THE FORMATION OF THE HIERARCHY OF THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND HUNGARY

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Abstract

Cathedrals and parish churches surviving from the Middle Ages are among the greatest achievements of architecture attracting a lot of tourists today, but not many visitors are aware of their origin, rank, and function. When studying about English arts foreign students need to be aware of fundamental ecclesiastical concepts, have a thorough knowledge of the historical background and art terminology not only in connection with England, but, in my experience, with their native country as well. Though the structure of the Church was basically similar in the two countries, there were fundamental differences in the size and number of (arch)dioceses and parishes. In this paper I will concentrate mainly on the territorial formation of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in the eleventh century, which was a decisive period in both England and Hungary, and will conclude with a short description of the present situation.

Why should we teach about the hierarchy of the Church?

In the Middle Ages the dominant religion was Roman Catholicism in both England and Hungary. During the Reformation various Protestant denominations won many converts in both countries. In England the kind of Protestantism represented by the Anglican Church (the Church of England) became the state religion. In Hungary, although some Protestant churches (Calvinist, Lutheran, Unitarian) were and are important, the Roman Catholic Church has remained dominant until the present day. In both countries the new denominations took over many buildings of the Roman Catholic Church and transformed them according to their liturgy and taste. Medieval Roman Catholic churches were richly decorated as they served as 'the poor people's bible', many of whom were illiterate, and the frescoes, painted altarpieces, sculptures helped them to understand the stories in the Bible. Protestantism was against such rich decoration, and Protestants whitewashed or destroyed the earlier frescoes, dismantled the Medieval winged altars, and also destroyed many sculptures. Today you cannot find a single Medieval winged altar in an English cathedral, and there are only a few fragments of frescoes, which have survived under the whitewashed surface. Similarly, in the territory of historical Hungary archaeologists are still uncovering frescoes in Protestant churches from the Middle Ages. Unlike England many Medieval altarpieces have survived in those parts of historical Hungary that were not occupied by the Turks. In some churches there are more than ten winged altars. (Bártfa – Bardejov, Lőcse – Levoča) In contrast, if you enter one of the famous Medieval English cathedrals today, you will find blank walls, no Medieval panel paintings, relatively few sculptures. Most tourists do not realize that these great achievements of architecture did not look so austere in their heyday; they used to be Roman Catholic churches and were richly decorated. This is one of the reasons why we

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have to make our students realize that these churches have undergone dramatic changes since the Middle Ages.

Another experience that lead me to teach about Medieval church architecture and the hierarchy of the church was that I came to realize that when I took groups of students to England, they were not familiar with elementary art historical concepts and they also lacked the basic vocabulary both in English and in their native tongue in the field of church architecture. They often failed to understand the guide or missed the best parts of the cathedrals if they visited them on their own. Words like 'temple', 'cathedral', 'basilica', etc can also cause problems for Hungarian students of English because of language interference. 'Temple' is often used incorrectly as Hungarian 'templom' means a Christian church, while in English it is used to refer only to pagan buildings. 'Basilica' denoted originally a secular building in ancient Rome. This building type was taken over by Christian architecture. In architectural sense it denotes a church that has a higher and wider central vessel (the 'nave') and two or four lower and narrower side vessels (the 'aisles'). But a church which has this architectural arrangement does not usually have the rank of a 'basilica'. In Christianity this term was originally applied to only the seven most important churches of Rome. Later the Pope had the right to give this title to exceptionally important churches anywhere. Officially they are the 'basilica minor' type. Consequently, using the word 'basilica' for a church is not a matter of size. We have a similar problem with 'cathedral'. When I ask my students to give examples of English cathedrals, they often give Westminster Abbey in the first place, but, however important a church it is, it has not been a cathedral (except between 1540 and 1550). Students often suppose that any church that is big and important could be a cathedral. But again having the rank of a cathedral is not a matter of size or importance, but of its status in the hierarchy of the Church.

