LIFE AND WORKS

At Three Councils: Serving Eugenius IV

A fortunate appointment in his twenty-eighth year thrust a young man who would become famous as Johannes de Turrecremata into the tug-of-war between councils and popes that was to dominate his era, his life, and his writings.

In October of 1416 Catherine of Lancaster, regent of Castile during the minority of her son Juan II, dispatched an embassy to the Council of Constance. Her decision to send envoys was the fruit of personal diplomacy by Sigismund of Luxemburg, king of the Romans, who persuaded her to renounce allegiance to Benedict XIII, Avignon claimant to the papal throne. Among the members of this embassy was Luis de Valladolid, Dominican provincial of Castile and Juan II’s confessor. Fray Luis’s travelling companion was a young friar named Juan de Torquemada, son of Alvaro de Torquemada, a Castilian nobleman in royal service; henceforth we shall call this friar, according to tradition, by the Latin version of his name. Born in Valladolid in 1388 at the height of the Schism, Johannes de Turrecremata had entered the Dominican convent of San Pablo de Valladolid while still an adolescent. And there, fortunately, Turrecremata’s exemplary conduct and keen mind came to the attention of his superiors, including Luis de Valladolid.

The ambassadors of Castile, including this young Dominican, reached Constance on March 30, 1417, and pre-
sented their credentials four days later. After prolonged negotiations, a Spanish nation was formed on equal footing with the others in the council, the French, German, English, and Italian nations. In June of 1417 Turrecremata was incorporated into the council as a junior member of the new Spanish nation and as such participated in the conclusion of its historic work. By that time the council was far advanced in its appointed tasks of reunification, reform, and defense of the faith. The fathers had already issued the decree *Haec sancta* with its claim that the council’s powers were given to it by Christ, had deposed the Pisan pope, John XXIII, and had accepted the resignation of the Roman claimant, Gregory XII. The assembly had also issued a posthumous condemnation of John Wyclif and sent John Hus to the stake. And on July 26, 1417, the council, now composed of representatives of all three obediences in the Schism, deposed Benedict XIII. Prolonged negotiations between the nations now produced an agreement that some reforms should be enacted before, and some after, the election of a new pope. Accordingly, on October 5, 1417, the assembly enacted five reform decrees, the most important of which, *Frequens*, provided for a regular series of general councils to oversee the government of the Church. A conclave composed of cardinals and representatives of the nations then elected Odo Colonna pope to reign over a reunited Christendom as Martin V. On March 20, 1418, a second series of reform decrees was enacted. In a closing session, on April 22, 1418, Pope Martin affirmed his acceptance of all decrees enacted *conciliariter* at Constance, without indicating explicitly whether this affirmation included *Haec sancta* and *Frequens*.

After the council adjourned, Turrecremata’s superiors sent him to the Dominican convent in Paris to study theology, a fitting preparation for his future career. At that time the University of Paris was the intellectual center of the conciliar movement. Among its masters and students were such future leaders of the Council of Basel as Thomas de Courcelles and the Dominican John of Ragusa. At the same university, Turrecremata acquired the erudition he would later use in opposition to that council. Turrecremata received his licentiate in theology on March 3, 1424, and became a master on February 16, 1425. He then returned
to Castile, where he served as prior of San Pablo de Valladolid and San Pedro Martir in Toledo; in this interval, he may also have been engaged in the teaching of theology.

Turrecremata served as prior until he was drawn once again, in a more important role, into the theater of great ecclesiastical events. In 1431 he represented the Castilian Dominicans at the order's general chapter in Lyons, where he helped the reforming party retain Master General Texier. Texier promptly named Turrecremata and the provincial of the observant Lombard congregation Johannes de Montenegro, along with John of Ragusa and four other friars, to represent the order at a forthcoming council.

The Council of Basel was the second ecclesiastical assembly called by Martin V on the timetable established in the decree *Frequens*. Despite grumbling about the failure of the preceding Council of Pavia-Siena to reform the Church, the momentous Council of Basel had an inauspicious beginning. It became viable only through a combination of circumstances: the decision of its president, Cardinal Cesarini, to open negotiations with the Hussites; an attempt by Martin V's successor, Eugenius IV, to transfer the assembly to Bologna for a later meeting with the Greeks; and the new pope's political misfortunes in Italy. Clerics of all ranks and representatives of princes frequented Basel in increasing numbers, discussing reform of the Church in head and members. France was one of the European powers quickest to fish these troubled waters; where France led, Castile followed. Juan II took advantage of Turrecremata's impending departure for Basel to name the friar his official observer at the council, a gesture that implied but a limited degree of approval. Thus, Turrecremata was primarily a royal envoy when he was incorporated into the Council of Basel on August 30, 1432. As we shall see, however, he never lost sight of his order's interests and soon recalled its traditional loyalty to the pope. Turrecremata began his residence in Basel by offering the fathers, on behalf of Juan II, a word of caution, unheeded by an assembly bent on forcing the pope to recognize its legitimate existence.

In the autumn of 1432 the council girded itself for action, assigning its chief work, not to the member nations, who were subject to control by the princes, but to four depu-
tations. These organs of the council, composed of members of each nation, were concerned with faith, peace, reform, and other matters. Membership in these deputations was open to all clerics, which delivered control into the hands of the lower clergy. The Council of Basel was the one exception in ecclesiastical history to the rule that prelates were the chief members of a general council, whatever the role of popes, princes, or clerics. Indeed, these lesser clergy would carry the Council of Basel to extremes that eventually disgraced the conciliar movement.

Under this novel regime, Turrecremata became a Spanish member of the reform deputation. In that role he took a hard line against corruption, even as he opposed council excesses. Turrecremata spoke for the deputation concerning the execution of reform decrees; he also served on special commissions on simony, liturgy, reunion with the Creeks, and the proposed canonization of Peter of Luxembourg. These actions reveal his complex attitude toward the council. As a royal agent, Turrecremata was supposed to discourage confrontation between council and pope, a duty consonant with a mendicant friar's interest in the privileges the pope had given the Dominicans and similar orders. Yet, his work on the reform deputation reveals a sincere interest in rooting abuses out of the ecclesiastical institution. At first Turrecremata hoped to balance out these interests. Such was the import of a sermon he delivered to the fathers on the feast of Saint Ambrose (December 7, 1432), exhorting them to combine zeal for reform with loyalty to Rome.

Turrecremata's preaching seems to have fallen on deaf ears. The council was already committed, with grudging papal approval, to a series of theological debates against the Hussites on their chief points of disagreement with Roman orthodoxy. The Bohemian delegation, including representatives of all factions in the Hussite movement, reached Basel on January 4, 1433. These delegates refused to take the oath of incorporation, which would have bound them to accept the council's decisions. Moreover, they stood their ground in debates with such Catholic champions as John of Ragusa and Juan Polemar. This failure of orthodoxy to vanquish heresy moved Turrecremata to intervene with more zeal than tact. On February 6, 1433, John of
Ragusa entered the hall of the Basel Dominican convent to answer the arguments on the eucharist put forward by John Rockycana, the Utraquist archbishop of Prague—and found there a table of reference works for the defense of orthodoxy, which Turrecremata had set up. Although the Catholic spokesman angrily ordered the table removed—it was a reminder of Ragusa’s own failures—this act established Turrecremata as a zealous defender of orthodoxy on whom the fathers might depend in difficult theological controversies. Failing to win over the Hussites by debating with them, the council entrusted the Bohemian question to skilled negotiators like Polemar, who might reach an accommodation with the moderate among the heretics.

