

**D.C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION FOR
HISTORIC LANDMARK**

APPLICATION TO:

Designate
 Rescind
 Amend

Summary of Amendments: Supplemental information added and miscellaneous editing

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Property Name Third Church of Christ, Scientist and Christian Science Monitor Building

Address 1601 I Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Square and Lot Number(s) Square 185, Lot 41

Present Owner Christian Science Board of Directors of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts

Owner Address 175 Huntington Avenue, AH2, Boston, Massachusetts 02136

Original Use Church and Office Building

Present Use Church and Office Building

Date of Construction 1968 - 1971

Date of Major Alteration(s)

Architect(s) I.M. Pei & Partners

Architectural Style/Period Modern

NAME OF APPLICANT Committee of 100 on the Federal City

(If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.)

Address and Telephone of Applicant

Committee of 100, Yost House, 1002 Pennsylvania Avenue S.E.,
Washington, D.C. 20003 Telephone: (202) 994-6098

Name and Title of Authorized Representative

R.W. Longstreth, Chairman, Preservation Subcommittee

Date 10 21 91

Signature 

D.C. Preservation League, 918 F Street, N.W., Suite 310, Washington, D.C. 20004

Date Nov. 19 1991

Signature 

310.21/1 Statement of Significance

The complex comprised of the Third Church of Christ, Scientist and the Christian Science Monitor Building (1968-1971) is significant according to four of the "Criteria For Designating Historic Landmarks And Districts" in Washington, D.C. These criteria specify that landmarks must possess one or more of the following qualities:

1. They are the site of significant events or are associated with persons, groups, institutions, or movements that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture, or development of the national capital or the nation;
2. They exemplify the significant military, political, economic, social, scientific, technical, educational, historical, archaeological, architectural, or artistic heritage of the national capital or the nation;
3. They embody the distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles, building types, types or methods of construction, landscape architecture, urban design, or other architectural, aesthetic, or engineering expressions significant to the appearance and development of the national capital or the nation;
4. They have been identified as notable works of craftsmen, artists, sculptors, architects, landscape architects, urban planners, engineers, builders, or developers whose works have influenced the evolution of their fields of endeavor or the development of the national capital or the nation;
5. They contain information about or evidence of historic or prehistoric events, processes, institutions, design, construction, settlement patterns, or other facets of earlier cultures, that is known or established likely to be important to knowledge or understanding of such cultures; or
6. In the case of natural forms or settings, or substantially natural forms or settings, they reflect significant patterns of settlement or use of the landscape as well as the continuum and evolution of cultural attitudes, norms, and values toward the land. (D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites, vii, viii)

The Third Church of Christ, Scientist meets Criterion 1 and Criterion 4 as the work of an important architect who has contributed significantly to the cultural heritage of both the national capital and the nation. This provocative, award-winning complex was designed by I.M. Pei & Partners, one of the most celebrated U.S. architectural firms of the post-World War II era. The Third Church complex contains one of the few churches designed by Pei, and it is an outstanding example of Pei's work in Washington, D.C. Upon its completion in 1971, the Third Church and Christian Science Monitor Building complex was awarded the "Award for Excellence in Architecture" by the Metropolitan Washington Board of Trade. The Third Church complex is significant according to Criterion 1 because it typifies an important local movement in which prominent architects were commissioned for new construction in the federal core of the city.

The Third Church complex also is significant historically according to Criterion 1 because of its relationship to the Church of Christ, Scientist and the growth of the Christian

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Science faith in Washington. Along with the Christian Science Church Center in Boston (1965-1973), the Third Church complex in Washington was executed as part of the centennial celebration commemorating the founding of the Christian Science faith. The Washington complex was the only one of these two building projects to include the construction of a new church. In addition, the Third Church complex was built partly for symbolic purposes, and the inclusion of a church with the administration building exhibited the institutional strength of the congregation within the national capital. The decision to build in downtown Washington in the late 1960s represented a reaffirmation of the Christian Science commitment to a downtown presence during a time of social upheaval and relocation by many churches. Thus, this complex is a relatively late, and therefore rare, local example of the national church movement, the greatest building activity of which occurred at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Third Church complex is significant according to Criterion 2 as an important example of a complex integrating a church with a harmonizing office building, contributing greatly to the overall architectural heritage of the city. In its short history, the complex has been heralded as an unusually significant example of post-World War II modern architecture in Washington, D.C. and an important piece of modernism along Sixteenth Street, one of the monumental corridors of the federal city. The construction of the Third Church and Christian Science Monitor Building contributes to the transformation of lower Sixteenth Street between the 1920s and the 1970s, when residences were replaced by commercial and institutional buildings. As one of the newest churches on Sixteenth Street, located one block from one of the oldest--St. John's Episcopal Church (1816) at the intersection of 16th and H streets--Third Church illustrates the long heritage of religious architecture found along this monumental approach to the White House and the core of the city. By including an administration building, this complex fuses two separate functions in an architecturally strong and coherent design. In recognition of its architectural significance and prominent location, the Third Church and Christian Science Monitor Building complex is the only example of modern architecture included in *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Volume 2*, a publication documenting historic local architecture published in 1988 by the D.C. Commission of Fine Arts .

In scale, siting, form, and architectural detail, the complex admirably embodies the distinguishing characteristics of postwar modern architecture and is thus eligible for local landmark designation according to Criterion 3. The octagonal form of the church, fronting a broad plaza, but also tied visually to the Monitor Building, was inspired in part by the Baptistery in Florence and its relation to the front of the Cathedral. At the same time, the ensemble is a very sophisticated local example of modernism as practiced during the third quarter of the twentieth century. In abstract terms, the order is achieved through the opposition of two dissimilar masses (one relatively low, chunky, and closed; the other relatively tall, thin, and open) united by a comparatively neutral open space. This integration of unlike parts, each equally essential to the integrity of others, creates a sense of dynamism that has been a fundamental component of modern movements in design since the early twentieth century. The result here is a forceful presence on a corner site along one of the most prominent thoroughfares of downtown Washington. On the other hand, the dynamic nature of the composition is balanced by, even subordinated to, a formal sense of equilibrium achieved through symmetry and containment in the arrangement of its parts. These attributes not only render the complex a dignified entity unto itself, but

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respect the dominant order of nearby commercial buildings despite differences in scale, mass, and detail. The ensemble thus combines the taste for bold, dynamic, sculptural expression that characterized the Brutalist vein of modernism during the postwar years with that for a more contextual approach to urban design that was emerging by the late 1960s.

