the message to the illiterate masses. So too, the houses of worship of the 21st century mobilize architecture to break through the inundation of images and information from Hollywood movies, Broadway shows, HBO, and the internet to reach the saturated masses. Many such NRM have expressed their **apocalyptic beliefs** in the structures themselves. Mother Moon of the Unification Movement stated, "The completion of this building is the completion of the providence of heaven. It is the completion of human history" (July 4, 2029).

Unlike the traditional houses of worship that sought to isolate themselves from the profane outside world, Reverend Robert Schuller instructed architects Philip Johnson and John Burgee to design a glass enclosure that would be open to the "sky and the surrounding world. The view from the main entrance was of the thousands of cars in the parking lot. Ten thousand glass panels were affixed to a slender framework of steel trusses surrounded by a 34-acre campus. Inspired by the charismatic Rev. Norman Vincent Peal who featured football stars and titans of industry as saints for the modern world, Schuller wanted his cathedral to be part of the modern world.



Crystal Cathedral

Temple of Solomon, São Paulo, Brazil

explanders.com/latin-america-antarctica/brazil/sao-paulo/temple-of-solomon/

Conclusion

The traditional method of studying world religions has been vertically where every element of a religion is placed within the overall structure of the particular religion. The method I have employed in this blog is a horizontal method where a particular element of a religion, in this case sacred headquarters, is compared to the same element in other world religions or NRMs. While most followers and scholars of religions tend to stress the uniqueness of their respective faiths, a horizontal study reveals that they are all responding to a contemporary crisis but in a diversity of ways.

This horizontal method highlights the constant dialogue and conflict between the many world religions as they struggle to achieve primacy in the 21st Century. Viewed horizontally, one sees the competing religions engaging in a creative process of dialogue, conflict, and exchange of ideas and structures. Converts freely pass from one movement to another, taking their experiences. These first decades of the 21st Century and the first century of the Third Millennium are awash in solutions to current problems, such as globalization, climate change, global warming, religious wars, crime and drugs, social upheavals, racism, and discrimination, the decline of the traditional family, pandemics, among others and challenging visions of the future.

How will the Unification Movement incorporate this new element of their faith? The 3rd millennium is off to an amazing and sometimes overwhelming start; the speed at which the current global culture creates and discards ideas is daunting.

The response of NRM's to these challenges will be very revealing.

Dr. Ronald J. Brown is a professor of history, political science and ethnic studies at Touro College, and teaches courses in world religions at Unification Theological Seminary. A docent at the New York Historical Society with degrees from Harvard Divinity School, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the University of Geneva, he is author of [A Religious History of Flushing, Queens](#); [Into the Soul of African-American Harlem](#); and [How New York Became the Empire City](#).