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Cardinal Enea Silvio Piccolomini and the Development of Cardinal Protectors of Nations

By Michael von Cotta-Schönberg

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Abstract

This article deals with the development of Cardinal Protectors of Nations in the 15th century. It is based partly on texts examined by Josef Wodka (1938), partly on the correspondence of Cardinal Enea Silvio Piccolomini published in the Opera Omnia edition of 1571 and the correspondence of King Christian 1. with the Papal Court.

The author's interpretation of the development differs somewhat from Josef Wodka's in that it recognizes the decisive role of the Council of Basle in creating a legal base for cardinals representing royal interests at the Apostolic See. The Council agreed with the stance of Pope Martin V that cardinals should act as impartial and independent advisors of popes, but - reaching back to Avignonese precedents - it accepted a form of representation termed "promotorship" rather than "protectorship" of royal affairs. It did not indicate any difference of content between the two concepts, but only addressed the modalities of partiality and payment.

This interpretation is based on the Conciliar Decree itself and on the Cardinal's correspondence which documents the practice at the Papal Court in the 1450's, including a formal arrangement of promotorship between the Cardinal and the Emperor, and negotiations concerning such a promotorship between the Cardinal and the King of Denmark.

Subject terms

Cardinal Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Cardinal Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Emperor Friedrich III; Emperor Frederick III; Pope Martin V; Pope Eugene IV; Pope Alexander VI; Cardinal Francesco Todeschini-Piccolomini; Pope Pius III; The Council of Basle; The Fifth Lateran Council; Cardinal Protectors of Nations; Crown Cardinals; Popes and Kings; Papal Government; Church Government; Renaissance

1. Introduction

In the 16th and 17th centuries an important instrument of papal government was the formal office of Cardinal Protector of Nations. This institution was the result of a development that began in the late Middle Ages and gained momentum in the 15th century in spite of opposition and ambivalence on the part of some popes who feared that such arrangements would lead to cardinals becoming dependent on secular princes.

Enea Silvio Piccolomini became a cardinal in 1456 and was elected pope already in 1458. As a cardinal he actively sought to become the privileged representative of a number of European princes, especially from the German sphere, including the Emperor, Frederick III, and the King of Denmark, Christian 1.

His correspondence as a cardinal¹ and a number of letters from the Danish Court to the Papal Court from that period² provide valuable documentation on the development of the office of Cardinal Protectors of Nations which has until now only been sparsely studied.³

¹ Published soon after his death as well as in the Opera Omnia editions of 1551 and 1571

² Extant only in a copy made in the 17th century, held in the Royal Library, Copenhagen

³ Studies of the development of the office of Cardinal Protector of Nations are few, cf. Olivier Poncet: The Cardinal-protectors of the Crowns in the Roman Curia during the first Half of the Seventeenth Century: the Case of France. In: G. Signorotto & M. A. Visceglia (eds.), *Court and politics in papal Rome*. Cambridge, 2002 (Cambridge Studies in Italian History and Culture), cf. p. 158. Walther Schürmeyer had a section on *Die Kardinäle als Protektoren* in his 1914-monograph on *Das Kardinalskollegium unter Pius II*, in: Walter Schürmeyer: *Das Kardinalskollegium unter Pius II*. Berlin, 1914. (Historische Studien; 122). The only general study as yet is Josef Wodka: *Zur Geschichte der nationalen Protektorate der Kardinäle an der römischen Kurie*. Innsbruck, 1938. (Publikationen des ehemaligen Österreichischen Historischen Instituts in Rom; IV, 1). Since then two special studies have been published, one being William E. Wilkie: *The Cardinal Protectors of England : Rome and the Tudors before the Reformation*. Cambridge, 1974; and the other Poncet's abovementioned article from 2002.

2. The office of Cardinal Protectors of Nations and its development in the 15th century

After the Pope himself, the College of Cardinals was the second most important organ of government in the Catholic Church⁴. Over the centuries, a number of special functions and offices accrued to the cardinals. Among them were the office of protector either of nations (and princes), of religious orders⁵, or of ecclesiastical institutions in the city of Rome. Another was the "office" of the "Cardinal Nephew" who over the centuries became an important member of papal government.

The general background of the function of Cardinal Protector of Nations was the need of kings and princes for high-level representation at the Apostolic See⁶ which for centuries remained the only truly international authority in Europe – since the Holy Roman Empire comprised only Germany and some parts of Italy. In principle, this authority was religious in its scope, but religious and secular affairs often coincided, as is for instance seen in connection with the foundation of universities that had to have papal approval. Especially the appointment of bishops was of great importance to secular rulers⁷, as bishops administered large areas within their states, controlled the incomes of these areas, and were often important members of royal government, sometimes even secular princes in their own right, and important political figures with their own agendas.

The cardinals were expected to be the pope's principal advisors and collaborators both in international affairs and in affairs pertaining to the individual European kingdoms. They therefore had to be independent of the interests of the different monarchs. Already in the Middle Ages, however, the practice of kings and princes being represented by a cardinal at the Roman Curia led to increasing dependence of cardinals on royal interests and support that was problematic for the popes.

⁴ Schürmeyer 1914, p. 96

⁵ The development of the protectorship of religious orders seems to have begun before that of the protectorship of nations, cf. Poncet 2002, p. 158. It was perceived as non-threatening to the popes, and though the two forms of protectorship are treated together in the papal and conciliar documents of the 15th century, they are treated differently. The present article focuses exclusively on the protectorship of nations

⁶ Schürmeyer 1914, p. 96; Wilkie 1974, p. 5

⁷ Wilkie 1974, p. 6

For various reasons, indicated by Josef Wodka in his seminal work on Cardinal Protectors of Nations from 1938, it is difficult to directly document the existence of concrete, formal arrangements between kings and cardinals before the end of the Fifteenth Century⁸.

However, some documentation does exist.

The first known case dates back to the Avignon period: In 1365, Pope Urban V (1362-1370) in a letter of May 14 to the Hungarian King, Lewis I the Great (1342-1382) stated that Cardinal Guillaume de la Jugée "would be the fervent champion and the solicitous promotor⁹ at the Apostolic See of your honour and state and of your kingdom." Another letter of July 27, 1366, sent by the same pope to the same king, has the following statement about the Cardinal: "[he] who untiringly promotes your honour and that of your Kingdom and the royal affairs [of Hungary] at the Apostolic See." And, finally, a letter of October 25, 1372, from Pope Gregory XI (1370-1378), again addressed to King Lewis, says that the cardinal "is the fervent champion of the honour of yourself and yours, and a solicitous promotor of your affairs."¹⁰ There is no mention of the cardinal being in any way remunerated by the king, but it is known that he held ecclesiastical benefices in the Kingdom of Hungary. This case may be have been an isolated occurrence, but evidently two Avignonese popes officially recognized a cardinal as the *promotor* of the affairs of a European king at the Apostolic See.

The second case is Pope Urban VI (1378-1389) who "many times told the Lord Cardinals that it it was against his wish that any of the Lord Cardinals should have

⁸ Wodka 1938, pp. 2-3

⁹ In this article, to avoid ambiguity, *promovere* and *promotor* have been consistently translated as *promote* and *promotor*, *protector* and *protectio* as *protector* and *protection*, and *defensor* as *defender*

¹⁰ 1365: "fore tui honoris et status ac tui regni fervidum zelatorem et apud sedem apostolicam sollicitum promotorem". Augustin Theiner: *Vetera monumenta Historiam Hungariam sacram illustrantia, ex Tabulariis Vaticanis*. 2 vols. Romae, 1859–1860, nr. 128, II, p. 68

1366: "ex quo tuum tuique Regni zelatur honorem et negotia regia apud apostolicam sedem promovet indefesse". Theiner, nr. 149, p. II, 80

1372: "honoris tui et tuorum fervidus zelator et negociorum tuorum sollicitus promotor existit". Theiner, nr. 253, II, p. 126. See also nos. 11 and 295. Cf. Wodka 1938, p. 28-29

pensions, provisions or other places from the princes because such profits were detrimental to the Church.”¹¹

This statement indirectly confirms that the practice of arrangements between kings and cardinals existed. It did not, however, forbid cardinals to represent a king at the Papal Court, as can be seen in the Hungarian arrangement approved by the Pope’s direct predecessors. What was considered improper was cardinals being financially dependent on kings.