Christian Science and Church Architecture

In 1875, Mary Baker Eddy formed the Christian Science Association, later chartered as the Church of Christ, Scientist. The teachings of the church were developed by Eddy from what she identified as a miraculous cure in 1866 of medical problems she had suffered after a fall. The fundamental precept of Eddy's consistent, if radical, theology was the predominance of the spirit over the material world. Eddy, who grew up in the tradition of New England Congregationalism, but who seems to have been influenced also by contemporary currents of Transcendentalism and Unitarianism, saw Jesus not as divine but as a demonstration of the spiritual power of God in the world. The unorthodox teachings of Christian Science not surprisingly incurred the hostility of the established Protestant denominations.

From the beginning, the Christian Science Church was highly centralized. Beginning in 1892, control of the entire organization has been vested in the First Church of Christ, Scientist (usually called the Mother Church) in Boston, which was controlled by Mrs. Eddy until her death in 1910, and since then by a self-perpetuating five-person board of directors. Local churches are branches of the central church rather than independent entities, although each congregation exercises considerable self-governance except in the broad areas set forth in the by-laws contained in Eddy's *Manual of the Mother Church* of 1895.

The church is strongly tied to the written word. The Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Eddy's commentary on the Bible, play central roles in both doctrine and education. The central organization in Boston is also responsible for a variety of other publications. Among these is the prestigious *Christian Science Monitor*. Founded by Eddy in 1908, the *Monitor* has, over the years, played an important role both as one of the most respected newspapers in the nation and as the voice of social concern within the church. With its emphasis on individual spiritual development and on the illusory nature of the material world, Christian Science has not focused on current political and social concerns although the *Monitor* was intended by Eddy to keep individual Christian Scientists involved in the problems of the world.

Even in those religions which have no formal liturgy, theological precepts affect the form and expression of the church architecture. Many of the tenets of Christian Science, with its roots in Congregationalism and its kinship to Unitarianism, are demonstrated in the Third Church of Christ, Scientist. The communal form of worship is reflected in the use of a centralized plan for the auditorium which recalls the configuration of early New England meeting houses. Because the service is intended to be educational, this plan allows for a greater sense of congregational involvement and sense of community. The emphasis on inward spirituality is exhibited in the windowless auditorium, which is

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naturally illuminated by skylights, and the orientation of the church toward the plaza rather than the street.

The theological and historical similarities between Unitarianism and Christian Science undoubtedly explain some of the architectural similarities between the church architecture of the two denominations. For this reason, the Third Church of Christ, Scientist visually recalls aspects of Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois. Although octagonal in plan, Third Church actually incorporates a square core with four projecting bays and the indirect lighting of clerestory and skylights used in Unity Temple. The broad expanses of unadorned wall surface and interior orientation of Third Church have their basis in doctrinal constraints as much as in stylistic predilections.

The Christian Science Church in Washington and the National Church Movement

Christian Science was introduced in the Washington area after its founder, Mary Baker Eddy, visited the city in 1882 giving a series of fourteen, three-hour lectures which reportedly attracted about fifty people. The growth of Christian Science was apparently rapid after these lectures as three churches were formed between 1895 and World War I. The First Church of Christ, Scientist, of Washington was organized in 1895, the Second Church in 1899, and in 1918, the Third Church was formed.

From the beginning, Third Church was a downtown congregation. First Church, constructed in 1911, still occupies its original church building at 1770 Euclid Street, Northwest. Second Church was also located in a residential neighborhood. Although established as the downtown representative of the Christian Science Church, for many years Third Church was unable to construct a large or prestigious building which would have established a prominent architectural presence in the national capital as other denominations with larger memberships and greater financial resources had done. The construction of the Third Church complex in the late 1960s was therefore important as a symbolic statement.

In 1918, Third Church held its first service in rented quarters in a house on Lafayette Square. One hundred forty-two charter members joined the congregation during the first month, and collections for a building fund began immediately. By the end of three weeks, the rented space had already become inadequate and new, larger quarters were leased in the Masonic Temple at the corner of 13th Street and New York Avenue, N.W. By 1926 this space, too, had become overcrowded and a decision was made to find a new site. Finding a location which the church could afford was complicated by the congregation's "conviction that Third Church should remain a downtown church." In May of the same year, however, the former Universalist church at the corner of 13th and L streets, N.W., was purchased for \$80,000. An additional \$90,000 was invested in remodelling the church to suit the needs of a Christian Science congregation. Marble memorial plaques and stained glass windows "which admitted insufficient natural light" were removed, as were, apparently, the organ console and choir loft. The interior was remodelled to provide for a large Sunday School, able to accommodate 200 people, in addition to a main auditorium, holding 900. The first service was held in 1927, but the

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building was not dedicated until 1939 when it was finally free of debt.¹ Third Church occupied the 13th and L streets location until 1967 when the church building was almost entirely surrounded by buildings used by the *Washington Daily News*. The congregation had been looking for a new location for some time, but their commitment to a downtown location once again made it difficult to find an affordable site.²

By the late 1950s and 1960s, downtown churches were becoming increasingly rare in Washington, D.C. Despite the rapid growth of church membership for Christian Scientists and other Protestant denominations during the postwar era, by the 1960s many congregations in Washington, including those originally established in the downtown area, were relocating to the suburbs, which offered relief from the social and economic problems gripping mid-twentieth-century cities. Although legalized segregation in Washington was a thing of the past, racial polarization had increased sharply, even before the violent upheaval of the 1968 riots following the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. Although the Christian Scientists held a liberal position on racial issues, Third Church had come under pressure from the *Washington Afro-American* newspaper in 1952 for failure to integrate its Sunday school. Adult services, however, at that church were already open to all, as were all services at other Christian Science churches.³ In this climate, the commitment of the Third Church to a continued downtown presence was notably unusual.

