

Romanesque Architecture and the Symbolic Platonism of the Medieval World in Europe

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The very simple way one might characterize the Romanesque is to hold that it represents the church under siege, the church militant. Romanesque churches, dark and with thick walls, represent a sort of fortress, a fortress against the enemies of western Christendom in the early middle ages, the Vikings, Muslims, the Lombards or the Saxons. The later Gothic might be said to represent the Church triumphant with its floating, light saturated interiors, but in the early middle ages, it was not taken for granted that the church of Rome would win out in the west (Jackson, 1913, 146).

The Romanesque developed under both Carolingian and Ottonian patronage and represented, from a political point of view, the restructuring of Roman power under Frankish and German rulership. The chaos of the fall of western Rome nearly destroyed civilization in the west, but the rise of Charles the Great (Charlemagne) and the Ottos in Germany (west Frankland) attempted to recreate the Roman world under a Catholic aegis. The Romanesque was their architectural testament.

The actual marks of the Romanesque might be reduced to these: first, the ceilings. The ceiling was vaulted, that is curved, representing the heavens. But many Romanesque churches featured the cross vault, where two of these curves intersected, creating a square. This is a famous Catholic motif, the idea of the circle in the square (Jackson, 1913, 11). The symbolism here is important. The square, based on the number four, was a number of death and evil: four was the prison, matter, the world in the worst sense. It was our world. The circle was its opposite: it was infinite and unending: it was the release from bondage to fallen matter. The numerical value of the circle was nine, or the number of completion, the transformation of matter through the infinite power of God. The square in circle motif is not the destruction of the square, of the world, but the transformation of the world. The two curves in the cross vaulting represented the creation of the world by the God of the heavens, while the drowning of the number four in the curves spoke of the restructuring of matter through divine power and the life of the struggling church on earth (Tcherikover, 1997, 85ff, also Jones, 2003, 82-83 for more on the value of numbers).

Another important element of the Romanesque was the thickness of the walls and the smallness of the windows. The physical reason for this is clear in that the walls needed to be thick to absorb the lateral thrust of the curved ceilings. But they also had a symbolic meaning. The thick walls and small windows were fortress like, and served to remind the people that the congregation was a church in battle. The individual will was to be hemmed into the doctrine of the church for the sake of survival and salvation. The small windows, necessary to maintain the structural integrity of the thick walls (the Gothic would be able to create large windows) were symbolic of the darkness of the outside world and the importance of keeping the faith inwardly, that is, among the chosen community. The church was a fortress, the new Israel struggling against the pagans and their complete lack of scruple in dealing with their new enemies (Conant, 1993, 36-39).

The Ottonian Romanesque came a little later than that of Charlemagne, built based on the same models. It is worth mentioning that the massive facade faced west—the realm of darkness,

this represents the full face of the church against the world and its evil and sin (Tcherikover, 1997, 73). But this facade was not monolithic: it featured the curious and beautiful rose window: the delicate circular window that offered the “west” the hope of eternal bliss and light.

Throughout the interior and exterior, there was the constant play of alternative triangles, circles and squares, representing the numbers three, nine and four. The trinity, the completion of the church’s work, and the world, or its raw materials. All of this is symbolic of the cathedral itself, struggling with the trinity against the dark world for the sake of the recapitulation of all things in Christ. The piers, or the columns in the interior, represented the union of clergy and laity, bound to the earth but reaching to heaven, who had to bear the weight of this task.

The Romanesque was not a random method of architecture reflecting the “primitive” modes of production. It was a response to the world of the early middle ages and the struggle to recreate civilization in the midst of post-Roman chaos. If anything, the many examples of Romanesque architecture are proof that the early medievals were advanced in engineering and mathematics, and were creating monuments of artistic skill that are being admired still in 2009. The Romanesque represents the ability of several powerful personalities within an internationally respected institution of the Church of Rome to revitalize commerce, currency, literature and the empire itself to protect these in the face of violent opposition from all corners of the globe, from the Vikings to the Huns to the Muslims in Spain (Conant, 1993, 31ff).

