



HAL
open science

Oration “Quid est” of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (27 April 1438, Vienna). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. Final edition, 2nd version. (Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 3)

Michael Cotta-Schønberg

► **To cite this version:**

Michael Cotta-Schønberg. Oration “Quid est” of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (27 April 1438, Vienna). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. Final edition, 2nd version. (Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 3). 2019. hprints-00927272v1

HAL Id: hprints-00927272

<https://hal-hprints.archives-ouvertes.fr/hprints-00927272v1>

Submitted on 13 Jul 2019 (v1), last revised 28 Jun 2024 (v2)

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; 3)

Oration "*Quid est*" of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (27 April 1438, Vienna). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg

Final edition, 2nd version

**July 2019
Copenhagen**

Abstract

In April 1438, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, then official at the Council of Basel, accompanied Bishop Bartolomeo Visconti of Novara on a voyage to Vienna. The bishop represented the Duke of Milan at the events leading to the acceptance by Albrecht V, Duke of Austria, King of Hungary and Bohemia, of his election as Holy Roman Emperor (as Albrecht II). During their stay in Vienna, Piccolomini wrote an oration or memorandum, in the name of Visconti, urging Albrecht to accept the imperial election. The reasons advanced in the oration were Albrecht's obligations towards the Empire, his eminent qualifications, and the advantages to the Hungarians, to Albrecht's family, to Albrecht himself, to the Church and to the Empire.

Keywords

Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Bishop Bartolmeo Visconti; Albrecht V; Albert V; Albrecht II; Albert II; Holy Roman Empire; Imperial election, 1438; Renaissance orations; Renaissance oratory; Renaissance rhetorics; Kingdom of Hungary; Turks; Habsburg Dynasty; 1438; 15th century; Holy Roman Empire; Papa Pio II

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 80¹ orations (including papal responses to ambassadorial addresses) are extant today, though more may still be held, unrecognized, in libraries and archives.

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

I do not, actually, plan to publish further versions of the present volume, but I do reserve the option in case I – during my future studies - come across other manuscripts containing interesting versions of the oration or if important new research data on the subject matter are published, making it appropriate to modify or expand the present text. It will therefore always be useful to check if a later version than the one the reader may have previously found via the Internet is available 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
3. Date, place, audience and format
4. Text
 - 4.1. Manuscripts
 - 4.2. Editions
 - 4.3. Present edition
5. Sources
6. Bibliography
7. Sigla and abbreviations

II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

1. Introduction [1]
2. Obligations towards the Empire [2]
3. Albrecht's eminent qualifications [3]
4. Advantages to the Hungarians [4]
5. Advantages in relation to the Turks [5]
6. Advantages to Albrecht's family [6]
7. Advantages to Albrecht himself [7]
8. Advantages to the Church [8]
9. Advantages to the Empire [9]
10. Conclusion [10]

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Context¹

On 9 December 1437, Emperor Sigismund died. The prince electors of the Empire gathered in Frankfurt, and on 18 March 1438 they elected Albrecht, Duke of Austria and King of Hungary, as Holy Roman Emperor. Immediately afterwards they sent a message to Albrecht, notifying him of his election and asking him to accept it. It appears that Albrecht was hesitant to do so because of problems connected with his accession to the Kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia. During the month of April, while in Vienna, he discussed the matter with his counsellors.² First on 29 April he accepted the election, as Albrecht II.³

In the meantime, the Duke of Milan, Filippo Maria Visconti sent Bishop Bartolomeo Visconti as his ambassador to Vienna to join the princes and other ambassadors assembled there and to support their efforts to persuade Albrecht to accept the election – probably a gesture aimed at improving the relations of the Visconti dynasty with the Empire.

Bartolomeo Visconti was a former employer of Enea Silvio Piccolomini. Some years earlier, they had parted company in rather ambiguous circumstances, connected with an unsuccessful Milanese plot against Pope Eugenius V in which Piccolomini became embroiled – with or without his knowledge. Nonetheless, relations between the two remained amicable, and when Visconti asked Piccolomini to join him on his voyage to Vienna, Piccolomini agreed.

In the section on Albrecht in his *De viris illustribus* (published 1458), Piccolomini wrote about the event – with no mention of the “*Quid est*”, but with focus on Hungarian opposition:

*Quo tempore et ego illuc veneram cum novariensi antistite, qui ducis Mediolani legatus erat et me in societatem ex Basilea uocauerat. hic multa consilia fuerunt an recipi imperium deberet; nam Hungari contrariari videbantur; nec enim bene prouideri et imperio et regno suo per unam personam rebantur. sed uicit alia pars, que acceptationem suadebat.*⁴

And in his *Commentarii* from 1462-1464, Piccolomini again wrote about the events in Vienna:

Duke Filippo of Milan despatched his legate Bartolomeo, Bishop of Novara, who on arriving at Basel managed to persuade Aeneas to go with him to Austria.⁵ Albert had not yet accepted the crown on account of the opposition of the Hungarians, who claimed that

¹ CO, I, 9 (Heck, I, p. 52); RTA, 13, pp. 21-24; Boulting, p. 97; Lhotsky: *Wiener*, pp. 134-135; Voigt, I, pp. 155-157

² Hödl, pp. 17-18

³ Böhmer, pp. 3-13

⁴ Piccolomini: *De viris* (Heck), p. 56

⁵ They probably arrived on 24 April, see Lhotsky: *Aeneas*, p 10

he had ascended the throne of Hungary on the understanding that he would not accept the Empire even if it was offered to him. Feeling unsure what to do, Albert decided to consult the envoys of the various princes who were present.^{1 2} During the time allowed for deliberations, Aeneas gave Bartolomeo a written statement³ outlining why Albert should accept the crown and suggesting how the Hungarians could be induced to consent. When Bartolomeo read it out in the council, he was publicly thanked and Albert proclaimed himself emperor, with the Hungarians not only consenting, but actually urging him to do so.⁴

It is not certain whether the bishop really did read the memorandum in council, but in any case it is unlikely that it would have carried any weight as such.⁵

Gianantonio Campano, one of Pius' contemporary biographers, gave a somewhat different – and erroneous - account in his biography:

He went to Albrecht, the emperor-elect, in Noricum and stayed with him briefly, trying to persuade him to side with the council fathers in Basel. However, Albrecht's sudden death made it uncertain whether he had succeeded.⁶

Campano mentions neither the Bishop of Novara nor the matter of the imperial succession. His claim that Piccolomini somehow had dealings with Albrecht concerning the Council of Basel is most unlikely, and the Council had actually sent its own representatives to the king, Johann von Zengg and Juan de Palomar.⁷

