

Oration "Si quis me roget" of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (4 April 1438, Basel). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. Final edition, 2nd version. (Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 2)

Michael Cotta-Schønberg

▶ **To cite this version:**

Michael Cotta-Schønberg. Oration "Si quis me roget" of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (4 April 1438, Basel). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. Final edition, 2nd version. (Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 2). 2019. hprints-00857755

HAL Id: hprints-00857755

https://hal-hprints.archives-ouvertes.fr/hprints-00857755

Submitted on 12 Jul 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

(Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 2)

Oration *"Si quis me roget"* of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (4 April 1438, Basel). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg

Final edition, 2nd version

July 2019
Copenhagen

Abstract

On 4 April 1438, the Feast of Saint Ambrose of Milan, Enea Silvio Piccolomini gave an oration, or rather a sermon, on Saint Ambrose to the Fathers at the Council of Basel. A couple of months before, the council had initiated the procedure for the deposal of Pope Eugenius IV and the later election of a new pope. In the sermon, Piccolomini presented a sketch of the life of Saint Ambrose, with special emphasis on his literary activities, his example of poverty as opposed to the vice of greed, and his independence vis-à-vis princes, i.e. the Roman Emperor. He also defended the use of classical pagan authors. In contrast with medieval hagiography he did not not greatly dwell of Ambrose's miracles.

Keywords

Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini; Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Papa Pio II; Saint Ambrose; Saint Jerome; Use of classical, pagan authors; Poverty; Greed; Renaissance oratory; Renaissance rhetorics; Renaissance orations; Saint Augustine; Augustinus; Ambrosius; Renaissance sermons; 1438; 15th century

Editor and translator

Michael v. Cotta-Schönberg

Mag. Art. (University of Copenhagen)
Bachelier en Philosophie (Université de Louvain)
Emeritus Deputy Director / The Royal Library, Copenhagen
Emeritus University Librarian / University of Copenhagen

ORCID identity: 000-0001-8499-4142
e-mail: typsita@gmail.com

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 80[1] 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 in HAL Archives.

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

20 July 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 Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II.* 12 vols. Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. *[Available on the web in HAL Archives]*

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
   - 2.1. Saint Ambrose
   - 2.2. Criticism of the clergy
   - 2.3. Miracles
   - 2.4. Use of classical authors
   - 2.5. Dependence on princes
   - 2.6. Milan
3. Date, place, audience and format
4. Text
   - 4.1. Early Version
   - 4.2. Final Version
     - 4.2.1. Manuscripts
     - 4.2.2. Editions
   - 4.3. Present edition
5. Sources
6. Bibliography
7. Sigla and abbreviations

II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

1. Introduction [1-5]
   - 1.1. Commemorations of saints [1]
   - 1.2. Captatio benevolentiae [2]
   - 1.3. Feast of Saint Ambrose [3-5]
2. Childhood [6]
3. Youth and early career [7]
4. Election as Bishop of Milan [8-10]
5. Enmity of the empress [11-12]
6. Avarice of the clergy [13]
7. Following Ambrose's example of poverty [14]
8. On avarice [15-20]
9. Virtues of Ambrose I [21-22]

10. Literary production [23]
11. Use of classical authors [24-25]
12. Virtues of Ambrose II [26-29]
13. Miracles [30]
14. Fame [31]
15. Patron Saint of Milan and its duke [32]
16. Death [33]
17. Conclusion [34]

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Context[1]

1438 was a momentous year for the Council of Basel. The conflict between Pope Eugenius IV and the council had run its course. The pendulum was swinging back in favour of the pope, and whereas some years before the European powers had mostly favoured the council, the intransigence of the council fathers themselves had now created a climate favourable to the Papacy. Developments in Italian politics favoured the pope, and his success in attracting the Greeks to a Union Council held in his own presence lent him considerable international prestige.

On 18 September 1437, Eugenius IV declared the Council of Basel as ended and indicted another one in Ferrara. On 8 January 1438, the Council of Ferrara opened[2], and the day afterwards the papal president of the Council of Basel, Cardinal Cesarini, left Basel for good. On 24 January 1438, the Council of Basel suspended the pope and initiated the procedure for his deposition and the later election of another pope.

On 24 March and again on 28 April, the Duke of Milan and Archbishop Pizzolpasso protested against the conciliar process against the pope, but in vain.[3]

The greatest merit of the preceding council, the Council of Konstanz 1414-1418, was to end the Great Schism of the Western Church, with three popes reigning at the same time. The Council of Basel had the serious demerit of creating a new schism, complete with an anti-pope, Felix V. That schism would last for 12 years, and it was to be last in the history of the Church – not counting the protestant reformation.

In 1438, Piccolomini had been made an ordinary member of the council and was one of its trusted officials, though in later writings he may have somewhat exaggerated his own importance. He was firmly on the anti-papalist side, though he was a keen and disillusioned observer of the conflicts between the conciliarist, French-dominated majority at the council and the papalist minority.

He must have been unsure and anxious about whether or not to join the exodus of the papalist party and seek employment in Italy, but he stayed on for a mixture of reasons, thus pursuing a course that - little did he know it - would lead to the Imperial Court and to a brilliant diplomatic and ecclesiastical career.

In 1438, he gave two orations in Basel, the first one a sermon on the Feast of Saint Ambrose, the "*Si quis me roget"*, and the second one "*Si ea quae justa" [4],* an address to the council fathers on

[1] Ady, 59; Boulting, pp. 93-94; Mitchell, p. 80; Reinhardt, pp.68-69; Voigt, I, 8, pp. 149-150; I, 12, pp. 226-228
[2] Later the pest made it necessary to move the council to Florence
[3] Paredi, p. 53

the scrutiny of candidates for episcopal preferment. He also wrote a speech for the Bishop of Novara to be given in Vienna in support of Albert II of Austria accepting his election as the new Roman King and Emperor.

As mentioned, the situation at the council in April 1438 was extremely serious and conflictual. Celebrating the patron saint of Milan, whose duke and archbishop were now in open disagreement with the council over the treatment of the pope, might have been conceived as a hostile political act of the Duke of Milan, but Archbishop Pizzolpasso of Milan was well liked, so on 4 April the council fathers attended the archbishop's pontifical mass in the Cathedral of Basel, and after the gospel they sat down to hear what that excellent official of the council, friend to all parties, the cultured youngish man from Siena, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, would have to say about Saint Ambrose. Hopefully, there would be some of that modern Italian rhetoric, so that it would not be too dull ...

In his *Commentarii*, Pius himself wrote about the event:

> *At Basel they were celebrating the feast of St. Ambrose of Milan. At the Archbishop's invitation, Aeneas delivered the eulogy[1] of the saint before the synod, despite the objections of the theologians who wanted to perform this function themselves. But Aeneas was preferred before them all and everyone listened to him with incredible attention.*[2] [3]

2. Themes

In his oration, Piccolomimi does not appear to be overly concerned with – or to follow – the rules for structuring a sermon on a saint established by the traditional *artes praedicandi*: introduction with an invocation of God (prothema), the formulation of the subject matter and the structure of the sermon (thema), the – usually three – parts of the sermon, and the conclusion. The first part would concern the biography of the saint, the second part a vice as opposed to a virtue, and the third part the exemplarity of the saint's life.[4] Instead, Piccolomini used the life of the saint to structure his oration, with intrapolation of the themes of criticism of the clergy (greed) and the reading and use of pagan, classical authors.[5]

[1] The Latin text has *"sermonem de laudibus"*
[2] CO, 8 (Meserve, vol. 1, p. 37)
[3] The oration is not mentioned by Pius' two contemporary biographers, Campano and Platina
[4] Iaria: *Enea,* p. 309
[5] Iaria: *Enea*, p. 314: *Nel sermo di Piccolomini si possono riconoscere le parti canoniche previste dall' ars praedicandi, anche se il sermo tende piuttosto verso l'oratio, non avendo egli separato le parti fra loro così*

2.1. Saint Ambrose

The description of Saint Ambrose is appropriately enthusiastic and admiring. Though being limited, in terms of factual knowledge, to what Paulinus and the *Historia Tripartita* could offer, Piccolomini did manage to give a vivid picture of Saint Ambrose, which does not, however, equal the refined and sensitive sketches of personalities that Piccolomini would develop later[1] and in which he would show consummate skill.

2.2. Criticism of the clergy

Piccolomini is quite outspoken in his criticism of the clergy. The council fathers might have expected gentle reproaches of various kinds, it was, after all, a sermon. But one may wonder if they would have expected a scathing denunciation of clerical greed and avarice:

> *But we today – oh, what shame! – we do not care about men, but about money. We are concerned not about souls, but about silver and gold. A bishopric is valued not for its number of souls, but for the size of its incomes. A diocese may have countless souls and an infinite number of people, but if it is not awash with money, nobody will want to go there, and it will lie about unwanted as if it was a piffling inheritance. However, if a bishopric is prosperous and its incomes large, everybody will turn their eyes towards it.* (Sect. 13)

When he adds that "*nobody is ordained as bishop there after careful scrutiny*," he refers to another matter being discussed at the council under the heading of church reform, i.e. the scrutiny of candidates for episcopal preferment. That same year Piccolomini, in an official capacity, was to give an oration to the council on this matter, the *Si ea quae justa*, where he pleaded for an effective system for scrutinizing such candidates. In this matter he was not more successful than he would be with his criticism of clerical greed.

2.3. Miracles

Piccolomini quoted a number of miracles from Paulinus' biography of Ambrose: that would be *de rigeur*. But he certainly did not quote them all, and he just briefly referred to them without in any way wallowing in them.

---

che il passagio da una all'altra non risulta in realtà così netto. Cf. McManamon on the sermons of Pierpaolo Vergerio, which were not thematic according to the rules of the *ars praedicandi*, but followed classical norms of panegyrics (McManamom: *Pierpaolo,* p. 179)

[1] E.g. in his *De viris illustribus*

It would appear that, already as a younger man, he held a cautious and somewhat skeptical attitude to miracles which he would also have later in life, even when he became a pope. Then he only refers to direct divine, i.e. miraculous, intervention in the daily affairs of men in connection with weather conditions favouring important outdoor papal ceremonies and, more importantly, battles won by papal armies and allies – or lost because of divine dissatisfaction with the Christians.

2.4. Use of classical authors

In the text there are 10 direct references to pagan classical authors, Terence, Juvenal, Gellius, Cicero, Seneca, Lucan, Virgil, and Horace, and 6 indirect references to Hesiod, Pliny, Plato, Homer, and Diogenes Laërtius.

Piccolomini makes the most of Virgil's description of greed, borrowed from Poggio Bracciolini, to press home his point on greed, and here pagan, classical morals fit neatly into the structure of Christian thought (sect. 18). Other uses do not support his religious or moral line of reasoning, but are purely ornamental, like the quote from Horace: *Why as the wheel runs round, does it turn out a pitcher* (sect. 20)?

The use of pagan classical authors was a somewhat controversial issue in the Renaissance, but happily the humanists had found an impeccable Christian authority to legitimize this practice, i.e. three Doctors of the Church, Basil, Ambrose himself and Jerome, whose profound knowledge of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers was based on a solid knowledge of classical literature that Piccolomini would use copiously and continuously (see sect. 23).

Piccolomini does mention Jerome's dream that he had been scourged by an angel because he was too fond of Cicero (sect. 23), but he proceeds to quote Jerome's allegory of the captive woman from Deuteronomy and his famous sentence: *Is it surprising that I too, admiring the fairness of her form and the grace of her eloquence, desire to make that secular wisdom which is my captive and my handmaiden, a matron of the true Israel* (Sect. 24)*?*

2.5. Dependence on princes

The council considered itself the highest authority in religious matters, and ecclesiastics were by then heirs to and keepers of a church culture that fiercely maintained its religious liberty and

independence from princes. In the letter of appointment of the President of the Council, Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, the pope had directly stated that one of the five aims of the council was to preserve the freedom of the Church from secular power.

In his oration *"Audivi" [1],* to the council fathers, Piccolomini had touched on this theme and openly rebuked them for unduly deferring to the princes and not having the courage to do anything that displeased them.[1]

In his sermon on Saint Ambrose, Piccolomini found excellent material for developing this theme in the conflict between Ambrose and Emperor Theodosius whom Ambrose forbade to enter the church before he had made penance for atrocities committed by his army.[2] The point would not have been lost on the council fathers.

2.6. Milan

Complimenting the city of Milan on the feast day of its great saint and protector, Saint Ambrose, would be quite natural and the thing to do: *Oh, truly blessed is that city which merited so great a Pontiff* (Sect. 32)! But then Piccolomini continues with two compliments to the Duke of Milan, Filippo Maria Visconti: *Oh, truly happy prince who was given so great a patron! … Ambrose it is who gives successful wars to our most excellent and wise prince. Ambrose it is who overcomes all the efforts of his enemies.* It is done elegantly as one would expect from this accomplished speaker, but it is nonetheless just an expression of the search for princely patronage that the humanists had to rely on for sources of income.

3. Date, place, audience and format

The date of the oration is the Feast of Saint Ambrose, viz. the 4th of April.

[1] Oration *"Audivi" [1],* sect. 4.4.3

[2] Piccolomini also mentioned this event in his much later work *De Europa* (Brown), p. 104: *On the other shore is Thessalonica, once a powerful city, made famous both by the epistles of the apostle Paul and by the impetuous and implacable anger of Theodosius the Great. In outrage at the murder of some magistrates there, this otherwise most merciful emperor ordered the entire population of the city to be slaughtered. Eleven thousand men are said to have been killed. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, did not allow so savage a crime to escape rebuke. He barred the emperor from entering the church and compelled him to do penance – nor did the mighty emperor refuse to comply with his pastor's judgment*

There has been some doubt concerning the year, some authors giving 1436[1] or 1437[2] and others - including Georg Voigt[3] and Johannes Helmrath[4] - 1438.

The year of 1438 seems to be supported by Pius himself who, in his *Commentarii*, describes his journey to Milan to take possession of the provostship of San Lorenzo, to which he had been appointed by Archbishop Pizzolpasso. Later, still in Milan, he is struck with fever and lies seriously ill for two and a half months. He then returns to Basel where *they were celebrating the feast of Saint Ambrose. At the Archbishop's invitation, Aeneas delivered the eulogy of the saint before the synod* …"[5] The next passage begins with the words, *Meanwhile, Emperor Sigismund died (Interea mortuo Sigismundo Caesare)*,[6] meaning during the period when Piccolomini was occupied in Milan, after which he came back and gave the sermon. Sigismund died on 9 December 1437, i.e. 8 months after the Feast of Saint Ambrose in 1437. So, if Sigismund died before Piccolomini held the sermon, the year could be not 1437, but must be 1438.

