

IN DEI NOMINE AMEN:

MEDIEVAL ECCLESIASTICAL ADMINISTRATION

[Slide 1: Title]

Hello and welcome to my talk 'In Dei Nomine Amen' (In the Name of God Amen, which is how many ecclesiastical documents, especially wills begin). In this presentation, I'm going to be looking at medieval ecclesiastical administration, which in England, existed alongside royal government administration, a topic on which my colleague, Jonathan Mackman, will be giving a separate presentation. The subject of my talk may be familiar to many of you, but I'm hoping that giving an overview of:

- Ecclesiastical Administrative Units and their personnel and
- The responsibilities of the chief officers, the Archbishops,

will help to set the registers of the medieval archbishops of York in context.

There are some materials to go with this presentation, which will be available on our website: a glossary of terms, in case any that I should use are unfamiliar; also, a list of the kinds of resources my colleagues and I find very useful when indexing the registers, and lastly, a very brief outline of how the various ecclesiastical institutions and individuals of the medieval church in England worked together, the last of which I will run through now.

[Slide 2: Table 1]

In this slide, I've made a table showing the hierarchy of ecclesiastical administrative units and the clergy that staffed them, working from the highest units, the two provinces of Canterbury and York, divided into dioceses, which are divided in turn into archdeaconries, made up of deaneries, which consist of groups of parishes, right down to the smallest units, chapelries and other smaller entities, within the parish. You could think of the hierarchy a little like a set of Russian dolls, with the province as the largest doll on the outside, and the smallest units as the last tiny doll in the inside.

[Slide 3: Table 2]

The second table shows the various types of institution within the administrative units and their personnel: the cathedrals and religious houses, the largest type of institution, at the top, the parish churches, the most common forms of places of worship in the middle, down to the very smallest types of unit, such as oratories, which might be found in a private house.

[Slide 4: Table 3]

Finally, in this table, I've put together a list of a few of the ways in which the laity or lay people, as opposed to the clergy, interacted with the church. I'm sure there are more, but these are some of the kinds of roles which, as well as those of the clergy, are reflected in the registers of medieval bishops and archbishops, and particularly in the registers of the archbishops of York on which we are working.

I'll now run through most of these various entities in a little more detail and explain the links between them, starting with both the ecclesiastical administrative units in England and also the personnel who presided over them.

[Slide 5: Two Archbishops]

At the top of the hierarchy of personnel in England and Wales, as I'm sure you'll know, are the archbishops of Canterbury and York, at present Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, seen here on the left, John Sentamu, in the middle, previously Archbishop of York, and on the right, Stephen Cottrell, currently archbishop of York following Dr Sentamu's retirement. Since the two archbishops also are or will be the bishops of their dioceses, Canterbury and

York respectively, they each have many responsibilities as bishop, with added powers as archbishop or chief bishop of their province, Canterbury taking precedence over York.

[Slide 6: Two Provinces]

Here are their provinces on the map, the boundary between them shown by a thin blue line running from the Humber on the east coast of Yorkshire, down from Yorkshire, round Nottinghamshire, then up along the western edge of Yorkshire, to the Ribble on the west coast of Lancashire. These are the provinces as they existed from the time after the Conquest and up to the time of Henry VIII, when he became head of the Church of England and carried out a reorganisation of the English dioceses. During the medieval period, the province of Canterbury, in the south, consisted of 14 dioceses, and the Province of York, in the north, of 3 dioceses: York, the area under the archbishop acting as bishop, and Durham, and Carlisle, each with their own bishop, subordinate to the archbishop of York.

[Slide 7: Northern Province: Three Dioceses]

Here is a close-up of those three dioceses (but we should ignore the red line which shows Henry VIII's changes), and you can see that the province covered

the whole of northern England, including parts of Lancashire and the old counties of Westmorland and Cumberland, as well as Nottinghamshire in the Midlands. The archbishop also had personal jurisdiction over Hexham in Northumberland, shown in yellow here, within the diocese of Durham, and over Churchdown in Gloucestershire (not shown here) which because of that personal jurisdiction are technically described as peculiars.

[Slide 8: Three Cathedrals]

Within these ecclesiastical administrative units, there may be a variety of places of worship, staffed by different bodies or individuals. Here are the three main churches of the northern province, York Minster, on the left, a secular cathedral, that is, one served by clergymen: the dean and chapter under the bishop, and Durham (top right) and Carlisle (bottom right), regular or monastic cathedrals, home to a community of monks and served by the prior and chapter, under the bishop acting as abbot. Other officials in the secular cathedrals, as you may know, were the precentor, in charge of the music and the choir; the chancellor, a legal expert; the treasurer, responsible for the cathedral treasures and property, and canons and prebendaries, the body of priests of the cathedral.

