

Frequently Asked Questions

Question 01:

Explain the various factors that affected early Christian architecture?

Answer:

The birth and spread of Christianity and Christian Architecture were affected by various factors. Below mention are the few main factors that directly or indirectly influenced the early Christian Architecture:

(i)Geographical:

Christianity was born in the Eastern province of Roman empire. It was carried by missionaries to Rome, as the centre of the world empire. Rome was then the centre of world power. There in the midst of power and influence, it grew to become the most universal religion of the whole Roman empire.

(ii)Geological:

Unlike the geographical factors that directly influenced Christian Architecture, Geological factors had an Indirect Influence on Early Christianity. Ruins of Roman Buildings provided the quarry whence materials were obtained. This influenced the style, both as regards construction and decoration

(iii)Climatic:

The climate of Italy, the most important centre of the building activity in this epoch, varied from North to South. This influenced the Architecture of the early Christian churches directly. North Italy has the climate of the temperate region of Europe, Central Italy is genial and sunny, while the South is almost tropical. This variety of climatic conditions accounted to the diversity of architectural features.

(iv)Religious:

In the history, there is no history as striking as that of the rise of Christianity. It has inspired the building of some of the greatest Architectural monuments. The purpose of a Christian church was to shelter worshippers who met for prayer and praise to an unseen deity.

(v)Social:

Many social changes and political disturbances could not fail to be reflected in the Architecture of a period in which great formative forces were at work.

(vi)Historical:

From Constantine to the death of Gregory the great. Under the pope Gregory the great, Early Christian Architecture, the latest phase of Roman art, gradually fell into disuse and for the next two centuries architectural development was almost at a standstill in Europe.

Question 02:

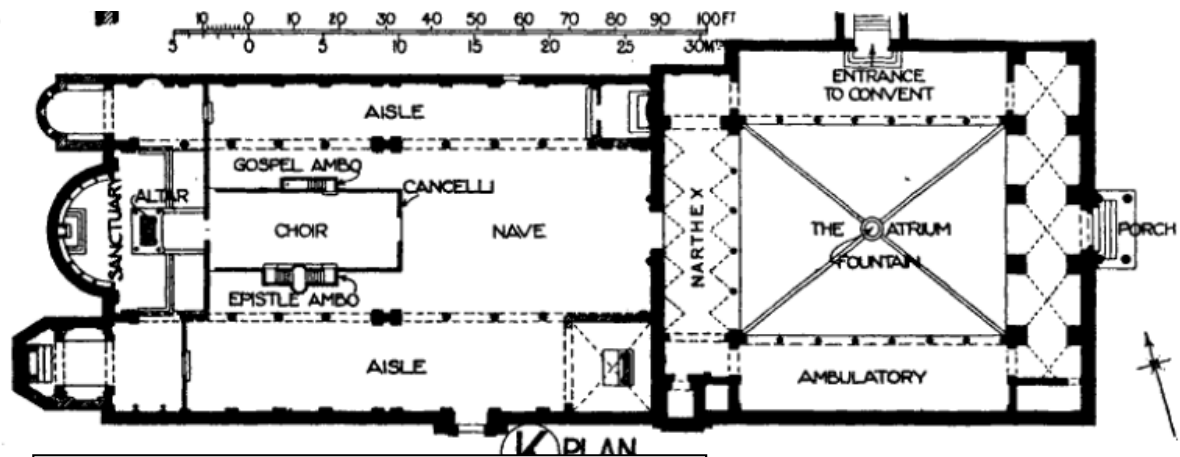
What differentiates the Basilican concept and byzantine concept of planning?

Answer:

The early Christian Architecture started with the Basilican concept of Church planning, which later evolved into the Byzantine Architecture. There are a lot striking differences that makes it easy to identify the Basilican churches from the Byzantine ones; listing out a few:

Basilican Architecture:

