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*SPECIAL ISSUE*

THOSE WHO WORKED, THOSE WHO FOUGHT,  
AND THOSE WHO PRAYED  
IN HONOR OF JOEL T. ROSENTHAL

Edited by  
Caroline Barron and Amy Livingstone

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# Richard Caudray (ca. 1390–1458)

## Fifteenth-Century Churchman, Academic, and Ruthless Politician

Shannon McSheffrey  
*Concordia University*

IN JUNE 1452 A prominent churchman, academic, and former clerk of the king's council named Richard Caudray, aged about sixty, attacked "with swords, knives, bows, and arrows" a Bedfordshire property belonging to Ralph, Lord Cromwell—or at least that is what Cromwell alleged when he sued Caudray over the incident. Cromwell contended that Caudray and a band of armed men, acting on behalf of the Duke of Exeter, seized his property at Ampthill, Bedfordshire, and pillaged goods and chattels worth £1,000.<sup>1</sup> If, in one sense, this was business as usual in the middle years of the fifteenth century (an example of "the breakdown of Lancastrian government," as Simon Payling put it), Caudray's priestly participation in this act of thuggery is nonetheless striking, even if one assumes that Cromwell exaggerated Caudray's role in the violence. For several years, Caudray avoided facing these charges in court, but finally, in the summer of 1455, the law caught up with him, and he spent several months incarcerated awaiting proceedings on Cromwell's suit. We can imagine him asking himself, as he sat in the Fleet Prison, how he had arrived at such a point; this was not what one might have expected of a man of the cloth, especially one who was dean of one of the kingdom's most important ecclesiastical institutions, the collegiate church of St. Martin le Grand in London, and who had earlier in his life been clerk of the king's council and chancellor of Cambridge University.

We, of course, do not have full knowledge of the life Caudray might have looked back upon as he sat in the Fleet, but what we can glean from surviving records suggests an eventful career near—if not quite at—the centers of power through most of the Lancastrian regime. Judging by the first records of his university studies, Caudray was likely born in the 1380s

<sup>1</sup> The National Archives (hereafter TNA), CP 40/769, rot. 328; TNA, E 13/145B, rot. 78; S. J. Payling, "The Ampthill Dispute: A Study in Aristocratic Lawlessness and the Breakdown of Lancastrian Government," *The English Historical Review* 104, no. 413 (1989): 881–907. These may well have been spurious allegations at least as concerned Caudray himself, as discussed below.



or 1390s, and he died a few years after the Amptill incident, in 1458; he was thus perhaps just into his teens when Richard II was deposed; he came into early adulthood during Henry V's short reign; and he died not long before Henry VI lost his throne for the first time. Although he appears in records in many different contexts—from royal and ecclesiastical administration to the cutthroat aristocratic politics of Henry VI's reign—he has not been given much notice in histories of fifteenth-century England. In R. A. Griffiths's magisterial biography of Henry VI, for instance, he makes only a brief appearance in a footnote.<sup>2</sup> If Caudray is not quite prominent enough to merit an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, I imagine that Caudray himself would have found this lack of notoriety annoying, as he was an ambitious man. His early appointments and promotions suggest that as a young man he had been tapped for advancement, following the same path that for others had ended in bishoprics and chancellorships. In middle age, however, Caudray's progress stalled, just below the episcopacy. His second-rate career as a striving but not entirely successful ecclesiastic, willing to push the boundaries of acceptable conduct for a man in orders, tells us much about the brutal contests of mid-fifteenth-century England. This article is a contribution to Caudray's place in a prosopography of the fifteenth-century clergy. We can patch together from surviving records both his own life course—his professional advancement and the web of connections that helped him create his career—and the contexts of his standing in relation to his peers and his reactions to the tumultuous politics of the century.