But it might be said that the abilities and production inputs necessary to create the Romanesque was based on the revival of urban life and the craft guilds that were necessary to create these huge structures. It also is not an accident that these revived towns were also build on old Roman sites, and, even more importantly, it was Rome and the Idea of Rome that remained normative for western civilization (Jackson, 1913, 259). Politics and government, not to mention religion, were absolutely inconceivable without the solid rock of Roman culture, law and international prestige.

Even more, bishops in the west, whose approval was necessary for the construction of these cathedrals, were in many ways the successors of Roman officials. In a world of illiteracy and chaos, monarchs of strength like Charles Martel and Charlemagne needed literate officials to run their new empire: the bishops were perfectly placed to represent the empire, the church and the independence of the new municipality.

Irish and English Illuminated Manuscripts: A Lesson in Medieval Aesthetics

The genre of the illuminated manuscript has fascinated scholars for centuries. The reasons for this are several: First, in some cases, the immense detail done on a very small scale has spoken volumes about the talent and ability of (especially Celtic Insular) artists and monastics. Second, the extent which the manuscript paintings reflect basic principles of medieval aesthetics (which will be the focus of this paper) as well as the relationship between the world of art, nature and symbol in relation to the divine, will be dealt with in some detail.

Manuscript paintings cannot be understood apart from theology or the basic ideas of medieval aesthetics. Using Haidu’s work (esp. 1977), one can rather briefly reconstruct some basic vision of medieval aesthetics. A series of ingredients that go into this vision might look like this: 1. Nature takes part in the divine, there is no radically separate distinction between the created and uncreated worlds. This is far from pantheism.

What is meant here is that since God has created the world, God’s power, or his energies, or even better, his Logos, is present in the created world. St. Augustine’s “seminal reasons” make

sense here. These “reasons” are imitations of the forms of all created things that exist in the mind of God. Their very creation places them in an intimate (but not identical) relationship with the creator (Haidu, 879). 2. God’s intention for the world, and for man’s place in it, can also be found in these “seminal reasons.” The world has purposes: it has begun in God, and will end in Him. Hence, in replicating any element in the nature world, found constantly in the manuscript paintings, one is actually drawing out the “iconic” nature of the seminal reason within, the presence of the Logos under the cover of matter, hiding God’s presence as well as revealing it. 3.

The entire world is a system of divine energy for this reason. The Logos, or the image of God, is defined as God’s image of Himself, God’s own self-knowledge, itself a God by definition. It is the “Logos,” occasionally mistranslated as “Word,” but more accurately translated as “structure.” Nature appears to the alienated observer as a set of pieces. But it is not, it is interconnected. This is the power of the Logos, giving nature purpose, order and regularity.

God’s energy, not his essence, is present in nature, and is the Force that keeps the whole of natural interaction via law together. 4. Form and symbol are more important than the realistic instantiation of a natural form, human or otherwise. A quick look at the Lindisfarne Gospels or the manuscripts of Canterbury will show unrealistic figures, combinations and poses. This should not be considered to reflect a primitivism of technique, the Celtic knotwork and labyrinth design should eliminate those modernist biases. But what is happening aesthetically is that the form, the presence of the Logos working through matter, is being drawn out by the artist. This is the only real purpose to iconography whether eastern or western. 5. The most interesting idea about Hades work is his concept of repetition. It is an ontological as well as an aesthetic idea. The repetition of the patterns and symbols in Celtic manuscripts are designed to represent eternity and infinity.