The sermon was given during a solemn mass celebrated by Archbishop Pizzolpasso of Milan in the Cathedral of Basel.

The audience consisted of the council fathers and their retinues attending the mass.

In the table of contents of both manuscripts containing the text as well as in the title of the text, it is designated as an oration. In his *Commentarii*, Pius himself called it a *sermo de laudibus.*[7]

4. Text[8]

The oration is extant in two versions, an Early Version and a Final Version.

[1] Reinhardt, p. 69: 4 December 1436
[2] Ady, p. 80; Mitchell, p. 80
[3] Voigt, p. 149
[4] Helmrath, p. 140
[5] CO, I, 8, 6 (Meserve, vol. I, p. 36-37)
[6] CO, I, 9, 1 (Meserve, vol. I, p. 38-39)
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] For the textual transmission of Pius II's, see *Collected Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, ch. 5

4.1. Early Version[1]

The Early Version is identical or very close to the oration as delivered by Piccolomini. It is presently known to be extant in three manuscripts:

- **Basel / Universitätsbibliothek**
  A III 38, ff. 145r-150v **(K**)*
  A IV 5, ff. 255r-260v **(L)**

- **Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana**
  Palat. Lat. 603, ff. 204v-209r **(J)*** [2]

It appears not to have been edited or collated previously.

4.2. Final Version

The Final Version of the orations was included in the Collected Orations of Pius II, but not in the first version of the Collected Orations, compiled in 1462 under the pope's own supervision.[3]

4.2.1. Manuscripts

It is extant in two manuscripts:

- **Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana**
  Chis. J.VI.211, ff. 14v-21r **(D)***

- **Lucca / Biblioteca Capitolare Feliniana**
  544, ff. 17v-24r **(G)***

It is not known why the oration was not included in the edition of the Collected Orations from 1462, represented by the manuscript BAV / Chis. J.VIII 284: either it was not available at the time, or it may have been considered that as a sermon it was outside the scope of the collection -

[1] Manuscripts for which an orthographical profile is given in *Collected orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II,* vol. 11, are marked with an asterisk
[2] http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav_pal_lat_603/0001
[3] See *Collected orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II*, ch. 5.2

though the compilation from 1462 actually did contain another sermon, the "*Non est apud me" [6]*. But it was included in the edition prepared for the Cardinal Nephew in 1463/1464, the BAV / Chis. J.VI.211, from where it was copied into the BCF / 544 in 1493.

4.2.2. Editions

The text was published by Mansi three times, all on the basis of the manuscript in Lucca:

- Mansi, Giovanni Domenico (ed.): *[Ad concilia Veneto-Labbeana Supplementum.] Sanctorum conciliorum et decretorum collectio nova: seu collectionis conciliorum … supplementum*. Tom. V. Lucca, 1751, pp. 1-11

- Pius II: *Orationes politicae et ecclesiasticae.* Ed. Giovanni Domenico Mansi. Tom. I. Lucca, 1755, pp. 39-52

- *Sanctorum Conciliorum et decretorum collectio nova*. Tom. XXX. Venezia, 1792, col. 1207-1216

4.3. Present edition

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

Text:

The present edition is based on alle the manuascripts listed above, as well as Mansi's edition.[1] The Chis. J.VI.211 has been chosen as the lead text.

Pagination:

Pagination is from the BAV / Chis. J.VI.211 (red), the Lucca ms. (blue) and Basel A III 38 (green).

[1] Mansi's edition has been included for the purpose of assessing its quality

5. Sources[1]

In the "*Si quis me roget"*, altogether 104 direct and indirect quotations from various sources have been identified:

Biblical	22
Classical	26
Patristic and medieval	52
Contemporary	4
All	**104**

This table shows that the biblical and the classical quotations are equal in number, surpassed by patristic and medieval quotations. This is a very different picture from Piccolomini's first oration, the "*Audivi" [1]*, from a year and half before, where there was only one quotation from the bible and the fathers, but 30 from the classics.

Biblical sources

Old Testament	
Deuteronomy	2
Ecclesiasticus	1
Ezekiel	1
Isaiah	1
Jeremiah	1
1. Kings	1
Proverbs	2
Psalms	3
All	**12**

New Testament	
Matthew	3
John	1
Philippians	3
Romans	1
1. Thessalonians	1
1. Timothy	1
All	**10**

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

All OT+NT	**22**

Classical sources

Boëthius	1[1]
Cassiodorus	3[2]
Cicero	2
Gellius	3
Homer	1
Horatius	2[3]
Juvenalis	1
Lucanus	1[4]
Macrobius	3
Plato	1[5]
Plinius Sen.	1[6]
Publilius Syrus	1
Quintilianus	2[7]
Seneca	1[8]
Terentius	1[9]
Valerius Maximus	1
Vergilius	1[10]
All	**26**

This list comprises most of the classical authors popular in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

[1] De consolat. phil.
[2] Hist. tripartita
[3] Ars poet. 1; Carmina 1
[4] De bello civ.
[5] Republic
[6] Hist. naturalis
[7] Institutiones orat.
[8] De clementia
[9] Andria
[10] Aeneis

Patristic and medieval sources

Ambrosius	1[1]
Augustinus	2
Basil of Caesarea	5[2]
Burley	2[3]
Decretum Gratiani	1
Hieronimus	19[4]
Paulinus	21[5]
Zeno Veronensis	1[6]
All	**52**

Contemporary sources

Poggio Bracciolini	4[7]
All	**4**

The main source of the sermon is Paulinus' biography of Saint Ambrose (337/40-397 AD). Paulinus was a deacon in Milan and knew Ambrose personally. The biography is dated to 412-413 or 422. Piccolomini actually draws quite heavily on this text for his information on Ambrose.

For factual information he also used the *Historia Tripartita* of Cassiodorus (c. 490 – c. 483) and Epiphanius.

Otherwise, he made extensive use of 3-4 letters of Saint Jerome, especially of his letter to Heliodorus (ep. 60), a letter of consolation on the death of Nepotian, Heliodorus' nephew and Jerome's friend.

Also, he used Poggio Bracciolini's work, *De Avaritia,* from 1428-1429, i.e. only 10 years earlier,[8] and Leonardo Bruni's recent translation into Latin of Saint Basil's *Ad adolescentes.*

[1] Sermo contra Aux. de basilicis trad.
[2] Ad adolescentes, in Leonardo Bruni's translation into Latin from ca. 1426
[3] Lib. de vita et moribus phil.
[4] Ep. 21 2; Ep. 22 2; Ep. 58 1; Ep. 60 13; Ep. 70 1; Ep. 75 1; Ep. 130 1
[5] Vita s. Ambrosii
[6] De avaritia
[7] De avaritia
[8] Piccolomini also mentions this work in his chapter on Poggio Bracciolini in *De Viris illustribus*, p. 35-36

The question arises: where did Piccolomini have access to the texts used in the sermon?
Many of the classical quotations he would have written down during his university studies in Siena and kept in som kind of file which he had brought with him.

And at the council, he had become friends with Archbishop Pizzolpasso of Milan, who often invited him to his table, lent him books, and even granted him the provostship of San Lorenzo in Milan, undoubtedly with the permission of the Duke of Milan, Maria Filippo Visconti, whose favour Piccolomini courted - sometimes with success.[1]

Pizzolpasso himself was somewhat of a humanist and over the years he collected an excellent library. His library included the books mentioned above, Paulinus' biography of Saint Ambrose, the *Historia Tripartita*, and the letters of Jerome. It also contained some works used by Piccolomini in his oration *"Audivi" [1]*.[2] The *De Avaritia* by Poggio Bracciolini does not feature in an inventory of the library dating from 1443, but in a letter from 1437 Poggio promised the Archbishop, then in Basel, to send him in a copy.[3] At any rate, Piccolomini used it in his oration on Saint Ambrose in 1438.[4]

In Basel there was another library that Piccolomini may have used, i.e. the library of the Dominicans.

There seems to be no need to search much further: the Archbishop of Milan had asked Piccolomini to give a sermon on his predecessor, Saint Ambrose, and he would quite naturally also have made his library available to him.[5] He may even have assisted Piccolomini in his search for materials for the sermon.

6. Bibliography

Ady, Cecilia M.: *Pius II (Æneas Silvius Piccolomini) – the Humanist Pope.* London, 1913

Basil of Caesarea: *Oratio ad adolescentes.* [ca. 370]

[1] Iaria: *Tra*, p. 9
[2] Oration *"Audivi",* sect. 4.3.3
[3] Iaria: *Tra*, p. 19
[4] And in other works, too, cf. Iaria: *Tra*, pp. 13, 18, 26
[5] Iaria: *Tra*, p. 9

- Basilio di Cesarea: *Discorso ai giovani. Oratio ad adolescentes*. Con la versione Latina di Leonardo Bruni. A cura di M. Naldini. [1984]. Prima edizione EDB. Bologna, 1998

Bracciolini, Poggio: *De avaritia.* [1428-1429]

- Poggius Bracciolinus: *Opera Omnia*. Torino, 1964. (Monumenta politica et philosophica rariora; ser. 2, nr. 4, pp. 1-31)

- Poggio Bracciolini: *Dialogus contra avaritiam (De avaritia).* Hrsg. Giuseppe Germano. Livorno, 1994

Burley, Walter: *Liber de vita et moribus philosophorum*.

- Gualteri Burlaei *Liber de Vita et Moribus Philosophorum* mit einer altspanischen Übersetzung der Eskorialbibliothek. Hrsg. von Hermann Knust. Stuttgart, 1886. (Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart; 177)

Cassiodorus & Ephiphanius: *Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita*

- Cassiodorus & Ephiphanius: *Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita*. Vindobonae, 1952. (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum; 71)

Cavallera, Ferdinand: *Saint Jérôme. Sa vie et son oeuvre*. Tom. I. Louvain, 1922. (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense. Études et Documents; 1)

Collins, Roger: *Early medieval Europe 300-1000*. Houndsmill, 1991

Dudden, F. Homes: *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*. 2 vols. Oxford, 1935

Helmrath, Johannes: *Die Reichstagsreden des Enea Silvio Piccolomini 1454/55. Studien zur Reichstag und Rhetorik*. Universität Köln, 1994

Iaria, Simona: Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Oratio in divi Ambrosii celebritate. Un modello culturale per i padri conciliari. In: *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Budapestensis. Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Budapest, 6-12 August 2006.* Ed. by R. Schnur *et al.* Tempe, 2010, pp. 307-316. (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies; 386)

Iaria, Simona: Tra Basilea e Vienna - letture umanistiche di Enea Silvio Piccolomini e la frequentazione della 'biblioteca' di Francesco Pizolpasso. In: *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 52 (2003) 1-32

Jeronimus: *Epistolae*

- Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis presbyteri epistolae. In: J.P. Migne: *Patrologiae Latinae Cursus Completus.* Tom. XXII. Paris, 1877, col. 326-1284

- St. Jerome: *Letters and Select Works.* (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers; Series 2, vol. 6)

Mansi, Giovanni Domenico (ed.): *[Ad concilia Veneto-Labbeana Supplementum.] Sanctorum conciliorum et decretorum collectio nova: seu collectionis conciliorum … supplementum*. Tom. V. Luca, 1751

Mansi, Giovanni Domenico (ed.): *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio.* Tom. XXX. Venezia, 1792

McManamon, John: *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder. The Humanist as Orator.* Tempe, 1996. (Medieval & Renaissance Texts; 163)

Mitchell, R.J.: *The Laurels and the Tiara – Pope Pius II, 1458-1464*. London, 1962

Paredi, Angelo: *La Biblioteca del Pizolpasso*. Milano, 1961

Paulinus Mediolanensis: *Vita Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi*

- *Vita Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi, a Paulino ejus notario ad Beatum Augustinum Conscripta*. (Patrologia Latina; 14)

- Paulinus: The Life of Saint Ambrose. In: Boniface Ramsey: *Ambrose*, 1997, pp. 195-218

Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *De Europa.* [1458]

- Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Europe (c. 1400-1458).* Transl. by Robert Brown. Edit. and annot. by Nancy Bisaha. Washington, D.C., 2013

Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *De viris illustribus.*

- Eneae Silvii Piccolominei postea Pii PP. II *De viris illustribus.* Ed. A. van Heck. Città del Vaticano, 1991. (Studi e test; 341)

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

- Pius II: *Commentaries.* Ed. M. Meserve and M. Simonetta. Vols. 1 ff. Cambridge, MA, 2003 ff.

Pius II: *Orationes.* [1436-1464]

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

- *Collected orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II.* Edit. and transl. by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. 12 vols. Final ed. Copenhagen, 2018-2019. *[Available on the web in HAL Archives]*

Ramsey, Boniface: *Ambrose*. London, 1997

Reinhardt, Volker: *Pius II. Piccolomini – Der Papst, mit dem die Renaissance begann.* München, 2013

Rice, Eugene F.: *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance. Baltimore,* 1988

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

Zeno Veronensis: *Tractatus.* Ed. B. Löfstedt. Turnholt, 1971. (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina; 22)

7. Sigla and abbreviations

D = Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana / Chis. J.VI.211
G = Lucca / Biblioteca Capitolare Feliniana / 544
J = Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana / Palatinus latinus 603
K = Basel / Universitätsbibliothek / A, III, 38
L = Basel / Universitätsbibliothek / A IV 5

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

Abbreviations

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

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 Secvlare*. 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

Eneae Silvii Picolominei Senensis Oratio habita Basileae in Divi Ambrosii celebritate[1] [2]

[1] {15r} {17v} {145r} *Si quis me roget*, reverendissimi[3] patres, cur a majoribus[4] sanctorum virorum commemorationes sint introductae, facile quidem responsum dabo: non tam propter illos, ut gloriam bene actae[5] [6] vitæ recipiant, quam propter nos, ut illorum sequamur exempla[7]. Quid enim est quod nostris praeconiis egeant, qui apud maximum Deum recepti, summo illo et ineffabili divinitatis splendore fruuntur? Quidve omnino mortalem exposcant[8] laudem, qui habitantes cum Christo angelicis continue[9] vocibus extolluntur? Nempe ita beati sunt illi, ut nec addere quicquam eis, nec auferre nostra studia possint. Fiunt igitur ad nostram institutionem[10] commemorationes hujusmodi, ut audientes illorum vitam, quorum vel ortus in lucem, vel transitus ad gloriam celebrantur, quales illi fuere[11], tales nos esse nitamur[12]. Qui quidem tanta probitate vixerunt, ut pars felicitatis existat nosse, quid fecerint.