[Slide 9: Collegiate churches]

Other major churches in the province were the collegiate churches - a college in this sense being a body of priests living together - In Yorkshire, these were Beverley, seen here bottom right, and Ripon, on the left, and in Nottinghamshire, Southwell, top right, staffed by secular canons, and at Beverley, with a provost in charge of the church lands.

[Slide 10: Rievaulx Abbey]

Other institutions, as I'm sure you'll be aware, were the many religious houses in the northern province - this is just one of them, Rievaulx abbey - these houses often with very large abbey or priory churches in which the monks or nuns worshipped, under the head of the religious house, the abbot or prior or abbess or prioress; other male officers included the sub prior; the cellarer, in charge of provisions, and infirmarer, in charge of the sick, among many others, and obviously there would be similar female roles in houses of nuns. Unless exempt from the archbishop's jurisdiction, these houses were subject to him, in particular with regard to his visitations, which I'll mention again shortly, elections of heads of the houses and their obedience to him, also control of who entered the houses, and discipline of errant monks and nuns, and you may very well have heard of at least one wayward nun, Joan of Leeds, who

figured heavily in the publicity at the launch of this project, and has also become the star of a play in London.

[Slide 11: Diocese of York: Five Archdeaconries]

Going back to the dioceses, each of these was and still is divided into smaller units, archdeaconries, each presided over by an archdeacon, who acted under the bishop, and the diocese of York is made up of five of these: the archdeaconries of York, Cleveland and the East Riding, covering most of Yorkshire; the archdeaconry of Richmond, covering parts of Yorkshire, also Lancashire, Westmorland and Cumberland (not shown here). Richmond was the largest and wealthiest archdeaconry in the country, making the office of archdeacon a plum job, often for royal officials and various cardinals, frequently absentee Italians. Lastly, the archdeaconry of Nottingham, covering the county of Nottinghamshire. Each of these archdeaconries was in turn divided into several smaller units, deaneries or rural deaneries, which you can see here in the diocese of York, staffed by a rural dean, under the archdeacon.

[Slide 12: Map of Medieval parishes of York]

And each deanery is made up of a group of parishes - here you can see a map of all the parishes, shown by the locations of the churches in the medieval city of York, in the deanery of the City of York and archdeaconry of York.

[Slide 13: Parish churches]

And as regards places of worship, I expect you might be most familiar with the parish church - here are a few - not all in Yorkshire, I have to confess, but very typical in their structure! The parish is generally the smallest ecclesiastical administrative unit, presided over by a rector or vicar under the dean, but many also contained chapelries, presided over by a chaplain, which cover even smaller areas within it.

[Slide 14: Chantry]

And other smaller units might comprise chantries in a cathedral or church, where chaplains would say prayers for the dead,

[Slide 15: Chapels]

or a chapel in a private house, such as this one, for family and household worship,

[Slide 16: Oratories]

Or oratories also in private houses or churches such as this one, which has a room above it in which the priest or chaplain would have lived.

So having looked at the ecclesiastical administrative units and their personnel, and before we look at the responsibilities of the chief officer, the archbishop, we'll look at those of the bishop, because, as I mentioned before, the archbishop was also bishop of his own diocese, and the bishop's duties fall into three main areas.

[Slide 17: Bishop/Spiritual]

Firstly, the bishop was the spiritual head of the diocese, with responsibility for the religious life of everyone there, but with sole responsibility for the duties you can see here:

- The Confirmation of children (top left)
- The Ordination of priests (right)
- And the Dedication of churches (bottom left and centre at the top)

If he were unable to carry out important duties, such as these, then another bishop, a suffragan, could be commissioned to act for him.

The bishop would also preside over

- Diocesan Synods: meetings of the clergy of the whole diocese at which they would be consulted and instructed

And carry out the

- Bishop's Visitation: one of the most important instruments of his administration, to make inspections of the state of pastoral, judicial and administrative affairs within the diocese, and determining reforms. The bishop would carry out a primary visitation, within the first year after his enthronement, followed by visitations every three years thereafter.