The third case is Pope Martin V (1417-1431)¹² who, in 1424, issued the following declaration as part of his reform of the Roman Curia: “[The cardinals] should not assume protectorships of kings, princes, counts, or other secular persons, and those protectorships that have already been assumed should cease.”¹³

This declaration is quite emphatic: cardinals are forbidden to undertake the protection of the interests of kings etc. at the Court of Rome, and the reason given is that they should advise and assist their Lord, the Pope, freely and without being bound by particular interests. The term used is *protection* (*protectio*). The texts themselves do not provide any evidence that there is a difference between *protectorship* in the sense of Martin V and *promotorship* in the sense of the abovementioned Avignonese popes.

The fourth case is Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) whose instruction to his legate and president at the Reform Council of Basle (1431-1439), Cardinal Cesarini, included the following passage concerning the cardinals: “Moreover, they should not be protectors of lords or communities”¹⁴, i.e. the cardinals are not allowed to be protectors of Lords or Communities, e.g. the Italian republics (Venice, Florence

¹¹ “... dixit dominis Cardinalibus plurimis vicibus, quod suæ intentionis non erat, quod aliqui ex dominis Cardinalibus de cætero haberent pensiones seu provisiones vel alia loca a principibus, quia propter illa lucra negotia Ecclesiæ male procedebant.” Odorico Rinaldi & Cesare Baronio: *Annales Ecclesiastici, ab anno quo desinit Card. Cæs. Baronius 1198 usque ad 1565 ...* auctore Odorico Raynaldo. Vols. 17-18. Köln, 1693-1694 [hereafter quoted as Rainaldus], vol. 17, ad ann. 1378, n. 101. Cf. Schürmeyer 1914, pp. 96-97

¹² Cf. Schürmeyer 1914, p. 97; Wodka 1938, pp. 4-5, 30

¹³ “Protectiones Regum, Principum, Comitum aliorumque personarum saecularium non assumant, assumptasque non exercent.” Rainaldus, vol. 18, ad ann. 1424, n. 4. Cf. Wodka 1938, p. 34

¹⁴ “Item quod non sint protectores dominorum aut communitatum”. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter abbreviated as BAV): Vaticanus Latinus 3884, fol. 15-12, as quoted by Wodka 1938, p. 5

etc.). The instruction simply repeats Martin V's prohibition issued seven years before. Here the term *protector* is used.

The Council of Basle was held during the pontificate of Eugene and was often in direct opposition to the pope whom it finally, but unsuccessfully deposed - after the papal party had left. In 1435, the Council debated a memorandum on the reform of the College of Cardinals, probably drafted by Cardinal Cesarini, that said: "Moreover, the cardinals should not be counselors, pensioners, sworn, or obliged by verbal or written promise to any prince, community, college, religious order, or person."¹⁵ The cardinals should assist the pope freely and sincerely without being under an obligation to any person, including kings and princes.

In March 1436, when it still had papal recognition, the Council actually decreed as follows:

"And as the cardinals should assist him who is the common father of all¹⁶, it is highly improper for them to make distinctions between persons or to become their advocates. Therefore this Holy Synod decrees forbids them, as co-judges, to represent any particular interest even if they themselves come from the country concerned. And they should not be partial protectors or defenders of any prince or community or anybody else against anybody, with or without payment. But freed of all passion, they should assist the pope in settling conflicts through concord and justice. But this Holy Synod encourages them to promote the just affairs of princes and all others, especially the poor and the religious orders, without payment and profit, but purely as a work of charity."¹⁷

¹⁵ "Item quod de cetero cardinales non sint consilarii, pensionarii, jurati aut aliqua verbali seu litterali promissione obligati quibuscumque principibus, communitatibus, collegiis, ordinibus, seu personis". Wien Hofbibl., Cod. Lat. 5429 (fol. 123). Cf. Johannes Haller: *Concilium Basiliense - Studien und Quellen zur Geschichte des Concils von Basel*. Vol. 1. Basel, 1896, pp. 242-243

¹⁶ I.e. the pope

¹⁷ "Et cum ei qui communis est omnium pater, cardinales assistant, personarum acceptatores fieri vel advocatos valde indecens est. Propterea interdicat haec sancta Synodus, ut tanquam iudices collaterales partialitatem nullam accipiant; etiamsi de terra partiali originem ducant. Nec sint principum aut communitatum, seu aliorum contra quemquam, cum pretio vel sine, partiales protectores aut defensores; sed exuti omnem passionem in sedandis concordia vel iustitia litibus papae assistant. Principum autem et quorumque, praesertim pauperum ac religiosorum, gratis et sine ullo quaestu promovere iusta negotia, tanquam caritatis opus, persuadet sancta Synodus et commendat." Mansi, vol. XXIX, pp. 116-119, as quoted by Wodka 1938, pp. 35-36; cf. also Schürmeyer 1914, pp. 97-98

The terms *protector* and *defensor* are used synonymously, and the term *promote* (promovere) is used as indicating a form of non-partisan, charitable assistance.

This conciliar decree contains some important modifications of the intransigent papal stance: protectorships are forbidden (being by nature partial), but cardinals are allowed to promote (promovere) the legitimate affairs (justa negotia) of princes – and others - on the condition that they are not paid for their good offices. In this text, the difference between protectorship (forbidden) and promotorship (permitted) is that partisanship and personal gain are connected with protectorship, but otherwise there is no attempt to delineate the functional differences between the two. So, the council recognizes that cardinals may represent kings at the Apostolic See on the condition that this service is impartial and unpaid.

Wodka discussed whether or not the decree of the Council of Basle mitigated Pope Martin V's position and concluded that this was not its intention¹⁸. However, he may not have paid sufficient attention to the fact that the *promotorship* introduced by the Council – probably reaching back to Avignonese precedents (promovere negotia) - made it legitimate for cardinals to act in the interests of kings and nations at the Roman Curia, and that the Council's distinction between *protectorship* and *promotorship* did not address any difference in terms of content, but only in terms of partiality and payment.

Against the position of Wodka, it may reasonably be argued that the Council of Basle actually did mitigate Martin V's stance on national protectorships. The Council did not necessarily do so as in a spirit of defiance against the popes and from a desire to reduce papal power, but because it recognized that papal decisions and appointments directly and significantly affected internal affairs in European kingdoms and that it was therefore necessary for the European sovereigns to have a privileged form of representation at the Papal Court. Consequently, the decree may be seen as a decision to legitimize such a form of representation without using the term *protectorship* that had been declared unacceptable by Pope Martin, and recognizing the impropriety of cardinals being affected by national partisanship and financial dependency in relation to kings.

¹⁸ Wodka 1938, pp. 5-6

Interestingly, Piccolomini himself, as a younger man and still a layman, returned to the Council of Basle from Scotland in March 1436 at the time when the Council was passing its decree on the cardinals, and later developments show that he must have been quite familiar with the decree and its exact wording.

As this conciliar decree belonged to the period in which the Council of Basle was recognized by Pope Eugene IV and his successors, it definitely changed the legal state concerning cardinals representing princes at the Roman Curia as defined by Pope Martin: such representation was now legitimate, but it had to be non-partisan and unpaid. And out of deference to Pope Martin, it was called *promotorship* and not *protectorship*.

The fifth case actually concerns our Cardinal Piccolomini himself when he had become Pope Pius II (1458-1464).

In 1463, his old friend, Cardinal Nicholas of Cues, that somewhat difficult and intransigent paragon of ecclesiastical virtue, at the Pope's own request submitted a memorandum on church reform containing the following observation on cardinals' protectorships:

"For how can he be a cardinal if his advice is not loyal, and how can his advice be loyal, if it is not free? That which binds advice is favours, hate, partiality and suchlike. So, if a cardinal is the protector of a nation, a prince or a commune, then his advice will be bound because of the advantage he may reap from this. And if he hopes for any gift resulting from the reports he has to make in consistory in favour of somebody, then he has simply been hired."¹⁹

The term used here is once again *protector*. For the first time the term *nation* (*natio*) is used in this context.

