



Oration “Habemus fidem” of Pope Pius II (November 1462, Rome). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. 4th version. (Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 71)

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(Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 71)

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2019

Abstract

In November 1462, an embassy came to Pope Pius II from the King of Bosnia, Stefan Tomašević, to seek aid from the pope against the Turks, expected to launch a major assault against Bosnia in the near future. The pope replied to the ambassadors' address with the very brief oration "*Habemus fidem*", in which he promised what help the papacy was able to give, exhorted the king to reconcile and ally himself with Hungary, and promised to erect Roman Catholic dioceses in Bosnia. He formally denied the petition for a crown to be sent to the king, referring that matter to the king's feudal overlord, King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (secretly instructing his legate to crown the king anyway). It would all be for nothing since next year the Turks invaded and conquered Bosnia.

Keywords

Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini; Aneas Sylvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Papa Pio II; Bosnia; Bosnian Church; 15th century; 1462; Renaissance orations; Renaissance oratory; Renaissance rhetorics; Turks; Sultan Mehmed II; King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary; Venice; King Stefan Tomašević of Bosnia

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Foreword

In 2007, I undertook a project of publishing the Latin texts with English translations of the orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II. Altogether 80¹ orations (including papal responses to ambassadorial addresses) are extant today, though more may still be held, unrecognized, in libraries and archives.

At a later stage the project was expanded to include ambassadors' orations to the pope, of which about 40 are presently known.

I do not, actually, plan to publish further versions of the present volume, but I do reserve the option in case I – during my future studies - come across other manuscripts containing interesting versions of the oration or if important new research data on the subject matter are published, making it appropriate to modify or expand the present text. It will therefore always be useful to check if a later version than the one the reader may have previously found via the Internet is available.

I shall much appreciate to be notified by readers who discover errors and problems in the text and translation or unrecognized quotations.

12 September 2019

MCS

¹ 81 orations, if the "*Cum animadverto*" is counted as a Piccolomini-oration, see oration "*Quam laetus*" [18], Appendix

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Context¹

After the Turkish conquest of Serbia 1459, the next Christian dominion – or domino - to fall would be Bosnia. To what extent Bosnia was a Christian kingdom was somewhat doubtful, as there were actually numerous Paterenes or Manichaeans in the country as well as some muslims.² The last king of Bosnia, Stefan Tomašević, who succeeded to the throne in 1461, was a Roman catholic and naturally hoped for help from the pope and the Christian powers (Hungary and Venice) against a threatening Turkish attack. In November 1462 an embassy from the king reached Rome with a number of requests designed to strengthen his position as the ruler of the realm and its defender against the Turks.

The ambassadors held an oration to the pope to which he replied briefly with the address “*Habemus fidem*”, granting all but one of the Bosnian petitions. The petition denied by the pope was a request for being crowned, which Pius referred to Bosnia’s feudal overlord, King Matthias of Hungary.³

Trusting that Western aid would be forthcoming, Stefan Tomašević then refused to pay tribute to Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, a most incautious refusal which greatly provoked the sultan.⁴

Next year, in 1463, Sultan Mehmed II invaded Bosnia and easily conquered it. The king was killed, brutally, on 25 May 1463, and Bosnia became part of the Turkish empire for centuries.

In his *Commentarii*, Pius wrote about the visit of the Bosnian ambassadors:

About this time Stephen, who shortly before had become king of Bosnia on his father’s death, sent two envoys to the Pope, tall and dignified old men, one of whom delivered an address as follows: [here follows the text of the oration⁵]. Pius after hearing this called a counsel of his brethren⁶ and replied as follows [here follows the text of Pius’ reply]. The Bosnians, dismissed with such words, went away happy. They were followed by the Pope’s spokesman, Domenico of Lucca, who was to see that their requests were complied with by the Venetians and Hungary.⁷

¹ CO, XI, 13; Rainaldus, ad ann. 1462, nos. 30-32; Babinger, p. 232-239; Pastor, II, pp. 184-185; Voigt, IV, pp. 671-674

² The indigenous Bosnian Church was considered heretics by both the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. It is uncertain whether the members of the Bosnian Church were a branch of the Bogomils, also known as the Patarenes, a Manichaean sect, or whether they were members of the Catholic Church who had acquired some heretical beliefs and influences from Eastern Orthodoxy and fell into Schism

³ The pope actually gave his legate secret instructions to crown the king anyway

⁴ Babinger, pp. 233-234

⁵ See Appendix

⁶ The College of Cardinals

⁷ CO, XI, 13 (Gragg, p. 742)