The search by Third Church for a suitable new location coincided with a decision by the Mother Church in Boston to construct a new building to house the D.C. Office of the Christian Science Committee on Publications and the *Christian Science Monitor*. The *Monitor*, which had occupied quarters in the National Press Building in Washington since 1926, had a very high national reputation in the 1960s and was playing an important role in church policy as well. The desire to identify this prestigious journal more closely with its church sponsor seems to have played a role in the decision to centralize all church publication functions in a single structure and to associate it with a congregation.

The site at Sixteenth and I streets, where the Third Church was constructed, had been owned by the Church Realty Trust, an arm of the Mother Church. The Trust had held all property since 1947 when that part of the street was rezoned for non-residential use. The large, former Gray-Payne residence located on that site had been remodelled and was being used jointly by all Washington area Christian Science congregations as a reading room and display area. The Boston church planned to demolish the house to construct the new reading room/administration building. The site was a prominent one, only two blocks from the White House, on Sixteenth Street, one of the most important avenues in Washington. Although the riots of April 1968 showed their decimating effects only a few

¹ "Dedicatory Address: Third Church of Christ, Scientist, Washington, D.C." December 10, 1939. Pamphlet on file in Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King Library, Washington, D.C.

² Sue A. Kohler and Jeffrey R. Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Volume 2* (Washington, D.C.: Commission of Fine Arts, 1988), 107.

³ "Christianity Is For All Persons," *Washington Afro-American*, 26 July 1952. On file, Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King Library, Washington, D. C.

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blocks east on Fourteenth Street, the Mother Church did not alter plans to build in the heart of downtown.

The prominence of the location influenced the decision to unite a Christian Science presence in the national capital by adding a new church building to the site. Departing from the much larger construction project of the Mother Church, which integrated the original church building into the site design, it was decided to include a new church in the plans for this highly visible Washington corner lot. It seems evident that the symbolic and visual importance of Sixteenth Street, particularly with its numerous churches and synagogues extending the entire length of the corridor, reinforced this decision.

Construction of the Third Church Complex and the Christian Science Centennial

Although the Third Church had outgrown its building, the impetus for construction of the new complex also had its origins outside of local considerations. In 1966, to commemorate the centennial of the founding of Christian Science, the Church of Christ, Scientist began planning two major building projects, one in Boston and the other in Washington, D.C. During this period of expansion, Erwin D. Canham, the influential Editor-in-Chief of the prestigious *Christian Science Monitor* newspaper, consistently advocated a "more enlightened attitude toward architecture and urban planning," an attitude which was reflected in these two projects.⁴ Because the Boston project did not involve the construction of a new church, the Third Church complex more completely illustrated this concern of the Mother Church.

At the urging of Canham, the Christian Science Board of Directors began planning a major new church administrative center to be built on a large parcel of land already owned by the church in the Back Bay area of Boston, adjacent to the original 1894 Mother Church and related buildings. I. M. Pei & Partners, an internationally known firm of architects and planners specializing in large-scale urban construction and revitalization projects, was chosen for the Boston project as a result of its previous experience in Boston. Araldo A. Cossutta, one of four senior partners of the Pei firm, was chosen as the design partner with overall responsibility for the project. Planning for the Boston project began in 1963. Ground was broken in 1967, and the complex was completed in 1973. Praised at the time of its completion as embodying a "regenerative attitude toward our society and cities," the project formed a key element in a major urban renewal effort in Back Bay.⁵

I.M. Pei & Partners was eventually chosen for the Third Church project, but only after a long and difficult search. After rejecting several proposed designs from an architect member of the congregation, the church officers, who were split in their preferences between traditional and modern veins, met with I.M. Pei & Partners. Araldo Cossutta,

⁴ William Marlin, "Formed Up in Faith," *The Architectural Forum* 139, No. 2 (September 1973): 34.

⁵ Marlin, 25

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design partner in charge of the Boston project, came to Washington and proposed a modern church located on the corner of the site with the office building located across a grassy plaza on the north side of the lot, abutting an existing office building. According to Cossutta, his proposals from this initial meeting were rejected as too costly. Third Church subsequently considered other architects and less expensive proposals, but returned to Cossutta's design and ultimately hired I.M. Pei & Partners to design the site.⁶

In scale, siting, form, and architectural detailing, the Third Church complex admirably illustrates the influence of I.M. Pei's design philosophy and the particular skills of design partner, Araldo Cossutta. In "The Nature of Urban Spaces," Pei elucidated four basic principles which guided all his projects, regardless of whether the project was a single building or a redevelopment plan for an entire city. All four of these factors came into play in the design of the Third Church of Christ, Scientist. The most important factor was scale, the physical integration of building with its surroundings. The second factor involved the shape and extent of the boundaries which defined the open space. Formality of design was the third factor, which to Pei meant not only the physical integration of architectural features but also a coherence in character, monumentality, and intensity. This could be achieved through formal symmetry in design, strict axial arrangement, or repetition of motifs. The final factor recognized the powerful physical and emotional effects of natural light.⁷

In scale and composition, the complex was skillfully designed to steer the eye toward the church, which, according to Cossutta, was "put into focus" against the backdrop of the taller Monitor Building.⁸ The eight-story Monitor Building is equal in height with the adjoining World Center office building to the north, creating a gradual reduction in height across the plaza to the five-story church building, which anchors the corner of the block with its solid and monumental presence.