Voigt scornfully declared Enea's memorandum as *dem Inhalt nach höchst unbedeutend*.⁸

Lhotsky, however, did not share this opinion. He wrote:

Gewiss ist, dass das Elaborat eine erstaunliche Probe staatsmännlicher Einsicht und richtiger Beurteilung der politischen Faktoren in einem Bereiche bedeutet, der, wie man

¹ Piccolomini's description of Albrecht's doubts appears to be correct, see RTA, 13, p. 23; Voigt, I, p. 155; Lhotsky: *Aeneas*, p. 7

² Piccolomini does not mention the presence of Duke Friedrich of Steiermark, Albrecht's cousin and successor on the imperial throne, and Piccolomini's own future employer

³ Piccolomini's authorship of the text is confirmed by Beckman, RTA, 13, p. 21, and Voigt, I, p. 156

⁴ CO I, 9 (Meserve, I, p. 38-39)

⁵ Voigt, I, 156

⁶ Zimolo, pp. 12-13: *Profectus ad Noricum ad Albertum Caesarem designatum, brevi apud eum mansit, traducere in sententiam Basiliensium conatus; an potuerit subsecuta statim illius mors incertum fecit*

⁷ Hödl, p. 16

⁸ Voigt, I, p. 156, n. 1

fürs erste meinen sollte, einem bisher nur im Süden und Westen Europas bewanderten Kenner nich ohne weiteres vertraut sein konnte.^{1 2}

2. Themes

The main theme of the oration is that Albrecht should accept his election as emperor.

After referring to Albrecht's moral obligation towards the Empire, Piccolomini presents seven arguments in favour of accepting his election:

Firstly, Albrecht is the best of the possible candidates since he is the most powerful, the most popular, and the wisest of them all.

Secondly, it is an advantage for the Hungarians that their king be also emperor, for in that case he is in a better position to defend them against, for example, the Venetians. In this context, Piccolomini mentions some reticence on the Hungarian side concerning Albrecht becoming emperor. If there was such a reticence it might have been caused by the Hungarian experience with Albrecht's predecessor as king, Emperor Sigismund, *whose Western European orientation caused losses to Hungary*.³ He does not refer to any conditions, made by the Hungarians, that Albrecht would become King of Hungary with the proviso that he would refrain from also becoming emperor.⁴ Such a condition is only mentioned years afterwards in Piccolomini's *De Europa*, published in 1458:

When Albert was crowned with his wife at Székesfehérvár, he also received the crown of Bohemia. Marveling at his success, the leaders of Germany also decided to elevate their own flesh and blood by entrusting him with the Roman Empire. Albert was not permitted to assume this position unless the lords of Hungary acquiesced, and to them it seemed disadvantageous for their king to rule the Germans; they had therefore bound Albert by

¹ Lhotsky: *Aeneas*, p. 8. See also Lhotsky: *Wiener*, p. 135, n. 355, where Lhotsky also defended Piccolomini against Voigt's criticism, stating that the arguments in the "*Quid est*" (incl. those concerning Hungary) were *aus dem Gesichtswinkel der Lage vom Frühjahr 1439 richtig gedacht*

² Some months later, a Milanese ambassador again appeared before King Albrecht, this time to formally congratulate him on behalf of the Visconti Duke of Milan. At this occasion a formal oration was delivered about which Paulhart wrote: *Die Rede im April [the Quid est] geht auf Enea Silvio Piccolomini zurück, der sich damals in der Begleitung des Bischofs von Novara befand. Von seiner Mitwirkung bei der Abfassung der zweiten Rede ist nichts zu merken. Wohl unterscheidet sie sich merklich von den früher üblichen schwülstigen und überladenen Machwerken dieser Art, doch fehlt die feine Feder eines Stilisten wie des Aeneas fühlbar* (Paulhart, p. 290)

³ *A History of Hungary*, p. 61

⁴ Albrecht's predecessor and father-in-law, Sigismund, had been both emperor and King of Hungary and Bohemia

*oath not to accept the empire without their approval. However, after being summoned to the king, who was then in Vienna, they were overcome by his pleas and granted their consent.*¹

The Hungarian conditions are also mentioned in Pius *Commentarii*, cf. above,

The Bishop of Novara and Piccolomini arrived in Vienna only some days before the 27th,² but as trained observers and diplomatic agents they would have been able to quickly pick up any rumours or reports concerning Hungarian opposition to Albrecht becoming emperor.

In article 13 of the electoral capitulation of 18 December 1437, setting out the conditions for the election of Albrecht as King of Hungary, he had promised to normally reside in Hungary:

*Item quod in isto loco, in quo sumus, nos cum ipsis manebimus et procedemus postea ad domos habitacionium nostrarum tam ante coronacionem quam post in Hungaria et ibi mansionem more aliorum regum faciemus et continuabimus.*³

And the envoy from Frankfurt reported that the Hungarians were not very positive (“wenig freundlich”) concerning Albrecht’s election as emperor.⁴

The character and importance of any Hungarian opposition are not attested to elsewhere, but it seems unlikely that Piccolomini would have referred to it in the speech if it was a matter of pure invention on his part: that would indeed have been very undiplomatic, and it would also have made a curious and negative impression on the audience. At any rate, the Hungarian issue is not the main subject of the speech, but only concerns one of Piccolomini’s arguments for Albrecht’s acceptance of the imperial crown.

Thirdly, the combined forces of Albrecht’s dominions and the Empire will strengthen them all against external enemies, and primarily against the Turks.

Fourthly, accepting the imperial crown will benefit Albrecht’s own dynasty, not only in terms of prestige and dignity, but also in terms of bestowing vacant offices, duchies, counties and margravates on members of his own family, thereby making it richer and more powerful.

¹ Piccolomini: *De Europa* (Brown), p. 55

² It must have been shortly before 27 April since Piccolomini was present in Basel on 4 April when he delivered the sermon “*Si quis me roget*” [2] to the council fathers

³ RTA, 13, p. 24

⁴ RTA, 13, p. 24

Indeed, the dynastic arguments may have been decisive in the process that led Albrecht to accept his election.¹

Fifthly, it is advantageous to Albrecht himself who should not spurn Fortune, but accept its gifts. Remarkably, Piccolomini refers directly to the personal pleasure of exercising power ("the management of great things").

Sixthly, it will help the Church to have an emperor who can reunite the divided Church, torn apart by the conflict between Pope Eugenius and the Council of Basel. As mentioned in the *Commentarii*, Piccolomini would at the time have preferred the emperor's help to the Church to consist in support of the Council of Basel against the pope, but it would have been impolitic to say so in view of the German movement towards formal neutrality between the two parties, and the fact that the Bishop of Novara's master, the Duke of Milan, was beginning to side with the pope.