[1] *No title* J; Sermo Enee in festo sancti Ambrosii K, L
[2] Ex Mss. Cod. Bibl. Canonic. Cathedr. Lucanae, edita est a me primum in Tom. V. Suppl. Concil. An. 1436 Mansi *in marg.* MA
[3] beatissimi J, K, L
[4] a majoribus : animae J, K, L
[5] bene actae : ante actae G, MA
[6] ad J
[7] sequamur exempla : exempla sequamur J
[8] expostulant J
[9] continuo MA
[10] constitutionem G; institutionem *corr. ex.* constitutionem MA
[11] fuerunt J, K, L
[12] enitamur J, K, L

Oration of Enea Silvio Piccolomini of Siena, given in Basel on the Feast of Saint Ambrose

1. Introduction

1.1. Commemorations of Saints

[1] *If anybody asks me*[1], Reverend Fathers, why our forefathers introduced commemorations of holy men, I can answer easily: they did not do so for the sake of the holy men themselves so that they would receive praise for a well-lived life, but for our sake so that we would follow their examples. For why would they need our praise when they have been received by the Great God and are enjoying the supreme and ineffable splendour of divinity? And why would they want the praise of mortal men when they are living with Christ and are continuously praised by the voices of angels? No, they are blessed, and we are not able to give them anything or take anything away from them.[2] Commemorations of this type are held for the sake of our own edification: when we hear about the lives of these persons, whose elevation to the light or passage into glory we celebrate, we will strive to be like them. For they lived so virtuously that just knowing what they did will bring us some measure of happiness.

[1] Terentius: *Andria,* 258: *Si quis nunc me roget*

[2] Piccolomini, as pope, reused and developed this theme in the introduction to his *Commentarii*: *the perfect happiness of the blessed [in Heaven] is neither increased by the praise of mortals nor diminished by their scorn,* CO*,* Praefatio (Meserve, I, pp. 2-3)

[2] Ea de causa placitum est hero meo Mediolanensi archiepiscopo, quoniam hodiernus dies antecessori suo beatissimo et excellentissimo[1] doctori Ambrosio sacer est, non solum ante conspectum vestrum divina celebrare officia, sed mihi quoque de tanto viro, et[2] coram tot tantisque patribus, ut orationem habeam, omnino insufficienti committere. Vereor tamen, ne sicut negare nescivi, sic etiam obedire non sciam. Obruit enim me magnitudo gestorum, quae si voluerim omnia recensere, nec[3] quidem dies[4] sufficiet[5], nec memoria tanta tenebit. Perterret me quoque vestra majestas, in cujus praesentia nil nisi tersum dici fas puto. Sed quoniam hunc locum ascendi, et aures vestras auditioni paratas video, antiquius arbitror aliqua dicere, quam penitus obmutescere, ne vel reverendissimi domini mei archipontificis desiderio desim, vel huic celeberrimo festo injuriam faciam; {18r} nequaquam tamen meis confisus viribus[6], sed divino numine fretus[7] ad rem veniam[8].

[3] Ambrosius noster hodie, sanctissimi patres, secundum repraesentationem ecclesiae diem obiit, quo nec *severitate vitae, nec sanctimonia morum, nec optimarum artium studio, nec sacrarum litterarum doctrina* probatior quisquam fuit. Quid igitur faciemus? Obitumne sanctissimi viri plorabimus; an potius, secuti Hesiodum {15v} *natales hominum plangentes*, in funere gaudebimus*?* {145v} *Prohibet quidem apostolus hujusmodi lachrimas Christianorumque mortuos dormientes appellat. Dominus quoque in Evangelio: Non est mortua, inquit, puella, sed dormit.* Scimus praeterea nostrum Ambrosium esse cum Christo, et in sanctorum choris admixtum, cujus in terra ea omnis cura fuit, ut aliquando in coelo diceret: *Sicut audimus*[9]*, sic vidimus in civitate domini virtutum, in civitate Dei nostri*.

[1] et excellentissimo *omit*. K
[2] ac J
[3] mihi *add.* G, MA
[4] quidem dies : dies quidem J, K, L
[5] sufficeret MA
[6] verbis viribus K
[7] sed divino numine fretus *omit.* J, K, L
[8] sed implorabo ex veteri more sanctissime dei genitricis favorem quem ut libentius prestet angelica eam oratione salutabimus: Ave Maria, gratia plena, dominus tecum J; sed implorabo ex veteri more sanctissime dei genitricis favorem quem ut libentius prestet angelica eam oratione consalutabimus: Ave gratia K, L
[9] audivimus J, K, L

1.2. Captatio benevolentiae

[2] For this reason, it has pleased My Lord, the Archbishop of Milan,[1] on this day dedicated to his predecessor, Ambrose[2], holy and exalted Doctor of the Church, to celebrate the divine office in your presence. Moreover, he has asked me to give an oration[3] on this great man before an audience of so many and so great Fathers, even though the task is completely beyond me. I fear that just as I cannot turn him down, I cannot either meet his requirements. For the greatness of Ambrose's deeds overwhelms me, and even if I wanted to relate them all, this day would not be long enough, nor would I be able to remember it all. Also, the majesty of your [assembly] overawes me, and I think it is only proper to be brief in your presence. But as I have stepped up here, and as I see that you are ready to listen, I think it is better to say something than stay completely silent. So, now I shall obey the wish of my Reverend Lord, the Archbishop, and not disgrace this noble Feast, but come to the point, not relying on my own powers, but on the Divinity.

1.3. Feast of Saint Ambrose

[3] Holy Fathers, according to Church tradition, our Ambrose died on this day.[4] Nobody has ever excelled him in *asceticism, holiness, dedication to the good arts, and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.*[5] So, how should we proceed now? Should we lament the death of this holy man? Or should we rather go along with Hesiod, who *bewails men's birthdays*[6], and rejoice in his death? *However, the Apostle forbids this kind of tears, saying that "dead Christians are only sleeping."*[7] *And the Lord says in the Gospel: "The girl is not dead, but sleepeth."*[8]

Moreover, we know that our Ambrose is with Christ and has joined the choirs of saints. When he was on this Earth, he was only concerned that when he went to heaven he would be able to say: *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the lord of virtues, in the city of our God.*[9]

---

[1] Francesco Pizzolpasso (-1443): Archbishop of Milan from 1435 to his death. Churchman with humanist interests and a friend of Piccolomini

[2] Aurelius Ambrosius (ca. 330 -397): Archbishop of Milan from 374 to his death. Doctor of the Church. Saint

[3] Note Piccolomini's own use of the term "oration" rather than "sermon"

[4] April 4

[5] Basil: *Oratio* (Bruni), dedicatio, p. 231

[6] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Helidorum (*60), 2. MPL, XXII, col. 598. Translation quoted after St. Jerome: *Letters*

[7] 1. Thessalonians 4, 12-14

[8] Matthew, 9, 24. The whole passage is quoted from Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 2. MPL, XXII, col. 590

[9] Psalms, 47, 9: *sicut audivimus ita vidimus in civitate Dei exercituum in civitate Dei nostri.* The version of the Vulgate used by Piccolomini has "domini virtutum" instead of "Dei exercituum". Quoted by Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 7. MPL, XXII, col. 593

[4] Convenientior igitur huic solemnitati laeta erit oratio quam tristis. Et si enim, ut est apud Tullium, nulla ex parte maesti Theramenes et Socrates obiisse creduntur, quid de Ambrosio nostro dicemus, cui *vivere Christus erat et mori lucrum*? Congratulandum est quippe tanto pontifici ejusque vitae[1] laudes cum alacritate a me referendae, et a vobis cum laetitia sunt audiendae. Quam rem nisi sufficienter implevero, dabitis veniam ingeniolo meo, et voluntatem magis a me quam vires[2] suscipietis**.**

[5] Nec ego *praecepta rhetorum*[3] hoc loco exequar[4], quibus mos est *majores ejus, qui landandus* proponitur, *et eorum altius gesta repetere*, ut *ramorum sterilitatem*, sicut Jeronimus ait, *radix fecunda compenset*[5]*, et quod in fructu non teneas, merearis*[6] *in trunco*. *At ego carnis bona, quae semper ipse contempsit, in animae laudibus non reponam.* Nec Ambrosium *jactabo de genere,* quamvis nobilissimus fuit, *id est de alienis bonis, cum et Abraham et Isaac, sancti viri, Ismaelem et Esau peccatores genuerint*[7], *et natus ex meretrice,* secundum Apostoli vocem*, in catalogo sanctorum adnumeretur*, et[8] veteri quoque lege sancitur: *Anima quae peccaverit, ipsa morietur*; {18v} *ergo et quae non peccaverit, ipsa vivet*. *Nec vitia, nec virtutes parentum liberis imputantur*. *Ab eo tempore quisque censetur ex quo Christo*[9] *renascitur.*

[1] *omit.* J, K
[2] a me quam vires : quam vires a me MA
[3] rethorum J, K, L
[4] exequor MA
[5] compescet K; compenscet L
[6] mireris J, K; mereris L
[7] Mali ex bonis nascuntur *in marg.* D, G
[8] *omit.* K
[9] Christus D, G

[4] So, an oration on this solemn occasion should be joyous rather than sad. And if - as Tullius[1] said - Theramenes[2] and Socrates[3] passed away with no regrets at all,[4] what should we say about our Ambrose for whom *to live was Christ and to die was gain?*[5] Certainly, we should felicitate this great bishop! So my task is to praise his life enthusiastically while yours is to listen joyfully. If I do not perform my task adequately, you will forgive my puny intellect and appreciate my intention rather than my abilities.

[5] On this occasion, I shall not follow *the rhetoricians' rule to go back to the ancestors of the man you have to praise and first recount their glorious deeds,*[6] so that, as Jerome[7] says, *a fertile root may make up for barren branches and you may admire in the stem what you have not got in the fruit.*[8] *I will not dwell upon those fleshly advantages nor refer to inherited advantages which he, for his part, always despised. Nor will I boast of his family,* although it was of great nobility, for *such good points belong to others; for even those holy men Abraham and Isaac had for sons the sinners Ishmael and Esau*, and – according to the Apostle[9] – *even the son of a harlot may be inscribed in the catalogue of saints*. And in the Old Law it is ordained that *the soul that sinneth, the same shall die*. *Neither the virtues nor the vices of parents should not be imputed to their children*. *Everyone should be taken account of only from the time when we are born anew in Christ*.[10]

[1] Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC): Roman statesman and philosopher
[2] Theramenes (fl. 411-404 BC): Athenian statesman
[3] Socrates (c. 469-399 BC): Athenian philosopher
[4] Cicero: *Tusculanae Disputationes*, 1.40.96 – 1.42.100
[5] Philippians, 1, 21: *mihi enim vivere Christus est et mori lucrum.* Quoted by Jerome*: Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 7. MPL, XXII, 22, col.. 593
[6] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 7. MPL*,* XXII, col. 594: *Praecepta sunt rhetorum, ut maiores eius, qui laudandus est, et eorum altius gesta repetantur*
[7] Jerome (ca. 347-420): Doctor of the Church. Saint. Translated the Bible into Latin (The Vulgate)
[8] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Demetriadem* (130), 3. MPL*,* XXII, col. 1108: *ramorum sterilitatem radix fecunda compenset, et quod in fructu non teneas, mireris in trunco*
[9] Not the Apostle, but Quintilian!
[10] This whole passage is adapted from Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 8. MPL*,* XXII, col. 594, where he speaks of Nepotian. The mss. erroneously have *Christus* in stead of *Christo* which does not give meening, since it is not Christ who was reborn, but the Christians who are reborn in Christ

[6] Surgat[1] igitur nobis infantulus noster Ambrosius, cujus cum fuerit omnis aetas laudabilis, infantilis[2] quoque mirabilis fuit. Nec me aliquis longum existimet quod ita remote incipiam. *Nam sicut in brevi tabella terrarum situs nonnumquam picti reperiuntur*, sic in parva oratione mea non expressam, sed adumbratam cernetis Ambrosii vitam. Praefectus erat in Galliis Ambrosius pater, cum natus est, de quo verba fiunt, Ambrosius, cui adhuc infanti et apud {16r} aream praetorii in cunis jacenti subito apes advolaverunt, ejusque vagientis ora {146r} frequentatis ingredi vicibus atque egredi cernebantur. Quas cum ancilla eademque puelli[3] nutrix abigere vellet, prohibita est a patre, qui exitum rei sollicitus expectabat. Illae autem, postquam aliquandiu circa puerum volitarunt[4] levatae in altum, ex oculis omnium evanuerunt. Quod omen tam genitor quam alii, qui aderant, portendere[5] aliquod magnum puero autumabant. Mihi videntur aviculae illae futuram hominis eloquentiam praesignasse, secundum quod scriptum est: *Favi mellis sermones boni*. Nec fefellit exitus, siquidem facundissimus postea, ut omnes nostis, evasit Ambrosius.

[1] surgat J, K, L; exurgat MA
[2] infantulus J
[3] puella K
[4] *omit.* G, MA
[5] pretendere K

2. Childhood[1]

[6] So, let the little child Ambrose rise before us. All his ages were praiseworthy, but his childhood was also miraculous. Let nobody consider me long-winded for starting with these remote beginnings, *for just as on a small tablet men depict the configurations of the earth,* so in this little oration of mine you may see Ambrose´s life if not fully depicted then at least outlined.[2]

When our Ambrose was born, his father – also called Ambrose – was Prefect of Gaul. Once, the baby was lying in his cradle in the courtyard of the pretorial residence when suddenly bees came flying and were seen to crawl in and out of his open mouth. When an old servant, the boy's nurse, wanted to drive them away, she was stopped by the father who anxiously awaited the outcome. The bees were buzzing about the boy for a little while, then they flew up and disappeared from sight. The father and the other bystanders considered this to be an omen of something great for the child. Personally, I think that these small birds[3] was a sign of the man's future eloquence,[4] as it is written: *Well ordered words are as a honeycomb.*[5] And the outcome did not disappoint, seeing that Ambrose later became extraordinarily eloquent.