The open plaza with its triangular-shaped grassy area is a key feature in the design of this complex. Pei admired the large, open gathering space in front of European cathedrals. In his writing, Pei often stated the importance of squares and piazzas in historic cities, which served valuable functions as public places providing communal foci for city life.⁹ The octagonal shape of the church permits easy circulation and invites people into the plaza area. The grassy area was designed to preserve two signature trees dating from the early twentieth century. Viewed from Sixteenth Street, these large trees assist in enclosing the plaza area, while providing the natural landscaping element Pei saw as necessary for a livable gathering space.

⁶ Araldo Cossutta, telephone interview, 10 January 1991; Kohler and Carson, 108, 110.

⁷ I.M. Pei, "The Nature of Urban Spaces," in Harry S. Ransom, ed., *The People's Architects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 67-74.

⁸ Cossutta interview.

⁹ Barbaralee Diamonstein, *American Architecture Now* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), 145.

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The Third Church building was initially envisioned as a round structure with an open interior space symbolizing the unity and community of the congregation. However, to achieve compatibility with neighboring buildings, Cossutta settled on an octagonal plan, which he viewed as reminiscent of the octagonal Baptistery in Florence. The angular, octagonal shape harmonized with the surroundings while maintaining an open central worship space. Cossutta's initial preference for a church faced in marble or granite was quickly abandoned in favor of less expensive concrete, a material which was actually the architect's forte.

Ground was broken in 1968, with both the church and the office building completed in 1971. Employing the sculptural use of forms and rugged materials characteristic of the modernist vein known as "Brutalism," the design was criticized in a newspaper review by Wolf Von Eckardt for the "brutal" appearance of its high windowless concrete wall facing I Street. Von Eckardt saw the open "suburban" plaza as a violation of the urban character of its Sixteenth Street neighborhood.¹⁰ However, the Pei firm designed the complex as a distinctly urban church based on classical principles to harmonize with its physical surroundings while symbolizing the unity of its congregation.¹¹ Upon its completion, the provocative design generally was admired by the Washington community and won the "Award for Excellence in Architecture" from the Metropolitan Washington Board of Trade in 1971.

Even Von Eckardt praised the design of the interior of the Third Church for its skillful use of natural light. Through a skylight around the perimeter of the ceiling, shafts of sunlight pierce the open auditorium with a constantly changing effect that intensifies the feeling of spirituality. This light highlights the vertical open space, preserved by the second-level balcony seating around the perimeter of the interior. The open plan, based on the rigidly symmetrical, Greek cross floor plan, reinforces the success of the interior by creating a physical harmony that inspired closeness.

The symmetry and order expressed in both the Boston Christian Science complex and the Washington Third Church complex reflected the concern of the Pei firm for monumentality and strict order. The designs also reflect Cossutta's classical training at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Indeed, Cossutta was the most traditionally trained of Pei's partners, and he described himself today as a "modern classicist."¹² Following the general philosophy of the Pei firm, Cossutta admired the beauty of exposed structure in ancient Roman and Greek architecture and engineering.

To achieve what he termed "integral beauty" in modern architecture, Cossutta used cast-in-place, poured concrete, his specialty, in a variety of textures and hues. "Concrete

¹⁰ Wolf Von Eckardt, "New Church Design: 'Rude, Brutal, Military, Uncivilized,'" *Washington Post*, 28 November 1970. On file, Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King Library, Washington, D.C.

¹¹ "Church Started Near Downtown," *Evening Star*, 11 October 1969. Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King Library, Washington, D. C.

¹² Cossutta interview.

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has great integrity," he said recently, "it is the same material inside and out."¹³ In an article published in *Progressive Architecture* in 1966, Cossutta described the growing preference of many architects in the postwar period for exposed, cast-in-place concrete. This use of exposed structural members was a break from conventional curtain wall construction in which the concrete frame was ordinarily sheathed in metal or glass. In keeping with the increasing use of exposed concrete, structural members, a grid of concrete was used in both the Boston and the Washington projects to create a strong, sculptural effect. This effect had been used earlier by Cossutta on the exterior of such buildings as the Denver Hilton (1954-1960), another Pei project with Cossutta as design partner.

I.M. Pei & Partners: Philosophy, Structure, and the Role of Araldo Cossutta

The intellectual context surrounding the Third Church complex is more fully understood by briefly discussing the philosophy and office structure of I.M. Pei & Partners and the role of Araldo Cossutta, design partner for the Third Church and Christian Science Monitor Building complex. Known as I.M. Pei & Partners at the time the Third Church complex was constructed, the firm is currently Pei Cobb Freed & Partners. The continued success of I.M. Pei's firm is primarily a result of the design philosophy of Pei, an orientation which has influenced all work of the firm, including the Third Church and Christian Science Monitor Building complex.

Ieoh Ming Pei was born in 1917 in Canton, China. Educated in Shanghai, Pei emigrated to the United States in 1935. In 1940, he was graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and six years later he received a master's degree in architecture from Harvard School of Design, where he studied with Walter Gropius. After working for four years (1945 to 1948) as a concrete designer for the Boston firm of Stone and Webster, he served on the faculty of the Harvard Graduate School of Design. From 1948 to 1955, Pei worked in the architectural division of Webb & Knapp, Inc., directed by prominent real estate developer, William Zeckendorf. It was Zeckendorf who involved Pei in his first Washington project, the redevelopment of the Southwest area of the city. Under Zeckendorf, who was known as a brilliant negotiator, Pei designed large and influential projects and gained experience with the many forces--commercial, local, and governmental--in the complex matrix of urban development. Pei carried these attributes of diplomacy, practical compromise, and collaboration into his own firm which had been organized in 1955 as I.M. Pei & Associates.¹⁴

Although educated in the United States, Pei's Chinese heritage profoundly affected his design philosophy. He described his aesthetic in terms of Chinese tradition:

¹³ Cossutta interview.

¹⁴ "Pei, I.M." *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, Volume 3* (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 584-585; Richard Guy Wilson, *The AIA Gold Medal* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984), 220-221.