Seventhly, if Albrecht does not accept his election, the Empire – like the Church – risks being torn apart between various other candidates for imperial power.

3. Date, place, audience and format

The oration/memorandum was delivered to Albrecht on 27 April, either in writing or being read directly, as Piccolomini states in his *Commentarii*.

The place was Vienna where Albrecht resided in April 1438 for the purpose of deciding whether to accept the imperial election.

The audience, if the text was presented during a formal meeting, would have been the counsellors of Albrecht, and possibly also the ambassadors and envoys present in Vienna.

The text was a memorandum, formally written as a letter but in a style which made it possible to deliver it in the form of an oration. Lhotsky considered it as *eine als Ansprache gedachte, aber vermutlich niemals deklamierte und bloss überreichte schöne lateinische Denkschrift*.² In

¹ Hödl, p. 18

² Lhotsky: *Wiener*, p. 134

his edition of Piccolomini's *Pentalogus*, Christoph Schingnitz refers to the text as *eine Rede*.¹ For the purpose of the present collection, it is classified as an oration.

4. Text²

The oration was not included in the Collected Orations of Pius II, compiled in 1462 under his direct supervision. The reason may be that the text was not available at the time of compilation, or that because of its character it was considered inappropriate for the collection.

4.1. Manuscripts

- **Melk / Stiftsbibliothek**
751,1 (729, slim), ff. 101r-102v (**M**)
- **Sémur / Bibliothèque Publique**
39 (40), ff. 134v-136v (**S**)

In his edition of the oration, see sect. 4.2 below, Pez used a manuscript from Gemnic.³ According to the editor of Albrecht II's acts, Gustav Beckmann, Gemnic stands for Gaming. Beckmann wonders why Pez did not use the text in Melk / Cod. Ms. 729 which he knew since he reproduced two other texts from that manuscript in his *Thesaurus*, but in view of the many differences between the manuscript used by Pez and the Melk manuscript, Beckmann appears to conclude that the manuscript used by Pez' was not the one from Melk.⁴

4.2. Editions

The text has been published in:

¹ Piccolomini: *Pentalogus* (Schingnitz), p. 7: *Er [Piccolomini] verfasste im Jahr 1438 eine Rede für den Bischof von Novara, Bartolomeo Visconti, die dieser als Gesandter des mailändischen Herzogs Albrecht II in Wien überreichte um ihn zur Annahme der Königswahl zu bewegen*

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

³ See note in Pez: Ex cod. Gemnic

⁴ RTA, p. 99

- Pez, Bernhard: *Thesaurus Anecdotorum Novissimus*. Tom. VI. Augusta Vindebonorum, 1729, Pars III, sect. 108, pp. 232-234 **(PE)**
[On the basis of a ms. in Gaming, apparently lost]
- Fejer, György: *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*. Tom. XI. Buda, 1844. pp. 48-54
[On the basis of Pez]
- *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter König Albrecht II: 1438*. Stuttgart, 1925. (Deutsche Reichstagsakten. Ältere Reihe; 13), pp. 99-102

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 the two manuscripts listed above and the edition by Pez, with the Melk manuscript as the lead text.

Though the two manuscripts were ably edited by Pez, they have – as a matter of principle – been re-collated for the present edition.

Pagination:

The pagination is from the Melk manuscript (red) and the Semur manuscript (blue).

5. Sources¹

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

Due to the circumstances of delivery and presentation, the oration "*Quid est*" was not intended to be an exercise in grand and classical rhetorics, and there are only a very few rhetorical devices and classical references in the text. Indeed, only one quotation has been identified, from Plutarch on Socrates. Cicero refers to this saying in *Tusculanae Disputationes*, 5.37.108, where Piccolomini probably picked it up. He might also have known it from Burley (Socrates).

6. Bibliography

Böhmer, J.F.: *Regesta imperii*. Tom. XII: Albrecht II (1438-1439). Bearb. G. Hödl. Wien, 1975

Boulting, William: *Aeneas Silvius (Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini – Pius II). Orator, man of letters, statesman, and pope*. London, 1908

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

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

Campano, Giantonio: *Vita Pii II. Pontificis Maximi*. SEE Zimolo

Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter König Albrecht II: 1438. Stuttgart, 1925. (Deutsche Reichstagsakten. Ältere Reihe; 13)

Fejer, György: *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*. Tom. XI. Buda, 1844

A History of Hungary. Gen. ed. P.F. Sugar. Bloomington, 1994

Hödl, Günther: *Albrecht II – Königtum, Reichsregierung und Reichsreform 1438-1439*. Wien, 1978. (Forschungen zur Kaiser- und Papstgeschichte des Mittelalters; 3)

Lhotsky, Alphons: *Aeneas Silvius und Österreich*. Basel, 1965. (Vorträge des Aeneas-Silvius-Stiftung an der Universität Basel; 5)

Lhotsky, Alpons: *Die Wiener Artistenfakultät 1365-1497*. Wien, 1965. (Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse; 247)

Paulhart, Herbert: Die Rede eines Mailänder Gesandten vor Albrecht II. 1438. Ein Nachtrag zu den Reichstagsakten. In: *Festschrift Karl Pivec*. Hrsg. von A. Haidacher & Hans Eberhard Mayer Innsbruck, 1966, pp. 289-293. (Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft; 12)

Pez, Bernhard: *Thesaurus Anecdotorum Novissimus*. Tom. VI. Augusta Vindebonorum, 1729

Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *De viris illustribus*. [1458]

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

Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *Pentalogus*. [1443]

- Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *Pentalogus*. Hrsg. Christian Schingnitz. Hannover, 2009 (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Staatsschriften des späteren Mittelalters; 8)

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

- Pii II *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae suis temporibus contigerunt*. Ed. A. van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984. (Studi e testi; 312-313)
- Pius II: *Commentaries*. Vols 1 ff. Eds. M. Meserve and M. Simonetta. Cambridge, MA., 2003 ff.

