

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE OF FOUR DENOMINATIONS
IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
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Geography

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated with gratitude and love to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Johnson, who waited patiently while my sister and I explored churches on our travels in Europe and America.

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ABSTRACT

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE OF FOUR DENOMINATIONS
IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

by

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For centuries church buildings have graced the landscapes of countries throughout Christendom. The styles of these buildings reflect the religious, cultural, and artistic traditions of mankind. In Los Angeles, California, numerous denominations of Christian churches abound, marking the imprint of man's religions on the landscape.

Church buildings in Los Angeles and its suburbs display a vast assortment of architectural styles. An analysis of randomly selected church buildings of four denominations, built from 1912 to 1972, reveals several influential factors affecting the choice of architectural style.

First, the influence of the historic revival styles in architecture is seen in examples of Christian Science, Congregational, and Lutheran church buildings dating from 1912 to 1937. Styles ranging from the Italian Renaissance Revival to the Spanish Colonial Revival

are significant forms employed during the early part of the twentieth century. During this period the influence of member's place of origin is evident in the church styles chosen for their new buildings in a new environment.

Secondly, a transitional phase in architecture began after World War II which was characterized by a continuation of historic revival styles as well as by a turn towards contemporary forms. These contemporary forms in architecture are incorporated in the building designs of Lutheran and Congregational churches, revealing as well aspects of liturgical renewal which crossed denominational barriers during the last few decades.

In addition, traditional forms of church architecture, such as the Byzantine style, are maintained by churches of the Eastern Orthodox denomination. Members of this faith, with its historical and theological roots in the Byzantine Empire, consistently build or renovate their churches in one or another of the Byzantine forms. This denomination is also an example of the influence of place of origin in the decision to build a new church in a manner similar to that of churches found in the old settlement.

Whereas the Eastern Orthodox maintain traditional church architecture, churches of the Christian Science, Congregational, and Lutheran denominations continually adopt a variety of architectural styles for their buildings.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The art, architecture, and thought of various traditions and cultures have influenced the style of Christian church buildings throughout history. The church building itself has been the recipient of many cultural and historic styles ranging from the classical Greek and Roman to the Baroque and Contemporary. Throughout Los Angeles many styles of church architecture are evident, reflecting the traditions of a wide variety of religious denominations. Tunnard and Reed observed in American Skyline, "Our cities would be quite different without the ornament of our churches, and although they are often screened by the towers of commerce, the variety of this ornament is greater than may at first meet the eye."¹ Why this variety in the ornament of our urban churches? What processes have been involved in the creation of what we see as a church building?

This thesis is an attempt to determine what factors influenced the architectural styles chosen by churches of four denominations in Los Angeles. Those denominations analyzed architecturally in this study are the Christian Science, the Congregational (United Church of Christ), the Eastern Orthodox, and the Lutheran. The differing cultural and religious backgrounds of these denominations, as well as variety

¹Christopher Tunnard and Henry Hope Reed, American Skyline (New York: A Mentor Book, The New American Library, 1956), p. 24.

in the place of origin of their members, may account for the wide mixture of church styles in evidence throughout the city. Also, the influence of architectural revival styles may be a key factor in the use of certain designs. In addition, it may be found that certain denominations maintain particular styles as part of their ideologically and culturally oriented traditions.

The Landscape Tradition in Geography

Modification of the landscape has been the central concern of cultural geographers, according to Salter.² Wagner and Mikesell explain, "The cultural landscape, then, connotes the geographic content of a determined area, or a geographic complex of a certain type, in which the choices made and changes worked by men as members of some cultural community are manifested."³ As landscape study is a main area of research in the field of cultural geography, the changes instituted by man upon the land as a result of his building practices are of interest. An analysis of man's religious edifices and their inherent meaning may clarify why these buildings appear as they do in the landscape. Because church buildings are part of the cultural landscape they must be dealt with in relation to what the landscape is.

Cultural geographers are also concerned with the study of how

²Christopher L. Salter, The Cultural Landscape (Belmont, California: Duxbury Press, 1971), p. 4.

³Philip L. Wagner and Marvin W. Mikesell, Readings in Cultural Geography (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 10.

man has altered his habitat through his nonmaterial culture. Language and religion are aspects of culture which contribute to the way groups may organize their spatial setting.⁴ Religious traditions have influenced the landscape in several ways, among which, has been the imposing of a sense of order on the physical setting.⁵

Man's settlement patterns are also of concern to cultural geographers. Study of rural settlement has dealt mostly with house types, the arrangement of houses and other structures in relation to each other and to road networks, and the arrangement of fields. American cultural geographers have done relatively little with urban settlement forms. Enticing opportunities for study may be found in regionally dominant town and city plans, the pattern of street and lot layout, and cross-city comparison of house types, building materials, and architectural styles.⁶ In relation to the study of architectural designs in the urban landscape Zelinsky points out:

Another universal element in the American settlement landscape, rural and urban, the church building, has been scandalously neglected by geographers. The architectural historians have confined themselves to the grander, professionally designed specimens, leaving vernacular church design in limbo. As an item responsive to ethnic, racial, temporal, socio-economic, and urban-rural, as well as denominational differentials, the church building would seem to represent too rich an ore to be overlooked by cultural geographers or historians.⁷

⁴David L. Sills, ed., "Geography: Cultural Geography," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 6 (1968), p. 130.

⁵Erich Isaac, "Religion, Landscape, and Space," Landscape, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Winter 1959-60), p. 18.

⁶David L. Sills, ed., op. cit., p. 130.

⁷Wilbur Zelinsky, The Cultural Geography of the United States (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 101.

Zelinsky's encouragement to pursue the study of church buildings and their inherent cultural meaning in the landscape has been a great influence on this particular investigation.

The study of origins and spread or diffusion of cultures is also an important process focused upon by cultural geographers. Differential migration of individuals and diffusion of ideas at different periods is part of the process involved in the cultural make-up of the United States.⁸ A consideration of diffusion has been made in this investigation to determine if the place of origin of people from other parts of the nation or other parts of the world affected the style of religious buildings they constructed upon final settlement in Los Angeles. Did the migrants base their decision concerning church style on familiar examples in their native areas?

Review of the Literature

Literature pertaining to the origins of specific types of architecture among Christian denominations in the Los Angeles area is minimal. However, some writing has been done within the field of cultural geography which involves the study of ethnicity and religious ideology in relation to the landscape. Bjorklund's article, "Ideology and Culture Exemplified in Southwestern Michigan,"⁹ deals with the effect of such ideology on the building forms of the Dutch Reformed

⁸Ibid., pp. 99-100.

⁹Elaine M. Bjorklund, "Ideology and Culture Exemplified in Southwestern Michigan," Association of American Geographers, Annals, Vol. 54 (1964), pp. 227-41.

settlement in Michigan. It was discovered that the Dutch community could adapt American building styles while retaining their old ideology simply because both old and new styles were suitable expressions of their beliefs. It was not necessary for the immigrants to retain a peculiar Dutch building style in their new country. It is of interest in the present study to see if any of the denominations retained traditional styles or if they adapted their ideology to the styles already in general use in Los Angeles.

Alan Gowans studied the ecclesiastical architecture of the early settlers in America to determine its relationship to their religious beliefs and traditions.¹⁰ Gowans found, for example, that the plain style of the Puritans was not an artistic expression of their culture, but rather it was a declaration of principle and belief.¹¹ The plain style of the Puritans becomes evident in their particular "meetinghouse" architecture which abounded in the New England landscape. This plain style became the common architecture for churches of the Congregational denomination. As Congregationalists migrated westward, settling and building churches in the typical New England style, other denominations were influenced by this manner of design. New England meetinghouse style churches are in evidence in both the rural and urban settings, and the influence of this style will be considered in the present examination of church designs.

¹⁰Alan Gowans, Images of American Living: Four Centuries of Architecture and Furniture as Cultural Expression (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964).

¹¹Ibid., p. 67.

The spiritual and liturgical revival taking place within the Christian religion during the last few decades has been a key factor in the search for a more honest and simplified form of religious architecture. André Biéler has pointed out that a return to the basic beliefs of Christianity and subsequently a more simplified service has had a definite influence on church architecture.¹² This renewed sense of liturgy, which is the participation of the people during worship, cuts across denominational lines and has inspired congregations to build new churches that fulfill their needs in a contemporary manner. The definition of church space and design has again, as it was in the early church, become functional in serving the needs of the community of worshippers. Instead of archaic designs patterned after medieval prototypes, various denominations have become involved in building churches which express a renewed sense of community and fellowship among the members. One aspect of this trend has been the construction of churches in-the-round with the members seated around a central altar or worship and preaching center.

Although geographic writing, such as David Sopher's Geography of Religions,¹³ has dealt with the visual impress of religious factors on the landscape, little of it pertains to architectural study. Therefore, literature from other sources, especially from the fields of architecture and religious history, provided the majority of background material for this investigation.

¹²André Biéler, Architecture in Worship (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 84.

¹³David E. Sopher, Geography of Religions (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967).

Architectural literature contains a number of articles dealing with religious belief and church building. For example, Andrew and Blank, in "The Four Mormon Temples in Utah,"¹⁴ discuss the four temples as distinct expressions of Mormon ideology and establish that a new architecture was developed from a mixture of Gothic and Masonic forms to embody the Mormon ethic.

Also, Charles Faulkner's Christian Science Church Edifices¹⁵ was of great assistance in providing insight into that denomination's building practices. Likewise, Elmer Grey's article on the building of the First Church of Christ, Scientist of Los Angeles was of value in analyzing that structure.¹⁶ James F. White's Protestant Worship and Church Architecture¹⁷ related the expression of theology in church architecture and explained the historical trends that produced certain styles. A portion of Marion Starkey's The Congregational Way¹⁸ dealt specifically with the church building practices and styles of the Congregationalists, relating their historical development to that of the early Pilgrims and Puritans.

¹⁴David S. Andrew and Laurel B. Blank, "The Four Mormon Temples in Utah," The Society of Architectural Historians Journal, Vol. 30, No. 1 (March 1971), pp. 51-65.

¹⁵Charles D. Faulkner, Christian Science Church Edifices (Chicago, Illinois: By the Author, 1946).

¹⁶Elmer Grey, "On the Design of Certain Modern Church Edifices," The Architectural Record (December 1913), pp. 545-56.

¹⁷James F. White, Protestant Worship and Church Architecture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

¹⁸Marion L. Starkey, The Congregational Way (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966).

Research Problem and Methodology

Whereas the literature previously cited illustrated how such factors as culture, theology, and artistic trends have influenced church building style, this investigation deals with how these or other factors affected church styles in Los Angeles. In order to determine how these styles were chosen and what factors influenced the choice the research focused on specific denominational samples.

At the beginning of this investigation eight denominations were under consideration. However, due to difficulties in obtaining information, the resulting sample was limited to four denominations representing a variety of ethnic and ideologically oriented Christian churches: Christian Science, Congregational, Eastern Orthodox, and Lutheran.

The Christian Science denomination was chosen because of its interesting metaphysical ideology as well as because of its founding as a native American religion. Observations of Christian Science churches and their particular styles throughout the United States further encouraged the author to include a local analysis of this denominations' buildings in the present study.

Likewise, the Congregational denomination was selected because of its particular theological orientation first represented in America by the Pilgrims and Puritans. The historical association of the Congregational Church with New England and the church styles found there was also of interest in considering this denomination.

Because it represented the Eastern Christian theology as well as counting a wide variety of ethnic groups among its adherents, the Eastern Orthodox denomination was included in the study. The author's previous experience and interest in the Byzantine style of architecture which is associated with the Eastern Orthodox churches was also a determining factor in the inclusion of this denomination.

The Lutheran denomination was historically divided along ethnic lines. As immigrant groups arrived in America from predominantly Lutheran areas of Europe, they formed their own synods, or church councils, which encouraged the perpetuation of linguistic and cultural differences. Swedes, Danes, Norwegians, Finns, and Germans were the major groups which formed specific synods within the Lutheran denomination. Although mergers have recently occurred among the various synods, the possible affect of this ethnic orientation on church style was of interest in this architectural examination. Therefore, Lutheran groups were included, not only because of their traditionally conservative theological outlook, but also because of their ethnic backgrounds, and origins in other parts of the world or other parts of the United States.

Six examples of church architecture were taken for each of the four denominations.¹⁹ A random sample was taken in an effort to include an unbiased, cross-section of church building from each denomination being studied.

