

been confined for five months in a prison, eleven by eighteen feet, built on the deck of the *Pandora*, where they were manacled hand and foot with minimal light and air. Only a guard, acting against orders by throwing them a key, saved them from drowning.

And if all this were not enough, Bligh in August 1806 arrived as governor of New South Wales and was deposed and placed under house arrest seventeen months later—on the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the colony. A little later in the nineteenth century, the settlement on Pitcairn Island was discovered. All the mutineers, except one, John Adams, were dead and the community was thriving, ruled over by Adams as a benevolent Christian patriarch.

Such a story could not be invented. No wonder there have been hundreds of books and articles, as well as documentaries and five motion pictures, all retelling this story with varying degrees of accuracy. The story of the early years of Sydney, with particular emphasis on the acute shortages of food, is only a partial account of these years and there are some troubling inaccuracies. For example, Preston continues the now refuted view that the convict hulks on the Thames were overcrowded and the inhabitants ill-fed.

The Bryants' great escape was a desperate attempt to leave the starving colony and begin a new life. Mary and her husband, William, their two children, Charlotte and Emanuel, and seven other convicts stole the governor's cutter and headed north. After enduring gales, starvation and attacks by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, they reached Kupang in Timor. They were shipped back to England in irons. William Bryant, the two children, and three of the remaining convicts did not survive the voyage. Mary Bryant and the other four convicts reached England and were committed to Newgate prison. Mary's story attracted the interest of James Boswell, the lawyer and celebrated biographer of Samuel Johnson, who used his influence to obtain pardons for her and her companions. He also arranged an annuity for Mary. She then disappeared from view.

This tale has also been told before, and though it is related to the Bligh story because of the similar long voyage in an open boat (and, in fact, Bligh admired the Bryants' skills), there does not seem much reason why it is told again here. However, Preston has done her research, and while nothing new is added to previous writings, her book provides a clear, accurate, and engrossing account of this perennially popular story.

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ALEXANDER RUSSELL. *Conciliarism and Heresy in Fifteenth-Century England: Collective Authority in the Age of the General Councils*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th Series, 105. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. 223. \$99.99 (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2018.15

Alexander Russell's *Conciliarism and Heresy* joins a wave of recent Anglophone scholarship on the fifteenth-century general councils, though its attention to specifically English conciliar interest makes it one of only a few studies on the subject to appear since Margaret Harvey, C. M. D. Crowder, E. F. Jacob, and A. N. E. D. Schofield published their foundational work between the 1950s and 1970s. Russell refines or refutes the claims of these historians in particular, but his project also has different aims; rather than attending primarily to English representation at the councils (Constance and Basel in particular)—and instead of focusing on their significance for religious reform or the history of political thought—Russell argues that the communitarian theories that the councils helped to crystallize were

the products of more general patterns of communal government throughout Europe, including England.

In chapter 1, Russell argues that the English were not only interested but enthusiastic about their participation in the councils and that they saw in these gatherings opportunities both to reform the church and protect English domestic interests. Russell contends that claims to the contrary mistake the eventual failure of the conciliar project for the perspective of its English participants at the time, whose apparently noncommittal attitude toward Basel in particular suggests a tacit acknowledgment that the councils must inevitably fail. To counter this assumption, Russell enlists other kinds of evidence, such as efforts by English officials like Archbishop Chichele to prevent the work of Constance from coming to a close, using the fact of unfinished business to gain leverage over the newly-elected Pope Martin V. Russell reads this and other similar cases in terms of a “sense of possibility” among the English (28).

In chapter 2 he turns to another point of intersection between the councils and broader communities in Western Christendom, suggesting that widespread charges of heresy in the period stemmed from clerical responses to an increase in lay involvement in what had once been more exclusively clerical concerns. Russell rightly points out that debates at the councils took place against the backdrop of developments in popular devotion. He highlights three points of engagement of the council fathers with matters of lay concern: the regulation of Eucharistic practice, the debates with the Hussites, particularly at Basel, and controversy surrounding the canonization of St. Bridget. Disputations on these issues reveal a concern among council fathers to both regulate and foster lay devotion.