Pius II: *Epistolae*

- *Der Briefwechsel*. Hrsg. Rudolf Wolkan. 3 vols. Wien, 1909-1918
- Eneae Silvii Piccolominei *Epistolarium Saeculare*. Ed. A. van Heck. Città del Vaticano, 2007

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

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

- *Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II*. Edited and translated by Michael v. Cotta-Schönberg. 12 vols. Copenhagen, 2015-2019
[Available on the web in HAL Archives]

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

Zimolo, Giulio C. (ed.): *Le vite di Pio II di Giovanni Antonio Campano e Bartolomeo Platina*. Bologna, 1964. (Rerum Italicarum Scriptores; t. III, p. II)

7. Sigla and abbreviations

M = Melk / Stiftsbibliothek / Cod. Ms. 729

S = Sémur / Bibliothèque Publique / Cod. Ms. 39 (40)

PE = Pez, Bernhard: *Thesaurus Anecdotorum Novissimus*. T. VI. Augusta Vindebonorum, 1729 / Pars III, sect. 108, pp. 232-234

Abbreviations

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

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

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

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

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

RTA = Deutsche Reichstagsakten

WO = *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*. Hrsg. von Rudolf Wolkan. 3 vols. Wien, 1909-1918. (Fontes rerum Austriacarum, 2 / 61, 62, 67, 68)

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

Epistolarium = *Enee Silvii Piccolominei Epistolarium Seculare*. Ed. A. van Heck. Città del Vaticano, 2007. (Studi e testi; 439)

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

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

II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Epistola per dominum Bartholomaeum, episcopum Novariensem, missa domino Alberto Hungariae etc. regi et duci Austriae in Romanorum regem electo persuasiva, ut consentiat electioni¹

[1] {101r} {134v} Quid est, rex serenissime, quod imperium renuis²? Quid est, optime princeps, quod tantum refugis honorem? Estne, quod vulgo dicitur, verum? Absit hic error. Neque enim utile, neque tibi³ honorificum esset, falsum quoque⁴ rumorem hunc⁵ arbitror. Video⁶ namque inifinitas paene causas, quae⁷ te Romano⁸ imperio praeficiant et⁹ acceptare cogant¹⁰, quas¹¹ etsi tibi¹² existimo¹³ notas¹⁴, earum¹⁵ tamen¹⁶ aliquas¹⁷ in praesentiarum retulisse non poenitebit, ut¹⁸ si¹⁹ forte dubius sit animus, hoc momento impellatur.²⁰ Illudque²¹ tibi persuade primum, non propter te {135r} offerri imperium tibi, sed propter rem Christianorum publicam. Neque enim imperium homini, sed homo imperio servit.

¹ Epistola ... suscipiat : Oratio sive epistola habita per serenissimum dominum dominum B. de Vicecomitibus, dei gratia episcopum Novariensem, ad ducem Albertum Austrie et Ungarie Bohemieque regem in imperatorem electum per mortem domini Sigismundi unanimiter et concorditer per omnes dominos electores in Francfordia anno domini MCCCCmo XXXVIII^{mo} de mense aprilis die XXVII^{ma} renuentem acceptare, sed hac oratione motus acceptavit S; Bartholomaei de Vicecomitibus, episcopi Novariensis, epistola ad Albertum V., Austriae ducem, quem hortatur, ut oblatum Romani imperii regimen ne renuat, sed alacriter suscipiat PE

² respuis S

³ id S

⁴ falsum quoque : falsumque ego S

⁵ rumorem hunc : hunc rumorem S

⁶ vide S

⁷ quos M

⁸ Christiano PE

⁹ illud *add.* PE

¹⁰ cogunt S

¹¹ omnes PE

¹² *omit.* S

¹³ extimo S

¹⁴ notos M

¹⁵ eorum M

¹⁶ *omit.* S

¹⁷ aliquos M

¹⁸ et M, PE

¹⁹ *omit.* S

²⁰ ut si ... compellatur : etsi forte dubius sit amicus, cujus monitu compellor PE

²¹ illud PE

Letter of Bartolomeo Visconti, Bishop of Novara, to Albrecht V, Duke of Austria, in which he exhorts the duke not to refuse the rule of the Roman Empire, but to accept it willingly

1. Introduction

[1] Most serene king, why do you refuse the Empire? Why, oh best of princes, do you spurn this great honour? Is it really true what people say? May there be no such error: it would be neither to your advantage nor to your honour. I must believe this rumour to be false for I see almost countless reasons for you to become head of the Roman Empire, urging for your acceptance. Though I believe you know them all, I shall present some of them – so that if you are in doubt, they will point you in the right direction.

Above all, know that the Empire is not offered to you for your own sake, but for the sake of the Christian Commonwealth, and that it is not the Empire which serves the man, but the man who serves the Empire.

[2] Congregati ergo¹ domini electores, viri clarissimi, de salute imperii cogitantes, unum te in toto orbe viderunt, qui posses imperium sublevare, unaque sententia te² vocaverunt³. Quid igitur facias, vide, quia non tibi nec⁴ Austriae natus es⁵, sed reipublicae, quae, ut est major, tanto nos astringit magis⁶. Certum est nos esse⁷ obligatos solo, in quo nascimur, idque patriam patriam appellamus, pro qua multi clarissimi viri non dubitaverunt⁸ se⁹ morti¹⁰ objicere, sicut¹¹ sicut¹¹ Thebis Meneheus¹², Athenis Codrus¹³, Romae Curtius, et alii quamplures, quos hic praetereo. Certum est tamen, quia¹⁴ plus orbi quam uni urbi sumus¹⁵ obnoxii, ideoque¹⁶ Socrates non Atheniensem¹⁷ aut ex alia urbe oriundum, sed mundanum¹⁸ se dicebat, ut qui sciebat omne ipsius¹⁹ studium omnemque cogitatum pro salute omnium publica consumendum nec esse ullam provinciam, quam²⁰ toti orbi praeferret²¹. [cont.]

¹ igitur S

² omit. M, PE

³ vocarunt S

⁴ neque S, PE

⁵ omit. M, PE

⁶ astringit magit : magis astringit S

⁷ omit. M, PE

⁸ dubitarunt S

⁹ sese S

¹⁰ tradere et add. PE

¹¹ sic S

¹² Meneocheris M; Meneocris S

¹³ Cedrus S

¹⁴ quod PE

¹⁵ simus PE

¹⁶ ideo S

¹⁷ Athenis S

¹⁸ mondanum S

¹⁹ ejus S

²⁰ quod S

²¹ preficeret S

2. Obligations towards the Empire¹

[2] Assembled to provide for the good of the Empire, the Worshipful Lord Electors considered you as the one man in the whole world who can restore it, and they have elected you unanimously. So, think carefully on what to do, for you were born not to Austria, but to the whole Commonwealth² which is greater than Austria and therefore requires more of us. Certainly we have an obligation towards the place where we are born and which we call our Fatherland, and many famous men did not hesitate to die for it, like Meneheus³ in Thebes, Codrus⁴ in Athens, Curtius⁵ in Rome, and many others whom I shall not mention here. But, certainly, we have an even greater obligation towards the world than towards one particular city. Therefore Socrates⁶ did not consider himself as a citizen of Athens or any other city, but as a citizen of the world,⁷ and he knew that he had to spend all his thought and energy on the common good of all, and he preferred no single region to the whole world.⁸ [cont.]

