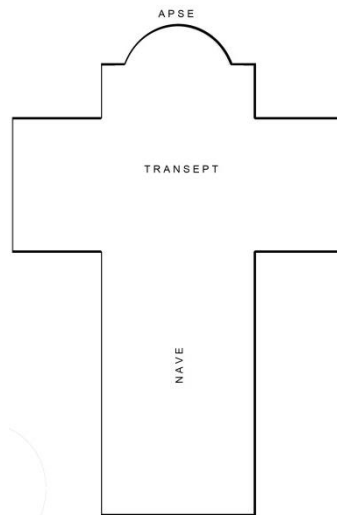


Romanesque vs. Gothic Architecture

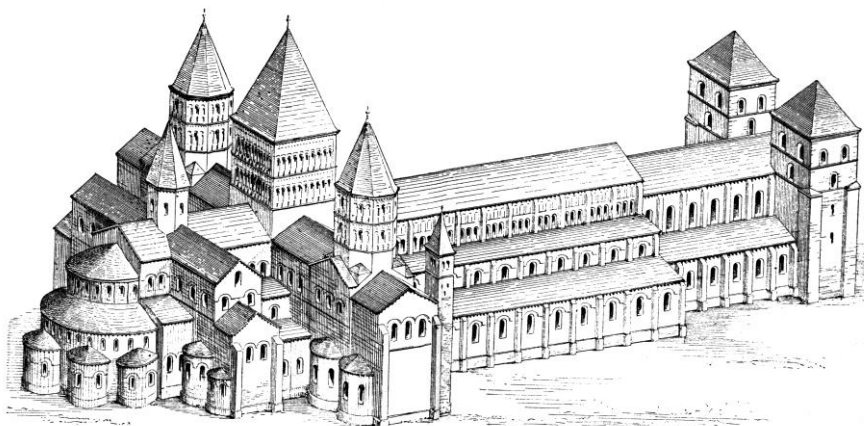
The earliest churches were based on Greek temples and Roman basilicas (secular government buildings). Unlike the Greek and Roman temple, their function was not just to house the statue of a god or a goddess but to embody a system of knowledge and beliefs shared by a community of people, who was able to gather inside churches for different ceremonies and rituals.



Romanesque Church (France, Italy, Northern Spain, Germany, 1000 AD – 12th century)

The classic temple is a system of sturdy walls and colonnades all helping to sustain a solid roof. Romanesque church follows the same principle, but it is based on a system of arches placed over the colonnades. They look solid and plain and have a modest elevation because the whole structure stands through virtue of inertia. Romanesque churches are dark and sober inside because of their thick stone walls and small windows.

Their beauty is based on form: a variety of volumes and space are organized according to the geometric harmony of their proportion. There is little decoration, often provided by Roman elements coming from previously built temples and buildings.



Abbey of Cluny, France, 948-981

Gothic Church (Europe, 12th – 14th century)

Gothic architecture has three distinctive features that make it different from Romanesque: pointed arches, ribbed vaults, flying buttresses.

These developments allowed architect to build the churches much larger and brighter than before. Gothic cathedrals are highly elevated and vertical, very ornate with in incredible variety of different sculptural elements, pinnacles, tracery and gargoyles. Since the weight of the ceiling outward thrust is now transferred to the flying buttresses, walls are lighter and can host huge windows. Stain glass windows let light enter the church and create a visionary environment by evoking the presence of God on Earth. Line and color are playing a major role in Gothic architecture.

