

The Church in Liverpool

Session 1



Medieval Church Organisation

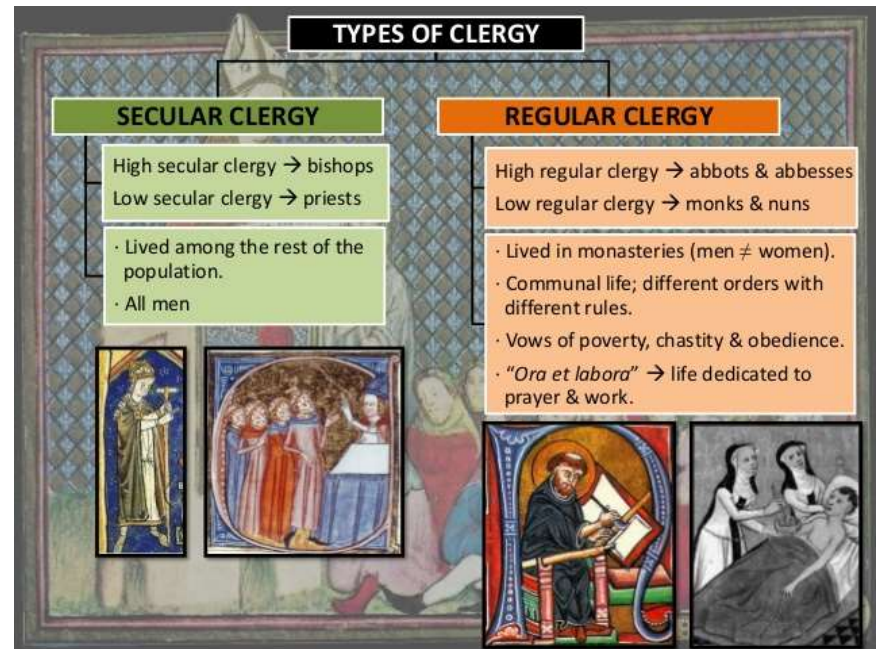
Organisation

- The Church was the single most dominant institution in medieval life.
 - Its religious observances gave shape to the calendar;
 - its sacramental rituals marked important moments in an individual's life (including baptism, confirmation, marriage, the Eucharist, penance, holy orders and the last rites); and
 - its teachings underpinned mainstream beliefs about ethics, the meaning of life and the afterlife.



Organisation

- The institutional Church can be divided into two unequal parts.
- The regular church was made up of those who followed a monastic rule (*regula* in Latin)
- The secular church was non-monastic.
- This was the larger of the two.



Organisation

- The secular church was attended by the general population.
- It was carved into regions governed by archbishops, and their territory was in turn divided into areas known as diocese, which were administered by bishops.
- The parish church was the basic unit of the Christian community, providing the sacraments required by the lay community.
- For most medieval Christians, religious experience was focused on a parish church.



Organisation

- The regular church, by contrast, consisted of men and women who had sworn vows of obedience, celibacy and poverty.
- Most of these people lived in communities governed by a 'rule', a book of instructions.
- The most influential and widespread rule was the Rule of St Benedict (c. 620 - 30), which set out a detailed routine consisting of manual labour, prayer and study.