When I try to find out about language interference in connection with 'cathedral', and ask what they mean by 'katedra' in Hungarian, e.g. when the teacher asks a schoolchild to go to the 'katedra', it turns out that some students have the raised platform in mind, others think of the desk of the teacher, and only a few of the chair. But actually the word refers to the chair, and the chair in the case of a church is that of the bishop or archbishop. So only churches where a(n arch)bishop has his chair (or rather throne) can be called cathedrals. And these churches are practically the seats of the district of the (arch)bishop, consequently they are normally important and huge buildings. These districts of the bishops are the dioceses, the bigger units of the territory of the Church, which are divided into smaller units, the parishes. In the Middle Ages cathedrals were typically products of towns and many of them were big enough to house the population of a whole town, but as the towns were growing, they had to be divided into districts with their own church, the parish church.

It would be difficult to speak about English art history, and within that the history of English architecture without clarifying such basic concepts. Besides this it is also interesting to compare the structure of the Roman Catholic Church in our countries because of the basic similarities: the dominant church was the Roman Catholic in both Medieval England and Hungary, and the size of the population was almost the same. Does it mean that the hierarchy was also the same as to the number of dioceses and archdioceses? This is what we are going to have a look at next.

But before that we have to make it clear what we mean by Middle Ages. It is widely accepted that this period lasted approximately from the fall of the Roman Empire to the

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discovery of America. In an even more simplified way we can roughly consider the millennium between 500 and 1500 as the Middle Ages. The first half of this period is often described as the Dark Ages, partly because of the constant wars and destructions of the various waves of the Age of Migration, and partly because of our lack of knowledge about this age. The term is not quite appropriate, but from the point of view of our topic it is anyway the second half of these thousand years, and within that especially the eleventh century that determined the future territorial and hierarchical system of the Catholic Church in both countries. In Hungary after the first efforts of converting Hungarians to Christianity in the tenth century, real change was brought about by the first Hungarian king, Saint Stephen, who started to rule just at the beginning of the new millennium. In England, though there the story of Christianity goes back to earlier centuries, the Norman Conquest of 1066 meant a real watershed, a clean sweep, not only because the whole upper clergy was replaced by a new Norman priesthood, but also by the renewed building activity. No really great church is known from the pre-Norman period. From the Conquest onwards, however, about one hundred cathedrals and thousands of parish churches have been built in England. The ruling art styles in England and Hungary in the period between 1000 and 1500 were Romanesque (called Norman in England) and Gothic, but the Renaissance also began to spread in the 1470s in Hungary, mainly in the royal court, while the Gothic style still flourished in the 16th century, especially in the more remote parts of the country. The Renaissance arrived in England with considerable delay as the 15th century was the age of the War of Roses.

The establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary

The general consensus as to the date of the settlement of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin is 896. They were pagan at that time. Their conversion to Christianity began during the reign of Géza in 953 first by Greek missionaries in Transylvania, then by Western monks and priests from Sankt Gallen and Passau in Western Hungary. Prince Géza himself was baptised in 972 or 973, but he was as much a pagan as a Christian during the rest of his life. (He said he was rich and powerful enough to serve two gods.) The first Benedictine monastery was also founded at the time of Géza in Pannonhalma, which is still the most important monastery in Hungary (and has the status of a diocese), and was named after St Martin, who was born in Roman Pannonia, in the town of Savaria (Szombathely). Géza's son, Stephen became the first really Christian king of Hungary. He was baptized by Adalbert, bishop of Prague, and married Gizella, who came from Bavaria with a retinue of Catholic priests and knights. Stephen was crowned in 1000 (or on 1st January 1001). He realized that Hungarians had a chance to survive in their new homeland only if his country became a Christian state, and they adopted the existing political system of Western Europe. In the field of religion he had to choose between Rome and Byzantium, and he chose the former. It was also symbolic that he asked the pope (and not the Byzantine emperor) to send him a crown. The German emperor Otto III supported him in his efforts. Stephen must have used German forces in consolidating his power and establishing order. He established the archbishopric of Esztergom in 1001, which has remained the centre of the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary ever since. Just as the pope is the bishop of Rome, the archbishop of the diocese of Rome, and the primate of Italy, the archbishop of Esztergom has had these ranks in his town, diocese and Hungary. (But of course he has not been the patriarch of the West, as the pope has.)

