

## *In angulum Europae: on Moses and Crusades in Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's Oration Moyses, vir Dei*

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**Abstract.** In the oration *Moyeses, vir Dei* (1452), the Italian humanist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini addresses the pope, Nicholas V, the request for a crusade against the Turks. In addition to exposing the necessity and feasibility of a crusade, Piccolomini addresses the issue of papal authority. Indeed, on the one hand, the oration admits the superiority of pontifical power over imperial or conciliar power; on the other hand, it identifies the pope as the only person having the authority to decide on crusade matters. In both cases, Piccolomini resorts to identifying the pope with Moses, inheriting two Medieval and Renaissance traditions. According to the first one, Mosaic authority is the model for papal authority. Received directly from God, it is therefore indisputable, insurmountable and indivisible. According to the second tradition, Moses is the typological prefiguration of Christ and of the crusade leader, intent on leading the Chosen People towards earthly and eternal freedom. The present study aims to analyze the interplay, in the oration, of these two typological frames.

**Keywords:** Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Moses; Pontiff; Authority; Crusades

### [es] *In angulum Europae: Moisés y las cruzadas en la oración Moyses, vir Dei* de Enea Silvio Piccolomini

**Resumen.** En la oración *Moyeses, vir Dei* (1452), el humanista italiano Enea Silvio Piccolomini pide al papa, Nicolás V, organizar una cruzada contra los turcos. Además de exponer la necesidad y factibilidad de una cruzada, Piccolomini aborda la cuestión de la autoridad papal. De hecho, por un lado, la oración admite la superioridad del poder pontificio sobre el imperial o conciliar; por otro lado, identifica al papa como la única persona que tiene autoridad para decidir sobre los asuntos de la cruzada. En ambos casos, Piccolomini recurre a identificar al papa con Moisés, heredando dos tradiciones medievales y renacentistas. Según la primera, la autoridad mosaica es el modelo de la autoridad papal. Recibida directamente de Dios, dicha autoridad es por tanto indiscutible, insuperable e indivisible. Según la segunda tradición, Moisés es la prefiguración tipológica de Cristo y del líder cruzado, empeñados en conducir al Pueblo Elegido hacia la libertad terrenal y eterna. El presente estudio se propone analizar la interacción, en la oración, de estos dos marcos tipológicos.

**Palabras claves:** Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Moisés; Pontífice; Autoridad; Cruzadas

**Summary:** 1. Introduction. 2. Moses, man of God. 3. *Passagium vel Exodus*. 4. Conclusions. 5. Bibliographic References

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## 1. Introduction

Christianity is confined to a “corner of Europe”, due to Muslim conquests. It is, therefore, necessary to liberate it. The request for a crusade is the scope of the oration *Moyeses, vir Dei* delivered by the humanist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini in the presence of the pope Nicholas V in 1452. Crowned as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire a few months earlier, indeed, Frederick III asks his ambassador Piccolomini, future Pius II, to formally address the pope the request for a crusade against the Turks.

Nicholas V, however, will never comply with the emperor's appeal.

After analysing the text of the oration to underline its salient features and understand its context, we will focus on the identification between the figure of the pope and that of Moses. Since the incipit of the oration appeals to the pope precisely through the reference to Moses as “man of God” (*Moyeses, vir Dei*), we will try to comprehend its link to the homonym Decree promulgated by Eugene IV during the Council of Florence (4 September 1439). In this regard, we will consider the relation between papal, conciliar

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and imperial power constituting the framework of the oration, since the emperor, as we shall see, recognises the pope's undisputable authority. We will then focus on the question of the crusade to show how the oration is inscribed into the long medieval tradition interpreting holy wars and pilgrimages in the light of the migratory paradigm inaugurated by the biblical narration of the *Exodus*. The path of liberation of the Jewish people from Egypt to the Promise Land constitutes, in fact, the pattern and imagery of the Christian liberation from the Muslim "infidels". The deliverance of the Hebrew people is primarily interpreted as a prefiguration of Jesus taking away sins of the world and then as a prefiguration of the crusaders freeing Muslim-occupied territories, whose leaders were, coherently with this pattern, seen as new Moses. In conclusion, we will try to understand the interplay, in the Piccolomini's oration, between the political identification pope=Moses and the Mosaic role of the crusader.

Michael von Cotta-Schönberg, in the introduction to his edition and translation of the *Moyses, vir Dei*, has already provided an excellent survey of the oration context and main themes.<sup>2</sup> This notwithstanding, it is necessary to give an overview of the text before addressing it in a more specific, Moses-related manner. To begin with, shall we consider that Cotta-Schönberg's edition is based on the three versions of the oration, "one of those that Piccolomini revised over the years until it achieved its final form in connection with the compilation of the Collected orations of Pius II in 1462. It is extant in an Early Version [=EV], an Intermediate Version [=IV] and a Final version [=FV]", the first one being closer to the original discourse as delivered in the presence of the pope than the other two.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, still following Cotta-Schönberg's analysis, "According to Wagendorfer, the oration was held on 24 April 1452. The place was – most probably – the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican. The audience was the pope in a public consistory. The emperor and Ladislaus, Archduke of Austria and King of Hungary and Bohemia, and probably a number of their courtiers as well as Roman curials were present. The format was an ambassadorial address to the pope on the part of the emperor and in his presence. It could not be more official".<sup>4</sup>

As we will see in greater detail, the oration opens and closes with a declaration of the superiority of papal power over any other. The pontiff's supremacy is affirmed through the first reference to Moses "vir Dei", who hears directions from the living voice of God. For this reason, everyone must conform to his will, kings and princes included. After the incipitory and not merely rhetorical *captatio benevolentiae*, Pic-

colomini introduces the central theme of the oration: the need for the pope to call for a crusade, a *passagium*, in order to freedom Jerusalem, Greece and other territories from the "impious followers of Muhammad".<sup>5</sup> Piccolomini then illustrates what is a crusade, why should it be organised and its feasibility in terms of military forces and economical affordability.

On the definition of the *passagium*, Piccolomini states that it consists in a "large military expedition proclaimed by the Christians [that is by the pope, representing Christianity as a whole] against the infidels".<sup>6</sup> The features of a crusade are, then, the huge number of participants constituting the Christian army, the purpose of fighting against the infidels in the name of God, and the movant-consequence of obtaining the plenary remission of sins for the soldiers. The expedition is metaphorically described as a migration of birds that, following the pope signal, head for new territories.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the "why", the emperor's request for a crusade is based on three reasons: "compassion, benefit and honour"<sup>8</sup> (*commiserationem, utilitatem, et honestatem*). 1) Indeed, because of the Christian virtue of compassion, the emperor and any not hard-hearted person suffer "together with those who are suffering".<sup>9</sup> This common sentiment leads the compassionate to desire the ending of any sorrowfulness, in this case coinciding with the annihilation of the Turks and the liberation of the Eastern European Christians. Frederick III is even more afflicted since the unbelievers are at the gates of Europe, whose extension corresponds to the extension of Christianity. The latter has, therefore, "been reduced to the corner of Europe",<sup>10</sup> and even there it is oppressed and in decline. Christians are not blamed for their loss of strength and control: they are somehow weak, while the Saracen enemy is paradoxically zealous in imposing his idolatrous faith. The occasion has come, for the pope, to break the silence, face the threat and, embracing the Emperor's suggestion, "pursue a different course".<sup>11</sup> 2) A crusade would bring several benefits, such as avoiding accuses of inaction that may be addressed to the pope, if not opposing the Muslims; liberating the oppressed Christians "from servitude" and reconquering the Holy Land; spreading the Christian faith and fighting the miscre-

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: "Passagii vocabulo nihil aliud designamus quam militarem expeditionem numerosissimam adversus infideles per Romanum pontificem indictam" (EV).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: "Quis videt afflictos et non affligitur? Cujus pectus adeo durum est, ut dolentibus non condoleat, gementibus non congemat, tristantibus non contristetur?" (IV/FV).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 13: "Cultus Christi, qui totum fere orbem oppleverat, in angulum Europae redactus est" (IV/FV).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13: "Cernimus Christianorum injurias et tacemus. Opprimitur, jugulatur nostra religio, et avertimus oculos. Sed alius est Caesaris animus, aliamque tuam mentem esse arbitramur" (IV/FV) ("We see how Christians are being abused, and we remain silent. Our religion is being persecuted and destroyed, and we look away. But the emperor wants to pursue a different course, as he thinks you do, too").