¹ In this section, Piccolomini reuses some ideas concerning internationalism vs. local patriotism from his *Oration "Audiui" [1]*, sect. 12, delivered a year and a half before, to the council fathers of Basel (November 1436), here substituting the empire for the council

² "reipublicae"

³ Not identified

⁴ Codrus: Last of the semi-mythical Kings of Athens

⁵ Marcus Curtius: (Roman myth.) Sacrificed himself to the gods of Hades

⁶ Socrates (c. 469-399 BC): Greek philosopher

⁷ "mundanus": Socrates as quoted by Plutarch: *On Exile*, in *Moralia: the saying of Socrates is still better, that he was no Athenian or a Greek, but a "cosmian" (as one might say Rhodian or Corinthian), because he did not shun himself up with Sunium or Taenarus and the Ceraunian mountains*. Cicero refers to this saying in *Tusculanae Disputationes*, 5.37.108, where Piccolomini probably picked it up. Cf. also Burlaeus, *Socrates*

⁸ Also the idea of avoiding local patriotism was used in the *"Audiui" [1]*: *So, Fathers, let us put aside the names of nations, let everyone free himself of local patriotism, and let us discuss instead what may serve this council and the Christian faith* (Sect. 13)

[2 cont.] Quod si pro patria et pro salute civium¹ vitam tenemur exponere, tanto² magis pro imperio et salute omnium. Tantique est salus cunctorum, ut ipsum Dei filium ex caelesti regno ad mortem traxerit. Pro hac³ et apostoli et ceteri martyres⁴ excarnificati obierunt⁵. Hoc⁶ autem ideo dico⁷, ut intelligas, quantum imperio quisque teneatur, quod non solum unam civitatem aut provinciam, sed totum complectitur orbem, ac⁸ errare illum minime dubitem⁹, qui non solum fortunas suas, sed¹⁰ vitam pro imperio non¹¹ exponit.

¹ omnium S

² quanto S, PE

³ pro hac : probant S

⁴ qui *add.* S

⁵ obiverunt S

⁶ haec PE

⁷ *omit.* S

⁸ ut S, PE

⁹ dubitet S

¹⁰ et *add.* PE

¹¹ *omit.* M

[2 cont.] So, if we are obliged to risk our life for our country and for the good of its citizens, how much more are we not obliged to risk it for the Empire and for the good of all?¹ So important is the salvation of all that it even drew the Son of God from the Kingdom of Heaven to his death. The apostles and the other martyrs died, under torture, for Salvation. This I say so that you may understand how much each of us is bound to the Empire, comprising not only one city or region, but the whole world. I am sure that those who are not willing to give their property or even their life for the Empire are in error.

¹ Piccolomini also used this concept in the oration "*Audivi*" [1], applying it to the Council rather than to the Empire: *If you have an obligation to give your life for your country, you have an even greater obligation to give it for the Council* (sect. 4)

[3] Eapropter, si es ad imperium accersitus¹, debes quidem omni re postposita ad ejus gubernationem te accingere. Neque retrahere te² Austria debet, aut Hungaria, aut Bohemia, non denique ipsa³ corporis⁴ et vitæ tuæ conservatio. His namque omnibus publica imperii cura est anteponenda, peccatque non mediocriter, qui ista pervertit. Efflagitat te imperium teque non solum poscit, sed obsecrat. {101v} Vides etiam, quam multipliciter sit laceratum⁵ quanta indigeat reparatione.⁶ At dicis forsitan⁷: "Sunt⁸ alii, qui me utilius illud⁹ regant." Id quidem non admitto, nam nemo¹⁰ inter Christianos est, qui plus quam¹¹ te¹² agri possideat, qui potentior sit, qui magis diligatur, qui prudentius regat¹³. Quod¹⁴ si alteri quam tibi committatur imperium, actum profecto de ipso judicaverim teque tanti mali causam¹⁵, qui, cum posses¹⁶ sublevare, nolueris. Quod malum taceo, quam grande sit, quoniam deficiente imperio omnia incendio aestuant¹⁷ membris invicem sine capite disceptantibus.

¹ arcesitus S

² aut *add.* S

³ propria S

⁴ tui *add.* S

⁵ et *add.* PE

⁶ ista pervertit ... reparatione : sic laceratum cernit quantaque indigeat reparatione considerans erigere refugit imperium S

⁷ dicis forsitan : forsitan diceres S

⁸ et *add.* S

⁹ me utilius illud : illud me utilius S

¹⁰ neque M, S

¹¹ plus quam : quam plus M

¹² tu M, PE

¹³ agat PE

¹⁴ quid S

¹⁵ actum profecto ... causam : nichil est profecto quod de ipso, sed te tanti causam fuisse judicaverim S

¹⁶ possis S

¹⁷ extuant M; (conflagrabit) PE

3. Albrecht's eminent qualifications

[3] Therefore, if you are called to the Empire, you should put everything else aside and prepare yourself for governing it. Neither Austria, Hungary, nor Bohemia, nor even the preservation of your own body and life should hinder you. For the public charge of the Empire is more important than all these, and whoever lets them be a hindrance commits a great sin. The Empire asks, nay begs you: you see how it is being scourged on all sides and how greatly it needs to be restored. Maybe you will say: "There are others who could govern the Empire better than me." I do not agree, for nobody among the Christians has more territory than you, is more powerful, is loved more, and rules more wisely. If the Empire is entrusted to another than you, I believe that it will be the end of it, and that you will be the cause of a great disaster since you could help it and did not want to. I cannot tell how disastrous this will be: if the Empire fails, there will be a general conflagration as its members, without a head, come into open conflict.

[4] His rationibus satis¹ liquet² regnum Hungariae nullo te pacto ab imperio posse³ retrahere, retrahere, qui⁴ plus capiti quam membro ulli tenearis. Sed cur⁵ Hungari te impediunt⁶? An non etiam eorum regno expediat {135v} te esse imperatorem? Vide quod⁷ salutem propriam resistunt. Et consulendum est etiam nolentibus, quando, quod bonum est, nesciunt⁸. Habet illud regnum et cum Venetis et⁹ cum Teucris litem. Magnus uterque hostis est, neque potens est Hungaria his resistere, sed adjuvante¹⁰ imperio¹¹ optime se defendet. Multi enim¹² regi¹³ adversabuntur, qui¹⁴ non inimicabuntur imperatori¹⁵. Quid est enim, quod Veneti doluerunt Hungariae regem imperatorem factum? Certe ex hoc licet arguere, quod, cum Veneti doleant¹⁶, Hungari debeant gaudere¹⁷: et quod illis est damno, his¹⁸ utilitati esse debet. Siquidem, ut jurisconsulti volunt, *contrariorum eadem est disciplina*. Nec dubitet aliquis alia nunc Venetos imperatori oblaturus¹⁹ quam antea. Unde et facilius tueri regnum imperator quam rex poterit et ampliare audacius.