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The ancient philosopher Lao-tse once remarked that the essence of a vessel is its emptiness. A city, in a sense, is a vessel, too--a container for people and for life. A city's essence, like a vessel's, also lies in its voids--its public spaces.¹⁵

Pei noted that without recognizing the relationship between the indoor and the outdoor, there was no Chinese architecture, where exterior and interior were always one. Outdoor spaces were often beautified with elements of the natural landscape, such as gardens, which were intended to raise the human level of experience. In Chinese cities, where the spaces are often extremely small, maximizing the effect of such spaces was also a key principle. Pei believed that poorly designed spaces inhibit movement, while well designed ones "raise the ordinary rituals of life to a high level of intensity and purpose."¹⁶ Rather than viewing the city as a group of buildings, Pei viewed it as a series of spaces enclosed by buildings. On a larger level, these spaces should vary in size according to specific function and should alternate, "constriction with expansion, concealment with revelation, so that each space intensifies and dramatizes its neighbors until, as a result, the whole becomes something greater than the sum of its parts."¹⁷

Pei's work of the 1960s and early 1970s was characterized by simplicity, derived largely from the inspiration of his teacher, Walter Gropius. Early in his career, Pei also worked with William Lescaze on some of Zeckendorf's Madison Avenue office buildings and was probably influenced by Lescaze's fondness for bold forms. Pei's buildings rely on abstract form, using the modern materials of concrete, stone, glass, and steel in a manner that emphasizes their inherent structural characteristics. However, he has departed from the self-contained buildings of his teacher Gropius. Pei favors relatively complex arrangements of massing and equally complex relationships between mass and site, with dramatically contrasting forms, materials, and spaces. Pei's aesthetic, the use of rigorous geometric forms arranged in a sculptural manner, made a major contribution to the development of modernism in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s - the period in which the Third Church complex was designed and built.

Although Pei's philosophy permeated the work of his firm, responsibility for individual designs was left to one of three partners: Cossutta, Henry Cobb, and James Freed, each of whom lent a distinctive mark. As partner in charge of the Third Church complex, Cossutta had full responsibility for developing the plans which clearly reflected his Beaux Arts training. His role in this project also illustrated how the firm operated throughout the 1960s and in later years as well. Pei's own efforts focused on securing commissions and working directly with clients as well as overseeing plans in the conceptual stage of design. This collaborative arrangement has been succinctly described by Pei's biographer:

¹⁵ Pei, 67.

¹⁶ Pei, 71.

¹⁷ Pei, 71.

One of the virtues of the Pei system was that it allowed the younger members to get a broad range of experience in all phases of the architectural process. So closely did the teams work together with Pei, who would critique individual designs at regular intervals, that while the younger architects enjoyed unusual freedom, they began to develop a common design "language." While a practiced eye might detect in a given building traces of Cobb's more abstract touch or Cossutta's fondness for Beaux-Arts symmetry, the fundamental Pei concerns for rigorous geometry, innovative technology, quality materials, and crisply executed details were becoming widely recognizable, and...highly regarded. As Cobb described it, the firm combined "the strength of a group practice with the strength of an atelier."¹⁸

Pei's firm is not dominated by managers, as are some firms that produce large volumes of undistinguished work, but is headed by designers, supported by a technical and managerial staff. It was this quality and structure that inspired architecture critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, to write in the *New York Times* in the early 1970s that Pei's firm--in competition with other notables such as Louis Kahn, Paul Rudolph, and Philip Johnson--was probably the best in the country.¹⁹ In the recently published book *I.M. Pei: A Profile In American Architecture*, Carter Wiseman states that Pei's firm "is alone in the history of American architecture in having produced such a large number of buildings of consistently high quality," and that the firm "has become a model for combining corporate success and architectural excellence."²⁰ Over the years, the firm has been awarded some of the highest honors in architecture including the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects (1979), the Pritzker Architecture Prize (1983), and the Gold Medal of the Academie d'Architecture, France (1981).

The high quality of work produced by Pei's firm results primarily from the excellence of its partners and associates, some of whom have worked with the firm for over twenty years. At the time the Third Church complex was completed, the only other general partners besides Pei were Cobb and Cossutta. Cossutta joined Pei in 1956 at the age of thirty. He became an associate in 1956 and was a partner from 1963 to 1973. In the latter year, he formed his own partnership, Cossutta & Ponte, with former Pei planning associate, Vincent Ponte. The firm is now Cossutta & Associates, based in New York, with branch offices in Paris and Brussels.

Cossutta was born in 1925 in Yugoslavia. His education included the University of Belgrade from 1945 to 1946 and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris from 1947 to 1950, where he received several distinguished honors, including the Premier Prix Chedanne

¹⁸ Carter Wiseman, *I.M. Pei: A Profile In American Architecture* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1990), 70-71.

¹⁹ Peter Blake, "I.M. Pei & Partners," *Architecture Plus* (February 1973): 52-59.

²⁰ Wiseman, 10.

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(1948), Deuxieme Prix Daubourg (1949), and Prix des Anciens (1950). In 1949, he worked in the atelier of LeCorbusier in Paris. Cossutta came to the United States in 1950 to study at Harvard University, receiving a master's degree in architecture in 1952. (He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1951.) Before joining Pei, Cossutta worked for Michael Hare and Associates, New York, from 1952 to 1955.

Cossutta was design partner for several Pei & Partners projects, including: University Gardens Apartments in Chicago (1961); Denver Hilton Hotel (1962); Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Green Center for Earth Sciences (1964); L'Enfant Plaza, Phase I, in Washington, D.C. (1968); master plan for the Tete de la Defense, Paris (1971); Third Church of Christ, Scientist, and Christian Science Monitor Building in Washington, D.C. (1971); Christian Science Center, Boston (1973). Many of these projects have won design awards.