To repeat over long periods of time is to participate in eternity, and as the author claims, this is a central element to painting and medieval aesthetics in general (Haidu, 881). Hence, repetition is the nature of an object being recapitulated until it is wholly spiritualized. In the human life, the ascetic life was a means of spiritualizing the body and the mind, to see the real form of God in the created beings of the universe and their interconnections. Since the manuscript paintings were done almost exclusively by monastics, this vision must be understood in detail: they were writing (not drawing) icons, icons that seek to replicate the universe from the point of view of manifesting the Logos within it (Dodwell, 1982). Hence, the idea is not realism, but symbol. For those who have not reached the level of evangelical perfection, the Logos nature in creation is brought to consciousness by symbol: hence, medieval art and, specifically, the structure of the manuscript painting follows.

Manuscript paintings, by and large, were done on Vellum, or the skin of cows, and were meant to last. They were designed to add the iconic idea to books of Scripture, the Missal and Lectionary, and probably the most numerous, the Psalter. The natures of the books themselves tell us much about the purpose of illumination. They were, in short, to be an addition to one’s daily devotion, especially in the Psalter, that was used at least six times a day (Backhouse, 1997, 69). Speaking generally, scholars are split on the specific historical route of the manuscript painting.

Writers such as Bradley (1909) hold that they derive from Egypt, went through Greek civilization and became a part of both the Roman and Byzantine Inheritance. Thus, one can find Roman influences in the paintings of the Carolingian era. At the same time, others hold that there are much indigenous to the Celtic work both in Ireland and England, and that the Roman world only partially penetrated the British world. British Christianity came as much from Iona and

Ireland as it did from Rome. Hence in both country's manuscript painting, there is much that is local and indigenous, and this is what makes their specific methods more interesting. There is a blend of Orthodox and "pagan" elements within the aesthetic such as the knot or the stylized animal, the labyrinth and specific patterns that make the Celtic version relative unique. Bradley makes several points concerning the Celtic manuscript painting that are worth summarizing. First, the regular use of the cross and arch, a dead Byzantine giveaway.

While the debate over the Byzantine inheritance in Ireland is beyond the scope of this paper, there has been interesting work done on the connection between Greek and Irish aesthetic forms in the past decade. Second, the use of geometry is dominant in Celtic and even some English manuscripts. Geometry was sacred (so to speak) for the Greeks, for it represented the regularity of the universe, a regularity that even the pre-Christian Greeks referred to as the "Logos" of the universe. Geometry, since it was apart from matter, was a "spiritual" set of designs and relations that was understood only by the mind, by the spirit that which was not bound by matter. Geometry became central to this genre by its relation to matter infused by spirit; it became, so to speak, a means of envisioning the Logos at work in both the creation and maintenance of nature (cf. Hull, 2003 for a detailed description of this, esp 30-37).

Third, the knots and interlacings are also worth studying, and the know especially will wait until the next section. But writers such as Bradley do hold that these are derived from early Roman models, though brought to new life in the Celtic world (Bradley, 38). These also partake in the geometric sequence of 1:1:2:2:3:3:3 that can be found in the Lindisfarne Gospels, and this number symbolism should be taken seriously. The number 1, universally, is the alpha, the creator, the origin of law and regularity in the universe. 2 is always female, and is "that which is fertilized by Alpha."

The number 3 is not a synthesis of 1 and 2, but refers to the world, the "desert" (in Hebrew numerology, 3 is Gimel, or the camel, cf Owcharuk, 2000), that which takes one over the desert of the world into everlasting life in heaven. 1 is almost always God the father, while 2 is often seen as the Mother of God, the personification of divine wisdom, herself almost always a symbol of the church on earth, that which both contain Christ and that which is necessary to get through the sufferings of this lower world and into the world beyond (de Hamel, 2001, 20).

Hence, in this scheme, God creates nature, nature is falling through sin, and death is introduced into creation: hence, what was an obvious presence of the Logos in nature (at An Eden) is now a hidden presence of the Logos in nature (the present world). But nature was to be re-made by the Logos personally, and this is his manifestation in the womb of the Mother of God, the 2, the female, earth. This newly created nature is manifest for us in the Orthodox Catholic church, the three, the "camel" that brings us through the arid desert of this fallen and death-filled world (Owcharuk, 2000).