[1] In this section, Piccolomi depends heavily on Paulinus, sect. 3

[2] A quotation adapted from Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 7. MPL, XXII, col. 593

[3] I.e. insects

[4] Cf. Valerius Maximus, 1.6.ext. 3, on bees, honey, babies, and future eloquence: *Formicis Midae iure meritoque apes Platonis praetulerim: illae enim caducae ac fragilis, hae solidae et aeternae felicitatis indices exstiterunt, dormientis in cunis parvuli labellis mel inserendo. qua re audita prodigiorum interpretes singularem eloquii suavitatem ore eius emanaturam dixerunt. ac mihi quidem illae apes non montem Hymettium thymi flore redolentem, sed Musarum Heliconios colles omni genere doctrinae virentes dearum instinctu depastae maximo ingenio dulcissima summae eloquentiae instillasse videntur alimenta (With good and sufficient reason would I prefer the bees of Plato to Midas' ants. The latter foretold of transitory, fragile felicity, the former of solid and eternal, by putting honey between the lips of the little lad as he slept in his cradle. Hearing of it, the interpreters of prodigies said that matchless sweetness of discourse would flow from his mouth. And to my thinking those bees at the prompting of the goddesses, fed, not upon Mount Hymettus, fragrant with flowers of thyme, but on the Heliconian hills of the Muses, verdant with every kind of learning, and instilled sweetest nurture of supreme eloquence into that mighty intellect)*

[5] Proverbs, 16, 24

[7] Is quippe amisso patre, cum esset admodum puer, cum matre vidua et sorore virgine nutritus est, et ut primum potuit per aetatem, liberalibus studiis navasse operam traditur, brevique tempore ita doctus evasit, ut inter primos causas peroraret, maximamque apud Probum, virum illustrem et tunc[1] Romani rectorem imperii, gratiam acquisivit. Ob quam causam juvenis adhuc ad consularem dignitatem pervenit, moxque provincia sibi decreta est Gallia, quae circa Padum intra Italiam jacet, quae res Mediolanum, urbem populosissimam et totius Insubriae caput, eum perduxit.

[1] adhuc J

3. Youth and early career[1]

[7] When Ambrose was still a small boy, he lost his father and was brought up by his widowed mother and an unmarried sister.[2] He is said to have begun to study the liberal arts at the earliest age possible, and in a short time he became so proficient that he was among the most prominent speakers in law trials. Moreover, he found high favour with the illustrious Probus,[3] at that time the administrator[4] of the Roman Empire. For this reason, he reached consular rank when he was still a young man. Soon afterwards, the Province of Gaul[5] around the Po river in Italy was allotted to him,[6] and thus he came to the very populous city of Milan, capital city of the whole of Lombardy.[7]

[1] In this section, Piccolomini relies heavily on Paulinus, sect. 4-5

[2] In Rome, cf. Dudden, p. 1-21. Ambrose's sister was Marcellina, also venerated as a saint

[3] Sextus Anicius Petronius Probus: Praetorian prefect of Italy with Illyricum since 368, one of the two regions of the Western empire at that time, cf. Dudden, I, p. 60-61; Ramsey, p. 18. Ammianus Marcellinus gives a description of his nogle birth, wealth, honours, and character in his *Rerum gestarum libri*, XXVII, 11, 1. (The translator of the Loeb ed. gives his name as C. Anicius Petronius Probus)

[4] "rector"

[5] Gallia Cisalpina

[6] As provincial governor, cf. Dudden, I, p. 61

[7] Milan: Around 400 BC, the Celtic Insubres settled Milan and the surrounding region. In 222 BC, the Romans conquered the settlement which was then renamed Mediolanum. Milan was declared the capital of the Western Roman Empire by Emperor Diocletian in 286 AD.

[8] Quo tempore, mortuo Auxentio[1] Arianae fatuitatis antistite, {19r} qui expulso Dionysio Mediolanensem occuparat ecclesiam, circa creationem novi episcopi non parva erat in civitate seditio, quod alium Ariani, alium orthodoxi pontificem cupiebant. Ideoque visum Ambrosio est[2] ad ecclesiam pergere, ut animos, si posset, concitatos sua oratione molliret. Vixque alloqui plebem coeperat[3], subito vox fertur infantis personuisse: “Ambrosium episcopum!”, ad quam vocem tamquam coelitus missam totius populi ora conversa Ambrosium episcopum conclamabant, factaque repente concordia hunc omnes unum[4] ordinari antistitem flagitabant.

[9] Sed nondum ea, quae nunc viget, ambitio macularat ecclesiam, nec adhuc pecunia vendebantur episcopatus: indignabundus ecclesiam dereliquit Ambrosius, praepositisque[5] tormentis, retrahere populum ab his vocibus satagebat; et nunc se cathecumenum, nunc philosophum respondebat; ac, cum nec sic cessaret {16v} populus, meretrices publicas ad[6] se propalam ingredi jussit, ut eo vel maxime modo indignum se redderet pontificatu. Sed quo plus repugnabat, eo magis in se studia omnium concitabat, merebaturque negando quod esse nolebat, quoniam dignior[7] erat, qui se clamabat indignum. Quam ob causam[8] fugae sese commisit[9], egressusque noctu Papiam pergebat. At dominus, qui ecclesiae suae murum parabat, et turrim adversus Damasci faciem, idest Arianorum perfidiam, erigebat, fugam tenuit ipsius, rubescenteque[10] aurora ante portam urbis, cui Romana[11] est nomen, ignorantem eum in conspectu populi reddidit[12].

[1] Auxoculio J
[2] Ambrosio est : est Ambrosio MA
[3] cum *add.* L
[4] *omit.* J
[5] propositisque J, K, L
[6] a K
[7] dignus J
[8] quam ob causam : ob quam causam J
[9] conversit J
[10] erubescenteque MA
[11] Roma K, L
[12] reddit K

4. Election as bishop of Milan[1]

[8] At this time, Auxentius[2] died. He was a bishop belonging to the absurd sect of the Arians[3] who had expelled Dionysius[4] and occupied the See of Milan. The appointmen of a new bishop caused a great uproar in the city as the Arians wanted one man as bishop, and the orthodox another. Therefore Ambrose decided to go to the church to talk to the excited crowd and if possible to calm them down. Hardly had he begun to speak to the people when – as it is told - a child's voice suddenly resounded through the church: "Ambrose for Bishop". As if this voice had been sent from Heaven, all faces now turned towards Ambrose, and shouting "Ambrose for Bishop" they unanimously demanded that this man should be appointed bishop.

[9] But ambition, so prevalent in the present age, had not yet blemished the Church, and bishoprics were not yet sold for money. Shocked and angry Ambrose left the church. Afterwards he endeavoured to turn the people away from these voices by ordering people to be tortured, and by declaring himself to a be catechumen[5] and later a philosopher[6]. And when that did not stop the people, he ordered prostitutes to come to him openly so that he would in this way make himself completely unfit for the episcopate. But the more he resisted, the more he provoked everybody to be for him, and by refusing he won what he did not want, for though he claimed not to be worthy, he was the worthiest. He therefore decided to flee, and having left during the night he set out for Pavia.[7] But the Lord, who was constructing a bulwark for the Church and a tower against the face of Damascus,[8] the perfidy of the Arians, foiled his plan, and when the sun rose, He put a bewildered Ambrose back at the Roman gate,[9] right in front of the people.

[1] In this section, Piccolomini relies heavily on Paulinus, sect. 6-9

[2] Auxentius of Milan (fl. c. 355-374): Arian theologian and bishop of Milan. Because of his Arian faith, Auxentius is considered by the Catholic Church to be an interloper, and he is not included in the Catholic lists of the bishops of Milan such as that engraved in the Cathedral of Milan

[3] Arianism: the theological teaching attributed to Arius (ca. AD 250–336), a Christian presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt, concerning the relationship of the members of the Trinity and the nature of the Son of God as being a subordinate entity to God the Father. Sentenced as a heretic by the Council of Nicaea 325 (AD)

[4] Dionysius: Archbishop of Milan from 349 to 355. He is revered as a Saint in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches and his feast day is on May 25

[5] Catechumen: one receiving instruction in the Christian religion with a view to baptism

[6] Cf. Paulinus: *philosophiam profiteri voluit,* which Dudden interprets as that *he meant to retire from the world and devote himself henceforth to solitary meditation*, I, p. 62

[7] 35 kilometers south of Milan

[8] 2. Kings, 8, 6: *And David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus*

[9] I.e. the Milanese city gate turning towards Rome

[10] Qui et retentus est, et missa legatione ad Caesarem postulatus episcopus, quod et Valentinianus libens concessit, et laetus audivit Probus, qui eunti in provinciam Ambrosio: “Vade, age, non ut judex, sed ut episcopus,” dixerat. Pendente tamen relatione, iterum fugit Ambrosius, et in possessione cujusdam Leontii, clarissimi viri, tamdiu latuit, quoad responso imperatoris habito, ab ipso Leontio est proditus, et in urbem reductus, ubi videns quia resistere {19v} Deo non poterat, jugo cervicem praebuit, baptizatusque, ut optabat, a catholico episcopo, omnia ecclesiastica implens officia infra octavum[1] diem episcopus est ordinatus.

[1] octavam J, K, L

[10] Ambrose was taken into custody, and envoys were sent to the emperor[1] requesting that Ambrose be appointed bishop. Valentinian was happy to approve, and Probus was glad to hear it since he himself had said to Ambrose when he was setting out for his province: "Go and act not as a judge, but as a bishop." While the report was pending, Ambrose fled once again, and for a time he hid on the property of the worshipful[2] Leontius. But when the emperor's answer arrived, he was handed over by this same Leontius and brought back to the city. When he saw that he could not defy God, he bowed his head under the yoke,[3] was baptized by a catholic[4] bishop as he demanded, and having accomplished all the ecclesiastical offices,[5] he was ordained bishop within a week.

[1] Valentinianus I Flavius (321-375): Roman emperor, 364-375
[2] "clarissimus", a title mostly given to senators
[3] Jeremiah 27, 11: *subjecerit cervicem suam sub jugo*
[4] i.e. orthodox, non-heretical and especially non-Arian
[5] The phrase is usually taken to mean that Ambrose received all the ecclesiastical ordinations, i.e. the lower ones and the higher ones: subdeacon, deacon, priest, cf. Dudden, p. 68. But this interpretation has been challenged, although a satisfactory alternative interpretation has not been suggested, cf. Ramsey, p. 20-21

[11] Qui[1] ubi assecutus est[2] episcopatum, *non honorem sed onus* intelligens, primam curam habuit, ut humilitate superaret invidiam, et instar salvatoris nostri *formam servi accipiens usque ad mortem se humiliavit,* haud nescius[3] quia qui *major* est, *ministri* personam debet induere. Clericos sane ut clericos honorabat, ceteros omnes, aut filiorum, aut fratrum, aut si aetas ferret, parentum loco habebat. Haereticis solum, et maxime Arianis erat infestus. Ob quam rem magna ei cum Valentiniani matre Justina concertatio fuit, quae cum esset Ariano infecta errore, nihil magis quaerebat quam Ambrosium perdere, promissisque dignitatibus et officiis scelestos homines provocabat in eum. Sed adjuvante domino omnem malitiam convincebat Ambrosius, incidebantque omnes[4] in *foveam, quam ipsi fecerant*[5], qui sancto viro struebant insidias.

[1] quod J, K, L
[2] assecutus est : est assecutus J, K, L
[3] nesciens MA
[4] omnes *omit.* MA
[5] fecerunt J

5. Enmity of the empress[1]

[11] When Ambrose attained the episcopate, he understood that *it was not an honour, but a burden*,[2] and his first care was to overcome envy by humility, and followed the example of Our Saviour *taking the form of a servant he humbled himself unto death*[3], knowing that one who is *great should become a servant.*[4] Clerics he honoured as clerics, and all others he treated as sons or brothers or, if they were elderly, as parents. His only enemies were the heretics, and especially the Arians. Therefore there was great hostility between him and Justina,[5] Valentinian's mother, who was infected with Arian error.[6] Desiring more than anything to destroy Ambrose, she incited certain villainous people against him by promising them honours and offices. However, with God's help Ambrose overcame all her malice, and all the people who plotted against the holy man themselves *fell into the pit they had dug.*[7][8]

[1] In this section, Piccolomini depends heavily on Paulinus, 11-13, 15, 20

[2] Quote adapted from Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 10. MPL, XXII, col. 595

[3] Philippians, 2, 7-8: *taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death (formam servi accipiens in similitudinem hominum factus et habitu inventus ut homo humiliavit semet ipsum factus oboediens usque ad mortem)*

[4] Matthew, 20, 26: *but whosoever is the greater among you, let him be your minister (quicumque voluerit inter vos maior fieri sit vester minister)*

[5] Justina (ca. 340-ca. 391): the second wife of the Roman Emperor Valentinian I, the mother of the emperor Valentinian II. She was an Arian Christian though unable to act in favor of her religious faction until after the death of her husband. She maintained a long struggle against Ambrose

[6] Cf. Paulinus, 11, 12, 13, 15,20, and Dudden, pp. 270-297

[7] Proverbs, 26, 27: *qui fodit foveam incidet in eam*

[8] Cf. Collins, p. 63

[12] *Angustiae* me *temporis* tenent, ne omnes Justinae molestias attingam. Illud tamen non praeteribo, quod *Tripartita* {17r} narrat *Historia:* Cum enim vidisset Justina ad verbum Ambrosii totam plebem esse devotam, {147r} armatos ad ecclesiam misit, qui eum raptum in exilium traherent. Sed audite, obsecro, verba[1] pastoris, audite, reverendissimi patres, responsum intrepidum: *Ego,* inquit Ambrosius, *sponte hoc non ago, ne lupis ovium saepta contradere videar, aut blasphemantibus Deum; hic, si placet, occido*[2]*; hoc loco mortem prona suscipio voluntate.* O animum vero pastore dignum! O verba in omnium episcoporum pectoribus[3] inscribenda! Sciebat eximius doctor, quia *pastor bonus*[4] *animam pro suis ovibus* libenter exponit. Anxius nempe Ambrosius erat, ne populum sine cura dimitteret, priusque mori volebat, quam oves perdere. Non agros ecclesiae, sed animas sibi commissas dolebat amittere.

[13] At nos hodie - proh pudor - non hominum, sed pecuniarum gerimus curam; {20r} non animabus, sed argento studemus et auro. Illa dignior aestimatur[5] ecclesia, non cui major est populus, sed cui major est redditus. Habeat innumeras animas ecclesia, sit infinitus in ea populus, nisi pecuniis abundet, nemo illam adibit, et quasi haereditatem jacere inopem quisque[6] dimittet. At ubi dives episcopatus, et introitus uberes sunt, huc *oculi omnium sunt conversi,* nec ibi quisquam cum examine ordinatur antistites, quasi non populo, sed pecuniae proponatur[7] episcopus. Quare, si ita pergimus agere, suadeo, ne sacris litteris ut praedicatores, sed abaco ut nummularii studeant clerici, quia sic ad episcopatum evecti et[8] tractare pecunias et reddere calculum scient.