A cardinal who is the protector of a nation or prince cannot be a neutral counselor to the pope because of the advantage accruing to him as a result of this relationship and for a number of other reasons. Cues especially criticizes the

¹⁹ "Nam quomodo erit cardinalis, si sua consilia non sunt fidelia, et quomodo erunt fidelia, si non sunt libera? Id autem quod ligat consilia, sunt favores, odia, particularitates et huiusmodi. Si igitur cardinalis est protector nationis, principis aut communitatis, propter quamcumque suam utilitatem, ligatum est consilium eius. Si ex relationibus in consistorio in favorem alicuius faciendis munera sperat, conductus est". BAV: Vaticanus Latinus 8090, fol. 118v, cf. Wodka 1938, p. 34, and Schürmeyer 1914, p. 98

remuneration of cardinals who make reports to the papal consistory in favour of some particular interest, e.g. a particular candidate for some high ecclesiastical office.

The Pope, Pius II, would be quite familiar with this practice since - as a cardinal - he himself had quite definitely made favourable reports on princely candidates for ecclesiastical preferment to the Papal Consistory that were expected to result in counterfavours from the princes involved.²⁰

However, as pope he also had painful experience of the nuisance caused by having cardinals who were dependent on their king (notably the French king) or being directly in his service: they would habitually reveal the secrets of the Papal Court to their secular master and promote his affairs to the point of directly counteracting papal policies.²¹ So, unsurprisingly, the draft for a papal bull on the reform of the Church to be issued by Pius II reiterated the need for cardinals assisting the pope without taking into account their own national interests:

"If any cardinal for the sake of protection of anybody, be it a king, prince or community, a religious order or college or any secular person, asks for or receives any temporal benefit, excepting food and drink, he shall be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and he can only obtain absolution if he gives all that he has received to Christ's poor."²²

Cardinals who receive temporal remuneration (*temporale commodum*) for their protection of a king etc. are excommunicated unless they give the profits to the poor.

The term used here is "protection", not "promotorship".

²⁰ Georg Voigt: *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini als Papst Pius der Zweite und sein Zeitalter*. 3 vols. Berlin, 1856-63, vol. III, pp. 214 ff.

²¹ I.e. the Cardinals Guillaume d'Estouteville, Alain de Coëtivy, and Jean Jouffroy; cf. Schürmeyer 1914, pp. 99-102, and a number of instances mentioned in Pius II's "autobiography": *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae temporibus suis contigerunt* [1464]. Published as: *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae temporibus suis contigerunt*. Ed. A van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984. (Studi e testi; 312-313), bk. XII, p. 36

²² "Si quis Cardinalium ratione protectionis cuiuscunque sive regis sive principis sive communitatis, sive religionis, sive collegii, sive personae saecularis temporale aliquod commodum petierit sive receperit, esculentis et poculentis exceptis, ipso facto excommunicationem incurrat, nec absolvi possit, nisi quod acceperit Christi pauperibus erogat". BAV: Vaticanus Barberinus Latinus 1500, fol. 14. Cf. Wodka 1938, p. 34, also pp. 6-7

Excommunicating cardinals is a serious business, of course, but the excommunication applies to the remuneration, not to the protectorship as such. Through such a decree, protectorships would have been implicitly recognized by the pope. What is forbidden is the compensation of a temporal, e.g. financial, nature. Food and drink, probably covering reasonable contributions to the cardinal's household as compensation for expenses incurred, are excluded from the ban, though this might conceivably open the doors for a wide range of interpretations. And what appears not to be forbidden is, significantly, recompensation in spiritual – as opposed to temporal or secular – form, for example ecclesiastical benefices located in the territory of the prince in question.

It would appear that Pius II was considering recognizing national protectorships, forbidding financial remuneration but allowing remuneration in the form of ecclesiastical benefices. He was only too familiar with the needs of cardinals ...

As Pope Pius died before the reform bull could be issued - had he wanted to, the ban never took effect, and the legal state in this area continued to be the one defined by the abovementioned decree of the Council of Basle.

The sixth case is Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503). In 1497, yet another draft for church Reform was submitted to the pope. The draft simply stipulated that: "A cardinal should not be the counsellor of princes... Therefore, we forbid the cardinals to act as counsellor, secretary, protector or procurator²³ to any secular potentate without the express and written permission of the Roman Pontiff."²⁴

²³ As regards the procurator, he is a separate official like an agent and business man, normally far below the dignity of cardinals, princes of the Church, as Pius II's protégé, cardinal Ammanati argued against the French Cardinal, Jouffroy, who had undertaken such an office for the King of France, cf. Schürmeyer 1914, p. 98. Cf. also Wodka 1938, p. 23-26 who rightly criticizes Schürmeyer for confusing the office of protector and procurator. Cf also Piccolomini himself in an undated letter to a German friend, Johann Frunt: "We have given assistance to your procurator" (*Obtulimus procuratori vestro nostras operas*), OO, letter 223, p. 773. See also the letter from King Christian 1. to Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, his nephew, of October 2, 1466. Gonzaga was at that time the king's preferred cardinal for influencing matters at the highest level of the Curia, and the king in the letter consults him about a change of his procurator in Rome - from Henricus Gervinus to Wilhelmus Molitoris who was in the employment of the cardinal himself (Johannes Lindbæk: *Pavernes forhold til Danmark under Kongerne Kristiern I og Hans*. 1907, 55). From the context it is clear that the king is completely aware of the difference between the good offices of his exalted cardinal-nephew and those of a procurator, and he writes as follows on the procuratorship: "It is expedient, nay necessary, that we should have a loyal and permanent procurator at the Curia." (*Expediit autem immo est necessarium, ut in ipsa curia procuratorem fidelem et continuum habeamus*). *Manuscripta Bartholiniana*. Del 1. Royal Library, Copenhagen: E don. Var. 1 folio, [1] Tomus B [hereafter quoted as Bartholin], p. 244. Published in *Scriptores rerum Danicarum Medii Aevi*. Ed. Jacobus Langebek. T. 8. Hauniae, 1834 [hereafter quoted as SRD], VIII, pp. 434-435. Cf. *Acta pontificum Danica : Pavelige Aktsstykker vedrørende Danmark 1316-1536*. 7 vols. Eds. A. Krarup, J. Lindbæk og L. Moltesen. 1904-1943 [hereafter quoted as APD], nr. 2389, III, p.

Here the relevant term used is once again "protector", parallel to the the functions of counselor, secretary and procurator. It is noteworthy that according this text protectorships of princes is recognized – but now subject to papal approval.

The reform was not implemented, and the legal state still remained the one defined by the Council of Basle 61 years before.

And finally, the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) carried a decree on cardinals' protectorships.²⁵

A preparatory memorandum from the time of Pope Julius II (1503-1513), included an exact quote from the decree of the Council of Basle: "The cardinals should not be the partial promotors or defenders against prince or community, with or without payment ..."²⁶

The conciliar decree of May 5, 1514, had the following text: "Therefore we ordain that they should not act in any particular interest, nor should they become promotors or defenders of a prince or community or anybody against anybody unless – and inasmuch - justice, equity and their own dignity and status require it."²⁷

Under certain, very general conditions (justice, equity, dignity, status) cardinals are now permitted to be promotors and defenders of princes and republics. *Promotorship* is evidently used as a synonym of *protectorship*, and there is no mention of consideration being paid.

393. Cf also L.P. Fabricius' – erroneous - remarks in his history of the Danish Church (1934) on the institution of "cardinal-procurators" towards the end of the 15th century, cf. L.P. Fabricius: *Danmarks Kirkehistorie*. 1934, p. 661

²⁴ "Cardinalis non sit consiliarius principum... Prohibemus igitur ne aliquis cardinalis absque expressa et scripta Romani Pontificis licentia apud quemcumque secularem potentatum quasi tanquam consiliarius, vel secretarius, aut protector, vel procurator conversetur", BAV: Vaticanus Latinus 3884. Cf. Wodka 1938, p. 35, also p. 7.

²⁵ Wodka 1938, p. 7-8

²⁶ "Nec sint [cardinales] principum aut communitatum, seu aliorum contra quemquam cum pretio vel sine partiales promotores aut defensores," BAV: Vaticanus Latinus 3884, fol. 27 ff., as quoted by Wodka 1938, pp. 35-36

²⁷ "Propterea statuimus, ne partialitatem suscipiant aliquam, neque principum aut communitatum, vel quorumcumque aliorum contra quemquam, nisi quantum iustitia et aequitas postulat, eorumque dignitas et conditio requirit, promotores aut defensores fiant," Mansi, t. XXXII, pp. 877-881, as quoted by Wodka 1938, p. 36

Poncet considers that the use of the term *promotor* instead of the term *protector* in the conciliar decree "fooled nobody"²⁸. However, it is reasonable to hold that no fooling was intended: the Lateran Council in quite an understandable spirit of continuity and deference to the authority of councils simply used the formal term employed by the preceding Council of Basle. Everyone was of course aware that *protector*, *defender*, and *promotor* had been used synonymously for quite some time. Thus, under the name of promotorship, protectorship was recognized by yet another Ecumenical Council, using a terminology for which there was conciliar precedence.