With his own firm, Cossutta & Associates, Cossutta's buildings and plans continue to receive acclaim. In 1974, he was elected a fellow of the American Institute of Architects. Cossutta & Associates is a medium-sized firm that works on diverse projects although the majority of the work of this firm involves the design of commercial office development and the redevelopment of urban cores. These projects include: master plan, interior design, and architecture for Cityplace Center in Dallas for the Southland Corporation (1989, 1988, 1977); Pittsburgh City Center (1987); Riverplace in Columbus, Ohio (1986); 585 Park Tower in New York City (1983); development plans for Portsmouth, Virginia (1983) and Newport News (1982); and the Long Wharf Marriott Hotel, Boston (1982). Outside the United States, Cossutta's projects include the 42-story Credit Lyonnais Tower in Lyons, France (1977) and many urban development plans for cities in Canada, France, and Belgium.²¹

The Third Church Complex in Local Context

The Third Church complex was one of a number of projects Pei designed in Washington. This legacy spanned a period of almost forty years, beginning with studies for the redevelopment of the Southwest quadrant undertaken in 1953 while employed by William Zeckendorf. Later work included: the Washington Plaza Apartments (1958-1964) and L'Enfant Plaza (1961-1968), both in the Southwest redevelopment area; the Slayton house in Cleveland Park (1962); the East Building of the National Gallery of Art (1968-1978); Columbia Square (1981-1987); and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (1986-). While the Third Church complex has not received the worldwide acclaim accorded the East Building, it is arguably among the most distinguished and prominent designs completed by the firm in the national capital.

The Third Church complex also shares with the East Building the stature of being one of the most sophisticated examples of Brutalism. Characterized by the use of rugged materials (most notably concrete) and boldly-scaled forms, often treated in a sculptural manner, Brutalism gained international recognition during the 1950s, foremost through the

²¹ "Cossutta & Associates" brochure, 1990; Kohler and Carson, 116, 118.

310.21/13 Statement of Significance

work of LeCorbusier, for whom Cossutta had worked. Few examples can be found in the United States prior to 1960. Thereafter, this approach to design emerged as a leading thrust in modernism until the mid-1970s. Other well-known examples in the District include: the Department of Housing and Urban Development building by Marcel Breuer (1965-1968); the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Museum by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (1966-1974); the J. Edgar Hoover Federal Bureau of Investigation Building by D.F. Murphy (1967-1975); the Hubert H. Humphrey Federal Office Building by Breuer (1968-1970); the Lauinger Memorial Library at Georgetown University by John Carl Warnecke (1968-1970); the headquarters building of the American Institute of Architects by the Architects Collaborative (1968-1973); and the National Air and Space Museum by Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum (1972-1976).

Finally, the Third Church complex stands as a uniquely distinguished example of ecclesiastical architecture, distinctly urban in character, designed in Washington since World War II. Most of the churches that remain in or near downtown were built during the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Among the few post-World War II examples, the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church (1951-1952) and the Roman Catholic Church of St. Stephen Martyr at Pennsylvania Avenue and 25th Street, N.W., are so dissimilar in both the intent and execution of their respective designs that no useful comparative framework can be constructed. The several churches erected in the Southwest redevelopment area during the 1960s are modest in nature and far more closely related to then current suburban work than that found downtown. The Third Church complex also remains in a league unto itself when compared to the design of postwar examples in other parts of the city. Indeed, the Third Church complex can be said to rank with the finest examples of design found in church architecture anywhere in Washington, including, but not limited to: St. John's Episcopal Church at 16th and H streets, N.W. (begun 1816); Luther Place Memorial Church at 1226 Vermont Avenue, N.W. (1867, 1870-1874); St. Matthew's Cathedral at 1725 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W. (1893-1899); the Washington Cathedral at Wisconsin and Massachusetts avenues, N.W. (1907-1990); All Souls Unitarian Church at 16th and Harvard streets, N.W. (1920-1924); and the National City Christian Church at 14th Street and Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. (1928-1930).

310.22/1 Architectural Description

The Third Church of Christ, Scientist and the Christian Science Monitor Building are located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Sixteenth Street and I Street in Northwest Washington, D.C. on Square 185, Lot 41. The two buildings on the site comprise an integrated complex, and both are strongly linked visually by the open plaza (See Figure 1, Photos 1-4). Each building also has access to an underground garage.

The Christian Science complex is located on an irregular, but roughly rectangular, lot measuring approximately 186 feet along Sixteenth Street by 83 feet along I Street (See 310.24, Figure 2). The lot borders Sixteenth Street on the east, I Street on the south, an alley separating it from a nine-story, office building on the west, and the adjoining eight-story office building to the north. The irregularity of the lot occurs at the northwest corner where a section (viewed from I Street) 23 feet wide and 84 feet deep gives the site a slight "L" shape. The architect minimized the irregularity by siting the Monitor Building at this corner. In addition, the underground garage, which extends the full length of the site, is entered from the alley at this corner of the property.

With its horizontal bands of plate glass windows, the eight-story Christian Science Monitor Building provides a contrast with the Third Church building, which contains fewer windows (See Photo 4). The concrete used in both the church and Monitor Building has a red hue, giving the uninterrupted exterior surfaces a warm, earthy tone. The concrete segments of both buildings were cast-in-place, rather than precast and shipped to the site. This process allowed greater uniformity in exterior appearance. The architect used the seams from these joints to emphasize the horizontal lines in both buildings, complemented by the horizontal glass panels of the Monitor Building (See Photo 4).

The Monitor Building is equal in height to its adjoining neighbor to the north, but one story shorter than the office building across the alley on its west side. The entrance to the building is located on its west side, facing the plaza. The door way can be reached either across the plaza on the Sixteenth Street side or via a narrow passageway from I Street (See Photo 5). The entrance is composed of plate glass panels and plate glass doors similar in character to the doorways used in the church. However, the entrance to the Monitor Building is not recessed as the church entrance is (See Photo 6).

The Christian Science Reading Room was located on the first floor of the Monitor Building with a separate, recessed entrance facing Sixteenth Street (See Photo 6). This space is no longer used as a reading room, which has been moved to 808 15th Street, N.W. This portion of the building is currently used as an architect's office. In addition to housing the offices of the Christian Science Monitor and the Christian Science Committee on Publication, this eight-story office building currently contains leased commercial office space.