The numerological significance of the patterns and designs in the (Celtic) manuscripts cannot be ignored. It would have been known to the monastics who designed and repeated these patterns. And lastly, he mentions the use of snakes and monsters that exist in "heroic verse" and used by the monastic artists in their manuscript paintings (Bradley, 39-40). Unfortunately, Bradley's standard work provides no analysis of symbol, but is a mere history of the development of certain techniques.

Celtic Aesthetics and Platonism

The Celtic knot exists in both Gaelic and English paintings of the early middle ages. It has been the subject of endless aesthetic debate over its nature and meaning. An excellent paper,

as yet unpublished, by Susan Travis goes a long way in permitting us a glimpse in this important artistic device of the illuminated manuscript of the insular era. For this section I'd like to use a specific example, the icon of the cross in the Lindisfarne Gospel. See the bibliography for the link to view the icon. In this example, a specifically powerful page in the Lindisfarne Gospels, I'd like to analyze, the knot (which is omnipresent in this example), the color scheme and the use of number in making sense out of what our monastic artist was trying to get across. First, the knot.

The use of interlacing and knot are the dominant elements of this specific manuscript painting. They form the material, as it were, of the icon in general. According to the excellent paper by Travis, the knot represents several things in Christian Ireland. First, more generally, the knot was a means of "bounding" and "bonding" evil. It bound the false gods of the "pagan world" and set a "limit" to the power of nature. In Plato's *Philebus*, it seems that the doctrine of the forms is eliminated: instead, he introduces the "limited" and "unlimited" in the creation of the material universe.

Though Travis does not make the Platonic connection, it makes sense, given what she says about the "bounding" power of nature, something similar is meant. God the Father is all present and all powerful, but nature is limited, striving for completion. This limit is the very boundary and vector of the natural world, and hence, the knot is the symbol of this limitedness, this boundedness to space and time. Since it is known that Greek was studied in the Insular period, there is no reason to doubt that some of the Platonic or Neoplatonic corpus made its way to Ireland.

The knot is paradoxical: it represents the limit of space and time, the "matter" infused by spirit, but its generally circular or serpentine patterns might also refer to the continuity of nature: its regularity, its law-boundedness, showing higher and higher levels of the spirit as well as higher levels of human comprehension. But something else should be noted, something extremely important, and something that is often lost on the modern writer: that the manuscript itself was considered a grace filled object, an icon in its own right. There are two ways to view prayer: the first, a mere series of petitions. But to the real ascetic, this is a lower form of prayer; it is a higher form of prayer in the nature of communion with the Logos Himself. The psalter can be seen as an icon in that it is only the problem of space and time that demands that words be recited (or sung) in chronological order. But that's not the nature of the prayer. There is no chronology in God. God is all present. The belief in God as all powerful means, by definition, that He is beyond space and time. Calendar time is a result of the fall, of the introduction of death into the world. Hence, the whole idea of a manuscript painting is to understand that: the psalter itself is iconic. True communion is timeless and hence wordless.

While the word is a reminder of our Fall, that is, of our space/time boundedness, the icon, or the painting in the manuscript, is meant to show the Word, not the word, the Word as timeless communion that will be fully experienced in Heaven. At the same time, the knot is also a form of integration. The knot is a means of knitting together the body of Christ in the church. It is a means of taking individual things, things with their own structure and interest, and in the bosom of the church (especially in corporate worship) creating a choir: unity in diversity. The knot ties the community together. The colors of this page in the Gospels are worth discussing. It seems, at first glance, that there are two colors dominant: red and blue. But this could be no accident, both in early Roman and Byzantine iconography, these are the colors of divinity and humanity, respectively. Red is the color of the Godhead. Hence, here, the cross is outlined in a bright and dominant red. However, outside the cross (and the cross itself might represent the church here), is the other dominant color of blue, that of humanity. Byzantine icons of Mary always show her

in a blue dress, representing her essential humanity, but wearing a red cloak. Christ is shown as exactly the opposite.

