
CONCLUSION

A delayed impact of Johannes de Turrecremata's thought on posterity can be discerned from the differing circulation and audience of his varied works. In his own lifetime, his devotional writings and polemical tracts were widely circulated in manuscript and, by his command, in print. Then and in the following decades, Turrecremata's major ecclesiological works, the *Summa de ecclesia* and *Commentarias super Decreto*, reached a far smaller public. Copies were transcribed for curialists like Nicholas Palmericus and Francesco della Rovere (Sixtus IV), while others made their way into the Vatican Library or into the hands of a few influential professors. Both of these works, which must have been expensive due to their bulk, only reached a wider audience in their sixteenth-century printed editions. In fact, an edition of the *Summa* was circulated by the Counter-Reformation papacy as a counterweight to the polemics of Protestant reformers.¹

Yet despite their initial limited circulation, Turrecremata's major works had a profound impact on the study of ecclesiology, the theory of the nature and government of the Church. Throughout the Middle Ages that branch of theology had been an ill-defined pursuit; most writings on the subject were scattered comments by canonists on legal texts or polemical tracts by such diverse figures as Moneta of Cremona, James of Viterbo, William of Ockham,

Marsilius of Padua, John Wycliff, Stanislav of Znojmo, and John Hus. (One wonders how well these authors, many of whom were extremists, reflected the ecclesiological ideas of their less adventurous brethren.) In Turrecremata's day, an authoritative synthesis of ecclesiological materials was much needed. The conciliar movement had raised a challenge to papal supremacy at the very time when the Husites rejected the fundamental principles of the medieval Church: obedience to all prelates, particularly the pope; the automatic nature of holy orders; and membership of sinners in the Church. John of Ragusa did write on these subjects, but his conciliarist leanings may have lost his works any chance of reaching a wide audience.² Thus, the role of synthesizer fell to Turrecremata, a papalist and reformer. Though not a brilliant thinker like Cusa, Turrecremata was an able polemicist and well versed in theology and law, with a reputation for probity and a zeal for orthodoxy. Turrecremata's critiques of conciliarism and Husitism, contained in expositions of basic doctrines acceptable to Rome, were very thorough, the most complete papalist polemics of the Conciliar Crisis.³

Turrecremata's authority was first cited by Laurentius Aretinus, who noted the appearance of the tract *Flores sententiarum*. The younger generation of papalists, whether reformers like Dominic de Dominicis or extremists like Arévalo,⁴ looked to Turrecremata with respect. Canonists like Felinus Sandaeus and Johannes Antonius de Sancto Georgio, reform-minded curialists like Jacobazzi and Gozzandini, Dominicans like Cajetan all carried Turrecremata's name and influence down to the Reformation era.⁵ North of the Alps, the most extreme papalists, men like Albertus Pighius, lost sight of Turrecremata's interest in reform, using his authority to buttress papalist arguments that many Germans must have thought were out of place when they looked at the career of a pontiff like Alexander VI." When the Reformation crisis erupted, the chief foes of Luther—Eck, Prierias, Politus, and Cajetan—all made use of Turrecremata's works in their apologetic writings, although only Cajetan showed any real comprehension of the issues involved. But Turrecremata's influence was not wholly negative, contributing as it did to the reform proposals presented to Paul III by Bartolomeo Guidiccioni.⁷

The impact of Turrecremata's thought proved far more creative in Spain than in Italy or Germany. The Spanish Dominicans, for whose reform Turrecremata had long labored, contributed to the Golden Age a vigorous Thomist school interested in practical as well as speculative questions whose leader, Francisco de Vitoria, educated such luminaries as Domingo de Soto, Melchior Cano, and Domingo Bañez.⁸ Bartolomé de las Casas found a place in their ranks, a secure place from which to continue his struggle in the defense of the rights of the American Indians. All of these luminaries made use of Turrecremata's major works without falling into slavish dependence. Their works, and those of the Augustinian theologian Alonso de la Vera Cruz, carried Turrecremata's fame to the New World.⁹ The Dominican cardinal's authority was also cited by Spanish jurists, including the polymath Antonio Augustín.¹⁰ The newborn Jesuit order adopted Turrecremata's works as part of its apologetic arsenal. Among his most zealous admirers were the second general of the Society of Jesus, Laiñez, and the great theologian Suárez.¹¹ Turrecremata's name was invoked frequently at the Council of Trent by Soto, Politus, and others; Laiñez even made a vain effort to persuade the council that Turrecremata's version of the mendicant doctrine of jurisdiction should be transformed into defined dogma. Indeed, the Tridentine coupling of zeal for orthodoxy with zeal for the reform of abuses may be seen, at least in part, as the fruit of Turrecremata's arduous labors.¹²

Turrecremata's ideas remained popular among the polemicists of the Counter-Reformation, the foremost of whom, Bellarmine, helped create the new theological science of ecclesiology.¹³ Parallel to this stream of his influence was one of criticism by Protestants and Gallican Catholics, Bishop Bossuet and Jean de Launoy among the most vocal critics.¹⁴

In a later age, when the First Vatican Council debated the possibility of defining the doctrine of papal infallibility, Turrecremata's name was invoked frequently in both affirmative and negative arguments. The first modern study of Turrecremata's life and works, Lederer's biography, was an offshoot of these arguments.¹⁵ Turrecremata's ideas also attracted the attention of the Anglican divine Edward

Pusey, who cited Turrecremata's rejection of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in attacking Pius IX's definition of that doctrine as an obstacle to Christian unity.¹⁶ Given all this impact during a span of four centuries, it is no more than justice to conclude that Turrecremata's zeal, probity, and unremitting labors have earned him a permanent place among the worthies of the Order of Preachers.¹⁷

But what of Turrecremata's reputation in our own century? Particularly, what is the lasting contribution of that first complete analysis of ecclesiology? In recent years, the Dominican cardinal's ecclesiology, with its strongly monarchic and juridical biases, has fallen into disfavor among Catholic theologians. Nonetheless, the study of his doctrines has remained a vital part of the present, lively inquiry into the historical roots of Roman Catholic ecclesiology.¹⁸ And now, in the closing decades of the present millenium, when the world of "*Pacem in terris*" is swept by new political, economic, social, and cultural changes—when tensions within the institutional church in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, and the relations of the ecclesiastical to the temporal sphere, have once again become matters of public interest, when the value of terms like indefectibility and infallibility is openly debated by theologians and historians, theology and ecclesiology have come into an arena wider than the scholar's study—there may be an unexpected relevance in seeing how Johannes de Turrecremata synthesized a coherent ecclesiology amid the problems of the turbulent conciliar age.