The council then turned its attention to reform, in May of 1433 the reform deputation drafting a decree to curtail the role of the papacy in the selection of bishops and abbots. This was done in response to persistent criticism that the papacy had virtually abolished the ancient practice of electing the church’s prelates. The fathers decided that so important a measure required public discussion. On June 6, 1433, the reform deputation selected Turrecremata to attack the decree and one Dionysius Parisiensis to defend it. While the two prepared to debate, however, the decree was modified to win wider acceptance and the debate cancelled. Undaunted, Turrecremata produced a pamphlet in which he asserted that the council could reform the Church but not meddle with papal prerogatives, which would cause scandal. This attempt to moderate the council’s actions failed entirely; on July 13, 1433, the fathers enacted the proposed reform decree.

Meanwhile, Pope Eugenius had fallen on evil days. His unsuccessful war against the Colonna family, the kin of his predecessor, had cost him control of the papal states; Rome itself became unsafe for him. The weakened pope was forced to temporize with the growing power of the council, and as early as February of 1433, Eugenius offered the fathers limited powers to negotiate with the Hussites. He tried next to bribe King Sigismund, who once more wished to direct a general council, by crowning him emperor. Then, in the spring of 1433, Eugenius tried to take control of the council by replacing its president, Cesarini, with a committee led by the canonists Juan de Mella and Panor-
mitanus. But the fathers refused to let these legates share the presidency and, instead, threatened to depose the pope. Another legation, which was led by the archbishop of Taranto, was treated similarly. Eugenius found this combination of conciliar threats and local reverses too powerful to resist; in the bull *Dudum* (August 1, 1433) he conditionally approved the council's continuation and past acts. This did not satisfy the fathers, whom Cesarini barely restrained from further threats of deposition. Finally, Eugenius gave way entirely, issuing on December 14, 1433, a new version of *Dudum* that gave an unqualified approval to the acts of the council. (Eugenius was later to maintain that this was an invalid concession made under duress, and that he had mentally reserved his own rights from being affected by this concession.)

Eugenius then nominated a new committee of presidents for the council, including Cardinals Cesarini, Albergati, and Cervantes, as well as the archbishop of Taranto. Wary of this change of papal policy, the fathers decided that the presidents should take the oath of incorporation into the council: they expected the committee to bind itself, and the pope by implication, to obey the decrees of both the assembly and the Council of Constance; nor would they allow it to direct the council's proceedings in a manner favorable to the pope. In a speech delivered on February 18, 1434, Turrecremata denied that the legates' oath could bind the pope, whereas John of Segovia, a Salamanca theologian, defended the proposal. Segovia's arguments carried the day, and the presidents took the oath, raising the council's prestige to a new height. Turrecremata's policy of moderation was ruined; thereafter, he spoke out as a conscious apologist for the papacy. Eugenius rewarded Turrecremata by taking him into his service. In April of 1434 Turrecremata became master of the Sacred Palace, a post traditionally reserved for a Dominican, which involved oversight of preaching and studies at the papal court.

In his new capacity, Turrecremata still worked zealously within the council for the defense of the faith. First, an internal dispute in the Brielgetine order was appealed to pope and council. During the hearing, one faction charged the monks of Vadstena, the chief house of the order, with ascribing near-Scriptural authority to the revelations of
then, in June of 1435, the council took up the case of Agostino Favaroni, a leading light of the Augustinian order, who had been accused of falling into Hussite errors he had set out to refute. On behalf of the faith deputation, Cardinal d’Aleman asked Turrecremata to examine Favaroni’s works. While Turrecremata worked on these materials, the Italian nation asked for, and received, sole right to hear the case. Accordingly, Turrecremata delivered to the Italians a treatise in which he attacked Favaroni’s errors: on October 15, 1435, the Italian nation censured the Augustinian. Favaroni appealed this decision to Eugenius who, for once in harmony with the council, ignored his appeal.  

Turrecremata was drawn also into the long-standing debate on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Opposition to this doctrine had long been common among Dominicans, which often left them vulnerable to criticism by the Franciscans and the secular clergy. On December 8, 1435, the feast of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated at Basel; a theological controversy at once ensued, and on March 23, 1436, Cardinal d’Aleman found it necessary to launch a formal inquiry. Johannes de Romeyo, a secular cleric, and Petrus de Porqueri, a Franciscan, were appointed to defend the doctrine, with Johannes de Montenegro and Turrecremata as their opponents. In April the defense of the doctrine passed into the abler hands of John of Segovia, who vanquished Montenegro in open debate. Proceedings were then adjourned because Turrecremata had not completed his thorough study of the doctrine. In March of 1437, while the council was deeply involved in negotiations with the Hussites and the Greeks, Turrecremata finally announced that he was prepared to debate the Marian question. The presidents replied that the council was now too occupied with other business; so Turrecremata set aside the materials he had gathered. When the council defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception on
September 17, 1439, however, Turrecremata issued his tract as a counterblast. (John of Segovia later charged in his history of the council that his old opponent had attacked the doctrine of the Church; nevertheless, the Basel definition, issued while the council was already at war with the pope, was never accepted by theologians.)

A constant background to these events was the council’s continued negotiations with the Hussites. Juan Polemar and his colleagues discovered that the moderates were willing to concede many points if the council would permit communion under both species. These negotiations exacerbated divisions within the Hussite movement: extremists rejected all talk of compromise, while moderates responded vigorously. The end result was the battle of Lipany (May 30, 1434), in which the extremists, led by Prokop the Bald, were crushed. This victory allowed the moderates to negotiate more confidently with the Basel assembly. An agreement was finally reached at Iglau in Moravia (1436) that made the Utraquists an autonomous body within the Catholic Church. The laity was allowed the chalice, but other Hussite demands were watered down to the point of the innocuous. These compacts allowed Emperor Sigismund, whose reign had spanned the entire Hussite crisis, to regain the Bohemian throne for the last months of his life.

Nevertheless, the compacts did not solve all outstanding problems between Hussites and Catholics (nor were they solved by the eve of the Reformation), and negotiations between Utraquists and Basel continued.

Some of the council fathers, particularly the Dominicans, were unhappy with the concessions already made. They asked Turrecremata to refute the Utraquists’ errors concerning the eucharist. Turrecremata’s tract (completed in December of 1436) denied that it was necessary for the laity to receive communion under both species and fore-shadowed the reaction of the papacy to the compacts: an unswerving resistance to making any concessions to heretics. The papacy always sought to persuade the rulers of Bohemia to become orthodox and compel their subjects to do likewise.