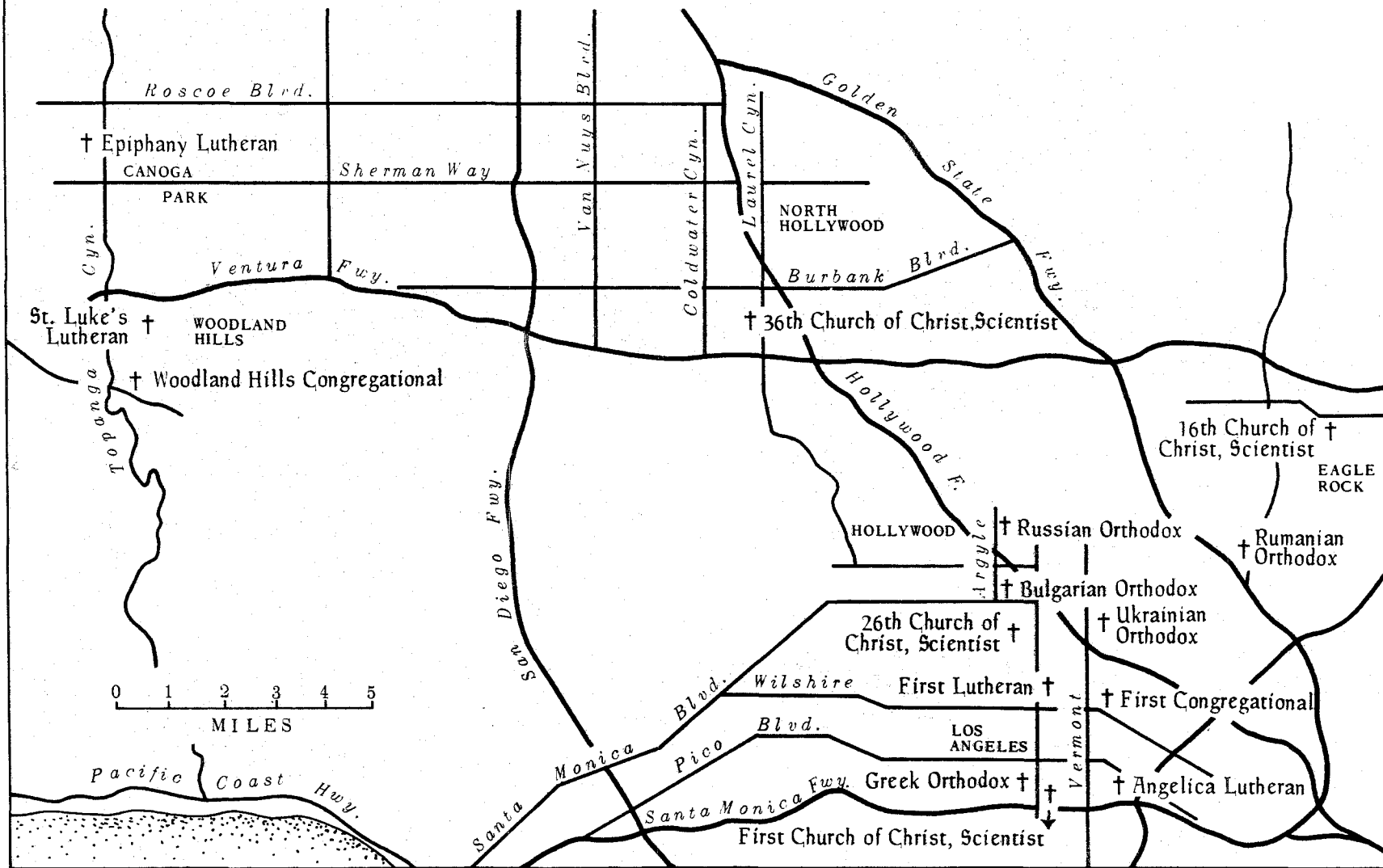
¹⁹Six examples were taken from each denomination as a result of the original research which included exactly six Armenian churches. Although the Armenians were not included in this study the random sample was based on the number of churches of that denomination and was retained as the number of examples taken from the other denominations.

The twenty-four churches were chosen randomly from all the churches of the four denominations listed in the Yellow Pages of Pacific Telephone Company's central directory for Los Angeles and its northwestern directory which includes portions of the San Fernando Valley. Thus the study area defined by the two telephone directories included not only the San Fernando Valley, but the central Los Angeles and Hollywood area south to the Santa Monica Freeway (Figure 1). This area was chosen in an effort to include church buildings from various periods in the outward growth of greater Los Angeles. Personal observation revealed that older church structures were located in the downtown portion of Los Angeles whereas more recent church architecture was evident in the suburbs of the city. Therefore, the downtown area was selected to include older church buildings in this study, and the San Fernando Valley, representing a growing suburb, was decided upon to include examples of more recent church architecture.

Although it was important to include areas of older and newer examples of church building, actual temporal limitations were not established at the beginning of this investigation. However, the dates of construction of the church buildings in the sample range from 1912 to 1972 and so incorporate a sixty-year period of time.

There are twenty Christian Science churches listed in the study area; therefore, to obtain six samples every third listing was taken from the telephone directories, beginning with the northwestern area. Obtaining a sample of Congregational churches involved first checking both directories under the listings "United Church of Christ," the new name since recent mergers with other Christian groups, then

Figure 1: Location of Sample Churches



checking "Congregational" listings separately to locate any churches not listed under the official name United Church of Christ. Because a total of eighteen churches were located within the delimited study area, every third listing was taken as a sample.

Twelve Eastern Orthodox churches were listed in the two directories; therefore, every second listing was cited as an example. With forty-three Lutheran churches listed in the two directories and within the study area, every seventh listing was taken as a sample to be analyzed architecturally.

Visits to the randomly selected churches were made in order to identify the architecture and photograph the building. Of value in identifying architectural style was course work taken on the subject as well as study in art history literature and architectural journals. A general explanatory letter and questionnaire were sent to pastors or secretaries of all the congregations in the sample and response was received from over half of them. Questions asked of pastors and church members as part of the questionnaire or interview focused upon the following: ²⁰

1. How was the style of the church building chosen?
2. What influenced the choice of style most?
3. Was the church building patterned after or influenced by any particular religious structure found in another part of the United States or any other country?

Additional discussions with architects dealt with architectural revival styles in Los Angeles, new trends in ecclesiastical architecture.

²⁰See Appendix for actual questionnaire used.

and the effect of liturgical changes on architecture. Specific questions concerning the meaning behind certain stylistic elements in particular churches were also part of interviews with both pastors and architects. For example, if a congregation purchased a structure from another denomination, would there have been any alterations made to make the church more suitable stylistically to the needs of the new group?

Out of twenty-four churches selected in the sample, fifteen responded to the questionnaire and granted interviews. These fifteen, then, provided the empirical basis for the research (Table 1).

TABLE 1

RANDOMLY SELECTED CHURCHES RESPONDING TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Christian Science Churches:

1. First Church of Christ, Scientist, Los Angeles
2. Sixteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, Eagle Rock
3. Twenty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, Hollywood
4. Thirty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, North Hollywood

Congregational Churches:

5. First Congregational Church of Los Angeles
6. Woodland Hills Community Congregational Church

Eastern Orthodox Churches:

7. Sveti Klimenti Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Hollywood
8. Holy Trinity Rumanian Orthodox Church, Los Angeles
9. Russian Orthodox Church of Protection of the Holy Virgin, Hollywood
10. St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Los Angeles
11. St. Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Hollywood

Lutheran Churches:

12. Angelica Lutheran Church, Los Angeles
13. First Lutheran Church of Los Angeles
14. Epiphany Lutheran Church, Canoga Park
15. St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Woodland Hills

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL REVIVAL ARCHITECTURE AND CHURCH DESIGN (1912-1937)

The period from 1912 through 1937 represents an era of architectural development that was profoundly influenced by a return to the past. The historic styles, based on the architecture of other eras, were sought to fulfill the needs of newly arrived settlers to the Los Angeles area in the early twentieth century. How these people perceived what a church should look like was reflected in the various styles that are still in evidence today in the Los Angeles landscape. Architectural trends in this period included a revival of old styles beginning with the Italian Renaissance Revival and continuing through to the Spanish Colonial Revival which became common in the building style of the southwestern United States. The popularity of the revival of historic forms of architecture is evident in Los Angeles during the twenty-five-year period represented by the sample churches in the first part of this study.

Christian Science and the Italian Renaissance Revival

The rebirth of knowledge and search for Truth, based on the writings of antiquity, symbolize the Renaissance era in the history of Western Civilization. The revival of the Italian Renaissance architectural style is evident in the First Church of Christ, Scientist of Los Angeles, built in 1912 and located at 1366 South Alvarado. Since

its selection in the random sample the church has been sold to another religious organization. Designed by Elmer Grey, the First Church incorporates the style elements of the Italian Renaissance Revival such as the classical colonnaded loggia (porch), masonry construction, and square tower dominating the center of the main structure (Figure 2).

The Christian Science religion cites the search for truth among its major tenets and the architect of this First Church, Elmer Grey, related the search for what is true or real to architecture:

The trend of preachment or sermon in all churches is for the things of lasting value, the real against the seeming; so when a church builds, it should show that it believes in putting such preachments into practice, that it demands the real in architecture instead of that which only seems so. ¹

Grey sought to profit by the lessons of the past and to use the historic styles of architecture to meet the conditions of the time and to convey the beliefs of those for whom he designed. The architect felt that excellence in architecture came as a gradual process and that the church architecture of Italy, England, and France provided the inspiration for the best in church architecture. Grey continued:

The historic styles of architecture which have endured and which we admire as having distinct character are the result of people during certain periods of the world's history having planned and built according to the practical requirements of their day....The process of thus first assembling the practical requirements into the form of a plan will usually go far toward deciding what the nature of the exterior or its architectural style will be. ²

¹ Elmer Grey, "On the Design of Certain Modern Church Edifices," The Architectural Record (December 1913), p. 545.

² Ibid., p. 551.

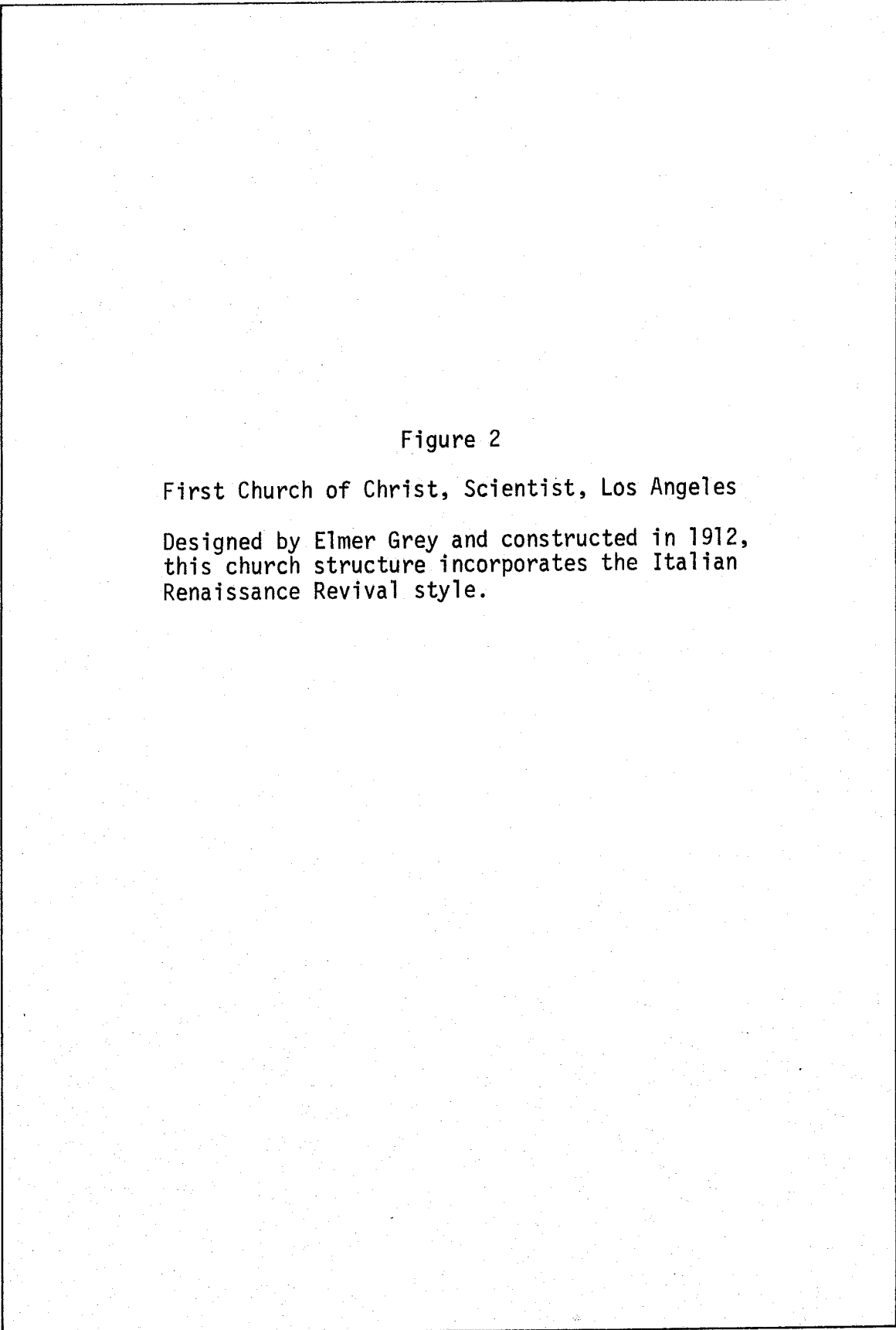


Figure 2

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Los Angeles

Designed by Elmer Grey and constructed in 1912,
this church structure incorporates the Italian
Renaissance Revival style.