Richard Caudray's origins are unclear. Later in life, he alluded in passing to having been raised (*educatus*) in the London mercer's guild, suggesting he was in his youth apprenticed in that trade in the metropolis.<sup>3</sup> If originally intended for life as a mercer, he evidently shifted paths towards a clerical career before he finished his apprenticeship. Early on he came under the patronage of Henry Chichele, then bishop of St. David's; Chichele came from a prominent London mercantile family himself and it was perhaps through London circles that Caudray came to the bishop's

<sup>2</sup> Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422–1461* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), 604. Note, however, that Griffiths does give him a paragraph in an essay, R. A. Griffiths, "Public and Private Bureaucracies in England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series* 30 (1980): 127.

<sup>3</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, COL/CC/01/01/003, Journals of the Court of Common Council, vol. 3, 1436–1442, fol. 65v.

attention.<sup>4</sup> The earliest record associated with Caudray was a papal dispensation in 1413 allowing him to pursue university studies while holding a benefice with cure of souls. Another similar dispensation of 1422 identifies him as “of noble birth,” but he was certainly not “noble” in the English sense. More likely he came from a minor gentry or mercantile family. The occasional glimpses of his family in later life suggest obscurity.<sup>5</sup>

When Henry Chichele was elevated to the archiepiscopal see at Canterbury in 1414, he brought his young protégé with him, and this provided Caudray entry into much more elevated circles. The young Caudray was appointed as scribe and notary public in the archbishop’s court of audience, taking up the same position Chichele himself had held as a young man.<sup>6</sup> By 1418, likely through the archbishop’s introduction, Caudray entered into royal service in Normandy, acting as scribe and notary for diplomatic negotiations with the French in November of that year. By early 1419 records describe him as “clerk of [the king’s] council” in Normandy. Through 1419 and 1420 Caudray served on several diplomatic missions, including the party dispatched to witness the oaths of the king and queen of France to the terms of the Treaty of Troyes in April 1420.<sup>7</sup>

Still a relatively young man—probably younger than thirty—Caudray had clearly impressed the king as well as the archbishop. In 1421, he became clerk of the king’s council at Westminster, a position he would hold for the following decade and a half. As A. L. Brown pointed out, Caudray was a new kind of council clerk, a Cambridge graduate (with, as we will see, continuing connections to academe) and a notary public, with experience in Archbishop Chichele’s bureaucracy before coming into the

<sup>4</sup> William Henry Bliss, Charles Johnson, and Jesse Alfred Twemlow, eds., *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Northern Ireland: Papal Letters* (London: HMSO/Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1893), 6:449; see also 7:264; Jeremy Catto, “Chichele, Henry (c.1362–1443),” in H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [ODNB].

<sup>5</sup> See The National Archives (TNA), C 1/17/1, an undated Chancery bill from Caudray involving marriage arrangements for his nephew, in which Caudray (presumably as the wealthy relative) settled £20 and a tenement in Smithfield on the couple, a significant amount for an ordinary person but nowhere near aristocratic levels.

<sup>6</sup> A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500 (BRUC)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 126–27; Catto, “Chichele, Henry.”

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Rymer, *Rymer’s Foedera with Syllabus* (London: British History Online, from edition 1704–1735, 2014), 9:645, 670–71, 749, 796–97, 813, 890, 910; A. L. Brown, *The Early History of the Clerkship of the Council* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1969), 18–20.

king's service. Brown hypothesized that Henry V appointed Caudray as clerk to the council to make the council's administration more efficient. Caudray was later in turn to use his administrative and political experience on the council to good effect when he returned to ecclesiastical administration.