<sup>2</sup> Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Oration "Moyses vir Dei" (24 April 1452, Rome)*, in *Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II*; 19, edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. <https://hal.science/halshs-01064759v8>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 16. For a detailed index/catalogue of the Oration manuscripts and sources, see *Ibid.*, 17-21.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.



Fig. 1. Bernardino di Betto called Pinturicchio, 1503-1508, *Homage to Pope Eugenius IV in the Name of Emperor Frederick III*, Libreria Piccolomini, Duomo, Siena. Photo: AboutArt Online

ants. 3) Finally, participating to a just, holy war is always honourable, for both victims and survivors. To a much greater extent, a war is honourable if it “is declared not by a man on Earth, but by the Emperor in Heaven [=Pope], and which aims at the propagation not of empire, but of the worship of God”.<sup>12</sup> The sacrifice of Christ, dead for liberating men from their sins, should be the model for the believers dying in the name of their faith.

For what the feasibility of the crusade is concerned, Piccolomini adduces two reasons. First, since European Christians are involved in intestine wars and are likely to fight their pious brothers, they would easily accept to form an alliance and turn their military strength towards the unbelievers.<sup>13</sup> The financial issue is therefore quickly liquidated, for it is obvious that the cities would willingly contribute and that other means should be adopted.<sup>14</sup> Second, there is a

“great hope of victory” because the Saracens are weak and effeminate: “If the forces of the Christians are so numerous that they cannot be physically overwhelmed by the mass of Saracens – which is the very meaning of the word *passagium* – then victory will be certainly be [*sic!*] in our hands, just like former examples show us”.<sup>15</sup>

The oration concludes with yet another claim of the papal supremacy, that we will analyse in the following paragraph.

## 2. Moses, man of God

Here is the beginning of the *Oratio*:

Holy Father, Supreme Pontiff, when Moses, the man of God, appointed Joshua, son of Nun, as his successor, he heard the voice of God speaking to him: *If any thing*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15: “Quid nos de hoc bello dicemus, quod non terrenus, sed caelestis imperator indicit, in quo non pomerii, sed fidei propagatio quaeritur [...]?” (EV).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 19: “Placebit omnibus arma in Saracenos vertere, patriam ut quietam relinquunt” (IV/FV) (“All will be pleased to turn their weapons against the Saracens and leave the fatherland in peace”).

<sup>14</sup> As Cotta-Schönberg argued (introduction to Piccolomini, *Moses vir Dei*, 14) Piccolomini alludes to indulgences, a widespread means to

finance crusades. See Franco Cardini, “L’indulgenza e le crociate”, in Id., *Iter, peregrinatio, passagium. Ripensare la crociata* (Spoleto: Fondazione CISAM, 2022), 57-71.

<sup>15</sup> Piccolomini, *Moses vir Dei*, 22: “Quod si Christianorum copiae tot fuerint, ut opprimi Saracenorum multitudine nequeant, quod passagii nomen exposcit, certa in manibus erit victoria, sicut prisca exempla nos instruant” (IV/FV).

*needs to be done, Eleazar the priest shall consult the Lord for him. He and all the children of Israel with him, and the rest of the multitude shall go out and go in at his word [Num. 27,21].* These words admonish not only peoples, but also kings and princes to seek, in great matters, the advice of the High Priest and follow his commands<sup>16</sup>.

*Numbers 27* deals with the succession of Moses, who delegates his authority to Joshua and presents him to the priests and to the community as the one they will have to obey. The identification of the successor derives from God, who indicates him to Moses. The latter is, then, the mediator introducing his heir so that everyone can recognise the new authority. The public manifestation of a decision personally received from God guarantees the effective handover of charge from Moses to Joshua, figures of the pope and emperor respectively. At the end of the oration, a quotation from *Deuteronomy 17,18* reiterates the admonition of conforming to the decision of those who are in command or, possibly, their delegate. In this passage, Moses receives the law from God and is its mediator before Israel. In particular, *Deuteronomy 17,18* concerns the eventuality that one does not know how to judge: in this case, one should consult the priests and comply with the law and judgement. These two references to biblical episodes concerning Moses, in the opening and conclusion of the oration, constitute the interpretive key to the discourse on the pope's power developed throughout the text.

As abovementioned, the nearest and most evident source of the expression “Moyses, vir Dei” is the Decree Eugene IV promulgated in 1439, during the Council of Ferrara-Florence.<sup>17</sup> The figure of Moses was there employed as a symbol of papal supremacy over the council. According to the document, as Mosaic authority, the papal sovereignty comes directly from God, and it therefore is insuperable and indivisible. Against the attacks aiming at weakening the spiritual and temporal power of the pope, in other words, Eugene IV stated its sacredness and directly divine provenance. Consequently, the Church as a whole resides in the pontiff, the only able to decide, promulgate laws and impose his will, independently from the council's opinion. Designated mediators of God's dispositions, both Moses and the pontiff hold the supreme force, and those who try to substitute or mitigate their strength are nothing but heretics. The

need of reaffirming papal authority has indubitably to be inscribed into the frame of conciliarism and papalism disputes occurred all along the 15<sup>th</sup> century and aroused during the Councils of Constance and Basel-Ferrara-Florence. Nonetheless, this conception is rooted into a long tradition originating from the Boniface VIII's Bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302). While Constance ended up affirming the supremacy of the council over the pope with the Bull *Haec Sancta* (1415), in Florence Eugene IV tried to contrast the schismatic Council of Basel, a *conspiratio*,<sup>18</sup> by negating its orthodoxy and rights. Indeed, the Council of Basel had been convened by Martin V in 1431 to pursue the dispositions of the Council of Constance, where Martin V himself had been elected. In order to reconfirm the Constance conciliarist tendencies, Basel aimed at limiting papal benefits and curial economic incomes and, above all, at declaring the council as the supreme Christian authority. However, Martin V's successor, Eugene IV, reversed the course and moved the council to Ferrara (1438) and then to Florence (1439). Meanwhile, in Basel the Council Fathers disavowed Eugene IV (1438) and elected Felix V, so provoking a new schism. The fracture was reconciled in 1449, with the abdication of Felix V. In this context, Eugene IV's reference to Moses (*Num. 16,26*) concerned the problem of heresy and splintering movements: Moses, by direct divine inspiration, understood the need to remove seditious men. It is here to notice that Eugene IV underlines Moses' *direct divine inspiration* and that, despite the pope is in the prophet's footsteps, his “authority and dignity” are considered higher because of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism.

