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Oration "Prius sanctissime praesul" of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (February 1445, Rome). Edited and translated by Michael v. Cotta-Schönberg. 5th version. (Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 7)

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(Collected Orations of Pope Pius II; 7)

Oration "*Prius sanctissime praesul*" of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (February 1445, Rome). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg

6th version

2019

Abstract

In the beginning of 1445, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, secretary in the Roman Chancery of Emperor Friedrich III, arrived at the papal court in Rome on a mission from the emperor. The mission was part of ongoing negotiations between the imperial court and the papal court aiming at ending the German state of Neutrality between Pope Eugenius IV and the Council of Basel, and at Germany returning to the obedience of the Roman pope. Formerly in his career, Piccolomini had been a fervent conciliarist and had written and spoken much against the pope. During his years in Austria/Germany from 1442 and onwards, however, he had slowly migrated to a papalist position, and he was now able to use the imperial mission to submit to the pope and seek his forgiveness. This he did in an oration "*Prius sanctissime praesul*", delivered before the pope and some trusted cardinals, before he took up the emperor's matter.

Keywords

Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini; Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Papa Pio II; Pope Eugenius IV; Pope Eugene IV; Papa Eugenio IV; Conciliarism; Council of Basel; Council of Basle; Renaissance Orations; Renaissance rhetorics; Renaissance oratory; 1445; 15th century

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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.

7 September 2019

MCS

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

Table of volumes in *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*. 12 vols. Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg.

1. General introduction
2. 1436-1444 (Orations 1-5)
3. 1445-1449 (Orations 6-13)
4. 1450-1453 (Orations 14-20)
5. 1454-1455 (Orations 21-25)
6. 1455-1457 (Orations 26-28)
7. 1458-1459 (Orations 29-42)
8. 1459-1459 (Orations 43-51)
9. 1459-1461 (Orations 52-63)
10. 1462-1464 (Orations 64-77)
11. 1454, 1459 (Orations 78-80). Orthographical profiles. Indices
12. Appendix: Ambassadors' orations to Pope Pius II

Table of contents

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Context
2. Themes
3. Date, place, format and audience
4. Text
 - 4.1. Manuscripts
 - 4.2. Editions
 - 4.3. Present edition
5. Sources
6. Bibliography
7. Sigla and abbreviations

II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Context¹

When, in 1442, Enea Silvio Piccolomini left the service of antipope Felix V to become a secretary in the Imperial Chancery of Friedrich III, he was still a fervent conciliarist, believing in the supremacy of the council over the pope and supporting the, by now, schismatic Council of Basel and its antipope against Pope Eugenius IV,² deposed by the Council of Basel in 1439. Over the next two years, however, a number of events made him abandon the conciliarist cause and join the cause of the Pope Eugenius.

An important factor in this development was the position of his mentor and superior, Chancellor Heinrich Schlick who for various reasons – some quite opportunistic – sponsored the papal cause and the cessation of the German Neutrality³ between the Council of Basel⁴ and Pope Eugenius IV. The development is documented in the oration “*Si putarem*” [5], held by the chancellor at the imperial court on 4 April 1444 and mostly written by Piccolomini.

In the beginning of 1445, Piccolomini was sent by the emperor to Pope Eugenius to present an imperial proposal for a new council with the object of restoring church unity. It had not been planned that way: the emperor had wanted his Chancellor Schlick to undertake this mission, but shortly before the chancellor’s projected departure court affairs prevented his travelling to Rome. In his stead the emperor sent one of his secretaries, the chancellor’s close collaborator and protégé, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, thus providing Piccolomini with an unexpected opportunity for reconciliation with the pope and a boost of his career in the clerical direction.⁵

The mission was not without some risk to Piccolomini himself, since his conversion to the papal cause was not yet public,⁶ and since he had, in 1435, been personally involved in a Milanese plot

¹ CO, I, 13 (Meserve, I, pp. 52-59); Ady, pp. 87-89; Boulting, pp. 154-160; Koller, p. 105; Mitchell, pp. 98-100; O’Brien, p. 113; Pastor, II, pp. 258-259; Pückert, p. 237; Stiebert, pp. 272-275 and especially pp. 271-273;; Voigt, II, 1-6, pp. 247-344 and esp. pp. 340-344;

