Lecture #6: Introduction to Architecture

Church Architecture
“Once A Week Art”
An Introduction to Art History
for Christian Students

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Early worship services in the Roman Empire were conducted in private homes or villas.
Mosaic floor of Roman villa in Israel used as a Christian house of worship in the 3rd century AD.

Fish – symbolizing Christianity
One of the Greek inscriptions on the mosaic floor of the villa used for Christian worship lists the name of the woman who donated the altar or table to the “God Jesus Christ”
Private houses in the Roman Empire…

- Weren’t just a place to live, but also where the family’s business was conducted
- The front door opened onto a large, rectangular room with little furniture called the *Atrium*
- Near the entrance was a source of water
- At the opposite end of the *Atrium* was a raised dining area with a table where the master of the house would sit
• When a house was used as a church, the water source became the *baptistry* (baptismal font)
• The atrium became the *nave*, which could hold 100-150 people
• The table became the *altar*
• The bishop sat in the chair behind the altar
• Parishoners stood up; pews were invented much later; Eastern Orthodox churches still have no pews
• If the back wall of the chancel (where the service is conducted) is curved, the area behind the chancel is called the apse
• The nave is where the congregation gathers during the church service
• The altar is where Holy Communion is served
Church Architectural Terms:
The *Nave*: where the congregation gathers
The Nave
Rouen, France
Cathedral

Monet, *Rouen Cathedral*
Church Architectural Terms:

The *apse* is the curved area behind the chancel.
The *altar* is the table from which Holy Communion is offered.

It can be placed against the *East Wall* of the *chancel*, or it may be centered in the *chancel* area.
During medieval times, additional space between the chancel and the nave was often required to make room for the choir, members of religious orders, and priests. These extensions gave the church a cross-shaped outline (cruciform) when viewed from above.
Cruciform Floor Plan with Transept

- Narthex (church entry)
- transept
- nave
- chancel
- apse
- East Wall
A cathedral is a church that serves as the bishop’s headquarters – it doesn’t refer to the style of the church.
A basilica is a large and important Catholic church, given special recognition by the Pope.
The chancel is the front part of the church where the service is conducted; it is usually 3 steps up from the nave.
The Nave: where the congregation gathers

The chancel – where the service takes place

The altar or Communion table
In medieval times, a rood screen often separated the nave from the chancel.
Clerestory windows: upper level windows in a Romanesque or Gothic church which help provide the nave with natural lighting.
What is an *icon*?

- A religious painting on wood, often of Jesus or the saints
- Usually not signed, because the artist wanted to show that his artistic talent came directly from God
- Deliberately not “life-like” to prevent idolatry
• The *iconostasis* was originally a low fence or wall between the *chancel* & the *nave*
• On it, icons were hung
• It represented the separation of heaven (the *chancel*) from earth (*the nave*)
• Changing out the icons for different seasons of the church year was tedious, so the permanent *iconostasis* was developed
The iconostasis was never originally intended to block the view of the chancel from the nave, but over time it grew in size.
By the 15th century, the Russian iconostasis consisted of 5 rows of icons.
St. Seraphim’s Orthodox Church in Dallas, TX
Iconostasis, St. Seraphim’s, Dallas
Why are there “onion domes” on Russian churches?

1) Some say they look were meant to look like candles burning
2) Some say they were made to keep snow from piling up on the roof
St. Basil Cathedral

- Located on Red Square in Moscow, Russia
- Legend that Ivan the Terrible had the architect blinded so he could never build a more beautiful church is untrue
• 1 dome represents Jesus Christ
• 3 domes represent the Holy Trinity
• 5 domes represent Jesus Christ and the 4 Evangelists
Russian cross

Represents Pontius Pilate's plaque, “Jesus Christ, King of the Jews”

Orthodox Christians say that the Apostle St. Andrew was the first Christian missionary to Russia. According to their history he used this cross as a teaching tool to show that all those (including the good thief) on Christ’s right will rise up to heaven, and those on Christ’s left will slide down to hell.

Represents a footrest, whose purpose was to prevent the flesh from tearing and to prolong the suffering during crucifixion
In 1486, Tsar Ivan the Terrible conquered the Russian city of Kazan, which had been controlled by the Muslim Tatars. He decreed from that time onward, all church crosses should be above the crescent moon, to show Christianity’s victory (cross) over Islam (crescent moon).

Few churches in Russia display the crescent moon.
In the early church, the *baptismal font* was placed just inside the entrance to the church, sometimes, even on its front porch – the location emphasized the sacrament’s importance in the life of a Christian believer.
The Baptistry

- A *baptistry* is a building or area of a cathedral surrounding the baptismal font.
- Separate buildings for baptism (*baptistries*) didn’t come into being until the time in Church history when many adults were being baptized by immersion.

