

The Church in Liverpool

Session 5



The Parish of Liverpool

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- By the end of the 17th century Liverpool had become so important that the governing body thought they might claim full parochial rights for the township.
- After negotiations with the rector and vicar of Walton, and the patron, Lord Molyneux, an Act of Parliament was procured to:

enable the town of Liverpool to build a church and endow the same, and for making the same town and liberties thereof a parish of itself, distinct from Walton.



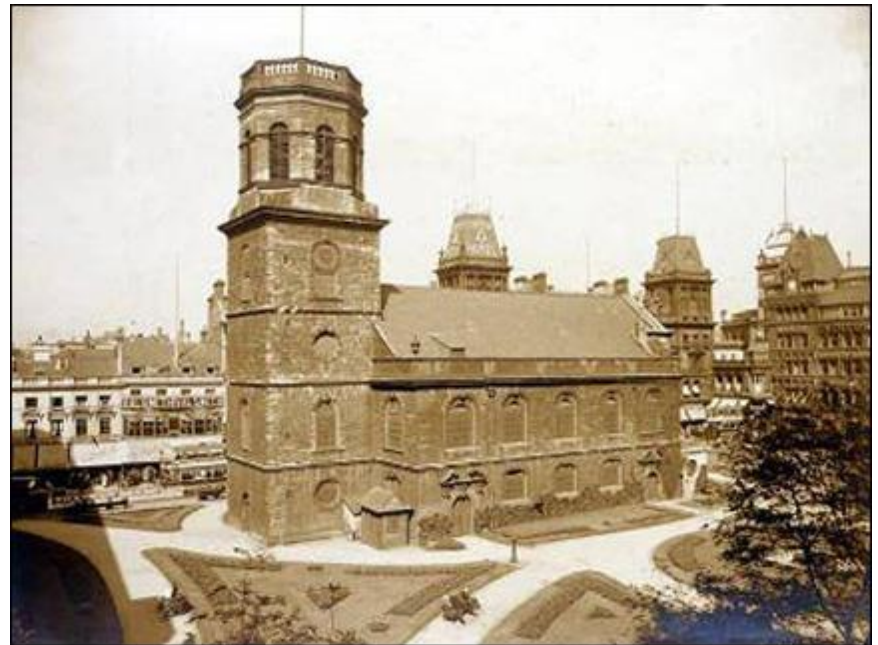
The Parish of Liverpool

- The new parish was formed in
- £400 was to be raised towards building a new church; to be dedicated to St. Peter.
- John Moffat, the architect, saw the first stone of St. Peter's Church laid.
- The entire cost when finished was £4000.



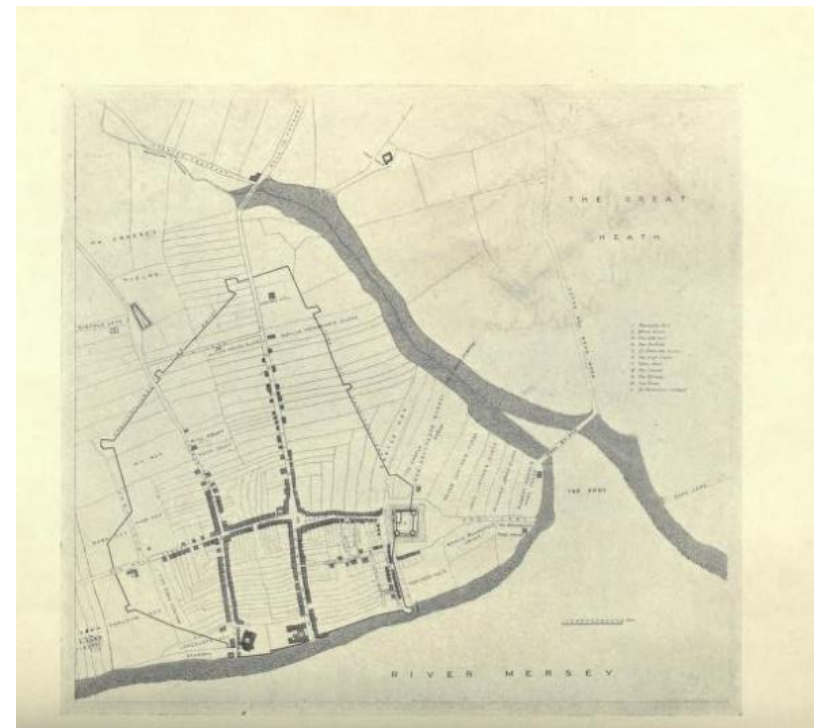
The Parish of Liverpool

- Two joint rectors were appointed, the first being the two curates then ministering.
- It was directed that £110 should be levied from the parishioners for each of them.