Even as form began to follow function in the planning of this church, the revival style chosen was accepted by the membership who sought the real in architecture. As the architect Charles D. Faulkner pointed out:

Compared to that of other denominations our path is untrod. We are setting out on a relatively new road, and for this very reason we should exercise wisdom and care. We are, as Christian Scientists, free of ritual and old theology, but that does not give us license to ignore the necessary fundamentals of dignity and substantiality in our church buildings. Simple beauty, which is built in, is a respected asset. From the true nature of Christian Science itself there will develop a true expression of that nature in its church buildings. This does not mean that symbolism or an ecclesiastical art will ever find a place in Christian Science church buildings. It does mean that, as we go along, we will build better and truer expressions of the teachings of Christian Science.³

In addition to the influence of the historic revival and its role as a factor in the design of the First Church was the member's own perception of what their church should look like. Based on the Italian Romanesque style of the Mother Church in Boston, the First Church incorporated stylistic elements characteristic of that building such as the tower, for example.⁴ Not only were the members of this Christian Science church planning to build substantially but they were intending to embody characteristics of their Mother Church structure in the new building as well. Along with the architectural training in historic forms by the designer and the desire to build well by the congregation, came the style influence of the Mother Church which accounts for the construction of this church in the Italian style.

³Charles D. Faulkner, Christian Science Church Edifices (Chicago, Illinois: By the Author, 1946), p. 37.

⁴Mrs. George L. VanAntwerp, Member of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, personal communication, November 1973.

Lutheran and Congregational Churches
of the Gothic Revival

In addition to the revival of the Italian Renaissance style in America came the return to Medieval Gothic forms for church buildings. The nineteenth century Gothic Revival expressed the church's desire to emulate what was believed to be the most spiritual Christian period, the Middle Ages. A continuation of the first phase of the Gothic Revival, which began in the early 1800's, was evident during the early 1900's as well. It is curious, however, that American Protestant churches so readily accepted the style which prevailed during the period of Church history so ardently attacked by the reformers of the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the Gothic Revival became the most influential movement in American ecclesiastical architecture during the last century and into the twentieth. The Gothic Revival left its impression on the landscape of Los Angeles in the style of two congregations of different denominations which were represented in the random sample taken.

Angelica Lutheran Church, built in 1925 and located at 1345 South Burlington, was typical of the Gothic Revival style in Los Angeles at that time. Designed by a Swedish engineer, Mr. G.S. Larson, the church is constructed of red brick and exhibits elements of Gothic architecture in its arched portal, stained glass windows, and tower (Figure 3). The tower previously had another stage above it with a tall steeple. However, due to earthquakes, both segments have

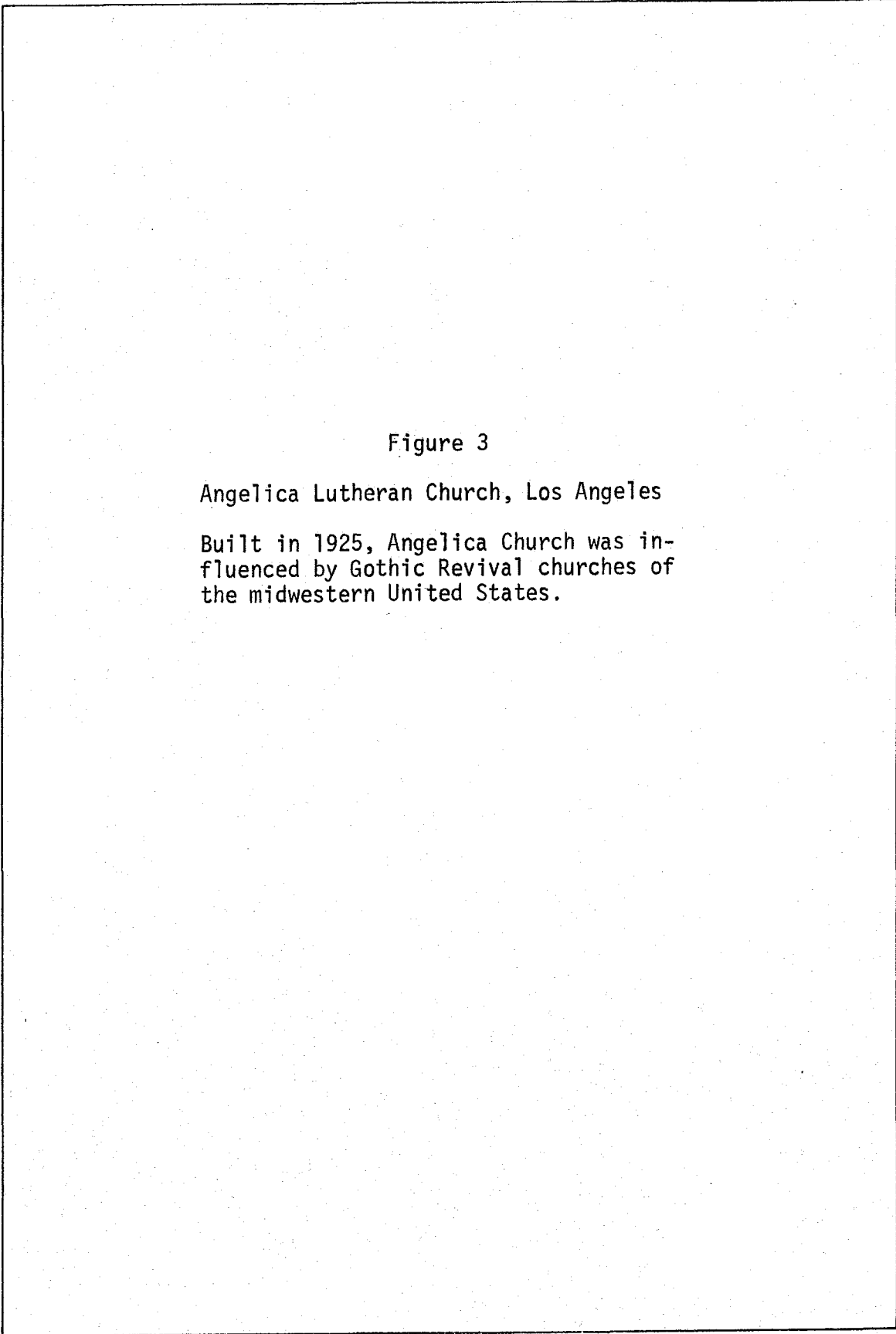


Figure 3

Angelica Lutheran Church, Los Angeles

Built in 1925, Angelica Church was influenced by Gothic Revival churches of the midwestern United States.



been removed over the years, altering the truer Gothic tower form.

At the time of construction the predominantly Swedish congregation decided by vote the style for their church. Many of the members of Angelica were recent arrivals from the midwestern United States as well as directly from Sweden. A discussion with the architect, who is now 97 years old, revealed that this particular church was the first and only religious building he had ever designed and that a great deal of influence on the actual style came from the midwestern churches so familiar to those members who migrated to Los Angeles from that area of the country.⁵ The Gothic Revival, well under way in the Middle West during the past century, had influenced the church styles there to such an extent that when people came west to California the image they brought of church buildings was naturally a Gothic one. Churches of red brick with their towers and steeples pointing heavenward still predominate in the prairie landscape of the American Midwest. Therefore, Angelica Church shows in its architecture how the landscape was modified due to the diffusion of ideas from one place to another. This was possible ideologically as well since Lutheran doctrine has never stipulated any specific building form so individual congregations are free to determine their own style of church design.

Another Gothic Revival style example was part of the random sample and represented by a Congregational church. The combination of traditions which merged to form the Congregational denomination, since 1961 the United Church of Christ, influenced not only the

⁵G.S. Larson, Architect of Angelica Lutheran Church, personal communication, August 1973.

theology of the church but the architecture as well. The Congregational heritage was portrayed by Marion Starkey:

The groups forming the first American churches represented two distinct traditions. The Pilgrims of Plymouth were wanderers who had withdrawn from the Church of England and brought with them leanings that led to tolerance and good will. The severe Puritans of Massachusetts Bay were reformers and brought with them a harsh and exacting theology that led to intolerance and persecution. The two groups in time nonetheless became the Congregationalists.⁶

The First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, at Sixth and Commonwealth, is in the English Gothic Revival mode of architecture. Built in 1931, it is constructed in a cross plan with a central tower over the crossing between nave, chancel, and transepts. Round window tracery, arch tympanum over the main portal, and pointed towers show elements of the English Gothic Revival in church architecture of the twentieth century (Figure 4). The decision to build in this English Gothic manner was made by vote of the congregation who wished to express their Pilgrim religious background in the architectural form of an English parish church.⁷ Although much larger than most English parish churches, the characteristics of style and feeling have been carefully implemented in the First Congregational Church. It is remarkable as well that the Puritan and Pilgrim heritage of the Congregational Church should revert back to the very style of the Church of England from which they originally dissented and separated. White pointed out that the powerful influence of such nineteenth century

⁶Marion Starkey, The Congregational Way (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966), p. vii.

⁷Harry Weber, Member of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, personal communication, September 1973.

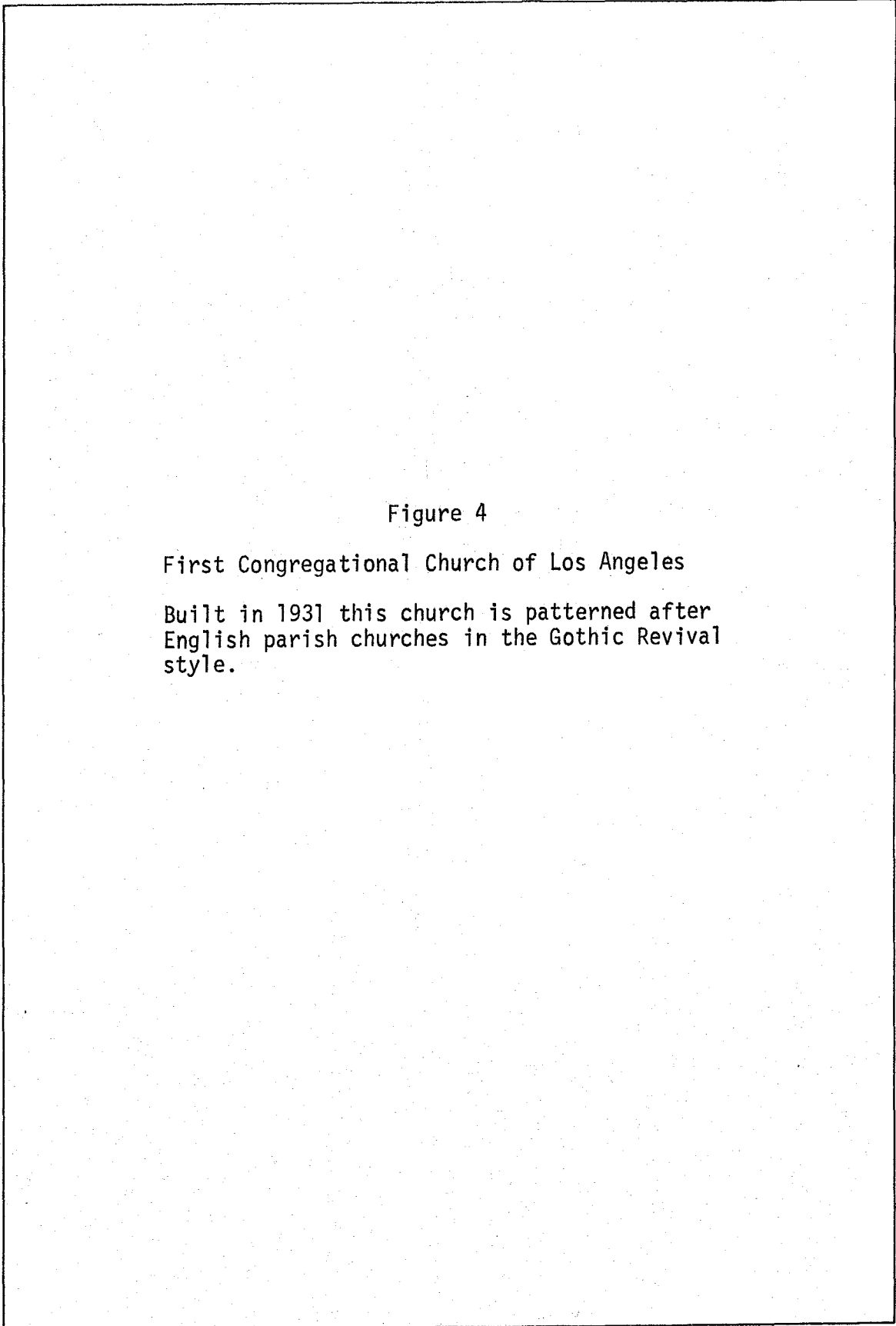


Figure 4

First Congregational Church of Los Angeles

Built in 1931 this church is patterned after English parish churches in the Gothic Revival style.



architects as Ralph Adams Cram were responsible for the creation of Gothic churches with large chancels and the full neo-medieval arrangement which became popular among Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Unitarians.⁸

Why did Congregational groups accept the neo-Gothic style, when, at the beginning of their history in America, they developed a unique form of church architecture known as the "meetinghouse?" The Puritan meetinghouse was typical in the New England landscape until the advent of the classical revivals which changed their appearance in several ways. First, the churches were painted white and classical columns and porches were added. With the addition of towers and steeples, the form that is now thought of to be "typical" New England church architecture was created. As White mentioned, the powerful influence of nineteenth century historic revival architects and the Gothic Revival that influenced almost every denomination in America had a great impact on the change from meetinghouse to other acceptable architectural styles for Congregational churches. Although the forebears of the present Congregationalists maintained a particular style as an expression of their beliefs, the religion was not so rigid that it could not accept other styles for its religious buildings. The last century of building practice reveals that Congregational church architecture has experienced most stylistic phases prevalent in the United States, including the Gothic Revival phase as exemplified in the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles.

