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(Orations by Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 72)

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Abstract

After his victory over the Malatestas in the Church States late 1462, Pope Pius II had agreed to a petition from the Republic of Venice to deal more leniently with them than he had intended to. In the case of Domenico Malatesta, Lord of Cesena, the pope had even accepted the mediation of the Republic in the person of one of its top diplomats. While negotiations were going on concerning the return of Domenico’s cities to the Papacy in case he died without legitimate male issue, the Venetians secretly bought from Domenico the salt mines of Cervia, one of the cities which would in casu return to the Papacy. As might be expected, the pope became furious at the double-dealing Venetians. Their ambassador was summoned and given a memorable dressing down as recorded in the text of the oration Senatu intercedente.

Keywords

Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Republic of Venice; Domenico Malatesta; Salt mines; Cervia; Renaissance orations; Renaissance rhetorics; Renaissance oratory; 1462; 15th century; Venezia; Firenze

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NOTE TO THE READER

Changes in this version: though they have been very ably edited before, the two principal manuscripts containing the text have been collated directly - as a matter of principle. The introduction and the translation have been revised.

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

I am publishing the preliminary edition of both the individual orations and the collected orations in the French digital research archive, HAL Archives.

The reader is advised that I publish – on a yearly basis - new versions of my preliminary editions. It will therefore always be useful to check if a later version than the one the reader may have found previously via the Internet is available in HAL Archives.

I aim at completing - Deo volente - a final edition of all the individual and collected orations in 2020 and will at that time decide upon the form of its ultimate publication.

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

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II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

1. Venice is treacherous [1-3]
2. Venice is impious [4]
3. Venice is doomed [5-7]
I. INTRODUCTION
1. Context

After his victory over the Malatestas in the Church States late 1462, Pope Pius II had – with some reluctance - agreed to a petition from the Republic of Venice to deal more leniently with them than had had intended to. In the case of Domenico Malatesta, Lord of Cesena, the pope had even accepted the mediation of the Republic in the person of one of its top diplomats.

The negotiations for a settlement seemingly went well but for the thorny issue concerning the return of a number of cities to the Papacy in case Domenico died without legitimate male issue. The problem was not the return as such, which was in accordance with the general rules of feudal and vicarial possession, but how to ensure that the cities in question would actually revert to the Papacy and not fall to some other Lord.

While these negotiations were going on, the Venetians secretly bought from Domenico the salt mines of Cervia, one of the cities which according to the agreement negotiated between the parties would return to the Papacy. The Venetians had their reasons, but under the circumstances the sale was probably illegal, and at the same time it was highly duplicitous, in view of the fact that they were themselves acting as mediators of the negotiations.

As might be expected, the pope became furious at the double-dealing Venetians. Their ambassador was summoned and given a memorable dressing down as recorded in the text of the oration Senatu intercedente.

However, the Papacy and Venice were now allied in a matter of much greater importance: the crusade against the Turks, where the Venetians had finally—though for completely self-serving purposes - accepted the papal crusade and decided to go to war against the Turks.

The affair of Cervia could not be allowed to spoil this alliance, and the Venetians got off lightly. In any case, there was not much the pope could do.

In his Commentarii Pius wrote about the episode:

While this discussion [the negotiations concerning the Malatestan cities] was going on the Venetians with the good faith characteristic of barbarians or after the manner of traders whose nature it is to weigh everything by utility paying no attention to honor, bought Cervia from

