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ASPECTS OF RAPHAEL'S  
"ULTIMA MANIERA"  
IN THE LIGHT  
OF THE SALA DI COSTANTINO<sup>1</sup>

(PLATES XCII-XCVIII)

THE SALA di Costantino (SdC) is one of the spacious and splendid State Rooms in the Vatican Palace. Because of its vicinity to the pope's private apartment it was used during the 16th century for a number of different festivities, which were of semi-public or semi-private character such as ceremonial banquets, weddings of papal relatives, or semi-public audiences (44-69). The persons usually present during these ceremonies — the College of Cardinals and/or the ambassadors of the European courts — were taken into account, when the program of this room's decoration was conceived (515 f.). It is composed of two cycles, both beginning on the East wall. The first, a chronological cycle of popes, shows eight saints from Peter to Gregory the Great, accompanied by fourteen female personifications. The second, devoted to Constantine, consists of four main episodes and several minor scenes in the basamenti and on the window embrasures.

Not only does the series of sainted popes resume a previous one in this room,

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a synthesis and elaboration of results, which I presented in my book *Die Sala di Costantino im Vatikanischen Palast, Zur Dekoration der beiden Medici-Päpste Leo X. und Clemens VII.*, Hildesheim - New York 1979 (Studien zur Kunstgeschichte 13). Unspecified numbers in parentheses in the text refer to pages of this publication as do references to documents (Dok.), which are assembled in its appendix. The reader will also find there detailed bibliographical information, which in this paper has been reduced to the absolute minimum. Recent contribution to the study of the Sala di Costantino, which appeared after the completion of the manuscript of my book, are: P. N. PAGLIARA, *Una fonte di illustrazioni del Vitruvio di Fra' Giocondo*, in: *Ricerche di storia dell'arte* 6 (1977), 113-120, esp. 117 n. 14 (on catapult in the basamento); M. PERRY, "Candor Illaesus": The "Impresa" of Clement VII and other Medici Devices in the Vatican Stanze, in: *BurlMag* 119 (1977), 676-686, esp. 684 ff.; D. Summers, 339 (see n. 36 below); P. Barolsky, 127, 131f. (see n. 21 below); B. F. DAVIDSON, Pope Paul III's

Additions to Raphael's Logge: His "Imprese" in the Logge, in: *ArtBull* 61 (1979), 385-404, esp. 386, 388f. (on number of original doors in the Sala di Costantino); P. Ward-Jackson, 77 No. 155 (see n. 2 below); K. Weil-Garris & J. F. D'Amico, 114f. nn. 99, 106 (see n. 6 below); E. Schröter (with important bibliographical addenda); J. Kliemann; K. Oberhuber (1982), 151-154 (see n. 4 below); L. Partridge; and — rather unsatisfactory — A. CHASTEL, *The Sack of Rome, 1527*, Princeton/N. J. 1983 (The Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts 1977. Bollingen Series XXXV, 26), 50-67. The review of my book by the author of an unpublished Master's thesis *The Iconography of the Wall-Frescoes of the Sala di Costantino in the Vatican Palace*, University of California at Berkeley 1975, B. Wollesen-Wisch, seems to be the result of a rather superficial reading of the book under review. — I am grateful to Arnold Nesselrath for stimulating suggestions offered after my lecture during the Convegno. Warmest thanks go to Linda Wolk and most of all to Sheryl E. Reiss, who kindly improved the English of my manuscript.

but it is also continued in the inscriptions given in the vault of the Sala dei Pontefici below, which was decorated at the same time as the SdC. The inscriptions in the Sala dei Pontefici refer to important historical events under ten popes from Stephan II (752-757) to Martin V (1417-31), who is praised as peace-maker (165-171). In the SdC the function of these inscriptions is taken over by the personifications. As attributes of the papacy in general they are grouped in such a way that — if read in connection with the pope they frame — they express a specific idea, which explains their choice. I shall give you four examples. Ecclesia and Aeternitas flanking Peter illustrate the “aeterni templi aedificatio”, which Leo the Great saw enacted in Matthew 16, 18, (181-204, esp. 190-192). Fides and Religio framing the pope, whose inscription originally read Alexander I. (161 f.), allude to this pontiff’s decrees promoting the worship of the Holy Sacrament (232-241, esp. 238-240). Fortitudo next to Silvester I is a symbol of that pope’s “robur auctoritatis”, which was crucial for the ratification of the decrees of the Council of Nicaea. Silvester is shown reading the acts of the council, which were sent to him, and writing his bull of ratification (284-301, esp. 293-295). Finally, “Fulminatio” with a thunderbolt, seen beside Gregory the Great, represents the *anathema*, with which this pope had threatened anybody who would not accept the decrees of the first four councils of the Church (301-314, esp. 307-312)<sup>2</sup>.