The former case Mary is taking on divinity. In the latter, divinity is taking on humanity: hence, the use of colors. Here, this may be proof of Byzantine influence. The cross contains the color of green (or a sort of bluish-teal) on the inside: this is traditionally associated with Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit. It is also the color of growth and hope, all of which are clearly associated with the Cross: the Logos has come to re-create the world. Death is despoiled and sin is no more, i.e. no longer an intrinsic part of nature. Blue is the dominant color outside the cross, being radiated by it, so to speak, and itself might be the church (rather than the cross itself). The knots on the bottom two panels (left and right), below the two arms of the cross form three levels of circles (knots), the first is 12 (or six on each side), 18 in the middle (or nine on each side), and 8 on the bottom (4 on each side). Above the arms of the cross is more formless, which is certainly because the “above” world is spirit, and not amenable to numerological analysis so beloved by the Pythagoreans. It makes sense that the well defined circles (knots) exist in the “below” panel of the icon, representing our life on earth, and the cross as transcending both heaven and earth.

One way of viewing the numbers outside the cross might be to say the following: the bottom row is the “lowest,” both qualitatively and quantitatively. 4 is always the number of death: the box, the prison cell. It is the world in all its deceptive glory. But $4+4=8$, the number of deliverance: the 8th day, the eternal day of rest, salvation. The world (4) is not intrinsically evil, it contains the fingerprints of the Logos and hence can be transformed (by the incarnation and the cross, into salvation 8. In the middle are two sets of nine, equaling 18. This might be speculation, but 9 is a sacred number of completion and eternal rest: there are nine orders of angels, and monks are, if they are successful in their asceticism, “angels in the flesh.” It is what man can be if he applies himself to the true Orthodox ascetic life and the monastic life. The last is the apostolic number of 12.

Six is also a symbol of the world and deception: but, like the 4, it can, with God’s help on the Cross, be transformed into the world infused with the spirit of Pentecost; the apostles after the descent of the holy spirit (Hull, 2003 has an interesting discussion of related topics on pps 93-109 and elsewhere). I certainly do not believe the above is speculation: it is well known in the world of numerology, in Egyptian, Hebrew and Greek guises. It is a part of the repetition mentioned above. Hence, in this particular example of a manuscript painting that I chose, color, number and location all form an icon, a gestalt.

There are other symbols in this painting (such as the 6 circles) that this paper does not permit me to get into, but suffice it to say that this icon is meant to symbolize the salvation of humanity in the fallen, lower world of sense by the cross. IV. In conclusion, This paper has sought to deal with the basic theological and ontological aesthetic of the medieval manuscript painting, or illumination. It has attempted to describe it as a theological statement of the re-creation of nature, as a series of symbols, and as a means of transcending time and space, the creation of a gestalt rather than a chronological word, followed by word format resulting from our fall and imprisonment in time.

The Medieval Idea: Art in the High Middle Ages

Two works in particular serve to summarize the medieval idea. The two are Cimabue, *Virgin and Child Enthroned*, c. 1280, (Tempera and gold on wood, 12’7½” × 7’4”. Uffizi

Gallery, Florence, Italy) and Giotto, Virgin and Child Enthroned, c. 1310, (Tempera on wood, 10'7"× 6'9". Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy)

These two works are clearly related: they are painted by Italians in the High Middle Ages, they use an identical subject, and they are of the same Catholic religion. This is a set of similarities of immense artistic importance. While the subject is a common one then and now, it remains profound. The fact that these two works are similar in many (if not most) respects should not blind the observer to their differences.