Caudray's early success likely both reflected and bolstered his ambition, and he did not confine his activities to the clerkship of the council but also maintained his university ties. He received his Master's in 1422, and in 1431 he was appointed warden of King's Hall, Cambridge, a position he would maintain until 1448. Between 1433 and 1435 he served as chancellor of the university.<sup>8</sup> Caudray leveraged his knowledge and connections as clerk of the council in his university responsibilities: for instance, in 1435, he successfully petitioned the young king to grant to King's Hall a library of seventy-seven volumes that had been held in the royal treasury since 1422, when they had been seized at Meaux during the French war.<sup>9</sup> Caudray likely benefited in this situation both from understanding how to appeal to the young king (he emphasized that the young scholars in the hall were bereft of proper study materials) and from his insider knowledge of the war booty in the royal treasury. During his period as clerk, Caudray also amassed a comfortable range of ecclesiastical benefices, likely eventually becoming very wealthy from his various sources of income.<sup>10</sup>

Caudray's time as council clerk also brought him political and intellectual connections that would endure for the remainder of his life. It was probably while working for Henry V in Normandy that he first met John Shirley, a layman doing similar secretarial work for the Earl of Warwick in France. By the 1430s, Shirley operated a scriptorium and bookshop in the precinct of St. Bartholomew's Hospital just outside the London walls and had become central to London reading circles. As Caudray and Shirley were friends until Shirley's death in 1456, when Caudray served as one of the

<sup>8</sup> Emden, *BRUC to 1500*, 126–27; Brown, *Early History of the Clerkship*, 27–29. The chancellorship was a two-year appointment. Alan B. Cobban, *The Medieval English Universities: Oxford and Cambridge to c. 1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 73.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Clarke, ed., *The University and College Libraries of Cambridge* (London: British Academy, 2002), 352; Kathryn M. Veeman, "'Sende Pis Booke Ageyne Hoom to Shirley': John Shirley and the Circulation of Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century England" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2011), 31.

<sup>10</sup> See Emden, *BRUC to 1500*, 126–27, for Caudray's benefices. In the early 1450s he loaned the crown thousands of pounds: *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1446–52 (Henry VI, vol. 5)* (London: HMSO, 1909), 332, 472.

executors of Shirley's will, Caudray himself may have come into familiar contact with Shirley's London citizen friends who shared some of his intellectual interests. Amongst the books associated with Shirley is a manuscript of Vegetius's *De re militari* in French translation (now BL Royal MS 20 B.XV), which Shirley apparently gave or sold to Caudray, inscribing it "Merci Iesu Caudray."<sup>11</sup>

Through the early years of his professional life, Caudray developed networks in the highest levels of royal and ecclesiastical administration, nurtured a career in university administration, and became connected to circles of literate lay Londoners. In 1435, Caudray's career shifted course when, for reasons that are not clear, he ceased serving as clerk of the council. As Brown speculated, he may himself have chosen to leave the king's service, hoping to focus more on his ecclesiastical career.<sup>12</sup> It is also possible that his leaving the council was tied to another major career development around this time, as also around 1435 Caudray entered into the service of one of the magnates on the council, John Holland, Earl of Huntingdon and later Duke of Exeter. This began a bond with the Holland family that was to endure for the rest of Caudray's life. Caudray's association with the Hollands clearly benefited him immensely, giving him access to networks of influence, but it also drew him into the aristocratic quarrels in which the Hollands were deeply embedded in the middle decades of the fifteenth century.<sup>13</sup> From the 1430s until his death in 1458, Caudray was the most prominent churchman amongst the Hollands' affinity. John Holland entrusted Caudray with caring for his son and heir Henry while the boy and an entourage of bastard brothers and servants lived and studied at Caudray's college, King's Hall, Cambridge, between 1439 and 1442.<sup>14</sup> In 1446, when Henry was about sixteen, Caudray presided over a rushed and canonically dubious marriage between the Holland heir and the even younger Anne Plantagenet, daughter of the Duke of York.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Griffiths, "Shirley, John (c.1366–1456)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB), 2004; Veeman, "Sende Pis Booke," 29–30. See also the MS description in the BL catalogue: [www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=5836](http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=5836).

<sup>12</sup> Emden, *BRUC to 1500*, 126–27; Brown, *Early History of the Clerks*, 27–29.