On January 4, 1437, Turrecremata joined Juan Polemar in a formal condemnation of the errors of Peter Payne. New friction had developed in 1435 between pope and
council over reform and over negotiations with the Greeks for reunion of the universal Church. At first, reform dominated the assembly's proceedings. On January 22, 1435, regulations concerning clerical celibacy and judicial procedures were enacted; on June 9 liturgical abuses were censured. These decrees were consonant with Turrecremata's idea of reform. In June of 1435, however, the council abolished—without compensation—the elaborate system of fees which financed the Roman curia. Tension between pope and council mounted; factions began to form in Basel supporting or opposing the curtailment of papal power. Thus, in November of 1435, and again in March of 1436, Turrecremata persuaded the reform deputation to reject proposals which would have prevented appeals to Rome from decisions of councils. This was Turrecremata's one significant victory over the more radical element in the council. Yet, the main thrust of the proceedings remained antipapal. Thus, on March 25, 1436, the assembly enacted a thorough reorganization of the curia and papal elections. Turrecremata protested in vain the provision that required a pope-elect to swear that he would obey conciliar decrees. Turrecremata's tracts in this period had a querulous tone; for the first time he questioned the validity of the decree Haec sancta, in which he came to see the seeds of an ecclesiastical revolution.

The proceedings of the council became heated. Turrecremata's defense of the Roman see drew much criticism upon him and his order. This was one factor behind the secular clergy's renewal, in 1436, of the old demand that the friars be stripped of their privileges. Johannes de Montenegro was the chief spokesman of the friars in the ensuing debates; Turrecremata also spoke for the Dominicans tamquam vicarius generalis. One secular cleric, the Paris master John Beaupère, took the occasion to criticize Turrecremata personally. Such arguments made inevitable an irreconcilable rift in the Basel assembly.

The fatal rift was caused by negotiations with the Greeks over the site of a council of reunion. A majority of the fathers, led by Cardinal d'Aleman, wanted the Greeks to travel beyond the Alps; the minority, led by Cardinals Cesarini and Cervantes, was willing to go to Italy. Turrecremata became a member of the latter party, whose ideas
were agreeable to both the pope and the Greeks. The minority made its first unsuccessful proposal of an Italian site on December 5, 1436. The two factions began to quarrel openly, leading to a rupture on May 7, 1437, when each approved a decree approving contradictory sites for a council with the Greeks. When the Greeks reached agreement with Pope Eugenius on an Italian site, Cesarini and his supporters began to leave Basel to participate in the new council. Cesarini's decision to leave Basel appears to have been based upon two concerns: his desire to promote Christian unity and his dislike of the growing radicalism of the assembly over which he was presiding. This concern caused the cardinal to turn for advice to Turrecremata, who produced for him a collection of excerpts from the works of Aquinas that supported papal power against conciliar pretensions. Cesarini's receptiveness to papalist doctrines in this crucial period also points toward the revival of pro-papal ecclesiological doctrines in the mid-quattrocento, a revival whose chief figure would be Johannes de Turrecremata.

When the Greeks left Constantinople on November 27, 1437, on galleys chartered by the pope, Turrecremata had already left Basel to help Eugenius IV prepare for the new council. Turrecremata and Giovanni Aurispa, the papal secretary, were sent to Castile in an attempt to win the support of Juan II. Caught between the arguments of the pope's representatives and pressure from France, Juan II temporized, instructing his envoy at Basel, Rodrigo Sanchez de Arévalo, to work for peace between pope and council but refusing to send an official representative to the Council of Ferrara. When Turrecremata and Aurispa reached Ferrara to report to the pope, the new council had already opened in defiance of a prohibition issued at Basel. Turrecremata, never loath to defend Roman orthodoxy, joined Cesarini in the earliest debate of the council in defending the doctrine of Purgatory.

While the Greeks and Latins discussed doctrine at Ferrara, the Council of Basel discussed the deposition of Eugenius IV. Although the princes of Europe were displeased with the possibility of another schism, some of them, most notably Charles VII of France, chose neutrality in the struggle between pope and council in order to barter potential
adherence to either party for concessions of increased control of their local clergy. The result was a diplomatic struggle in which papal and conciliar legations argued their respective cases before assemblies of princes and notables at the same time that they conducted negotiations on the details of possible concordats. One of the first of these diplomatic battles took place before a meeting of the imperial Diet at Nuremberg in 1438. Eugenius sent Cardinal Albergati to Germany with a suite that included Turrecremata and Nicholas of Cusa. The Germans listened politely to speeches for both parties but refused to support either one. A meeting of the German princes was scheduled to be held at Frankfurt in March of 1439 in order to hold further discussions on the struggle between pope and council. Albergati, who was returning to Italy, left behind the archbishop of Taranto, Turrecremata, and the legist Giovanni Francesco di Capodalista to attend the meeting in Frankfurt. Turrecremata spent the winter in Nuremberg, turning a draft of an undelivered address into a pamphlet that foreshadowed the attack on conciliarism contained in his later works.

Plague broke out in Frankfurt, forcing the princes' meeting to move to Mainz. There it opened on March 21, 1439, without the presence of the papal legates, who remained at Nuremberg due to a dispute over their letters of safe conduct. Nicholas of Cusa represented the pope unofficially, replying to Basel's representative, John of Segovia. The ambassadors of France and Gastile urged that the electors help organize a council at a neutral site, which would absorb the rival assemblies and resolve their differences. The princes issued the Acceptatio of Mainz, which, like the French Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, accepted Basel's reform decrees without taking its part against the pope. By April, when the papal legates finally reached Mainz, most of the dignitaries had departed. In a public audience for those who remained, first Turrecremata, and then Capodalista pleaded the Eugenian cause. Turrecremata's brief speech described himself and his colleagues as representatives of the infallible pope. This was the first time that Turrecremata ever made this claim for the Roman pontiff; nor was such a papalist concept dear to his German listeners. Turrecremata's speech at Mainz therefore won
Eugenius no friends in that time of crisis. Disappointed, the legates returned to Italy. When in the spring of 1439 Turrecremata reached Florence, the new site of the council, negotiations for union had reached a critical stage. Debates over the doctrine of the Trinity had convinced Bessarion of Nicaea and Isidore of Kiev that the Greek and Latin Fathers were in substantial agreement on the doctrine of the Trinity. This resolved, as far as they were concerned, the old debate over the relationship of the Spirit with the Father and Son (the filioque controversy). Moreover, John VIII was eager to bring these negotiations to a successful conclusion; he needed Western aid to protect Constantinople from the Turks. A last set of debates on other issues was due to begin. Johannes de Montenegro, who had been the chief Dominican spokesman during Turrecremata’s absence, was selected to defend papal power. Turrecremata himself was selected to defend Latin eucharistic practices. When these debates were held on June 16 and June 18, 1439, the Latin spokesmen ably upheld the practices of the Roman Church. Finally the Greeks, with the notable exception of Mark Eugenicus, declared themselves satisfied. On June 26, 1439, a commission was selected to draw up a decree of union. Among its members were Bessarion, Isidore, Ces- arini, Montenegro, and Turrecremata. Finally, on July 5, 1439, the council promulgated the decree of union Laetantur coeli. Although this ecclesiastical reunion proved short lived, it was a major triumph for Eugenius IV, whose works of peace stood in stark contrast with the schism being inaugurated by the Council of Basel. Even while the Council of Florence concluded its negotiations with the Greeks, the Council of Basel had decided to take definitive action against Eugenius IV, who had convoked the rival assembly. Some prelates and ambassadors present at Basel, notably the canonist Panormitanus, representing the House of Aragon, tried to prevent the assembly from deposing the pope. But d’Aleman and his supporters, most of them members of the lower clerical ranks, were adamant. On May 16, 1439, they voted to depose Eugenius, a sentence published on June 25, little more than a week before the solemn promulgation of the bull of union Laetantur coeli. The Council of Basel then created
an electoral college, which chose as pope Duke Amadeus VIII of Savoy, who became Felix V. Once more Western Christendom was confronted with the spectacle of two conflicting claims to the papal throne. When Pope Eugenius took notice of the decree of deposition, he did so forcefully. In the bull Moyses (September 5, 1439), the pope declared all past concessions null and void, since the Basel assembly had extracted them under duress. Eugenius attacked even the decree Haec sancta, on which the Council of Basel had based its acts. Eugenius described Haec sancta as a decree issued by only one obedience present at Constance, that of John XXIII. Haec sancta was thus not the decree of a general council and so could not be invoked to justify any act. To underline this point, Eugenius staged a debate on the problem of papal relations with councils. Turrecremata defended the pope; Cesarini, the council. Turrecremata made a frontal assault on conciliarism, using the pope's argument against the validity of Haec sancta to help prove that the pope, not a general council, was that agent of Christ which ruled over the Church. At the conclusion of the debate, Cesarini owned himself convinced by his opponent while Pope Eugenius hailed Turrecremata as "defender of the faith." A more tangible reward was bestowed on December 18, 1439, when the pope created new cardinals. Among those promoted were the archbishop of Taranto, Bessarion, Isidore, the French bishop Guillaume d'Estoutville, and Johannes de Turrecremata, who became known, from the name of the first titular church, as the cardinal of San Sisto. But the Dominican was not in Florence to receive his red hat.