The Cimabue painting is intensely vertical. Everything exists along three vertical columns. This is appropriate because the Mother of God is a "horizontal" figure in that she represents humanity, and thus the church and Christian culture more broadly. That such a subject should be placed within a rigidly vertical (and thus hierarchical) context makes perfect sense, since they compensate for each other, creating a clear vision of balance and equilibrium (Moody, 145-147).

Similar to the Greek icon (and of course, much of Italy was Greek at the time), the mentality and purpose is the same: to show mankind (in this case, humanity as such) as glorified, returned to its primeval state of innocence. The vertical refers to the connection of creator to creation, the position of dominance, loving paternity and artistry. The horizontal is the relation of man to man, the church, society and culture. These two directions need each other and meet in the cross: the vertical and horizontal in the person of Christ (White, 1947: 421-427).

These icons are that of Mary enthroned, that is, in a royal dignity. Catholic theology states clearly that mankind is now a part of the Trinity: man sits at the right hand of the father, not Christ merely as God. Christ also became Man, and this incarnation took the flesh (that is, the humanity in all respects) from Mary, making her the mother of God and the mother of cosmic renewal (Meyendorff, 212-214).

In addition to the perfect equilibrium of horizontal and vertical, Cimabue is also stressing the gold color: that of heaven, the intellect, and the final purpose of the human race. The entire icon is suffused with gold, clearly expressing that this icon is not of this world: it belongs in heaven or to the end of time, when mere matter will be transformed and suffused with spirit (White, 1947:425ff).

As is normal with icons, Mary is pointing away from herself. Both the tilt of her head and the position of her hand is expressing the clear centrality of Christ. Mary has her regal authority only because of Christ, that is, of the God that did not shrink away from the humiliation of becoming a human man.

The four saints underneath her are not identified in the painting, but they seem to be Old Testament figures. This makes sense because Mary was of the lineage of David, meaning that Christ was as well. Thus, the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets would be the perfect people to look on this scene: this is what they were writing about, this is what got them killed. It has all been fulfilled.

The Giotto icon of the same title and subject was written a generation after the Cimabue piece. Theology, however, does not change. It might emphasize different aspects of one and the same entity, but its fundamental structure and definition remains. The differences between the two remain subtle, but of course, are variations on a very common theme.

Again, gold is the dominant color, universally seen as the color of glory, the Holy Spirit, heaven, paradise and Truth. To have such an icon stressing any other color would make little sense, since these are stylized visions: not realistic sciences. These are as close as sinful man can get to the state of glory that awaits all Christian strugglers at the end (Andreopoulos, 145-150).

It also stresses verticality relative to the symbolism of its subject, but is not nearly as starkly so as the Cimabue piece. Horizontal motifs exist in the base of the throne, and canopy above, and the slightly more haphazard positioning of the angels and saints that surround her.

It might be worth noting that there is no blatant positioning of Mary so as to emphasize Christ. Anyone at the time, even Muslims and Jews, would realize that Christ is the sole reason for any of this. Mary was a vehicle, albeit a tremendous one, a woman held up as the icon (literally) of the pious woman, one strong enough to tolerate long and dangerous journeys in the last days of her pregnancy and still have strength left over to stand at the Cross while her innocent son is tortured to death (Meyendorff, 150-159).

Because of this, both icons show Mary as Stoic. She is strong, determined, focused: gazing at the reader with an expression both of compassion and urgency. Being surrounded by such heavenly luminaries does not phase her, since her life was extraordinary enough. They are only significant – as she herself is – because of the baby. Christ is depicted as a child, quite possibly, to express his innocence. His shameful death was based on rumor and jealousy, not evidence or reason. Of course, his church will be treated in the same fashion. Mary's expression is the second most significant aspect of these icons after Christ.

It is a mockery of basic reading comprehension to see Mary as anything but a figure of colossal strength, enduring a life of deprivation for the sake of her mission. From the flight into Egypt to his being lost in the Temple as a boy straight up to the Way of the Cross itself, Mary is not promised a “happy” life. This is identical for the individual believer and the church as a whole. At each step, the theology of Mary—and hence these two icons—is the same as that of the church, the person and each soul suffering due to the irrationality of social forces and those with power (Meyendorff, 151-155).