¹ sat S

² liquebat M, S

³ ab imperio posse : posse ab imperio S

⁴ quod S, PE

⁵ sedne S

⁶ impediunt S

⁷ quia PE

⁸ et consulendum ... nesciunt *omit.* S

⁹ *omit.* S

¹⁰ iuvante S

¹¹ imperatore PE

¹² etiam PE

¹³ *omit.* S

¹⁴ tamen *add.* S

¹⁵ non inimicabuntur imperatori : imperatori non inimicabuntur S

¹⁶ dolent M

¹⁷ debeant gaudere : debent gaudere M; gaudere debeant S

¹⁸ illis M

¹⁹ alia nunc ... oblaturus: nunc Venetos imperatori minus oblatratos S

4. Advantages to the Hungarians

[4] For these reasons, it is quite evident that the Kingdom of Hungary may in no way hinder your assumption of the Empire, for the head should concern you more than any one member. But why should the Hungarians hinder you? Is it not an advantage to their Kingdom if you are also the emperor? Consider that they would be obstructing their own good, and that one should help even those who do not want to be helped if they do not know their own good. The Kingdom of Hungary is in conflict with both the Venetians and the Teucrians.¹ Each of these enemies is great, and Hungary does not have the force to resist them, but with the aid of the Empire it could defend itself very well: many who are adversaries of the king will not wish to be enemies of the emperor. Why have the Venetians taken it so badly that the King of Hungary has been elected emperor? It may confidently be argued that if the Venetians are upset, the Hungarians should rejoice, and that what is bad for the Venetians is good for the Hungarians.² Indeed, as lawyers³ claim: *Opposites are two sides of the same issue.*⁴ The Venetians will undoubtedly change their behavior towards you as emperor. It follows that an emperor can defend the Hungarian Kingdom better than a king – and even extend it more boldly!

¹ Note that in 1436 Piccolomini still uses the term "Teucrians" for the Turks, cf. his Oration "Audivi" [1], sect. 20-21

² The reference to the Venetians is carefully calculated. The Venetians were the mortal enemies of Milan, and the Duke of Milan intended to seek Albrecht's support against them by presenting them as a common enemy (Paulhart, p. 290)

³ Or the Schoolmen (scholastics)

⁴ A tenet of Aristotelian philosophy, as transmitted through medieval scholasticism

[5] Idem quoque de Teucris existimandum¹ est. Quis enim non velit hostem suum esse debiliorem? Et quis nesciat regem cum imperio fieri fortiolem, quando et imperium regno et regnum imperio sustentatur²: plus quoque³ hoc nomen imperii, ubicumque sit imperator, regno proderit, quam si rex⁴ in Hungaria praesens maneat⁵. Quamquam⁶ imperatorem⁷ quis prohibebit personaliter in Hungaria commorari, cum et illa non sit inepta⁸ imperio sedes⁹? Quod si nollent Hungari propter absentiam te fieri imperatorem, sic nec Bohemorum suscipere regnum oportebat, quoniam et propter regnum Bohemiae¹⁰ saepe te necesse abire¹¹ erit. At sicut Hungariam¹² Bohemiae vires juvare possent¹³, sic regnum utrumque vires imperii. Et facta duorum regnorum cum imperio conjunctione¹⁴, incredibile est, quantum robur connectatur, ut manifestum sit, quod propter imperium nemo audeat haec duo regna invadere, et propter ipsa¹⁵ regna nemo audeat imperium devastare¹⁶.

¹ extimandum S

² substentabitur S

³ quam M, S

⁴ si rex : rex si M, S

⁵ maneret S

⁶ et *add.* S

⁷ imperatori PE

⁸ septa PE

⁹ *omit.* S

¹⁰ ex Hungaria *add.* S

¹¹ te necesse abire : abire necessarium S

¹² Hungaria S

¹³ potest S; possunt PE

¹⁴ conjuncto S

¹⁵ duo *add.* S

¹⁶ imperium devastare : devastare imperium S, PE

5. Advantages in relation to the Turks

[5] The same applies to the Teucrians. Who does not want his enemy to be weakened? And who does not know that a king becomes stronger if he also has the Empire? For the Empire supports the Kingdom, and the Kingdom the Empire. Regardless where the emperor resides, imperial status will benefit the Kingdom more than a [mere] king who stays all the time in Hungary. Actually, nobody would forbid the emperor to stay in Hungary which would be a quite suitable seat of the Empire. But if the Hungarians do not want you to become emperor because of your absences, then you should not accept the crown of Bohemia either, for you would often have to leave Hungary for affairs in Bohemia. But just like the strength of Bohemia can help Hungary, the strength of the Empire can help each kingdom. If the two kingdoms are joined with the Empire, their united force will be incredible. Clearly, because of the Empire nobody would dare to attack the two kingdoms, and because of the two kingdoms nobody would dare to attack the Empire.

[6] Videsne, quanta utilitas ex hoc resultat? Quid hic dicas¹? Cur non² tam Hungari quam omnes alii³ suscipere imperium⁴ suadent etc.⁵ At tuos nepotes audi, necessarios tuos⁶ ausculta. Hos tu⁷ imperio magnos {102r} facere et sublimare potes. Quot ducatus, quot comitatus marchionatusque ad imperium devolventur? His ditare tuos poteris Australemque domum perpetuis ampliare honoribus. Quid si tibi virilis nascatur soboles, numquid⁸ plura cum imperio his relinquis⁹? Det tibi maximus atque¹⁰ optimus Deus ex consorte tua praestantissima filium; det, sicut spero¹¹ ¹² alios liberos. An ipsi adulti justam querimoniam¹³ habeant, quod imperare nolueris regnumque hoc Romanorum quasi¹⁴ haereditarium in familia tua collocare¹⁵? Licet enim electione detur, nil tamen prohibet in una domo Caesari succedere Caesarem, et post patrem eligi¹⁶ filium. Nec dubita plurimum tibi ad hanc dignitatem soceri tui¹⁷ nomen valuisse, cui cum duplici regno successeris, ne fugias imperio quoque substitui.