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1 Pius II: Commentarii (van Heck), pp. 686-690
2 Cf. Pius II: Oration “Quaecumque rogat”
3 The negotiations were not made easier by the pope’s desire to grant lands, vacated by the Malatestas, to his nephews: Venice and the other Italian powers did not favour a more direct and stronger papal presence in the Church States, cf. Pius II: Commentarii (Totaro, p. 2630, n. 156)
Domenico, agreeing to pay 4,000 ducats yearly to him for his lifetime and on his death to those he might designate, and in addition two hundred bags of salt. There are salt mines at Cervia where the very best salt is found. It is taken to the cities of Romagnola and brings in a very large profit to the Malatestas. Since the Venetians supply the Ferrarese with salt (though much against the latters’ will), fearing that it might be secretly furnished them from Cervia, they resolved to lay hold upon the place in any way they could, right or wrong. It was a fief of the Church of Rome and bound to return to it if the male line of the Malatestas should fail; and the Malatestas might not in any circumstances transfer it to any other family or gens; nor had the Venetians the right to buy it without the consent of the Church ... When Pius learnt the facts about Cervia, he sent for the Venetian envoy and asked him the reason for this and what excuse he had to give. He admitted what had been done with embarrassment and shame like a man who knew a base act could not be defended but he put forward motives of expediency seeing that the Venetians’ income from salt (which is very large in the territory of Ferrara and neighbouring districts) was being seriously reduced by the secret importation of salt from Cervia. The state had been unwilling to stand the deprivation and had therefore bought the place as a means of recouping its losses. The pope replied: [Here follows the oration]. When the Venetian envoy heard this he shook with terror and for a long time stood dumb but at last, having no further defense for his city’s cause, he said he hoped the Venetian Senate would in the future atone for its present misdeeds by profitable services to the Church of Rome; and so he withdrew from the Pope’s presence.4

2. Themes

The oration has three main themes:

- Venice has acted treacherously and dishonourably:

We are in the middle of negotiations and consultations with Venice on how Cervia and Malatesta’s other cities shall return to the Church after his death, and now the Venetians have grabbed Cervia. Behold a noble deed! Behold the Senate’s integrity! Behold the glory of the Venetian Republic! Is this how you keep faith? Is this how you care for decency? If Jacopo Piccinino who has often sold his loyalty, or if the greatest robber or thief in Italy had accepted to mediate between Us and Domenico, he would certainly never have permitted himself the indecency of seizing a city which was under negotiation: he would have feared infamy, he

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4 Pius II: Commentarii (Gragg), pp. 744-746
would have feared the voice of the people, he would have feared the label of traitor. But the Venetians are indifferent to such things. Their republic is quite impassive: it does not feel shame, it does not grow red or pale; it does not falter. It always shows the same countenance: impudent and shameless. [Sections 1-2]

- Venice is impious

  Your greed and ambition have no limits. You do not care whether you amass riches lawfully or unlawfully, as long as you amass them. Neither justice nor injustice stands in the way of extending your dominions. It is fine for you to have more power if only your empire grows. Honesty is less important than power. You scorn God in Heaven. The republic is your God: this is what you worship, having abandoned the Creator of the Universe. [Sect. 4]

- Venice is doomed

  With such morals you will not last. An empire built on bad foundations must perish. You will pay the penalty for your sins and you will not be allowed to deceive the Roman Church with impunity. Now that you are powerful, you insult your Mother, arrogant while favourable winds fill your sails. But the wind will change. Do not trust in air. Those who dwell in Heaven remember good as well as bad deeds. God knows and cares about what men do. He cares for his creation and he hates iniquity. You cannot escape his hand. Just when you think that your empire stands firm, some sudden and unexpected catastrophe will occur, and it will be completely destroyed by divine justice. [Sect. 7]

3. Date, place, audience, and format

The pope’s meeting with the Venetian ambassador took place in May 1463, at the Apostolic Palace in Rome. Only the ambassador is known to have been present, and the format was a direct and heated reply to the ambassador’s embarrassed explanation of the Cervia affair.

In his Commentarii the pope did not call it an oration, but simply wrote: Cui pontifex (The pope [said] to him).

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5 Cf. Pius II: Commentarii (Totaro), p. 2630, n. 156
4. Text

The oration was not actually delivered as a formal speech, but written later, in Latin, on the basis of the pope’s exchange in Italian with the Venetian ambassador, for insertion into the *Commentarii*, Bk. 11, Ch. 16. It was not included in the official compilation of Pope Pius II’s orations.