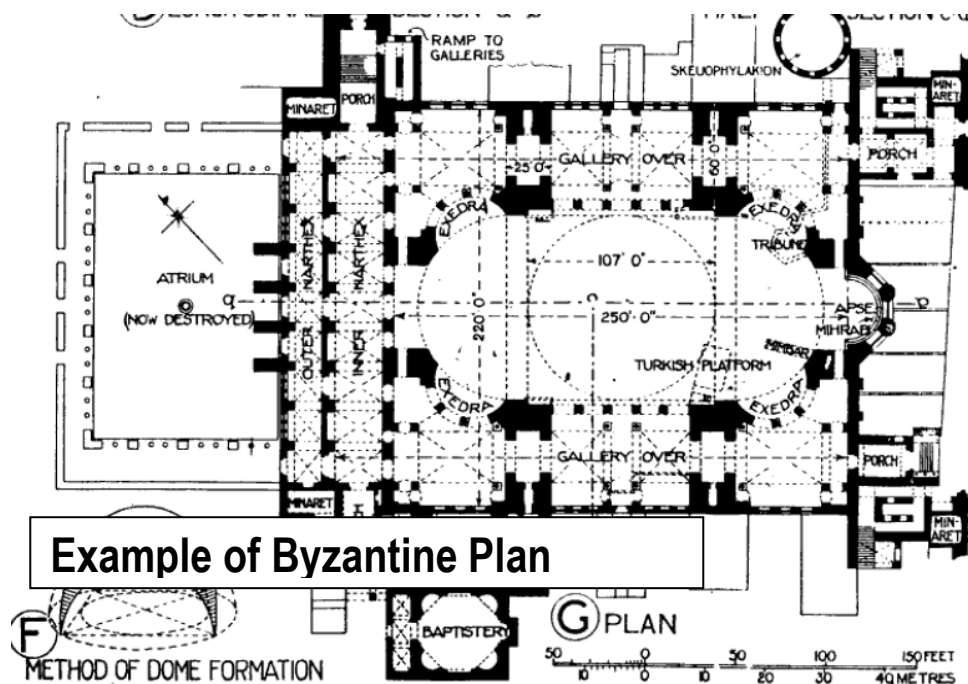
- Basilicas or Roman halls of justice served as the early Christians as models for their churches
- The term "*basilica*" applied to a Christian church from the 4th century referred to the buildings dedicated to the king of kings.
- Usually erected on the burial place of the saint to whom the church is dedicated. There were 31 Basilican churches in Rome alone.
- Evolved from the Roman dwelling houses where communities assembled
- A Basilican church was usually erected over the burial places of the saint to whom the church was dedicated.
- Linear rectangular plans
- More use of Catacomb paintings and mosaics
- Post and lintel roof
- Eg : St.Clemente, Rome



Example of Basilican Plan

Byzantine Architecture:

- Byzantium, renamed Constantinople after its Imperial founder was inaugurated as the capital of Roman empire in AD 330.
- Constantinople has no good building stone, and local materials such as clay for bricks and rubble for concrete were employed.
- Byzantine architecture is characterized by the dome to cover the plans of churches.
- The practice of placing many domes over one building was introduced
- Plan in the shape of a cross was introduced
- More use of mosaics and icons
- Pendentives in roof
- Eg : St.Hagia Sophia, Constantinople



Example of Byzantine Plan

Question 03:

Explain the Architecture of a Basilican church with any example.

Answer:

- The early Christian Architecture started with the Basilican concept of Church planning. Basilicas or Roman halls of justice served as the early Christians as models for their churches
- The term “*basilica*” applied to a Christian church from the 4th century referred to the buildings dedicated to the king of kings.
- Usually erected on the burial place of the saint to whom the church is dedicated. There were 31 Basilican churches in Rome alone.
- Evolved from the Roman dwelling houses where communities assembled
- A Basilican church was usually erected over the burial places of the saint to whom the church was dedicated.
- The Basilican churches exhibited Linear rectangular plans
- The church exhibited the use of Catacomb paintings and mosaics and post and lintel roof
- One major example of the Basilican architecture is St.Clemente, Rome.