---

[1] boni *add.* D, G, MA
[2] occide Historia tripartita
[3] episcoporum pectoribus : pectoribus episcoporum J, K
[4] pastor bonus : bonus pastor G, MA
[5] extimatur J, K, L
[6] quisque sed J; quisquis G, MA
[7] preponatur J, K, L
[8] *omit.* MA

[12] *The limited time*[1] does not permit me to relate in full how Justina harassed Ambrose, but I shall not pass over an episode told in the *Tripartite History*[2]*:* When Justina saw that all the people was hanging on Ambrose's lips, she sent armed men to the church with orders to seize him and send him into exile. But hear – I ask you - Reverend Fathers, the fearless answer of this good shepherd: *I do not accept this,* Ambrose said, *for else I shall be handing the flock of sheep over to the wolves or to people who blaspheme God. Here I fall, if you wish, and in this place I shall freely accept death.*[3] Oh, spirit worthy of a true shepherd! Oh, words to be written in the hearts of all bishops. The eminent Doctor knew that *the good shepherd* freely *giveth his life for his sheep*.[4] Ambrose worried about leaving the people without [pastoral] care, and he would rather die than lose his sheep. It did not pain him to lose the lands of the Church, but the souls entrusted to him.

6. Avarice of the clergy

[13] But we today[5] – oh, what shame! – we do not care about men, but about money. We are concerned not about souls, but about silver and gold. A bishopric is valued not for the number of its people, but for the size of its incomes. A diocese may have countless souls and an infinite number of people, but if it is not awash with money, nobody will want to go there, and it will lie about unwanted as if it was a piffling inheritance. However, if a diocese is prosperous and its incomes large, *everybody will turn their eyes towards it.*[6] Nobody is appointed bishop there after careful scrutiny,[7] because the bishop is put in charge not of the people, but of the money. Indeed, if that is what we want, I advise that clerics should not study the Holy Scriptures like preachers, but the abacus like bean counters. Thus, when they are promoted to the episcopate, they will know both how to deal with money and how to set up accounts.[8]

[1] Cicero: *De oratore* 3.61.228

[2] Cassiodorus: *Historia Tripartita.* Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator was a Roman writer, statesman and monk (ca. 490-ca. 584). He had translations made from the Greek ecclesiastical histories of Theodoret, Sozomen, and Socrates, and himself made extracts from these and combined them in the *Historia Tripartita,* a somewhat unreliable text, but nevertheless much used throughout the Middle Ages as a manual of history

[3] *Historia Tripartita* 9, 21, p. 528: *Ego sponte hoc non ago, ne lupis ovium saepta videar contradere, aut blasphemantibus Deum; hic, si placet, occide; hoc loco mortem prona suscipio voluntate*

[4] John, 10, 11: *Bonus pastor animam suam dat pro ovibus*

[5] I.e. in 1436

[6] Seneca: *De clementia*, 1.8.4: *omnium in istam conversi oculi sunt*

[7] Scrutiny: of his pastoral qualities, presumably. A whole oration of Piccolomini, "*Si ea quae justa" [4]*, at the Council of Basel in 1438, was devoted to the scrutiny of candidates for episcopal preferment

[8] Piccolomini is dripping irony!

[14] Melius tamen Ambrosium imitabimur; namque si clerici, hoc est de sorte domini, volumus esse[1], eorum[2] viam sequi debemus, quorum sors dominus fuit. *Habet,* sicut Jeronimus ait*,* (libenter namque in hujus dictis tamquam in agro fertili versor) *unumquodque propositum suos principes: Romani duces imitentur Camillos, Fabricios, Regulos, Scipiones. Philosophi proponant sibi Pythagoram, Socratem, Platonem, Aristotelem. [cont.]*

[1] volumus esse : esse volumus G, MA
[2] *omit.* K

7. Following Ambrose's example of poverty

[14] It would be better, however, to imitate Ambrose. For if we want to be clerics,[1] meaning those of the Lord's lot,[2] we should indeed follow the way of those whose lot was the Lord[3]: According to Jerome (for I happily move around among his sayings as in a fertile field)[4], *every mode of life has its own exponents. For instance, let Roman generals imitate men like Camillus,[5] Fabricius,[6] Regulus,[7] and Scipio.[8] Let philosophers take for models Pythagoras,[9] Socrates,[10] Plato,[11] and Aristotle.[12] [cont.]*

[1] Clericus, from Greek kleros, "lot". Cf. Decretum, D.21, 1 (col. 67)

[2] Cf. Deuteronomy, 18, 2; Paulinus, 41

[3] Psalms, 15, 5: The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: it is thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me (*Dominus pars hereditatis meae et calicis mei tu possessor sortis meae)*

[4] Piccolomini shared his admiration Saint Jerome with other humanists: *The admiration of Italian humanists for Jerome is thus a single instance of a larger cultural phenomenon, the rediscovery and reevaluation of Christian antiquity, itself an integral part of the rediscovery and reevaluation of ancient arts and letters* (Rice, p. 85). The only work of Jerome used by Piccolomini in his orations (and only until 1452), was Jerome's Letters. Piccolomini had probably studied a volume containing these letters in the possession of Archbishop Pizzolpasso, and he even made a collection of excerpts from it to be used in his own later work, still extant in a manuscript in the Vatican Library, the Chis. J.VII.251, ff. 260r-262v

[5] Marcus Furius Camillus (ca. 446-365 BC): a Roman soldier and statesman of patrician descent

[6] Gaius Fabricius Luscinus Monocularis: said to have been the first of the Fabricii to move to ancient Rome. Consul 282 BC. The tales of Fabricius are the standard ones of austerity and incorruptibility

[7] Marcus Atilius Regulus (born probably before 307-250 BC): Roman general and consul

[8] Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (236-183 BC): also known as Scipio the African, Scipio the Elder, and Scipio the Great. Roman general in the Second Punic War and statesman

[9] Pythagoras of Samos (ca. 570-ca. 495 BC): ancient Greek philosopher, mathematician, and founder of the movement called Pythagoreanism

[10] Socrates (469-399 BC): Greek philosopher

[11] Plato (ca. 424-ca. 348 BC): Greek philosopher, student of Socrates, founder of the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the Western world.

[12] Aristotle (384-322 BC): ancient Greek philosopher and polymath, student of Plato

[14 cont.] Poetae aemulentur Homerum, Virgilium, Menandrum, Terentium. Historici Thucydidem, Sallustium, Herodotum, Livium. Oratores Lysiam, Gracchos, Demosthenem, Tullium. Et ut ad nostra veniamus, episcopi et presbyteri habeant in {17v} exemplum apostolos et apostolicos viros, quorum honorem possidentes, habere nitantur[1] *et meritum*. Quod si nobis durior apostolorum imitatio videtur, at saltem Ambrosii nostri recipiamus exemplum. Quod si fecerimus, nequaquam sub Christo paupere sequemur[2] divitias, aut affluentibus ipsis cor minime apponemus.

[1] habere nitantur : nitantur habere G, MA
[2] sequimur K

[14 cont.] Let poets strive to rival Homer,[1] Virgil,[2] Menander,[3] and Terence.[4] Let writers of history follow Thucydides,[5] Sallust,[6] Herodotus,[7] and Livy.[8] Let orators find masters in Lysias,[9] the Gracchi,[10] Demosthenes,[11] and Tully.[12] And, to come to our own case, let bishops and presbyters take for their examples the apostles or their companions; and as they hold the rank which these once held, let them endeavour to exhibit the same excellence.[13]

But if we find this imitation of the apostles too demanding, then let us at least follow the example of Ambrose. If we do so, we shall not – under Christ who was a poor man – be pursuing riches, or if they flow in on their own, we shall certainly not become dependent on them.

[1] Homer: ancient Greek epic poet. Modern researchers appear to place Homer in the 7th or 8th centuries BC
[2] Publius Vergilius Maro (70-BC): Roman poet, author of the Aeneid. One of Piccolomini's favourite poets
[3] Menander (ca. 341-ca. 290 BC): ancient Greek playwright
[4] Publius Terentius Afer (195/185-159 BC): Roman playwright. One of Piccolomini's favourite authors
[5] Thucydides (ca. 460-ca. 395 BC): ancient Greek historian
[6] Gaius Sallustius Crispus (-ca. 35 BC): Roman historian
[7] Herodotus (ca. 484-425 BC): ancient Greek historian
[8] Titus Livius Patavinus (59-AD 17): Roman historian
[9] Lysias (ca. 445-ca. 380 BC): ancient Greek orator
[10] The Gracchi brothers, Tiberius and Gaius, (late 2nd c.BC): Roman plebeian nobles who both served as tribunes in the late 2nd century BC. Famous also as speakers
[11] Demosthenes (384–322 BC): Greek statesman and orator
[12] Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC): a Roman philosopher, statesman, orator, consul
[13] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Paulinum* (58), 5. MPL, XXII, col. 583. The last part of this passage was also used by Piccolomini in his *Oration "Si ea quae justa" [4],* sect. 25

[15] Exosam enim prae {147v} ceteris vitiis avaritiam habuit, praecipue tamen hujus turpissimi sceleris sacerdotes desiderabat immunes, ne illa, quae Romanorum subvertit imperium, ecclesiam quoque pollueret. Sed quoniam de avaritia sermo incidit, nequaquam inutile fuerit pauca in hoc vitium dicere. Et ne quid ambigui nomen efficiat, avaritiam ego non, ut aliqui putant, {20v} solius aeris, sed auri quoque et argenti et ceterarum opum cupiditatem appello.

[16] Fateor enim antiquitus hanc fuisse consuetudinem, ut qui[1] avidi essent aeris, hi[2] dicerentur avari, *cum nondum esset ullus[3] usus aureae monetae, vel argenteae. Nam solus aes habitum est[4] in pretio apud Romanos usque ad bellum Punicum primum. Quinque etenim dumtaxat annis ante id bellum signari argentum[5] coepit, bigarum et quadrigarum nota, anno urbis conditae quingentesimo octuagesimo quinto. Attamen[6] anno post secundo et sexagesimo nummus aureus percussus est. Aes autem Servius Tullius primus signavit nota pecudum, unde pecunia dicta est, cum antea rudi aere uterentur. Itaque licet variaretur[7] monetae materia, idem tamen avaro nomen mansit*. Nec ista contraria sunt Lucano, qui ait:

> *Primus Thessalicae rector telluris Ionos[8]*
> *In formam calidae percussit pondera massae;*
> *Fudit et argentum flammis, aurumque moneta,*
> *Fregit, et immensis coxit fornacibus aera*.

[1] quod MA
[2] ii L
[3] *omit.* J
[4] solus aes habitum est : solum est habitum J, K, L
[5] tergendum *add.* D, G, K, L, MA; Mansi margin note: “vox corrupta”
[6] atque J, K, L
[7] variarentur MA
[8] Ionus J, K, L; (Itonus) *add.* MA; Ionos Lucanus

8. On avarice

[15] Ambrose considered avarice[1] to be by far the worst of vices,[2] and he particularly wanted priests to be free from this horrible sin, so that it should not flaw the Church as it had already destroyed the Roman Empire. But since we are talking about avarice, it will useful to say something about this vice. And so that there should be no ambiguity about the concept, I use avarice in the sense of cupidity not only for money, as some do, but also for gold, silver and all other types of riches.

[16] In antiquity, they alled "*avari*"[3] those who were avid for "aes"[4] [5] *for at that time they did not yet use gold or silver coin*[6]*: until the First Punic War the Romans only used bronze for payment. Then, about five years before that war, i.e. 485 years after the foundation of Rome, they started to mint silver coins with two-horse chariots and four-horse chariots. 62 years later, they struck coins of gold. King Servius Tullius*[7]*, however, was the first to stamp a design of an ox*[8] *on bronze, which is the origin of the term "pecunia".*[9] *Before, only simple copper pieces had been used. So, whatever material was used to coin money, the same word "avaricious" was used*.[10] This is in accordance with Lucan[11] who says:

> *Ionos, a king of Thessaly, was the first*
> *to hammer into shape ingots of molten metal;*
> *he melted silver in the fire, and broke up gold and stamped it,*
> *and smelted copper in vast furnaces.*[12]

[1] Avarice (greed): one of the so-called Seven Deadly Sins, also known as the Capital Vices or Cardinal Sins, a classification of vices that have been used since early Christian times to educate and instruct Christians concerning fallen humanity's tendency to sin. The other sins are wrath, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony

[2] Paulinus, 41

[3] Avaricious, covetous

[4] Copper, bronze

[5] Gellius, 10.5.1-2: [quoting P. Nigidius] *Avarus enim, inquit, "appellatur, qui 'avidus aeris' est.* Isidoro de Sevilla*: Etymologiae,* 10, 3*: Avarus ex eo dictus, quod sit avidus auri*

[6] The Roman currency during most of the Roman Republic and the western half of the Roman Empire consisted of coins including the aureus (gold), the denarius (silver), the sestertius (brass), the dupondius (brass), and the as (copper). These were used from the middle of the third century BC until the middle of the third century CE

[7] Servius Tullius: the legendary sixth king of ancient Rome, and the second of its Etruscan dynasty. Reigned 578-535 BC

[8] Or sheep: the term "pecus" comprises both

[9] Plinius: *Historiae Naturalis,* 33.13.43: *Servius rex primus signavit aes. Antea rudi usos Romae*

[10] Poggio Bracciolini: *De avaritia*, 6. Almost verbatim quote

[11] Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (39-65): Roman poet

[12] Lucanus: *De bello civili,* 6.402-405

[17] Potuit namque sic inter Graecos fuisse. Utcumque est, exclamare cum Boëthio possumus:

Heu primus quis fuit ille
Auri, qui pondera tecti,
Gemmasque latere volentes
Pretiosa pericula fodit?