4.1. Manuscripts

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

- **Roma / Biblioteca dell’Accademia dei Lincei**
  Corсинianus 147, f. 367v-368v (S)

- **Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana**
  Reginensis Latinus 1995, f. 515v-516v (R)

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

4.2. Editions and translations

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

- **Pius II: Commentarii rerum memorabilium que svis temporibus contigervnt.** Ed. A van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984 (Studi e testi; 312-313) / II, p. 688-689


It was not included in Mansi’s edition of Pius II’s orations.

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

4.3 Present edition

Text

The text is based on both the Reginensis (R) and the Corsinianus (S). The Corsinianus, representing the final edition of the text, has been chosen as the lead manuscript.

Presentation:

The Latin text and English translation are presented synoptically, with the Latin text on the left side and the English text on the right side.

Identified quotations are given in italics.

Pagination:

The pagination is from both the Reginensis (red) and the Corsinianus (blue).

Textual apparatus:

In the main text, the readings from the lead manuscript are preferred unless other readings are clearly better. Variants are placed in the textual apparatus, with the exception of standard orthographical variants, see below.

Orthography and punctuation:

Standard variations from contemporary lexical practice are not indicated in the textual apparatus. For such variants, the reader is referred to those orthographical profiles of the manuscripts which are given in the bibliography volume of the collected edition.6

The punctuation is the editor’s own.

6 To be published in 2017
Translation:

The translation is intended to be a close rendition of the meaning of the Latin text, but not to directly transpose Latin grammatical forms which would result in a stilted and convoluted text, or expressions which would seem unnatural or senseless to modern readers. 

Unless otherwise stated, translations of quotations from classical authors are from the Loeb Classical Library (Digital). Translations of quotations from the Bible are from the Douay-Reims translation of the Vulgate into English. In the case of quotations from the synoptic gospels, normally only the reference to Matthew is given.

5. Bibliography

Loeb Classical Library / Digital. Cambridge, MA


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

- Commentarii rerum memorabilium que suis temporibus contigerunt. Ed. A van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984 (Studi e testi; 312-313)


Pius II: Orationes

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

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7 On the principles of translation used, see Introduction to the Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II, to be published in 2017

6. Sigla

R = Roma / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana / Reginensis Latinus 1995
S = Roma / Biblioteca dell’Accademia dei Lincei / Corsinianus 147
II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Si Jacobus Piccininus, cujus saepe vendita fides est, si major, qui reperiatur in Italia, praedo latrove inter nos et Dominicum concordiae partes assumpsisset, profecto numquam hanc turpitudinem admisisset, ut oppidum aliquod, de quo contenderetur, sibi aripuisset: timuisset infamiam, timuisset populi voces, timuisset proditoris nomen. At Venetos nihil horum movet. Inanimis est res publica: non verecundatur, non erubescit, non pallet, non titubat. Unam semper faciem ante se fert, eamque procacem et inverecundam. Senatus decreto, non recta ratione honestum metimini. Sanctum est, quod senatui placuit, quamvis evangelio adversetur. Abrogant divinam legem consulta senatus.


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8 pendetis corr. ex deducta R; pendentis S
1. Venice is treacherous

[1] At the intercession of the Venetian Senate we promised peace to Domenico. We accepted you as mediator on behalf of the Senate. One of the terms of peace had special importance: if Domenico dies without male \(^9\) issue, the cities he has received from the Church either as a fief or as a [papal] vicariate shall revert to the Church. You yourself approved this condition and so did Domenico’s representatives, though there has been some disagreement concerning the procedure. \(^{10}\) In the meantime your Senate has bought Cervia from Domenico though he did not have the right to sell it. Impediments [to this sale] are the nature of feudal possession, the confiscation [of Domenico’s possessions] on account of his rebellion, the conflict now ended, the apostolic letter of investiture which forbids any alienation [of territory], and finally honesty itself. We are in the middle of negotiations and consultations with Venice on how Cervia and Malatesta’s other cities shall return to the Church after his death, and now the Venetians have grabbed Cervia. Behold a noble deed! Behold the Senate’s integrity! Behold the glory of the Venetian Republic! Is this how you keep faith? Is this how you care for decency?

