Andrew E. Larsen. *The School of Heretics: Academic Condemnation at the University of Oxford, 1277–1409*.

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There is evidence of teaching at Oxford as early as 1100 or so, but, in his excellent survey of various kinds of censures recorded at the university in the Middle Ages, Andrew Larsen finds no report of any such until 1277, when thirty propositions in grammar, logic, and natural philosophy were censured, and a somewhat different list in 1284. In 1285 a Dominican friar was condemned for holding Thomistic positions, and in 1315 eight Scotist propositions were condemned. In 1323–24 William Ockham had to explain himself on "relations," and in 1358 an Augustinian friar, John Kedrington, was censured for positions on clerical property (*dominium*) and for calling the university a *gymnasium hereticorum*. Next comes the quarrel between the Benedictine Uthred Boldon and the Dominican William Jordan on questions of grace and salvation; both were silenced in 1368.

The longest chapter of the book deals with John Wyclif, starting with Wyclif's report that a Franciscan friar in the mid 1370s was forced to recant a position concerning church endowments. In 1377, Oxford responded to Pope Gregory XI's condemnation of Wyclif's propositions by declaring them merely ill-sounding and not erroneous; but in 1381 two of his positions were declared erroneous, without naming Wyclif. In 1382, Archbishop Courtenay convened a committee

at Blackfriars in London that condemned twenty-four Wycliffian propositions, also without naming Wyclif. After some resistance at Oxford, the condemned articles were publicized there, but Wyclif had already withdrawn to his rectory at Lutterworth, where he died in peace in 1384.

Next comes the prosecution of Wyclif's followers at Blackfriars, notably Philip Repingdon, Nicholas Hereford, and John Aston. Larsen notes the unusual procedure that was followed: instead of being charged with having publicly held the proscribed articles, they were required to give their opinions about them, and were condemned when they agreed with them. In the Canterbury convocation held at Oxford in November of 1382, the Oxford chancellor brought heresy charges against the Cistercian Henry Crump and two friars but they were exonerated. Next we hear of Crump's condemnation on unspecified articles at Stamford in 1392.

Larsen does not take up the Canterbury convocation held at London in February of 1397, at which representatives from Oxford asked for the condemnation of eighteen Wycliffian propositions. The Canterbury clergy met at Oxford again in November of 1407 and passed anti-Wycliffite constitutions, the last of which dealt with the scandal attaching to Oxford University because of Lollard doctrines: it ordered all superiors to check every month for false doctrines. Larsen rightly doubts that this order was ever carried out, at least in a systematic way. It is remarkable that for the whole of the fifteenth century he can produce only one report of a disciplinary proceeding for doctrinal deviation at Oxford, the case of Richard Fleming, which he places in 1409. Larsen here follows H. E. Salter (*Snappe's Formulary* [1924]), but in my view many of Salter's datings need revision. A proposition of Fleming's was condemned by an Oxford committee of masters elected to search out heresies; this could only have occurred in 1410. The formation of this committee was the university's response to Archbishop Arundel's order at the convocation of February–March 1410 to set up a panel to condemn heresies in Wyclif's works (recounted by Arundel in a letter clearly dated December 1410, Salter, 123n1). But by the time it produced its list of 267 Wycliffian errors early the next year (1411), Fleming himself was a member of the committee; and he went on to become bishop of Lincoln in 1419.

These case histories are followed by informative chapters on the authority of Oxford to condemn heresy, academic freedom at the university, and political factors that may have inspired or prevented condemnations. The upshot is that surprisingly little heresy was found at Oxford, and so Larsen was ill-advised to call his book *The School of Heretics*, after Kedrington's unfair gibe in 1357. It is true that the accusation might have been made with some truth in Wyclif's day, but only a handful of Oxford scholars were convicted of heresy at that time and most of them were rehabilitated. When Oxford set up its heresy committee in 1410, the stated goal was to take pains that the university be no longer justly suspected of heresy ("ne digne de cetero mater nostra universitas de errore vel heresi habeatur suspecta," Salter, 118), and that goal was clearly met.

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