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Paul Eli Ivey. *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States 1894-1930.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999. xix + 227 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-02445-0.

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Christian Science Architecture in the United States

Paul Ivey's *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States 1894-1930* is an important contribution to the history of American architecture. Not only does Ivey's work add to the historiography of an understudied building type, it also takes into account the impact of the church on larger themes in architectural history such as urban planning, technological innovation and the role of the professional architect. Ivey sets out to address "the complex issues surrounding the creation and building of an American institution that has had considerable social and political influence and yet has created much controversy since its inception" (p. 6). Approaching the material chronologically, Ivey presents several themes that assist in proving his thesis, ranging from the individualistic nature of the faith and its prominent positioning of women to the more architecturally based elements of style, urbanism and patronage.

The first chapter outlines the theology of Christian Science, highlighting the importance of Mary Baker Eddy who founded the movement in the 1870s. Baker's writings outline the tenets of the faith and emphasize its individualistic, feminine, healing and all-encompassing nature. The most controversial of these notions was the importance of 'healers' who, instead of a conventional medical practitioner, would cure physical and mental illness. The contentious nature of the religion and its novelty necessitated churches of architectural prominence Ivey argues, stressing the need for "substantiality and permanency" in order to gain respectability for the faith (p. 35).

The second chapter details the first fifteen years of Christian Science architecture, beginning with the original Mother Church in Boston designed by Franklin I. Welch and consecrated in 1894. Welch's design was based on Romanesque architecture and constructed of granite from New Hampshire, Mary Baker Eddy's home state. Moreover, the building was completely paid for by the date of its consecration ceremony, a model Christian Scientists upheld in most commissions. The architectural image of the First Mother Church was subsequently employed on several of the early churches, but was quickly supplemented by classically inspired notions as found on buildings in the great urban centers of Chicago and New York. Solon Spencer Beman's First Church of Christ, Scientist in Chicago of 1897 used classical imagery inspired by Beman's architectural involvement in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Early works in New York City also espoused the classical past in their use of temple fronts, simplistic decoration, monochromatic color schemes and domed interior spaces. In addition to classical detail, prominent siting of churches near the business and civic centers of a city made them highly visible in the urban fabric.

In the third chapter Ivey emphasizes contextuality by placing each Christian Science church within a larger urban and religious framework. He makes use of a variety of primary source materials that equally present both positive and negative reactions to the work the faith was undertaking. Especially convincing is his discussion of the structures within the context of Protestant architecture in the United States. The style debate was also introduced in this chapter, but not fully developed until three chapters later. The complete stylistic discussion may have been useful at its earlier mention in the text, particularly since the Christian Science movement, which stressed in its theology the importance of the individual, never prescribed a style for its buildings but instead gave each new church license to select its own architectural idiom. The fact that classicism became the preferred expression is convincingly argued by Ivey and successfully related to the general propensity to use classical models after the 1893 World's Fair spawned the City Beautiful Movement and reinforced the ideals of the American Renaissance.

A full and detailed discussion of the relationship between client and architect is presented throughout the

book, but emphasized in the fourth chapter. The benefits of this theme include the presentation of unfamiliar architects as well as the exposition of technological innovations in seating, lighting, ventilation and acoustics. The breadth of Ivey's scholarship is displayed in this discussion as he introduces a feminine component into the design of a church, with women playing a vital role in shaping the space of the hall and its associated foyer, reading room and Sunday School.

Ivey's work should appeal to scholars from disciplines of architecture and urban planning to religious and women's studies. The author's source materials are germane and broad, ranging from archival documents found in the Church History Division of the Mother Church to articles in contemporary architectural and religious periodicals. He also uncovers information on relatively unknown projects for Christian Science churches by Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan and Eliel Saarinen. Illustrations of buildings are generally well placed within the text, but the addition of a few more plans, sections and interiors would be welcome. Furthermore, an appendix listing the churches built during this time period would be a useful resource for persons in search of Christian Science structures within their own locale. Now that Professor Ivey has raised our awareness of these buildings, conceivably future work could address post-1930 Christian Science churches?

These minor comments should not detract from this model of architectural historical scholarship. Paul Ivey's work not only presents a new addition to the field of religious architectural history where serious scholarly works are limited, but it also expands the traditional notions of architectural history to demonstrate how a building should be judged in relationship to larger architectural and cultural issues. In the context of U.S. religious architectural history, Ivey's work successfully answers the call of architectural historian Judith Hull, who in a recent review of two religious architecture surveys in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, asked for an understanding of "not only of how congregations reconcile their ideals with social and economic realities in general, but in particular how they behave as clients in their negotiations with architects and builders."[1] Perhaps now others can do the same.

Notes:

[1]. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58:2 (June 1999), 250. Hull was reviewing Peter W. Williams, *Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997) and Marilyn J. Chiat, *America's Religious Architecture: Sacred Places for Every Community* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997).

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