

The Law

1. Trials
2. Manor Courts
3. Royal Courts
4. Church Courts



1. Trials

- Two common forms of trial were trial by ordeal and trial by battle
- The logic behind these two forms of trial was that God would certainly help an innocent person



Trial by Ordeal

- Since God would certainly protect the innocent, why not test their innocence by exposing to danger and seeing if God will intervene on their behalf?



Examples...

- Swallowing Poison
- Pulling objects from boiling water
- Walking over nine red-hot ploughs
- Carrying red-hot iron over a certain distance

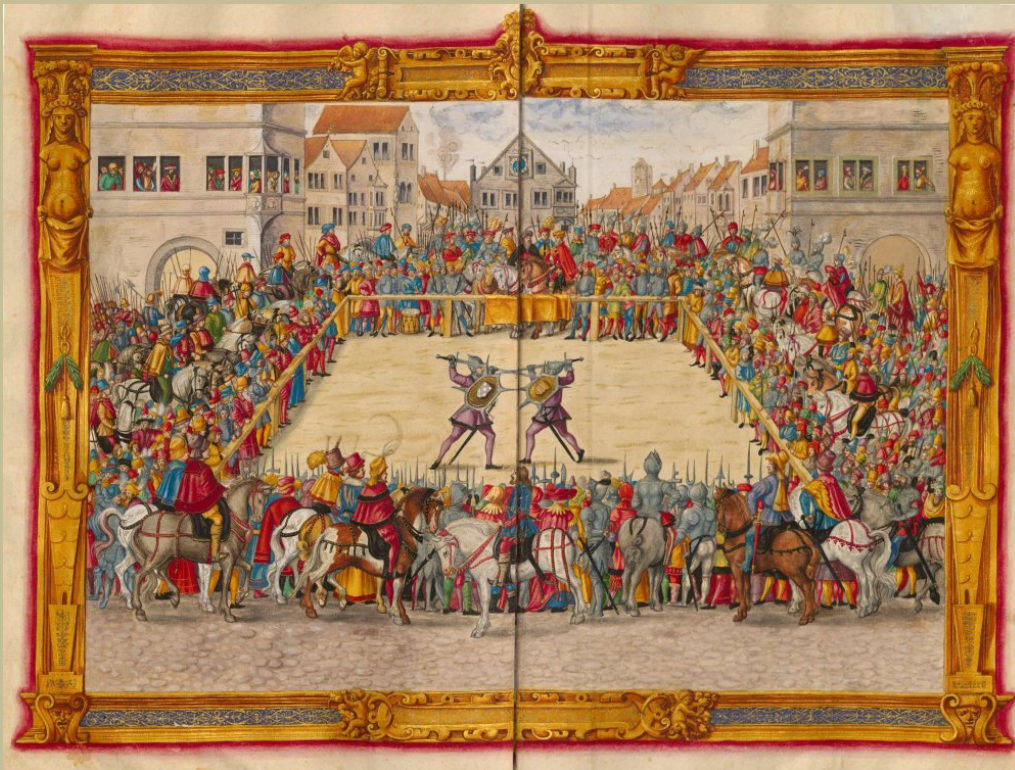


- If a person succumbed to the torture, they were considered guilty
- For example, if a burn got infected or blistered then they must be guilty because God did not protect them!



Trial by Battle

- Two nobles would fight, usually until one of them died



- A winner was presumed innocent because God would only protect the innocent
- Only noblemen could choose trial by battle



- A noblewoman could choose any champion to do battle on her behalf



Lieutenant Colonel John Lindley Marmion Dymoke, Queen's Royal Champion



The Courts

- A person would be tried in a different court depending on the nature and seriousness of his or her crime



2. Manor Courts

- The most common kind of court was the manor court, which settled minor disputes and punished petty criminals



- Many of the disputes in manor courts had to do with farming and property
- Dealt also with charges of assault, petty theft, public drunkenness, and other small crimes



- Manor courts were like village meetings, and most villagers would attend
- Representatives of the lord, called stewards, acted as judges



- Villagers decided who won the case
- The stewards decided the punishment, which was usually a fine



3. Royal Courts

- People charged with serious crimes like murder, rape, and treason were tried in royal courts



- Poaching game from royal forests, cutting down trees in royal forests, or even collecting deadwood for fuel from royal forests meant a trial in a royal court



- Royal courts used “common law” to decide cases
- It was called common law because it was meant to be the same for the whole kingdom



- Royal courts had the authority to order the execution of convicted criminals
- After the execution, the person's possessions would be taken away by the court



4. Church Courts

- Bishops, deacons, priests, clerks, monks, and nuns could only be judged in Church courts
- Church courts usually gave out lighter sentences and could not order executions



- Even though the Pope technically had authority over the kings and queens of Europe, disputes still arose between the Church and monarchs



Henry II and Thomas Becket

- In 1164, King Henry II of England wanted the clergy to be tried in royal courts instead of Church courts