[18] Absit tamen, ut monetae usum damnem, quia et uti eadem recte licet. Eos vero accuso, eosque vitupero, quorum semper est occupatus in quaerendo animus, qui dediti sunt studio thesaurizandi, qui cupiditati obnoxii et pecuniarum {18r} sunt servi hujusce nefandissimi vitii, ut *faciem et quasi picturam quandam* Virgilius expressit his versibus, *quibus descripsit harpyas*:

Virginei volucrum vultus, foedissima ventris
proluvies, uncaeque manus, et pallida semper
ora fame …

Humanus vultus non hominem significat esse avarum, sed monstrum, sub cujus aspectu placido latet truculenta bestia ad omne nefas parata; testanturque virginei vultus cupiditatem avari semper virescere; *numquam enim,* ut scitis, *satiatur, aut*[1] *expletur cupiditatis*[2] *sitis, semper appetit,* {148r} *semper eget;* {21r} nam veteri proverbio *tam deest avaro quod habet quam quod non habet*[3]. Praetereo cur volucres finxerit, quid pallida ora, quid proluvies illa ventris importent. Nemo est enim tam hebes ingenio, qui haec avaro nesciat applicare.

[1] ut K
[2] cupiditas G, MA
[3] quam quod non habet *omit.* J

[17] It may have been so with the Greeks. At any rate, we may exclaim together with Boethius[1]:

> *Woe, woe for him, whoe'er it was,*
> *Who first gold's hidden store revealed,*
> *And—perilous treasure-trove—dug out*
> *The gems that fain would be concealed!*[2]

[18] Far be it from me to condemn the use of money in as far as it is used rightly. However, the ones I blame, the ones I accuse, are the ones who are always intent on amassing, who are only concerned about hoarding, and who, enslaved by greed and money, are the servants of this abominable vice. Virgil depicted *their face and likeness*[3] in those verses, *where he described the Harpies*[4] [5]:

> *Maiden faces have these birds, foulest filth they drop,*
> *clawed hands are theirs, and faces ever gaunt with hunger.*[6]

The human face means that the avaricious person is not a man, but a monster, whose peaceful exterior hides a truculent beast, ready to commit every misdeed. The maiden faces show that the cupidity of avaricious men is always fresh. *For greed is never sated or fulfilled, it always wants more, it always needs something else.* According to an old proverb, *the miser misses what he's got no less than what he hasn't.*[7] I pass over why Virgil imagined them as birds, and what is the meaning of the gaunt face and the foul filth.[8] Nobody is so stupid as not to know how these apply to the greedy.

---

[1] Anicius Manlius Severinus Boëthius (ca. 480– ca. 524): Roman philosopher

[2] Boethius: *De consolatione philosophiae*, 2, 5, 27-30. Quoted after the translation by H.R. James: Boethius*, The Consolation of Philosophy.* London: Stock, 1897

[3] Poggio Bracciolini: *De avaritia*, 8

[4] Harpies: In Greek mythology harpies were winged spirits best known for constantly stealing all food from Phineus. The literal meaning of the word seems to be "that which snatches"

[5] Poggio Bracciolini: *De avaritia*, 8

[6] Vergilius: *Aeneis*, 3.216-217

[7] Poggio Bracciolini: *De avaritia*, 7. Verbatim quote. The proverb is from Publilius Syrus: *Sententiae*, 55. Quoted in Quintilianus: *Institutio oratoria,* 9.3.64

[8] Piccolomini does not quote the other interpretations of these images given by Poggio Bracciolini

[19] Sed quid ego in avaritiam armo gentiles, cum infiniti ex nostris eam impugnent? Utinamque tam[1] facile hoc scelus omnes dimitterent, quam facile detestantur. Recte inquit inter suos sermones Zeno: *Deus odit avaritiam, est enim libido profunda, cupiditas caeca, tempestas insana, rapacitas sine fine, sollicitudo sine requie, ad sua numquam perveniens vota*. Sed quibus ego verbis detestari avaritiam magis queam, quam Augustini[2], qui fuit hujus Ambrosii nostri discipulus, et sicut ipse fatetur, *per lavacrum fidei filius*? Errorem namque Manichaeorum apud Carthaginem imbiberat adolescens, quem - sicut nostis - Ambrosius sibi detraxit, quod unum inter egregia nostri doctoris[3] facinora non dubitaverim nominare[4], ex Ambrosio namque recepit[5] ecclesia, quidquid postea magnus attulit Augustinus.

[20] At quid ille de avaritia? Nempe ita in eam irascitur, *ut haereticis aequiperare avaros non vereatur in eo libro[6], qui est contra Donatistas: Quaero enim, inquit[7] ipse, quis peccet gravius, an qui nesciens in haeresim incurrit, an qui sciens ab avaritia, hoc est idolatria, non[8] recessit?* Exinde subdit: *Sicut ergo haeretici regnum Dei non possidebunt, ita et avari regnum Dei non possidebunt.* Omitto infinitos testes, ne longior fiam, neve Flaccus de nobis rideat dicens[9]:

… Amphora coepit
Institui, currente rota, cur urceus exit?

[1] *omit.* G, MA
[2] Augustinus Ambrosii discipulus *in marg*. D, G
[3] egregia nostri doctoris : nostri doctoris egregia G, MA
[4] numerare L
[5] accepit J
[6] libri J
[7] *omit*. G, MA
[8] *omit.* G, MA
[9] *omit.* J

[19] But why am I marshalling gentile[1] authors against greed when countless of our own [Christian] authors attack it. If only it was as easy to banish this sin as it is to hate it! Zeno[2] in one if his sermons rightly said that *God hates avarice: it is a deep lust, a blind desire, an insane storm, boundless greed, worry without rest which never attains its goal.*[3] But how can I express the hate of greed better than in the words of Augustine,[4] who was the disciple of our Ambrose and - as he says himself – *his son in Faith, through baptism*?[5] As a young man in Carthage[6] Augustine had been impressed by the erroneous teachings of the Manichees,[7] but – as you know – Ambrose pulled him away from them, and this I do not hesitate to call one of the most important deeds of our Doctor of the Church. For that which the great Augustine later gave to the Church, it received through Ambrose.

[20] How was Augustine concerned about greed? Actually, he was so incensed about it that *he did not hesitate to compare the greedy to heretics in his book Against the Donatists, saying*[8]*: Which is the worse, I ask: the man who unknowingly falls into heresy, or the man who knowingly refuses to reject covetousness, i.e. idolatry.*[9] And later he adds: *as therefore heretics shall not possess the Kingdom of God, so the covetous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*[10] I pass over countless other witnesses so as not to bore you and make Flaccus[11] laugh at us when he says:

> *Why as the wheel runs round*
> *does it turn out a pitcher?*[12]

[1] I.e. classical pagan authors like Virgil
[2] Zeno of Verona (ca. 300-371/380): Bishop of Verona. Saint
[3] Zeno of Verona: *Sermo (Tractatus),* 3: *De avaritia,* 1, 21, p. 68
[4] Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis (354-430): also known as St. Augustine. Bishop of Hippo (present-day Annaba, Algeria). Doctor of the Church. Saint
[5] "per lavacrum": through baptism. Augustine was baptised by Ambrose in Milan
[6] Carthage: the centre of the Carthaginian Empire in antiquity, today a suburb of Tunis, Tunisia
[7] Manichaeism: major gnostic religion, originating in Sassanid era Babylonia. Although most of the original writings of the founding prophet Mani (ca. 216-276) have been lost, numerous translations and fragmentary texts have survived. "Manichaean" as used in contemporary popular discourse refers to someone who sees the world as a struggle between the two fundamental powers of Good and Evil
[8] Donatism: a Christian sect (named for the Berber Christian bishop Donatus Magnus) within the Roman province of Africa that flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries. Considered a heretical sect by the Church
[9] Augustinus: *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, 4, 5, 8. Translation is quoted after the New Advent ed., *On Baptism against the Donatists*.
[10] Augustinus: *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, 4, 19, 27. Cf. 1 Corinthians, 6, 9. The whole passage is an almost verbatim quote from Poggio Bracciolini: *De avaritia*, 29
[11] i.e. Horace
[12] Horatius: *Ars poetica*, 21

[21] Redeo ad nostrum Ambrosium, cujus {18v} semper in ore apostoli verbum erat, quo servitutem idolorum praedicat avaritiam, ideoque revocandum esse labentem rationem dicebat, ejusque monitis fore obtemperandum. Subditos suos hominess esse docebat[1], hoc est *umbram et pulverem*, ut ait Flaccus, sed praeditos animo immortali. Hunc[2] {21v} unum esse ditandum, colendum, ornandum; reliquis vero in rebus non magnum studium esse ponendum, sed utendum pro commeatu hujus brevissimae vitae ac velocissimae. Solebat referre Cratem[3], qui magnum auri pondus abjecit, ut expeditus[4] {148v} sequereretur philosophiam, nec putavit se posse virtutes simul et divitias possidere. Referebat etiam *Diogenem Cynicum humana omnia contemnentem[5], qui se ideo magno rege ditiorem asseverebat, quoniam ipse videlicet paucioribus indigeret.* Sororia quoque de nostris narrabat, omnesque illos[6] paupertatis amatores proferebat[7] in medium, qui post Christum usque ad sua tempora abjectis mundanis opibus se ipsos abnegaverant. Non hic thesaurizandum, sed in caelo admonebat, et cum esset eloquentissimus, facile omnia suadebat.

[22] Nec enim cohortari ad virtutem ardentius aut a vitiis revocare acrius quisquam potuit quam Ambrosius, quia, quod aliis praedicabat, ipse primus implebat, nec alius domi erat quam in ecclesia. Thesaurum suum inter egentes assidue dividebat, asserens quia hujusmodi ecclesiarum bona non magis possidenda tradantur[8], quam dispensanda committuntur. Et quoniam elemosynae peccata delent, mortem perimunt, et poenam perpetui ignis extinguunt, nihil tam aptum fidei aut tam conveniens pietati putabat, quam egentium juvare pauperiem, infirmorum curam recipere, et fraternis necessitatibus subvenire. Erat etiam[9] ejus studium *visitare languentes, provocare hospitio, lenire blanditiis, gaudere cum gaudentibus, et flere cum flentibus. Caecorum baculus, esurientium[10] cibus, spes miserorum[11], solamen languentium fuit. Ita in singulis virtutibus eminebat, quasi ceteras non haberet.*

[1] dicebat MA
[2] nunc K, L
[3] *corr. ex.* Socratem D; Socratem G, J, K, L, MA
[4] expeditius G, MA
[5] condempnentem J
[6] *omit.* K
[7] afferebat G, MA
[8] traduntur J, K, L
[9] igitur J, K, L
[10] exurgencium L
[11] infirmorum G, MA

9. Virtues of Ambrose 1

[21] Now I return to our Ambrose. He was always referring to the words of the Apostle who preaches that greed is servitude to idols: floundering reason must be brought back to sanity, and the warnings obeyed. He taught that men were the subjects of reason, i.e. *shadow and dust*[1] - as Flaccus[2] says – but endowed with an immortal soul. Only the soul should be enriched, cultivated and adorned. Other things one should not be greatly concerned about: they should simply be used as provisions for this very brief and rapidly passing life. Ambrose used to refer to Crates[3] who threw away a great amount of gold in order to follow philosophy more freely, and he thought that one could not be virtuous and rich at the same time.[4] He also referred *to Diogenes the Cynic*[5] *who despised all things human and claimed that he was much richer than a king because he did not need people who were poorer than him.*[6] Ambrose told similar things about our own[7] people, and he talked about all those lovers of poverty who, after Christ and until his own times, cast off earthly riches and lived in a state of abnegation. He urged people not to gather treasure here, but in Heaven, and as he was very eloquent, he readily convinced his listeners.

[22] Nobody could encourage virtue more ardently or discourage vice more vehemently than Ambrose for what he preached to others, he was the first to do himself, and he was the same at home as he was in the church. His money he regularly distributed to the poor saying that the possessions of the Church are entrusted [to clerics] not to keep, but to pass on.[8] And since alms redeem sins,[9] destroy death, and extinguish the punishment of perpetual fire, he considered that nothing is more proper for faith or suitable for piety than to alleviate the poverty of the poor, to nurse the ill, and to help brethren in need. His main concern was to v*isit the sick, encourage men to show hospitality, soothe them with soft words, rejoice with those who rejoiced and weep with those who wept.*[10] *He was a staff to the blind, food to the hungry, hope to the dejected, consolation to the bereaved. Each single virtue was as conspicuous in him as if he possessed no other.*[11]

---

[1] Horatius: *Carmina*, 4.7.16
[2] Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65-8 BC): Roman poet
[3] Crates of Thebes (ca. 365-ca. 285 BC): Greek philosopher belonging to the Cynic School
[4] Burley, (Crates)
[5] Diogenes of Sinope (404/412-323 BC): Greek philosopher and one of the founders of Cynic philosophy
[6] Burley, (Diogenes). Basil: *Ad adolescentes,* 9, 21: *Porro non sine benevolentia quadam mihi in mentem venit Diogenis humana omnia simul contemnentis*
, qui magno rege ditiorem sed praedicabat, quod ipse videlicet pauciorum indigeret
[7] i.e. Christian
[8] See Paulinus, 38
[9] Ecclesiasticus, 3, 33
[10] Romans, 12, 15, quoted by Paulinus, 39
[11] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 8. MPL, XXII, col. 595

[23] Nullum ei tempus currebat in vanum: aut enim {19r} in ecclesia plebem docebat, aut intra parietes suos[1] dictante spiritu sancto volumina conscribebat. Extant adhuc ejus scripta[2] complurima, scientiae[3], sapientiae Dei plena, quorum si quisquam[4] nosse titulos cupit, successorem {22r} ejus hic praesentem adeat, qui suas reliquias diligentissime perquisivit. Dies mihi deesset[5], si numerare[6] illius[7] volumina vellem, quae non solum ad scribendum, sed ad legendum quoque integram hominis vitam requirunt. Videturque[8] ille mihi et ante episcopatum et postea oratorios codices lectitasse, nec enim verborum delicias omisit, nec flosculos eloquentiae saecularis. Cujus exemplum valde eos refellit, qui poetas et oratores ecclesiastico viro interdicunt, Platonem - ut existimo[9] - imitati atque Jeronimum, quorum alter ex sua civitate poetas[10] exclusit, alter ideo se ab angelo verberatum dicit, {149r} quod Ciceroni nimium inhaereret[11].

[1] *omit.* J
[2] Ambrosii scripta *in marg.* D, G
[3] ac *add.* J, K; et *add.* MA
[4] quis K; quispiam G, MA
[5] deest K
[6] dinumerare K
[7] ejus MA
[8] et *add.* G, MA
[9] extimo J, K, L
[10] ex sua civitate poetas : poetas ex sua civitate G, MA
[11] inhaeret J

10. Literary production

[23] He never wasted his time: he was either in church instructing his people or at home writing books[1] under dictation by the Holy Spirit. Many of his writings are still extant, full of divine knowledge and wisdom. If anybody wishes to know their titles, he can just approach Ambrose's successor who is present here today,[2] and who has diligently searched for works left by Ambrose. One day would not be enough for me to just list his books; indeed, it would take a man's entire life not only to write them, but also to read them.