² Eugenius IV [Gabriele Condulmer] (1383-1447): Pope from 1431 to his death

³ Established by the German princes in 1438, and accepted by emperors Albrecht II and Friedrich III

⁴ Council of Basel: Recognized by the Catholic Church from its beginning in 1431 until 1437 when it was transferred by the pope to Ferrara, continuing in Basel, however, as a schismatic council

⁵ Baldi, p.103

⁶ On Piccolomini’s vulnerability in this specific context O’Brien writes: *Over the course of his professional career, Aeneas had significantly aggravated the conciliar threat facing the papacy – or at least, so the papacy had perceived. He did so first very consciously and deliberately as a prominent member of the council of Basel, and, in particular as a publicist who introduced powerful new weapons into the assembly’s anti-papal assaults. As imperial secretary, legate, and adviser, he continued to take positions on conciliar authority and on the role of general councils that were perceived in the curia as hostile to papal sovereignty* (O’Brien, p. 113). Piccolomini’s importance to the conciliar movement and the Papacy’s perception of it, however, appear not to be well documented. Moreover, his change to the papalist cause actually occurred only a couple of years after his joining the imperial court – and had been privately communicated to Piccolomini’s connections at the papal court

to seize the pope's person.¹ It was therefore necessary for him to formally submit to the pope and to obtain his forgiveness for his former conciliarist activities at the Council of Basel.

When he was received by Eugenius, he therefore first asked for the pope's forgiveness which he received, and only afterwards did he undertake his negotiations on behalf of the emperor

In his *Commentarii*, Pius wrote about the mission:

After this, the Council of Basel rejected the proposed terms of peace, and Aeneas was sent to confer with Eugenius. When he reached Siena, however his relations all tried to deter him from going to Rome because he had been opposed to Eugenius at Basel. Eugenius, they said, remembered nothing so long as an injury and was both vindictive and cruel. Aeneas replied that he could not imagine the emperor's ambassador would be in danger in Rome and that he must either perform the duty he had undertaken or die in the attempt. And so, ignoring the protests of his weeping family, he continued on his way. An old intimate of his, Gerardo Landriani, cardinal of Como, an honest priest and faithful friend, introduced him to the presence of Eugenius. I should like to quote here the words Aeneas addressed to the pope, for they are brief and worth recording. Two cardinals, Como and Amiens, were standing by the pope. First, they invoked apostolic authority to absolve Aeneas of all the blame he had incurred by taking the side of the Council of Basel. Then Aeneas came before Eugenius. He was given permission to kiss his foot, hand and cheek; he presented his credentials and was asked to speak. [Here follows the text of the oration.] Eugenius replied: "We know that you have sinned grievously against us, but since you confess your error we must pardon you. The Church is a loving mother, who never remits the due penalty if a son denies his sin, nor insists on it when he confesses. Now you know the truth. See that you do not let it go. Strive by good works to regain the divine grace which you lost by wicked acts. You are now in a position to defend the truth and be of service to the Church. Hereafter we shall forget past wrongs and, so long as you do well, we shall love you well." After this they proceeded to speak of ecclesiastical matters, about which Eugenius wished time to meditate.When he heard from Eugenius that he would send an ambassador to the emperor, he went back to Siena.^{2 3}

Pius' contemporary biographer, Gianantonio Campano wrote:

¹ Voigt, I, p. 80

² 1 April 1445

³ CO, I, 13 (Meserve, I, pp. 52-59)

*His second mission was to Eugenius. His friends advised against it since he had offended Eugenius gravely, when his dignity was under continuous attack in Basel. But he became reconciled with Eugenius and when his mission was accomplished he returned ...*¹

His second contemporary biographer, Bartolomeo Platina, wrote:

When Eugenius and the emperor began to negotiate on ending the schism, Enea was sent to Rome in this matter. When he came to Siena his friends urged him not to go to Eugenius, fearing that he would detest Enea because he had often attacked his authority, in epistles and orations, at the Council of Basel. But being courageous and confident in his own innocence, he disregarded the pleas of his relations, and continued to Rome. First he excused himself in an elegant oration before Eugenius for having followed the authority of the men who had secured the approval of the Council of Basel.² Then he began to negotiate with him on the matters concerning which he had been sent by the emperor, though many were against it.³