Eugenius had sent Turrecremata as ambassador to Charles VII of France, with the nominal duty of making peace between England and France but the real task of winning French support for Eugenius against the Council of Basel. The Estates General was supposed to meet at Bourges to consider, among other business, the new schism. Turrecremata and his fellow legates travelled to that city, but the meeting was delayed while the king subdued the Praguerie, a revolt of nobles led by the Dauphin Louis. The legates made good use of the time they spent waiting at Bourges. Basel had recently replied to the bull Moyses and elected a new pope, Felix V (November, 1439). This
aged widower of pious repute now attempted to take control of the council, an act which produced new dissension, and even named his own college of cardinals. For his part, Turrecremata spent the winter composing a reply to the council's censure of Eugenius's bull. In his tract he pointed to the election of Felix and the other acts of the Basel assembly as acts of rebels against the legitimate authority of the true pope. This defense of legitimate authority remained the rallying cry of the Eugenians till the end of the Schism. While Turrecremata wrote, an assistant, Peter of Versailles, worked to win the good will of the bishop of Bourges. Thus, when the legation from Basel, led by John of Segovia, reached Bourges, it found its papal counterpart well entrenched. And when Charles VII reached Bourges in August of 1440, the papal legates appealed to him to support the pope, a fellow monarch, against open rebellion by the Council of Basel, which was an astutely designed form of argument. The king, still shaken by the Praguerie revolt, listened readily to the papalists' arguments and to Turrecremata's reminder that Eugenius had supported the claim of the king's brother-in-law, Rene of Anjou, to the throne of Naples. On September 2, 1440, Charles rewarded the labors of the legates by acknowledging Eugenius IV as the true pope. Although he still talked of a third site for a council and refused to revoke the Pragmatic Sanction, Charles eventually made a choice. While French support for the Council of Basel slipped away, Juan II of Castile readily recalled Arévalo from Basel. England and Burgundy had already sided with the pope; Aragon and Milan would soon come to terms with Eugenius, leaving only the German princes as supporters of the council. Turrecremata's role in this papalist diplomatic success earned him Eugenius's utmost confidence. Mis mission in France accomplished, Turrecremata returned to Italy, entering Florence on November 24, 1440."

Charles VII did make one last attempt to promote the idea of a neutral site for a council, an attempt blocked, however, by Turrecremata. In the winter of 1440–41, the French king sent Turrecremata's erstwhile colleague Peter of Versailles to Florence bearing a petition for the choice of a neutral site that questioned the very validity of the Council of Florence. Eugenius named Cardinals Cesarini,
Capranica, and Turrecremata commissioners to deal with this petition. The Dominican cardinal, in the name of this commission, delivered a crushing response to the French proposal, which was never revived by the king or his agents. Turrecremata then composed a gloss on *Laetantur coeli* that demonstrated the validity of the Council of Florence while it underlined its most important achievement.

Meanwhile the Council of Florence, with Turrecremata's participation, was making further progress toward reunion with the Eastern churches. Turrecremata played a key role in successful negotiations with the Coptic Church. Eugenius tried to send aid to the Greeks and, on March 1, 1442, named Cesarini legate for a crusade against the Turks in the Balkans. The pope hoped to secure the support of Bohemia for this project and at the same time convert the Hussites to Roman orthodoxy. Accordingly, Turrecremata composed a tract intended to promote this twofold policy by refuting Hussite errors. The Bohemians, however, ignored both this essay in religious propaganda and the crusade itself. Without Bohemian assistance Cesarini and the king of Poland led an army into the Balkans, but, after some initial success, their force was routed by the Turks at Varna (1444), where Cesarini perished.

Meanwhile Turrecremata resumed work for the reform of the Church. The cardinal's experiences at Basel had forced him to shift his attention from general reform, which had come to smack of revolution, to the reordering of local religious communities. Turrecremata set these communities an example by himself adhering to the Dominican rule. Even after promotion to the cardinalate, he continued to wear the habit and read the office of his order. Only in 1442, after his mission to France, did Turrecremata find time to concentrate on local reforms. In that year the monk Arsenius, a leader of the Santa Justina congregation of reformed Benedictines, appealed to Turrecremata for aid and advice. The cardinal responded by composing a commentary on the Benedictine rule to guide Arsenius's work of reform.

Orthodoxy also concerned Turrecremata in these years. By 1443 conditions were ripe for Eugenius to move southward from Florence. In June, while at Siena, the pope took cognizance of charges of heresy against the Salamanca
theologian Alfonso Tostado de Madrigal, whose loyalty to Eugenius was as suspect as his doctrines were. Tostado was forced to expound his doctrines before Cardinals John of Taranto, Turrecremata, and Capranica. Turrecremata took a deep interest in the affair, producing a tract which censured Tostado on several points, particularly his doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. For the time being, the accused submitted to this judgment. On his return to Castile, however, Tostado denounced the proceedings at Siena as unjust and won the support of Juan II of Castile; the pope therefore let the matter rest. Three years later Tostado became bishop of Avila, a post in which he served well.