⁸James F. White, Protestant Worship and Church Architecture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 138.

Christian Science and Lutheran Churches
of the Spanish Colonial Revival

Another aspect of the revival of historic architecture in the first part of the twentieth century was the return to the Spanish Colonial style for buildings of all types. This revival included two phases: the Mission style and the Churrigueresque style. In areas once dominated by Spain and Mexico examples of restored traditional Spanish colonial building were already present in the landscape. Most notable among those existing structures were the missions which were usually built in a simplified Baroque manner. The missions, then, were the primary influence in the first phase of the Spanish Colonial Revival. Their simplicity of design is reflected in plain adobe or stucco surfaces, wood beamed ceilings, tile roofs, and rounded arches supporting the porches. These elements of the Spanish Colonial, as exemplified in the Mission style, are carried out to some degree in samples of churches in this design.

By the 1920's the Spanish Colonial Revival became the popular architecture of Southern California. Beginning with the simplicity of the Mission style the revival ran its course all the way through to the more elaborate Churrigueresque form popularized by the architecture of the San Diego Panama California International Exposition of 1915.⁹

⁹David Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California," Society of Architectural Historians Journal, Vol. 26, No. 2 (May 1967), pp. 131-47.

The Sixteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, built in 1928 and located at 5006 Ellenwood Drive, was constructed in the Mission style characteristic of the era and region in which it was designed. The Mission style was chosen by the membership after almost six years of exploratory visits to and conferences with other Christian Science churches in Los Angeles. Consultations with architects and viewing of proposed plans were also part of the process in determining church style. As early as 1922, members seriously considered three suggested exterior plans, all in the Mediterranean motif: Mission, Italian, and Spanish American. Meyer and Holler, who designed a number of other Christian Science churches in the Los Angeles area, were engaged as the architects and furnished with the church requirements. Plans were drawn and immediately accepted.¹⁰ The resulting architecture of the Sixteenth Church incorporates the Mission style tile roof, adobe brick walls, porch, and wooden beams extending to the exterior (Figure 5).

Also represented in the first phase of the Spanish Colonial Revival is First Lutheran Church of Los Angeles at 3119 West Sixth Street. The congregation, which was predominantly German, moved its location from Eighth and Flower to the present site and began their church building in 1937. The congregation viewed architect's plans and made the decision to build in the Mission style because it was the style of the area and in particular of the homes surrounding the church.¹¹ The church building itself is very plain and simple archi-

¹⁰Margaret Alagna, Member of the Sixteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, personal communication, September 1973.

¹¹Rev. Paul E. Valentiner, Pastor of First Lutheran Church of Los Angeles, personal communication, September 1973.

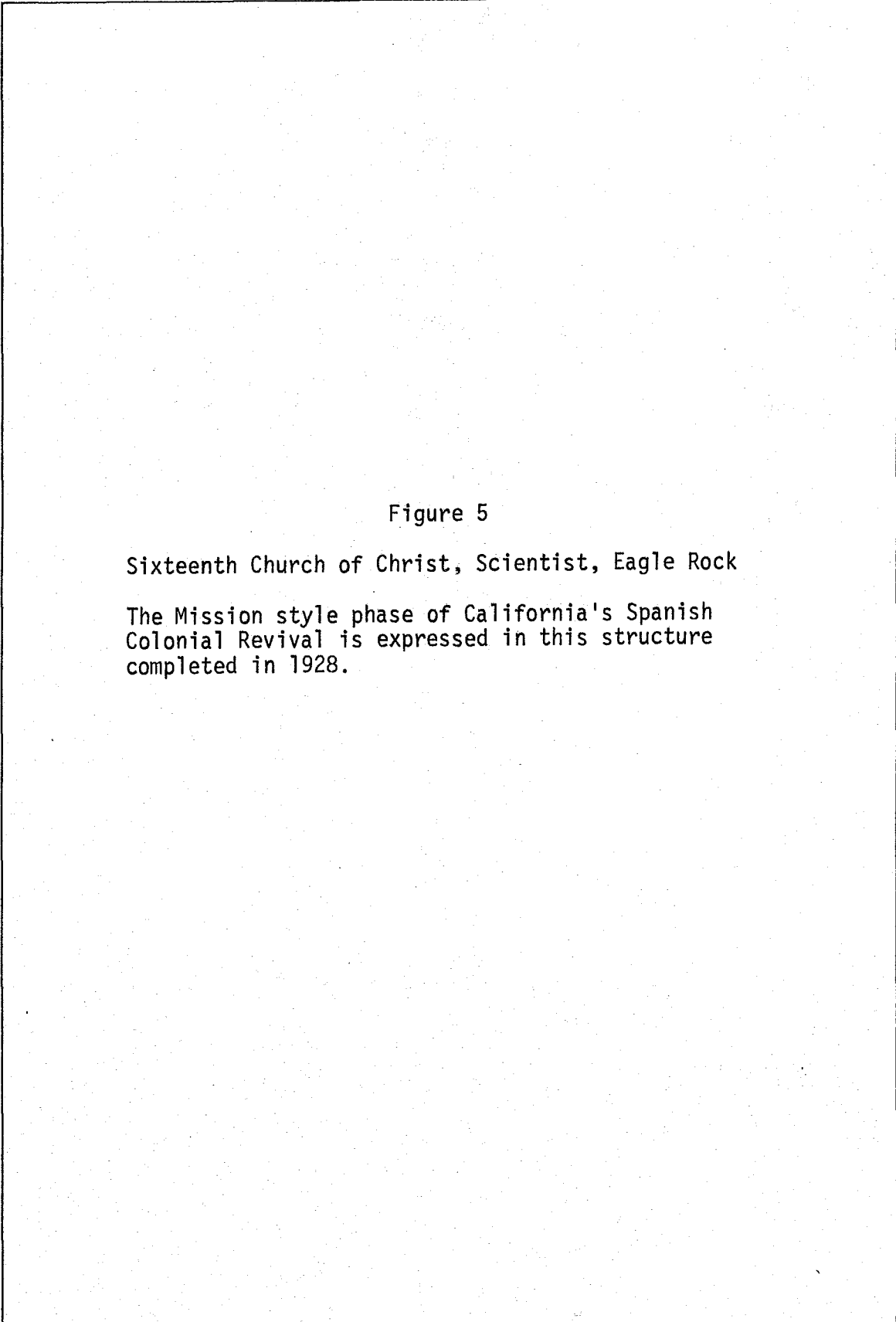


Figure 5

Sixteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, Eagle Rock

The Mission style phase of California's Spanish Colonial Revival is expressed in this structure completed in 1928.



tecturally, with a small round window centering above the main doorway. A simplified version of the Spanish Baroque portal, arched windows, and red tile roof are elements of the Mission style of First Lutheran Church of Los Angeles (Figure 6).

Although the Mission phase of the Spanish Colonial Revival was a "California" style, the fact that its historical derivation was from Catholic Spain was of no consequence in the choices made by Christian Scientists or Lutherans. The samples in this investigation show that because the Mission style was typical of the region in which the denominations were building, and because the style could be adapted to the functional requirements of the churches, it became accepted and used regardless of its historical background.

Christian Science and the Modernized Classic

The inherent meaning of the classical style was noted by Gowans when he wrote, "The classical style represented an ideal of order and reason in the world and churches in this style meant to reveal the divine powers of Reason given to mankind."¹² Because the importance of rational thinking is stressed in Christian Science, this style seems especially appropriate to that denomination. As an article in Architectural Forum noted, "The Christian Science faith is not a ceremonial one calling for expressive forms. Its teachings are

¹²Alan Gowans, Images of American Living; Four Centuries of Architecture and Furniture as Cultural Expression (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964), p. 184.

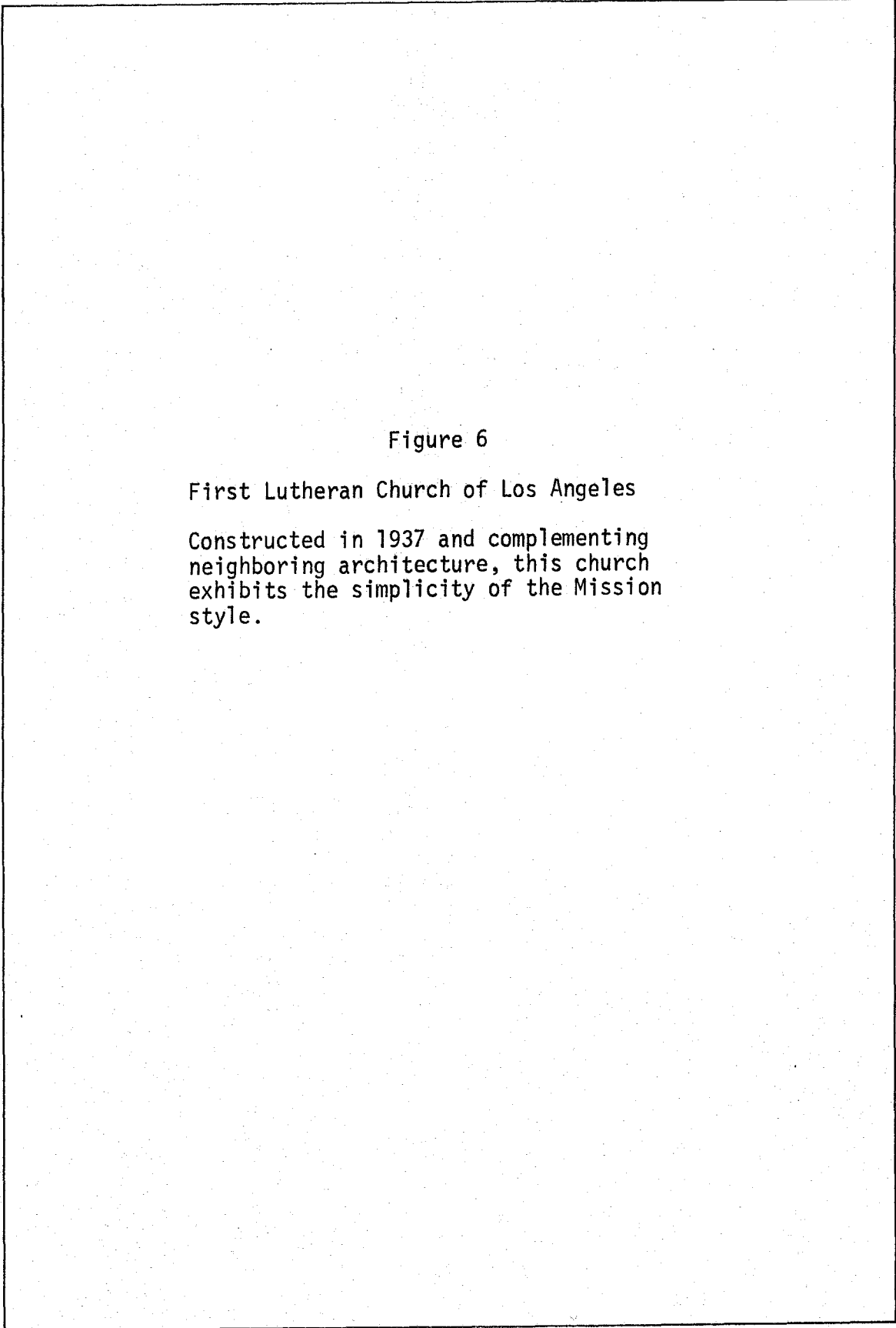


Figure 6

First Lutheran Church of Los Angeles

Constructed in 1937 and complementing neighboring architecture, this church exhibits the simplicity of the Mission style.



transmitted by the spoken word, and its churches are efficient auditoriums, as large as site and budget allow." ¹³

The Twenty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, at 470 North Saint Andrew's Place, Hollywood, was built in 1929 in a modernized classic style. The term "modernized" classic expresses a mode of architecture that is an extremely simplified version of the more elaborate classic style. While a church in typical classic revival mode would include characteristics of the temple style such as portico, freize, and classical order columns, the "modernized" version would include more simplified elements of the style. The Twenty-Sixth Church expresses this modernized classic style in its simple, temple-like facade (Figure 7). A vote of the membership determined the type of style for the building and the firm of Meyer and Holler designed the structure.¹⁴ This firm also designed the Sixteenth Church of Christ, Scientist examined in this study (p. 28), as well as several other Christian Science churches in Los Angeles.

¹³"Church in a Grove of Skyscrapers," Architectural Forum, Vol. 130, No. 5 (June 1969), p. 43.

¹⁴Gordon Baird, Member of the Twenty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, personal communication, October 1973.

