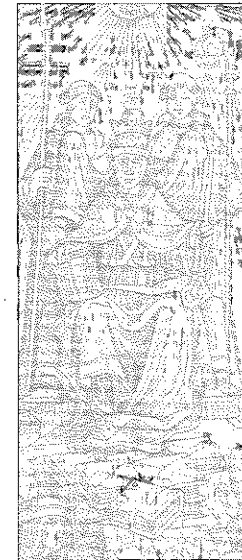


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The Church, the Councils, & Reform

The Legacy of the Fifteenth Century

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THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS
Washington, D.C.

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PREFACE

One could say that this book is a *Festschrift*, but not for a person. Rather, it is a celebration of a book—a special book on a special occasion, the fiftieth anniversary of the groundbreaking and highly influential *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory* by Brian Tierney (1955).

Thus, while the topic of our volume has exceptional relevance to current issues in church and society, it has a personal significance as well. Our authors were asked to consider the contributions of the “Tierney generation” to the significant but controversial period of the reform councils that rose to prominence when the Council of Constance healed the Great Schism (1378–1417), during which the papacy was divided among two and then three obediences, and came to a climax when the Council of Trent initiated sweeping reforms within a church divided by the Reformation. The specific issue that these authors address is how the crisis of the schism and the conciliar movement that followed caused theologians, jurists, and humanists to rethink accepted concepts of church government, and to balance the need for reform with the need to preserve order in the visible institution and reaffirm its legitimacy.

Typical of those who faced this issue were two theologians who, among others, figure prominently in these pages: Nicholas of Cusa and Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II). Both men at first embraced the Council of Basel. Cusanus even prepared (according to Tierney) that “most mature” of all conciliar theories, the *Catholic Concordance*, in which he attempted to balance consent with hierarchy and connect both of these with wide-ranging reform. Yet both Nicholas and Aeneas abandoned Basel and had to rethink concepts of church, councils, and authority, while still preserving their dedication to renewal. The essays in this volume assess the contributions of these and other figures in this