

University Education of the Parochial Clergy in Medieval England:

The Lincoln Diocese, c.1300–c.1350

The need for an educated parochial clergy had been seen from early times and during the Middle Ages was articulated by popes, councils and generations of canonists. Uneducated parish priests, it was frequently said, were like the blind leading the blind, both in peril of falling into the pit. Various efforts were made to remedy this problem, culminating in 1298 with the decretal of Pope Boniface VIII *Cum ex eo*, which allowed non-priest rectors of parish churches to absent themselves for up to seven years to attend university, using the income from their parish as a kind of scholarship. When their studies were completed, they had to become priests within one year.

This study set out to examine how this decretal was implemented over the next fifty years in the diocese of Lincoln, the largest in England with nearly two thousand parishes. The bishops' registers, however, revealed a much wider practice. In addition to dispensations granted by virtue of *Cum ex eo*, a very substantial number of licences to study were also granted, particularly after 1320. These licences were for rectors who were already priests. There were, then, two types of permissions given to rectors of churches to be absent from their parishes for the purpose of university study: dispensations and licences.

Over twelve hundred rectors of Lincoln diocese received such permissions to study at university during this period. The vast majority studied in the Faculty of Arts at Oxford for about three years, returning then to the parochial ministry.

A comparison of Lincoln diocese and two other dioceses for parts of the same half-century shows that the granting of such permissions to study at university was not peculiar to Lincoln diocese and occurred elsewhere at similar rates. This is suggestive of a wider English phenomenon.

The Appendix lists the names of those rectors of parishes in the Lincoln diocese who went to university and the details for each rector/student.

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F. DONALD LOGAN



PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES

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In Memory of
Leonard E. Boyle, OP
and
A.B. Emden

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Preface

The year 1961, in a sense, gave rise to this book. In January of that year, as a young graduate student, I visited Oxford, where I had lunch at the Golden Cross with A.B. Emden. Later, in April, I was in Rome and called unannounced at San Clemente to meet Father Leonard Boyle.

Dr Emden's great three-volume Oxford register had recently appeared, and over lunch he told me stories about its beginnings during the war and how, after the war ended, he was able to visit episcopal archives, including St Paul's, where he worked in the transept of the cathedral, its roof still open in places to the sky. It was not long thereafter that I discovered – incredible as it seems – a copy of the Oxford register being remaindered. It has been my companion ever since. A correspondence with Dr Emden followed our meeting, and there were occasional meetings over tea at Dunstan Cottage in Old Headington and elsewhere. The Cambridge register soon followed, and in conversation he spoke of these two monuments of scholarship as 'BRUC' and 'BRUO': The register of university students that appears here in the appendix is offered as a supplement to his registers and as a very small repayment to Dr Emden for one of the greatest achievements of medieval scholarship in recent memory.

Meeting Leonard Boyle in Rome was fortuitous. A fellow student, knowing I was going to Rome, told me about Father Boyle and that I should meet him while I was in Rome. With the presumption of youth – what else could explain it? – I called in to San Clemente without prior notice and asked for Father Boyle. Out from the cloister came this white-robed friar with a welcoming smile on his face. Our friendship began from there. When I returned to Toronto, he was then professor at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. He assisted me with my doctoral thesis and with countless other matters thereafter. I was greatly intrigued by his article on the papal decree *Cum ex eo*, which appeared in 1962 in *Mediaeval Studies*. He brought to the attention of the scholarly world the provision of Pope Boniface VIII that allowed young men, rectors of churches but not yet priests, to attend university. I often wondered how this provision worked out in practice, but it was not till many decades later – in a new century and new millennium – that I was able to turn my attention to answering that question. I chose the large diocese of Lincoln, which extended from the Humber to the Thames and had nearly two thousand parishes. The research revealed that in addition to the *Cum ex eo* procedure there was a parallel procedure which allowed a considerable number of rectors of

churches who were already priests to attend university. These two types of permissions to study – dispensations to non-priest-rectors and licences to priest-rectors – are the subject of this study. This book would never have been written without the pioneering work of my friend Leonard Boyle.

It is a great pleasure to be able to dedicate this book to these two great scholars.