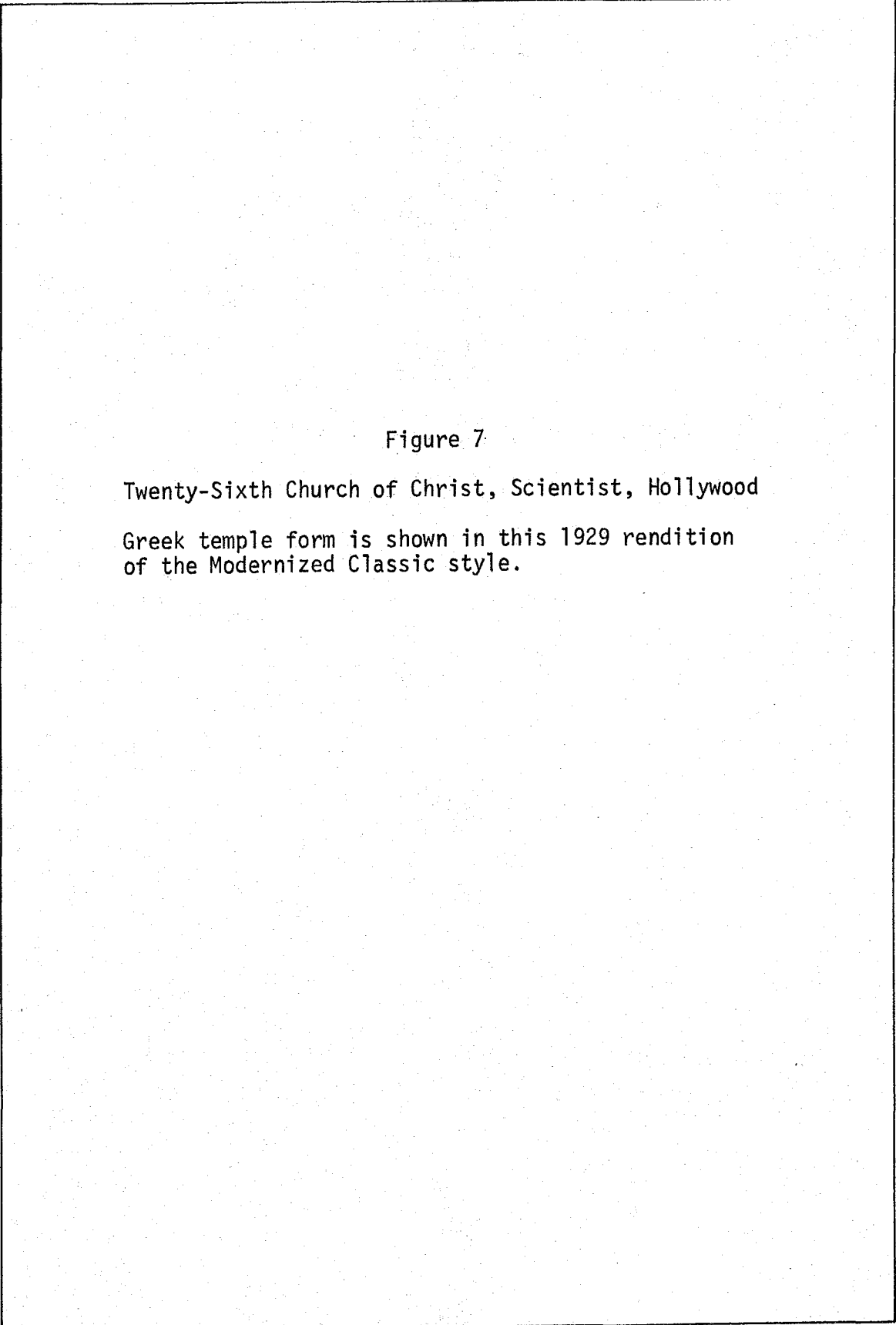


Figure 7

Twenty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, Hollywood

Greek temple form is shown in this 1929 rendition
of the Modernized Classic style.



CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AND CHURCH DESIGN (1952-1959)

At the beginning of the 1950's the architecture of the sample churches in this study began to follow three distinctly different forms of design. First, prior to World War II, churches tended to build in styles derived from historical antecedents. A continuation of this historic revival trend prevailed during the post-war period as well, although its influence began to wane.

Secondly, a form of design which became prevalent beginning in the 1950's was the modern or contemporary style. Churches following the modern form were built in such a manner as a result of changes in theological understanding and liturgical renewal. Various denominations also sought a closer relationship with the modern community of which they were a part. Since the traditional Gothic forms were in contrast to the life of the contemporary church, a more suitable contemporary style was adopted in many denominations. Peter Hammond summed up this trend when he wrote, "In essence, it was a revolt against the falsehood of an approach to architecture which had degraded the architect into a purveyor of assorted styles and historical souvenirs, and which had isolated the most social of the arts from the daily life of the community."¹

¹Peter Hammond, Liturgy and Architecture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 51.

Finally, a traditional form of church architecture is reflected in the ethnically oriented churches within the Eastern Orthodox denomination. An analysis of traditional Orthodox architecture, as evidenced in the Byzantine style, will be presented in the following chapter.

A Transition from Old to New in Church Design

A debate has arisen during the last few decades among architects stressing the importance of retaining old historical styles in church design and those striving to express Christian beliefs through a more contemporary means of architecture. "Too many bad imitations of imitations have been done as churches until mediocrity has become the accepted style for most denominations," argues Bill N. Lacy, architect.² "There are some who confuse the perpetuation of a recognizable architectural style with the preservation of the church's traditions. Gothic cathedrals, Greek temples, colonial meetinghouses, and Mayan shrines are not appropriate symbols of contemporary Protestant religion. Hypocrisy should not be the emblem of Protestantism."³

As Robert Inslee, church architect, pointed out, churches have discovered that their reasons for being are different than they were fifty years ago.⁴ Besides providing for worship, the congregation may

²Bill N. Lacy, "Designing a Church: An Act of Risk," American Institute of Architects Journal, Vol. XLVII, No. 3 (March 1967), p. 60.

³Ibid., p. 62.

⁴Robert Inslee, church architect, personal communication, October 1973.

be involved in more socially oriented avenues of service to the local community. Counselling, day care centers, recreation, training programs, youth activities, and ministries to the aged, are just some examples of the church's extended concern into the surrounding social environment. Architecture, then, will follow the function of the church and the form or style will be a result, rather than the form dictating an archaic ecclesiastical function. The multi-purpose church structure, according to Mr. Inslee, is the possible form that some Protestant churches may be taking in the future as a result of their belief in serving the needs of mankind.

Christian Science and the Georgian-Colonial

Christian Science draws its authority from the Bible and its teachings are set forth in "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" by Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science.⁵ The Christian Science denomination, founded in 1879, is a native American church having no specific ethnic orientation other than the American culture in general. The resulting architecture in some examples of Christian Science building reflects a tendency towards the native American style popularly known as "colonial".

In 1952 the Thirty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, at 4032 Whittsett, in North Hollywood, was built in the Georgian-Colonial

⁵Christian Science Committee on Publication, Facts About Christian Science (Boston, Massachusetts: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1959), p. 1.

style. This church edifice features a cupola with balustrade at the roof top, typical of the early New England meetinghouse style; red brick construction, typical of buildings in the southern and middle American colonies; and large paned windows, which were common in the London churches of Gibbs and Wren during the 1700's (Figure 8).

The styles known as Georgian and Colonial were contemporary in that the Georgian prevailed in England at the same time that the Colonial prevailed in the American colonies. Many of the style elements are similar, having been derived from the Roman Classic. They include the use of the Classic orders for columns, cornices, and pediments.⁶ Consequently, the Thirty-Sixth Church contains a number of these classical elements typical of the Georgian style. A white pediment supported by two white Ionic order columns graces the front porch of this structure (Figure 9). In connection with this style Faulkner wrote:

The church buildings designed in the Colonial style of architecture seem to fit most locations in this country and with the progress which is bound to be experienced in the future, it is probable that the Colonial style of architecture will at some future time become the basis of a distinctive characteristic style for Christian Science churches. A careful blending of the refined and delicate proportions of the Colonial with good taste, will probably result in a general recognition of what will become something still more chaste, beautiful and dignified in Christian Science church design.⁷

Members of the Thirty-Sixth Church voted to build in the style typical of colonial Williamsburg, Virginia and to express their

⁶Charles D. Faulkner, Christian Science Church Edifices (Chicago, Illinois: By the Author, 1946), p. 397.

⁷Ibid., p. 401.

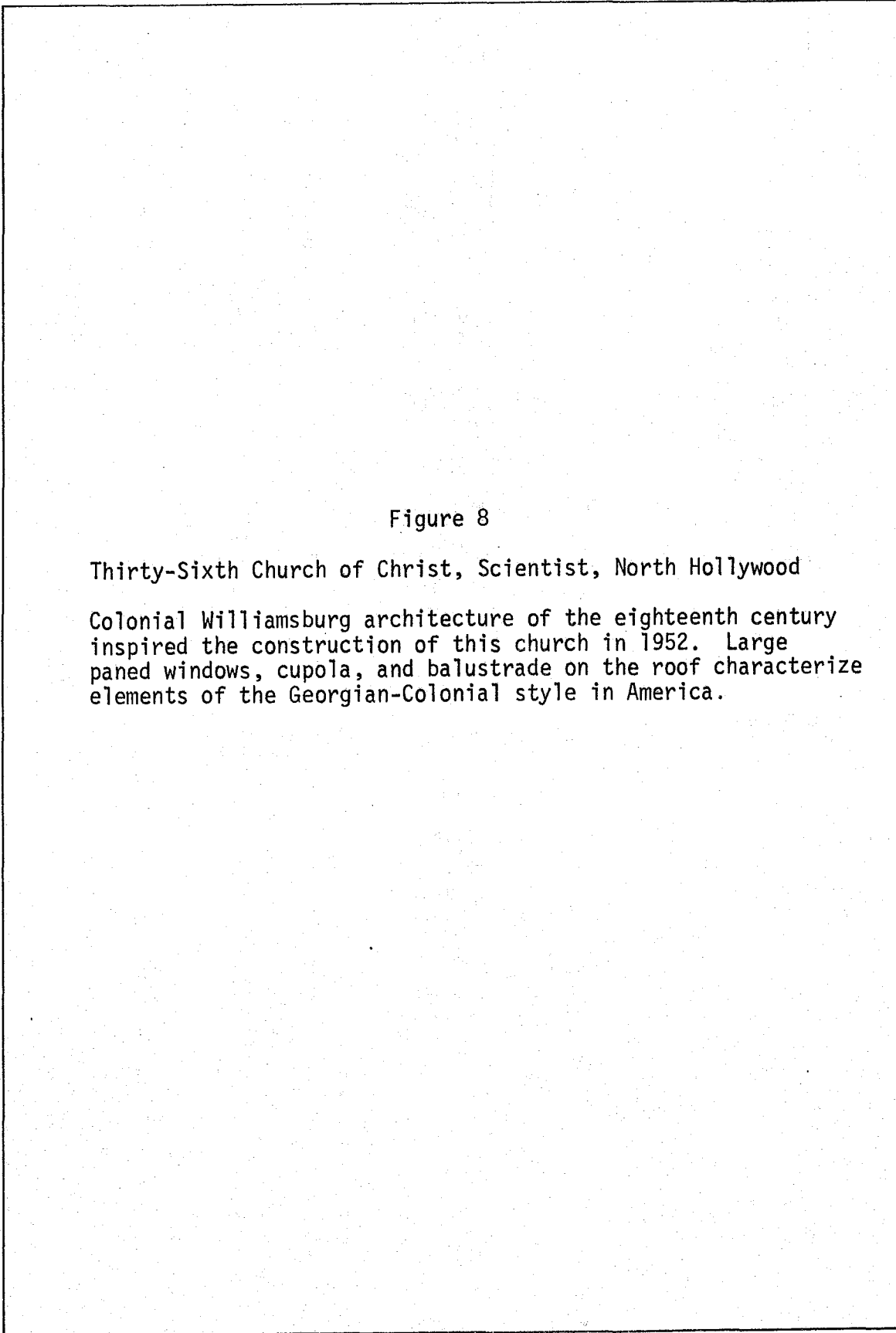


Figure 8

Thirty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, North Hollywood

Colonial Williamsburg architecture of the eighteenth century inspired the construction of this church in 1952. Large paned windows, cupola, and balustrade on the roof characterize elements of the Georgian-Colonial style in America.