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Though the political and religious centre of the country was in Esztergom, from 1018 Fehérvár (today's Székesfehérvár) began to play a role which is similar to that of Westminster. The royal court began to reside here (just like the English one in Westminster), and though it was not the seat of an archbishop (similarly to Westminster Abbey), many Hungarian kings were crowned and buried there, and had their royal chapel and treasury (including crown jewels and relics) there for centuries until the Turks destroyed the place in the 16th century. (It is a sad thing that in this way, unlike most European royal houses, the tombs of the majority of Medieval Hungarian kings have not survived.) Though the royal residences were located in different towns during the rest of the Middle Ages (besides Esztergom and Fehérvár also in Visegrád and Buda), Fehérvár preserved its role as a sacral centre of Hungary, the population of which was around one million at the turn of the millennium.

In the hierarchy of the Church the uppermost rank was held by the archbishop of Esztergom, who was primate of Hungary. Saint Stephen founded ten bishoprics in Hungary: Esztergom, Eger, Kalocsa, Csanád, Várad, Erdély (Transylvania), Pécs, Veszprém, Vác, Győr. The exact date of foundation has survived only in two cases: Pécs – 1009 and Csanád – 1030-31. Eger is likely to have been founded in 1004. (Another version is 1009.) Some of the bishoprics may have existed before St Stephen's coronation (Veszprém, Győr, Esztergom), and from among them he chose Esztergom as the future centre of the Hungarian Church. Kalocsa also became an archbishopric soon. Esztergom and Kalocsa remained the two archdioceses in Hungary until the end of the Middle Ages. (Further bishoprics were turned into archbishoprics in later centuries: Eger – 1804, Veszprém – 1993.) Veszprém was always strongly associated with the rulers' wives. While the king was crowned by the archbishop of Esztergom, the queen by the bishop of Veszprém. Saint Stephen cared not only for the establishment of cathedrals and monasteries, but also of parishes. Every ten villages were obliged to build a church jointly. Chapters were established not only in the centres of bishoprics (székeskáptalan), but also elsewhere (társaskáptalan). Fehérvár was the first of the latter kind. The members of the chapter were the canons; their head was the dean. With the growth of the number of parishes it became a practice that several neighbouring parishes joined into a bigger unit (esperesség).

The new foundations were also given land properties, and the peasants had to give one tenth of their harvest to the Church. Monasteries were founded either by the king or by clans. (The latter kind was not approved by the Holy See, but remained practice in Hungary until the twelfth century.) Monks and nuns lived their way of life according to certain regulations, often their own. The head of a monastery was usually an abbot. One of the best-known monasteries, Tihany Abbey was founded by András I in 1055, and the original foundation document still survives and contains the first written text in Hungarian.

The first king of Hungary, Stephen was canonized in 1083 at the initiative of King Ladislaus I (who was also canonized in 1192). Stephen I was the first ruler in the world who became a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. He was also canonized by the Orthodox Church in 2000. In this way Saint Stephen is respected uniquely in both parts of the Christian world. Another interesting fact is that perhaps no other royal family has given so many saints to the Catholic Church as the Árpád Dynasty (1000-1301).

The eleventh century was the time of the schism of the Church between the Greek Orthodox East and the Latin West. The Eastern and Southern borders of historical

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Hungary became the divide between the two great branches of Christianity. Transylvania, which had been rather under Greek influence in the tenth century, became part of the Latin West in the eleventh, though in later centuries Greek Orthodoxy played an important role in the communities of Romanians and Serbs.

The eleventh century, which was as decisive in Hungarian as in English history, was also the age when the Church tried to reform itself in whole Europe. Until then priests, even bishops, had been allowed to get married. From the end of the eleventh century several synods declared that priests should live in celibacy. It was also the age of struggle about investiture between kings and pope. Just like in England, in Hungary kings did not always ask for the permission of the pope when appointing new bishops or other leaders of the clergy. However, it seems popes were often more tolerant in the case of Hungary. The agreement of the pope was rather formal, the real choice was in the Hungarian king's hands. Archbishops and bishops were real political factors; they had secular power as well, they had lands, castles, vassals. It was important for the king that they should be loyal to him through getting their power from him and becoming his vassal in this way.