2. Themes

In his address to the Bosnian ambassadors, Pius

- declared his belief in the veracity of the Bosnian reports concerning the expected Turkish attack
- gave an optimistic (under the circumstances surprisingly optimistic) assessment of the Bosnian defense capabilities
- promised to send what aid he could, which would really amount to very little, given the financial circumstances of the papacy
- agreed to put pressure on the Venetians and Hungarians to send aid to the Bosnians, including making the hoard of weapons available which had been amassed in Dalmatia by the king's father
- agreed to create Roman catholic dioceses in Bosnia and to appoint bishops to them
- denied – for diplomatic purposes – to send a crown to the king (but secretly instructed his envoy to crown the king anyway)
- firmly exhorted the king to seek friendship and alliance with the King of Hungary

3. Date, place, audience, and format

The oration “*Habemus fidem*” was delivered in November 1462¹ during the audience for an embassy from the King of Bosnia, at the Apostolic Palace in Rome.

The audience was the participants in a papal consistory, and the format was that of a papal response from the throne to royal ambassadors.

In his *Commentarii*, Pius used the term “oration” about the address of the ambassadors: *Stephen ... sent two envoys to the pope, one of whom delivered an address [oration] as follows*² (*Stephanus ...*

¹ Voigt, III, IV, 11, p. 672. Babinger, p. 232, gives the date as November 1461

² Pius II: *Commentarii* (Gragg), p. 740

legatos ad pontificem misit duos ... quorum alter ... orationem habuit.)¹ Concerning his own reply, he only wrote: *Pius replied as follows*² (*Pius ... ita respondit*).³ The text of the ambassadors' oration included in the *Commentarii* was – like Pius' response - quite probably redacted by Pius himself or his literary staff (in the form of a summary). It is quotes or alludes to two favourite classical authors of Pius, viz. Terence and Virgil.

4. Text⁴

The “*Habemus fidem*” was not included in the Collected Orations of Pius II, of which the first version was completed in 1462, but only in his *Commentarii*, book 11, chapter 13.⁵

4.1. Manuscripts

The two principal manuscripts containing the *Commentarii*, with the oration, are:

- **Roma / Biblioteca dell'Accademia dei Lincei**
Corsinianus 147, f. 366r (S)
- **Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana**
Reg. lat. 1995, ff. 513v-514v (R)

Of these, the Reginensis represents the first edition and the Corsinianus the final edition, probably with a now lost intermediate edition, all produced under the supervision of the pope himself.

4.2. Editions and translations

Some important editions and translations of the *Commentarii* are⁶:

¹ CO, XI, 13 (Heck, p. 683)

² Pius II: *Commentarii* (Gragg), p. 741

³ Pius II: *Commentarii* (van Heck), p. 683

⁴ For the textual transmission of Pius II's, see *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, ch. 5

⁵ For orations included in Pius II's *Commentarii* (1463-1464), see *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, sect. 5.1.4.

⁶ For other editions, see *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, ch. 11: General Bibliography

- *Pius II: Commentarii rerum memorabilium que suis temporibus contigerunt*. Ed. A van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984 (Studi e testi; 312-313) / II, p. 685
- Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Papa Pio II: *I Commentari*. 2 vols. Ed. Luigi Totaro. Milano, 1984 / II, pp. 2168-2171
[With an Italian translation]

An English translation of the *Commentarii* was published by Florence Gragg:

- *The Commentaries of Pius II*. Tr. By Florence Alden Gragg. Northhampton, Mass.: 1937-1957 (Smith College Studies in History; 22, 25, 30, 35, 43) / pp. 741-742

4.3. Present edition

Text:

Though the *Commentarii* have already been edited a number of times, the text of the oration has – as a matter of principle - been collated directly from the two principal manuscripts.

Pagination:

The pagination is from the lead manuscript.

5. Sources¹

In this orations, no direct or indirect quotations have been identified.

¹ On Piccolomini's use of sources in general, see *Collected orations of Pope Pius II*, ch. 8.