The Parish of Liverpool

- When St Peter's was built Church Street was cut off from Lord Street by salt water.
- The tidal creek known as the Pool of Liverpool still ran along what is now Paradise Street and Whitechapel.
- Until the Pool was closed in 1709, Church Street and all the land beyond could only be reached by crossing over the Pool by a bridge at the foot of Lord Street.



The Parish of Liverpool

- St Peter's Church was the first building erected on the open fields outside the town.
- Church Street at this time was a muddy track.
- St Peter's was opened in 1704.
- Church Street remained unpaved until 1760.
- There were constant complaints about its muddy state.
- One writer called it a quagmire.
- There were also weekly cattle markets held there.



The Parish of Liverpool

- There is a story that the Corporation was presented with four different designs for the entrance doors.
- As they were unable to make a decision, all four were chosen and all four used.
- Although it was a large building it was never considered to be architecturally significant.



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From Picture of Liverpool: A Stranger's Guide published in 1834

"This edifice, which stands on the south side of Church street was built by assessment, and consecrated in 1704. It cost three thousand five hundred pounds and is said to be the first parish church that was erected in Lancashire after the Reformation. There are four portals, and each in a different style of architecture- a proof how little good taste or architectural beauty was understood at that time in this town. The upper part of the tower is octangular and ornamented at the angles with pinnacles, each bearing a gilt vane.

The entire height of the steeple is 108 feet, and it has a peal of eight bells.

The interior of the church is furnished with pews, and the galleries rest on four well carved oak pedestals, on which rise an equal number of plain columns, supporting the roof.

The altar exhibits a fine specimen of rich carving in oak, and is generally and deservedly admired. A representation of St Peter, in stained glass decorates the east window, and a large and handsome organ occupies the west end, with a gallery on each side, appropriated to the use of the children who belong to the Blue Coat Hospital.

In 1715, a mariner named John Fells gave a donation of thirty pounds, for the purpose of founding a small theological library in this church. It has since received additions from one of the rectors, and at present comprises 107 volumes in folio, 56 in quatro, and 54 in octavo. These works are deposited in the vestry, and chiefly treat on divinity and ancient church history".

The Parish of Liverpool

- Before the building of St George's Hall, St Peter's was famous for festivals of church music.
- The first Oratorio to be performed in Liverpool was Handel's *Messiah* and was performed in St Peter's Church.
- Many people felt, however, that it was wrong for a church to be the venue for concerts and this led to the building of St George's Hall.
- When Liverpool became the centre of a diocese, St Peter's was the Pro-Cathedral but, after the building of the Anglican Cathedral, it was demolished in 1922.



The Parish of Liverpool

- St George's Church, for which an Act of Parliament was obtained in 1715. was begun in 1726 on the site of the newly cleared Liverpool castle.
- It was completed in 1734.
- It was designed by Thomas Steers, the dock architect.
- It was an elegant building, thought at the time the handsomest church in Liverpool.



The Parish of Liverpool

- 'It had originally an elegant terrace, supported by rustic arches, on one side; these arches the frequenters of Red Cross market used to occupy.'
- The reference to the market is to shelters for women trading in the surrounding New market.
- It also had two octagonal outhouses, one for the Clerk of the Market and one for the Night Watch.



