

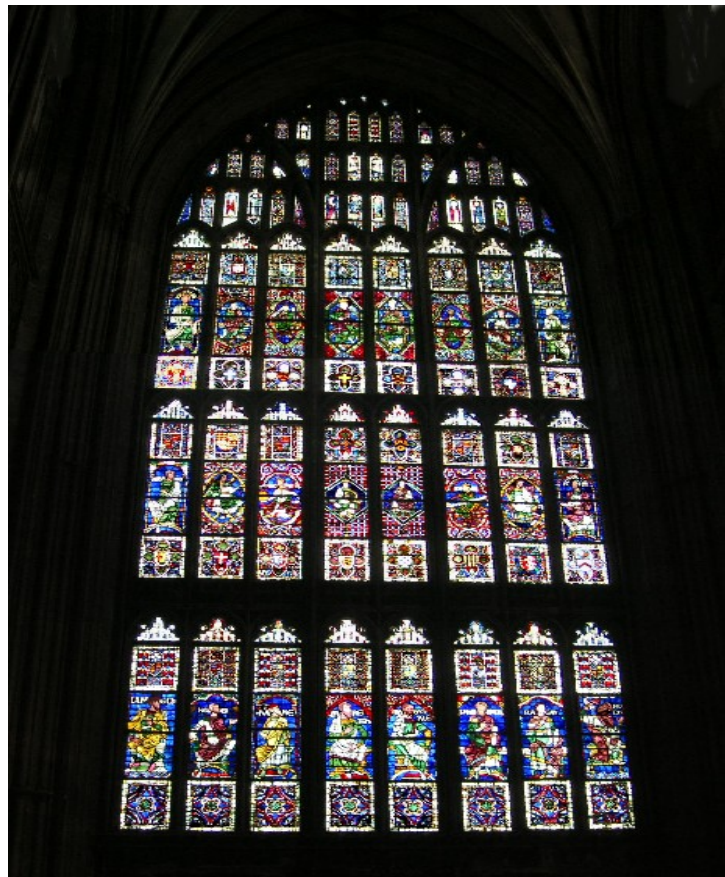
Romanesque and Gothic Styles in Ecclesiastical Architecture: A Visual Comparison.

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The flying buttress, attached to the wall with a half-arch, supports the ceiling of a Gothic church, for the first time allowing large stained-glass windows to decorate the structures, in contrast with the thick walls required in their Romanesque counterparts. Instead of being dark and gloomy, Gothic churches could be warmly lit by bright sunshine.



With the sun behind them, stained-glass windows are quite impressive. They illustrated biblical passages to the illiterate populace and provided light, such as in the Canterbury Cathedral's windows, pictured above. The great height, helped by the pointed arches, ribbed

vaults, and flying buttresses, is intended to make the church seem closer to God.



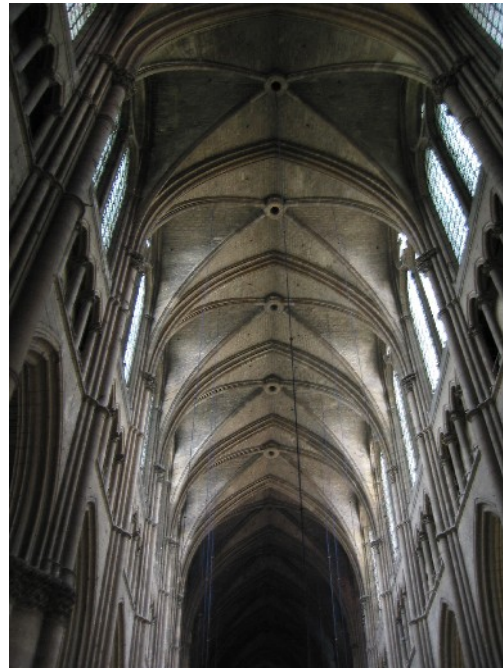
The rounded arches of Winchester Cathedral (left) are a staple of the Romanesque era. It is not until the Gothic era that the advantaged pointed arches (right) become widespread. Being more true to the forces of compression, they are stronger and can be build higher, as an increase in height does not require so much distance between the endpoints.



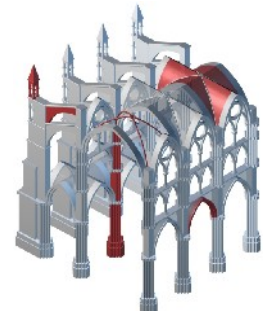
A Romanesque cathedral started in 1067, Saint-Etienne exhibits the rounded arches, grandiose presence, and dedication to geometric symmetry that is common among the churches of its time.



The Seville Cathedral, the largest of the Gothic era, with its lone tower, features less symmetry. The rounded arches on the tower and dome vault show that elements of the Romanesque period persist.



On the left, we see the classic barrel vaulting of a Romanesque ceiling, with the more modern ribbed vaulting of the Gothic period on the right. The difference is similar to that of rounded arches and pointed arches: barrel vaults must be large and have thick walls on their sides so as not to



collapse, whereas ribbed vaulting distributes the weight on the pillars more evenly.



With its construction beginning in 1136, the Saint-Denis Basilica, pictured left, is the first of the Gothic cathedrals. Pointed arches and ribbed vaulting, once again, set it apart from its Romanesque contemporaries.



Many churches, such as Binsted's Church of the Holy Cross, pictured left, combine elements from both eras, such as with the mixture of pointed and rounded arches. It is not always clear whether a church should be considered “Gothic” or “Romanesque.”