<sup>13</sup> Michael M. N. Stansfield, "The Hollands, Dukes of Exeter, Earls of Kent and Huntingdon, 1352–1475" (DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1987), 224, 233, 239, 252, 291. On patronage relationships between clerics and laymen, see Derek G. Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 93–94.

<sup>14</sup> Alan B. Cobban, *The King's Hall Within the University of Cambridge in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 75–76.

<sup>15</sup> Stansfield, "Hollands," 224; the marriage was dissolved for consanguinity, a process that involved testimony about Caudray's solemnization. *Ibid.*, 252.

Caudray acted as executor of the will of John Holland, by then Duke of Exeter, in 1447, and when Holland's heir Henry succeeded to his father's ducal title Caudray remained his close adviser.

The third major shift in Caudray's life in 1435 was his appointment by the king as dean of St. Martin le Grand, a collegiate church within the walls of the City of London, just north of St. Paul's Cathedral.<sup>16</sup> This appointment may have been a consolation prize for his loss of the clerkship of the council (if his departure was involuntary), or alternatively it could have been a sign of promotion, putting Caudray into a holding pattern awaiting even more significant ecclesiastical preferment. For his immediate predecessors as dean, the position had been a stepping stone to bishoprics, archbishoprics, and chancellorships. John Stafford, dean 1422–1425, went on to become bishop of Bath and Wells and later Archbishop of Canterbury and chancellor; William Alnwick, who held the position in 1426, resigned it that same year to become bishop of Norwich and later bishop of Lincoln; and Thomas Bourchier, dean 1427–1435, later became bishop of Worcester, and then archbishop of Canterbury, cardinal, and chancellor.<sup>17</sup> His fifteenth-century successors as dean, Robert Stillington (later bishop of Bath and Wells) and James Stanley (later bishop of Ely), likewise moved on to higher ecclesiastical offices.<sup>18</sup> Caudray thus may have been given the deanship in the expectation that he would be promoted to an episcopal see if one became vacant. Although his antecedents were very different from the aristocratic Bourchier's, his early life had many commonalities with Stafford's and Alnwick's, and also with his patron Chichele's, all of whose successes depended on talent rather than high birth. As it turned out, however, for Caudray the appointment to the deanery at St. Martin's was the end of the road rather than a way station. Caudray remained dean of St. Martin le Grand for over two decades, until his death in 1458, a position he held along with the position of warden of King's Hall at Cambridge (until 1448) and a large collection of prebendaries and other benefices.

<sup>16</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1429–36 (Henry VI, vol. 2)* (Norwich, UK: HMSO, 1907), 489.

<sup>17</sup> Minnie Reddan, "The Collegiate Church of St. Martin Le Grand," in *The Religious Houses of London and Middlesex*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Matthew Davies, Victoria County Histories (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2007), 206; R. G. Davies, "Stafford, John (d. 1452)," *ODNB*, 2004; Rosemary C. E. Hayes, "Alnwick, William (d. 1449)," *ODNB*, 2004; Clark, "Bourchier, Thomas," *ODNB*, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Hicks, "Stillington, Robert," *ODNB*; D. G. Newcombe, "Stanley, James," *ODNB*.

For the last two decades of his life, Caudray focused on three arenas of activity: his college responsibilities at King's Hall, Cambridge; his responsibilities to the Holland family; and his deanship at St. Martin le Grand. In the relatively scant references to Caudray's life, the latter has been given little attention; Brown, for instance, noted only in passing in a footnote his appointment to the deanery, assuming that Caudray's attention was focused on the university after 1435.<sup>19</sup> The records of St. Martin's itself, however, make it clear that Caudray took on the decanal position as more than a sinecure. His long term as dean—and perhaps his (immediate or eventual) realization that no episcopacy was forthcoming and that thus he did not need to keep himself out of contentious political quarrels—meant that he was able to work hard to promote the fortunes of the collegiate church. He was remembered for several generations as the most important figure in the collegiate church's history, even though other deans went on to hold more prestigious positions. His renown as dean reflected Caudray's signal role in the 1440s and 1450s in building St. Martin le Grand, both literally through the construction of walls and tenements, and figuratively in his efforts to establish the liberties and privileges of the church.