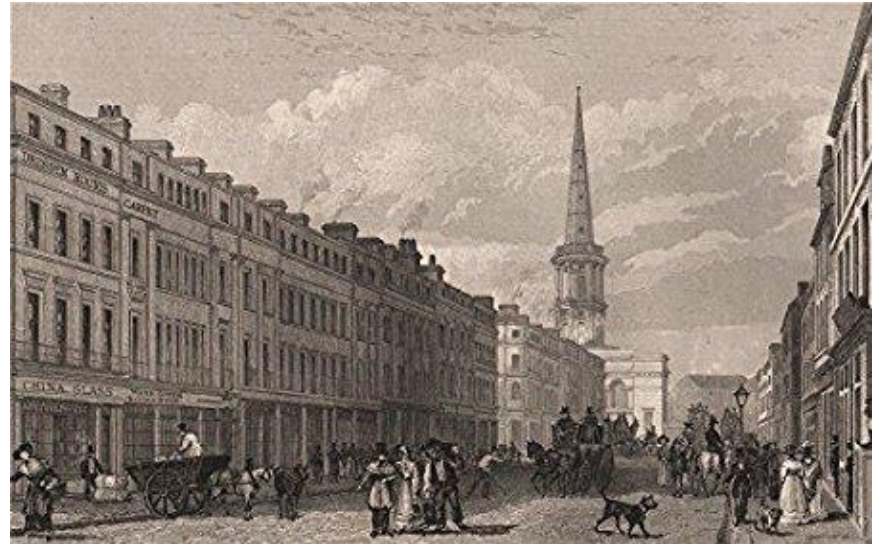
The Parish of Liverpool

- The church was rebuilt piecemeal between 1819 and 1825, and its new spire was reduced in height in 1833.
- in its time it was regarded as 'one of the handsomest in the kingdom.'
- It was the property of the corporation and maintained by them.



The Parish of Liverpool

- At one time the mayor and the judges of assize at one time attended it.
- On Mr. Charles Mozley, who was a Jew, being elected mayor in 1863, the incumbent preached an anti-Semitic sermon denouncing the choice.
- From that time the mayor and corporation ceased to attend St. George's.



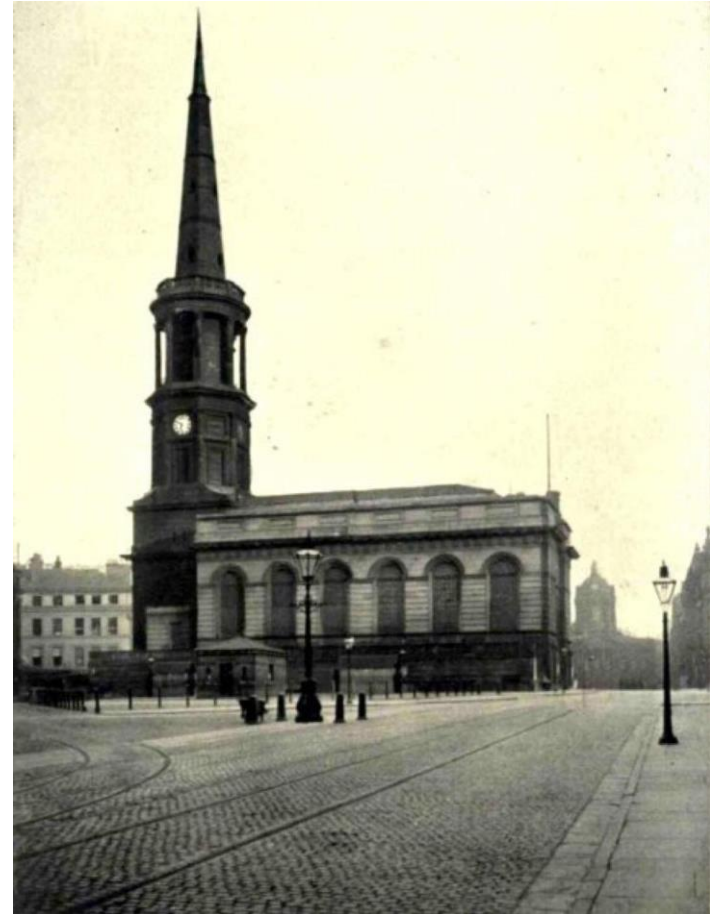
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- In the early 19th century it was discovered that, although the body of the church had been built on solid rock, the tower had been built over the rubble-filled castle moat.
- This mean that the church had to be substantially rebuilt.



The Parish of Liverpool

- The building having long failed to attract a congregation was closed in 1897.
- It was demolished in 1899.
- The Victoria Monument now occupies the site.

