

Monastic & Secular Cathedrals of Medieval England (*circa* 1200)

- Cathedral – a church that contains the seat of a bishop (*cathedra* meaning ‘seat’).
- The cathedrals of early-Medieval England were divided into two types: **monastic & secular**.
- Secular does not mean ‘non-religious’ in this case.
- The secular cathedrals and dioceses were ruled by the bishop and staffed by secular canons (they were free to live separately & not under a monastic Rule).
- Monastic cathedrals were an English phenomenon, beginning in the Anglo-Saxon period. They were very rare outside of England.
- The 10th & 11th centuries saw church reformers founding monastic cathedrals.
- In monastic cathedrals the bishop took the place of an abbot and ruled both the cathedral monastery and diocese. A prior would head up the monks.
- Generally monastic cathedrals were staffed by monks (*Benedictines* – governed by the Rule of St. Benedict). Carlisle Cathedral was an exception and had *Canons Regular* who were *Augustinian Canons* (governed by the Rule of St. Augustine).
- Of the 17 late-Saxon/early-medieval foundations 9 were monastic & 8 were secular.

MONASTIC CATHEDRALS

Bath
Canterbury
Carlisle
Ely
Durham
Norwich
Rochester
Winchester
Worcester

SECULAR CATHEDRALS

Chichester
Exeter
Hereford
Lichfield
Lincoln
London
Sarum
York

Notes:

Bath replaced Wells as the cathedral of Somerset between 1090 and 1218

Old Sarum was replaced by New Sarum (Salisbury) *circa* 1220

5 of the 8 secular cathedrals were pre-Conquest: Exeter, Hereford, Lichfield, London & York

3 of the 8 secular cathedrals date from the reign of William I: Chichester, Lincoln & Sarum

There are cathedrals as we know them today, such as Gloucester or Bristol, that were not cathedrals but abbeys in the medieval period.

Sources

Clifton-Taylor, Alec, *The Cathedrals of England* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), pp. 16-17

Daniell, Christopher, *Atlas of Medieval Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 92