Afterwards, in September of 1443, Eugenius IV returned in triumph to Rome, the city he had fled almost a decade before. Eugenius could well afford to celebrate his return from exile. The Council of Basel was weak and divided; it seemed only a matter of time before the Germans, too, must abandon that now enfeebled assembly and come to terms with the pope. Under these circumstances Turrecremata was able to retire from the field of diplomacy, and in 1446 Eugenius rewarded him with a new titular church, the basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere.

In the meantime, those younger diplomats—Nicholas of Cusa, Thomas of Sarzana, and Juan Carvajal—labored long and arduously to win the German princes to the Eugenian cause. At times their efforts were impeded by the pope's own actions, such as his attempt to depose certain hostile ecclesiastics from their sees. But on February 14, 1446, Frederick III, king of the Romans, agreed to support Pope Eugenius on the condition that German grievances were redressed. Carvajal and Thomas of Sarzana, accompanied by Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (a former supporter of the Council of Basel who had entered Frederick's service), travelled to Rome to win papal support for this agreement, whereupon Eugenius appointed a commission of cardinals to scrutinize its terms. Three of its members, Johannes de Turrecremata, John of Taranto, and Alonso Borgia, Cardinal of Valencia, deemed excessive the concessions made by the legates. But Eugenius IV, now mortally ill and wishing to die as head of a united Church, had already guaranteed ratification in naming to the commission Cardinals
Le Jeune and Capranica, as well as Thomas of Sarzana and Carvajal, themselves new members of the Sacred College. The cause of unity at any price proved triumphant at a meeting held on January 7, 1447. On February 14 Eugenius's assent to these terms was formally given, and nine days later the ailing pontiff breathed his last.

Service under Later Popes

Thomas of Sarzana, who succeeded Eugenius IV as Nicholas V (1447-55), would finally bring peace to the Church. First, the German princes made peace with Rome. King Frederick signed the Concordat of Vienna (1448), which promised him, in return for his support of the new pope, the right to fill certain lucrative benefices with his own servants. Without German support, or at least neutrality, the Council of Basel was finished. It had already dwindled to a shadow of its former self, holding its sessions in Lausanne since the city of Basel was plague-ridden. The council now decided to bow out gracefully by "electing" Thomas of Sarzana as pope and dissolving itself. Felix V, long at odds with the Council of Basel, also came to terms and abdicated in return for recognition as a cardinal. Nicholas V was likewise magnanimous with the erstwhile leaders of the council. He received d'Aleman back into the College of Cardinals and confirmed the promotions of several of Felix V's cardinals. Other conciliarists, including John of Segovia, were given benefices and allowed to retire.

Although he had been a key supporter of Nicholas's election, actually casting the deciding vote, Turrecremata inevitably played a less prominent role in this pontificate than in the last; Nicholas's reign was a time of reconciliation, not of heroic struggle. But the Cardinal of San Sisto was by no means idle. One notable instance of Turrecremata's activities involved his native Castile, where the old Christians, supposedly of pure Spanish blood, hated the New Christians for their success as much as for their bloodlines. The conversos, or marranos, of Jewish blood, had risen high in the Church, the government, and the professions. Resentment towards them boiled over at Toledo in 1449, where a riot against royal taxes became a persecution of
conversos because one of them was serving as a tax collector. Hoping to focus attention on the conversos and away from himself, Alvaro de Luna, Juan II's favorite, fanned the flames. He employed a propagandist named Pedro Sarmiento to accuse the conversos, even before the king himself, of remaining crypto-Jews. On June 5, 1449, John II deprived the Toledo conversos of their legal rights in that city. News of this decision angered responsible churchmen, including Cardinal Turrecremata. Perhaps influenced by the cardinal, Nicholas issued the bull *Humani generis*, which quashed the offensive law. But under Castilian pressure the pope withdrew the bull—a decision that prevented neither the overthrow of Alvaro de Luna by the nobility nor Turrecremata's denunciation of Sarmiento (1450) for having propounded the heretical idea that no Jew could become a good Christian, a clear denial of the efficacy of baptism. Thereafter, speculation became rife as to whether the Torquemadas were of Jewish origin. The conversos were eager to claim so eminent a churchman as one of their own; the Dominicans thought otherwise. Such gossip, it seems, left Turrecremata unmoved but may have influenced the future conduct of his nephew Tomás de Torquemada, the famous inquisitor.

During Nicholas's reign Turrecremata, less active now, fortunately had leisure to write lengthy works. The cardinal began his most important labor, the composition of a coherent defense of the institutional Church and its head, the pope. Ecclesiological ideas adumbrated in his polemical tracts were now fully developed in a series of books. The work first begun but last completed was a commentary on Gratian's *Decretum*, a book that had provided conciliarists with many of their key proof texts, as had the most famous of the glosses on those texts. Turrecremata decided that it was incumbent upon him to correct those canonistic doctrines which conflicted with his papalist concept of the Church. But this project almost failed at the outset. Turrecremata, who had always cited canon law in his polemical tracts, found the composition of a formal commentary difficult beyond expectation. Lacking a legal education, he became hopelessly entangled in Gratian's discussion of the principles of law. So, on the advice of friends, Turrecremata turned to the tracts *De consecratione* and *De poenitentia*, 
the most theological portions of the _Decretum_, completing his commentaries in 1449 and dedicating them to Nicholas V. The project was then halted by illness.61

When Turrecremata recovered his health, he began two new, but related, works. One, completed in 1451, was a reordering of the _Decretum_ along the lines of the Gregorian decretals. This labor gave Turrecremata a stronger grasp of canon law, of which he later made effective use.62 Then, in 1453, he composed his most famous work, _Summa de ecclesia_. This was by no means the first treatise on the nature and government of the Church; however, it was the most comprehensive medieval synthesis of ecclesiological doctrines acceptable to Rome. Turrecremata grounded his system on theological (particularly Thomistic) principles, which he applied to practical questions with well-chosen citations from canon law.63 This exposition of doctrine was coupled with criticism of the enemies of the Roman Church. Turrecremata denounced conciliarism as a fruit of the antipapal writings of Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham, a charge which has survived till the present day. Turrecremata also attacked the Hussites, whom he placed in company with the Lollards as latter-day Waldensians.64

During these years of residence in Rome, Turrecremata worked even more energetically for ecclesiastical reform. He tried to implant in his native Castile those ideals discussed in his commentary on the Benedictine rule. In this struggle his allies were two successive priors of San Benito de Valladolid, García de Frias and Juan de Gumiel. Turrecremata used his influence with Eugenius IV and Nicholas V to force Castilian monasteries, among them San Claudio de Leon, San Salvador de Oña, and Sahagún, to join a congregation of observant Benedictines. On the practical side, Turrecremata also contributed funds for the up-keep of reformed monasteries.65

In 1445 Turrecremata decided to increase the endowment of his home convent, San Pablo de Valladolid. But disquieting reports reached him that its friars were ill-disciplined and its buildings in disrepair. So, in 1449 he persuaded Pope Nicholas to cancel all illegal contracts made by the friars and then began work for the reform and repair of the convent. He hoped to make San Pablo a Castilian
center for the Dominican observant movement, a hope realized only after long labors lasting well into the reign of Pius II. Turrecremata also took a more general interest in the affairs of his order. Although he was not its cardinal protector, he represented the Order of Preachers at the curia and worked to obtain indulgences for the friars, defend those involved in theological controversies, and procure the canonization of saintly members of the order. In return Turrecremata expected the Dominicans to follow his advice. Thus, he felt free to tell the general chapter of 1450 what qualities to look for in a possible successor to Master General Texier; likewise, he rebuked Master General Auribelli (elected in 1453) for setting a bad example in undermining the autonomy of the Lombard congregation of observants (in 1462 Turrecremata was to be instrumental in Pius II's deposition of Auribelli).