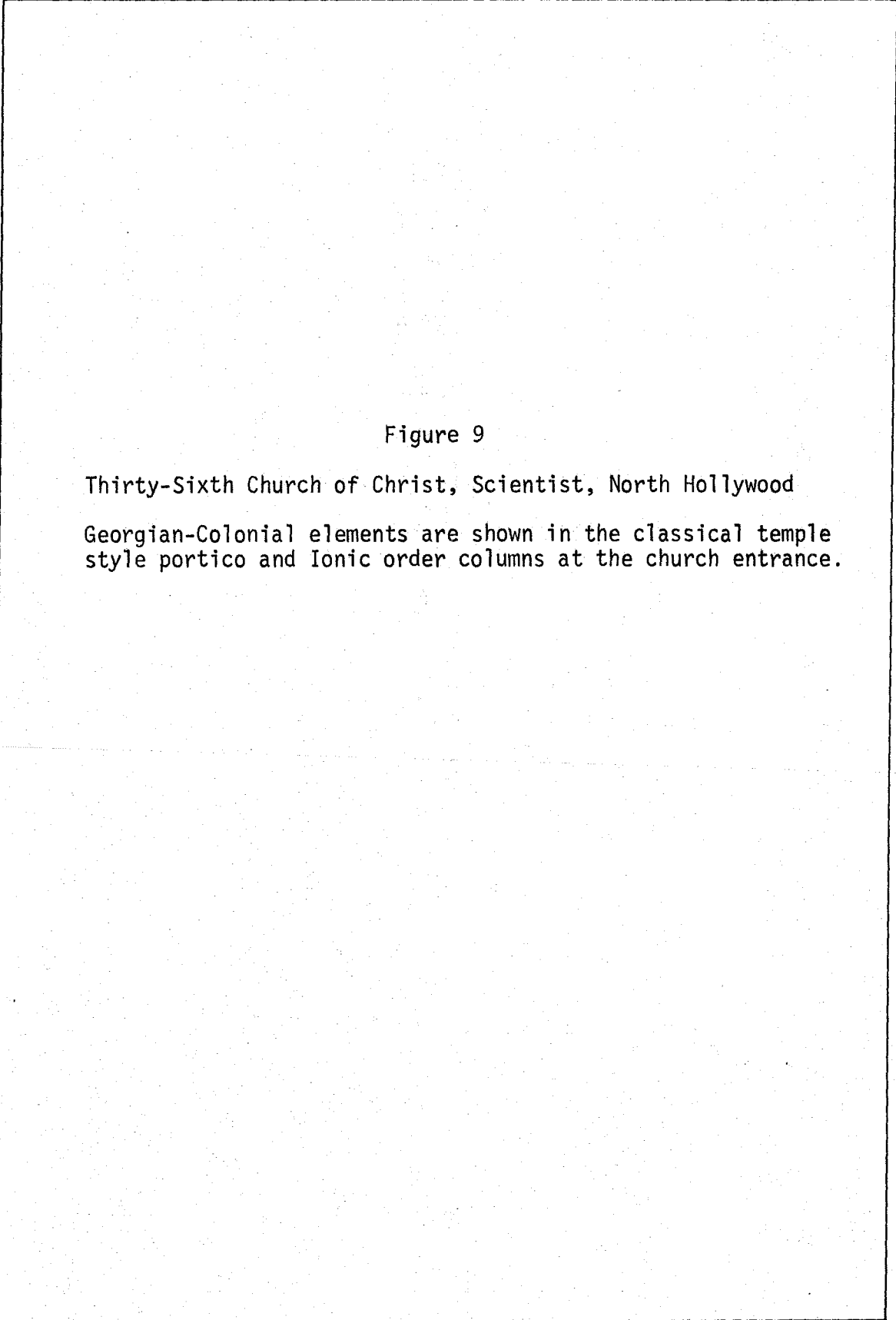


Figure 9

Thirty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, North Hollywood

Georgian-Colonial elements are shown in the classical temple style portico and Ionic order columns at the church entrance.



American cultural heritage in the church building style.⁸ Therefore, the style prevalent in Williamsburg was incorporated into the church building and the result was a design typical of the eighteenth century Georgian-Colonial in America.

Lutheran and Congregational Churches and Liturgical Renewal

Concerning the church building Peter Hammond wrote:

The church building is the house of the Church, in the biblical sense of that word; the house of the people who are themselves the temple of the living God, the habitation of the Spirit; a spiritual house built of living stones. It has no meaning apart from the community which it serves. It is first and foremost a building in which the people of God meet to do certain things: to perform the various communal activities known collectively as liturgy or public service. This is what a church is for. It is a building for corporate worship; above all, a room for eucharistic assembly. Reduced to its bare essentials, it is a building to house a congregation gathered around an altar.⁹

The liturgical renaissance which many denominations have experienced over the last two decades involves a renewal of Christian life and teaching which centers on the participation of the individual in corporate worship. A renewed sense of fellowship and community with one another during the activity of worship characterizes this new interest in and emphasis on the liturgy. Hammond expressed this attitude when he wrote, "The task of the church architect is not merely to find a contemporary idiom. It is rather to create architectural forms which embody the theological vision of the twentieth century as

⁸Bettina Swan, Member of the Thirty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, personal communication, July 1973.

⁹Peter Hammond, op. cit., p. 28.

the characteristic forms of Gothic architecture expressed that of the twelfth."¹⁰ Two denominations affected in some degree by recent liturgical changes are the Lutheran and Congregational. In this chapter their building styles will be examined.

The cultural landscape of Woodland Hills has been affected by the construction of two contemporary churches, one Congregational and the other Lutheran. Woodland Hills Community Congregational Church, at 21338 Dumetz Road, was completed in 1958 and follows a contemporary form of functional architecture (Figure 10). The congregation, being rather liberal theologically, wished to express that its source of inspiration was in the present rather than in the past. Therefore, through a consideration of the practical and theological needs of the congregation and a study of other church buildings, a contemporary style, typical of the time in which the church was built, was chosen.¹¹

St. Luke's Lutheran Church, at 5312 Comercio Way, built in 1959, also represents a suburban congregation in a more recently settled area of Los Angeles. This church is similar to the Woodland Hills Community Congregational Church in its contemporary design. A cross section of the congregation served on the building committee which visited a number of other churches of various denominations before locating several they liked. The committee found that several of the churches they liked best were designed by the same architect, and so consulted with him concerning their own building. The well known

¹⁰Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹Rev. Donel G. McClellan, Pastor of the Woodland Hills Community Congregational Church, personal communication, September 1973.



Figure 10

Woodland Hills Community Congregational Church

Built in 1958 this basic contemporary structure is functionally designed for the congregation, and exhibits simplicity in form.



church architect, Culver Heaton, was then engaged to design the structure for St. Luke's Lutheran Church which resulted in the construction of a basic A-frame building of contemporary style (Figure 11).¹²

Epiphany Lutheran Church, at 7769 Topanga Canyon, Canoga Park, also constructed in 1959, reflects the modern trend in church design. The architect envisioned the building as symbolizing a modern Noah's ark representing salvation in the Christian fellowship. According to the pastor, Reverend Richard Torgerson, "An attempt was made to speak to the community through an unusual, but contemporary and pleasing style. It was my intent to say that the Church (the Christian community) is alive and well, and even leading a little, in today's world."¹³ The style of Epiphany Lutheran Church attempts to express to the community what the church is, and is representative of the modern trend in church design. An article in The Architectural Record relates well to the form taken by Epiphany and other contemporary churches when it stated, "The life of a tradition is in the spirit of the forms and not in the particular forms of any past period....The church, the congregation, the religion should each seek its own expression of its faith and purpose and function."¹⁴

The sloping roof, supported by wooden post-buttresses, and the use of stained glass for the walls above the red brick construc-

¹²Lloyd Common, Member of St. Luke's Lutheran Church, personal communication, November 1973.

¹³Rev. Richard Torgerson, Pastor of Epiphany Lutheran Church, personal communication, August 1973.

¹⁴"Eight Churches Cited in Awards," The Architectural Record (September 1962), p. 14.

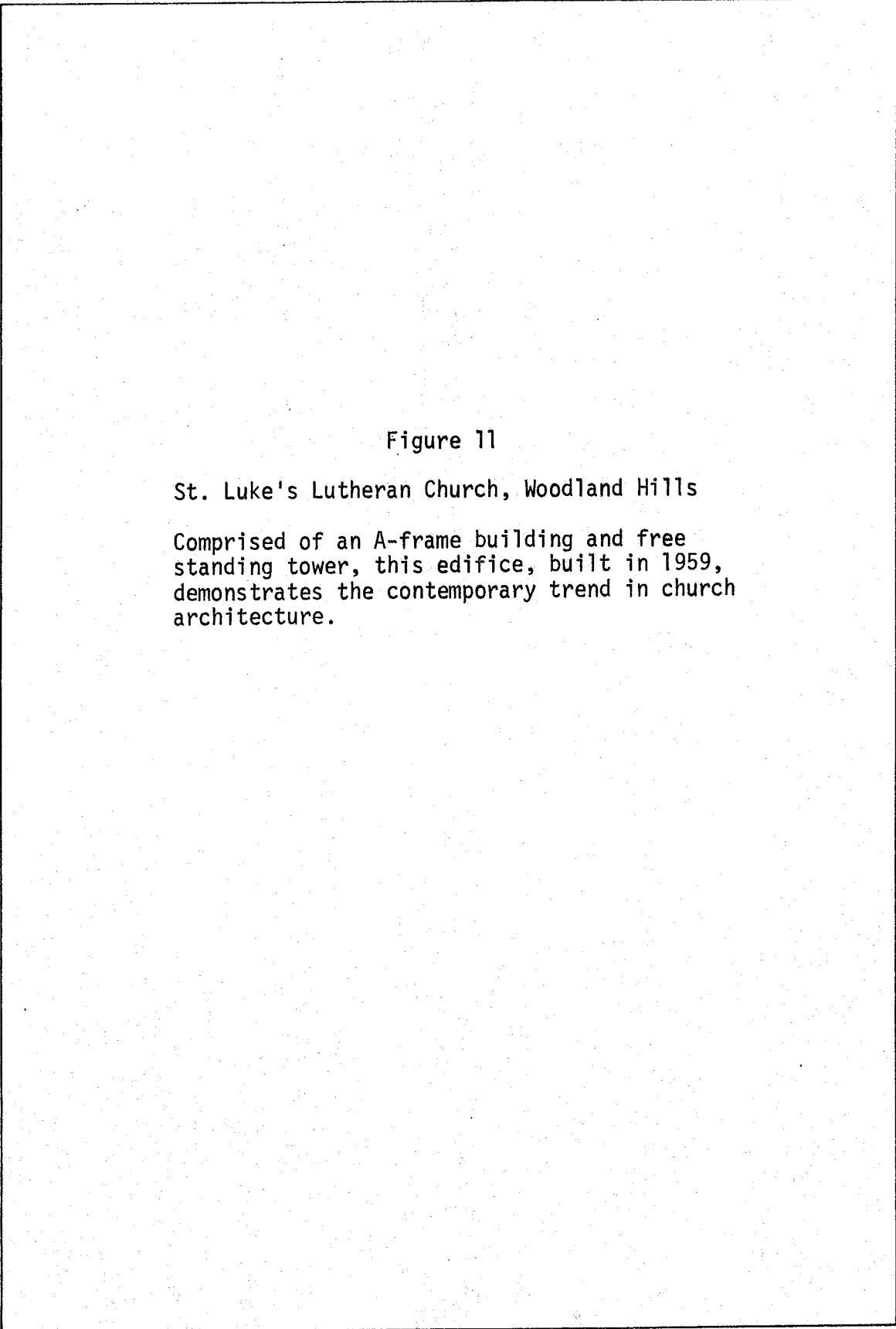


Figure 11

St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Woodland Hills

Comprised of an A-frame building and free standing tower, this edifice, built in 1959, demonstrates the contemporary trend in church architecture.



tion are major style elements of Epiphany Lutheran Church (Figure 12), characterizing the modern trend in architecture.

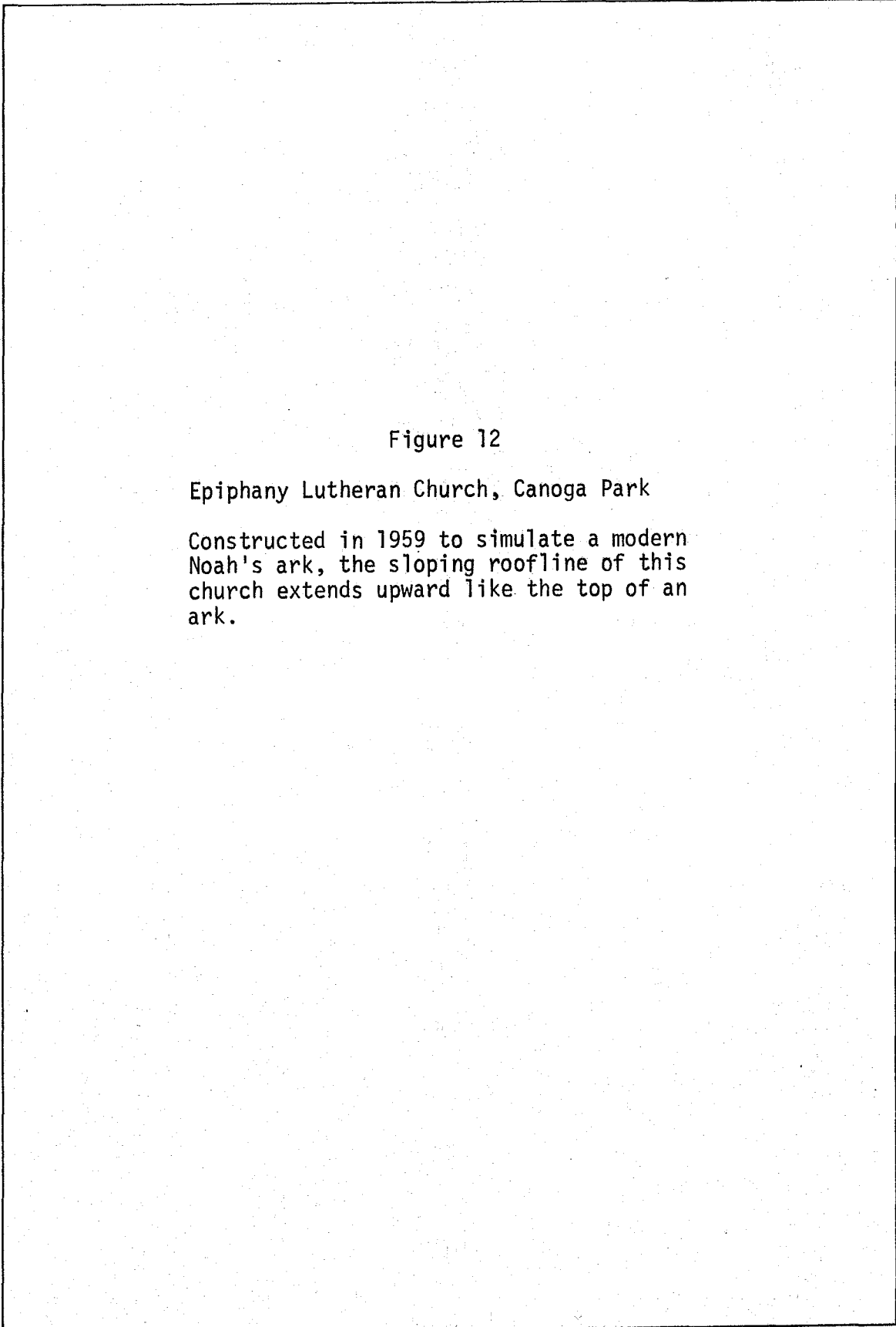


Figure 12

Epiphany Lutheran Church, Canoga Park

Constructed in 1959 to simulate a modern Noah's ark, the sloping roofline of this church extends upward like the top of an ark.