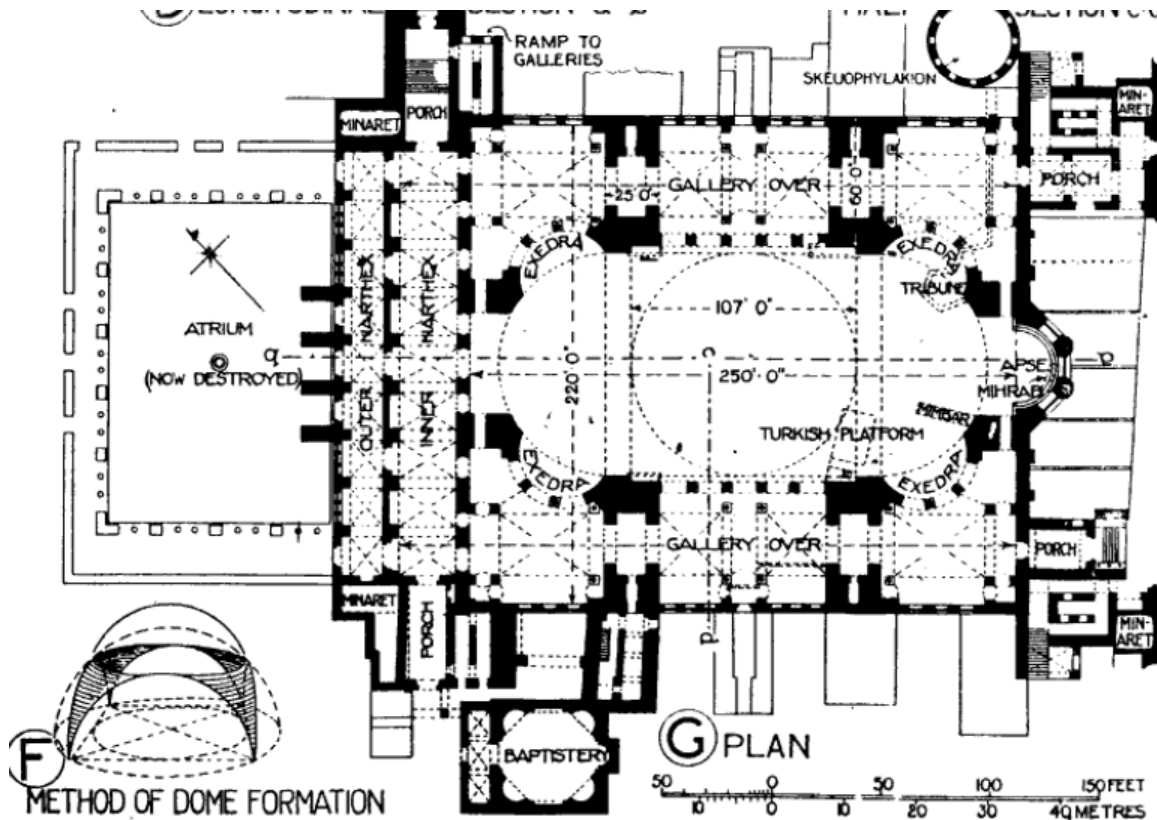
St Clemente, Rome

- Byzantium, renamed Constantinople after its Imperial founder was inaugurated as the capital of Roman empire in AD 330.
- Constantinople has no good building stone, and local materials such as clay for bricks and rubble for concrete were employed.
- Byzantine architecture is characterized by the dome to cover the plans of churches.
- The practice of placing many domes over one building was introduced
- The church plan in the shape of a cross was introduced
- More use of mosaics and icons were used in the church interiors and pendentives were used in roof

St. Hagia Sophia, Constantinople

- Hagia Sophia literally translates to Devine wisdom
- Constructed between AD 532-537
- It Was built by the order of Justinian by the architects Anthemius of Tralles and Isidorus of Miletus
- The atrium with its marble columns, leads to the outer narthex and then to the main narthex, 220ft x 30ft which is in 2 floors.
- The upper floor acts as the gallery to the church
- The plan of the church consist of a central space of 107ft square with 4 massive stone piers.

- This supports 4 semi circular arches upon which rests the dome, 107ft in diameter and 180ft above the ground.
- The whole area is enclosed with semi domes forming a great oval nave, 225ft by 107ft



- North and south of this nave, are 2 storied aisles over 50ft wide.
- The first floor of this has the women's gallery.
- These aisles make the main building approximately a square.
- The 2 principal semi domes, east and west abut against the great supporting arches, thus acting as buttresses to the central dome. There are 40 small windows in the bottom of the dome.
- Monumental interiors with vast domed space, with vaults and domes laid with glass mosaics. The dome is constructed of bricks with mortar joints of almost same thickness.
- Columns of many colored marbles to the numbers 107 are used constructively to support vaults under the galleries.

- Bronze rings encircle the columns
- The exterior brick walls are plastered over and distempered red and white in alternate bands in imitation of brick and stone
- Immense buttresses and deeply recessed spandrel wall between them forms an important part of elevation.
- Thus this church is considered to be the Master piece of Byzantine architecture of all time.