During the several years that this project has been underway I have received much generous help. Michael Clanchy encouraged it from the start and, along the way, has given wise advice. In an act of great kindness, Nicholas Bennett sent me a copy of his typescript of a significant part of Bishop Burghersh's registers; this later appeared in his exemplary edition in the Lincoln Record Society series in 2011, to which references can now be made. He has greatly assisted my work, and I shall be forever grateful. Every scholar working with bishops' registers will find invaluable the guide to these registers produced by David Smith. In addition, from his new home in Transylvania he offered to help me decipher difficult placenames and with enviable ease resolved my queries. I have learned a very great deal from William J. Courtenay, who was always generous with his vast knowledge of university education in the fourteenth century. H. Ansgar Kelly raised probing and valuable questions and encouraged this work. Michael Robson sent me several helpful references about related matters. The two anonymous readers for the press made excellent suggestions, the kind that every author is happy to receive. I am mindful that my debt to these scholars is large. And an enormous debt is owed to the remarkably skilled copy editor, Megan Jones, who helped to produce a much improved text.

Without the professional help of archivists and librarians a work of this sort would be impossible. The staffs at the Lincolnshire Archives Office and at Lambeth Palace Library made material available to me not only promptly, but cheerfully. A special word of thanks to Susan von Daum Tholl, director of the Emmanuel College Library in Boston, and to her staff, particularly Jennifer Woodall, for assisting in numerous ways, not least with help with microfilm readers and inter-library loans. For decades my academic home in London has been the Institute of Historical Research, where directors and librarians have provided a place *sans pareil* for scholarly historical research, for which one is always grateful.

Dr Emden in presenting his last Oxford register (for the first forty years of the sixteenth century) memorably said that 'octogenarians, like young men, are apt to be in a hurry'. May this octogenarian associate himself with that remark and express the hope that the work done here for Lincoln will be carried on by other scholars so that, in time, it may be possible to see England as a whole. *Foreat historia.*

F. Donald Logan
1 December 2013
Brookline, Massachusetts

Abbreviations

- Boyle, “Boniface VIII” Leonard E. Boyle, “The Constitution ‘Cum ex eo’ of Boniface VIII: Education of Parochial Clergy,” *Mediaeval Studies* 24 (1962): 263–302, reprinted as chapter 8 of *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education and Canon Law, 1200–1400* (London, 1981)
- BRUC A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge, 1963)
- BRUO A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1957–59)
- COD *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. J. Alberigo *et al.* (Basel, 1962)
- Compilatio prima ... quinta* *Quinque compilationes antiquae*, ed. E. Friedberg (Leipzig, 1882)
- Councils and Synods* *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, vol. 2: AD 1205–1313, ed. F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, 2 pts (Oxford, 1964)
- CPL *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, ed. W.H. Bliss *et al.* (London and Dublin, 1894–)
- Decretum Gratiani* Gratian, *Decretum Gratiani*, in *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. E.I. Richter and E. Friedberg, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1881)
- Hist. Univ. Oxf.* *The History of the University of Oxford*, gen. ed. T.H. Aston, 8 vols (Oxford, 1984–2000); vol. 1, *The Early Oxford Schools*, ed. J.I. Catto; vol. 2, *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. J.I. Catto and Ralph Evans
- LAO, Ep. Reg. Lincolnshire Archives Office, Episcopal Register
- Liber extra* Gregory IX, *Decretales*, in *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. E.I. Richter and E. Friedberg, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1881)
- Liber sextus* Boniface VIII, *Liber sextus*, in *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. E.I. Richter and E. Friedberg, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1881)
- Lics Burghersh LAO, Ep. Reg. V

ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 61 vols (Oxford, 2004)
Reg. Bek	LAO, Ep. Reg. VII
Reg. Dalderby	LAO, Ep. Reg. II
Reg. Gynwell	LAO, Ep. Reg. IX C
<i>Reg. Langton</i>	Walter Langton, <i>The Register of Walter Langton, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 1296–1321</i> , ed. J.B. Hughes, Canterbury and York Society 91 (2001), 97 (2007)
<i>Reg. Montacute</i>	Simon de Montacute, <i>Calendar of the Register of Simon de Montacute, Bishop of Worcester, 1334–1337</i> , ed. Roy Martin Haines, Worcestershire Historical Society, new series, 15 (1996)
<i>Reg. Sutton</i>	Oliver Sutton, <i>The Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton, 1280–1299</i> , ed. Rosalind M.T. Hill, 8 vols, Lincoln Record Society 39, 43, 48, 52, 60, 64, 69, 76 (1948–86)
<i>Regs Burghersh</i>	Henry Burghersh, <i>The Registers of Henry Burghersh, 1320–1342</i> , ed. Nicholas Bennett, Lincoln Record Society 87 (1999), 90 (2003), 101 (2011)
<i>Statuta antiqua</i>	<i>Statuta antiqua Universitatis Oxoniensis</i> , ed. Strickland Gibson (Oxford, 1931)
X	<i>Liber extra</i> . See above.

The traditional counties of England are referred to by their conventional abbreviations (e.g., Leics. for Leicestershire).