Overall, these similar icons have differences that are easy to miss: the Giotto piece is far more complex, while Cimabue icon stresses the simplicity of the Gospel message. The faces and poses of the figures in the later piece are more complex and less stylized than in the earlier one. Simplicity is the strength of the 13th century work: there can be no mistaking the subject nor the message. At the time, this was a particularly striking variation on a theme.

It is also important to notice that there are more human beings in the Giotto icon. For the earlier work, Cimabue is showing mostly angels, who are not people. The Old Testament figures are not stressed and can easily be interpreted as icons themselves – that is, stylized archetypes – without doing violence to the work itself.

They are both theologically correct. They are faithful to the mission of spreading the gospel in artistic and iconic form. These icons can express in their simple lines what it would take volumes to describe in the printed word. Whether one stresses the simplicity of Mary and Christ, or the complexity of the church in the world (as might be the focus of the Giotto piece) is to say the same thing in two distinct, but complimentary, ways.

Conclusion

The early middle ages, contrary to myth, were not without technology. Recent developments were the windmill, spinning wheel, compass, glasses, the use of Arabic numerals rather than the Roman (which could not be multiplied), the astrolabe and many other important developments assisted in the revival of empire and the development of the Romanesque so dependent upon it. The fact is that the early middle ages were not stagnant, but dynamic and complex, and need to be admired for recreating civilization in the midst of chaos rather than be piously rejected as retrograde (cf esp Townsend, 1966, 79-100).

The early medieval world (prior to the rediscovery of Aristotle) was largely the philosophical domain of Plotinus and the whole neo-Platonist school so beloved by St. Augustine. God was the first mover, pure spirit, who, through His own goodness, created the world through emanations of Himself, creating a chain of being from pure spirit an unlimited power, to a greater and greater instantiation in matter, right down to pure matter itself, at the very edge of non-being. These emanations are, again, expressions of his Word, or the Logos, the Image of the Father in Christ who holds the legal structure of the universe together through the Father's power, reflected in Him.

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Cimabue, *Virgin and Child Enthroned*, c. 1280.
(Tempera and gold on wood, 12'7½" × 7'4". Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy)

Giotto, *Virgin and Child Enthroned*, c. 1310.
(Tempera on wood, 10'7" × 6'9". Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy)

In Medieval art, the term "Romanesque architecture" describes the European style of building design which flourished during the late Medieval era (c.800-1200). There was the more or less total adoption of the vault covering, symbolic of the progress made in construction techniques but also a deliberate stylistic choice, and experiments were being made in certain constructive and formal aspects of churches, such as systems for articulating the walls, which were still divided in bays with an elevation on several levels. Romanesque architecture reached its zenith in the eleventh century hinging on the year 1095 when Urban II proclaimed the Crusade, and it would be pointless to ask what this medieval civilization would have been without Cluny. Romanesque architecture is an architectural style of medieval Europe characterized by semi-circular arches. There is no consensus for the beginning date of the Romanesque style, with proposals ranging from the 6th to the 11th century, this later date being the most commonly held. In the 12th century it developed into the Gothic style, marked by pointed arches. Examples of Romanesque architecture can be found across the continent, making it the first pan-European architectural style since Imperial Romanesque: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.

First Romanesque: The name given by Josep Puig i Cadafalch to refer to the Romanesque art developed in Catalonia since the late 10th century. Lombard band: A decorative blind arcade, usually exterior, often used during the Romanesque and Gothic periods of architecture.