¹ dices S, PE

² hic *add.* S

³ omnes alii : alii omnes S, PE

⁴ suscipere imperium : imperium suscipere S, PE

⁵ *omit.* S; ... *add.* [*sic!*] PE

⁶ necessarios tuos : necessariisque tuis PE

⁷ cum S

⁸ numquam S

⁹ reliques S; relinques PE

¹⁰ et S

¹¹ speras PE

¹² et *add.* S, PE

¹³ non *add.* PE

¹⁴ hoc Romanorum quasi : Romanorum quasi hoc S

¹⁵ colorare S

¹⁶ ellegi S

¹⁷ *omit.* M, S

8. Advantages to Albrecht's family

[6] Do you not see how great is the advantage accruing from this? What will you say now? Why do not just the Hungarians, but everybody else urge you to accept the Empire? Listen to your own descendants, heed your relatives. Then you can make great and raise up through the Empire. Many duchies, counties, and margravates will revert to the Empire which you may use to increase the riches and honours of your family and the House of Austria. What if you have sons: do you not want to leave them more, with the Empire? May the Great and Good God¹ grant you a son from your noble spouse²; and may he give you other children, too, as I hope. When they grow up, will they not have just cause for complaint if you now refuse to rule and to make the Kingdom of the Romans almost hereditary in your lineage? Though it is bestowed through election, nothing forbids that an emperor succeed an emperor of the same House and that a son be elected after a father.³ Do not doubt that the name of your own father-in-law⁴ was very important for you as regards this office, and that since you succeeded to his double kingdom,⁵ you should not refuse to succeed him in the Empire.

¹ Piccolomini here applies the epithets of the pagan Roman chief God, Jupiter Optimus Maximus, to the Christian God

² Elizabeth of Luxembourg (1409-1442): Daughter of Emperor Sigismund. Married to (elected) Holy Roman Emperor, Albert II. They had two daughters. When Albert died in 1439, Elizabeth was pregnant with a boy, the future Archduke of Austria and King of Hungary and Bohemia, Ladislaus

³ This is exactly what happened: the Holy Roman Emperors after Albrecht were from the House of Habsburg

⁴ Sigismund of Luxemburg (1368-1437): King of Hungary and Croatia from 1387, King of Bohemia from 1419, and crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1433

⁵ Hungary and Bohemia

[7] Unum quoque¹, oro: considera et apertis attende auribus. Magna est fortuna tua, quae tam parvo tempore ex duce te regem² fecit regnumque regno adjecit. Nunc quoque imperium tibi offert, {136r} quod etsi tuae exigant virtutes, vide tamen, ne fortunam contempnas. Indignabunda est, honorari vult. Quod si quis eam semel expulerit, numquam³ ab ea visitatur. Si benigne recipitur, illuc⁴ larga manu beneficia confert. Suscipe, quod tibi non a fortuna solum, sed ab ipso Deo et ab hominibus offertur. Quod si repudies⁵, ad ignaviam tibi atque pusillanimitatem ascribetur: “Laborem⁶,” inquit⁷, “hic homo declinat⁸, quem pro republica republica libentissime debuit suscepisse.” Quamquam nec⁹ labor est alta tractare negotia, habet enim¹⁰ nescio quid lenimenti¹¹ ipsa rerum actio magnarum. Quod nisi esset, numquam maximorum duces exercituum tot sufferre labores¹² quaerent¹³. Est namque per se pulchrum atque suave sentire ac¹⁴ disponere omnia, eaque cogitatio¹⁵ corpus reddit¹⁶ sanius et habilis. Quid igitur hic respondeas, aut¹⁷ quale iudicium de te¹⁸ feras, imperium fugiens? Hoc est¹⁹, quod Veneti²⁰ et²¹ rex Poloniae cuperent, quod pusillaninem hostem et debiliorem dicerent se habere

¹ unum quoque : unumque S

² te regem : te regem PE

³ amplius *add.* S

⁴ illac PE

⁵ repudias S

⁶ non quaerit *add.* PE

⁷ dicent PE

⁸ declinet S

⁹ enim PE

¹⁰ tamen PE

¹¹ benemeriti S

¹² sufferre labores : labores sufferre PE

¹³ quirent M, S

¹⁴ atque S

¹⁵ agitatio S

¹⁶ reddat M

¹⁷ ut S

¹⁸ iudicium de te : de te iudicium S

¹⁹ *omit.* M, PE

²⁰ quodque Teucris *add.* S

²¹ ipse *add.* S, PE

7. Advantages to Albrecht himself

[7] And this one thing I ask you to hear with open ears.¹ Great is your luck which in a very short time has made you king from duke and then added one kingdom to the other. Now Fortune offers you the Empire, too. Of course, your own qualities merit it fully, but, still, do not scorn Lady Fortune for she is easily angered and wants to be honoured. If you reject her once, she will never come back. But if you receive her gladly, she will pour benefits over you with generous hands. So, accept what not only your good Fortune, but God himself and men offer to you. If you refuse it, people will think that it is because of cowardice and pusillanimity. They will say that here is a man who does not want to do anything that takes an effort and who refuses what he should gladly accept for the sake of the common good. However, it is not really a burden to deal with high matters, for the management of great things actually gives some kind of pleasure. If it was not so, generals of great armies would never take on such charges. Beautiful and sweet it is to deal with and manage great affairs,² and being occupied with them makes the body healthy and fit.

So, what do you say now, and how will you judge yourself if you refuse the Empire? That is what the Venetians and also the King of Poland would want you to do, believing that thus they would have a timid and weak enemy.

¹ The terms for hearing and listening in the text indicate that it was written as an oration

² "omnia"

[8] Sunt tamen alia longe graviora, et quibus nulla ratione valeas respondere. Etenim si qua¹ te religionis cura remordet, si conscientiae² tangeris³ stimulo, imperium ut⁴ accipias oportet. Videsne quantum schismatis periculum imminet? Videsne laceratam ecclesiam, concilium cum papa et papam cum concilio dissentire? Quis⁵ his⁶ provideat, nisi tu imperes? Rex profecto {102v} non tantum posses⁷. Sperabit papa alium sibi propitium, si tu repudies⁸, idemque concilium, eritque undique⁹ major disceptatio. Nunc expectatio est utrimque¹⁰, quid agas. Et certe, si volueris, unionem efficies, quae non tibi minorem¹¹ gloriam paritura est¹² quam socero tuo¹³ Constantia praestiterit¹⁴. At si omnino imperare repudies¹⁵, nihil¹⁶ dubito¹⁷ durissimum schisma futurum. Cui rei nisi cupis¹⁸ occurrere, haud leviter peccas. Causa divisionis ecclesiae reputaberis, qui, cum possis¹⁹ unire²⁰ illam, praetermiseris²¹.