Cardinal Turrecremata did serve as cardinal protector of another order. Upon the death of Cardinal Cervantes in 1453, Pope Nicholas named Turrecremata his successor as protector of the Camaldolese. The new protector embarked on a reform campaign, an effort which culminated in two sets of reform decrees. Those enacted by a general chapter at Pisa in 1457 made the order's program of studies more rigorous; those enacted at Pontebuono in 1459 imposed stricter discipline on the monks. Although not entirely successful, these efforts were a step toward the general renovation of discipline that would be accomplished by the end of the century.

The last years of Nicholas V's reign were overshadowed by the Turkish menace, a threat that would ultimately bring Turrecremata back into world affairs. Despite the pope's efforts to send aid, the Ottoman sultan, Mehmed II, took Constantinople on May 29, 1453. The last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI, died defending the city; the papal legate, Isidore of Kiev, barely escaped with his life; and the tenuous bond of East-West union, forged at Florence, was snapped. Nicholas tried to retrieve this situation by calling for a crusade, an appeal that was largely ignored. When Nicholas died on March 24, 1455, Turks were threatening Serbia, Bosnia, and Albania, three Christian strongholds in the Balkans.

To continue work for a crusade the cardinals chose Al-
fonso Borgia, who, as Pope Calixtus III (1455-58), achieved but limited success against the Turks. Calixtus also worked toward a peace in Europe as a whole that would enable him to mobilize its resources for a crusade. Thus, he recognized the Utraquist George Podiebrad as king of Bohemia, under the terms of an agreement drafted by Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who had been made a cardinal. Piccolomini had been deeply moved by the fall of Constantinople and would spare no effort to see the Turks punished. But owing to a misunderstanding, the agreement intended to mobilize Bohemian resources for a crusade proved detrimental rather than helpful to the cause. The pope thought the king had promised to revoke the Basel compacts, whereas King George thought the agreement ratified Utraquist privileges. The resulting quarrel over religious policy outlived both men and left Bohemia too divided to wage war on the Turks. Aside from its failure to further the crusade, Calixtus's reign proved largely detrimental to the welfare of Christendom. The Borgia pope, shortly after his election, abrogated the "capitulations" he had signed in conclave, giving the cardinals a larger share in the powers and revenues of the Roman see, an action resented by many cardinals, including Domenico Capranica. The always latent tension between papal power and the pretensions of the cardinals was thus transformed into an open and long-lived conflict. Calixtus exacerbated the rift by filling lucrative posts with his fellow Catalans, and the angered Romans openly took sides with the aggrieved cardinals. Further, Calixtus proved to be a blatant nepotist, making his worldly nephew Rodrigo Borgia, the later Alexander VI, a cardinal and vice-chancellor of the Roman Church.  

In contrast to all this disharmony, slim evidence does suggest that Calixtus and Turrecremata worked together reasonably well. On April 24, 1955, the pope named Turrecremata administrator of the cardinalatial see ofPalestrina, vacated by the recent death of John of Taranto. In the same year Calixtus made Turrecremata abbot in commendam of Subiaco. (The cardinal found the abbey in disrepair and its Benedictine monks in need of reform, defects he remedied before placing the abbey under direct papal supervision. Six years later Pius II would visit Subiaco at Turrecremata's request and find it a model monastery.)
Perhaps it was to escape curial squabbles that Turrecremata now resumed earnest labor on his *Decretum* commentary, turning it into a companion to the *Summa de ecclesia*. Commentary on key texts in the former was cross-referenced to expositions of fundamental doctrines in the latter, each work buttressing its companion. In 1457 he completed his volume of commentary on the *Distinctions*, which he dedicated to Calixtus.  

Upon Calixtus's death in 1458, Cardinal Turrecremata was plunged into the drama of electing a new pope, this time on the losing side. The Romans had rioted and driven the Catalans out of the city; while the cardinals waited out this storm, speculation was rife about the identity of the next pope, for the death of the acknowledged favorite, Cardinal Capranica, had left the field wide open. Although rumors mentioned Johannes de Turrecremata, he showed no desire to occupy the see whose dignity and prerogatives he had so long defended. Nor was Turrecremata an ecclesiastical politician who would garner votes by fair means or foul. He soon joined one of the two factions (both dominated by the usual political chicanery) in search of a pope able to conduct a crusade. As a contender Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini had the support of most of the Italians and of opportunists like Rodrigo Borgia. The worldly Cardinal d'Estoutville, on the other hand, had the support of the French interest, of those willing to believe his promises of preferment, and of the most ardent advocates of a crusade—Bessarion, Isidore of Kiev, and Turrecremata—who considered Piccolomini too crippled by gout to bear the burden of office. Of the two contenders Piccolomini proved the more adroit politician, winning over the more timid or greedy of d'Estoutville's faction while playing on the fears of the Italians that a French pope would remove himself to Avignon. When the election of Piccolomini began to seem inevitable, his opponents tried to disrupt the conclave: Turrecremata and Isidore stalked out of the hall on the excuse of a call of nature but returned quickly when no one followed them; Bessarion tried to gag Cardinal Colonna when he rose to cast the deciding vote. Despite such rash acts, Piccolomini ascended the papal throne as Pius II (1458–64).  

Nevertheless, Turrecremata's anti-Turkish policy soon
elevated him in the councils of the new pope. Pius promptly made peace with the more worthy of his recent opponents by avowing an interest in promoting a crusade, which pleased Turrecremata as well as the Greeks. The pope expected to achieve his goal by gathering the princes at Mantua to settle their differences and prepare for war against the Turks. Turrecremata, whom Pius made cardinal bishop of Palestrina, worked fervently for the success of this congress. In the winter of 1458–59 he wrote a tract that pilloried Moslem errors such as they were commonly understood at the time. In strong language Turrecremata repeated the hackneyed charge that Mohammed was a false prophet influenced by Nestorian errors. Other age-old charges of false doctrine and immorality were trotted out to rouse the fervor of Christians for war against the infidels. Pius II, interested in arousing such sentiments, preferred Turrecremata's repetition of old charges to the more enlightened views of John of Segovia and Nicholas of Cusa, who advocated dialogue with Islam.