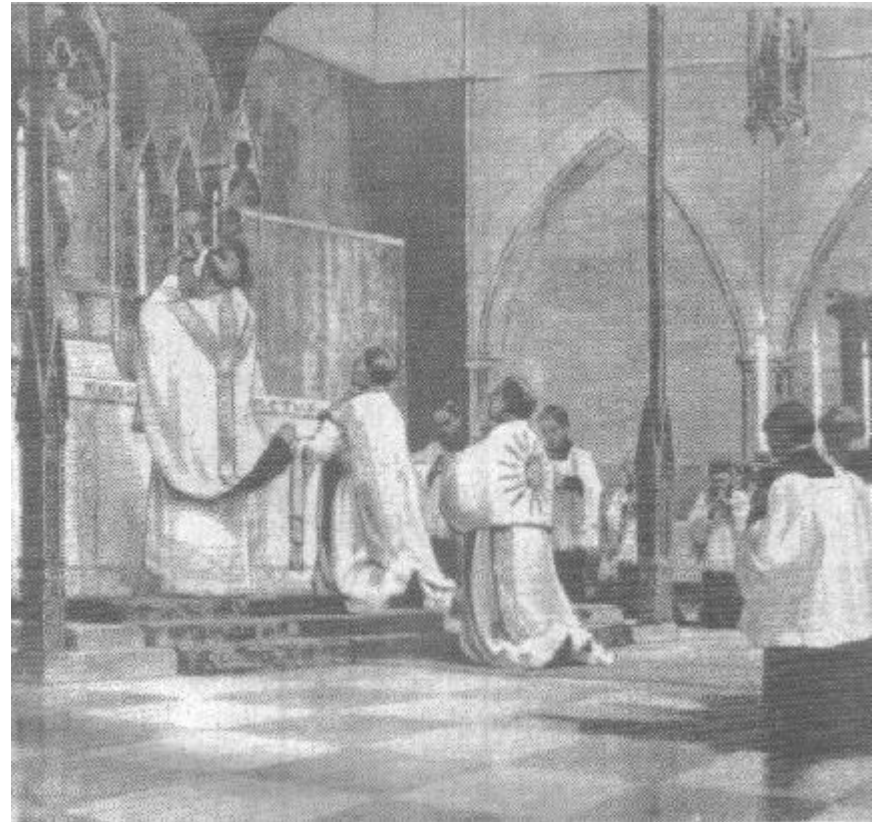




The Wider World

The Wider World

- The religious settlement of 1689 shaped policy down to the 1830s.
- The Church of England was not only dominant in religious affairs, but it blocked outsiders from responsible positions in national and local government, business, professions and education.



The Wider World

- A new spirit of toleration was abroad.
- Restrictions on Nonconformists were mostly either ignored or slowly lifted.
- The Protestants, including the Quakers, who worked to overthrow King James II were rewarded.
- The Toleration Act of 1689 allowed nonconformists to have their own chapels, teachers, and preachers.



The Wider World

- Harsh penalties on Catholicism remained until the threat of a French restoration of the Catholic Stuart kings ended.
- These penalties were seldom enforced, however, and afterwards were slowly lifted until Catholic emancipation was achieved in 1829.



The Wider World

- The evangelical movement inside and outside the Church of England gained strength in the late 18th and early 19th century.
- The movement challenged class differences as well as emphasising individual spirituality.