Eugene IV's Decree is not the only document founding the pontiff's authority on Moses' example. On the contrary, during the Renaissance Moses is frequently presented as *typus papae*: “In defending the dignity and authority of the Roman Church and in emphasizing the powers of the papacy, the Roman humanists thus looked to additional sources. And they found in Hebraic antiquity, particularly in the religious career of Moses, prefigurements of the priestly, legislative, and governing roles of the Roman pontiffs”.<sup>19</sup> Medieval publicists did not only recur to Moses as a “figure” of the pope to confirm his theological-political status, but also to other biblical or historical episodes. For instance, during the Middle Ages the pope could be presented as Peter's heir

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: “Moyses, vir dei, beatissime pater, maxime pontifex, cum sibi successorem ordinaret Josue, filium Num, divinam vocem ad se dicentem audivit: Pro hoc si quid agendum erit, Eleazar sacerdos consulat dominum; ad verbum ejus egredietur et ingredietur ipse et omnes filii Israel cum eo et cetera multitudo. Quibus verbis non populi solum, sed reges et principes admonentur magnis in rebus, etiam bellicis, summi sacerdotis et consilium quaerere et imperium sequi” (EV).

<sup>17</sup> *Decretum concilii Florentini contra synodum Basiliensem (Sessio VII, 4 sept. 1439)*, in *Conciliarum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, Giuseppe L. Dossetti, Perikles-P. Joannou, Claudio Leonardi, Paolo Prodi, Hubert Jedin (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 1973), 529-534.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>19</sup> Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 203. Also see Gaetano Lettieri, “Lo «spiraculo» di Machiavelli e «le mandragole» di Savonarola. Due misconosciute metafore cristologico-politiche”, *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 87, no. 1 (2021): 285-321, in part. 287: “[...] Mosè, che dal concilio di Firenze sino all'esaltazione di Giulio II trionfante in guerra era divenuto figura privilegiata dell'universale monarchia pontificia” e “Mosè, insomma, è figura eminentemente papale”; and Amedeo De Vincentiis, *Battaglie di memoria. Gruppi, intellettuali, testi e la discontinuità del potere papale alla metà del Quattrocento. Con l'edizione del Regno di Leodrisio Crivelli* (Roma: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2002), 73-101.

in possessing the keys of the Church<sup>20</sup>, or as successor of the Caesars.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, the identification pope=Moses allows to legitimate and strengthen pontiff's authority when threatened by "heretic" councils, as in the case of Eugene IV, or by "heretic" infidels, as for Piccolomini. Moses is, in the end, the typological response to any form of heresy fragmenting the pontifical power and unity, which is conceived as monolithic, derived from God and therefore indivisible. As Gaetano Lettieri points out, "Tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento, i pontefici che emergono dallo scisma d'Occidente e attraversano i conflitti conciliaristi promuovono, infatti, la loro identificazione simbolica con Mosè, monarca spirituale e temporale, dotato di autorità profetica (parla con Dio di cui è unico interprete e mediatore) e regia/legislativa, figura sacrale assoluta e supremo *princeps* terreno, la cui *imperatoria maiestas* racchiudeva suprema *iustitia* teologica, fondamento e scaturigine delle *leges*, e sacrale possesso di *arma*, strumento di tutela e glorificazione della *civitas Dei* in terra".<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, in Piccolomini's oration the Mosaic features of the prophetic authority and of the royal/legislative authority are transferred to the pontiff's image and role, since the text on the one hand emphasises the aspect of hearing the voice of God, and on the other hand presents the figure of a mediator who do not need mediation.

In short, if the reading of Moses *typus papae* originated in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and continued in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries through the work of theologians, canonists and of the popes themselves, Piccolomini's oration prosecutes this tradition, particularly claiming papal power over ecumenical councils, political authorities, and Christianity as a whole. It is regarding the first subject that the oration *Moyses, vir Dei* owes the greatest debt to the Florentine Decree. In the conclusive section of the oration, the council is indeed identified with the pontiff himself and thus deprived of any autonomous power. In fact,

[a]nother would perhaps have requested a general council or reform decrees, but what greater council can there be than an assembly comprising you yourself and your holy senate? In vain do people demand a council if they do not accept the decisions of the Roman Pontiff. Where Your Holiness is, there is the council, there are the laws, there the morals, there the [legitimate] decrees and salubrious reform.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 203.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*, the chapter "The Roman *Imperium* and the Pope as Caesar", 238-246. Piccolomini (*Moyses vir Dei*, 24) employs the *topos* of the pope as possessor of the keys, whereas he does not allude to the *topos* of the pope as a new Caesar, so reinforcing the idea of the emperor being the heir of the Roman political tradition.

<sup>22</sup> Lettieri, "Lo «spiraculo» di Machiavelli e le «mandragole» di Savonarola", 287-8.

<sup>23</sup> Piccolomini, *Moyses vir Dei*, 24: "Alius fortasse vel generale concilium vel reformationis decreta petivisset, sed quod majus haberi concilium potest quam tuae sanctitatis tuique sacri senatus praesentia. Frustra concilium petit, qui Romani pontificis mandata non recipit. Ubi tua sanctitas est, ibi concilium, ibi leges, ibi mores, ibi decreta salubris reformatio".



Fig. 2. Bernardino di Betto called Pinturicchio, 1503-1508, *The Departure of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini for Basel*, Libreria Piccolomini, Duomo, Siena. Photo: AboutArt Online

Since papal authority is supreme, Frederick III turns to the pope, through Piccolomini's speech, for the crusade. This evidently confirms that imperial – temporal and political – authority is believed to be second to papal sovereignty, and only to it must refer, for "[o]n Earth [the Emperor's] authority only defers to your own".<sup>24</sup> With this and other statements,<sup>25</sup> the oration shows the overcoming of the conflict between Church and states that had animated the Middle Ages in the light of a new quest of political balance. This fight here appears solved,<sup>26</sup> then, for the emperor claims his political dependency on the pope, who had crowned him and is now demanded to providentially

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1;2;15;20;24-25.

<sup>26</sup> Cotta-Schönberg notes that the incipit of the oration is an implicit statement of imperial support for the papacy (in Piccolomini, *Moyses vir Dei*, 0, note 2) and that the expression "Vicar of God" had been used for the first time by Innocent III to indicate the "supremacy of the papal office, also in temporal affairs" (*Ibid.*, 2, note 15). Also see Norman Housley, "Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, Nicholas of Cusa, and the Crusade: Conciliar, Imperial, and Papal Authority", *Church History* 86, no. 3 (September 2017): 643-667. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640717001275>, who argues that the former tension between papacy and empire has been replaced by the tension between ideology and military feasibility (657).