Both the church and the Monitor Building have coffered ceilings, formed by a modular, concrete grid squares, revealing the structure while creating a dramatic interplay with natural and artificial light (See Photo 7). This system of modules houses air conditioning ductwork and electrical, lighting, and telephone lines in a manner that reduces the usually large volume of space devoted to such functions. The modules also contain acoustic material to reduce noise. Upon entering the church lobby and the Monitor Building, the viewer notices immediately this innovative ceiling system.

310.22/2 Architectural Description

The octagonal church is freestanding, located in the corner of the lot, eighteen feet from the curb of I Street and approximately seven feet from the alley. It is separated from the alley by an approximately twenty-foot-high concrete wall that serves as a key visual link between the two buildings and an equally important framing device for the plaza. Halfway up the wall is a projecting concrete box, with recessed circular lights underneath for night time illumination of the passageway leading to the plaza (See Photo 5). The projection also was designed to contain shrubbery, although currently there appears to be no landscaping in this concrete "planter." The wall creates privacy by enclosing a narrow passage leading from I Street into the open plaza area. The plaza walkways and the narrow passageway on the west side are paved with brick in a herringbone pattern, which extends into the sidewalk area to physically delineate the complex from its neighbors (See Photo 1).

A triangular area planted with grass occupies much of the plaza, which provides an open space that balances the massing of the two buildings. The architect preserved three large existing trees inside this grassy triangle, taking advantage of these mature natural forms to complement the new, smaller trees which were planted in a typical urban landscaping design near the curbs along I Street and Sixteenth Street. The plaza area is unobstructed between the church entrance, which faces the plaza, and the facade of the Monitor Building, located 78 feet across the plaza.

The church has an octagonal perimeter with sides alternately measuring 32 feet 3 inches and 30 feet 6 inches. The octagonal church building is five stories tall, with windows only on the side facing the plaza, and a small vertical window on the side fronting Sixteenth Street. A distinctive feature on the church exterior is the horizontal carillon projecting toward Sixteenth Street (See Photo 4). This design element required a special zoning variance in the D.C. code because it projects over a public space. The twenty bronze bells of the carillon were cast in Belgium and mounted by the Bergen Bell foundries, based in Greenwood, South Carolina.¹ The carillon is visible from the interior through a narrow, vertical window located near its junction with the wall.

The church is entered from the north side. The first-floor lobby contains a broad expanse of plate glass running the entire length of the entrance wall. The symmetrical, cross-shaped plan of the auditorium (See Figure 2) is the primary worshipping space, entered on two sides via stairs from the lobby. The interior design of the auditorium was intended to inspire intimacy and spirituality. The speaker's lectern, visible from seats on both the first and second levels of the auditorium, is framed by the gospel phrase "God Is Love" boldly incised into the wall above (See Photo 8). In addition to the open plan, which reinforces physical closeness, the religious intensity of the auditorium is enhanced by shafts of sunlight streaming through a skylight which frames the perimeter of the ceiling. This quantity of constantly changing light increases the effect of the open vertical space, unimpeded by the balcony seats which are found along the second-level wall.

On the top floor of the church building is a Sunday School, with side walls of sliding glass that open to an outside balcony. This level contains built-in concrete planters around

¹ Kohler and Carson, 110.

310.22/3 Architectural Description

its perimeter. High side walls on this top level provide safety and a buffer from the wind. The ceilings of the Sunday School are also composed of the coffered concrete system repeated throughout the complex (See Photo 9).

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31.24 Map Showing Property Boundaries of:

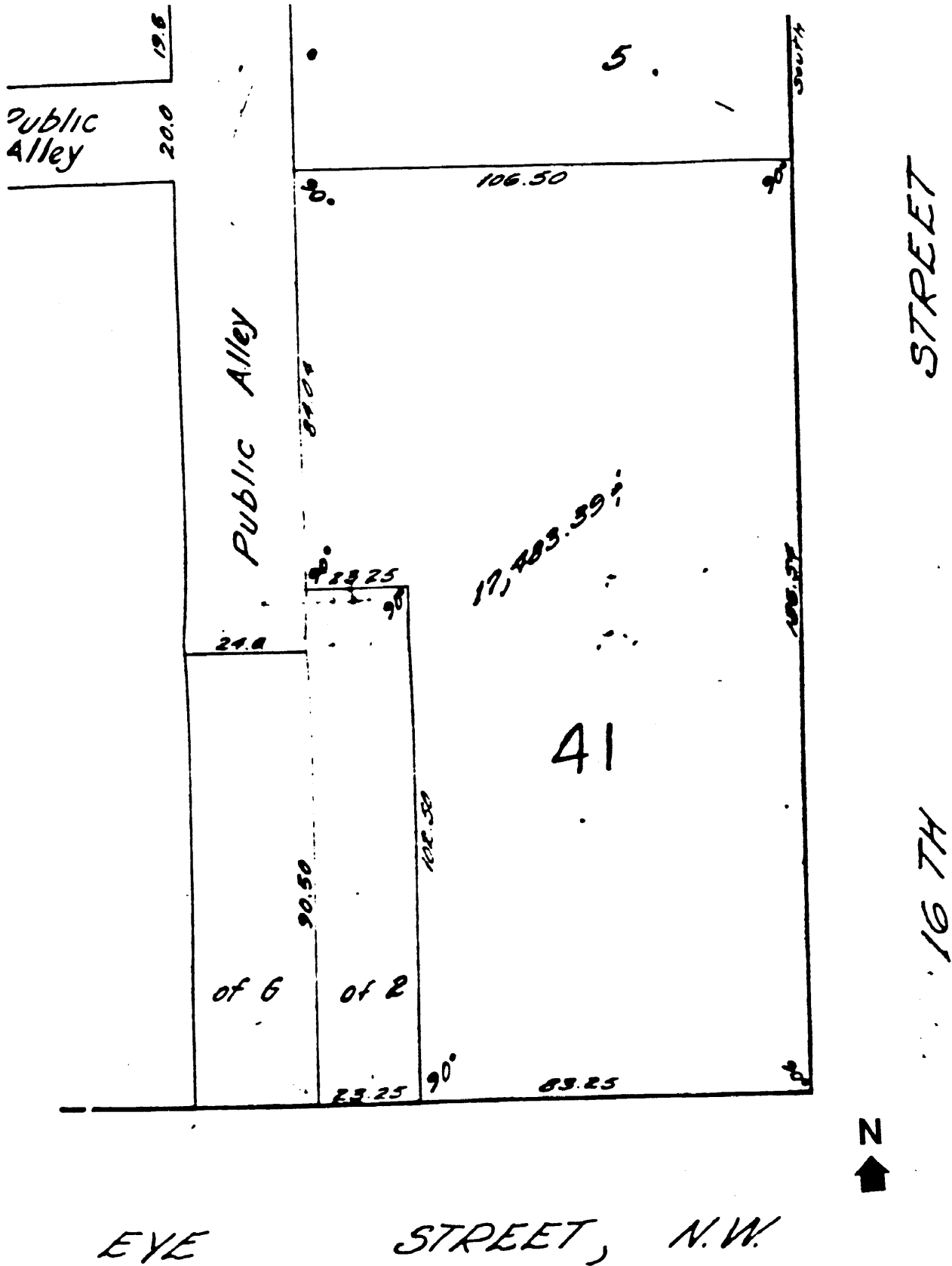
Third Church of Christ, Scientist, and
Christian Science Monitor Building
1601 I Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Square 185, Lot 41

