



# Reject Aeneas, Accept Pius: Selected Letters of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II)

*Pius II*

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Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (1405-1464, elected Pope Pius II in 1458) was an important and enigmatic figure of the Renaissance as well as one of the most prolific writers and gifted stylists ever to occupy the papacy. Though several biographies have been written about "the humanist pope," this book allows Aeneas to tell his story in his own words through a careful selection of seventy-five letters and two documents. All but one newly translated and most translated for the first time into English, these writings bring Aeneas vibrantly alive for the ordinary reader.

Aeneas's letters range from brief and very personal revelations to a history the length of a small treatise. They provide a unique lens for exploring the less political, more private aspects of his life. They trace the changes in his political and ecclesiastical allegiances that parallel his change of vocation from worldly humanist poet to learned prelate, and from participant at the Council of Basel where he actively engaged in the election of an anti-pope to advocate for the papacy and eventually pope. A history of the Council of Basel is included as are two bulls from his pontificate. One bull condemns appeals from the Roman pontiff to a general council (*Execrabilis*), and the other (*In minoribus*) attempts to explain away the errors of his youth.

In addition to an engaging general introduction, the book includes short narrative introductions to each letter placing it in proper context. The letters are generously annotated to assist readers in understanding the persons, places, and literary allusions discussed.

Thomas M. Izbicki is coordinator of collection management and development at the Milton S. Eisenhower Library and adjunct associate professor of history at Johns Hopkins University. Gerald Christianson is professor of church history at Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary. Philip Krey is president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary of Philadelphia.

### PRAISE FOR THE BOOK:

"

This selection of letters presents a coherent recounting of Aeneas's life and activities and provides great

insight into some of the important events of the fifteenth century to which he was witness.... The editors are highly qualified and are, indeed, among the recognized leaders in the study of later medieval and Renaissance ecclesiastical and intellectual history. I can think of no finer or more appropriate editorial team."--Cary J. Nederman, Texas A&M University

"A significant contribution to conciliar and papal history, *Reject Aeneas, Accept Pius: Selected Letters of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II)* offers a detailed portrait of one of Renaissance Europe's most influential figures and a revealing window onto the world in which he lived.... Izbicki, Christianson, and Krey have made their volume useful to a wide audience. Aeneas's sometimes stiff formality is rendered into readable English, while the eloquence and charm characteristic of so much of his writing emerge clearly in translation. A substantial introduction offers both a general sketch of Aeneas's life and a detailed chronicle of his journey through ecclesiastical politics. Prefatory remarks to each letter effectively anchor his correspondence in this larger narrative, while underlining the translators' four central themes. The notes to the text serve primarily to identify the letters' substantial cast of characters, but they also document Aeneas's references to biblical, classical, and legal texts, and make useful corrections to the Wolkan edition. The volume concludes with helpful indices of names, places, and subjects, and a selective bibliography." -- Emily O'Brien, *Renaissance Quarterly*

"These letters are well translated into a particularly lucid English; each is prefaced by a short descriptive introduction which refers, in a specific way, to the very carefully constructed overall discussion of the lette

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