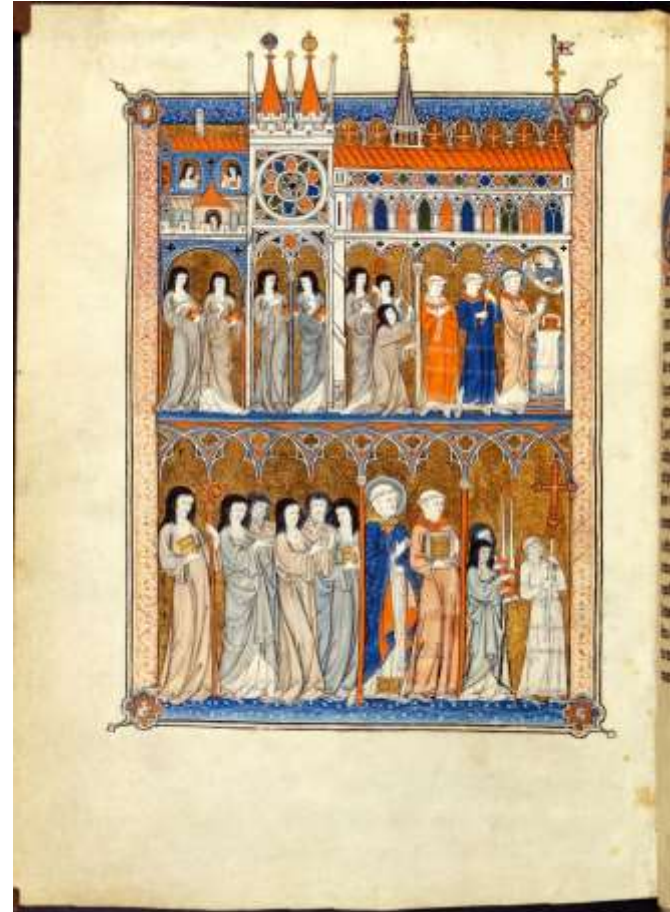
Organisation

- Numerous other religious orders, some stricter and others more lenient, proliferated in the Middle Ages.
- These can be categorised as:
 - monastic orders,
 - mendicant orders, and
 - military orders.



Organisation

- Monastic orders were made up of monks and nuns.
- They tried to remove themselves as much as possible from the secular world.
- Ideally they lived in communities with minimal contact with the outside world.



Organisation

- The name mendicants was derived from the Latin word 'to beg' (*mendicare*).
- The mendicants were orders who engaged with ordinary people by preaching to them and hearing confession.
- The military orders were made up of knights who participated in the crusades which sought to capture the Holy Land and convert Muslims to Christianity.
- An example was the Templars.

