

# ON THE PAPAL ELECTION

Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey (1473–1530)

to Henry VIII (1509–1547), King of England

30 September 1524

It may like Your Highness to understand I have this hour received letters from your orators resident in the court of Rome mentioning how the 24<sup>th</sup> day of this instant month it pleased Almighty God to call the Pope's Holiness to His mercy, whose soul our Lord pardon.

And in what train the matters then were at that time for election of the future Pope, Your Highness shall perceive by the letters of your said orators, which I send unto the same at this time, whereby appears that my absence from thence shall be the only obstacle (if any be) in the election of me to that dignity; albeit there is no great semblance that the College of Cardinals shall consent upon any being there present, because of the sundry factions that be among themselves, for which cause—though before God I repute myself right unmeet and unable to so high and great dignity, desiring much rather to demure, continue, and end my life with Your Grace for doing of such service as may be to your honour and wealth of this, your realm, than to be ten Popes.

Yet nevertheless, remembering what mind and opinion Your Grace was of at the last vacation to have me preferred thereunto, thinking that it should be to the honour, benefit, etc. advancement of your affairs in time coming; and supposing that Your Highness persists in the same mind and intent, I shall devise such instructions, commissions, and other writings as the last time was delivered to Mr. Pace for that purpose.

And the same I shall send to Your Grace by the next post whom it may like to do further therein as will stand with your gracious pleasure, whereunto I shall always conform myself accordingly.

And to the intent it may appear further to Your Grace what mind and determination they be of towards mine advancement, which, as your orators wrote, have now at this present time the principal authority and chief stroke in the election of the Pope, making in manner *triumviratum*, I send unto Your Highness their several letters to me addressed in that behalf, beseeching Our Lord that such one may be chosen as may be to the Honour of God, the weal of Christ's Church, and the benefit of all Christendom.

And thus Jesus preserve your most noble and royal estate.

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1 October 1524

It may like Your Grace to understand that ensuing the tenor of my letter sent unto Your Highness yesterday, I have devised such commissions and letters to be sent unto your counselors the Bishop of Bath, Mr. Richard Pace, and Mr. Thomas Hanibal, jointly and severally, as at the last time of vacation of the Papal dignity were delivered unto the said Mr. Richard Pace for the preferment either of me or, that failing, of the Cardinal de Medici unto the same.

Which letters and commissions, if it stand with your gracious pleasure to have that matter set forth, it may like Your Highness of your benign grace and goodness to sign, so to be sent to the Court of Rome in such diligence as the importance of the same, with the brevity of the time does necessarily require.

And to the intent also that the Emperor may the more effectually and speedily concur with Your Highness for the furtherance hereof, albeit, I suppose verily that ensuing the conference and communications which he has had with Your Grace in that behalf, he has not permitted before this time to advance the same, yet nevertheless for the more acceleration of this furtherance to be given thereunto, I have also devised a familiar letter in the name of Your Grace to be directed unto His Majesty, which—if it may please Your Highness to take the pain for to write with your own hand, putting thereunto your secret sign and mark, being between Your Grace and the said Emperor—shall undoubtedly do singular benefit and furtherance to your gracious intent and virtuous purpose in that behalf.

Beseeching Almighty God that such effect may ensue thereof, as may be in His pleasure, the contentation of Your Highness, the weal and exaltation of your most royal estate, realm, and affairs, and howsoever the matter shall chance, I shall no less knowledge myself obliged and bounden far above any my deserts unto Your Highness than if I had attained the same, whereunto I would never in thought aspire, but to do honour good and service unto your noble person and this your realm.

And thus Jesus preserve your most noble and royal estate.

Fred W. Bewsher, *The Reformation and the Renaissance (1485–1547)* (London, 1913):34–36.