decide on crusade matters. However, we should not oversimplify the secular-papal relationship in Piccolomini's thought since, as scholars have noted, during the Council of Basel he had been a great advocate of imperialism, auspicing the Emperor to become the supra-confessional guardian of the Christian unity and the promoter of a renewed universalism.<sup>27</sup> At the beginning of his political career, in fact, he had developed a "Sienese" Ghibelline attitude towards imperialism,<sup>28</sup> attitude he had put into practice in Basel, where he had become the secretary of the so-called Anti-pope Felix V and, later, at the court of Frederick III. Piccolomini's first ambition was the building of a Christian unity under the guide of the Emperor, in the footsteps of the Roman Empire.<sup>29</sup> Historians have called Piccolomini's ideal of imperial unity and peace a "broken dream":<sup>30</sup> during his experience as emperor's chancellor at the court in Wien, he realised how the imperial machine was far from becoming a guide for Christian peoples.<sup>31</sup> Due to several reasons – political convenience and personal "conversion"<sup>32</sup> – Piccolomini progressively shifted towards a more "Roman" attitude. In 1443 he "quitted" the conciliarist pope, Felix V, and started working for the empire's dialogue with the pope;<sup>33</sup> the next year, he became apostolic secretary and took holy orders. Abandoning the disillusioned dream of imperial unity, Piccolomini matured over time an alternative solution to the internal and external threats to Christendom (heresies, fragmentation of states, Turks...): unity under

the leadership of the Church. It is within the framework of the rapprochement between Frederick III and the papacy, for which Piccolomini had been working for a decade, that one must read the *Moyses, vir Dei* declaration of imperial submissiveness to the pope, already enshrined in the coronation a few months earlier:

He has therefore decided first to consult, hear, and follow you, Vicar of the Great God, Holy Head, Perfect Leader, Eminent Governor and True Teacher of the Christian people: your wisdom will know what should be done, your authority will impose it, and your power will execute it.<sup>34</sup>

Wisdom, authority and power are Mosaic qualities related to prophetic abilities and to the possibility of imposing laws and decisions. Moreover, if the conciliar authority resides in the pontiff's person, all Christianity together is reunited in the hands of the new Moses too. His unique and inseparable power represents its desirable political and theological cohesion. Indeed, council, kings and peoples must submit to his decision and authority. Acquiring force of law, the pope's will is the only capable of reuniting the fragmented Christian states, otherwise consumed by internal struggles and wars. The fragile and still unearned unity of the Christian Europe, for Piccolomini, has to find its only warranty in the pontiff's figure and supreme, incontestable decision, his monolithic authority directly deriving from God, as Moses capable of uniting the inhomogeneous Jewish people.

Due to his unequalled decisional power, the pope should promote a crusade that would involve every Christian nation, now engaged in defending itself from external and internal pressures. In fact, Piccolomini affirms, anyone would escape the sacred task of a holy war if convened by the "Vicar of God" himself, and "All will singlemindedly obey to Your Holiness' commands".<sup>35</sup> The fragmented nature of Europe worries Piccolomini, although the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 will be a watershed in the perception of a dangerous enemy threatening Christendom and the concern will increase in later writings.<sup>36</sup> In this

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Baldi, "Un umanista alla corte di Federico III. Il *Pentalogus* di Enea Silvio Piccolomini", *Cahiers d'études italiennes* 13 (2011): 161-171. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/cei.85>: "Di fronte all'inconcludenza del concilio, infatti, la ricerca della pace e dell'unità della Cristianità può essere trovata per il Piccolomini solo attraverso il ricorso ad un'autorità superiore – quella imperiale appunto, l'unica capace di porre fine al prolungarsi dello scisma e dello scontro fra il papato e il concilio. Questa rinnovata fiducia nell'impero fa così tutt'uno con il recupero – più o meno "aggiornato" – della tradizione universalistica (o medievale) dell'impero come punto di riferimento centrale della Cristianità, e, in simile luce, la figura del Piccolomini è stata anzi più volte paragonata a quella di un "novello Dante", di un "novello Petrarca". La decisione del Piccolomini nell'autunno 1442 di abbandonare il concilio di Basilea e l'antipapa Felice V per seguire Federico III rientra, rientrerebbe, a sua volta, in questa prospettiva" (162).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 162-3.

<sup>29</sup> Alphonse Dupront, "Les «solitaires» de la croisade", in *Le mythe de la croisade* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 4 voll., vol I, 255-430, in part. the paragraph "Pie II", 338-365: 340-341.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 342: "[il] va vivre l'envers de son rêve, découvrir la fragilité de l'autorité impériale".

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>32</sup> On Piccolomini's "conversion", see Ágnes Ritoók-Szalay, "Enea Silvio Piccolomini: un modello di conversione degli umanisti?", in *Il sacro nel Rinascimento. Atti del XII convegno internazionale (Chianciano-Pienza, 17-20 luglio 2000)*, ed. Luisa Secchi Tarugi (Firenze: Franco Cesati Editore, 2002), 685-690.

<sup>33</sup> Franco Cardini, "Sacro e menzogna. Crociata e propaganda antimusulmana nell'età di Pio II", in *Il sacro nel Rinascimento. Atti del XII convegno internazionale (Chianciano-Pienza, 17-20 luglio 2000)*, ed. Luisa Secchi Tarugi (Firenze: Franco Cesati Editore, 2002), 631-660: "Nel 1443, con scandalo dei principi tedeschi che ribadivano la loro fedeltà a Felice V, il dotto scrittore di Corsignano mollava anche il pontefice savoiardo e pilotava il riavvicinamento del re dei Romani a Eugenio IV" (634).

<sup>34</sup> Piccolomini, *Moyses vir Dei*, 2: "Passagium vocabulo nihil aliud designamus quam militarem expeditionem numerosissimam adversus infideles per Romanum pontificem indictam. Quam qui sequuntur cruce signati plenariam peccatorum remissionem et merentur et assequuntur, appellaturque passagium sermone Italico quasi transitus. Nam sicut aves quaedam certis anni temporibus gregatim de regione in regionem transeunt dicunturque passagium facere, sic et Christiani nonnumquam, armis sumptis turmatim incedentes, atque in hostes fidei ex apostolicae sedis jussione prosilientes, et visi et dicti sunt passagium habuisse. Numquam tamen verum passagium dici potest, nisi multorum fuerit populorum, qui migrare magis novas sedes quaesituri, quam bellaturi videantur [...] (EV).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 20: "Omnes, quod tua jubebit sanctitas, corde magno et animo volenti suscipient".

<sup>36</sup> Arsenio Ginzo Fernández, "Eneas Silvio Piccolomini (Pío II) y su concepción de Europa", *Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía* 28 (2011): 71-100. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_ASHF.2011.v28.36280](http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_ASHF.2011.v28.36280), roots Piccolomini's fear of the Turkish threat



Fig. 3. Philippe de Mazerolles, 1470 c., *Siege of Constantinople*, Jean Chartier's *Chronique de Charles VII* (MS BnF Français 2691, f. 246v). Photo: [data.BnF.fr](https://data.bnf.fr)

regard, three orations Piccolomini pronounced during the three imperial diets held after the fall of Constantinople are eloquent. They all dealt with the urgent problem of the Turkish military pressure. Piccolomini intervened on behalf of Frederick III with the *Quamvis omnibus* (Regensburg, May 1454); the *Constantinopolitana clades* (Frankfurt, October 1454); and the *Optasset* (Wiener Neustadt, April 1455).<sup>37</sup> In the

and the project of the crusade, evident in later writings and in the years of the papacy, already in the *Moses vir Dei* (87). Also see Nancy Bisaha, "Inventing Europe with Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini", in *Images of Otherness in Medieval and Early Modern Times: Exclusion, Inclusion, and Assimilation*, ed. by Anja Eisenbeiß and Lieselotte Saurma-Jeltsch (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2012), 143-150. For a study on the imagery of the Turks as "Barbarian" enemy, see Nancy Bisaha, "New Barbarian or Worthy Adversary? Humanist Constructs of the Ottoman Turks in Fifteenth-Century Italy", in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perceptions of the Other*, ed. by Michael Frassetto and David R. Blanks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 185-205. On the importance of the Fall of Constantinople in the thought of Piccolomini and his contemporaries, see Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Oration "Quamvis omnibus" (16 May 1454, Regensburg)*, in *Orationes of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II*; 21, edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg, 2019. <https://hal.science/hal-01086738v5>; Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Oratio "Constantinopolitana clades" (15 October 1454, Frankfurt)*, in *Orationes of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II*; 22, edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg, 2019. <https://hal.science/hal-01097147>; Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Oration "Optasset"*