At any rate, by this time the popes had bowed to and embraced the inevitable: a number of Cardinal Protectors of Nations had already been officially designated by European kings and recognized by the popes. One of the very first officially established protectors was Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini, nephew of Pope Pius II, and himself in 1503 elected as Pope Pius III. And in 1492, the English King, Henry VII, asked the pope, Alexander VI, for permission to appoint this cardinal as the protector of himself and of his kingdom²⁹. So, at the end of the 15th century, the office of Cardinal Protector of Nations was finally recognized and was becoming an important instrument of papal government and a main conduit of relations between the Apostolic See and the European powers³⁰.

The first officially recognized protector of the Danish king and nation was Cardinal Marco Vigerio, as attested by letters from Pope Leo X to King Christian 1. in 1513-1516³¹. He was succeeded by Cardinal Lorenzo Pucci³², and then the Reformation put a stop to the need of the Danish king to be represented in Rome.

²⁸ Poncet 2002, p. 162

²⁹ Wodka 1938, p. 11; Wilkie 1974, p. 17 ff.

³⁰ Poncet 2002, p. 162; Wilkie 1974, p.6; Wodka 1938, p. 1, 11 ff. Wodka, pp. 8-9, also mentions a reform draft addressed to Pope Hadrian VI (1522-1523) but this falls outside the scope of the present article

³¹ Cf. Wodka 1938, p. 21

³² Cf. Wodka 1938, pp. 21-22

3. Cardinal Piccolomini at the service of family, friends and princes

On December 16, 1456, Piccolomini was – at long last - appointed cardinal.

As a cardinal, he fully exploited the network he had developed in his former career as a secretary to prelates and popes, as an official of the Council of Basle, and finally as a high-ranking diplomat at the Imperial Court and Bishop of Trieste, later of Siena. In this context, he also continued his systematic efforts to promote the interests and careers of his family, friends, and “clients” as befitting any important personage of the era.

The cardinalate was certainly an honorable charge with significant responsibilities vis-à-vis the pope and the Church, but at the same time, it provided the incumbent with advantages which Piccolomini - like his brother cardinals and the popes themselves - shared freely with his family, friends and dependents, obviously with a view to mutual benefit.

Thus, on December 26, 1456, a few days after his elevation, he wrote to his friend Niccolò Listi: “If the dignity bestowed upon us is worth any honour or advantage³³ – or for that matter shame and loss – you should know it is something that you and I shall have in common.”³⁴

And to another friend and high-ranking official of King Ladislas of Hungary, the Bishop of Wardein, Jan Vitez: “And if we have avidly accepted the dignity of cardinal, it is only because we may sometime and in some matter be of service to you.”³⁵

No doubt, Jan Vitez would have perfectly understood the *hyperbole* of friendship – as well as the offer itself!

³³ “utilitas”

³⁴ “... si quid est in ea dignitate nobis credita vel honoris vel utilitatis, itemque dedecoris vel damni, id tibi nobiscum commune esse non nescias.” From letter to Niccolò Listi, December 27, 1456 (Aeneae Sylvii Piccolominei Senensis, qui post adeptum pontificatum Pius eius nominis Secundus appellatus est: *Opera quæ extant omnia, nunc demum post corruptissimas æditiones summa diligentia castigata & in unum corpus redacta*. Basileae, 1571 [hereafter quoted as OO], letter 196, p. 765)

³⁵ “Nec aliam ob causam magis cupide hanc dignitatem cardinalatus accepisse, quam ut tibi aliquando in aliqua re digna morem gerere possimus”. From letter to Jan Vitez, December 27, 1456 (OO, letter 198, p. 766)

And to the Senate of his home city, Siena – echoing the patronage of high-ranking Romans vis-à-vis their hometown: "However, we shall faithfully help your envoys when they are here, and we shall always assist your state as far as we can."³⁶

A whole series of the new Cardinal's letters are in the same vein³⁷ and shows how normal a feature patronage and mutual assistance was in the life of a high-ranking official of the time.

Some of the letters are addressed to princes:

One was the Duke of Modena, nominally a part of the Holy Roman Empire. To some extent the duke owed his elevation to the status of duke in 1452 to Piccolomini himself, then in the service of the emperor. Soon after having been granted his cardinalate, Piccolomini approached him through one of his own relations, Jacopo Tolomei, and offered him his services: "Offer - profusely - to his Excellency whatever is within our means now and in the future, for we greatly wish to please him, and if there is any advantage to the dignity of the cardinalate, we wish it be his rather than ours."³⁸

The Duke himself in a letter to Piccolomini thanked him and offered mutual assistance³⁹.

A similar approach was made to the Duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza.⁴⁰

³⁶ "Juvabimus tamen Oratores ipsos cum hic fuerint, summa fide, vestraeque reipublicae quantum facultas tulerit numquam deerimus". From letter to the Senate of Siena, December 29, 1456 (OO, letter 199, p. 766)

³⁷ Cf. to his old teacher in Siena, Mario Sozzini, December 30, 1456 (OO, letter 208, p. 768); to the condottiero Jacopo Piccinino, January 18, 1457 (OO, letter 214, p. 770); to Johann Frunt, undated (OO, letter 223, p. 773); and to Cardinal Dionysius Szechi, March 10, 1457 (OO, letter 244, p. 783-784)

³⁸ "Quae possumus aut in futurum poterimus excellentiae suae pleno offeras ore, quia nos sibi pleno corde cupimus complacere. Et hanc cardinalatus dignitatem si quid habet utilitatis, magis suam esse volumus quam nostram." From letter to Jacopo Tolomei, December 22, 1456 (OO, letter 192, p. 764 – erroneous addressed)

³⁹ Letter from Duke Borsio of Modena, January 15, 1457 (OO, letter 221, p. 772-773)

⁴⁰ Letters to two courtiers of the Duke, i.e. to Leodrisio Crivelli, February 17, probably 1457 (OO, letter 230, p. 776), and to Stefano Curte, February 3, 1457 (OO, letter 231, p. 777), and to the Duke himself, Francesco Sforza, December 6, 1457 (OO, letter 351, p. 829)

Piccolomini also wrote directly to King Alfonso of Aragon and Sicily whom he knew personally from earlier diplomatic missions to Naples⁴¹; there is, however, no record of a reply.

The offers of service to the princes are couched in general terms of friendship and gratitude and are clearly written with a view to future, mutual benefits.

4. Cardinal Piccolomini as promotor of the German nation at the Roman Curia

At the time of Pope Calixtus III, a general practice at the Papal Curia was for kings to send their letters on episcopal matters, including the appointment of bishops, to a cardinal at the Curia who would then present them to the pope and be charged with dealing with the case. The cardinal would then be responsible for investigating the matter and presenting a report and his recommendations to the Papal Consistory. This practice is documented in a letter from Cardinal Piccolomini to Prokop von Rabstein, an old friend, who was at the time the Bohemian Chancellor of King Ladislas: "But please take care that in future the royal letters on episcopal matters to be sent to the pope should be transmitted to us so that we can be more useful. For such cases are committed to those [cardinals] who present the royal letters."⁴²

⁴¹ Letter to King Alfonso V, December 24, 1456 (OO, letter 194, p. 765)

⁴² "Tu autem deinceps curato, ut literæ Regiæ ad Papam dirigendæ in causis episcopalibus ad nos transmittantur, et sic poterimus magis prodesse. Nam causæ illis committi solent, qui literas regias præsentant." Letter to Prokop von Rabstein, November 11, 1457 (OO, letter 310, p. 811). An instance of the same practice at the Court of Pius II himself is related in his *Commentarii*, cf. the episode of the French Cardinal Jouffroy presenting a letter from the French king to the Consistory – and falsifying its contents, cf. Pius II (1984), Bk. XII, 36, pp. 780-781.