Pius chose Turrecremata and five other cardinals to accompany him to Mantua. They reached Florence just when the saintly archbishop of the city, the Dominican observant Antoninus, was on his deathbed. In Mantua the Pope found few princes represented. Philip of Burgundy alone was eager for a crusade; other representatives straggled in and offered various excuses for their lack of crusading fervor. The pope's entourage became discouraged and discontented; among the cardinals only Turrecremata and Bessarion consistently supported Pius's crusade policy. Tired of listening to excuses, Pius formally declared war on the Turks in January of 1460. He also lashed out at one of his critics, Diether von Isenberg, the archbishop-elect of Mainz. Pius had expected Diether, in return for confirmation of his election, to pay excessive fees and promise never to call for a new council; Diether flatly refused, demanding that the imperial Diet take strong measures against the pope and dismissing the crusade as an excuse for taxing the Germans. Pius replied in the bull Execrabilis, which condemned appeals from pope to council. Thus, this former adherent of the Council of Basel issued the strongest anticonciliar pronouncement to appear in Turrecremata's lifetime.
Following the Congress of Mantua, Pius II became embroiled in European politics, which included his bitter struggle with Sigismondo Malatesta. The pope never lost interest in the crusading ideal, however, and leaned heavily on Turrecremata's aid and counsel. Pius dramatized this goal in a formal reception for the relic of the head of Saint Andrew and even wrote a letter to Sultan Mehmed II (apparently it never was delivered) in which he promised to make Mehmed a true emperor if he would become a Catholic. Pius's understanding of Muslim errors, which he asked the sultan to renounce, apparently derived from Turrecremata's tract against the Turks, and not from one of the more enlightened authors like John of Segovia.

Turrecremata played a more active role in church affairs in this period than he had in the last two pontificates, though he was painfully aware of his advancing years. In 1460 he expressed a desire to be freed from some of his duties; in 1462 he was too infirm to walk in the procession that conveyed the head of Saint Andrew to the Vatican. In 1460, however, Pius named him to the see of Leon and thereby plunged him into a confrontation with the king of Castile. (Turrecremata had already held the sees of Cadiz [1440-42] and of Orense [1442-45].) But because he wanted Leon for a political ally, King Henry IV of Castile, the son of Juan II, favored the papal nuncio Antonio Veneris as bishop and prevented Turrecremata's agents from taking charge of the diocese. In vain the pope angrily denounced first the royal councillor Rodrigo Sanchez de Arévalo, then his own nuncio for misleading the king. Finally Turrecremata, who had kept a discrete silence throughout the whole affair, accepted a transfer back to the see of Orense (1463–66), and Veneris became bishop of León.

In the meantime Turrecremata, like the pope, continued to work for a crusade against the Turks. King Stephen Thomas of Bosnia sought Pius's aid in repelling the infidels' advance. To reinforce his plea, he sent to Rome three Bogomil nobles, members of a Balkan Manichee sect, to be converted to Roman Catholicism and serve as pledges for his good faith and the good behavior of their fellow Bogomils in the coming war with the Turks. Pius asked Turrecremata to supervise the effort to convert these nobles.
The cardinal left the actual work of instruction to experts in the nobles' native tongue, Serbo-Croatian, while he composed a refutation of Manichean errors for use as a catechism. On May 9, 1461, the Bogomil nobles adjured their errors in a solemn ceremony at the Vatican. But their conversion had no impact in Bosnia. When the Turks crossed the border, the Bogomils ignored the call to arms, and, in 1463, the kingdom of Bosnia was overrun and its king beheaded.87

An even more sensational failure of papal diplomacy, also abetted by Turrecremata, contributed to the woes of Bohemia. Deeming that a united Bohemia might be assigned a major role in a crusade, the pope decided that the agreement he had arranged between his predecessor, Calixtus, and George Podiebrad ensured the conversion of the Utraquists to Roman orthodoxy. Accordingly he threatened to unilaterally revoke the Basel Compacts, the foundations of religious peace in Bohemia. Ambassadors of King George warned the pope in 1461 that such a step would provoke civil war in Bohemia. Pius and his cardinals received the envoys coldly; Carvajal, Cusa, Bessarion, and Turrecremata all advised them that obedience to the pope's commands was the only licit course of action. Podiebrad remained unconvinced. When the pope did revoke the compacts, the king tried to turn Europe against the Roman see, even suggesting that the princes conduct a crusade without papal authorization. One of Pius's last acts was a threat of excommunication against King George. In 1466 Paul II was to declare Podiebrad a deposed heretic, which resulted in a civil war that deepened the religious divisions of Bohemia.88

Contrasting with these diplomatic failures, Turrecremata's major successes at reform came during the reign of Pius II. The resistance to reform at San Pablo de Valladolid collapsed between 1459 and 1463 under pressure from Turrecremata, the cardinal's brother Pedro (a royal official), Master General Auribelli, and the pope himself. Thereafter San Pablo, together with the related college of San Gregorio, became a center for the reform of other convents. This work was speeded by a papal endowment for the convent, and Turrecremata himself funded construction and sent a gift of books. (In 1468, the year of
Turrecremata's death, Auribelli chartered a Castilian congregation of observants along the lines of the Lombard congregation. Subsequent efforts made the Spanish Dominicans a vital religious community during an era of lax ecclesiastical discipline, and in the sixteenth century they would produce a Thomist revival and labor mightily in the New World.)

Contemporaneously with his work for San Pablo, Turrecremata in 1460 founded the Brotherhood of the Annunciation to dower poor girls so that they could marry and not fall into sin. As its headquarters he chose the Dominican church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome (a painting can still be seen there, in which Turrecremata presents the dowered girls to the Virgin of the Annunciation). Turrecremata had observed even earlier the physical decay and lax discipline in the Minerva convent, and in 1461 Pius II authorized him to reform it without interference from Master General Auribelli. This reform project became an enthusiasm of Turrecremata's later years. When discipline had been restored, he affiliated the convent with the observant Lombard congregation to ensure the maintenance of order, took up residence at the Minerva, and gave the church a rebuilt choir and a new cloister ornamented with devotional paintings.

Soon—through the new means of typography—these paintings would be seen by many who had never gone to Rome. The movable type process was diffused throughout Europe by printers who had fled Germany during Pius II's war against Diether von Isenberg; in 1465 Conrad von Schweinheim and Arnold Pannartz settled at Turrecremata's own abbey of Subiaco and produced the first printing in Italy. At once Turrecremata saw the value of the medium. So, in 1466 he had printed in Germany a volume of his Meditationes, devout reflections on the paintings in the new cloister at the Minerva. And the following year he hired another travelling German printer, Ulrich Han, to print an illustrated copy of this work in Rome, the first illustrated book published in Italy. Parenthetically, the Meditationes were not Turrecremata's first devotional work; in May of 1463 he had completed a commentary on the Psalms, a work with only slight ecclesiological overtones, which he dedicated to Pius II. The pope returned the com-
pliment by naming Turrecremata successor to the recently deceased Isidore of Kiev as cardinal bishop of Sabina.95

Seriously ill by now, Pius II nevertheless made one final effort to launch a crusade. Though only Burgundy and Venice were truly interested, the pope himself took the cross and left Rome for Ancona, intending to embark there for the East. Turrecremata, too old to undertake the journey, pledged money for the support of the crusade; his enforced stay in Rome spared him the visual evidence of Pius' failure: the pope's tiny army, held together by his own will, never sailed from Ancona. On August 11, 1464, Nicholas of Cusa died while giving his last efforts to the cause, and on August 15 the pontiff breathed his last in that Adriatic port; his army dispersed, and Venice disbanded its fleet.96