¹ quae PE

² si conscientiae *omit.* S

³ teneris S

⁴ et S

⁵ quid S

⁶ hic S

⁷ possis S

⁸ repudias S

⁹ igitur S

¹⁰ est utrimque : utrimque est PE

¹¹ tibi minorem : minorem tibi S

¹² erit PE

¹³ *omit.* S

¹⁴ praestitit PE

¹⁵ repudias S

¹⁶ nil S

¹⁷ dubio M, S

¹⁸ cupieris *aut* cupietis M

¹⁹ posses PE

²⁰ *omit.* S

²¹ praetermissis S

8. Advantages to the Church

[8] However, there are far more important issues about which you would have no answer. For if you care about religion and feel any pangs of conscience, you must accept the Empire. Do you not see how great is the danger of a schism? Do you not see how the Church is being torn apart, the Council disagreeing with the pope and the pope with the Council? Who may deal with this if you do not rule the Empire? Indeed, as a mere king you would not be able to achieve nearly as much in this matter. If you refuse the Empire, the pope will hope for another emperor more favourable to him, and the Council will do the same. Everywhere there will be great conflicts. Now, both sides are waiting to see what you will do. And, certainly, if you want to, you may reunite the Church, something that would bring you as much glory as it did to your father-in-law in Konstanz.¹ But if you refuse to govern the Empire, I do not doubt that the schism will be of the utmost severity. If that is what you want, you commit a grievous sin, and you will be considered as the cause of the division in the Church since you did not want to unite Her when you could.

¹ Under the leadership of Emperor Sigismund, the Council of Constance ended the Great Western Schism, with three popes reigning at the same time

[9] Timeo et aliud, ne imperium quoque¹ renuntiatio tua dividat. Nam etsi in te concordēs² electores fuerunt³, non ita in alio erunt: quoniam neque alium quempiam ad imperium tot rationes⁴ incitant⁵, vereorque, ne⁶ in discordia fiat electio, ut duo sese asseverare audeant imperatores. Cui ut occurras malo, suscipe oblatum benignus imperium.

[10] Quod si feceris, pacem ecclesiae dabis, collapsum reparabis imperium, regna tua conservabis melius, Australi vero domui ac familiae tuae divitias et honores et tibi⁷ perpetuam et gloriosissimam⁸ acquires⁹ famam¹⁰, quae¹¹ nec in humanis est^{12 13} quidquam praeclarius, nec aliud ad sepulchrum justius¹⁴ sequitur. Haec volui tuae majestati dixisse: cui licet ex officio non teneor, ex caritate tamen consulere obligor, quamquam neque hoc consilium est, sed recordatio quaedam notissimarum rerum¹⁵. Optime namque et ista discernit majestas tua¹⁶, {136v} cui det bonorum omnium largitor Deus amplecti¹⁷, quod in rem fuerit populi Christiani et ipsius aeterni Dei laudem. Vale per omnia, rex dignissime, et me servitore tuo utere pro arbitrio, qui singulos suscipere pro te¹⁸ labores atque curas minime dubitabo.

¹ imperium quoque : imperiumque S

² in te concordēs : concordēs in te S

³ fuerint PE

⁴ ad imperium tot rationes : tot rationes ad imperium S, PE

⁵ decitant M; vocitant S

⁶ ut S

⁷ et tibi : tibi S

⁸ perpetuam et gloriosissimam : gloriosissimam et perpetuam S

⁹ acquiris M

¹⁰ acquires famam : famam acquires S

¹¹ qua PE

¹² omit. M

¹³ in humanis est : est in humanis S

¹⁴ jus M, S

¹⁵ rex add. S

¹⁶ majestas tua : tua majestas S

¹⁷ omit. S

¹⁸ suscipere pro te : pro te suscipere S, PE

9. Advantages to the Empire

[9] And I fear that the Empire, too, will be divided if you refuse. For though the electors have agreed on you, they may not be able to agree on another: indeed, few reasons point to anybody else as candidate to the Empire. I fear a disputed election and that there will be two persons daring to call themselves Emperor. Please prevent this evil, and benignly accept the Empire offered to you.

10. Conclusion

[10] In doing so you will bring peace to the Church, you will restore the collapsed Empire, you will be able better to preserve your kingdoms, you will obtain riches and honours for the House of Austria and for your lineage, and you yourself will acquire everlasting and glorious fame: nothing is more important for men, and nothing follows us to the grave more justly.

This is what I wanted to say to Your Majesty. Though I am not bound to speak by office, charity bids me to give advice, not as some kind of formal counsel, but simply as a reminder of facts well-known to Your Majesty. May God, the Giver of all Good Things, grant that you accept what would be to the advantage of the Christian people and to the praise of Eternal God.

Live well in all things, most worthy King, and freely use me as your servant, if you wish: I shall not hesitate to undertake both labours and cares for your sake.

[11] Ex oppido Viennae XXVII. Aprilis mane summo, currente anno domini MCCCCmo XXXVIII¹, et² dominica secunda post festum resurrectionis.

Subscriptio³: Ejusdem majestatis tuae serenissimae devotissimus servitor Bartholomaeus de Vicecomitibus, Novariensis episcopus ac illustrissimi⁴ principis domini ducis Mediolanensis⁵ ad ad excellentiam tuam⁶ orator, sed⁷ minimus, cum recommendatione humillima.

Superscriptio⁸: Serenissimo principi et domino gloriosissimo, domino Alberto Romanorum regi dignissime electo, Hungariae Dalmatiae⁹ etc. coronato, Bohemiae vero regi electo, Austriae quoque duci et domino¹⁰ meo colendissimo¹¹.

¹ Mo CCCC XXXVIIIo M; MCCCCXXXVIII. PE

² *omit.* S, PE

³ *omit.* PE

⁴ illustris PE

⁵ Mediolani S

⁶ *omit.* S

⁷ licet PE

⁸ a tergo S

⁹ Croatiae *add.* S

¹⁰ hero S

¹¹ Superscriptio ... colendissimo *omit.* PE

[11] From the City of Vienna, in the early morning of 27 April, in the year of Our Lord 1438, on the second Sunday after the Feast of the Resurrection.

Subscription: Bartolomeo Visconti, Bishop of Novara, devoted servant of your Most Serene Majesty, and orator of the Illustrious Prince, the Lord Duke of Milan, though myself insignificant, to Your Excellency, with humble recommendations.

Superscription: To the Most Serene Prince and Lord, the Glorious Lord Albrecht, worthily elected King of the Romans, crowned King of Hungary, Dalmatia etc., elected King of Bohemia, Duke of Austria, my Most Worshipful Lord