[2] If Jacopo Piccinino\(^{11}\) who has often sold his loyalty, or if the greatest robber or thief in Italy had accepted to mediate between Us and Domenico, he would certainly never have permitted himself the indecency of seizing a city which was under negotiation: he would have feared infamy, he would have feared the voice of the people, he would have feared the label of traitor. But the Venetians are indifferent to such things. Their republic is quite impassive: it does not feel shame, it does not grow red or pale, it does not falter. It always shows the same countenance: impudent and shameless. You measure honesty by your Senate’s decrees, not by just reason. That is holy which the Senate decides even though it is against the Gospel: the Senate’s decrees abrogate the Law of God.

[3] “Cervia secretly furnished salt to the people of Ferrara and thereby reduced our tax incomes. We have just sought to be indemnified. Now that we have bought Cervia, we shall be cheated no more.” Oh, what a fine reason! You seek your own gain at another’s loss. You have joined cause with robbers and thieves and are only concerned with your own advantage. In that way whatever men do may be approved. What sane person will not prefer to act in his own interest. Also the panderer and the harlot seek their own profit. You are only concerned about your own republic’s gain, not about the loss which you inflict upon the Roman Church.

\(^9\) and legitimate
\(^{10}\) I.e. how it could be guaranteed that the cities in question would actually return to the Church
\(^{11}\) Jacopo Piccinino (1423 - 1465): Italian condottiero and nobleman who had been, for some years, a dangerous adversary of the pope in the Church States


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\[12\] et R
\[13\] ac R
\[14\] omnesque R
2. Venice is impious

[4] Your greed and ambition have no limits. You do not care whether you amass riches lawfully or unlawfully, as long as you amass them. Neither justice nor injustice stands in the way of extending your dominions. It is fine for you to have more power if only your empire grows. Honesty is less important than power. You scorn God in Heaven. The republic is your God: this is what you worship, having abandoned the Creator of the Universe.

3. Venice is doomed

[5] But this God of yours shall perish. It shall perish. Do not think it is immortal. The Athenians were greater than you, and so were the Spartans and the Carthaginians. But they were completely destroyed when they became unjust. No power has been greater than the Roman Empire, but God put an end to it when it became impious, and He replaced it with a priestly rule which would care for God’s Law. Rome became a priestly city and a large part of Italy became the patrimony of Saint Peter, the Keybearer of Eternal Life, and his successors. All kings and emperors bow to the Roman Pontiff as the Vicar of Jesus Christ and kiss his feet.

[6] Yet you Venetians scorn the Roman Church, usurp its rights and possessions, and defy its commands and censures: and still you believe that your republic will last forever? It will neither last forever nor for long. Your [many territories] have been gathered together by wicked means and they will be dispersed quickly. The fishermen’s refuse will be destroyed. An insane city cannot stand long. Your state will waste away. It will not reach old age since it has been beset by terrible and incurable ills already in its youth. Within the memory of our fathers, the justice of Venice was highly treasured. Your city was reputed to be decent, modest, and devoted to religion. In our time all piety has disappeared, all moderation, all regard for justice. Instead have come greed, rapacity, ambition, jealousy, cruelty, lust and all kinds of wickedness.

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15 “multitudo”
16 The pope appears to be referring to the Venetian territories on the Italian mainland, in Greece, and in the Mediterranean
[7] With such morals you will not last. An empire built on bad foundations must perish. You will pay the penalty for your sins and you will not be allowed to deceive the Roman Church with impunity. Now that you are powerful, you insult your Mother, arrogant while favourable winds fill your sails. But the winds will change. Do not trust in air. Those who dwell in Heaven remember good as well as bad deeds. God knows and cares about what men do. He cares for his creation and he hates iniquity. You cannot escape his hand. Just when you think that your empire stands firm, some sudden and unexpected catastrophe will occur, and your empire will be completely destroyed by divine justice.

\[17\text{Psalms, 44, 8}\]