Site = 17,483.39 Square Feet

Source: Subdivision Plat 154-45, 18 October 1968, from
Columbia Title Company

(For Site Plan See Figure 2)



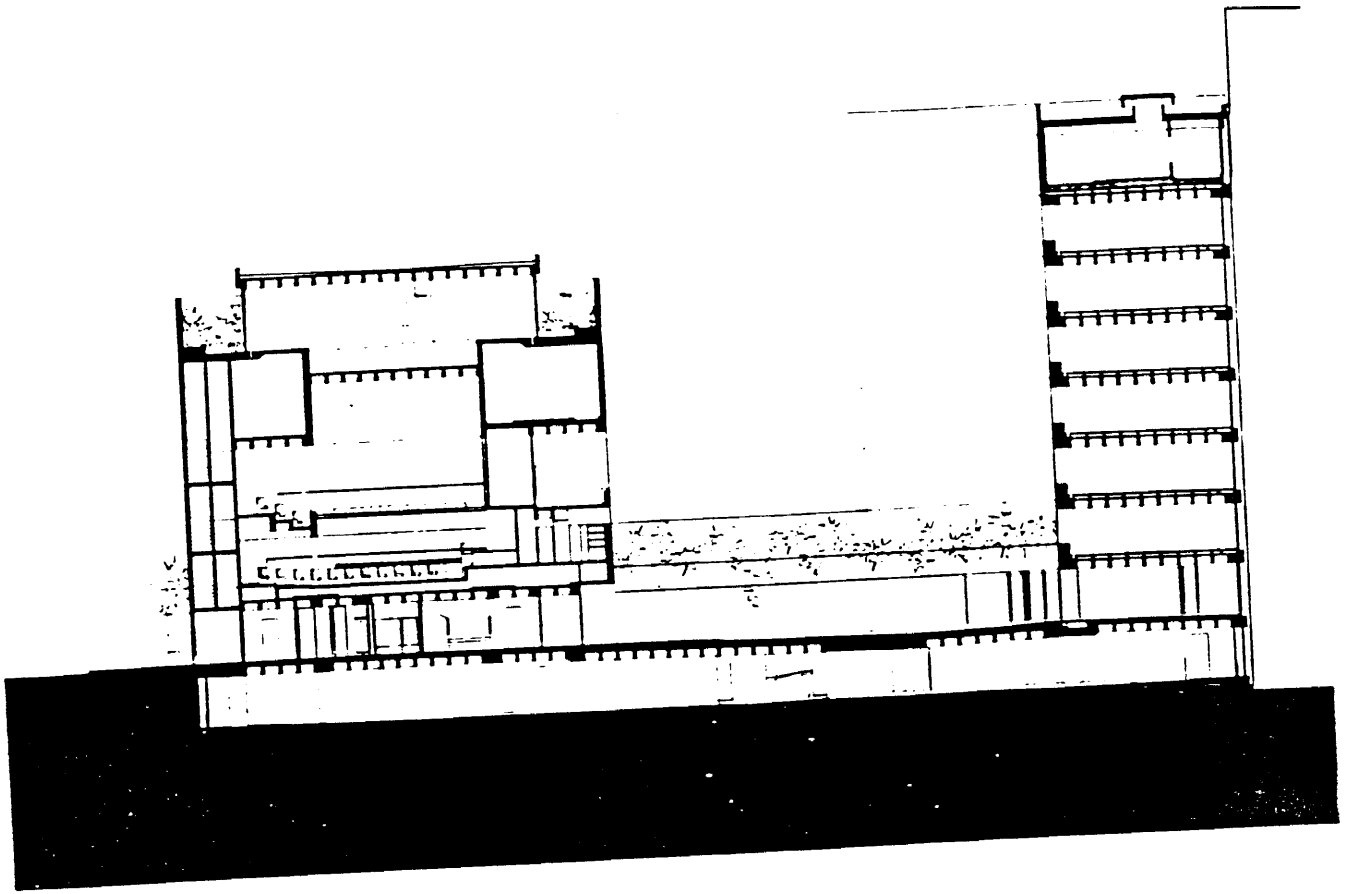


Figure 1. Section of Third Church of Christ, Scientist and
Christian Science Monitor Building.
Source: *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Volume 2*