*Constantinopolitana clades*, for example, Piccolomini is once again in defence of the crusade against the Turks by addressing three main reasons: *justitia*, *utilitas* and *facilitas* of the war. Of course, the threat of invasion is more tangible than in 1452 and the context of the oration is different (imperial rather than curial), but still Piccolomini's argument is based on the same issues. Defending Christendom, preventing new attacks on Europe, demonstrating the superiority of German strength over the Turks are still at the core of Piccolomini's belief in the necessity of war. Moreover, incidentally Piccolomini refers to Moses in order to demonstrate "the justice of a war conducted on the authority of superiors with the purpose of protecting religion, saving the fatherland, or helping allies".<sup>38</sup> In the oration *Moses, vir Dei*, however, he focuses on a Christian Europe, whose shattering nature raises the question of what Capdepuuy called "multiscalar territoriality" ("territorialité multiscalaire").<sup>39</sup> Piccolomini assumes the belonging of each

(23 April 1455, Wiener Neustadt), in *Orationes of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II*; 25, edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg, 2019. <https://hal.science/hal-01149087v4>

<sup>38</sup> Piccolomini, *Constantinopolitana clades*, 8: "Bellum, quod pro tuenda religione, pro conservanda patria, pro juvandis sociis ex auctoritate superiorum gereretur, nemo umquam veterum reputavit injustum. Sic Moysi, sic Josuae, sic Saulis, sic David, sic Maccabaeorum proelia commendamus" (FV).

<sup>39</sup> Vincent Capdepuuy, "Grands espaces et territorialité", *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 21 (2011): 119-135. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/crm.119>

individual to multiple realities, local and universal, all equally divided and non-homogenous. It is also evident that, in the oration, different degrees of authority correspond to different levels of this “territorial scale”: the local dimension responds to a sovereign, whose power is surmountable, while the universal dimension of Christendom responds to the unequalled power of the pope. This is crucial to the statement of the papal insuperable authority, since in the pontiff resides the unity of power, neither dividable in the council’s polyphonic decrees nor delegable to the different and even discordant decisions of the political sovereigns, responsible of the Christian fratricidal fights. Differently from the pope and from his vetero-testamentary prefiguration, Moses, the sovereigns do not receive the counsels and directions from God necessary to decide on “great matters”<sup>40</sup> and consequently assume union-breaking warlike decisions. But who would rather disobey the highest authority?

The explicit parallelism between Moses and Nicholas V of the incipit has ceased. Nonetheless, it underlies the whole *oratio* and its representation of the pontifical authority, capable of hearing God’s commands, being his very mediator (as Christ) to whom any other authority (derived and secondary) should obey. Another pontifical prerogative is the capability of uniting peoples, to direct them towards a common cause, towards a land to regain, with a truly general *passagium*.

### 3. *Passagium vel Exodus*

The question of balance of power and authority is the framework of the oration, but its ultimate aim is to induce Nicholas V to call for a crusade, a *passagium*. To be such, the crusade must possess some specific traits:

By the word crusade (*passagium*) we simply mean a large military expedition proclaimed by the Christians against the infidels. The crusaders taking part in it merit the plenary remission of all their sins. The Italian word for *passagium* means something like migration: as some birds are said to make a passage when at certain times during the year they migrate from region to region, thus from time to time the Christians are seen and said to make a passage when, at the bidding of the Apostolic See, they take up arms and in great throngs move towards the enemies of the faith. It is not a true crusade (*passagium*) unless many peoples participate,

seeming to migrate in search of new homes more than going to war [...].<sup>41</sup>

Many of these features are part of a crusade paradigm that had been established for centuries. First of all, we must note that in the Early version of the oration, the crusade is to be called not by the “Christians” (*per Christianos indictam*), as in the Intermediate and Latest version, but by the Roman Pontiff (*per Romanum pontificem indictam*). In the migratory analogy, the pope is in any case assimilated to the bird that decides and guides the massive displacement of the Christian flock-population. Indeed, starting with Eugene III’s bull *Quantum Praedecessores* (1145), a process of papal monopolisation of the crusades had begun.<sup>42</sup> The unbalance was only recalibrated during the conciliarist controversies in such a way as to involve not only the pope, but also the Curia, the council and the sovereigns.<sup>43</sup> There is no doubt that Piccolomini aim, in the oration, at an imperial-papal collaboration, which, however, seems to exclude the effective involvement of the curia and the council, basically recapitulated in the figure of the pontiff himself. The first characteristic of the *passagium*, in short, concerns the one who can induce and

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: “Passagii vocabulo nihil aliud designamus quam expeditionem militarem numerosam adversus infideles per Christianos indictam. Quam qui sequuntur cruce signati plenariam peccatorum omnium remissionem merentur, appellaturque passagium sermone Italico quasi transitus. Nam sicut aves quaedam gregatim certis anni temporibus de regione in regionem transeunt dicunturque passagium facere, sic et Christiani nonnumquam, sumptis armis turmatim incedentes, atque in hostes fidei ex apostolicae sedis jussu prosilientes, et visi et dicti sunt passagium habuisse. Neque verum passagium videri potest, nisi multorum fuerit populorum qui migrare magis novas sedes quaesituri, quam bellaturi videantur [...]” (*IV/FV*).

<sup>42</sup> Cardini, “L’indulgenza e le crociate”, 61: “Alla fine del 1145, papa Eugenio III fondava, con la bolla *Quantum Praedecessores*, le basi della prassi crociata: da allora in poi, i vari *passagia* sarebbero stati banditi legittimamente solo dal pontefice, il quale ne avrebbe volta per volta stabilito scadenze e modalità”. On the pontifical monopolisation of the crusade by canonists see Franco Cardini, “Crociata e religione civica nell’Italia medievale”, in *La religion civique à l’époque médiévale et moderne (chrétienté et islam). Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de recherche “Histoire sociale et culturelle de l’Occident. XIIe- XVIIIe siècle” de l’Université de Paris X-Nanterre et l’Institut universitaire de France (Nanterre, 21-23 juin 1993)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1995), 155-164: 156. [https://www.persee.fr/doc/efr\\_0223-5099\\_1995\\_act\\_213\\_1\\_4943](https://www.persee.fr/doc/efr_0223-5099_1995_act_213_1_4943). On the crusades, see Franco Cardini and Antonio Musarra, *Il grande racconto delle crociate* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2019), and Antonio Musarra, *Le crociate. L’idea, la storia, il mito* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2022). On the crusades in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and in the Renaissance, see Norman Housley (ed.), *Reconfiguring the Fifteenth-Century Crusade* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017); Norman Housley (ed.), *The Crusade in the Fifteenth Century. Converging and competing cultures* (London-New York: Routledge, 2017); Marco Pellegrini, *La crociata nel Rinascimento. Mutazioni di un mito 1400-1600* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2014). On papal authority and crusades, see Benjamin Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs. Les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Franco Cardini, “Eugenio IV, il concilio e la crociata”, in *Id.*, *Iter, peregrinatio, passagium*, 85-98: durante Costanza e Basilea “si era andata progressivamente affermando una tendenza alla cogestione della crociata spartita tra Curia pontificia, il concilio stesso e i sovrani laici” (85).

