

Order from chaos

The Nine Orders of Angels Window (9)

For a long time no one knew what this window was about. The mystery was solved in 1965. We now know it is 'The Nine Orders of Angels'.

Pope Gregory I described the status of different types of angels in a sermon in 591.



Detail from the window

How was the mystery solved?

It was identified from a drawing in a sketch book by Henry Johnston found in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Johnston visited Yorkshire churches in 1670 to sketch tombstones and memorials. This and the Pricke of Conscience Window (4) are the only windows in his sketch books.



Look out for... the man wearing glasses in the bottom right panel. This is a very rare image of spectacles from the early 1400s.

What could it have been?

The window was in a poor condition. Some people thought it was just a jumble of fragments from other windows. Others assumed it showed a religious procession, with an angel, an archbishop and a pope. In the 1800s, a glass restorer suggested it showed the coronation of Edward IV in York in 1464.



Johnston's Sketch



All in order

The Nine Orders of Angels Window (9)

This window is arranged to reflect the hierarchy or orders of angels. A single angel on the left represents each group. They are watched by people from different walks of life.

Pope Gregory I said that angels were organised in three levels. Each level had three 'choirs' (groups).

How many wings do angels have?

The book of Isaiah in the Bible says that angels in the highest hierarchy have three pairs of wings. They are in the top row in this window. The next row has two pairs and the lower order angels have one pair.



The winged angels

Who else is shown here?

The people in the window are also ranked according to their status. High ranking officials are in the top row. Kings, a pope, an emperor and noblemen fill the second row. The last row shows ordinary people from merchants to working men and women.

What can you discover of ordinary people's lives in this window?

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|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Seraphim | 6. Powers |
| 2. Cherubim | 7. Virtues |
| 3. Thrones | 8. Archangels |
| 4. Dominations | 9. Angels |
| 5. Principalities | |



Detail from the window