And his friend, Lodrisio Crivelli, wrote in his *De expeditione Pii II*:

Though many learned men had assembled there [in Basel], he was the only one⁴ to have praised the majesty and the acts of the council in his writings. For that reason he knew Eugenius to be his enemy. But after the dissolution of the council⁵ he came to the pope and presented a splendid apology, which is now read by many, showing so great virtue and uncommon gracefulness that the past was forgotten and he rose greatly in the estimation of the pope and the other fathers.⁶

¹ Zimolo, p. 14: *Altera [legatione] ad Eugenium, adversantibus amicis, quod offendisse illum graviter videbatur, oppugnata totiens ad Basileam eius dignitate. Eo reconciliato et rebus ex sententia confectis, divertit ...*

² Primarily Cardinal Cesarini

³ Zimolo, p. 100: *Agi de abolendo scismate ab Eugenio et Caesare interim est coeptum. Eius rei causa Aeneas Romam missus, cum Saenis iter faceret, a suis vehementer rogatur ne ad Eugenium proficisceretur: veriti enim sunt ne in eum pontifex graviter animadverteret, quod eius auctoritas in concilio basiliensi ab Aenea epistolis et orationibus persaepe impugnata fuerat. At homo fortissimus sua innocentia fretus, spretis cognatorum precibus, Romam contendit, seque primum ad Eugenium eleganti oratione purgat, quod eorum auctoritatem secutus esset, quorum sententia basileense concilium fuerat approbatum. Deinde de his rebus cum eo agere coepit, quarum gratia ab imperatore venerat, cui certe studio partium multi sunt adversati*

⁴ Piccolomini was certainly not the only one to have praised the council in words and writings

⁵ If Crivelli's refers to the pope's translation of the Council of Basel to Ferrara in 1438, eight years had actually passed before Piccolomini was reconciled with the pope

⁶ Crivelli, p. 38: *...cum multi doctissimi viri eo convenissent, solus tamen illius synodi majestatem et res gestas scriptis suis illustravit. Quorum gratia cum se Eugenio infensum sciret, post concilii tamen dissolutionem ad Pontificem veniens et luculentissimo, qui nunc a multis legitur, usus apologetico vis tantae virtutis et non vulgaris gratiae dignitatisque locum, oblitterata praeteritorum memoria, apud eum ceterosque patres invenit*

Of course the pope forgave the man kneeling before him,¹ the emperor's personal envoy, and though it was delicately put, he now expected Piccolomini to act in the interests of the Papacy at the imperial court:

*You are now in a position to defend the truth and be of service to the Church. Hereafter we shall forget past wrongs, and as long as you do well, we shall love you well.*²

Having become reconciled with the pope and concluded his mission to the papal court, Piccolomini returned to the emperor. The imperial mission actually failed since the pope – well-advisedly – later rejected the emperor's proposal for another council, but his personal mission, the reconciliation with the pope, was a success: it marked the end of his conversion from the conciliarist to the papalist cause and gave the first serious impetus to his future ecclesiastic career.³

2. Themes

The theme of the oration was Piccolomini's confession of his conciliarist errors:

While in Basel, I said, and wrote, and did much against you: I do not deny it. But my intention was not to harm you, but to benefit the Church of God. Working against you, I thought that I was serving God. I erred: who will deny it? [Sect. 1]

Piccolomini's errors were not in themselves terrible, since so many others had held them, too, and had afterwards been happily reconciled with the pope. Piccolomini carefully mentions some of them, among whom was an outstanding member of the College of Cardinals, a luminary of the papal court, Cardinal Cesarini who as papal legate had represented the pope in the crusade ending disastrously at Varna the year before, and where Cesarini himself was killed, a martyr for the Faith.