[Slide 18: Bishop/Judicial]

Secondly, the bishop had judicial responsibilities focussed on the administration within the diocese of Canon law, that is, a legal system based on the canons, or rules, of the church. Ecclesiastical law was administered in several different types of court, of which the bishop's courts were the highest within the diocese, and the archbishop's, the highest in the province; in York, this was the Chancery Court, and in Canterbury, the Court of Arches. Seen here is the Consistory Court at Chester Cathedral, the only surviving ecclesiastical court room, dating from the mid 17th century.

[Slide 19: Cause Papers]

These courts dealt mainly with offences to do with morals, and for records of causes, that is, cases, in the Northern Province, see the York Cause Papers Project website <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/causepapers/> . The highest sanction enforced by the bishop's court was excommunication, that is, exclusion from the sacraments of the church and society, such as Christian burial, to be followed by repentance and penance, after which absolution could be given, and you'll find all those terms defined in the glossary I mentioned at the start.

[Slide 20: Bishop/Temporalities]

Thirdly, as an administrator, the bishop was ultimately responsible for the management of the lands of the bishopric, known as the temporalities, as opposed to the spiritualities, that is, the spiritual responsibilities, of the see. In the province of York, the archbishop was lord of several manors and lordships and had more than 20 places of residence, such as the archbishop's palace at Bishopthorpe near York, and Cawood castle, seen here, all of which would be managed for their income and which would also obviously incur expenses of the household, maintenance and payment of officers, such as the steward of the lands of the bishopric, and his subordinate bailiffs.

[Slide 21: Papal authority]

Most of the rights and responsibilities of a bishop also applied to the two archbishops, but there were many areas where the duties of the archbishops were added to those of their role as bishop. As well as that, the archbishops received their authority directly from the Pope, symbolised in the pallium, the Y-shaped ecclesiastical vestment that you can see here on the right. The archbishop's authority was not confirmed until he had received this from the Pope and professed obedience to him.

[Slide 22: Two Archbishops]

Of the main areas of the powers of each archbishop, some were to take charge in dioceses where there was no bishop for whatever reason, that is, during a vacancy of the see, and during that time, collate, or have the personal right to institute, clergy to benefices, that is, give them the 'cure of souls' or care of the spiritual life of their parishioners. The archbishop would also oversee all stages in the appointment of bishops, particularly receiving their oath of obedience, and would carry out visitations, as I mentioned before. He would also preside over his provincial council, which became known as Convocation, a meeting of all the higher clergy and heads of religious houses in the province to discuss ecclesiastical matters and especially taxation of the clergy. His extra legal responsibilities would be to exercise superior jurisdiction over bishops'

ecclesiastical courts, particularly in appeals, but also to hear cases in his own court. Lastly, he would prove testaments (that is, wills) of those of his province with 'notable goods' (goods over a certain value) in more than one diocese of the province.

Besides the officers already mentioned, the bishop was assisted by others, including the sequestrator, who had responsibilities for taking property into his custody in the name of the bishop if a church were vacant or in dispute. Also, the Vicar general, appointed under commission for a fixed term during the absence of the bishop, with wide powers.

The bishop also had officers in his household: clerks who would be University educated and who acted as advisors, agents and administrators, and other officers and sequestrators would often be chosen from them. Lesser clerks included notaries public and some who might be responsible for keeping the bishop's registers.

[Slide 23: All Gas and Gaiters]

The bishop might also have chaplains in his household, and I couldn't resist including a picture of one such chaplain from the dim and distant past, the

hapless Rev Mervyn Noote. He was one of the characters (seen here second left), from the first ever British TV ecclesiastical sitcom, which you may or may not remember, was aired long before the Vicar of Dibley or Rev. It was set in the fictional cathedral of St Oggs, always depicted by the twisted spire of Chesterfield parish church, which you can see on the right. The bishop's chaplains were often close relatives, acting as spiritual advisers and priests, staffing the bishop's chapel; with secretarial duties and perhaps also looking after the bishop's household.

So, having examined the responsibilities of the bishop and the archbishop, and their administration, and having gained an idea of the types of activities taking place, we can get an overview of the kind of business that might have been recorded in the Archbishops' Registers, which have been described as "the official record of [the archbishop's] administration", and these are the documents which we are examining in the Northern Way Project.

[Slide 24: Database]

Just before I go, I'd like to say something about the project's database:

[Slide 25: Picture Credits]

And here are the credits for the pictures I've used, some taken by myself, most from Wikipedia Commons.

[Slide 26: End Title]

So thank you very much for your attention and I hope that you will enjoy exploring the records yourselves.