From the 1410s to the dissolution of St. Martin le Grand in 1542, the City and St. Martin's engaged in an on-again, off-again conflict over the collegiate church's rights and liberties, a dispute that involved many different legal actions, formal and informal appeals to the crown, and occasional violent struggles.<sup>20</sup> The quarrels involved both St. Martin le Grand's claims to offer sanctuary privilege to felons, debtors, and traitors, and the more prosaic (but likely more fundamental, as far as the City was concerned) economic independence of the church's precinct, which allowed artisans to work outside the regulation of the London guilds. Upon his appointment to the deanery in 1435, Caudray's brief was to argue hard, and summon his political resources, for St. Martin's privileges. Until the end of the 1530s, St. Martin's had the upper hand in conflicts with the City, a legacy of Caudray's hard work in the middle decades of the fifteenth century.

Through a number of direct confrontations—which generally started when the sheriff of London seized and arrested offenders who had taken sanctuary in St. Martin's—Caudray displayed legal virtuosity

<sup>19</sup> Brown, *Early History of the Clerks*, 28n.

<sup>20</sup> See for a more detailed examination of these conflicts, Shannon McSheffrey, *Seeking Sanctuary: Crime, Mercy, and Politics in English Courts, 1400–1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 58–82.

and a remarkably agile political *savoir faire*. In his first major set-to with the City in 1440, for instance, he put his political experience to good use when he outmaneuvered the mayor and alderman with a much subtler approach than they displayed. As the conflict unfolded, Caudray personally appealed to the eighteen-year-old Henry VI, employing to excellent effect his prior relationship with the young king. He managed to persuade Henry to appoint his patron, John Holland, then Earl of Huntingdon, as an ostensible “mediator” in the case. Not surprisingly, Caudray emerged victorious, with a signet letter from the king confirming clearly the rights and liberties of the collegiate church, including sanctuary. This did not settle the matter, as the City continued to pursue test cases, including two difficult treason cases in the 1450s as the kingdom descended into civil war; even as traitors to Henry VI’s regime sheltered in its sanctuary, however, Caudray persuaded the pious king that its asylum must remain inviolate. Caudray’s advocacy for St. Martin le Grand involved both personal pleading with the king and his councilors and the crafting of written submissions, both for legal proceedings in royal courts and as petitions to the king and council. His long experience as a clerk showed in these submissions: they hit precisely the right tone of humility and obeisance to the royal will, especially in comparison to the City’s submissions, which implied not only its rule over St. Martin’s but its effective independence from the crown. Caudray also made an interesting linguistic choice for his submissions to the king; while the City of London’s petitions were written in a formal Latin, Caudray used English, still relatively rarely used for official documents in 1440 but which he likely knew from his personal knowledge that the young king preferred.<sup>21</sup> Caudray evidently thought carefully about language choice in his clerical work; he also made an interesting and significant choice as clerk of the king’s council to shift in recording the council minutes from French to Latin.<sup>22</sup>

Following the confirmation of the rights and privileges of St. Martin’s as the outcome of the 1440 quarrel, Caudray compiled a record of the submissions made by both sides into a register, contextualizing the documents

<sup>21</sup> See the records of the conflicts in London, Westminster Abbey Library and Muniments, Muniment Book 5, *Registrum Collegii Sancti Martini Magni*, London, and on language, Gwilym Dodd, “The Rise of English, the Decline of French: Supplications to the English Crown, c. 1420–1450,” *Speculum* 86, no. 1 (2011): 129–30.

