

ALBERGATI'S DIPLOMACY

COMMUNICATION OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN POPE EUGENE IV AND THE COUNCIL OF BASEL

When it comes to describing the relationship between Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) and the council of Basel (1431-1449), “friendship” is probably one of the last words one would use. From the beginning of the Council of Basel ⁽¹⁾, Eugene IV never showed very much enthusiasm for it. ⁽²⁾ In fact, even before the council held its first official session, on 14 December 1431, the pope had decided to dissolve the council. ⁽³⁾ This dissolution led to a sharp reaction from the council fathers, who, by February 1432 already proclaimed the principle that papal authority was not higher than

(1) A lot has already been written on the council of Basel. Among the most important studies are: Stefan SUDMANN, *Das Basler Konzil. Synodale Praxis zwischen Routine und Revolution*, Frankfurt a. M., 2005; Heribert MÜLLER, *Die Franzosen, Frankreich und das Basler Konzil (1431-1449)*, Padenborn-München-Wien-Zürich, 1990; Johannes HELMRATH, *Das Basler Konzil, 1431-1449: Forschungsstand und Probleme*, Köln, 1987; Giuseppe ALBERIGO, *Chiesa conciliare. Identità e significato del conciliarismo*, Brescia, 1981; Gerald CHRISTIANSON, *Cesarini: The Conciliar Cardinal. The Basel Years, 1431-1438*, Sankt Ottilien, 1979; Joachim W. STIEBER, *Pope Eugenius IV, the Council of Basel, and the Secular ecclesiastical Authorities in the Empire. The conflict over Supreme Authority and Power in the Church*, Leiden, 1978; Joseph GILL, *Constance et Bâle-Florence*, Paris, 1965; E. DELARUELLE, E.R. LABANDE and P. OURLIAC, *L'Église au temps du Grand Schisme et de la crise conciliaire (1378-1449)*, 1962; Noël VALOIS, *Le pape et le concile (1418-1450)*, Paris, 1909.

(2) Cf. a letter of Eugene IV to Cardinal Cesarini, papal legate for both the crusade against the Hussites of 1431 and the council of Basel, wherein the pope ordered the cardinal to first finish his mission in Bohemia and only afterwards travel to Basel: J.D. MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, Venetiis, 1788 (New editions: Paris, 1903, Graz, 1961), 29, col. 13. (Further references to this edition will run as: MANSI). Cesarini only arrived in Basel on 9 September 1431. Not many prelates had arrived at Basel by that time. Only on 14 December 1431 were there enough prelates in the city to hold the first session of the council.

(3) Although the council had been convened for March 1431, only by December 1431 had enough prelates reached Basel for the council to start working. One of Eugene IV's reasons for dissolving the council, was that so few prelates had come to Basel. Cf. *Infra*.