The Vision of the Cross and the Battle at the Milvian Bridge both glorify the victory won under the sign of the cross by the first Christian emperor over the persecutor of Christians Maxentius. The Baptism and Donation of Constantine are manifestations of the superiority of the popes over the emperor, and of the legitimacy of their territorial power. As a visualization of divine Providence in history and of God-given papal authority, the program of the SdC is consistent with the decoration of the Stanza dell’Incendio and even with the earlier Stanze.

We can gain an insight into the didactic intentions, which are connected with such a program, if we recall a letter of the Camaldulesian General Pietro Delfino, written in 1490 to a brother about the plaster image of his predecessor Ambrogio Traversari: “Everyone entering to see me observes and honours (this image) ‘pro numine’. I have it daily before my eyes. Through gazing at it, I am aflame to be

<sup>2</sup> The interpretation of the female personification beside Gregory the Great — which I called “Fulminatio” — is still a matter of dispute. Simultaneously with the publication of my book P. Ward-Jackson, 77 No. 155 suggested that she may represent Eloquence, since later C. RIPA (*Iconologia, ovvero descrizione di diverse imagini cavate dall’antichità, e di propria inventione*, Roma 1603, Reprint Hildesheim-New York 1970, 127) described her as a woman, who “nella mano destra tiene un folgore, & nella sinistra un libro aperto.” Regarding this interpretation as more convincing than mine (which has been accepted however by L. Partridge, 517) E. Schröter, 251 n. 3 did not take into consideration one important detail, which is crucial to my argument: i.e. the number of twice four books accompanying Gregory the Great and the female personification respectively. I still find it hard to believe, that the representation of twice four books and the thunderbolt should be fortuitous and unrelated to Gregory’s famous, politically important decree “Sicut sancti evangelii quattuor libros, sic quattuor concilia suspicere et

venerari me fateor. (...) Quisquis ergo aliud sapit, anathema sit.” Since the appearance of my monograph I have found new contemporary evidence in the writings of Erasmus of Rotterdam that seems to strengthen my interpretation. In the *Moriae Encomium, id est stultitiae laus* of 1511 mention is made of the popes’ “fulmen illud terrificum, quo solo nutu mortalium animas vel ultra tartara mittunt.” (*Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, vol. IV, 3, ed. C.H. Miller, Amsterdam-Oxford 1979, 174), and the expression “excommunicationis fulmen” is repeatedly used in the *Dialogus, Julius exclusus e coelis*, first published in 1517 (*Erasmi Opuscula, A supplement to the Opera omnia*, ed. W. K. Ferguson, The Hague 1933, 69f., 107). In accordance with this usage the thunderbolt of excommunication is also held by the personification of the Church (cf. tiara, pair of keys, pontifical shoes) in the spandrels of the nave arcade of St. Peter’s (1647/49; stucco statue attributed to Andrea Bolgi; see R. ENGGASS, *New Attributions in St. Peter’s: The Spandrel Figures in the Nave*, in: *ArtBull* 60 (1978), 96-108, esp. 100 fig. 7).

bound to emulation and imitation of such a father, wishing to be transformed into that same image, which this celestial being imaged when he was alive"<sup>3</sup>.

Before work on the painting could start, the SdC received a new coffered-wood ceiling, for which there are payments to Antonio da Sangallo the Younger in September 1518 and March 1519 (Dok. 37 a/b). We must imagine this ceiling, gilded and decorated with the yoke of Leo X, resting on the stucco frieze with a Vitruvian scroll. It was replaced by the present vault in the 1580s (31 f., 75 f.). In October 1519 work on the designs for the decoration of the SdC must have been well advanced, because Giuliano Leno was paid at that time "per ponti de pittori per la sala grande" (Dok. 38). These were probably erected in front of the South and East walls (88). Still under Raphael — says Vasari (Dok. 40 c2) — one wall was prepared with a special *mistura*, in order to paint on it in oil. But only three months after Raphael's death, in July 1520, we hear of "una mostra de una figura a olio in muro" executed by Raphael's pupils (Dok. 45). From this early phase two figures in oil — *Justitia* and *Comitas* — have survived<sup>4</sup>.

Problems with the oil on plaster experiments led to a return to the more familiar fresco medium (86), which was employed between autumn or winter 1520 and the death of Leo X in December 1521. The South and East walls (exclusive of their basamenti) were painted first, and then, as is indicated by Leonine *imprese*, part of the North. After a break under Hadrian VI work in the SdC was resumed, when a second Medici, Clement VII, became pope in November 1523. By late August 1524 the interrupted decoration on the North wall, as well as that of the whole West wall, and all of the basamenti had been completed. All these parts show the *imprese* of Clement VII, as does the carved wooden door beneath Peter (90-95, 27).