At times of struggle for royal succession potential kings often turned to Byzantium for support. In one case Géza I got a crown from the Byzantine emperor in 1074, the acceptance of which normally meant the status of a vassal to the emperor, but he managed to avoid becoming a vassal. This Greek crown was combined with a Latin part at the end of the twelfth century according to the most accepted theory, and they formed together the crown of later Hungarian kings until the 20th century.

Ladislaus I (Saint Ladislaus) had the cathedrals of Várad (Oradea) and Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) built. When Hungary annexed further territories at the end of the eleventh century, Croatia became a new diocese with the seat Zagreb under Ladislaus I. Nyitra in Upper Hungary (today's Slovakia) also became the seat of a new bishopric created in a region of the former Esztergom diocese at the beginning of the twelfth century. In the following centuries further bishoprics were created in territories held by Hungarian kings for shorter or longer periods.

The Roman Catholic Church in Medieval Britain

Christianity arrived in Roman Britannia in the third century and became more wide-spread in the fourth century, but only in that part of the British Isles that was occupied by the Romans, i.e. the one practically corresponding to the territory of modern England. At the synod of Arles in 314 the bishops of York, Lincoln, and London attended, testifying to the existence of a church hierarchy at this time. However, when the Romans had to withdraw from Britain at the beginning of the fifth century, this development was broken, and the country was soon invaded by pagan Anglo-Saxons. In this respect, the history of the Christian faith on the soil of later Hungary was similar. Christianity was also present here in the Romanized Western part of Pannonia, to which, among other things, the Early-Christian tombs in Pécs testify, which are part of the World Heritage. As the Romans withdrew from Pannonia, waves of various pagan peoples arrived here as well. The difference between Britannia and Pannonia was that in the former Catholicism did not stop being practised completely, but was driven into the Western parts of the Isles (Cornwall, Wales), and to Continental Britannia minor (Bretagne).

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Ireland and Scotland were never invaded by the Romans. Christianity began to spread there in the fourth and fifth centuries through missionaries from Britannia and Gallia. But these missionaries were not very successful, and the real conversion of the Irish is rather due to the activity of St Patrick, who may have been born in Scotland around 389, then spent much of his youth as a slave in Ireland, and became a monk later in Gallia. In the end he was authorized by the pope in Rome to convert the Irish. He must have arrived there for this purpose around 432, and managed to convert almost the whole country with the help of his disciples. The centre of his activity was Armagh, which became later an archbishopric. He not only converted the Irish, but also founded bishoprics and monasteries. Arts and sciences began to flourish in these institutions.

The organisation of the Church in Ireland was special. There were practically no towns in Ireland. By the sixth century the centres of church and spiritual life were monastic communities. Bishops were just members of these monastic communities, subordinated to the abbot. The veneration of the Scripture is shown by the great number of richly decorated holy books in Irish monasteries. The spirit of the Old Testament greatly influenced moral life. Public confessions were substituted by private ones. This practice was spread throughout Western Europe by Irish missionaries. Irish monks were famous for their missionary activity in whole Western Europe, and founded many monasteries in Gallia, Germania, Italia.

The conversion of the pagan Anglo-Saxons began from two directions in the sixth century. Pope Gregory the Great (Gregory I) sent Augustine to the Southern part of Britain, who arrived at the estuary of the Thames in 597. In 601 he managed to convert Aethelbert, King of Kent, whose wife, being the daughter of the Frankish king, had already been baptized. This was followed by the baptism of the whole population of Kent. Augustine had been ordained a bishop in Arles in the meantime. In 601 the king endowed him with Canterbury, which became the seat of his Church. Augustine began to organize the hierarchy of the church from Canterbury. He founded one more bishopric in Kent: Rochester. Kent was followed by Essex, where the centre of the diocese became St Paul's Cathedral in the Roman forum of London. Other parts of England were converted only after Saint Augustine's death. Another outstanding archbishop of Canterbury in the early period was the Greek Theodoros between 669 and 690. He established six new dioceses, and there were 16 of them on his death. Though the Church in England had very strong relations with Rome, after all it was a national church, over which the king had considerable influence.