Development of First Romanesque Architecture. Gothic architecture flourished during the high and late medieval periods, evolving from Romanesque architecture. Freiburg Cathedral is noted for its 116-meter tower, which is nearly square at the base with a dodecagonal star gallery at the center. Above this gallery, the tower is octagonal and tapered with a spire above. Gothic architecture "most apprehensible in the form of the medieval cathedral" is perhaps the most defining and comprehensive representation of these various trends. As it is stated by Henri Daniel-Rops in his book *Cathedral and Crusade*, "nothing of medieval Christianity had survived excepting the cathedrals, they alone would tell us all, or nearly all, that matters about the period in question." While it was practical and originally expressive "a feat of both engineering and symbolic innovation" the most notable aspect of the Gothic cathedral is in how it embodies the culmination of the Christian energy of the medieval period, an energy exceeding that any other age, both in the clergy and in the laity.

Previous (Romance of the Three Kingdoms). Next (Romanesque art). Romanesque architecture is the term that describes the architecture of Europe which emerged from the dark ages of the late tenth century and evolved into the Gothic style during the twelfth century. The Romanesque style in England is more traditionally referred to as Norman architecture. Romanesque architecture is characterized by its massive quality, its thick walls, round arches, sturdy piers, groin vaults, large towers, and decorative

Romanesque : The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region. First Romanesque : The name given by Josep Puig i Cadafalch to refer to the Romanesque art developed in Catalonia since the late 10th century. While Romanesque architecture tends to possess certain key features, these often vary in appearance and building material from region to region. Learning Objectives. Gothic architecture flourished during the high and late medieval periods, evolving from Romanesque architecture. Freiburg Cathedral is noted for its 116-meter tower, which is nearly square at the base with a dodecagonal star gallery at the center. Above this gallery, the tower is octagonal and tapered with a spire above. Romanesque architecture is a style of medieval Europe featured with semi-circular arches. There are many opinions about the beginning date of this style. San Liberatore a Maiella, Abruzzo, Italy, built in 9th century. Info source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Liberatore_a_Maiella The story ... French churches followed the scheme of the early Christian basilica plan, using radiating chapels to accommodate more priests. Around the sanctuary apse it could be found ambulatories for visiting pilgrims, and large transepts between the sanctuary and nave. Pisa Cathedral (Duomo di Pisa), Pisa, Tuscany, Italy. Info source: <https://www.nanocathedral.eu/index.php/pisa-cathedral/>. Features. Previous (Romance of the Three Kingdoms). Next (Romanesque art). Romanesque architecture is the term that describes the architecture of Europe which emerged from the dark ages of the late tenth century and evolved into the Gothic style during the twelfth century. The Romanesque style in England is more traditionally referred to as Norman architecture. Romanesque architecture is characterized by its massive quality, its thick walls, round arches, sturdy piers, groin vaults, large towers, and decorative... Explore Romanesque architecture and the ideas that transformed the abbeys of medieval Europe. Romanesque describes medieval architecture in the Western world from around 800 AD until roughly 1200 AD. The term may also describe Romanesque art—mosaics, frescoes, sculptures, and carvings—which was integral to the design of Romanesque architecture. Romanesque Basics. Romanesque Church of St Climent de Taüll, 1123 AD, Catalonia, Spain. Xavi Gomez/Cover/Getty Images (cropped). Although certain characteristics are associated with what we call Romanesque art and architecture, the look of individual buildings can vary widely from century to century, from a building's purpose (e.g., church or fortress), and from region to region. Romanesque Architecture – Medieval Europe. Façade of Pisa's Duomo. We call this kind of building Romanesque because it is a little like Roman architecture, with its columns and round arches. But people built Romanesque buildings around 1000-1200 AD instead of during the Roman Empire. Most of the people who could afford to build in Europe were monks. In 814 AD, the monks of St. Gall (Switzerland) built a big stone church. In 955 AD, the monks of Cluny built a great church with a stone roof. About 1000 AD, the monks of St. Germain Abbey built the church of St. Germain des Pres in Paris. Join our Patreon community and you'll help not only yourself but students all over the world. Advertisement. Tags.