CHAPTER IV

TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND CHURCH DESIGN (1952-1972)

Representing a traditional form of church architecture is the Byzantine style found almost exclusively in churches of the Eastern Orthodox denomination. Historical and cultural aspects of this denomination have been pointed out by Meyendorff:

The Orthodox presence in the West is a rather new phenomenon. Following the two world wars large numbers of emigrants from Eastern Europe sought new homes in Western Europe, and particularly in America. The social and religious consequences of this migration are not yet clearly discernible, but we may venture to say that it will certainly be regarded as of great importance in the history of Christianity. The Orthodox Church has now ceased to be an exclusively Eastern Church. This fact can readily be observed in the United States, for example, where several millions of the faithful have largely adopted the language, culture, and ways of thought of their new country, while at the same time remaining faithful to the Church of their forefathers.¹

One discernible manifestation of the Orthodox diffusion from Eastern Europe to the West, and to Los Angeles in particular, has been the construction of ethnically oriented churches. Although the Orthodox Church may have ceased to be exclusively Eastern in its outlook, several cultural traits have been preserved by the migrating groups in connection with their church. First, the liturgy is still conducted in the congregation's native tongue. Second, the style of architecture used in the building or renovation of Eastern Orthodox churches in this Los Angeles sample has consistently adapted traditional Byzan-

¹John Meyendorff, The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today (Pantheon Books, 1962), p. 230-31.

tine forms to the total design.

Traditional church architecture is that which has been accepted and maintained by a group of people over a period of time. The building style that became associated with the Eastern Orthodox has been various Byzantine forms as noted by White:

The building type that became normative among the Byzantines was the dome over a square building, a style still favored among Orthodox Christians in the buildings they erect in the United States. Various other shapes could also be used, especially the Greek cross (a cross shape with equal arms), an octagon, or a square with one or three apses. ²

The traditional forms of architecture used by the Orthodox churches throughout history have also assisted in the maintenance of the faith's elaborate ritualistic liturgy. In regard to this elaborate ritual Meyendorff wrote:

...the liturgy in the life of the Orthodox Church, a living, drama-filled liturgy, has served as a unique source of inspiration for theological thought and a last refuge for the faithful during particularly difficult periods, and has even revealed itself capable of keeping alive the essential truths of the Christian faith. ³

The Schism of 1054 severed the Western and Eastern churches from one another because of theological differences and the Eastern Church continued to develop along the lines of the Byzantine Empire. The rich Byzantine culture and artistic tradition were contributing factors in the creation of a distinctly different Christian church than was developing in the Medieval West. This Eastern Church, based in Greece, eventually spread its theology and its Byzantine art and

²James F. White, Protestant Worship and Church Architecture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 62.

³John Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 201.

architecture, throughout Slavic lands by means of missionary activity. Beginning in the ninth century Orthodox missionaries converted the Bulgarians, and by 988 A.D. Russian acceptance of Orthodoxy was accomplished through the conversion of its ruler, Vladimir of Kiev.⁴ Later, during the nineteenth century, nationalism which identified Orthodoxy with Hellenism and the Greek longing for independence, began to flourish in Greece. Slavic nationalism which forced the restoration of autocephalous churches, began to rise at the same time as that in Greece, and accounts for the retention of the ethnic variety so typical of Eastern Orthodoxy.⁵

Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Byzantine Style

The Cathedral Church of the Divine Wisdom of God, also known as Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, was completed in 1952. Located at 1324 South Normandie, it is an adaptation of the Byzantine style patterned after the Hagia Sophia of Justinian in Istanbul. Although not an exact imitation of Hagia Sophia, the architecture features the broad dome resting on four main arches typical of the original style (Figure 13). Also in keeping with Byzantine tradition the exterior has little decoration except in the recessed arches of the entrances which display traditional carvings of foliage, flowers and

⁴Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher, and Robert Lee Wolff, A History of Civilization (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), pp. 240-44.

⁵John Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 90.



Figure 13

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Los Angeles

Similar to the ancient Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, the dome of this St. Sophia rises above the tree-tops at Pico and Normandie. Completed in 1952, the cathedral expresses aspects of the Byzantine style and tradition in its architecture.



symbolic birds (Figure 14).

Charles Skouras of Twentieth Century Fox Studios was instrumental in supporting the construction of Saint Sophia Cathedral. His associate at the studios, William Chevalis, designed the Byzantine adaptation for the cathedral. Plans were approved by vote of the congregation and accepted as the form that would best express their traditional ecclesiastical mode of architecture as well as to maintain the style associated with their ancient liturgy.⁶

Holy Trinity Rumanian Orthodox Church, located at 3315 Verdugo Road, was purchased from an Episcopalian congregation in 1948 and remodelled after a fire in 1953. The exterior of the plain stucco structure reveals an apse extending from the altar end of the church which was present when used by the Episcopal group. The apse was a common element in some Byzantine style churches and was used in Western style churches as well. Therefore, this element which was already a part of the building, satisfied the need for some cultural expression in the church. A small tower and cross complete the exterior characteristics of Holy Trinity Church (Figure 15). Even though the original structure was not built by the present Orthodox congregation, its simple form was acceptable to the members' concept of what traditional church exteriors should be.⁷

A modernized adaptation of traditional Ukrainian church design, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Saint Vladimir, at 4025 Melrose, was

⁶George Bolas, Member of St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, personal communication, November 1973.

⁷Richard Grabowski, Pastor of Holy Trinity Rumanian Orthodox Church, personal communication, June 1973.

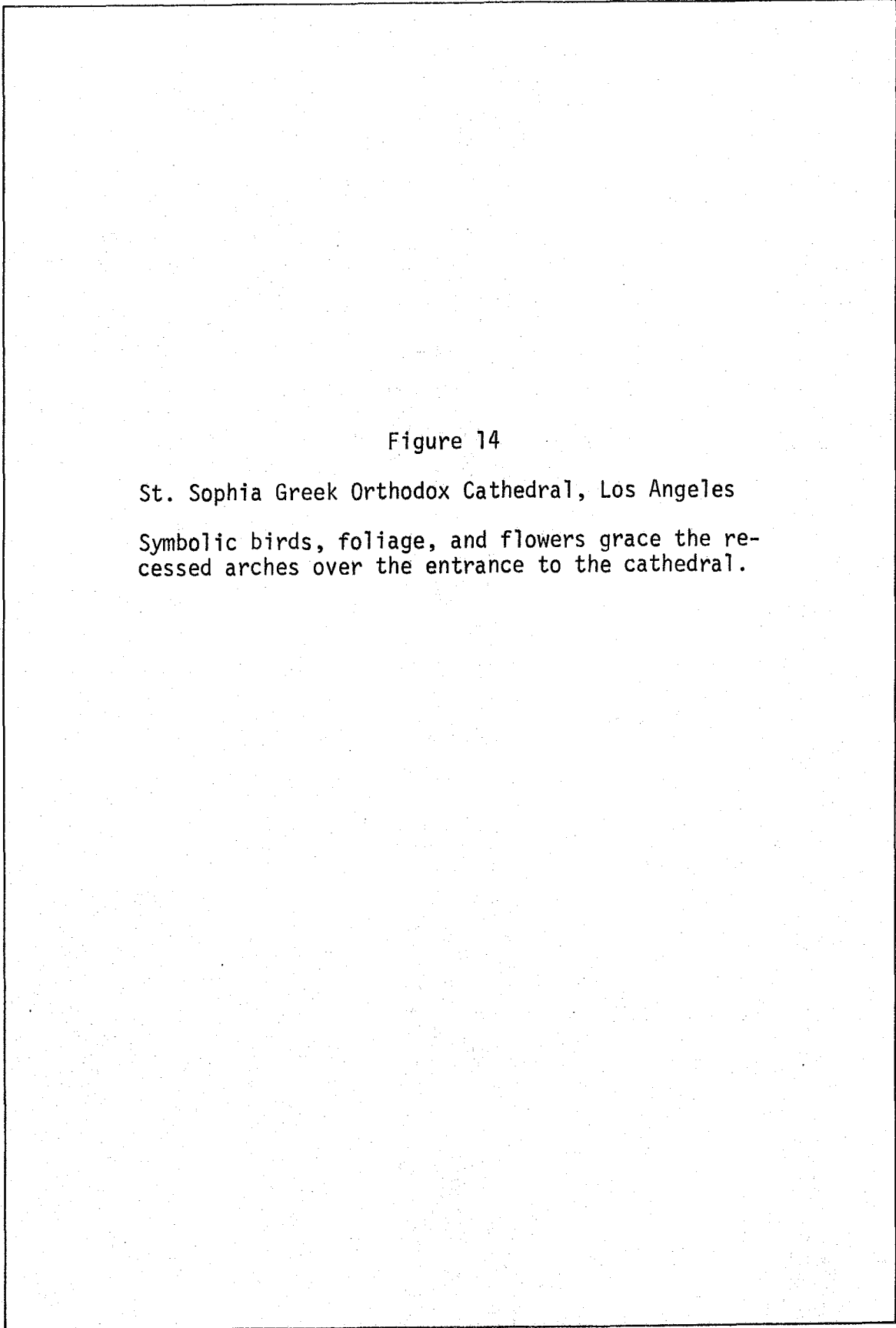


Figure 14

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Los Angeles

Symbolic birds, foliage, and flowers grace the recessed arches over the entrance to the cathedral.



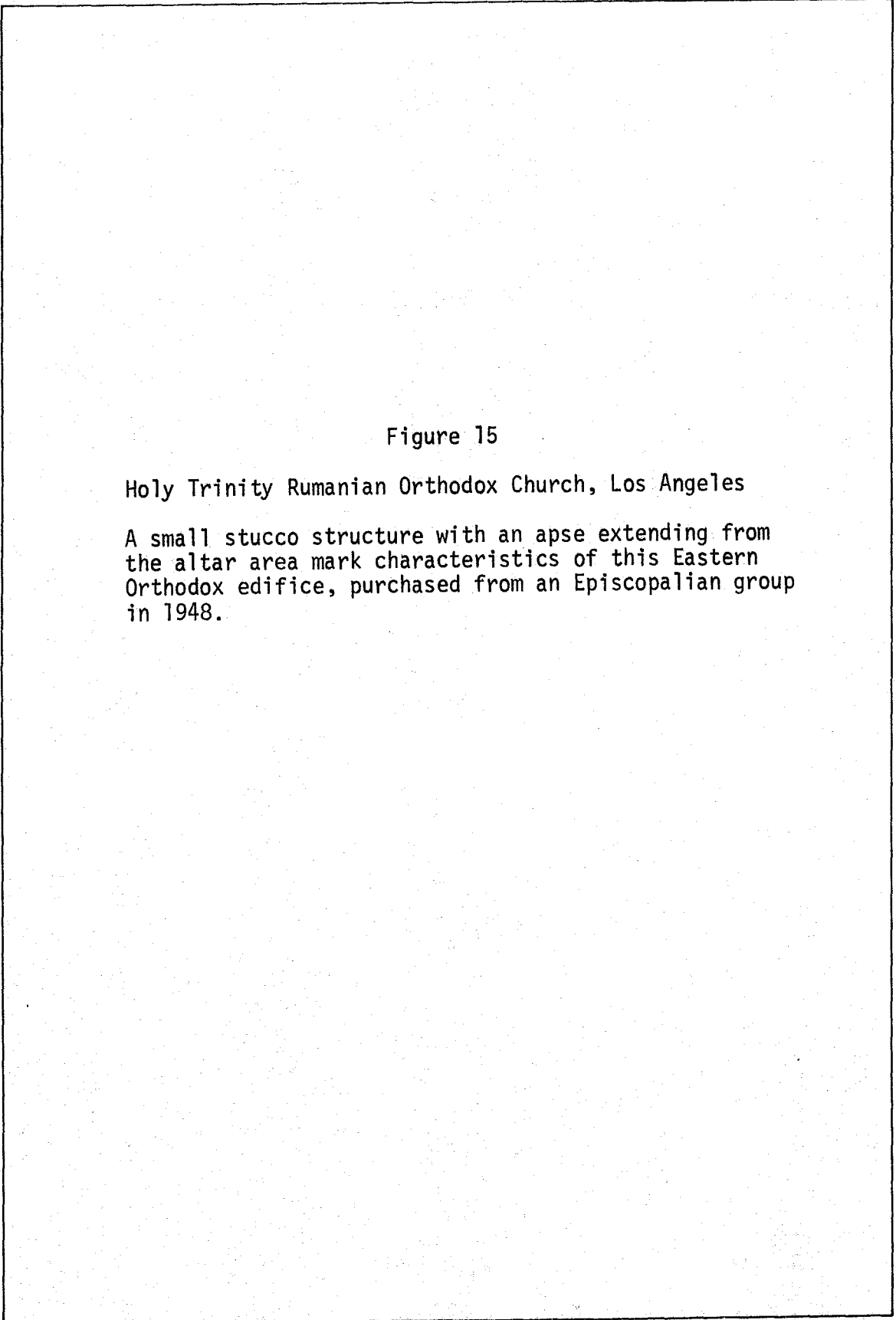


Figure 15

Holy Trinity Rumanian Orthodox Church, Los Angeles

A small stucco structure with an apse extending from the altar area mark characteristics of this Eastern Orthodox edifice, purchased from an Episcopalian group in 1948.



completed in 1962. The typical Byzantine spires were modified by the priest to simulate those of the Cathedral of Saint Sofia in Kiev, Ukraine (Figure 16). Culturally oriented, this Orthodox group wished to express its individual ethnic style in their church building. Some members, including the priest, recalled familiar church architecture from their homeland, such as Saint Sofia, and desired to portray elements of it in their new building.⁸ Again, the diffusion of ideas is shown in this example of Ukrainian church architecture, from its place of origin to its manifestation in the Los Angeles landscape.