While the missionaries of Rome started the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons from the South, the Irish-Celtic Church did it from the North. Columba founded a monastery on the Island of Iona in 563, from where he began to convert the Picts of Scotland. Irish priests were monks, even the bishops lived in monasteries. As they lived a simpler way of life, Irish bishops were more readily accepted by ordinary people than the bishops of the South, who lived in royal courts. In the end the Roman and Celtic Churches had to agree about whose organisational forms and doctrines will prevail in England. It was done at the Synod of Whitby in 663 in favour of the Roman Church. Rome extended its authority over all Christians in Britain.

The state of the English Church before the Norman Conquest is often described as inferior to the Church in Normandy; corruption and the ignorance of the lower clergy are mentioned as typical features. Edward the Confessor was, however, canonized. He had the same power in England as William in Normandy. He appointed bishops and abbots,

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and he had Westminster Abbey built. After the Norman invasion William reorganized the Church in England. Similarly to the way he appointed the archbishop of Rouen, the six bishops of Normandy and heads of the monasteries in his homeland from among his friends and relatives, he replaced almost the whole Saxon upper clergy with his own people. Lafranc, archbishop of Canterbury, who had come from Italy and studied Bede's history of the Church in England, was his faithful ally. He considered himself the primate of England, although archbishops of York had never given up a similar aspiration. With the help of forged documents Lafranc managed to prove his claim to supervising most of the fifteen bishoprics of England and left only Durham to York. Soon, with the exception of Worcester, Norman (or other foreign) bishops were appointed everywhere. He also moved the centres of several sees that had been in rural areas to urban ones. The abbots of the 35 Benedictine monasteries which existed in England in 1066 were also replaced with reliable Normans. William expected all bishops and abbots of England and Normandy to provide armed and mounted knights for his service.

Gregorian (Gregory VII's) reforms reached Ireland at the beginning of the twelfth century. Until then monastic settlements, rather than dioceses, had characterised the organisational structure of the Irish Church. The Synod of Cashel in 1101 forbade divorce, clerical marriage, lay abbots among other things. The two ecclesiastical provinces of Armagh and Cashel were established on that occasion, and in 1152 Tuam and Dublin were also elevated to archbishoprics. Diocesan boundaries often coincided with former territorial boundaries of Irish dynasties (clans).

The right of appointing bishops belonged to the king in England until the twelfth century, just like in Hungary. In 1107 the king had to give up this right, but the upper clergy had to vow loyalty to the king. There were efforts in later centuries from time to time to get back this right, but when for example King John Lackland refused the candidate of the pope in 1213, his country was punished by interdictum, and the king had to give in finally.

Britain also had less dioceses and, as a result, less cathedrals than some other countries. (For example Italy had 275, while England had 'only' 100 during its whole history, seventeen built before the Reformation.) Even so their quantity outnumbers that of Hungarian dioceses and cathedrals. Still, it is said the English favoured fewer, but large dioceses, which resulted in the splendour of their cathedrals, while many of such buildings were architecturally unimportant in France or Italy. While on the Continent monasteries and cathedrals represented different kinds of institutions in the Church, in England several cathedrals were also monasteries at the same time, with the bishop also serving as the abbot of the monastery and a prior being the effective head of the monastery (cathedral priory). In some cases, though the cathedral complex never housed monks, even though they may show architectural elements that are otherwise typical of monasteries. (E.g. the beautiful cloisters of Salisbury.) They were rather built for show. Out of the seventeen Medieval cathedrals eight were monastic (Winchester, Worcester, Canterbury, Rochester, Durham, Norwich, Ely, Bath – which replaced Wells). The other cathedrals were served either by Canons Regular (Carlisle) or Secular Canons (London, York, Lichfield, Hereford, Lincoln, Chichester, Sarum - Salisbury.) London, York, Lichfield, Hereford, Exeter, Wells were Saxon foundations, Lincoln, Chichester, Sarum were those of William I. Henry VIII added six more sees in the 1540s, but then no more new dioceses were established between 1546 and 1836. This shows again how lasting the arrangements of the eleventh century proved to be.