[doi.org/10.4000/crm.12431](https://doi.org/10.4000/crm.12431): “La fragmentation de l’Europe chrétienne pose la question de la territorialité multiscaleaire: un individu n’est jamais d’un seul territoire [...] De fait, l’Europe, qui en tant que telle n’est alors qu’un territoire évanescant, est fragmentée en nations: l’Italie, la Germanie, la Gaule, [...], l’Angleterre, la Hongrie sont autant de territoires clairement identifiés. Or, à toutes les échelles, le manque d’unité est patent. Æneas ne cesse de déplorer, par exemple, les guerres civiles qui ravagent l’Italie et il n’y a pas plus d’union à l’échelle de la Chrétienté latine” (130).

<sup>40</sup> Piccolomini, *Moyses vir Dei*, 0.



guide it: the pope. It is also necessary for the military expedition against the infidels to consist of a large army. Only in this way would it be possible to defeat the Turks, and would it consist in a general *passagium*. Piccolomini does not introduce anything new compared to the previous tradition, since it was a consolidated papal prerogative to call for the universal or general *passagium*, an alternative to the *particulare passagium*, undertaken by private initiative.<sup>44</sup>

A great multitude of men led by a divinely inspired authoritative and charismatic leader to liberate the Holy Land from the oppression of the infidels: Piccolomini employs, here, the exodal paradigm of the crusade, fitting into a long tradition. Indeed, the *Exodus* and the “migration” of the Jewish people towards the Promised Land was one of the biblical references constituting the narrative and imagery of the crusade:

Il s’agit de marcher à la terre sacrée, où se sont posés les pieds rédempteurs, et de la gagner à pieds d’homme. Correspondance où le fait de marcher, qui est l’immense effort du pèlerinage, trouve sa tension sacrale. Quant à l’accomplissement historique, il s’illustre par des images collectives tirées de l’histoire sainte: si la lutte de David contre Goliath, les exploits des Macchabées consacrent les combats de la guerre sainte, l’image migrante du retour des Hébreux dans la Terre promise, l’exploit miraculeux de la traversée de la mer Rouge éclairent aussi bien pèlerinage que croisade. Du pèlerinage habituel, traditionnel, elles font un pèlerinage singulier, c’est-à-dire un pèlerinage d’histoire sacrée.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, the crusade was the “nuovo esodo, la nuova marcia del Popolo Eletto verso la *Terra Promissionis*”,<sup>46</sup> and therefore the *passagium* was likened to the path of liberation of the Jews led by Moses.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Franco Cardini, “Ripensare la crociata”, in Id., *Iter, peregrinatio, passagium*, 3-19: “Il *passagium* poteva a sua volta essere *particulare*, se organizzato e condotto per iniziativa di singoli e di gruppi con scopi anche ristretti, ma giudicati tuttavia congrui rispetto al costante fine ultimo della liberazione di Gerusalemme; oppure *generale, universale*, se bandito dall’autorità pontificia e ritenuto un dovere per tutti i cristiani, ch’erano chiamati a ottemperarvi con il loro diretto impegno militare o con varie forme di contributo finanziario (decime, elemosine, somme corrisposte a titolo penitenziale o sotto forma di lascito testamentario)” (4). Also see Musarra, *Le crociate*, 77-92.

<sup>45</sup> Alphonse Dupront, *Du Sacré. Croisades et pèlerinages. Images et langages* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 254.

<sup>46</sup> Franco Cardini, “La guerra santa nella cristianità”, in *Militia Christi’ e Crociate nei secoli XI-XIII, Atti dell’undecima settimana internazionale di studio (Mendola, 28 agosto - 1° settembre 1989)* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1992), 387-401: 399.

<sup>47</sup> “... al viaggio del Popolo Eletto verso la Terrasanta, a sua volta simbolo della *peregrinatio*. In questo senso la crociata era *passagium*, non meno di quello degli ebrei al seguito di Mosè per il Mar Rosso” (Cardini, *Iter, peregrinatio, passagium*, 52). On the Mosaic inspiration of the crusades, also see Vito Sibilio, “Il meraviglioso nella Prima Crociata”, *Teresianum* 56, no. 1 (2005): 161-198: “La crociata è l’*opus sanctum*, la *peregrinatio* del *Populus Dei*. [...] Lo studio delle fonti del meraviglioso crociato conferma questa equazione [...]. Ovviamente, esse sono rintracciabili nella Bibbia. Ma essa,

In his opening speech to the Fourth Lateran Council (11 November 1215), Innocent III had remarked the connection between crusade, liberation and Easter or Passover.<sup>48</sup> Commenting *Luke 22,15* (“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer”):

l’esprit me fait désirer d’un grand désir de manger cette Pâques avec vous. Non certes, pour un avantage terrestre ou la gloire temporelle, mais pour la réforme de l’Église universelle et surtout pour la libération de la Terre Sainte: telles sont les deux raisons essentielles de la convocation de ce saint concile. [...] La Pâque a plusieurs acceptions dans les Saintes Ecritures: elle signifie le jour [...]; l’heure [...]; l’agneau [...]; l’azy-me [...]; la fête [...]; voire, le Christ lui-même [...]. En hébreu, le terme vient de *phase*, passage (*transitus*); en grec de *paschium*, souffrance: parce qu’il nous faut passer à la gloire par les souffrances, comme la Vérité elle-même l’atteste [...]. Cette Pâque, appelée *phase*, c’est-à-dire passage (*transitus*), j’ai désiré d’un grand désir la manger avec vous: c’est celle même dont parle l’*Exode* [...].<sup>49</sup>

come vedremo, non si limita a fornire modelli di agiofanie e prodigi, ma fornisce un archetipo culturale su cui tutta la crociata è modellata, l’*Esodo*” (162-3); “Peraltro, essendo essi i condottieri crociati designati dal papa, lo stretto rapporto tra le loro imprese e le visioni ben si addice al paradigma esodale del racconto, in quanto anche Mosè agiva illuminato continuamente da Dio, che gli si manifestava in teofanie” (170); “Per essi, l’*iter* non è solo una imitazione di Cristo, una riedizione dell’*Esodo*, ma è – peraltro come tutti i pellegrinaggi popolari – una ricerca del miracoloso, un viaggio verso i *mirabilia Dei*” (172).