¹ Frizzi, p. 72: *la propria difesa, che ad Eugenio recitò il Piccolomini, ne desarmò l'ira per quanto aveva detto e scritto contro di lui nel Concilio di Basilea*

² CO, I, 13 (Meserve, I, p. 56-57)

³ Baldi, pp. 102-103: *L'immagine, tramandata dai Commentarii, del Piccolomini che, inginocchiato ai piedi di Eugenio IV, chiede al pontifice il perdono per il suo passato conciliare, ha in effetti assunto un'importanza centrale nella ricostruzione dello svolgimento della vicenda piccolominiana e proprio la decisione di prestare obbedienza ad Eugenio IV è stata anzi considerata spesso come il punto di arrivo di un processo di maturazione, di "svolta", che si afferma progressivamente e che lo porta a riavvicinarsi al papato romano. L'episodio, in particolare, aprirebbe al Piccolomini nuove, importante possibilità di carriera, di azione; contribuirebbe alla sua ascesa, non solo nella cancelleria, ma anche, entro il volgere di breve tempo, nella gerarchia ecclesiastica*

Cesarini had been a friend and mentor of Piccolomini's at the Council of Basel, before he returned to the pope in 1438,¹ and Piccolomini was indeed well-advised to mention him in his apology:

But I did so together with many and great men. I followed Giuliano, Cardinal of Sant'Angelo, Archbishop Niccolò of Palermo, and Ludovico Pontano, a notary of your own See, men who were considered the eyes of the law and teachers of truth. And what should I say about the University of Paris and the other universities in the world, many of which opposed you? Who might not have erred together with so great men? [Sect. 2]

Piccolomini might also have mentioned Cardinal Cusa, another luminary of the papal court, who after an early conciliarist phase left the Council of Basel in 1436, to be appointed cardinal by Eugenius in 1446.

Aggravating circumstances, however, would have been Piccolomini's fervent writings and orations in the conciliarist cause, his contributions to the election of the antipope and his administration, and the time it had taken for him to reach his present papalist convictions.

He defended himself quite reasonably, however:

I admit that when I perceived the error of the Basileans, I did not immediately hasten to your side, as many did. Fearing to abandon one error just to fall into another – as often happens when those who wish to avoid Charybdis fall into Scylla – I went to those who were considered neutral, so as not to pass from one extreme to another without a pause for reflexion. So I have stayed with the emperor for three years² where I have heard more and more about the conflicts between the Basileans and your legates. I no longer have any doubts that the truth is with you. [Sect. 2]

3. Date, place, format and audience

The exact date of Piccolomini's audience with the pope, where the oration was delivered, is not known, but it was sometime in February or March 1445. According to Pückert, Piccolomini was in Rome already before 16 January.³

¹ Becker, pp. 17-57

² Since 1442

³ Pückert, p. 238. Baldi, p. 102, gives the time of Piccolomini's arrival in Rome as March. Voigt, II, p. 340, only says that Piccolomini began his travel to Rome in the beginning of the year

The place was the Apostolic Palace in Rome, and the oration was delivered before Pope Eugenius and cardinals Landriano and Le Jeune.

The format is that of an oration, though a very short one. In his *Commentarii*, Pius does not use the term “oration”, but says: “*jussus fuisset dicere ... inquit ...*”. However, a margin note in the Reginensis Latinus 1995 (see below) says: “*Oratio Enee ad pontificem*”. And Platina calls it an oration.¹ Though the context of the speech was semiprivate and the audience very small (but august), the occasion was a formal one and for Piccolomini personally of the greatest importance. So, he had undoubtedly prepared his text very, very carefully.

4. Text²

Though the oration had circulated individually and was much read,³ it was not included in the Collected Orations of Pius II, compiled under his direct supervision in 1462.

It was, however, included in his *Commentarii*, together with a number of orations given by the pope during the last years of his pontificate (1462-1464).⁴ It is not known if or to what extent it was revised in this connection.

4.1. Manuscripts

Manuscripts containing the individually circulated oration are not presently known.

The oration is only extant in the manuscripts containing the *Commentarii*, of which the two primary ones are:

- **Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana**
Reginensis Latinus 1995, ff. 15r-15v
- **Roma / Biblioteca dell'Accademia dei Lincei**
Corsinianus 147, ff. 11v

¹ Zimolo, p. 101: *se ... eleganti oratione purgat*

² For the textual transmission of Pius II's orations, see *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, ch. 5

³ See Crivelli above

⁴ See *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, sect. 5.1.4

4.2. Editions

The oration has been published in the editions of the *Commentarii*, e.g.