6. Bibliography

Annales ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi Card. Baronius desinit. Auct. Odoricus Raynaldus. Tom. XVIII-XIX. Roma: Varesius, 1659-1663¹

Babinger, Franz: *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit – Weltenstürmer einer Zeitenwende.* München, 1953

Otto, A: *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer.* Hildesheim, 1962

Pastor, Ludwig: *Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der Renaissance.* 16 vols. Freiburg i.B., 1886-1933

Voigt, Georg: *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini als Papst Pius der Zweite und sein Zeitalter.* I-III. Berlin, 1856-63

7. Sigla and abbreviations

R = Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana / Reg. lat. 1995

S = Roma / Biblioteca dell'Accademia dei Lincei / Corsinianus 147

Abbreviations

CO = Pius II: *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae suis temporibus contigerunt* [1464]

HA = Eneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Historia Austriacalis*. Teil 1: Einleitung von Martin Wagendorfer. 1. Redaktion ed. von Julia Knödler. Teil 2: 2./3, ed. Martin Wagendorfer. 2 vols. Hannover, 2009. (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum. Nova Series; 24)

HB = Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Historia Bohemica*. Herausg. J. Hejnic & H. Rothe. 2 vols. Köln, 2005. (Bausteine zur slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte. Neue Folge. Reihe B; 20)

MA = Pius II: *Orationes politicae et ecclesiasticae*. Ed. Giovanni Domenico Mansi. 3 vols. Lucca: Benedini, 1755-1759

¹ References to the *Annales* are usually given in this form: (e.g.) **Rainaldus, ad ann. 1459, nr. 67** (without reference to any specific edition)

MPL = Migne, Jacques-Paul: *Patrologia latina*. 217 vols. 1841-1865

OO = Pius II: *Opera quae extant omnia*. Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1551 [2nd ed., 1571; Anastatic reprod. Frankfurt: Minerva 1967]

RTA = Deutsche Reichstagsakten

WO = *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*. Hrsg. von Rudolf Wolkan. 3 vols. Wien, 1909-1918

Decretum = *Decretum magistri Gratiani*. Ed. Lipsiensis secunda. Eds. A.L. Richter & A. Friedberg. 2 vols. Leipzig, 1879

Epistolarium = Enee Silvii Piccolominei *Epistolarium Seculare*. Ed. A. van Heck. Città del Vaticano, 2007

Rainaldus = *Annales ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi Card. Baronius desinit*. Auct. Odoricus Raynaldus. Tom. XVIII-XIX. Roma: Varesius, 1659-1663

Reject = *Reject Aeneas, accept Pius : Selected letters of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II)*. Intr. and transl. by T.M. Izbicki *et al.* Washington, D.C., 2006

II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

[1] {366r} Habemus¹ fidem legationi Stephani: eadem multis ex locis nuntiantur. Occidentis quaerit imperium² Mahumetus, qui orientale pervasit. Aptissima ejus desiderio Bosna est. Hanc portam – credibile est – inprimis perfringere conabitur. Non perficiet audente rege forti animo resistere. Ardua sunt montium claustra et aditus, quos facile tueri pauci queant. Conjugent Hungari arma et Veneti. Legatum ejus rei causa ad utramque gentem mittemus. Communem causam communibus adjuvabunt viribus. Nos tantum auxilii praestabimus quantum per facultates licebit. Arma, quae sunt in Dalmatia, ministrari jubebimus. Ecclesias cathedrales in Bosna mandabimus erigi et erectis constituemus episcopos.

[2] Coronam mittere sine praejudicio regis Hungariae haudquaquam possumus, cujus rex Bosnae vassallus est, et ad eum pertinet coronare regem. Sciscitabimur, quid sit animi ejus. Si aequo animo³ tulerit⁴, coronam, quae parata est, per legatum mittemus. Invito non faciemus injuriam, neque irritabimus eum, a quo sunt auxilia expectanda. Stephanus, si sapiat, Matthiam Hungariae regem omnibus sibi studiis conciliabit; quocum foedere ac benevolentia junctus difficile a Turcis pessumdabitur.

¹ Pontificis responsive *nota marg.* R

² quaerit imperium : imperium quaerit R

³ *omit.* R

⁴ ~~animo~~ *add.* R

[1] We believe Stefan's¹ embassy: the same [news] are coming in from many places. Having conquered the Oriental Empire,² Mehmed³ now wants the Western. Bosnia fits his designs very well: quite probably, this is the gate he will first try to break through. But he will not succeed if the king dares to resist courageously. The mountain passes are difficult, and the access roads can easily be defended by a few men. The Hungarians and Venetians will join the fight. We shall send a legate to each people to that purpose. They will aid the common cause with joint arms. We Ourselves shall send what aid We can. We shall order that the weapons kept in Dalmatia be made available to you. We shall order dioceses to be created in Bosnia and afterwards appoint bishops to them.