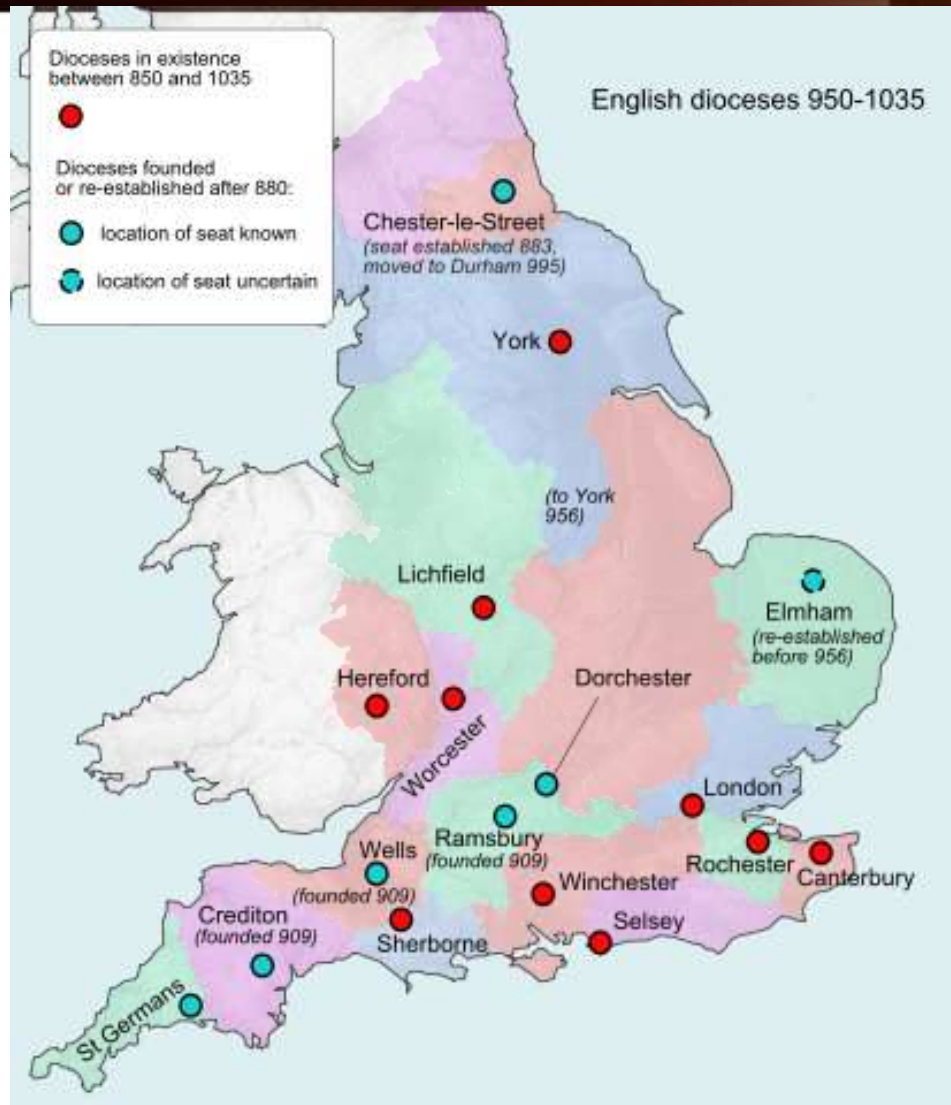


Medieval Church Organisation

- The Church in England was divided into two archbishoprics – Canterbury and York.
- Each archbishopric was then divided into dioceses.
- In 1300 England had 18 dioceses.
- Liverpool was in the huge diocese of Lichfield.
- It was so large because huge swathes of its territory were very sparsely populated.



Early Dioceses



Medieval Church Organisation

- Each diocese was headed by a bishop.
- In most cases bishops were monks who had risen to prominence through service to the king.
- At this stage most royal trained officials were clerics or monks because they could read and write.
- For most of this time the Chancellor was an ecclesiastic.
- These royal officials gathered benefices (which meant money) as rewards for their work.
- Most of them only became priests when they were offered bishoprics.



Medieval Church Organisation

- Some of the bishops came from lowly stock.
- The Church was one way that men could gain an education and work their way up the social ladder.
- This sort of administrative background was useful preparation for the duties of a bishop.
- Even in the 14th century, however, there were some voices raised against this close connection between Church and State.



Medieval Church Organisation

- The medieval bishop was a far more significant figure than his modern counterpart.
- In addition to his responsibility for clergy and parishioners, he was also a great landowner.
- He enjoyed real political and judicial power and a place at the very pinnacle of society.



Medieval Church Organisation

- The work of the parish priest had its administrative side, but it was much more largely spiritual and social.
- A rector had to see to the collection of all tithes.
- The medieval church was not run on voluntary contributions.
- The parish priest could excommunicate for non-payment of the tithe.



Medieval Church Organisation

- The parish priest also tilled or let out the glebe land on his church.
- Glebe is an area of land within an ecclesiastical parish used to support a parish priest.
- The priest was bound to keep the chancel of his church in repair and see that the church-wardens repaired the nave.



Medieval Church Organisation

- It was the duty of the medieval priest to relieve the poor as far as he could himself.
- As he often couldn't afford to do this himself it was his duty to exhort his parishioners to care for the poor.
- He was also expected to persuade the dying to leave alms for the poor.



Medieval Church Organisation

- The spiritual work of the parish priest consisted on the instruction of his people and the administration of the sacraments.
- He was supposed to preach on the Sunday at the parish mass and to instruct his people on the creed and ethical living.
- The priest would normally say mass every day but only monks, nuns and priests made their communion frequently.
- Most people received it after confession at Easter.





Walton-on-the-Hill

The Mother Church

- St Mary's was originally the parish church of the Hundred of West Derby.
- As such it was originally the parish church of people living in Liverpool.
- A church on the site is mentioned in the Domesday Book.
- This was rebuilt in 1326.



The Mother Church

- The fact that St Mary's was mentioned in the Domesday Book indicates that it was in existence in Saxon times.
- This is confirmed by the existence of a late-Saxon cross shaft found there.
- This has been dated to the tenth century.



The Mother Church

- There is also a Norman font that is 800 years old but has been very badly treated!
- The font was turned out of the church in 1754 and then used as a mounting stone by the door of a neighbouring inn.
- Attention was called to it in 1817 and it was subsequently restored to its original use.



The Mother Church

- The font has a circular bowl, on which are six arched panels containing figure sculpture, the intervening spaces having floral patterns.
- The figure-subjects are damaged and indistinct, but one shows the temptation of Adam and another has been interpreted as the Flight into Egypt.
- The bowl of the font only is ancient.