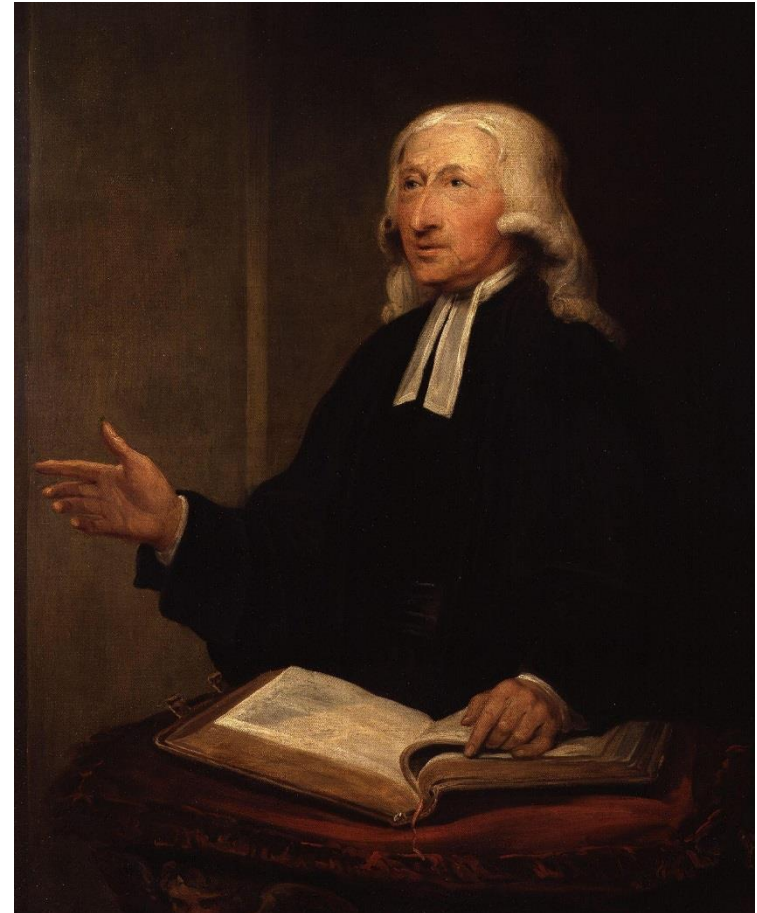
The Wider World

- John Wesley (1703 – 1791) and his followers preached revivalist religion, trying to convert individuals to a personal relationship with Christ through Bible reading, regular prayer, and especially the revival experience.
- Wesley himself preached 52,000 times, calling on men and women to "redeem the time" and save their souls.



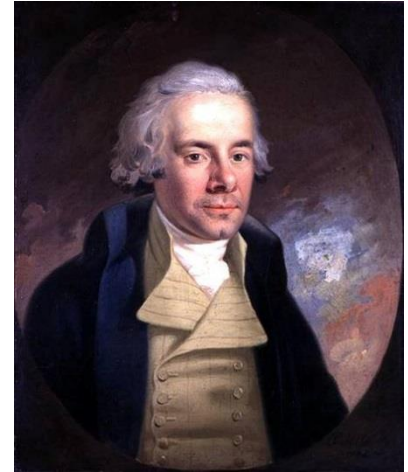
The Wider World

- Wesley always operated inside the Church of England, but at his death, it set up outside institutions that became the Methodist Church.
- It stood alongside the traditional nonconformist churches, Presbyterians, Congregationalist, Baptists, Unitarians and Quakers.
- The old nonconformist churches, however, were less influenced by revivalism.



The Wider World

- The Church of England remained dominant, but it had a growing evangelical, revivalist faction the "Low Church".
- Its leaders included William Wilberforce and Hannah More.
- It reached the upper class through the Clapham Sect.



The Wider World

- It did not seek political reform, but rather the opportunity to save souls through political action.
- This took forms such as freeing slaves, abolishing the duel, prohibiting cruelty to children and animals, restricting gambling, and avoiding frivolity on the Sabbath.
- All souls were equal in God's view, but not all bodies, so evangelicals did not challenge the hierarchical structure of English society.

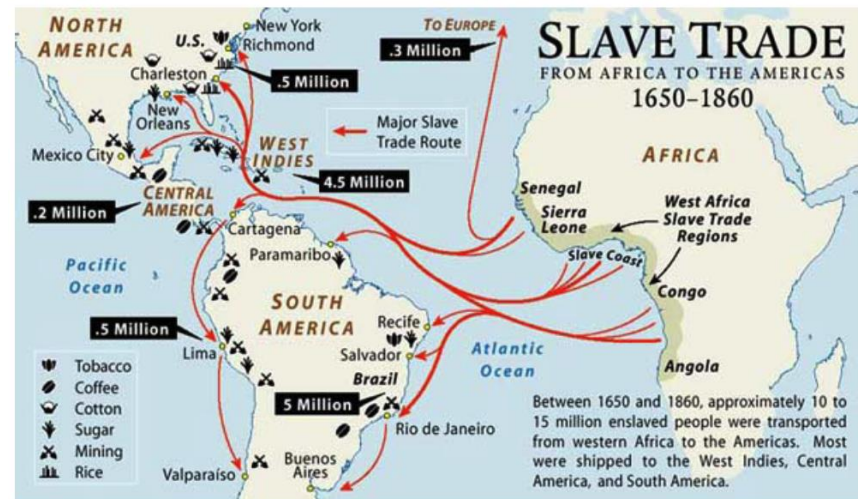




Impact of Church in Liverpool

Impact of the Church

- Notable Christians, particularly from dissenting churches, were involved in programmes of social change.
- These included:
 - Abolition of slavery
 - Provision of education
 - Setting up of libraries.





Other Denominations

Other Denominations

- In 1800 there were 14 Anglican Churches in Liverpool and 13 dissenting places of worship.
- These included the Octagon Chapel which stood in Temple Court, off Matthew Street.
- It was built in 1763 by Joseph Finney, who was a watch and clockmaker as well as an architect.
- Those who attended it were known as Octagonians.
- After 1776 it became an Anglican Church.
- It was demolished in 1820.