Evidence of this practice is also found in two letters from King Christian 1. to Pope Calixtus III and to Cardinal Prospero Colonna of February 1458. Both letters concern the appointment of a coadjutor to the ageing Bishop of Linköping, and in the letter to the pope the king refers to Cardinal Colonna as his representative vis-à-vis the pope in the affair: “Concerning this matter we humbly submit our earnest and filial requests to Your Holiness. The Reverend Lord, Cardinal Colonna, will – in my name – apply to Your Holiness for commission and benevolent patronage in the matter.”⁴³

Though this practice would not in itself create a formal relationship of protectorship or promotorship between a cardinal and a king, it would certainly be advantageous to both.

It is therefore not surprising that immediately on his appointment Cardinal Piccolomini began a veritable epistolary campaign to become the privileged representative in the College of Cardinals of those rulers whom he knew personally.

So, already on 22 December, 1456, he wrote letters to his old employer, the Emperor Frederick III, the Empress Leonora, and the Emperor’s nephew, the young King Ladislas of Hungary, all of whom he knew very well and to whom he was indebted for their repeated recommendations of him to the pope as a candidate for the cardinalate. In the letters, he expressed his undying gratitude and – in delicate terms - offered his services.

To the Emperor he wrote:

”I know how much I owe to Your Highness, but I do not see how I could ever repay the debt. However, as long as there is life in these limbs, I shall act in such a manner that all will understand that this dignity has come to me through your favour and from your Court, and that I am a German rather than an Italian

⁴³ “Super quo exquisitissimas Sanctitatis vestrae et filiales preces humiliter porrigimus, super quibus Reverendissimus Pater Dominus Cardinalis de Columna meo nomine vestrae Sanctitatis sollicitabit commissum et benevolum patrocinium.” Bartholin, pp. 150-151, 157-158. SRD, VIII, pp. 379-380, 383-384. APD, nos. 2118-2119, III, p. 256

cardinal. Please deal with me as freely as before. For I shall never spare any effort or care for the sake of Your Majesty, the Sacred Empire, the exalted House of Austria and of all those who are dear to you. Nothing that may be done through my own efforts will ever be denied Your Serenity⁴⁴.”⁴⁵

And to the empress on the same day:

”So now you have someone at the Apostolic See who is entirely devoted to Your Highness⁴⁶, and one who shall always be dedicated to you, your splendour, glory, and greatness. No effort which I make on your behalf will be too heavy. Hereafter it is up to Your Majesty to use me in a way which matches the great marks of consideration that you have bestowed upon me.”⁴⁷

He also, on the same day and in the same vein, wrote directly to King Ladislas⁴⁸ and later, indirectly, through friends who were officials of the king.

Already on 30 January, 1457, i.e. a month afterwards, the emperor replied to the cardinal – in the elaborate chancery style showing that this was indeed an imperial matter:

”And we do not doubt that this dignity – which is above all a great distinction and ornament to the Holy Roman Church and to you personally – will be a considerable boon and advantage to us, the Holy Roman Empire, and to our exalted House, which you served so successfully and usefully when you were younger and are now in a position to do even more. We are confident and certain

⁴⁴ “Mansuetudo”

⁴⁵ “Intelligo quantum debeo tuæ Sublimitati, et unde persolvere possim debitum non intelligo. Conabor tamen dum spiritus hos regit artus [Virgil: *Aeneid*, IV, 336], ita me gerere, ut omnes intelligant ad hanc me dignitatem tuo fauore et ex tua curia provenisse, meque Theutonicum magis quam Italicum Cardinalem esse. Tuum erit nihil mecum remissius agere quam prius. Nam ego pro tua maiestate, pro sacro imperio, pro inclyta domo Austriæ, pro tuis quibuscunque charis nullos usquam labores, nullas curas effugiam. Nihil enim unquam tuæ mansuetudini negabitur, quod mea opera effici possit.” From letter to the emperor, December 22, 1456 (OO, letter 189, p. 763)

⁴⁶ “Magnitudo”

⁴⁷ “Habes igitur apud sedem apostolicam hominem tuæ magnitudini deditissimum: qui pro te tuoque splendore gloria amplitudine omni tempore curiosus erit. Neque enim ullus me numquam gravabit labor, quem tua causa susceperim. Tuæ Majestatis deinceps erit ita me uti, quemadmodum ingentia quae mihi contulisti beneficia deposcunt.” From letter to the empress, December 22, 1456 (OO, letter 190, p. 764)

⁴⁸ Letter til King Ladislas, December 22, 1456 (OO, letter 191, p. 764)

that you, Reverend Father⁴⁹, will always – in your present dignity and place - diligently promote and, wherever needed, brilliantly defend everything that concerns our own person, our state and dignity as well as those of the Holy Empire, and the honour, good and advantage of our aforesaid House, of ourself, and of those who are ours, with your customary loyalty and in your usual manner as well as with your great wisdom⁵⁰ both in relation to Our Most Holy Lord⁵¹ and the Sacred College⁵², to whom we have written recently. We also ask and exhort you, Reverend Father, to frequently write your very welcome letters to us and continue your service to us, and We shall – as the individual cases arise - continuously address ourselves to you as our patron and promotor of our affairs at the Apostolic [See].”⁵³

This is the first known case of the emperor formally appointing a cardinal as the promotor of his affairs in Rome. The terms of the imperial letter, i.e. *promote* and *promotor of affairs*, are taken directly from the decree of the Council of Basle. The term *protector*, forbidden by the Council, is carefully avoided by the Imperial Chancery, though the equally unacceptable terms *defend* and *defender* are in fact used⁵⁴.

⁴⁹ "Paternitas"

⁵⁰ "prudentia"

⁵¹ i.e. the pope

⁵² i.e. the cardinals

⁵³ "Nec dubitamus eam quidem dignitatem in primis sanctae Romanae ecclesiae et vobis plurimum decoris et ornamenti, nobis vero et sacro Romano imperio ac inclytae domui nostrae (cui in minoribus semper fructuose et utiliter praefuistis) non mediocriter commodum et utilitatem allaturam, cum id longe magis efficere poterit. Confidimus enim ac pro certo tenemus paternitatem vestram in ea dignitate et loco, ea quae personam nostram, statum atque dignitatem nostram, et sacri imperii, necnon dictae iam domus nostrae ac nostrum ac nostrorum honorem, commoditatem, atque utilitatem respicere videbuntur, pro sua solita in nos fidelitate et consuetudine, necnon singulari prudentia vestra tam apud sanctissimum dominum nostrum, quam etiam sacrum collegium, cui modo scripta est, diligenter promoturam et ubicumque opus fuerit optime defensuram. Rogamus autem et hortamur paternitatem vestram quatenus licebit nos suis litteris nobis semper jucundissimis crebro visitare necnon suum circa nos officium intermittere velit. Et nos pro occurrentibus singulis ad vos tamquam patronum et promotorem negotiorum apud apostolica [-m sedem] agendorum continuo recurremus ...". Letter from the Emperor, January 30, 1457 (OO, letter 250, p. 783-784)

⁵⁴ Cf. Wodka 1938, p. 26, including his remarks on the term "patronus"

So, on the legal basis defined by the decree of the Council of Basle, the emperor here appointed Cardinal Piccolomini the promotor of his affairs at the Papal Court. This appointment may be considered a significant step in the development of the office of Cardinal Protectors of Nations.

In Georg Voigt's opinion Cardinal Piccolomini held "a so-called protectorship over the affairs of the German Church, without anybody having asked him to do so"⁵⁵. This is not correct: whether the Cardinal held a promotorship or a protectorship is debatable; however, Voigt does not seem to be aware that at the time it would have been impossible to use the term protectorship. But there is no doubt that Piccolomini had been requested to represent the German Nation (the Holy Empire) including, by necessity, its ecclesiastical affairs at the Papal Court, and not just by anyone, but by the Emperor himself. The request could not have been more official.

Following Voigt, Josef Wodka raised the question "if Pius II himself - during his own cardinalate (1456-1458) - may have held a protectorship over Germany"⁵⁶. His lack of certainty was due to the fact that he rejected the idea that the Council of Basle mitigated the papal prohibition of protectorship of nations, and he could not, therefore, be certain that the *promotorship* mentioned in the Emperor's letter of January 1457 could be considered a *protectorship*. However, if the Council of Basle did permit *protectorship* in a broad sense, only under the name of *promotorship*, as argued against Wodka in the present article, there can be no doubt that Piccolomini exercised a form of protectorship of the German nation.

