After the completion of my work on Jean Gerson many years ago, I envisioned as my next research project a comprehensive study of the ecclesiological and reform thought of several major personalities associated with him at the University of Paris, namely, Pierre d’Ailly, Nicolas of Clamanges, Jean Courtecuisse, and Gerard Machet. Such an extensive study, I hoped, would show the diverse approaches toward the problems of ecclesiology and church reform operative at Paris at the time of the Great Schism and the Council of Constance. With the passage of time, the enormity of such a project gradually dawned on me and I eventually came to the realistic decision to concentrate on only one of the above personalities. Because of the close association of Pierre d’Ailly with Gerson as both mentor and personal friend, I decided to center my research on him. Given the extensiveness of d’Ailly’s ecclesiological and reform thought, I further restricted my research to three major dimensions of that thought, namely, his views on bishops, theologians, and canon lawyers. Although I eventually realized that each of these topics could easily merit a separate monograph, advancing age and increasing prudence strongly dictated that I remain with my previous goal.

Any project that has taken so much time to bring to completion is naturally indebted to a large number of institutions and persons. While it is impossible to enumerate all of these, I would like to thank the academic administrators at Fordham University for providing me with the series of faculty fellowships that made much of the research for and writing of the present work possible. I am also very much indebted to the Fordham University Library whose strength in the medieval field is such that I rarely lacked for anything in the realm of printed primary and secondary sources. To my fellow medievalists at Fordham and to Fordham’s Center for Medieval Studies, I also extend my gratitude for their support and interest in my work as well as for the highly personal and professional companionship which they have provided over these many years. To my graduate students I also owe much but I am especially grateful to Christopher Bellitto, Daniel La Corte, and
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Finally, I would like to conclude by listing three medievalists to whom, over these many years, I owe a special debt of gratitude for their inspiration, encouragement, and scholarly guidance. The first is the late Gerhart B. Ladner, my doctoral mentor at UCLA, who introduced me to the realm of reform thought and whose scholarly model I have tried to imitate but only at a distance. Secondly, the late Heiko A. Oberman who, while at the University of Tübingen and later at the University of Arizona at Tucson, continually encouraged me in my research on Gerson and d’Ailly. Thirdly, Gilbert Ouy, at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris, whose extensive knowledge of the manuscript tradition of the works of Gerson and d’Ailly has always been at my disposal in both a warmly personal and professional manner.

It is something of a cliché in the writing of prefaces to assume personal responsibility for all errors and shortcomings in the work being presented, and I do so now knowing well that in all clichés there is also much truth.

Louis B. Pascoe, S.J.
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