<sup>22</sup> Gwilym Dodd, “The Spread of English in the Records of Central Government, 1400–1430,” in *Vernacularity in England and Wales, c. 1300–1550*, ed. Elisabeth Salter and Helen Wicker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 265–66.

in a narrative frame that told the story of the dispute.<sup>23</sup> This is a fascinating account, compellingly told. Although Caudray's use of the cartulary or register genre was not especially innovative (many such books were produced by religious houses in the medieval period, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries<sup>24</sup>), he was a master of the form. Dean Caudray had in fact worked in the genre before: as clerk of the council—a “particularly inventive” one, as R. A. Griffiths comments<sup>25</sup>—Caudray instituted the compilation of council proceedings known as the “Book of the Council.” In this book Caudray collected material considered particularly significant from files the council dealt with, not simply copies of documents but edited and elaborated when necessary.<sup>26</sup> The skill with which Caudray told his narrative of the events of 1440 had thus been developed over a long experience shaping accounts and making sure they conveyed the right message.

Caudray's skills as a writer and even as a political strategist were consistent with his clerical training and experience. Although we have no direct evidence, we can infer that he used those same skills in his service to the Holland family, as devising both the technical and rhetorical bases of legal actions was an important aspect of aristocratic conflicts. It is especially likely that Henry Holland, who succeeded to the ducal title at the tender age of seventeen, relied extensively on Caudray, under whose guardianship he had spent several years at King's Hall as a young boy.

Henry Holland not only had the misfortune to assume his ducal title in a complex and cutthroat political environment as the realm descended into civil war, but he also faced a contradiction between his elevated title and the relative poverty of his lands and income. In the early 1450s, the young duke was eager to acquire landed estates commensurate with his position, and accordingly he began to pursue—perhaps with Caudray's

<sup>23</sup> Registrum. The manuscript is described and a table of contents listed in Lawrence E. Tanner, “Nature and Use of Westminster Abbey Muniments,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fourth Series* 19 (1936): 80.

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Philippe Genet, “Cartulaires anglais du moyen âge,” in *Les cartulaires*, ed. Olivier Guyotjeannin, Laurent Morelle, and Michel Parisse (Paris: École des chartes/H. Champion, 1993), 343–61. See also similar kinds of records produced by secular institutions, such as the City of London's own 1419 *Liber Albus*: W. Kellaway, “John Carpenter's Liber Albus,” *Guildhall Studies in London History* 3, no. 2 (1978): 67–84.

<sup>25</sup> Griffiths, “Public and Private Bureaucracies,” 127.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, *Early History of the Clerkship*, 21–27. The Book, now in the British Library (Cotton Cleopatra F III and F IV), is printed in Nicholas Harris Nicolas, ed., *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England* (London: G. Eyre and A. Spottiswoode, 1835), vols. 2 and 3.



advice—legally questionable tactics to acquire property. He identified Ralph, Lord Cromwell's substantial properties at Ampthill in Bedfordshire as his target, and the result was the armed seizure of Cromwell's estate in early June 1452 with which this essay began. The accusation in lawsuits that Caudray himself had wielded arms in the raid at Ampthill must be treated with some skepticism: Caudray was by this time aged sixty or more, and it seems unlikely that Exeter would employ an elderly priest without extensive military experience in an armed assault when he had a household full of armed retainers at his command. The accusation of violence could easily have been an oblique attack on Caudray as the tactical mind behind Exeter's schemes in the early 1450s, rather than as active participant in an armed raid. One can infer Caudray's hand in some of the legal maneuvers Exeter undertook in the months that followed his seizure of the Ampthill property; especially reminiscent of Caudray's *modus operandi* were elaborate and multipronged treason accusations against Exeter's enemies, apparently designed to deflect attention from the Ampthill seizure.<sup>27</sup>

Caudray was able for several years to avoid summonses to the court of Common Pleas to answer Cromwell's suit over the trespass, but when Cromwell shifted courts to Exchequer, Caudray's stalling tactics stopped working. In the summer of 1455 Caudray was outlawed, arrested, and incarcerated in the Fleet Prison. Caudray sat for some months in the Fleet—his patron Exeter was unable to help him as he, too, was likely incarcerated during this time—before finding sureties in mid-October 1455.<sup>28</sup> Cromwell's lawsuits came to nothing as they were not pursued following his death in early 1456, but it must have been thoroughly humiliating for Caudray, as a prominent churchman, to spend several months languishing in the Fleet.