- Pius II: *Commentarii rerum memorabilium que suis temporibus contigerunt*. Ed. A van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984, (Studi e testi; 312-313) / Lib. I, cap. 13, p. 58
- Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Papa Pio II: *I Commentari*. Ed. Luigi Totaro. 2 vols. Milano, 1984 / Lib. I, cap. 13, pp. 58-60
- Pius II: *Commentaries*. Ed. M. Meserve and M. Simonetta. Vols. 1 ff. Cambridge, MA, 2003 ff. / Bk. I, ch. 13, 52-57

The edition by Meserve is with an English translation. An older English translation was published by Florence A. 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. 33-34

4.3. Present edition

For principles of edition (incl. orthography) and translation, see *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, ch. 9-10.

Text:

The edition is based on the Reginensis and the Corsinianus.¹

The lead text is from the Corsinianus, with variants from the Reginensis in the critical apparatus.

Pagination:

Pagination is from the Reginensis.

¹ Though the two manuscripts have been very ably edited by van Heck, Totaro and others, they have - as a matter of principle - been collated directly for the present edition

5. Sources¹

Only three quotations have been identified in the text, one from Virgil's *Aeneid*, the other a quotation from the Gospel of John, and the third a Latin topos.

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¹ For an analysis of Piccolomini's use of sources, see *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*, ch. 8

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

- *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae suis temporibus contigerunt*. Ed. A. van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984 (Studi e testi; 312-313)
- Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Papa Pio II: *I Commentari*. Ed. Luigi Totaro. 2 vols. Milano, 1984
- Pius II: *Commentaries*. Ed. M. Meserve and M. Simonetta. Vols. 1 ff. Cambridge, MA, 2003 ff.
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7. Sigla and abbreviations

R = Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana / Reginensis Latinus 1995

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

Abbreviations

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

¹ http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10016831_00005.html

- HA** = Eneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Historia Austrialis*. 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
- MPL** = Migne, Jacques-Paul: *Patrologia latina*. 217 vols. 1841-1865
- RTA** = Deutsche Reichstagsakten
- WO** = *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*. Hrsg. von Rudolf Wolkan. 3 vols. Wien, 1909-1918. (Fontes rerum Austriacarum, 2 / 61, 62, 67, 68)
- 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. (Studi e testi; 439)
- 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] {15r} Prius¹, sanctissime praesul, quam Caesaris mandata refero, de me ipso pauca dicam. Scio multa de me tuis auribus inculcata esse neque bona neque digna relatu, sed neque mentiti sunt, qui² me tibi detulerunt. Plurima ego, dum Basileae fui, adversus te dixi, scripsi, et³ feci: nihil inficior. At non tam tibi nocere quam Dei ecclesiae prodesse mens mea fuit. Nam cum te persequerer, *obsequium me Deo praestare* putabam. Erravi, quis neget? Sed neque cum paucis neque cum parvis hominibus. Julianum, sancti Angeli cardinalem, Nicolaum, archiepiscopum Panormitanum, Ludovicum Pontanum, tuae sedis notarium, sum secutus, qui juris oculi et veritatis magistri credebantur. Quid scholam Parisiensem {15v} et alia orbis gymnasia referam, quorum pleraque adversum te sentiebant? Quis cum tantis nominibus non erraverit?

[2] Verum ego ubi errorem deprehendi Basiliensium, fateor, non statim ad te convolavi, quod plerique fecerunt. Sed veritus ne ab errore in errorem prolaberer, ut saepe *in Scyllam incidunt cupientes vitare Charybdim*, ad eos me contuli, qui neutrales habebantur, ut ab altero duorum extremorum ad alterum non sine consultatione ac mora transirem. Mansi ergo apud Caesarem tribus annis, ubi dum magis ac magis contentiones audio, quae inter Basilienses et tuos legatos fiunt, nihil mihi dubii relictum est, quin te penes sit veritas. Atque hinc factum est, ut cupienti Caesari ad tuam me clementiam viam facere non invitus paruerim, sic enim me tuam in gratiam redire posse sum ratus. Nunc apud te sum, et quia ignorans peccavi, mihi ut ignoscas oro. Deinde causam Caesaris explicabo.