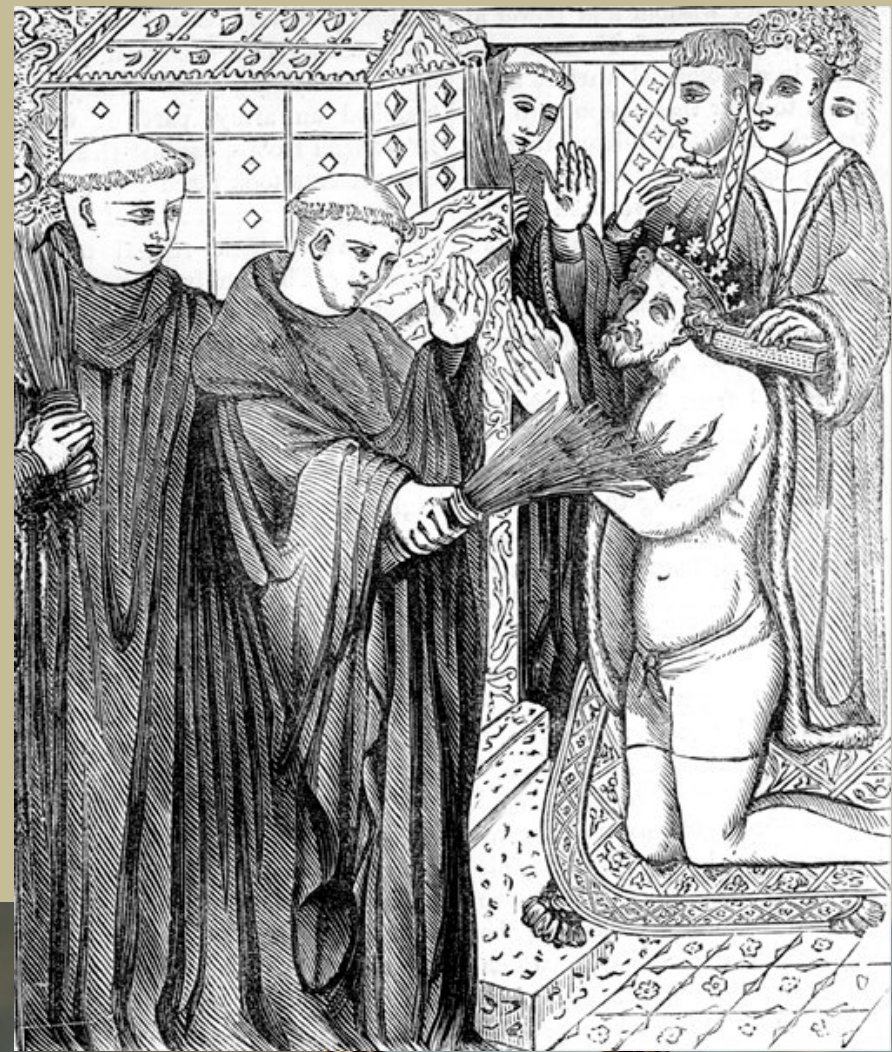


- The leader of the Church in England (called the archbishop of Canterbury) Thomas Becket, refused to obey the king



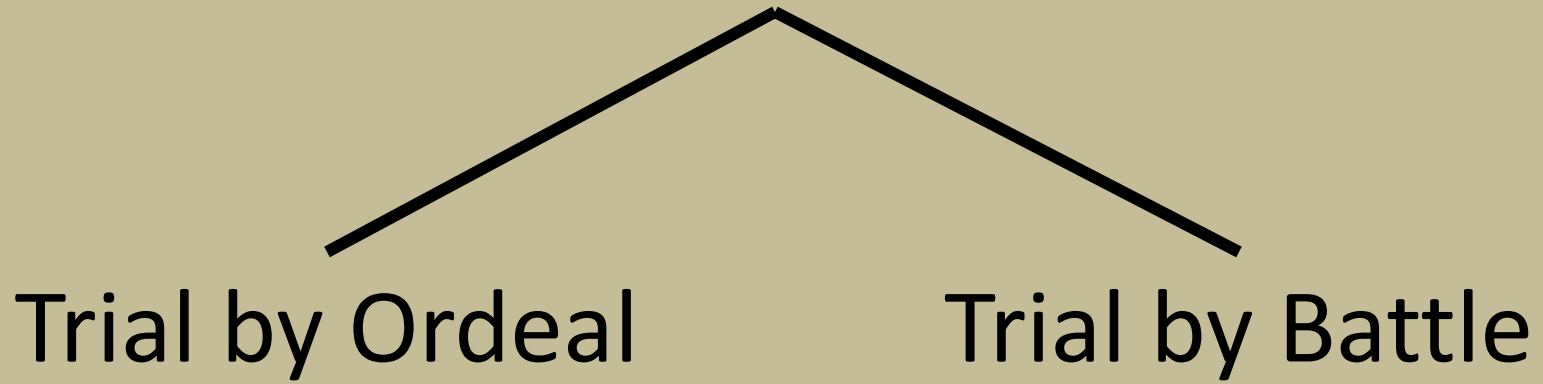
“Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest?”





Pope Alexander III

Forms of Trial



Courts