Caudray's time in prison over Exeter's foolish enterprise not only was (presumably) humiliating in itself, but also nearly undid two decades of hard work establishing St. Martin le Grand's rights. The mayor and aldermen of London must have been cheered by the opportunity that an imprisoned and disgraced dean of St. Martin le Grand presented them: perhaps in his absence they could finally reverse the string of decisions and ordinances endorsing the independent status of St. Martin's. Caudray's imprisonment was not the only factor working in the City's favour in the summer and early fall of 1455:

<sup>27</sup> Payling, "Ampthill Dispute," 887–89. Payling attributes these tactics to Exeter himself, but no doubt he relied heavily upon his more experienced advisers, chief amongst whom was Caudray.

<sup>28</sup> Stansfield, "The Hollands," 243, 239; Payling, "Ampthill Dispute"; Griffiths, *Reign of King Henry VI*, 604; TNA, E 13/145B, rot. 78.

the dean's usually staunch ally, Henry VI, was incapacitated by mental illness and had lost control of the reins of government. It is no surprise, then, that in September 1455 the City officials seized—or perhaps even manufactured—an opportunity to turn the tables and find a case that would result in a definitive declaration that St. Martin's had no liberty or sanctuary privileges. The London sheriffs went to the precinct to arrest seven thieves who had taken sanctuary. This precipitated an armed encounter between the sanctuary men and the sheriffs' servants that resulted in at least one bystander death before the thieves were taken into custody.<sup>29</sup> As had become normal by the mid-1450s, the seizure and imprisonment of the offenders from St. Martin's sanctuary was followed by a period of intense lobbying of the chancellor, acting for the king, by both the City and St. Martin's. In this uncertain political moment, the City covered its bases by additionally sending envoys to the Duke of York, then attempting to consolidate his protectorate.<sup>30</sup> Caudray followed the unfolding situation from the Fleet (the City's records indicate that he sent a letter to the mayor and aldermen concerning the matter),<sup>31</sup> but he was certainly not in a good position. The City pushed hard, bringing in several canon lawyers to make arguments challenging St. Martin's sanctuary privileges.<sup>32</sup> Given all the City's advantages at that moment, it must have been especially crushing that the mayor and aldermen were nonetheless unable to convince the chancellor to strip the accused thieves of their sanctuary status. The prisoners were thus returned to St. Martin's. Caudray was released from the Fleet in mid-October 1455 just as the situation was resolved, no doubt relieved.

A year and a half later, in February 1457, when Henry VI was once again lucid and at the helm of government, the sanctuary privileges of St. Martin's for felony, treason, and debt were confirmed under the king's great seal, in a set of regulations governing the admission and conduct of those who took the oath as sanctuary men. The regulations established in clear and uncertain terms precisely what Caudray had been fighting for from the time

<sup>29</sup> The records associated with this situation are TNA, KB 9/291, mm. 49–50; KB 27/791, rex m. 6; KB 27/796, rex m. 9; KB 29/88, mm. 13, 13d; LMA, COL/CC/01/01/005, Journals of the Court of Common Council, Journal 5, 1449–1455, fols. 263v–266r; Letter Book K, fol. 283v, transcribed in Reginald R. Sharpe, ed., *Calendar of Letter-Books, Letter Book K (1422–1460)* (London: J. E. Francis, 1911), 370–71. See for a more detailed discussion, McSheffrey, *Seeking Sanctuary*, 78–80.

<sup>30</sup> Journal 5, fol. 263v.

<sup>31</sup> Journal 5, fol. 266r.