It is evident to me that both before and after becoming a bishop he read rhetorical works and that he did not neglect the delights of words or the flowers of secular eloquence. His example must be highly disappointing to those who would forbid a clergyman [to read the] poets and the orators, imitating, I think, Plato and Jerome: the first one banned poets from his city[3], and the second one said that he had been scourged by an angel because he was too fond of Cicero.[4] [5]

[1] Cf. Paulinus, 38

[2] Francesco Pizzolpasso, Archbishop of Milan

[3] Plato: *The Republic*, 3, 398a sq; 10, 595 sq, 605b, 607a

[4] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Eustochium* (22), 30. MPL, XXII, col. 418

[5] Later in his life, Jerome himself attached no great importance to this dream, see Cavallera, pp. 30-31: *Longtemps après, quand Rufin eut le mauvais goût d'aller chercher dans ce récit un argument contre Saint Jérôme, celui-ci affecta de n'y plus attacher aucune importance. Il répondit avec désinvolture qu'il ne fallait pas faire tant de cas d'un songe: on rêve parfois des choses si absurdes! Comment en être rendu responsible et y chercher une règle de vie?* See also Rice, pp. 85-87

[24] Sed audiant[1] Jeronimum, qui Jeronimi auctoritate se fulciunt. Ad Damasum quidem [2]proposita figura Deuteronomii de muliere captiva sic ait[3]: *Ita et nos facere solemus, quando philosophos legimus, quando in manus nostras libri eorum veniunt, vel sapientiae saecularis. Si quid in eis utile reperimus, ad nostrum dogma convertimus. Si quid vero superfluum, de idolis, de amore, de cura saecularium rerum, haec[4] radimus, his calvitium inducimus[5], haec in unguium more ferro acutissimo desecamus.* Ad oratorem vero Romanum latius rem prosequitur, plurimosque tam ex Veteri Testamento quam ex Novo pro se testes adducens: *Quid mirum est,"* inquit, *"si et ego sapientiam saecularem propter eloquii venustatem et membrorum pulchritudinem de ancilla atque captiva Israelitem[6] facere cupio?*

[1] audiunt L
[2] quidam J
[3] De secularibus libris *in marg.* D, G
[4] *omit.* J
[5] indicimus L
[6] Israeliten D; Israëlitam MA

11. Use of classical authors[1]

[24] But let those who rest their case on Jerome listen to Jerome himself: writing to Damasus[2], he cites the allegory of the captive woman from Deuteronomy,[3] saying: *This is what we use to do when we read the philosophers, when their book or books of secular learning come into our hands. If we find something useful in them, then we convert them to our teachings. If we find anything that is superfluous or dealing with idols, sex, and the care of secular matters, we delete it. But concerning the others things, we shave their heads and pare their nails with a sharp blade.*[4]

And in another letter to a Roman rhetor he pursues the matter, with many quotations from the Old and the New Testament in his own support*: Is it surprising that I too, admiring the fairness of her form and the grace of her eloquence, desire to make that secular wisdom which is my captive and my handmaiden, a matron of the true Israel?*[5]

[1] Iaria: *Enea,* p. 313
[2] Damasus I (c. 305-384): Pope from 366 to his death. His life coincided with the rise of Emperor Constantine I and the reunion and redivision of the Western and Eastern Roman Empires
[3] Deuteronomy 21, 10-14
[4] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Damasum* (21), 13. MPL*,* XXII, col. 395. The allegory alludes to how captive women were prepared for the pleasure of Israeli men, cf. the passage from Deuteronomy
[5] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Magnum* (70), 2. MPL*,* XXII, col. 666

[25] Legebat[1] igitur, sicut mihi videtur, etiam saeculares autores noster Ambrosius, magnae prudentiae fore dicens aurum in luto quaerere. Non tamen in tali lectione requiescebat, nec sonabat in ore ejus[2] *Jupiter omnipotens, et Mi Hercles*[3]*, et Mi Castor, et cetera*, sicut Jeronimus ait, *magis portenta quam nomina*. Sequebatur etiam[4] in hoc[5] suas apes, quae, ut[6] Basilius apud Graecos doctissimus, inquit: *Nec penitus*[7] *{19v} omnes flores adeunt, nec si quos adeunt, eos totos absumunt, sed eo ablato quod operi suo aptum sit, reliquum {22v} omne valere sinunt.* Sic de poetis Ambrosius factitabat. Nec enim omnes passim admittebat, sed tunc solummodo, cum aut virtutes extollunt aut vitia effulminant. In reliquis vero non aliter, quam ipsi poetae asserunt de Ulixe sirenarum cantus timenti, aures obdurabat[8]. Erat praeterea in orationibus creber, vigilans in precando, sed[9] lacrimas Deo, non hominibus offerebat: longe a simulatione[10], longe ab hypocrisi[11] praedicans semper illud Platonicum, quia ultimus amentiae[12] terminus[13] est bonum[14] videri, cum non sis. Unde[15] prohibet ecclesiasticus[16], ne quis hypocrita in conspectu hominum fiat.

[26] Festino ad finem, plurimaque brevitatis causa praetermitto. Nec de parcitate ejus aut continentia multa dicam, in quibus virtutibus ita enituit, ut parem posthac[17] neminem sibi invenire sciam: abstinebat namque a carnibus, qui carnem crucifigere cum vitiis et concupiscentiis intendebat. Potuisset sub Pythagora vivere, qui, ut[18] est in Satyro:

> *Ventri indulsit non omne legumen.*

---

[1] legebatur L
[2] ore ejus : eius ore J, K, L
[3] Hercules J, K, L
[4] *omit.* J
[5] etiam in hoc : in hoc etiam K
[6] *omit.* K
[7] peritus J; pariter K, L
[8] obturabat K, L, MA
[9] *omit.* G, MA
[10] similacione L
[11] hypocresi J, K, L
[12] iniurie J, K, L
[13] amentiae terminus : terminus amentiae G, MA
[14] donum J
[15] ut J
[16] ecclesiasticis MA
[17] postea K
[18] prout J, K, L

[25] So, it is evident to me that our Ambrose also read the secular authors, saying that it would be wise to look for gold also in dirt. However, he was certainly not content with this type of literature exclusively, and from his mouth you did not hear expressions like *Almighty Jove!, By Hercules!, By Castor!* and the like which, according to Jerome, are *omens rather than names*.[1] In this he followed his bees that, according to Basil,[2] one of the most learned men among the Greeks, *do not indiscriminately visit every flower, nor seek to remove all the nectar from the flowers on which they alight, but only draw from them what they need to make honey, and leave the rest.*[3] This is what Ambrose usually did with the poets for he did not use them indiscriminately, but only where they praise virtue or castigate vice. For the rest, he closed his ears to them just like those poets tell about Ulysses[4] fearing the song of the sirens.[5]

Otherwise Ambrose was often preaching, he was assiduous in prayer, he gave tears to God, not to men. He was far from simulation and hypocrisy, and he often referred to the words of Plato that supreme folly is to appear to be good when you are not. Therefore Ecclesiasticus absolutely forbids hypocrisy in anyone.

12. Virtues of Ambrose II

[26] I hasten towards the end, and for the sake of brevity I omit many things. I shall not say much about his frugality or abstinence:[6] in these virtues he excelled so greatly that I am unable to find anybody who equalled him in later times. For wanting to crucify the flesh with its vices and desires, he abstained from meats. He might have lived under Pythagoras who, according to the Satirical Poet,

---

[1] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Theodoram* (75), 3. MPL, XXII, col. 687

[2] Basil of Caesarea (ca. 329-379): Greek bishop of Caesarea Mazaca in Cappadocia, Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Doctor of the Church. Saint. Basil's work, translated by Leonardo Bruni under the title *Ad adolescentes*, *became one of the works most frequently copied and printed in fifteenth-century Italy* (Rice, p 87). Bruni commented on his translation of the work thus: *Through the authority of such a man I wished to put an end to the ignorant perversity of those who attack the studia humanitatis and regard them as wholly aberrant* (ibid.*)*

[3] Basil: *Ad adolescentes,* 4, 9: *Illae [apes] enim nec omnes partier flores adeunt, nec si quos adeunt, eos totos assumunt, sed eo solo ablato quod opera suo aptum sit, reliquum omne valere sinunt*

[4] Ulysses = Odysseus: (perhaps fictional) Greek king of Ithaca and the hero of Homer's epic poem the *Odyssey*. Odysseus also plays a key role in Homer's *Iliad* and other works in the Epic Cycle

[5]Homer: *Odyssey*, 12.166-200. The point of the story was, however, that the sailors' ears were filled with wax, whereas Odysseus was bound to the mast without having his ears filled, so that he could hear the sirens without being able to give in to their irresistible calls. The faulty version of Odysseus' actions goes back to Basil: *Ad adolescentes*, 4, 1: *Cum vero in improborum hominum mentionem incidunt, fugienda est illorum imitatio, auresque claudendae, non secus atque ipsi ferunt Ulyxem ad Sirenum cantus*

[6] Cf. Paulinus, 38

would not indulge his belly with every kind of pulse.[1]

[27] Non ferculorum multitudine[2] aut vini, sicut {139v} hodie facimus, varietate oblectabatur. Tenebat tamen memoriae non solum illud Psalmistae: *Quia vinum laetificat cor hominis*, sed Platonis quoque sententiam non ignorabat, qui existimabat[3] *fomitem esse quemdam et pabulum ingenii virtutisque, si mens ex corpore hominis vino flagraret*. Ceterum neque Platonem neque psalmistam[4] velle dicebat, ut passim haurirentur vina, sed *modicis honestisque inter bibendum remissionibus refici integrarique animos ad instauranda sobrietatis officia*. Dicentem quoque cum istis conjungebat Apostolum: *Noli aquam bibere, sed vino modico utere propter stomachum tuum et frequentes tuas infirmitates,* nihilque aliud esse vinolentiam affirmabat quam resolutionem venereamm, duasque illas[5] voluptates gustum et tactum[6] communes nobis esse cum bestiis. Idcirco[7] in pecudum ferarumque animalium[8] haberi numero, quisquis his[9] esset voluptatibus occupatus. Adducebat[10] {20r} saepe Socratis verba, quem dicere solitum referebat: *Multos homines {23r} propterea velle vivere, ut ederent et biberent; se bibere atque esse, ut viveret*.

[28] Fuit igitur noster Ambrosius mirabilis continentiae[11], incredibilis pudicitiae, infinitae patientiae atque humilitatis. Audierat[12] vocem Domini: *Discite[13] a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde,* inquientis[14]. Omnibus namque in rebus se vincere reputabat, cum ipse vinceretur, nisi vel honor Dei vel religionis integritas laederetur. Tunc enim incredibili vigore animi et constanti praesentia resistebat. Tunc nec parcebat ulli, nec timebat quemquam. Tenetis memoriae - sicut opinor - quo vultu, quo animo, quibusque verbis respondentem illum Theodosio Caesari Tripartita narrat Historia, cum sacram illi basilicam vetuit. Scitis quid[15] postea Ruffino pro imperatore supplicanti responderit: *Ego,* inquit*, Ruffine, praedico, quoniam eum ingredi sacra limina[16] prohibeo[17]. Si vero imperium in tyrannidem mutaverit, necem libenter et ego suscipio.* O vocem omnium laude dignam! O[18] animum pastoris egregium! Quis est, qui martyrem neget Ambrosium?

---

[1] Juvenalis, 15.174
[2] multitudinem MA
[3] existimauit L
[4] psalmigraphum J; philosophum K; philosophum *add.* L
[5] vini *add.* J, K, L
[6] gustum et tactum *omit.* G, MA
[7] idcircoque J, K, L
[8] *omit.* G, MA
[9] *omit.* G, MA
[10] abducebat D *[NB: D corrected by G]*
[11] abstinentie J
[12] enim *add.* J; audiverat enim K
[13] discitis K
[14] inquietis L
[15] quod MA
[16] ingredi sacra limina : sacra limina ingredi G, MA
[17] prohibebo J, K
[18] en J

[27] Unlike us, he did not enjoy having many courses of food or a variety of wines. He kept in mind not only the verse of the Psalmist: *That wine may cheer the heart of man,*[1] but also a saying of Plato that *it was a kind of touchwood and tinder to the intellect and faculties if mind and body were inflamed with wine*.[2] But he also said that neither Plato nor the Psalmist wanted us to drink wine indiscriminately, but *by the proper and moderate recreation of drinking the mind was refreshed and renewed for resuming the duties of sobriety*.[3]. To these he added the Apostle[4] saying: *Do not only drink water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thy frequent infirmities.*[5] He also said that drinking wine was the same as a prelude to sex, and that we have these two pleasures in common with animals: taste and touch. So those who are slaves to these pleasures should be considered as cattle and wild animals.[6] Also he often quoted Socrates saying that *many people wanted to live in order to eat and drink, but he himself drank and ate in order to live.*[7]

[28] So, our Ambrose was a man of admirable chastity, incredible purity, and infinite patience and humility. He had heard the voice of the Lord saying: "*Learn from me, because I am meek, and humble of heart."*[8] For in all things, he considered himself to win if he himself lost, unless the honour of God or the integrity of religion had been offended. Then he would resist with incredible vigour of mind and constant attention; he would not spare anybody, and he feared no one. I believe you remember with what demeanour, courage and words he – according to the *Tripartite History* – answered Emperor Theodosius when he refused the emperor entrance to the holy basilica.[9] You know how later he answered Rufinus[10] making a petition on behalf of the emperor: *Rufinus, it is I who say that I forbid him to come through the holy entrance. But if he has changed*

[1] Psalms 103, 15
[2] Gellius, 15.2.3; Macrobius: *Saturnalia,* 2.8.4: *fomitem esse quem clam dicens et ignitabulum ingenii virtutisque, si mens et cor … hominis vino flagraret*
[3] Gellius, 15.2.5
[4] Paul
[5] 1. Timothy 5, 23. Quoted in Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Eustochium* (22), 8. MPL, XXII; col. 399
[6] In 1445, Piccolomini returned to this theme in his oration *"Non est apud me" [6*], sect. 43: *According to Macrobius* (2, 8, 10-12), *Aristotle claims* that *pleasure derived immoderately from all these senses is base and wicked, but excessive pleasure derived from taste and touch – a compound pleasure, as wise men have judged it – is the most disgusting of all … The two pleasures of food and sex are the only ones that human beings share with the beasts and that's why that anyone wholly in the grip of these pleasures should be counted among the animals of the fields and the wilds*

[7] Burley, (Socrates). Also quoted in Macrobius: *Saturnalia*, 2.8.12
[8] Matthew, 11, 29
[9] Cf. Collins, p. 63
[10] Flavius Rufinus (- 395): a 4th century Eastern Roman Empire statesman of Gaulish extraction who served as Pretorian prefect of the East for the emperor Theodosius I, as well as his son Arcadius, under whom Rufinus was the actual power behind the throne

empire into tyranny, then I will gladly accept being murdered.[1] Oh, praiseworthy answer! Oh, excellent shepherd's soul! Who will deny that Ambrose was a martyr?