In his "autobiography" written by Piccolomini as Pope Pius II, there is no doubt in his mind about his relationship with the German nation when he was a cardinal. He wrote: "Aeneas was always known as the champion and defender of the Germans not just when he was cardinal but also once he was pope, and in regard

⁵⁵ "... einen sogenannten Protectorat über die Angelegenheiten der deutschen Kirche führte, ohne freilich von irgend jemand dazu berufen zu sein." Voigt 1856-1863, vol. III, p. 214

⁵⁶ "Man konnte sich hier nun fragen, ob nicht vielleicht Pius II. selbst in seiner eigenen Kardinalszeit (1456-1458) ein Protektorat über Deutschland ausgeübt habe." Wodka 1938, p. 26

to German affairs Calixtus listened to him more than to any other cardinal.”⁵⁷ Again the term *protector* is carefully avoided, and the more general term of *defender* is preferred.

It may be noted that an essential element of the arrangement was keeping the Imperial Court informed of developments at the Papal Court and of important news reaching this court from elsewhere.

The most important part of the office of Promotor, however, was to favour the interests of the prince in connection with the bestowal of important ecclesiastical benefices. That a cardinal’s exercise of influence in this connection was a form of promotorship is substantiated by a letter from Cardinal Piccolomini to a fellow-cardinal, the very influential Vicechancellor of the Roman Church and nephew of the pope, Rodrigo Borgia, later Pope Alexander V. Piccolomini wrote to him: “The rumour is now running that the See of Toul has become vacant⁵⁸. The Bishop of that place had a monastery *in commendam* to a value of 1.500 Gold Ducats annually. It is said to belong to the jurisdiction of the Duke of Burgundy. Our Lord⁵⁹ said that he would commend it to you. The Cardinal of Rouen was the promotor of the case.”⁶⁰

In the matter concerning the bestowing of a commendatory abbey on the Pope’s nephew, the “promotor” was the French Cardinal of Rouen, Guillaume

⁵⁷ “Eneas Germanorum semper et laudator et defensor extitit non modo in cardinalatu, uerum etiam in pontificatu maximo, et Calixtus eum pre ceteris cardinalibus in rebus Germanicis audiuit.” Pius II (1985), vol I, 93-94.

Translation from Pius II: *Commentaries*. Ed. M. Meserve and M. Simonetta. Cambridge, MA, 2003 ff., vol. I, p. 164

⁵⁸ Picking up rumours of vacancies in ecclesiastical benefices was quite important in the continuous “hunt” for such benefices, or rather the incomes generated from them, as it made it possible for well-placed persons at the Papal Court to be the first to present a petition. It was, however, a tricky business as such rumours were often false. In another letter to Cardinal Borgia, Piccolomini wrote: “In the matter of benefices, I am highly alert and shall act both in yours and in my own interest. But we are often deceived and led astray by false rumours. The person who was recently reported to have died in Nuremberg, arrived some days ago and had dinner with me!” (De beneficiis sum curiosus, et tibi et mihi consulam. Sed decipimur et fallimur falsis rumoribus. Is qui nuper apud Nurembergam obiisse ferebatur, proximis diebus hic fuit, et mecum pransus est). Letter to Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, April 1, 1457 (OO, Letter 257, p. 787-788)

⁵⁹ I.e. the pope

⁶⁰ “Fama hic est vacasse episcopatum Tulensem. Episcopus ejus loci monasterium commendatum habuit, cujus annuus (the printed text has “animus”) valor mille et quingentorum aureorum esse fertur sub ditione ducis Burgundiae. Dominus noster id tibi commendatum se ait. Rothomagensis ejus rei promotor fuit.” Letter to Cardinal Roderigo Borgia, February 22, 1457 (OO, letter 228, p. 775)

d'Estouteville; however, in this matter he was probably not acting on behalf of the French king.

One issue was still outstanding in the arrangement between the emperor and Cardinal Piccolomini: the remuneration of the cardinal. Piccolomini – to his credit – was a poor cardinal, and the costs of maintaining the lifestyle and household of a cardinal were considerable⁶¹. However, the Council of Basle had expressly forbidden payment to cardinals for their service as promoters of the affairs of princes.

In a later letter to the Emperor he wrote:

”But, Most Serene Caesar, as I have been appointed to the honour of the cardinalate as a gift from you, nothing in this office is more important to me than to do everything in my power that I think may enhance your glory. What is left now is for You to deign to consider my situation, so that my livelihood can be assured. For until now I had sufficient means, and though my possessions were few, they were adequate for my dignity then. Today, I am indeed extremely poor, and only now do I truly experience what poverty is. ...Your Highness can – without loss to yourself – alleviate my poverty, if you will permit some benefices from your territories to be given to me ...”⁶²

⁶¹ William Boulting: *Æneas Silvius (Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini – Pius II.) – Orator, Man of Letters, Statesman, and Pope*. London, 1908, p. 230-232; Cecilia M. Ady: *Pius II (Æneas Silvius Piccolomini) – the Humanist Pope*. London, 1913, pp. 136-137; R.J. Mitchell: *The Laurels and the Tiara – Pope Pius II 1458-1464*. London, 1962, p. 118; D.S. Chambers: The Economic Predicament of Renaissance Cardinals. In: *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3 (1966) 289-313

⁶² “Verum Serenissime Caesar, cum ego tuo munere ad cardinalatus honorem assumptus sim, nihilque magis mihi in hoc officio incumbat quam ea regere quae putem gloriae tuae conducere, reliquum est ut de meo statu cogitare digneris, ut habeam unde vivam. Nam ego hactenus fui dives satis, et quamquam pauca possidebam, erant tamen illa dignitati meae sufficientia. Nunc vero pauperrimus sum, et jam primum quid sit miseria experior. Tua sublimitas absque damno suo inopiae meae contulere potest, si patitur aliqua beneficia ex suis territoriis me impetrare ...” Letter to the Emperor, March 8, 1457, OO letter 238, p. 780

In this letter, Piccolomini is very forthright concerning his personal poverty and implies a moral obligation on the part of the emperor to support a cardinal whose appointment the emperor had himself ensured. But as Piccolomini was all too aware of the emperor's parsimony, he hastened to add that his services to the emperor would be free of charge, if the emperor would allow some ecclesiastical benefices in his own territories to be granted to Piccolomini. Enjoying an ecclesiastical benefice in the territory of a prince would technically not be the same as being paid out of the coffers of that prince, since the income would by rights belong to the benefice itself, i.e. the Church. Piccolomini's solution – which was by no means unusual - had the double advantage of formally respecting the conditions for promotorship decreed by the Council of Basle and of sparing the emperor's purse.

5. Relations of King Christian 1. of Denmark with cardinals in Rome

In the period from 1450 to 1458, the ecclesiastical policies of Christian 1., Union King of Denmark, Norway and sometimes Sweden, too, as well as his relations with the Papal Court were directed by Bishop Marcellus. How this notorious adventurer managed to become Bishop of Skalholt in Iceland, to acquire such a position with the King, and to be elected Archbishop of Trondheim in Norway need not concern us in the present context. Suffice it to say that he is generally considered to have been the principal advisor of the King in his relations with Rome including the issue of Scandinavian participation in the crusade planned against the Turks.

A number of the letters of King Christian 1. to the Papal Court have survived in a collection of *Letters mostly Written by King Christian 1. or Addressed to Him*⁶³. The

⁶³ "Excerpta ex Manuscripto chartaceo ex Musæo Comitum Rantzovii, quo continentur *Epistolæ Scriptæ fere a Christiano I Rege vel ad Eundem Rege*", Bartholin, p. 121. This note is made by Thomas Bartholin in his introduction to the collection, where he also states that the style and handwriting (*stylo seu scriptura*) of the text, which he copied, belong to the time of Christian 1. – and that the text contained many errors which he could not correct. Bartholin, p. 121-263. For a description of the Bartholin ms., see Alfred Krarup: *Katalog over*

original manuscript has been lost, but luckily it was copied – or recopied - in the 17th century by Thomas Bartholin (1659-1690). This copy is part of a larger collection of medieval texts copied by him and which is held by the Royal Library in Copenhagen⁶⁴.

A large part of the correspondence between the Danish Court and the Curia in this period concerned the king's attempts to obtain the pope's recognition of Marcellus as Archbishop of Trondheim.