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4 Developments in Hungary since the Middle Ages in the field of the territorial organization of the Roman Catholic Church

The central part of historical Hungary was occupied by the Turks for 150 years from the mid 16th century. Some of the areas in the South that had been most densely populated before the Turkish invasion were left now without population. It is estimated that the population was reduced to three millions at that time. When the Turks were driven out of the country at the end of the 17th century, the Austrian ruler invited new foreign settlers to the country. In this way the ethnic and religious composition of the country was changed dramatically in these two centuries.

Another dramatic change occured in the twentieth century. Hungary was reduced to one third of its former territory in Trianon. This strongly influenced the territories of the former dioceses, too. The territorial loss has been further increased through the creation of new dioceses in recent years. Eger diocese, for example, comprised one seventh of the territory of Hungary in the 11th century, and was almost as big as today's Hungary. It preserved its size until the nineteenth century, when it became an archdiocese in 1804 with the subordinated dioceses of Rozsnyó (Rožnava), Kassa (Košice), Szepes (Spišska Kapitula), and Szatmár (Satu Mare). All these dioceses became parts of Czechoslovakia and Romania, respectively, after 1918. Further areas were joined to the new Debrecen-Nyíregyháza diocese in 1993. So today its territory is only 11500 km^2. (It is, however, still one of the biggest and most important dioceses of Hungary.)

The number of dioceses and archdioceses has also decreased in Hungary since the Middle Ages. There are four archbishoprics at the moment (Budapest-Esztergom, Eger, Kalocsa-Kecskemét, Veszprém), which are divided into 13 dioceses (besides the archdioceses, which are automatically also dioceses, these are Vác, Miskolc, Hajdúdorog (Greek Catholic), Debrecen-Nyíregyháza, Szeged-Csanád, Pécs, Kaposvár, Szombathely, Győr), plus two special dioceses: the Diocese of Pannonhalma Abbey and the Military Bishopric, which are subordinated to the Holy See directly. The present borders of the dioceses were established by John Paul II in 1993. As some of the dioceses have seats in two towns, besides the usual centre of a diocese, the cathedral, there is a co-cathedral in some towns.

As to ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries, in some countries the dominant denominations are the same as those of the Hungarians (in Slovakia, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia), while in other countries they are different (in Romania, the Ukraine, Serbia). There is no Hungarian bishop in Slovakia, though this has been demanded by ethnic Hungarians for decades. In Romania there has been a Hungarian Roman Catholic archbishop in Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) for a few years (earlier it was a bishopric), but in an interesting way the other Transylvanian and Western dioceses (Szatmár - Satu Mare, Nagyvárad - Oradea, Temesvár - Timişoara) do not belong to Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), but to Bucureşti. In other neighbouring countries the number of Hungarian Roman Catholics is much smaller, so the diocese they belong to is subordinated to the religious authorities of the capital of the given country.

5 The present number of (arch)dioceses in the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Church on the British Isles

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The Church of England has 43 dioceses, and correspondingly 43 cathedrals, in England and Wales. Two of these (Canterbury and York) have been archdioceses from the very beginning, with the archbishop of Canterbury being the supreme head within the Church (though formally it is the Queen). The dioceses are divided into 13000 parishes. Many of the cathedrals and parish churches are the oldest and architecturally the most valuable building in their town or village. As a result they are the most visited buildings as well.

The Roman Catholic Church has almost 3000 parishes in England and Wales, which make up 22 territorial dioceses, plus there are two special dioceses: those of the Forces and the Ukrainian Apostolic Exarchate. As the buildings of the Roman Catholic Church were usually transformed into Anglican churches during the Reformation, their present churches are often more recent foundations. As mentioned above, Westminster Abbey, though not a cathedral, is one of the most important churches of the Church of England, which was, however, a Roman Catholic abbey in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, Westminster Cathedral is a Roman Catholic church today, but it was built only in the nineteenth century.

The Anglican Church of Ireland has two provinces similarly to the Church of England, with archbishops in Armagh and Dublin. The Roman Catholic Church has four archdioceses: Armagh, Cashel & Emly, Dublin, and Tuam, with 26 dioceses.

The Catholic Church has two archdioceses in Scotland: St Andrews & Edinburgh and Glasgow. These are divided into 9 dioceses (Western Isles, Argyll, Aberdeen, Dunkeld, Galloway, Motherwell, Paisley).

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