¹ Oratio Enee ad pontificem *in marg.* R

² de *add.* R

³ *omit.* R

[1] Holy Bishop, before I deliver the message ¹ from the emperor, I shall say a little about myself. I know that you have been told many things about me which are neither good nor worthy of mention, and those who denounced me to you did not lie. While in Basel,² I said, and wrote and did much against you: I do not deny it. But my intention was not to harm you, but to benefit the Church of God. Working against you, *I thought that I was serving God.*³ I erred: who will deny it? But I did so together with many and great men. I followed Giuliano, Cardinal of Sant'Angelo,⁴ Archbishop Niccolò of Palermo,⁵ and Ludovico Pontano,⁶ a notary of your own See, men who were considered the eyes of the law and teachers of truth. And what should I say about the University of Paris⁷ and the other universities⁸ in the world, many of which opposed you? Who might not have erred together with so great men?

¹ Vergilius: *Aeneis*, 7.267; 11.176

² Piccolomini arrived in Basel in 1432, as secretary to Cardinal Capranica. He was often absent from Basel, however, on extended missions to Milan and Scotland. Returning to Basel, he became a functionary of the council in 1436 and remained so even after the Council suspended the pope in 1438, at which point the remaining papalists left the council and returned to the papal court. The rump council went on to elect a new pope, Felix V, in 1439, whose secretary Piccolomini became. In 1442 he joined the imperial court of Friedrich III which still officially favoured the Neutrality between Pope Eugenius IV and the Council in Basel, declared by the German nation in 1438

³ John, 16, 2

⁴ Cesarini, Giuliano (1398-1444): created cardinal by Martinus V in 1426. Died at the Battle of Varna, 1444. Mentor and friend of Piccolomini. When he arrived, as papal legate, to take up the presidency of the Council of Basel in 1431, Cardinal Cesarini was a firm conciliarist, and he actively and successfully resisted the pope's attempt to speedily dissolve the Council. As the Council's opposition to the pope became more and more pronounced, not to say rabid, Cesarini gradually lost faith in it and finally left, in January 1438, in order to rejoin the pope and become one of his most trusted advisors

⁵ Niccolò Tedeschi (1386-1445): canon lawyer and abbot of Benedictine monastery in Catania; Archbishop of Palermo from 1435; created cardinal by the antipope, Felix V, in 1440. Called "lucerna juris". Taught civil law at the University of Siena from 1418-1430, including during the period (1423-1429) when Piccolomini studied at the same university

⁶ Ludovico Pontano (1409-1439): Italian lawman. Pronotary of the papal Curia. One of the representatives of Alfonso V at the Council of Basel. Friend of Piccolomini who admired him greatly

⁷ During that period the University of Paris was staunchly conciliarist

⁸ "gymnasia"

[2] Verum ego ubi errorem deprehendi Basiliensium, fateor, non statim ad te convolavi, quod plerique fecerunt; sed veritus ne ab errore in errorem prolaberer, ut saepe *in Scyllam incidunt cupientes vitare Charybdim*, ad eos me contuli, qui neutrales habebantur, ut ab altero duorum extremorum ad alterum non sine consultatione ac mora transirem. Mansi ergo apud Caesarem tribus annis, ubi dum magis ac magis contentiones audio, quae inter Basilienses et tuos legatos fiunt, nihil mihi dubii relictum est, quin te penes sit veritas. Atque hinc factum est, ut cupienti Caesari ad tuam me clementiam viam facere non invitus paruerim, sic enim me tuam in gratiam redire posse sum ratus. Nunc apud te sum, et, quia ignorans peccavi, mihi ut ignoscas oro. Deinde causam Caesaris explicabo.

[2] I admit that when I perceived the error of the Basileans, I did not immediately hasten to your side, as many did. Fearing to abandon one error just to fall into another – as often happens when those who wish to avoid Charybdis fall into Scylla¹ – I went to those who were considered neutral, so as not to pass from one extreme to another without a pause for reflexion. So I have stayed with the emperor for three years² where I have heard more and more about the conflicts between the Basileans and your legates. I no longer have any doubts that the truth is with you. Therefore, when the emperor³ wished to send me to Your Clemency, I was very happy to obey, believing that in this way I could gain your favour. Now I stand before you, and having sinned out of ignorance, I beg you to forgive me.

Afterwards I shall set forth the emperor's matter.

¹ Otto, p. 82. The Latin proverb was coined by Gualtier de Lille: *Alexandreis*, 5, 301

² Since 1442

³ Friedrich III (Habsburg) (1415-1493): Duke of Austria (as Friedrich V) from 1424. Elected King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor in 1440, crowned emperor in Rome in 1452