[2] A crown We cannot send without prejudice to the King of Hungary:⁴ the King of Bosnia is a vassal of his, and it belongs to him to crown the king. We shall ask him what he wants. If he accepts it, We shall send a legate with the crown which is being held in readiness. But if he does not, We shall not wrong him nor provoke the one you should look to for help. If Stephan is wise, he will try to by all means to win over King Matthias of Hungary. If he is united with him by treaty and friendship, it will be difficult for the Turks to destroy him.

¹ Stefan Tomašević (d. 1463): King of Bosnia from 1461 to his death

² The Byzantine Empire

³ Mehmed II the Conqueror (1432-1481): Ottoman sultan who ruled first for a short time from August 1444 to September 1446, and later from February 1451 until his death. In 1453 he conquered Constantinople and brought an end to the Byzantine Empire

⁴ Matthias I Corvinus (1443-1490): King of Hungary and Croatia from 1458 to his death. After conducting several military campaigns, he was elected King of Bohemia in 1469 and adopted the title Duke of Austria in 1487

Appendix: Oration of Bosnian ambassadors (November 1462, Rome)

(Translation by Florence A. Gragg, pp. 740-741)

Most Holy Father, the King of Bosnia has sent us to you and bidden us to speak thus in his name: 'I am informed that Mahomet, Sultan of Turkey, intends to move against me next summer and has troops and engines of war in readiness. I am not in a position to withstand so severe an attack. I have begged the Hungarians and the Venetians and George¹ of Albania to come to my aid. I make the same request of you. I do not demand *mountains of gold*.² I am only eager that my enemies and my provincials should be assured that I am by no means without your favor. If the Bosnians know that I shall not be alone in the war they will fight more bravely and the Turks will not dare to invade my lands which are difficult of access and in many places have almost impregnable fortresses. Your predecessor, Eugenius,³ offered my father the crown and wished to build pontifical churches in Bosnia. My father refused in order not to draw upon himself the hatred of the Turks, for he was newly a Christian and had not yet expelled the Manicheans from his kingdom. I was baptized as a child and learned Latin and have whole-heartedly embraced the Christian faith. I do not fear what my father feared.⁴ I pray you to send me the crown and consecrated bishops. This will be a sign that you will not fail me if I am threatened by the disaster of a war. If I am crowned by you I shall inspire hope in my subjects and terror in my enemy.

When my father was alive you gave orders that the arms in Dalmatia under the control of the Venetians should be collected in the name of a crusade and sent to him. The Venetian Senate would not agree. Bid them to be sent to me. Perhaps you will find your command of greater effect, since the temper of the Venetians has changed and it is said that they are about to declare war on the Turks. I ask these things and also that you will send an envoy to the Hungarians to commend my cause to the King and urge him to join arms with me. In this way Bosnia can be saved; otherwise she is doomed to perish. The Turks have built a number of fortifications in my kingdom and are showing a kindly disposition toward the peasants. They promise that all who desert to them shall be free and they welcome them graciously. The inexperienced rustics do not understand their wiles and think their liberty will last forever. The people will be easily induced by such tricks to desert me unless they see me fortified by your aid, and the nobles, if they are deserted by the peasants, will not hold out long in their fortresses.

¹ Skanderbeg

² Terentius: *Phormio*, 68. Otto, 1132

³ Pope Eugenius IV

⁴ Vergilius: *Aeneis*, 8.535

If Mahomet sought my kingdom only and did not mean to advance further, my lot might be endured and it would not be fitting that the rest of Christendom should be plagued to defend me. But an insatiable passion for power knows no limits. After me he will harry Hungary and the Dalmatians, who are now subject to Venice, and then through the Croatians and the Istrians he will aim at Italy, which he aspires to rule. He often talks of Rome and has turned his thoughts thither. If Christians allow him to make himself master of my kingdom, he will find here a very suitable province and very advantageous bases for fulfilling his ambition. I am the first to expect the storm. After me the Hungarians and Venetians will have to await their fate, nor will Italy be left in peace.

Such are the enemy's plans. I tell you what I have learned that you may not one day say you were not warned and accuse me of negligence. My father predicted to your predecessor, Nicholas V, and the Venetians the fall of Constantinople. He was not believed. Christianity to its great hurt lost a royal city and a patriarchal see and the prop of Greece. Now I prophesy about myself. If you trust and aid me I shall be saved; if not, I shall perish and many will be ruined with me.

This is the message Stephen bade me give you. Do you, who are the father of the Christian religion, give advice and aid.