The matter was actually rather difficult since Rome had as recently as the year before declared Marcellus to be an unsavoury and even a criminal character.⁶⁵

A mission from the Danish Court to the Papal Court in this matter failed, resulting in letters of complaint from King Christian 1. sent both to the pope himself in February 1456⁶⁶ and to Cardinal Juan Carvajal presumably during the same month⁶⁷.

In the summer of 1456, another attempt was made: the King sent the knight Geminiano Trevisano as his envoy (orator) to Rome in the same errand.

Universitetsbibliotekets Haandskrifter i samlingerne E dono variorum, Additamenta, Rostgaards, Schiønnings og Ørsteds Samling. 1. Del. 1929

⁶⁴ The collection of royal letters comprises 58 letters from 1455-1458, i.e. the period when Bishop Marcellus is considered to have been the Kings' principal advisor in church matters, and 44 letters from the period 1459-1468, i.e. from after the fall and death of Marcellus. Whereas the first group of letters are generally presumed to have been written by Marcellus (in a florid, even turgid Latin), and some are actually personal letters from himself and not official letters from the King, the last group of letters clearly cannot have been written by him. Nonetheless, the collection is often called the Copybook or the Letterbook of Marcellus. The history of the textual transmission from the original manuscript, which may have been a copybook of the Royal Chancery, to Bartholin's copy is not known

⁶⁵ Cf. letter from Pope Calixtus III from the end of 1455 ordering the Archbishop of Lund and the Bishop of Roskilde to punish Marcellus for his crimes or to send him to Rome. APD, nr. 2055, vol. III, p. 225

⁶⁶ Two letters to Pope Eugene IV of February, 1456. APD, nos. 2057-2058, III, p. 226

⁶⁷ Letter to Cardinal Juan Carvajal, presumably of February, 1456. Bartholin, p. 135-137. SRD, VIII, 369-372. APD, nr. 2060, III, p. 227

In letters to the pope and to Cardinal Juan Torquemada of 13 June, 1456⁶⁸, the King recommended his envoy and his business. In a letter of 1 August to the envoy, he instructed him to address himself to Cardinal Colonna for assistance in the matter⁶⁹. And finally, in a letter of 14 December, he directly asked Cardinal Colonna to assist the envoy⁷⁰.

Given the hopelessness of the case, the two cardinals probably did not exert themselves greatly. However during his stay in Rome, the envoy apparently met with several cardinals and brought letters from them home to the King and to Marcellus himself. One of the cardinals was Cardinal Piccolomini who asked him to convey his respects to the king and to offer his services, possibly intimating that he might be of assistance in the matter of Bishop Marcellus with whom he may have been acquainted from a meeting in Frankfurt years before. He also gave the envoy a personal letter to Marcellus for which Marcellus thanks him in an effusive letter of 29 November, 1457⁷¹.

At the return of Geminiano Trevisano to the Royal Court in Denmark, he reported his negotiations in Rome and his contact with Cardinal Piccolomini.

This resulted in two letters from the King. One is a letter to Cardinal Colonna of 21 September, 1457, in which the King thanks him for his "favourable assistance" in the matter of the See of Trondheim⁷².

Another is a letter from the King to Cardinal Piccolomini of October, 1457⁷³:

⁶⁸ Letter to Pope Eugene IV and letter to Cardinal Juan Torquemada, both of June 13, 1456. Bartholin, p. 145 and 139. SRD, VIII, 372-373, 376. APD nr. 2065-2066, III, p. 229-230

⁶⁹ Letter to Geminiano Trevisano of August 1, 1456. Bartholin, p. 145 ff. SRD, VIII, 376. APD, nr. 2071, III, p. 231-232

⁷⁰ Letter to Prospero Colonna of December 14, 1456. Bartholin, pp. 144-145. APD, nr. 2080, III, pp. 235-236

⁷¹ Letter from Bishop Marcellus to Cardinal Piccolomini of November 29, 1457. Bartholin, pp. 165-167. SRD, VIII, p. 388-389. APD, nr. 2115, III, pp. 253—254. Concerning their acquaintance, Marcellus writes: "After having become your acquaintance and friend in Frankfurt years ago" (Postea enim quam tibi Francfordiae dudum primo cognitus et necessarius fueram)

⁷² Letter to Cardinal Prospero Colonna of September 21, 1457. Bartholin, p. 155 ff.: "in negotiis sibi per nos commissis favorabilem assistenciam prestitistis ...". SRD, VIII, p. 382. APD, nr. 2102, III, p. 249-250

- 1) The letter starts with an expression of regret concerning the ("hopefully!") unjustified difficulties of Bishop Marcellus in connection with his election to the See of Trondheim (Nidaros).
- 2) It goes on to congratulate Piccolomini with his appointment as a cardinal.
- 3) It refers in vague terms to some assistance that the cardinal had given to the King's envoy, Geminiano Trevisano, apparently in the matter of the See of Trondheim, and which the envoy had now reported at length to the King.
- 4) It then specifically touches upon the matter of Piccolomini as promotor of Danish interests in Rome.
- 5) And finally the matter of the appointment of Bishop Marcellus to Trondheim is brought up again, now with the vaguely ominous statement that the king's Council and Parliament are not happy with the pope's decision in the matter.

Concerning the matter of promotorship, the letter states as follows:

"For this reason, we send our undying thanks to you, Reverend Father, firmly desiring that it should please you henceforth to act – free of charge – as a promotor of our affairs. On Our part, Reverend Father, we shall with cordial love⁷⁴ consider you as a father and special friend to Our Majesty, and when we and our friends hear of matters that may be advantageous to you, Reverend Father, you shall always find us at the ready."⁷⁵

As for a more formal arrangement of promotorship (based on the conciliar decree from Basle), we do not know if the Danish Court had prior knowledge of such arrangements, or had only heard of them from Cardinal Piccolomini himself through the king's envoy, Geminiano Trevisano.

⁷³ Letter to Cardinal Enea Silvio Piccolomini of October 1457. Bartholin, pp. 156-157. SRD, VIII, p. 383. APD, nr. 2103, III, p. 250

⁷⁴ The Latin text is corrupt, see the following note

⁷⁵ "Unde eidem P.V. referimus gratias immortales ob eadem, obnixius affectantes quatenus exinde rerum et negotiorum nostrorum placeat vos gratuitum reddere promotorem. Nos vero P.V. tamquam nostre majestatis patrem et amicum singularem omni cordis cum affecti [Bartholin; SRD has –u; a verb, e.g. diligimus, seems to be missing] paratique sumus etenim cum nostris amicis ad omnia que sciverimus P.V. proficua grata et accepta ..."
Bartholin, p. 157

But it is remarkable that in his letter to the cardinal the king uses the very two terms acceptable after the decree of the Council of Basle, firstly that the cardinal should act as promotor (and not as protector), and secondly that it should be free of charge – just like the cardinal’s arrangement with the emperor.

The last part of the passage quoted may refer to possible remuneration for the cardinal in the form of ecclesiastical benefices in the king’s territories, and it is entirely in keeping with the cardinal’s use of his extensive European network to keep himself informed of vacancies in such benefices in order to obtain them through papal provision or otherwise. Indeed, for this reason Piccolomini’s 19th century German, and not very sympathetic biographer, Georg Voigt, calls him a veritable “Pfründenjäger” (hunter of benefices)⁷⁶, which was quite unjust since at that time the enjoyment of a plurality of ecclesiastical benefices was a completely normal form of remuneration of officials both in royal and ecclesiastical service.

It would also be completely natural for Cardinal Piccolomini to try to extend his Germanic sphere of promotorship to Denmark since he considered this entire region part of Germany, as he says in his *De Europa* written during this period: “*Dania ... Germaniae portio est.*”⁷⁷

Whether or not the King’s letter led to Cardinal Piccolomini exercising an active promotorship over Danish affairs at the Roman Curia is not known. The Danish historian, Johannes Lindbæk, was of the opinion that he did not since we have no information of Piccolomini having referred matters of provision of Danish bishoprics in the Papal Consistory. Consequently he thought that the king’s reply to Cardinal Piccolomini had been nothing more than an expression of politeness.⁷⁸ Indeed no other record of such an arrangement seems to exist, and later, in 1457 and in 1458, the King wrote letters to the pope himself⁷⁹ and to five (!) cardinals -

⁷⁶ Cf. Voigt 1856-1863, vol. I, p. 225 ff.