When the conclave to name a successor opened in Rome, Turrecremata entered it in very poor health. Rumors circulated that he would be carried out either dead or pope. But the cardinals chose a younger man, Pietro Barbo, a nephew of Eugenius IV, who reigned as Paul II (1464–71).97 Neither illness nor age had deprived Turrecremata of his wits, however. In 1464 he completed his commentary on the Decretum, dedicating the volumes on the Causae to the new pope. At last, Turrecremata had completed his systematic exposition of ecclesiological doctrines favorable to the Roman Church, a labor that well justified the title "defender of the faith" once bestowed on him by Eugenius IV.98

In his few remaining years, the aged cardinal was again plunged into controversy. In 1466 a report reached Paul II that Fraticelli were in central Italy, and the pope began proceedings against those extreme advocates of the Franciscan poverty ideal. Zealous churchmen began to write refutations of their errors; among them was Nicholas Palmericus, the Augustinian bishop of Orte, who went too far by casting doubt on the mendicant ideal of Christ's poverty. As a Dominican friar, Turrecremata felt called upon to reply and did so in two tracts pillorying Palmericus's ideas. To still this budding controversy between members of the curia, Paul II asked Turrecremata to write a treatise on the true relationship between poverty and perfection; after its completion, the doctrinal dispute was allowed to die out."
Turrecremata's final polemical tract dealt, once more, with the affairs of Castile. Castilian nobles had rebelled against royal authority, rallying to a figurehead, Alfonso, the half-brother of King Henry IV. They claimed that they only wanted restoration of their ancient rights and that these rights were founded upon Roman law. In 1467 Henry's representative in Rome, Rodrigo Sanchez de Arevalo, replied by denying Roman law any place in the dispute. The Roman empire he insisted, had merely usurped royal rights; the empire of the present day had no power over Castile, which had stood alone against Moslem aggression; and in fact the Roman empire had only attained legitimacy by papal sanction. These arguments, touching on the ancient if fratricidal bond between emperor and pope, were controversial in the extreme; they were criticized by such authors as the curial referendary Dominicus de Dominicis. In 1468 Turrecremata, too, attacked Arevalo. The cardinal defended the legitimacy of the Roman empire, arguing that it had been founded by natural law on the consent of its subjects to its just rule. It had been valid in Christ's own day and needed no legitimization by the pope. (Turrecremata did agree with Arevalo that Castile, and France too, had won its independence by defeating the Moors.) Arevalo, for his part, refused to be drawn into a personal contest with the venerable (and irritable) Turrecremata, pretending instead that someone else had circulated specious arguments under Turrecremata's name.\footnote{100}

Despite these occasional polemical thunderings, which matched his occasional rages caused by gout, Cardinal Turrecremata began turning his mind to forms of religious thought higher than mere apologetics. After completing his work on the Psalms, he devised a series of scholastic questions on the Gospel texts in the liturgical lectionary and dedicated the work to Cardinal d'Estoutville. He then composed a mystical treatise inspired by devout reading of a feast day office, a tract which may well have been his very last work.\footnote{101} In 1468, knowing he was near death, Turrecremata donated his library to the Minerva convent. Then, virtually pen in hand, Cardinal Johannes de Turrecremata died on September 26, 1468. His body lies in a simple tomb in the Annunciation Chapel of Santa Maria sopra Minerva.\footnote{102}
Catholic historians have often eulogized this eminent churchman. What they say is largely true: Turrecremata was pious, zealous, brave, munificent, upright, no grasper for power. However, certain faults are not lost in the plaudits: Turrecremata was also stubborn, dogmatic, and harsh to the lax and erring. In old age, his gout made him irritable and hard to live with. His mind lacked the creative spark found in Cusa's works, the literary talent displayed by Pius II. Yet Turrecremata's achievement was considerable. Through hard work, carried often to excessive length, he mastered the literature of theology and canon law. No labor was too hard to undertake; no subject beneficial to the devout reader was left untouched. Turrecremata's great merit as a papal apologist consisted in never losing sight of the Church's saving mission amid the forest of authorities on whom he drew to build his doctrine of the Church. Thus, his chief works, the *Summa de ecclesia* and *Commentaria super decreto*, seem the writings of a moderate in comparison with those of preceding or subsequent generations of papal apologists.103

One true measure of a man is found in his dealings with his fellows. Here Turrecremata overshadows most of his contemporaries, having earned the respect of all the popes he served, even the somewhat cynical Pius II. His friends included such diverse figures as the learned Bessarion, the worldly d'Estoutville, the historian Flavio Biondo, the dedicated papal servant John of Taranto, and the holy Antoninus of Florence. Turrecremata also chose wisely and well when bestowing his patronage.104 He readily saw the value of the new art of printing and employed its best practitioners; he gave aid to the humanist Giovanni Tortelli, the poet Juan de Mena, the painter Fra Angelico, and many lesser figures.105

In sum, Cardinal Turrecremata shone with a moral and intellectual light against the dark tapestry of his own times. By the later Middle Ages, the College of Cardinals had both achieved great power and earned harsh criticism. Many reformers sought to limit its size, wealth, and influence; general councils tried to keep the cardinals from controlling their own proceedings or (at Constance) the election of the one pope for all Christendom. In this conciliar epoch, however, the Sacred College recovered some prestige, numbering in its ranks such luminaries as Ces-
arini, Albergati, Capranica, d’Aleman, Isidore of Kiev, Bessarion, Cusa, and Turrecremata. These men did good works whenever possible and avoided the abuse of power (thus, Turrecremata limited his support of kinsmen and familiares). But moral rot continued to take its toll with the promotion of papal kinsmen, royal favorites, and scions of noble Italian houses. By the reign of Pius II, who gave John Joffry the red hat solely to please Louis XI of France, even the cardinals thought they were deteriorating. Matters worsened as the older generation of cardinals died out; after Turrecremata’s death, only Carvajal, Bessarion, and d’Estoutville were left of the great names from past pontificates. After them, the College of Cardinals, though it boasted an occasional luminary, seemed to warrant the jibes of Erasmus and the diatribes of Luther. This decline, and Turrecremata’s contrasting presence, are well symbolized in one significant scene. On June 17, 1462, when Pius II celebrated Corpus Christi at Viterbo, members of the curia vied in lining the route of the solemn procession of the Host with spectacular tableaux. The most garish and displeasing was that staged by Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, a depiction of Pope Pius as lord of the world. The most sober and reverent was that presented by Turrecremata, as described in the pope’s own approving words:

Next tame [the tableau of] the Cardinal of San Sisto [Turrecremata]. As befitted his ecclesiastical dignity, he showed a representation of the Last Supper, with Christ and the disciples, and the institution of the Sacrament in memory of the Passion and the everlasting protection of mankind against the wiles of the devil to the end of time. And he had represented Saint Thomas Aquinas administering that holy and solemn Sacrament.