Russell explicitly takes up the theme of “collective culture” in the third chapter (86), where practices of majority voting and other means of corporate decision making at Constance and Basel are shown not to have been anomalous or revolutionary (as has often been asserted), but applications of communitarian administration that were widespread in European government and administration of the church. This argument proceeds by analogy, whereby procedures of collective decision making at Constance are compared to those found in smaller-scale forms of government in England. Russell concludes that English acceptance of policies at Constance stemmed from their familiarity with similar forms of collective government at home.

In chapter 4 Russell revisits the charge of English indifference in endorsing conciliarism. It argues that the English struggle to combat Wycliffism at home complicated English ability to openly endorse the conciliar correction of papal abuses. The English recognized that the arguments of papal apologists, who associated conciliarism with sedition that was likewise a threat to secular monarchs, bore uncomfortable resemblance to Wycliffite positions about resistance to erring churchmen. The significant absence of English commentary on conciliarist theory thus makes sense: given their condemnation of Wyclif’s positions, drawing attention to English involvement in the deposition of popes could appear to be troublingly inconsistent.

English hesitation about openly supporting conciliar theories of resistance helps to explain their more explicit endorsement of conciliarist communitarianism, the subject of chapter 5. In accepting the councils’ claims to represent the universal church, the English could (and did) then cite the councils in anti-heresy campaigns. Heretics were shown to stand apart from the community whose membership included the majority of all believers. Thus, the heterogeneity of the conciliar decision-making body was not absolute; the council could discipline those who rejected its representative authority.

Conciliarism and Heresy offers fresh and sensible perspectives on English involvement in the fifteenth-century general councils, perhaps the most important of which is to resist a priori assumptions about English apathy or pessimism towards the conciliar endeavor. One of Russell’s most valuable contributions is to show how local or national circumstances can

determine acceptable positions or deliberate silences on the part of English representatives in conciliar debates. Of course, as Russell acknowledges, an argument for English enthusiasm is difficult to prove, given the scarcity of records or explicit commentary. At the very least, however, Russell convincingly argues that the English were willing and concerned participants in the project.

Russell's subject is of course vast, and so a judicious selection of focal points is essential. Even so, one wonders if his treatment of the very significant English involvement in the prosecutions of Wycliffite and Hussite positions and personages at Constance and Basel—even aside from their significance for the history of religious reform, which is not his subject—is perhaps cursory. Additionally, at certain points in the book, the English seem to be inexplicably missing, while at others extrapolation from the English context to conciliar practice seems to leave out the rest of Europe. Again, one should not expect an exhaustive study of conciliarist interest in all parts of Latin Christendom; but even so, there are points where arguments for situating the councils within a more widespread context of collective government in Europe seem to rest on evidence from England alone, so slightly more could be done to show that England was representative. These points of criticism aside, Russell's monograph is a remarkable contribution, providing a generous and reliable resource for scholars of conciliarism, and important correctives to previous assessments. *Conciliarism and Heresy* will stand out as an influential study for years to come.

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MICHAEL STAUNTON. *The Historians of Angevin England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 402. \$100.00 (cloth).
 doi: 10.1017/jbr.2018.16

The late twelfth and early thirteenth century has long been recognized as the golden age of medieval English historiography, and in his new book Michael Staunton sets out to understand the purpose and mentalities of nine historians who made this age of history writing so important. Although he acknowledges that other histories were written, Staunton argues that the works of the nine historians he discusses best reveal the literary brilliance of the period and contemporary attitudes toward history writing. These attitudes were, for Staunton, shaped by the very dynamism of the period. These historians lived in an exciting time in English history that inspired them to write about their own times rather than ancient or earlier medieval history. As a result, as Staunton clearly reveals, their historical works provide important insights into ideas about kingship, family ties, government, the Crusades, and heretics and Jews, as well as offering a narrative of the various Angevin kings who dominated the era.

The book is organized into two main sections of eighteen chapters, including an introduction and conclusion. In the first part Staunton introduces the nine historians who wrote about English history at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century and outlines the character of history writing during that time. Staunton begins this section by exploring what these historians wrote about and what motivated them to do so, arguing that the exciting nature of the times and individuals living then as well as literary changes caused these writers to focus on their own period. It was, however, the historians themselves who were essential in writing about the era, and the main focus of part one is on those writers. Four of the historians—Roger of Howden, Ralph of Diceto, William of Newburgh, and Gerald of Wales—are