<sup>32</sup> Journal 5, fol. 265r–266r.

he assumed the position of dean in 1435: that St. Martin's had an independent jurisdiction as a liberty and a sanctuary that was as great as any religious house in the land.<sup>33</sup>

Caudray died in 1458.<sup>34</sup> Through his considerable acumen and connections, he had built for himself a notable career in the worlds of ecclesiastical, academic, and royal administration. Entering royal service in the late 1410s he witnessed—and often participated in—the triumphs and potential of Henry V's victories in Normandy and the rough-and-tumble politics of the kingdom during the reign of Henry VI. In the last decades of his life, both as ecclesiastical administrator and as servant of the Holland dukes of Exeter, Caudray was a fighter as well as a cleric. Caudray's talents as an administrator—his strategic thinking and ability to craft persuasive written submissions in legal disputes—were the same tools that made him an effective political actor. His political canniness was especially useful in his long career (1435–1458) as dean of St. Martin le Grand. In conflicts with the City of London over the collegiate church's privileges, Caudray outmaneuvered the City many times, shrewdly calling upon his own personal knowledge of and relationship with the young Henry VI as well as his aristocratic patrons. For decades after his death, Londoners could see Caudray's name carved into a wall he built surrounding the precinct of St. Martin le Grand church, and rows of tenements in St. Martin's were still called “Dean Caudray's Rents” into the 1540s.<sup>35</sup> Caudray was not only shrewd; he could also be ruthless. His association with the Holland family shows him apparently entirely willing, despite his ecclesiastical status, to participate in the violent aspects of political action in this highly unstable time in English aristocratic life.

Caudray was almost certainly a complex and highly intelligent personality. We have no way of knowing whether he was content with his substantial successes. On the one hand, the intelligence and ambition the records of his life show suggest that seeing others proceed to bishoprics when he did not would likely have irked him. On the other hand, Caudray was not alone in making a significant and active career at this secondary tier of ecclesiastical administration using literary and legal skills; both his life course and the strategies he employed on behalf of his house were similar to those of several other clerics active in his lifetime. For example, Thomas Pype, the

<sup>33</sup> Cf. a different interpretation in Isobel Thornley, “The Destruction of Sanctuary,” in *Tudor Studies*, ed. R. W. Seton-Watson (London: Longmans, Green, & Company, 1924), 194–95.

<sup>34</sup> As far as I know, no will survives.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, STAC 2/23/266, m. 6; E 101/674/4, fol. 12r; WAM, MSS 13318, 13319.

controversial late fourteenth-century abbot of Stoneleigh, Warwickshire; John Wessington, prior of Durham from 1416 to 1446; John Neel, master of St. Anthony's Hospital in London; and John Wakeryng, master of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London all compiled rhetorically sophisticated cartularies and legal submissions to defend their houses, just as Caudray himself did.<sup>36</sup> When he died in 1458, then in his sixties, he may have been a bitter and disappointed man, frustrated that the early promise of high ecclesiastical office had not come to fruition, or he may have been satisfied that he had nonetheless accomplished a great deal.

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<sup>36</sup> R. H. Hilton, ed., *The Stoneleigh Leger Book*, Dugdale Society 24 (Oxford, 1960), xvii–xxi; Jean-Philippe Genet, “Cartulaires, registres et histoire: l'exemple anglais,” in *Le métier d'historien au moyen âge: études sur l'historiographie médiévale*, ed. Bernard Guenée (Paris, 1977), 118; R. B. Dobson, *Durham Priory, 1400–1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Anne F. Sutton “John Neel, 1420–63,” in *The Late Medieval English College and Its Context*, ed. Clive Burgess and Martin Heale (Woodbridge, UK: York Medieval Press, 2008), 211–30; Euan C. Roger, “Blakberd's Treasure: A Study in Fifteenth-Century Administration at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London,” in *Exploring the Evidence: Commemoration, Administration and the Economy*, ed. Linda Clark (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2014), 81–107.