<sup>48</sup> Richard of San German, *Chronica*, in *Ignoti Monachi Cistercensis S. Mariae de Ferraria Chronica et Ryccardi De Sancto Germano Chronica Priora*, ed. Augustus Gaudenzi (Napoli: F. Giannini & Fil., 1888), 90-93. Tr. fr, “Discours prononcé par Innocent III au Concile (11 novembre 1215)”, in Raymonde Foreville, *Latran I,II,III et Latran IV* (Paris: Éditions de l’orante, 1965), 333-338. See Suzanne Desternes, *Petite Histoire des conciles* (Paris: Éditions Fleurus, 1962), 75-80. On Richard of San German, see Lidia Capo, “Riccardo di San Germano”, *Enciclopedia Treccani online*, Federiciana (2005), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/riccardo-di-san-germano\\_%28Federiciana%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/riccardo-di-san-germano_%28Federiciana%29/). For a synoptic edition of the two *Chronica* versions and an exhaustive introduction: Ryccardi de Sancto Germano Notarii, *Chronica*, ed. Carlo Alberto Garufi, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores: Raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquocento ordinata da L.A. Muratori*, vol. VII, part 2 (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1937-38). The second version omits Innocent III’s speech and many documents included in the *Chronica priora* (written in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century and unknown until Augusto Gaudenzi discovered the manuscript in the Bolognese Biblioteca Comunale dell’Archiginnasio in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) in order to facilitate the diffusion and accessibility of the text (see Capo, “Riccardo di San Germano”).

<sup>49</sup> Foreville, *Latran*, 334. Richard of San German, *Chronica*, ed. Gaudenzi, 90-91: “Ego autem illius invoco testimonium, qui est testis in celo fidelis, quod non carnali, sed spirituali desiderio desidero hoc pasca manducare vobiscum: non propter commoditatem terrenam aut gloriam temporalem, sed propter reformationem universalis Ecclesiae et liberationem potissimum terre sancte: propter que duo principaliter et precipue hoc sacrum concilium convocavi. [...] Pasca namque multis modis accipitur in scripturis divinis: pro die [...]; pro hora [...]; pro agno [...]; pro agno [...]; pro festo [...]; et etiam pro ipso Christo [...]. Sane pasca hebrayce a *phase*, quod est *transitus*, grece vero a *paschium*, quod est *passio*, dicitur, quia per passionem transire debemus ad gloriam, secundum quod veritas ipsa testatur [...]. Hoc pasca, quod dicitur phase, idest transitus, desiderio desideravi manducare vobiscum, de quo in exodo dicitur [...].”

It continues:

C'est un triple passage (*phase*), une triple Pâque (*pascha*) que je désire célébrer avec vous: corporelle, spirituelle et éternelle. Corporelle pour effectuer le passage (*transitus*) d'un lieu en un autre lieu et libérer la pitoyable Jérusalem; spirituelle, pour réaliser le passage vers un autre état et réformer l'Église universelle; éternelle, pour assurer le passage de cette vie à la Vie et obtenir la gloire du ciel. A ce passage corporel, Jérusalem nous invite à grands cris.<sup>50</sup>

*Pesach* or Passover celebrating the liberation of the Jews and the Passion of Christ are connected to the crusade as a liberating expedition, as a *transitus from one place to another*, a migratory mass displacement conducting, through Christ-like suffering and pain, to the conquer of both the Holy Land and the Eternal Life.

Although the term employed by Innocent III is not *passagium* but *transitus*, his discourse is an example of an eminent voice affirming the exodal paradigm of the crusade, interpreted as transition or passage. The Fourth Lateran Council was one of the crucial moments in the history of the assertion of papal power. Expression and actualization of Innocent III's policy, it aspired to centralize theological, political and administrative power in the hands of the pontiff. During the Council, indeed, Innocent III affirmed with "unprecedented intransigence and consistency" the superiority of the Church over the Empire, the primacy of the Roman Church over the other patriarchal sees, and the sovereignty of the pontiff over the bishops and the council.<sup>51</sup> With respect to the context of Western Christianity, the Fourth Lateran Council intended to regulate heresies, clerical orders, liturgy and confession. Moreover, in his opening speech, Innocent III proclaimed a crusade<sup>52</sup> and presented its organization as a papal prerogative. He arrogated the power to call for it and indirectly promoted the identification between the pontiff, Moses and Jesus. In fact, by likening the crusades to the Exodus, Innocent III reinforced the Mosaic typology. Regarding the oration *Moses, vir Dei*, this paradigm is applied with some adaptations to the historical-political context: in the text, the Promise Land and the Jewish people prefigure Egypt and the reunited Christendom; instead of freeing oneself, the aim is to help other people, oppressed by the Muslim enemy. Yet the journey to liberate Christian brothers is, at the same time, a

mean of individual liberation for the crusaders. Indeed, participating in the Holy War meant, in an eschatological key, gaining plenary remission of sins and, consequently, salvation. In the oration *Moses, vir Dei* an unsurprising reference to Christ's death as a mean of remission from all sins confirms this frame. Since, according to the typological hermeneutics that nourishes the assimilation of Moses to the pope and to the crusade leader, the episodes of the *Exodus* concerning him have been interpreted as a prefiguration of Christ,<sup>53</sup> the latter's sacrifice for the redemption of every man is seen as prefigured by the Jewish people struggling in the desert. Their suffering ends up being a model of the crusader's willingness to suffer and eventually die, as Piccolomini notes.<sup>54</sup> But, most importantly, the role of the liberator passes from Moses to Jesus, to the pope who would decide to lead a crusade.

Finally, in the oration the opposition to the unfaithful enemy allows the formation of a compact Christian community. As we have seen, the *passagium* is universal if all adhere. It also has been noted that the crusade is the means Piccolomini employed for an early "European" conception of Christendom. European and Christian identities tend to coincide, their elements forming a uniform though varied mass against the threatening "barbarous" enemy. Indeed, Piccolomini has been seen as an important figure in the naissance of Europeanism thanks to the drift from Christianity to Europe he promoted in his writings,<sup>55</sup> even if the nature of "Europe" in his reflection is a subject of debate.<sup>56</sup> Be it historical or geographical,

<sup>50</sup> Foreville, *Latran*, 335. Richard of San German, *Chronica*, ed. Gaudenzi, 91: "Triplex enim phase, sive pascha, desidero celebrare vobiscum, corporale, spirituale et eternale; corporale, ut fiat transitus de loco ad locum pro miserabili Jerosolima liberanda; spirituale, ut fiat transitus de statu in statum pro universali ecclesia reformanda; eternale, ut fiat transitus de vita in vitam pro celesti gloria optinenda. De corporali clamat ad nos Jerosolima [...]"

<sup>51</sup> See "Innocenzo III", Enciclopedia Treccani online, Federiciana (2005), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/innocenzo-iii\\_\(Federiciana\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/innocenzo-iii_(Federiciana)/)

<sup>52</sup> The Fifth crusade (1217-1221) was only implemented after Innocent III's death, during the pontificate of Honorius III.

<sup>53</sup> Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 210: "Moreover, typological links between Moses and Christ had New Testament sanction. St. Paul, for instance, interpreted the passage through the Red Sea, the manna in the desert, and the water that gushed forth from the rock when Moses struck it with his staff as prefigurations of the sacraments established by Christ (I Corinthians 10: 1-5). [...] the opening parts of Matthew's Gospel, in which the temptation narrative re-evokes Israel's trials in the desert and the Sermon on the Mount presents Christ in the Mosaic guise as law-giver".

<sup>54</sup> Piccolomini, *Moses vir Dei*, 16: "Maxima esset ingratitude nostra, si non ad incertam mortem pro Christo iremus, qui certam pro nobis tulit; si non illi vitam offeremus, a quo suscepimus" (*IV/FV*) ("Indeed, our ingratitude will be immense if we do not go to uncertain death for Christ, who went to certain death for us, and if we do not offer our life to him who gave it to us").