The Mother Church

- The church as it stands is quite modern.
- The nave was rebuilt in 1741, followed by the chancel in 1810.
- None of this has survived.
- The oldest part of the present church is the west tower, which was built in 1829–32 .



The Mother Church

- Most of the church, apart from the tower, was destroyed by incendiary bombs in the May Blitz of 1941.
- The body of the church was rebuilt between 1947 and 1953 retaining the exterior as before, but creating a new interior.





St Mary del Key

St Mary del Key

- It can be assumed that the founding of St Mary del Key was in order to provide the growing community of Liverpool with its own chapel.
- It was a chapel of ease for St Mary's in Walton.
- It meant that Liverpool people didn't have to travel to Walton to go the church.



St Mary del Key

- There are no remains of the church and only fleeting references to it in documents.
- The erection of a chapel at Liverpool was probably at the same time as the foundation of the borough.
- It was already described as 'a great piece of antiquity,' when it was used as the free school in 1673.



St Mary del Key

- From references in old deed we can assume that it was near to where the Tower was eventually built.
- Chapel Street was probably given that name because of this church.
- From these references we can assume that it was built before 1257.



St Mary del Key

- It was presumably given the same name as its Mother Church in Walton.
- To distinguish it the addition of “by the Quay” was added because it was near to the high water mark on the Mersey.



St Mary del Key

- For the first century, the chapel had no endowment (income) of its own.
- It would have been paid for by contributions from its congregations.
- In 1353, Prince Henry (the newly installed Duke of Lancaster) gave it an endowment of 12 shillings.
- This was to endow the first chantry in Liverpool.
- From then on it was the “High Altar of Liverpool”



St Mary del Key

- By the mid-14th century the population of Liverpool had grown to about 1,000 people.
- In September 1361 the Bishop of Lichfield granted a licence for burials in the churchyard, during a visitation of plague.
- St Mary's carried on until it was closed in the 1500s by Henry VIII.





St Nicholas

St Nicholas

- In about 1353, the mayor of Liverpool approached the Duke of Lancaster and requested a larger piece of land next to St Mary's to build another, larger church.
- This was granted and the people of Liverpool began to plan out a new church dedicated to St Nicholas, the patron saint of those who go to sea.



St Nicholas

- Shortly afterwards William de Liverpool gave a rent of 6s. 8d. towards the stipend of the chaplain, as long as the chantry should continue.
- The chantry referred to was probably that at the altar of St. John, founded by John de Liverpool to celebrate for the souls of his ancestors.
- The priest was nominated by the mayor and burgesses.
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St Nicholas

- Another ancient chantry was that of St. Mary at the high altar, founded by Henry, Duke of Lancaster.
- The succeeding duke, John of Gaunt, founded one at the altar of St. Nicholas.
- There were thus three priests in residence serving the chantries from the latter part of the 14th century down to the Reformation.



St Nicholas

- St Nicholas's may have been used as a votive chapel in which offerings and prayers for safe passage would be made by sailors or those about to cross the River Mersey on the hazardous ferry run by monks of Birkenhead Priory.
- At least one guide book to the city, dating from the late-18th century talks about a statue of St Nicholas in the church yard to which the sailors presented offerings before going to sea.



St Nicholas

- John Crosse established the chantry of St. Katherine about 1515, the priest of which was also to 'teach and keep a grammar school.'
- By this means the endowed staff was raised to four priests.
- A house was provided for them, with a garden adjoining.



St Nicholas

- The church, consisted of a nave and a chancel of about equal lengths, with a tower at the west end, a south porch, and an aisle on the north side.
- It had four or five altars.
- The chapel of St. Mary of the Key, which was a separate building standing on the river bank, a little to the west of St. Nicholas's, also had its altar.
- There is no means of deciding how many priests and clerks were employed, but the size of the chancel indicates a considerable staff.



St Nicholas

- Until 1699 St. Nicholas was regarded as a chapel of ease to Walton Church.
- However, a national inventory of church goods made in the mid-16th century shows St Nicholas's was more substantially and lavishly furnished than the mother church at Walton.



St Nicholas



- It was also used for more than just religious purposes.
- The town held meetings there, local taxes and transactions were collected there.
- In the late-16th century sail making was taking place the church being one of the largest and driest places in the town.

