

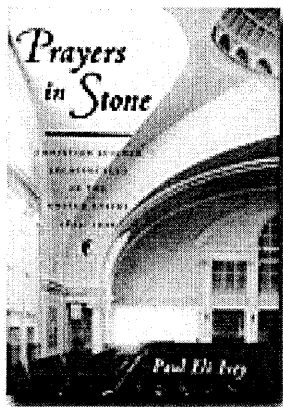
23 November 2007

Tersh Boasberg, Chairman  
D. C. Historic Preservation Review Board  
801 N. Capitol Street, N. E. Suite 3000  
Washington, D. C. 20002

Dear Tersh Baosberg, David Maloney, and other members of the Preservation Review Board,

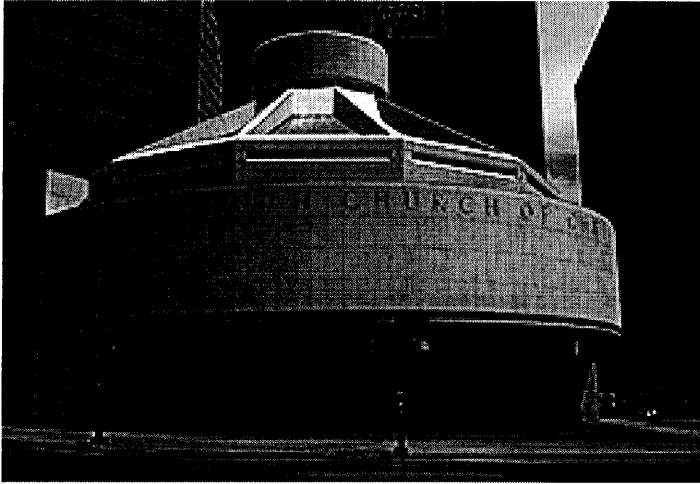
My colleague Richard Longstreth has asked me to lend my support for the landmark nomination of the award-winning design of Araldo Cossutta's Third Church of Christ, Scientist, Washington, D. C., and I do so with pleasure and urgency. The building is of exceptional importance as it provides significant historical information about the history and development of one of only two major indigenous American religions, Christian Science, the only American religion with a primarily urban focus and interest in significant architecture. The fact that a Christian Science church could be located in such an important area of the city is proof in itself of Christian Science's desire to be an important urban presence, and the desire to sell the property a signal of a probable financial decline of Christian Science's fortunes. Hopefully a financial motive will not prevent this important piece of Modernist architecture and Christian Science history from being demolished.

I am author of Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894-1930 (University of Illinois Press, 1999) and have closely studied many of the Christian Science churches built in the United States and Great Britain during the denomination's existence. The book came from my dissertation at SUNY-Binghamton, in which I also looked specifically at Christian Science leader Mary Baker Eddy's wishes to have a significant presence in the Washington, D. C. area.



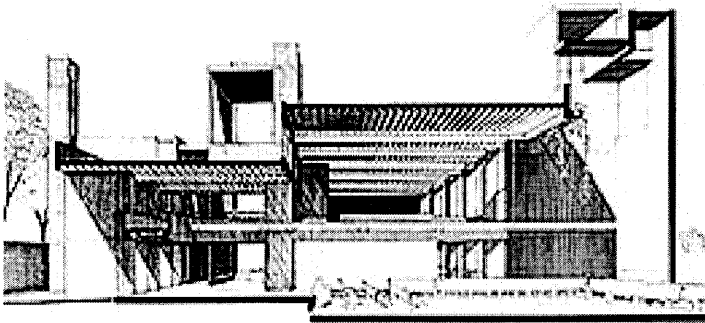
Several monumental classical buildings were built in Washington, D. C. in the twentieth century, of which Third Church is the most recent and important, as it represents a clearly Modernist vision of church architecture, hinted at in Christian Science church designs in The Hague and Bern, Switzerland. Among other important Modernist Christian Science

church designs is Harry Weese's Seventeenth Church of Christ, Scientist (1968) in the Chicago Loop.



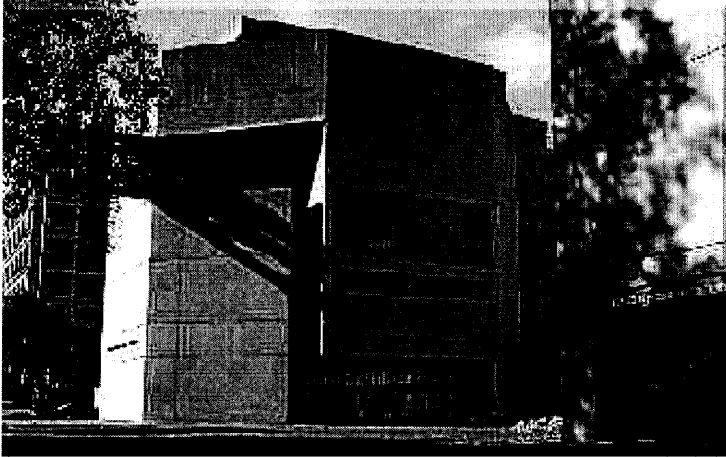
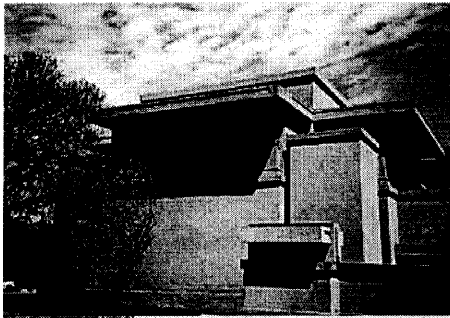
Harry Weese, Seventeenth Church of Christ, Scientist (1968)

Third Church, Washington, D. C. is a bold Brutalist design, one of the few remaining religious structures in this style. Paul Rudolph's 1968 Christian Science Organization Building in Champaign-Urbana has been razed, and now we face the real problem of Third Church being lost. Third Church is an exceptional example of modernized classicism, a style of absolute importance to the publicity and ideals of civic permanence explored by the early Christian Science movement.



Paul Rudolph's Brutalist Christian Science Organization Building (1962)

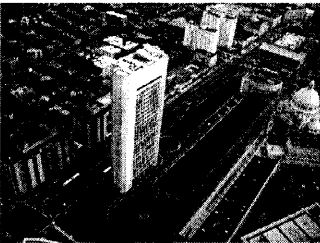
It is certainly important that the style of Third Church is an example of Le Corbusier-inspired Modernist architecture, and that Cossutta's design is the only significant Modernist quotation of one of the most important religious structures in the United States, Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple (1906).



Araldo Cossutta, Third Church of Christ, Scientist

It is also tantamount to understand the broader context of Christian Science architecture in the United States in order to defend Third Church's civic and architectural relevance in the urban fabric of Washington, D. C.

Third Church of Christ, Scientist, Washington, D. C. is actually part of a much broader insistence on an urban presence for the Christian Science church that began in the early twentieth century, retooled in the late 1960s, as the church was re-conceiving itself and trying to modernize its vision of what was an American-born religion whose theology was ultimately based in American congregational Puritanism. The Christian Science Board of Directors expressed this modernization by hiring I. M Pei's architectural firm in the 1960s, after the firm's successful completion of the Boston Government Center's master plan. The Christian Science Board of Directors, which had considered plans for expansion as early as the 1950s, believed that the firm's idea for urban growth were consonant with their own, in particular, in stimulating civic improvements.



Christian Science Center, Boston

This attention to urban renewal marks Christian Science church building from its inception in the late nineteenth century. The architectural heritage of Christian Science,