<sup>55</sup> See Serge Stolf, "L'Europe et ses «Européens» vus par Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1458)", in *Cahiers d'études italiennes*, 27 (2018). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/cei.5225>, building on Jacques Le Goff, *L'Europe est-elle née au Moyen Âge?* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2003). Also see Emilio Mitre Fernández, "Entre el diálogo y el belicismo: dos actitudes ante el turco desde el occidente a fines del medievo", *Hispania Sacra* LXII (2010): 513-538. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3989/hs.2010.v62.i126.257>

<sup>56</sup> Some scholars tend to interpret Piccolomini's conception of a Christian-European identity as the historical outcome of a cultural process. See Stolf, "L'Europe et ses «Européens» vus par Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1458)", 5: "tous ces «chrétiens» sont bien européens. L'appartenance à une communauté humaine pouvant s'identifier par des traits communs – la religion chrétienne – met en évidence la vision de Piccolomini, plus historique que géographique [...] En termes politiques, les Européens constituent une même nation, attachés aux intérêts d'une même «chose publique» et leurs divisions sont comparées à une «guerre civile»". On the contrary, Capdepuy ("Grands

however, it is undoubted that the urgency of facing an external military, cultural and religious threat contributed, for Piccolomini, to form and reinforce a Christian and European identity against the diversity of “the others”, barbaric infidels.<sup>57</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

The *Moyses, vir Dei* deals with two issues: the first one is related to the sphere of papal authority, empire and council, while the second one to Muslim military pressure, Holy War and the construction of the idea of “Europe”. Both these domains originate from historical and political concerns, but their theological elaboration is rooted in the Sacred Scriptures. Their key-vault is the figure of Moses. Considered individually, the two Mosaic paradigms are not unusual in the panorama of medieval sources and reflections. As shown above, Piccolomini addresses the question of authority by quoting Eugene IV’s Decree and referring to the barely overcome problems of conciliarism and imperialism. He attributes unlimited decision-making authority to the pope, although in cooperation with the empire. To do so, the oration assimilates the pope to Moses. At the same time, it echoes the *topos* of the crusade as an exodus: a huge mass of migrating people constituting the *civitas Dei*, a leader having a privileged relationship with God, the liberation of the Promised Land, the acceptance of earthly suffering for an eternal reward. In this typological setting, the oration alludes to the pope being a new Moses as the leader of the holy army against the infidels.

The two typologies are mutually functional and reinforce each other. Piccolomini condenses here – and this is perhaps the distinctive element of a text otherwise mainly receptive to several well-established hermeneutic traditions – two *topoi* of the Mosaic interpretation. They all converge in the person of Nicholas V: to the prophetic and theological-political roles attributed to the pope, Piccolomini overlaps a liberating function and justifies the three with the reference to Moses. The last feature, a novelty with regard to the Eugene IV’s Decree, attributes a religious or metaphysical role to the pontiff, who herit-

ages the Mosaic historical and supra-historical task of liberating Christianity both concretely and spiritually. This latter actualisation of Moses’ gift might appear nothing more than a consequence of his prophetic and theological-political qualities, on which it depends and derives. On one level, indeed, Moses’ freeing attitude is only secondary to the prophetic and authoritarian ones (if he did not know, he would not lead; if his authority was not approved as derived from God, he would not bring the people together). But, at the same time, the pope-liberator reinforces the other two Mosaic characteristics and, in a sense, it is their precondition. In fact, even if partially retracted in the light of the Turkish menace, the dream of unity and peace was crucial for Piccolomini. In the oration, he sees in the pope the sole possible guide towards liberation, the only person capable of uniting Christian peoples. This recognition led him to admit papal insuperable jurisdiction on earth and to foresee an alternative to imperialism.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, since the new Moses could be the leader of a new Chosen People towards new geographical and spiritual conquests, it is possible to recognise in him what the Renaissance “hammering theological-political cliché”<sup>59</sup> indicated as prophetic and political authority. The fact that the pope, as the successor of Moses, is identified as the one who can lead the liberation from the infidels and form a European union allows and reinforces the confidence in his prophetic gifts and temporal sovereignty. As we have seen Piccolomini, who first espoused an imperialist position, gradually slipped to a radically opposite perspective. Accordingly, his thought ended up converging with a theocratic tradition aspiring to demonstrate and strengthen the political role of the papacy. The main actors involved in this political construction are, undoubtedly, Boniface VIII, Innocent III and Eugene IV; Piccolomini alludes to their theological-political elaborations. The resolution of conciliarist conflicts, on the one hand, and the end of the disputes over the primacy of empire and

espaces et territorialité”, 121-2) focuses on the geographical features and sees the European identity as a spatial identity – where Europeans and Barbarians face each other.

<sup>57</sup> Dupront, *Le mythe de croisade*, 351: “La croisade, c’est maintenant l’union des forces chrétiennes pour libérer Constantinople, ou au pire, tant la menace grandit, arrêter l’invasion turque [...]. Constantinople, «lieu» de l’empire et trésor des sources antiques, est d’Europe; en Europe, il n’y a pas de place pour le Turc. [...] D’où, d’une part, une conscience religieuse de la réalité européenne qui désigne déjà l’Europe comme puissance spatiale de l’entière chrétienté – transfert proprement de «Renaissance». D’autre part, une Europe pure de toute présence infidèle; une Europe enfin, dépositaire et gardienne de l’*imperium*: la puissance d’empire est nécessairement européenne”. Also see Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West. Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 2004).

<sup>58</sup> On the Roman primacy founded on the papal monopoly of the crusade, see Dupront, *Le mythe de croisade*, 356: “Plus qu’à aucun moment peut-être dans l’histoire de la croisade, la croisade de Pie II est la croisade pontificale, et presque du pontife tout seul, avec la poignée d’hommes d’Eglise qui vivent avec lui la grande tradition de la chrétienté [...]. Comme si d’une intuition géniale, pour le service de la papauté menacée par le concile, inquiète devant une Allemagne rebelle et dont Bessarion décrira joliment la *frigiditas*, ce pape politique avait compris que la preuve de la prééminence pontificale devait encore se manifester dans l’accomplissement de la croisade [...]. Tirant en somme de la tradition de croisade ce qui peut lui servir à montrer le primat romain, alors qu’il est combattu par le démocratisme conciliaire et mal supporté du monde germanique, suscitant en même temps la conscience du péril pour une chrétienté qui s’abandonne, où trouver ailleurs que dans cette politique de Pie II un plus bel usage de la force d’une continuité et d’une sagesse clairvoyante du présent? Il y a là, dans l’histoire de la croisade survivante, un moment d’incontestable grandeur. Et plus grand que sa politique, le pape lui-même”. Although it is referred to the future pope Pius II, this analysis well portrays Piccolomini’s attitude towards the crusade and the pontifical power.

<sup>59</sup> Lettieri, “Lo «spiraculo» di Machiavelli e «le mandragole» di Savonarola”, 288 (“martellante luogo comune teologico-politico”).

papacy, on the other hand, are the backdrop of the oration. In both cases, doctrinal elaboration had engaged popes and theologians, whose reflections aimed at building a theological scaffolding to justify

Roman political authority. To this purpose, the recourse to biblical episodes or characters, such as Moses, is functional in constructing an unassailable theological-political role for the pope.

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