

Church Architecture

What is a church and how should it be built?

A church is a place of public worship, for prayer, and for the reception of the sacraments.

Mandated in the 10th century, the church would be built so that the nave pointed east so that the rising sun would shine on the altar, the faithful would “greet” the risen Christ, and the church would face Jerusalem. Interestingly, since construction of a church typically began on the east side, the west side would have a “newer” architectural style than the east side.

Main Plans

Latin Cross and Steeple (Basilica Plan Church)

Roman style and basilica plan in the shape of a Latin cross

Greek Cross and Dome (Central Plan Church)

Central plan church in the shape of a Greek Cross with a dome (heaven on earth)

Use of mosaics

Found mainly in the Eastern Churches

Architectural Styles

There are 6 main styles of Church architecture:

Byzantine

360-1400 AD

A continuation of Greek architecture, it is used mainly in the Eastern churches.

Characterized by round arches, the use of brick instead of stone, central plan, domes, and mosaics.

Example:

1 - Monastery of Hosios Lukas in Phocide, Greece

2 - Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (Constantinople)

Romanesque

Came about during the 11th and 12th century and was seen as a transition from Classical Greek architecture to more “European” architecture. It is characterized by round or slightly pointed arches.

Example:

3 - Abbey of Jumièges, Normandy, France

Gothic

12th-16th Centuries

Gothic comes from Italian: *gotico* with connotations of “rough and barbarous” coined during the Renaissance.

According to a writer during the Renaissance:

"The ancient Greek and Roman architecture answered all the perfections required in a faultless and accomplished building" -- but the Goths and Vandals destroyed these" and

"introduced in their stead a certain fantastical and licentious manner of building: congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy, monkish piles, without any just proportion, use or beauty."

Gothic architecture is characterized by ribbed and domed vault, flying buttresses, stained glass windows, pointed arches. The filtered light and soaring heights symbolized the lifting of the spirit towards God.

Example:

4 - Cathedral of Amiens

5 - Vaults

Renaissance

Began in Florence, Italy in around early 15th century. A revival of Roman architecture and an articulation of forms and space based on precise measurements and proportions based on man. Classically styled columns, geometrically perfect designs, and hemispherical domes characterize Renaissance architecture

Example:

6 - Florentine Cathedral

Baroque

Started in 1600 in Rome and spread throughout Europe. It was influenced by the Church's encouragement that the representative arts should speak to the illiterate masses rather than the educated. This encouragement was due to a canon promulgated at the Council of Trent in 1545-1563. The term is also used to apply to the bad taste or "baseness" in design.

Examples:

7 - St. Peter's Basilica

8 - St. Theresa in Ecstasy

Created a sensual and emotive experience that is illustrative of St Theresa's spiritual connection with God

Rococo

Originated in 1700s in the French decorative arts and is characterized by elaborate natural forms, curves, and floral patterns. It mirrored the lavishness of Louis XV's court. The term comes from the French word for shell *rocaille* and Italian *barocco* for Baroque style. Critics used the term Rococo as a derogative term to imply the frivolousness of the style.

Catholic Encyclopedia:

"For the church the Rococo style may be, generally speaking, compared with worldly church music. Its lack of simplicity, earnestness, and repose is evident, while its obtrusive artificiality, unnaturalness, and triviality have a distracting effect. Its softness and prettiness likewise do not become the house of God."

Examples:

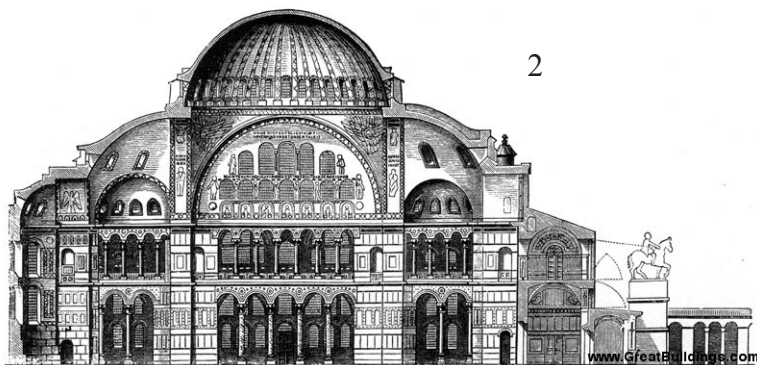
9 - Love, Vanquisher of Time by Charles Cressent

10 - Cathedral, Cadiz

11 - Basilica at Ottobeuren



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11

EAST
God

Structure or veil around tabernacle:
Remnant of a Jewish synagogue's
Holy of Holies, which contained the
Ark of the Covenant

Altar:
Usually made of stone
and contained the relics
of a martyr or saint.

Apse

Steps to the Altar:
Symbolic of spiritual
ascent to Christ

Chapels can be
housed in the apse or
on the sides of the
church, such as the
transept

Devil's Door:
Some older churches had
a door to let out devils
during Mass

Transept

NORTH
Devil

The north side is
where the male ser-
vants and the poor
sat.

SOUTH

Saints and Angels

The south side is
where the female
servants and poor
sat.

Rose window:
Symbol of the Virgin Mary

Nave: Symbol of the
world and humanity

Narthex

Church doors symbolized
the gates of Heaven.

Baptistry:
In older churches, the
building that contained
the baptismal font was
separated from the
church.

3. AMIENS.

WEST
Man