⁷⁷ Enea Silvio Piccolomini: *De Europa*. 1458. Published as: *De Europa*. Ed. A. van Heck. Città del Vaticano: 2001. (Studi e Testi; 398), pp. 133-136. Cf. Michael v. Cotta-Schønberg: De Daniae regno aliqua non indigna cognitu - Danmarksbilledet hos en italiensk renæssancehumanist Æneas Silvius Piccolomini (Pius II). In: *Renæssancen i svøb - dansk renæssance i europæisk belysning 1450-1550*. Red. af Lars Bisgaard, Jacob Isager og Janus Møller Jensen. 2008, p. 87

⁷⁸ Lindbæk 1907, pp. 45-46. Cf. Cotta-Schønberg, p. 86

⁷⁹ Letter to Pope Calixtus III of November 17, 1457. Bartholin, pp. 149 ff. SRD, VIII, p. 378-379. APD, nr. 2108, III, 251

Piccolomini, Colonna, Jayme of Portugal, Calandrini, and Torquemada – *inter alia* on the Trondheim-issue,⁸⁰ and another two to Colonna on other ecclesiastical issues⁸¹, all copied in the collection of *Letters mostly Written by King Christian 1. or Addressed to Him*.

So, it does not seem as if the contact between Cardinal Piccolomini and the Danish Court resulted in an arrangement of promotorship in line with the one that the cardinal had with the emperor.⁸² The reason for this may be that the king (or Marcellus himself) did not really want to switch from Cardinal Colonna to Cardinal Piccolomini, or that Piccolomini himself realized how hopeless was the affair of Bishop Marcellus.

It should be noted that in none of the letters addressed to other cardinals than Piccolomini is there any mention whatsoever of a permanent promotorship of the king's affairs in Rome. Over time, King Christian 1. asked for help from a number of individual cardinals, with a preference for Cardinal LeJeune in the beginning, later for Cardinal Colonna, and still later for Cardinal Gonzaga, his nephew⁸³. But it happened in individual cases and on an ad hoc basis. The expressions used in the royal letters to describe the expected or rendered help of the cardinals are terms like: "to deign to assist (operam dare) the matter both with the Supreme Pontiff and everywhere else it may be useful"⁸⁴; "you have rendered favourable assistance" (favorabilem assistenciam)⁸⁵; "show diligence" (diligentiam efficere)⁸⁶.

⁸⁰ Letter to Cardinal Prospero Colonna of November 16, 1457. Bartholin, pp. 160 ff. SRD, VIII, pp. 385-386. APD, nr. 2107, III, p. 251; identical letter to Cardinal Piccolomini of same date; letter to Cardinal Jayme of Portugal of November 17, 1457. Bartholin, pp. 158 ff. SRD, VIII, pp. 384-385. APD, nr. 2109, III, p. 252; letter to Cardinal Filippo Calandrini of November 17, 1457. Bartholin, pp. 159 ff. SRD, VIII, p. 385. APD, nr. 2110, III, p. 252; letter to Cardinal Juan Torquemada of November 17, 1457. Bartholin, pp. 161 ff. APD, nr. 2111, III, p. 252

⁸¹ Letter to Cardinal Prospero Colonna of February, 1458. Bartholin, pp. 157-158. APD, nr. 2119, III, p. 256; Letter to Cardinal Prospero Colonna of May 13, 1458. Bartholin, pp. 181-182. APD, nr. 2125, III, p. 258; Letter to Cardinal Prospero Colonna of May 13, 1458. Bartholin, pp. 181-182. APD, nr. 2125, III, p. 258

⁸² In his *History of the Danish Church*, Fabricius overrates Piccolomini's relations with Scandinavia and with Bishop Marcellus, cf. L.P. Fabricius, p. 642

⁸³ Lindbæk 1907, p. 29

⁸⁴ From letter to Cardinal Colonna of December 14, 1456. Bartholin, p. 145. APD, nr. 2080, III, pp. 235-236

⁸⁵ From letter to Cardinal Colonna of September 21, 1457. Bartholin, p. 155. APD, nr. 2102, III, pp. 249-250

Only in one instance is the word "promote" used: "to advise, favour, assist in this matter and to promote (promovere) it when it comes before Our Most Holy Lord, the Pope ..."⁸⁷.

After the elevation of Cardinal Piccolomini to the papacy and the fall of Bishop Marcellus, the king on a number of occasions⁸⁸ wrote to the Cardinal of Mantova, Francesco Gonzaga⁸⁹, asking for his assistance in various matters, but this was much by way of family assistance as the cardinal was the king's nephew, being the son of Barbara of Brandenburg who was the sister of the king's spouse, Queen Dorothea of Brandenburg, and married to the Marquess of Mantova. In 1474, during the king's visit to Rome, this arrangement may have been formalized as a proper protectorship, as witnessed by a letter from the cardinal's secretary, Pietro Arrivabene, to the cardinal's mother. In the letter, Arrivabene relates the events of the royal visit and states that the king made the cardinal his Protector and general procurator at the Curia, and he adds: "I am certain that he [the king] wishes all his affairs to pass through his hands".⁹⁰

⁸⁶ From letter to Cardinal Colonna of February, 1458. Bartholin, p. 158. APD, nr. 2119, III, pp. 256

⁸⁷ From letter to Cardinal Gonzaga of October 26, 1466. Bartholin, p. 256. SRD, VIII, p. 441. APD, nr. 2391, III, pp. 394

⁸⁸ APD 2361, 2372, 2389, 2391, 2428

⁸⁹ Son of the Marquess of Mantua. Appointed cardinal by Pius II in December 1461

⁹⁰ Letter from Gio. Pietro Arrivabene to Barbara of Brandenburg (Mantova) of 19.4.1474, as quoted in: Johannes Lindbæk: Dorothea, Kristiern den Førstes droning, og familien Gonzaga. I: *Historisk Tidsskrift*, VII Række, Bd. 3, 1900-1902, pp. 487. This letter is part of a collection of 26 letters from the period 1474-1477, kept in the Archivio Gonzaga in Mantova, E. XXV. 3, cf. Lindbæk: *Dorothea*, p. 461. In another letter to Barbara of May 16, 1475, Arrivabene writes about the cardinal that "he was a good and useful relation to have at [the papal] court." Cf. Lindbæk 1900-1902, p. 474

6. Conclusion

Contrary to Josef Wodka's view, the Council of Basle did have a decisive role in creating a legal base for cardinals representing royal interests at the Apostolic See. The council agreed with the position of Pope Martin V that cardinals should be impartial and independent advisors of the popes, but - reaching back to Avignonese precedents - it accepted a form of representation termed *promotorship* rather than *protectorship* of royal affairs. The council's distinction between *protectorship* and *promotorship* did not address any difference in terms of content, but only in terms of partiality and payment.

This interpretation is corroborated by the correspondence of Cardinal Piccolomini which documents the practice at the Papal Court in the 1450'es.

After his appointment to the cardinalate, Enea Silvio Piccolomini continued his patronage of the interests of his family, friends, colleagues and dependents. Such patronage was a manifestation of the "system" of mutual obligations of family and friendship, as practiced in that age, and Cardinal Piccolomini's activities in this area were neither unusual nor extraordinary.

As a cardinal, Piccolomini also had an opportunity to extend his patronage to princes, on the basis of the decree on unpaid *promotorship* for kings and princes carried by the Council of Basle. Piccolomini was in Basle at the time and obviously knew of the decree.

Indeed, Piccolomini actively offered his services to a number of princes: Emperor Frederick III, Empress Leonora, King Ladislav of Hungary and Bohemia, King Alfonso of Sicily of Aragon, Duke Borso of Modena, and – later – the King of Denmark.

Only in two cases positive reactions from these princes are recorded: one is the emperor who in a letter of 30 January, 1457, formally appointed Cardinal Piccolomini as the promotor of his affairs at the Roman Curia, and the other is the King of Denmark who in a letter of October, 1457, signalled his interest in a similar arrangement.

In both cases, the terms of the decree of Basel concerning the name and remuneration for the arrangement were carefully observed.

These cases document the continued need for royal representation at the highest level at the Papal Court and that Cardinal Piccolomini actively favoured the development by soliciting promotorship of princes – and formally acquiring the promotorship of the emperor himself. The similar arrangement negotiated with the King of Denmark did not come into effect.

Thus, his activity in this area is a significant and well-documented element in the 15th century development of the office of Cardinal Protectors of Nations as based on a decree issued by the Council of Basle, and which later became an important element of the system and structure of papal government.

