

Union Theological Seminary

Individual Landmark

3041 Broadway

Designation Date: November 15, 1967



Union Theological Seminary. Photo: Lorraine Colbert

Rising high above the lower buildings adjacent to them, in the quadrangle of the Union Theological Seminary, the Brown Memorial Tower in the southeast corner and the James Tower set in the middle of the Claremont Avenue side are among the finest examples of the English Perpendicular Gothic style of architecture in New York. There is a sophisticated restraint revealed in their design, coupled with a delicate precision in the execution of the details that seems to impart a special quality to the masonry. These striking towers are expressions in masonry of the intent of the designer, and manifest the art and skill of the master stone carvers who produced them.

At the base of these square towers, buttresses project boldly from the corners, stepping inward as they rise to the top and terminating in pinnacles with delicate finials. Parapets at the roof line are paneled and ornately decorated. In the upper half of the Brown Memorial Tower, the unusually tall windows with their thin mullions and fine shafts of stone end as handsome, intricate tracery. The windows in the James Tower, though shorter, have much the same quality.

The Brown Memorial Tower doorway is impressive and imposing in size. A broad flight of steps leads up to the transomed double doors recessed within the wide reveal of an enriched archway. These doors open into a projected vestibule, embellished with decorated tympani, columns, niches, moldings and ornamented panels. Set back above the vestibule, an enormous arch rises above the first floor. Within its deep reveal, two tiers of windows light the high lobby under the Tower. The arch with its traceried windows is repeated in the south elevation facing West 120th Street.

The James Memorial Chapel on Claremont Avenue extends south from the Tower of the same name. The walls of the east and west elevations are evenly divided into seven bays separated by stepped buttresses. The treatment of the clerestory windows in both facades is identical. Enframed within a pointed arch, they have two mullions dividing the tall arches terminating in handsome tracery at the top. The north arch with the balcony behind it has stained glass in the upper two thirds; the two south arches where the choir stalls are located only have glass within the tracery at the top, while the other four arches contain full stained glass windows. On the Claremont Avenue side, the buttresses rise above the crenelated parapet wall and terminate in finials. Both doorways to the Chapel are distinctive and distinguished in design. Between the buttresses of the east elevation facing the inner courtyard, there are a series of low arched windows at ground floor level. Behind them is a cloistered walkway or arcade. The Chapel is also a fine example of the English Perpendicular Gothic Style.

[Read the full NYC LPC designation report here.](#)