[29] Utinam ille animus et illa constantia nobis esset, nec enim auctoritatem ecclesiae in manibus principum poneremus. Ego faciam, dicebat Ambrosius, *quod sacerdotis; quod imperatoris est, faciat imperator. Prius est, ut animam mihi quam fidem eripiat.* Quod si modo {150r} dicere auderemus, major principum esset erga ecclesiam reverentia[2]. Nec enim Theodosii nunc deessent, deessent, si[3] reperirentur Ambrosii. Sed quid ille de Ambrosio dixerit[4]? Audite, obsecro, testimonium Theodosii: *Vix,* enim ait, *veritatis inveni*[5] *magistrum; Ambrosium namque solum novi digne vocari pontificem*. Quo unico testimonio omnes laudes meae vincuntur.

[30] At est non solum Caesarea laude sublimis, sed etiam divino praeconio illustris Ambrosius, multifariam namque multisque modis clarere hunc hominem divina majestas voluit. Expellebat enim[6] immundos spiritus, illuminabat caecos, paralyticos liberabat, et omni morbo {23v} detentos sanitati restituebat. Florentiae quoque clarissimi viri Dicentii extinctum subita morte filium suscitavit. Praeterea {20v} duo corpora martyrum Gervasii atque Protasii Mediolani repperit. Qui martyres, sicut ait Jeronimus, cum jampridem apparendi haberent tempus, hominem, cui se proderent, inquirebant, eum[7] certe, cui sub ea fide revelarent[8], qua martyria sustinuissent.

[1] *Historia Tripartita,* 9, 30, p. 543: *Ego, inquit, Rufine praedico, quoniam eum ingredi sacra limina prohibebo; si verum imperium in tyrannidem mutabit, necem libenter et ego suscipio*. Cf. Paulinus, 24
[2] major principum … reverentia : discerent principes extra cancellas in ecclesia remanere et sancta sanctorum relinquere sacerdotibus J
[3] sed J
[4] dixit J, K, L
[5] veritatis inveni : inveni veritatis G, MA
[6] namque J
[7] illum J
[8] revelarentur J

[29] I wish we had his courage and steadfastness, then we would not place the authority of the Church in the hands of princes. Ambrose said: I shall do *what a priest should do. Let the emperor do what an emperor should do. He will take my life before he takes my faith.*[1] If only we dared to speak thus today, then princes would have greater respect for the Church. And if there were people like Ambrose today, there would also be people like Theodosius. But what did Theodosius have to say about Ambrose? Pray listen to Theodosius' own testimonial*: I have hardly been able to find a teacher of truth: the only one I know who is worthy of being called a "Bishop" is Ambrose*.[2] This single testimonial surpasses all of my eulogies.

13. Miracles

[30] Ambrose was not only singled out for imperial praise, he was also distinguished by divine praise, for the Divine Majesty wanted to exalt this man in many and different ways. Thus Ambrose expelled unclean spirits,[3] he restored sight to the blind and movement to the lame,[4] and he healed all kinds of illnesses. In Florence, he even resuscitated the worshipful Dicentius' son who had died suddenly.[5]

Moreover, in Milan he found the two bodies of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius.[6] According to Jerome,[7] these martyrs had already reached the time of their reappearance, but they were searching for the right man to entrust themselves to, one about whom they could feel certain that he was of the Faith for which they had been martyred.[8]

[1] Ambrosius: *Sermo contra Auxentium de basilicis tradendis*, 18. Piccolomini also uses this passage in his oration "*Si ea quae justa" [4]*, sect. 23
[2] *Historia tripartita*, 9, 30, p. 546
[3] Saints Gervasius and Protasius: Christian martyrs, probably of the 2nd century. They would have waited a couple of centuries to be rediscovered by Ambrose. See Paulinus, 21, 33, 43. See also Collins, p. 63
[4] Cf. Paulinus, 10
[5] Cf. Paulinus, 28
[6] Cf. Paulinus, 14. On Ambrose finding other bodies of martyrs, see Paulinus, 14, 29, 32, 33
[7] Jerome, or maybe Augustine who, not yet baptized, witnessed these events and relates them in his *Confessions* (9, 7, 16), and in *De Civitate Dei* (22, 8) as well as in his *Sermo 286 in natal. Ss. Mm. Gerv. et Prot.*
[8] I.e. he must not be a heretic, e.g. an Arian, but of the right, catholic, persuasion

[31] Quibus ex rebus ita erat celebre toto orbe nomen Ambrosii[1], ut ad solam hominis famam complures pagani ad Christum desciverint[2], inter quos fuit regina Marcomannorum Fritigil. Duo etiam potentissimi viri Persarum ad audiendam sapientiam sacerdotis venere Mediolanum, habitisque per interpretem cum eo colloquiis admiratione pleni discesserunt. Quid ultra? Tam clara erat hujus pontificis fama, ut ideo reputatus sit Arbogastes vincere, quia et notum Ambrosio se diceret et ab eo dilectum.

[32] O igitur beatissimam illam urbem, quae tantum meruit habere pontificem! O felicissimum principem, cui tantus patronus est datus! O fortunatissimum[3] populum, qui talem habet apud Deum intercessorem[4]! Ambrosius est, qui urbem illam Mediolani populossisimam ex peste praeservat. Ambrosius est, qui[5] nostro excellentissimo et sapientissimo principi secunda efficit bella. Ambrosius est, qui omnes adversariorum conatus infringit.

[1] nomen Ambrosii *corr. ex.* Ambrosii nomen D; Ambrosii nomen G, MA
[2] desciverunt G, MA
[3] illum *add.* L
[4] o fortunatissimum … intercessorem *omit.* J
[5] *omit.* J

14. Fame

[31] For these reasons the name of Ambrose was so renowned in the whole world that his fame alone was enough to make many pagans convert to Christ. Among them was Queen Fritigil[1] of the Marcomanni.[2]

And two high-ranking[3] Persians came to Milan to hear the wise words of the priest, and having conversed with him through an interpreter, they departed full of admiration.[4]

What more can I say? The fame of this pontiff was so great that Arbogastes[5] was reputed to have won a victory just because he said that Ambrose knew and loved him.[6]

15. Patron saint of Milan and its duke

[32] Oh, truly blessed is that city which merited so great a pontiff![7] Oh, truly happy prince[8] who was given so great a patron! Oh, truly fortunate people that has such an intercessor before God! Ambrose it is who preserves the populous city of Milan from the plague. Ambrose it is who gives success in war to our most excellent and wise prince. Ambrose it is who overcomes all the schemes of his enemies.

[1] Fritigil (or Fritigils): Queen of the Marcomanni, is the last known ruler of the Germanic peoples who were at that time (mid 4th century) probably settled in Pannonia. She is alleged to have had her residence in the present Burgenland. Fritigil corresponded with Ambrose of Milan about the conversion of her people to Christianity

[1] Paulinus, 36

[2] Paulinus, 36

[3] "potentissimi"

[4] Paulinus,25

[5] Flavius Arbogastes (- 394): Frankish general in the Roman Empire

[6] Paulinus, 30

[7] An allusion to the Easter hymn of Exultet with the words: *O blessed sin that merited to have so great and such a saviour (O felix culpa, quae tantum ac talem meruit habere redemptorem)*

[8] Filippo Maria Visconti (1392-1447): Duke of Milan, 1412 -1447. At this time, Piccolomini was endeavouring to win his patronage, see his oration *"Audivi" [1]*

[33] Ceterum, *quid te subtrahis, quid tergiversaris, oratio*[1]*, quid sic*[2] *times ad ultimum pervenire? Heu miserabilis humana conditio, et sine Christo vanum*[3] *omne, quod vivimus. Omnis caro fenum et omnis gloria ejus quasi flos feni.* Peregit et noster Ambrosius humanum cursum, sed non invitus e vita migravit *cupiebatque*[4] *dissolvi et esse cum Christo*. Praedixerat quippe et ipse[5] suum obitum. Ideoque rogatus a Stilicone {150v} comite, ut in vita maneret: *Non*[6] *ita inter vos vixi, respondit, ut vivere me pudeat; nec timeo mori, quia bonum dominum habemus*. Cumque in lectulo aegrotaret, circumstantium ipse omnium moestitiam solabatur, et universis circa plorantibus solus {24r} ipse cum Christo gaudebat, quem visibiliter ad ipsum descendisse Bassinus, episcopus Laudensis ecclesiae, rettulit. Cujus praesentia ita confirmatus Ambrosius est, ut paucis post diebus libens et laetus, sumpto dominico corpore, spiritum exhalaverit; *unde et corpus terra suscepit, et animam Christus***.**

[1] oro D, G, MA
[2] si K
[3] dampnum K
[4] cupiebat namque J
[5] quippe et ipse : ipse quippe G, MA
[6] nam J

16. Death

[33] But - I ask - *why do you drag it out, why do you hesitate, why do you fear coming to the end? The human condition is indeed miserable, and vain is all life without Christ*.[1] *All flesh is hay, and all its glory like a hay flower*.[2] Our Ambrose fulfilled his human course, but he did not die unwillingly, and he really *desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ*.[3] He actually foretold his own death, and when he was asked by Stilicho to stay alive,[4] [5] he answered: *I have lived among you in such a manner not to be ashamed to live on. But I do not fear death, because we have a good Lord.*[6] When he lay ill in bed, he consoled all the grieving bystanders, and while everybody else was crying, he alone rejoiced with Christ[7] who had visibly come down to him, as related by Bishop Bassinus of the Church of Lodi.[8] Thus comforted by Christ's presence, Ambrose gave up his soul after some days, joyful and happy, having taken the Lord's body. *Afterwards earth received his body; his soul was given back to Christ.*[9]

[1] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 13. MPL, XXII, col. 599

[2] Isaiah, 40, 6: *all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field* (omnis caro fenum et omnis gloria eius quasi flos agri). Quoted in Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 13. MPL, XXII, col. 597: *O miserabilis humana conditio, et sine Christo vanum omne quod vivimus! Quid te subtrahis? Quid tergiversaris, oratio; quasi enim mortem illius differre possimus, et vitam facere longiorem, sic timemus ad ultimum venire. Omnos caro foenum et omnis gloria ejus quasi flos foeni*

[3] Philippians, 1, 23: *desiderium habens dissolvi et cum Christo esse.* Quoted in Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 13. MPL, XXII, col. 593

[4] Flavius Stilicho (c. 359-408): high-ranking general who was, for a time, the most powerful man in the Western Roman Empire. Half Vandal and married to the niece of the Emperor Theodosius, Stilicho's regency for the underage Honorius marked the high point of German advancement in the service of Rome

[5] Paulinus, 45

[6] Direct quote from Paulinus

[7] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 13. MPL, XXII, col. 597

[8] Cf. Paulinus, 47

[9] Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 14. MPL, XXII, col. 598

[34] Ex cujus exemplo debemus {21r} et nos animo praemeditari, quid futuri simus, et quia sive Titonis[1] senectutem speremus sive vivacissimi apud nostros Mathusalem[2], qui mille annos[3] minus quadraginta[4] vixisse dicitur, moriendum est tandem. Ob quam causam praeparare nos ipsos ad virtutem debemus, et ceteris omnibus pro nihilo habitis animum nostrum ad illa caelestis aulae gaudia sublevare, ubi nihil umquam deest, nihil a suo statu tollitur aut declinat, omnia bona atque perpetua exuberant; ubi nemo eget, nemo invidet, nemo furatur, nemo rapit, nemo proscribit, nemo jugulat, et nemo moritur; ubi[5] omnes felices, omnes unanimes, omnes immortales, omnes sunt semper aequales; ubi[6] quod unius est, omnium est, et quod omnium, singulorum. Ad quam beatitudinem ille perducere nos[7] dignetur, qui cum patre et[8] spiritu Sancto regnat in saecula benedictus. Amen[9].

[1] Thitoni D, J, K, L
[2] *omit.* K
[3] annis J
[4] XXX J, K
[5] *omit.* J
[6] uti J
[7] perducere nos : nos perducere G, MA
[8] patre et *omit*. G, MA
[9] *omit.* J

17. Conclusion

[34] Following his example, we, too, should think of our future, and whether we may hope for the old age of Tithonus[1] or – among our own – of the very long-lived Methuselah[2] who is said to have lived for 960 years,[3] in the end we have to die. Therefore, we should prepare ourselves for virtue, and disregarding everything else we should raise our soul to the joys of the Heavenly Court where nothing is ever lacking, nothing loses its position or goes into decline, and where there is joyful abundance of everything good and eternal: nobody lacks for anything, nobody is jealous, nobody steals, nobody robs, nobody condemns to death, nobody kills, and nobody dies; where all are happy, unanimous, immortal, and equal; where whatever belongs to one belongs to all, and whatever belongs to all belongs to each. May He deign to lead us to this blessed state who reigns together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, blessed for all ages. Amen

[1] Tithonus: In Greek mythology, the lover of Eos, Titan of the dawn known in Roman mythology as Aurora. Eos kidnapped Ganymede and Tithonus, both of the royal house of Troy, to be her lovers. According to the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, when Eos asked Zeus to make Tithonus immortal, she forgot to ask for eternal youth. Tithonus, indeed, lived forever, but as a babbling, feeble old man

[2] Methusalem = Methuselah: according to the Bible, the oldest person to ever live. Methuselah was the son of Enoch and the grandfather of Noah. The name Methuselah, or the phrase "old as Methuselah", is commonly used to refer to any living thing reaching great age. Jeronimus: *Epistola ad Heliodorum* (60), 14. MPL, XXII, col. 598

[3] Basil: *Ad adolescentes,* 10, 4*: Ego autem, sive quis Tithoni senectutem sive Arganthonii dicat, sive vivacissimi apud nos Mathusalae*