Purchased from a Catholic congregation in 1965, the Russian Orthodox Church of Protection of the Holy Virgin, 2041 North Argyle, Hollywood, was originally a Mission style structure. The congregation decided to re-style the basic basilica church, both internally and externally, in a traditional Russian-Byzantine manner. The undulating roof line and bulbous onion-shaped domes mark characteristic elements of the Russian style demonstrated in this church (Figure 17). A free standing bell set in a small tower structure topped with the typical dome is located at the side of the church near the entrance.

Also noteworthy is the brick and iron fence surrounding the church which is quite common to immigrant Russian churches in Western Europe. No doubt based on the style of fences in the homeland, this same type of fence can be seen surrounding the Russian Orthodox churches in Paris and Helsinki, for example.

⁸George Kurylenko, Architect of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of St. Vladimir, personal communication, July 1973.

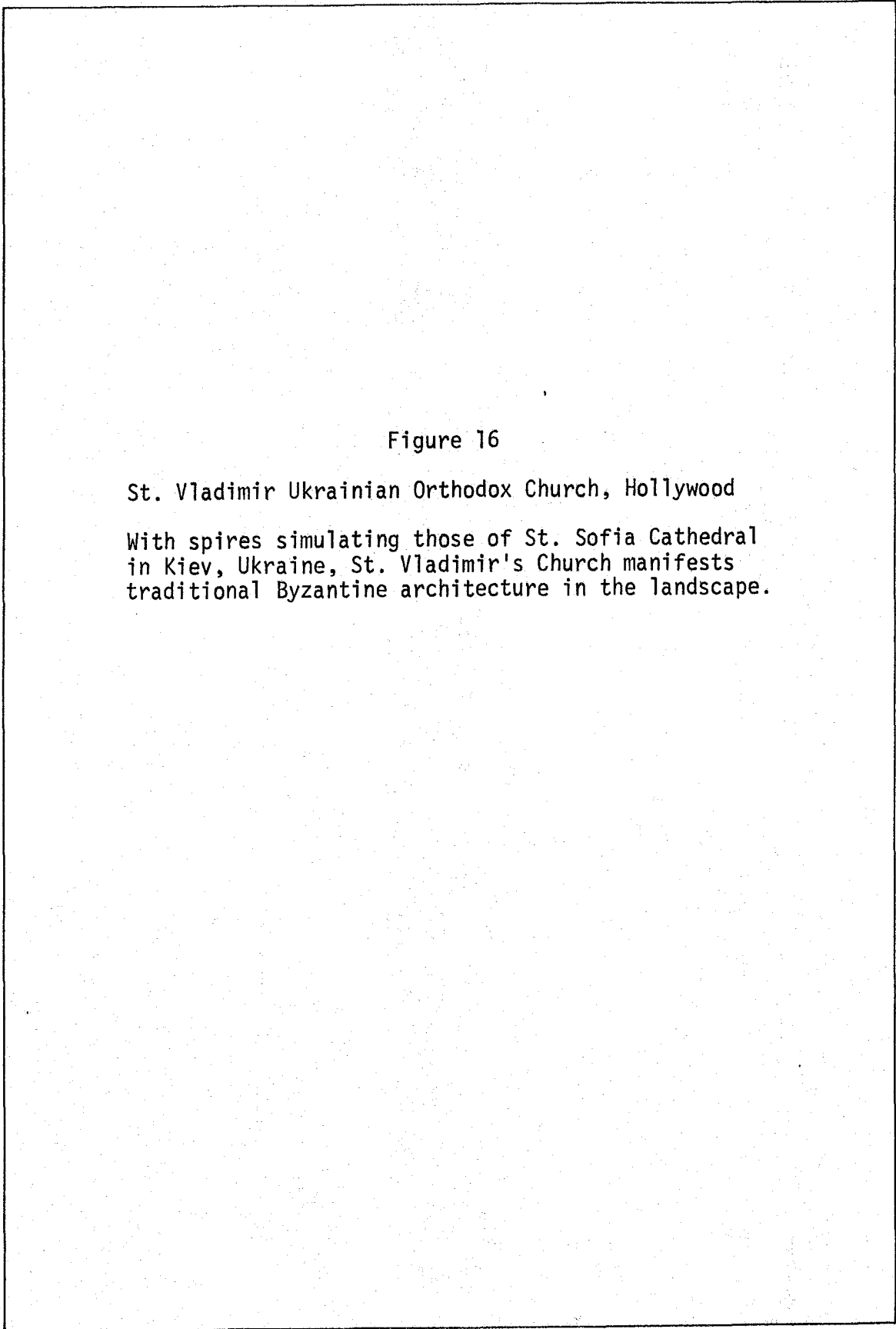


Figure 16

St. Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Hollywood

With spires simulating those of St. Sofia Cathedral in Kiev, Ukraine, St. Vladimir's Church manifests traditional Byzantine architecture in the landscape.



Figure 17

Russian Orthodox Church of Protection
of the Holy Virgin, Hollywood

Situated on a hill in Hollywood, this Russian church portrays onion-shaped domes and gilded crosses typical of churches in the homeland.



The exterior Russian architecture expresses what is housed in a splendid interior where the liturgy takes place. Again, the emphasis on liturgy, involving all the senses, is portrayed by White as he observed:

...The common worship of Orthodox Christians is conceived of as acts performed in heaven in eternity. Thus the worshippers stand in the midst of the saints as all worship about the throne of the heavenly Father. In churches of the Eastern Christians the saints stand motionless in heavenly ecstasy rather than in one activity or another as usual in Western representations. ⁹

Sveti Klimenti of Ohrid, a Bulgarian Orthodox Church, at 1162 North Bronson, Hollywood, was built in 1972. The structure is small and of white stucco with a natural wood trim and cross (Figure 18). The congregation decided to pattern their church after early Byzantine churches found in their native Bulgaria. The culture of the congregation, as well as economic constraints, played a major role in defining the final form. Wherever possible the architect attempted to bring out meaningful elements found in past and present Bulgarian Orthodox Church style. The architect originated most of the proposals and a design committee approved them. Mr. Mihailovski, the architect, also felt that there was a certain religious attitude about using woods wherever possible and leaving them natural. ¹⁰

Thus, a modified version of what was known previously in another locale was established in a new setting as a result of how a certain cultural group perceived the way churches of their denomination should look.

⁹James F. White, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁰Peyo Mihailovski, Architect of Sveti Klimenti of Ohrid Bulgarian Orthodox Church, personal communication, November 1973.

Figure 18

Sveti Klimenti (St. Clement) of Ohrid

Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Hollywood

This simple structure reveals the traditional early Byzantine church style found in Bulgaria.



CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Factors

The varied forms of church architecture manifesting man's religious imprint on the landscape of Los Angeles have their origins in several factors; architectural revival styles as expression of fads or ideology; contemporary architectural trends and a renewed sense of liturgy; and the retention of traditional forms. All of these foregoing factors are evident in the random sample taken from the delimited study area.

To what extent has Christian ideology affected the above listed factors which contributed to the church styles examined in this study? As Erich Isaac discovered, "Not all the transformations effected in the landscape in a planned society can be ideologically determined, and even in cases where ideology is an important factor, it is difficult to sift out the ideological motive from others at work."¹ This thesis has been an attempt to determine what motives have been involved in the creation of certain church styles in Los Angeles over the last sixty years.

The powerful influence of the revival of historical architecture has been seen in the first part of this study showing churches

¹Erich Isaac, "Religion, Landscape, and Space," Landscape, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Winter 1959-60), p. 18.

built from 1912 to 1937. Every one of the sample churches during that period was constructed in one revival form or another regardless of denomination. The trend towards historicism at the beginning of the twentieth century reflects not only the perpetuation of popular architectural styles but also depicts how the migration of people and their ideas influenced the local architecture. New settlers to California in the early part of this century sought an expression of what was familiar to them in their church architecture, as was evident in the Gothic-revival style of Angelica Lutheran Church built by predominantly Swedish settlers from the midwestern United States.

Contemporary design in architecture, the result of new methods and materials as well as ideas, has also been important in the process of constructing more suitable churches for meeting the needs of modern man. Religious expression in church architecture rather than slavish acceptance of past traditions or fashionable fads has become the point of departure in modern church design. And, in relation to this trend, the church itself has also experienced a revitalization of its worship practices and so adapted contemporary ideas in architecture to express this liturgical renewal. Examples of this trend as shown through Congregational and Lutheran denominational samples, reveal the importance of form following function in church design.

The influence of recent migrations of people, as well as ideological and cultural considerations, are seen as major factors in the retention of traditional forms of Byzantine architecture among the ethnically oriented sectors of Eastern Orthodoxy in Los Angeles. Church buildings in this denomination have generally been built or

renovated to incorporate traditional Byzantine forms. Decisions to continue in this traditional manner show that, in a number of cases such as those of the Bulgarian, Greek, and Ukrainian churches, the cultural make-up of the congregation greatly influenced the choice of style. Because all three of these churches perceived their building in terms of architecture familiar to them in their native lands, they proceeded to construct their new structures in similar manner. The ideological factor based on an elaborate Orthodox ritual, is also inherent in the continuation of this traditional Byzantine style.

Additional processes involved in the selection of certain forms of church architecture are evident from this study. Some congregations form building committees that study other church buildings before deciding on a style for their own. Most congregations, regardless of denomination, decide by vote of the membership which style they want from a choice of plans drawn and presented by an architect. In relation to the historical revival styles of architecture a number of congregations of varying denominations in Los Angeles adopted aspects of the Spanish Colonial revival style because it was the architecture of the region and popular as well.

The architectural influence from other parts of America and other countries of the world is also a contributing factor in the choice of church styles that can be seen in Los Angeles. Besides the Byzantine examples found throughout Greece and the Slavic lands which influenced the Orthodox churches, the style of colonial Williamsburg, Virginia was the major influence on a church built in the San Fernando Valley. The Thirty-Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, in North

Hollywood, adopted the style of colonial Williamsburg which also expressed the American cultural heritage of that particular denomination. An English Gothic style church was the primary idea in mind most influential in motivating members of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles to build their church in the English Gothic revival style.

Conclusions

A number of influences have been at work in the formation of what we see as churches in our urban and suburban Los Angeles landscape. Although each influential factor has been important in the construction of churches of different styles the major trend that becomes obvious in this study is that churches continue to demand a building that is different from other buildings in the cultural landscape. Eastern Orthodox churches maintained a traditional architectural style whereas the Christian Science, Congregational, and Lutheran denominations adapted a wide variety of styles to their church buildings. Styles popularized by historic architectural revivals or by new trends in theology, or as expressions of culture were used by all the non-Eastern churches in this sample regardless of denomination. Denominational differences among the Protestant groups, then, were not important factors in determining church style.

The church buildings we see, then, in the landscape of greater Los Angeles, are more than just structures scattered through the area; they are the architectural embodiment and expression of many combinations of artistic, religious, and cultural factors.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Below is the Questionnaire which was sent to pastors and secretaries of the randomly selected churches in this study.

1. Name of the architect of the church building and his location:

2. Date of completion of the church building: _____

3. How was the style of the church building chosen?

4. What influenced the choice of style the most:

- Religious belief. Culture of the congregation.
 Style of architecture of the era in which the church was built.

5. Was the church building patterned after or influenced by any particular religious edifice or style found in another part of the United States or any other country?

6. I am available for interview

I am not available for interview

The most convenient times would be: _____

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____