Baptistry: San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome, built by Emperor Constantine.
The Baptistry: Florence
Florentine competition:

- Ghiberti and Brunelleschi competed
- Ghiberti won – his entry was cast in 1 piece; his rival soldered on the figures

The North Doors of the Baptistry

Florentine competition: Baptistery doors
Sacrifice of Isaac

Brunelleschi’s submission

Ghiberti’s submission
2nd set of door panels, Gates of Paradise, were completed years later.
The **Baptistry**

When the *baptistry* was not in use, its doors were sealed shut.
Baptistry buildings were often quite large. They had to be able to hold many people because the bishop only performed adult baptisms 3 times per year.
As viewed from the congregation, there are 2 places for speakers. The *pulpit*, where the gospel is spoken and the sermon is given, is located on the left. This left side of the church is the *gospel* side.
Pulpit – Gospel side of the church

Lectern - readings
Some Famous Churches

- St. Paul’s Cathedral, London
- St. Peter’s Basilica, Vatican City, Italy
- St. Basil’s Cathedral, Moscow, Russia
- National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.
- Cathedral, Cologne
  - St. Patrick’s Cathedral, New York
St. Paul’s Cathedral
London, England

Architect: Sir Christopher Wren
- English Baroque style, designed by architect, Christopher Wren
- Building begun in 1677
- Florence Nightingale, artists Turner, Henry Moore, Winston Churchill buried here

Replaces previous St. Paul’s destroyed in Great Fire of London, 1666
Photo of St. Paul’s Cathedral during the Blitz of World War II. German bombs landed in or near the London church on many occasions.
Wedding of Princess Diana and Prince Charles inside St. Paul’s Cathedral, London
Basilica of St. Denis
Paris, France

• Original Abbey of St. Denis founded in 7th century
• 1st major structure designed and built in Gothic style
• Burial place of French kings, and Marie Antoinette
• St. Denis is the patron saint of France
• First rose window in France
• Flying buttresses
• Clerestory windows
• Ribbed vaulted ceiling
• Cornerstone laid in 1163
• One of the first buildings in the world to use flying buttresses
• Cathedral was desecrated during French Revolution

Notre Dame de Paris

- "rose window"
- 28 Statues of the Kings of Judah & Israel
- Middle doors – portal of the Last Judgment
- West facade
Notre Dame de Paris

- Bell towers
- Apse
- "Rose" window
- Gothic window
- Flying buttresses
Apse of Notre Dame de Paris

Flying buttresses

Interior view of one of the rose windows
Kings of Judah statues on outside of building
In 1793 during the French Revolution, the Kings of Judah statues were beheaded when rioters mistakenly thought they represented kings of France.
Notre Dame – statues of the Apostles
During the mid-1800’s, when Notre Dame was in a state of disrepair, Victor Hugo wrote a book known as “The Hunchback of Notre Dame”, which raised interest in restoring the cathedral.
Notre Dame de Paris: coronation site of Napoleon I and Josephine in 1804

Painting by Jacques Louis David
Pope Pius II attending the coronation ceremony of Napoleon

In reality, Pope Pius was very angry about being at the coronation, but David was told to change the painting to make him appear less annoyed.
St. Basil’s Cathedral
Moscow, Russia

Built by Tsar Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) in 1556 to celebrate the victory of the Russian Christians over the Muslim Tatars in Kazan.

The legend that the architect’s eyes were poked out after he built St. Basil’s so no other church could be as beautiful is not true.
Duomo, Florence

- Baptistry
- Campanile (bell tower)
- Brunelleschi’s dome

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Duomo
Florence, Italy

- Dome designed by Brunelleschi
Brunelleschi was so well thought of that he was buried in the underground vault with the church bishops.

Building began in 1269 & was completed in 1469 with placement of ball & cross.
Duomo, Florence, Italy

Campanile (bell tower)

Baptistry

Pink & green marble church – some think the building looks as if it’s wearing pajamas
Duomo
Campanile
(Bell tower)
The Dome – designed by Brunelleschi

Original ball & cross on top of dome designed by artist. *Verocchio* (Leonardo da Vinci’s teacher)
Westminster Abbey, London, England

First 1/3 of King James Old Testament translated here

Site of coronations of British kings and queens

Author Charles Dickens buried here

Poet, Alfred, Lord Tennyson buried here

Chaucer buried here
Queen Elizabeth II, at her coronation at Westminster Abbey, London in 1953

Church and monastery were dedicated to the memory of St. Peter
Hagia Sophia
Istanbul, Turkey

Byzantine church - converted to a mosque by the Muslims

World’s largest Christian church for 1000 years
St. Patrick’s Cathedral, New York City

Church appeared in the 2002 Spiderman movie

Selected as one of the favorite buildings in America

Gothic Revival architectural style
Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered here by the knights of King Henry II in 1170.
St. Peter’s Basilica, Vatican City

Church originally designed by Bramante

World’s tallest dome designed by Michelangelo

The front of the church (façade) is topped with 13 statues of John the Baptist, Christ and 11 of his apostles

Pieta by Michelangelo found inside St. Peter’s
St. Peter’s Square

Bernini’s colonnade

Egyptian obelisk
Egyptian obelisk from 13th century BC, was moved to a Circus to the left of the Basilica in 37 AD by Emperor Caligula, then moved to St. Peter’s Square in 1586.

Only obelisk in Rome which has not toppled since ancient Roman times.

Bernini’s colonnade.
Thorncrown Chapel

Considered one of America’s most beautiful buildings. Designed by E. Fay Jones, understudy to Frank Lloyd Wright.

Eureka Springs, Arkansas