It was presumably under Clement VII that the last two main episodes of the Constantinian cycle were changed. According to an early plan, made known to us by Sebastiano del Piombo (Dok. 46), as of September 1520 the Battle at the Milvian Bridge was to be followed by a Presentation of Prisoners and by Constantine's Refusal to have his Leprosy Cured by the Blood of Innocent Children. According to this plan the first Christian emperor would have been the only protagonist in all four main episodes, and was thus to be regarded as a model for the crusade against the Turks propagated by Leo X, as peace-maker and as an "exemplum pietatis" (384-398)<sup>5</sup>. In the Baptism and Donation of Constantine, both executed under Clement

<sup>3</sup> "Ab omnibus ad me ingredientibus pro numine fere exulta, et observata. Habeo illam quotidie prae oculis: eiusque iugi contemplatione ad aemulationem, atque imitationem tanti patris accendor, cupiens transformari in eandem imaginem, cuius ipse coelestis imaginem portavit vivens." (*Ambrogii Traversarii ... Latinae Lettere*, ed. L. Mehus, Florence 1759, II, 1105); text and translation quoted from: R. C. TREXLER, *Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image*, in: *Studies in the Renaissance* 19 (1972), 7-41, esp. 32f. with n. 74. — The belief that the "principal audience of the frescoes was not the curia or the diplomatic corps at all, but the patrons themselves, as is true of nearly all propagandistic art" (L. Partridge, 520) is an unjustified simplification of the issue, since it limits the purposeful didactic intentions of such a decoration which is so clearly set out in Cinquecento program instructions written for the Vatican Palace (see 512-514).

<sup>4</sup> Inspecting both figures from a movable scaffolding during the *Convegno* one could see the high quality of the oil painting, which led Konrad Oberhuber and John Shearman to continue believing that some parts may still have been executed by Raphael himself. Such an attribution is, however, inconsistent with the documentary evidence provided by Sebastiano del Piombo (Dok. 45) and Vasari (Dok. 40c2). Just before the *Convegno* my argument (89f., 582f. n. 301) had been accepted by Oberhuber (1982), 152. Most recently my view is shared by R. JONES & N. PENNY, *Raphael*, New Haven-London 1983, 243.

<sup>5</sup> The credibility of Sebastiano's information has been questioned recently by J. Kliemann, 320 as well as by others during the discussion of my paper at the *Convegno*. A careful reading of Sebastiano's five letters to Michelangelo from April

VII, Pope Silvester I becomes the second protagonist, thus stressing the papal ideal of the proper relationship between temporal and ecclesiastical power within the *Civitas Christiana* (399-448).

It has recently been pointed out rightly that already in 1510 the Donation of Constantine had been suggested for the decoration of a cardinal's palace in Paolo Cortesi's "De cardinalatu"<sup>6</sup>. We may ask, nevertheless, whether the program of the SdC was changed after September 1520 for topical reasons. In the years 1520/21 discussions about the authenticity and validity of the Donation of Constantine became more and more critical in Rome, and papal concerns about the territorial independence of the States of the Church were growing in view of the rivalry between Francis I and Charles V (448-463).

The paintings of the SdC were executed primarily by Giulio Romano and Giovanfrancesco Penni, the only artists to be paid for the work (Dok. 58 a-f, 64 a-k). Vasari also mentions Giovanni da Lione and Raffaello dal Colle, who assisted Giulio (Dok. 40 b2, c2, d). Since the 18th century an attribution of the basamenti to Polidoro da Caravaggio and Maturino has been taken into consideration (118-130)<sup>7</sup>.

According to Vasari, Leo X commissioned Raphael to paint the SdC, who thereupon made designs for the decorative scheme and for several stories of Constantine. Again according to Vasari, he even drew some cartoons and prepared one wall with a *mistura* to paint on it in oil (Dok. 40 a-c). This was the South wall with the Battle at the Milvian Bridge, which already in the 1520s Paolo Giovio called Raphael's "extremum opus" (92 f., Dok. 39). Raphael's contribution to the SdC is confirmed and specified by a number of drawings. I shall survey some of these very quickly, pointing out that in certain cases the controversial attribution of several sheets is crucial for the argument (96-117).

Two drawings in the Louvre generally assumed to be by Giovanfrancesco Penni (RZ 477, 485)<sup>8</sup> are fragments of a compositional draft, which dates from Raphael's life-time, and belonged to at least two walls of our room. Thus Raphael himself designed the decorative scheme, the Battle at the Milvian Bridge, and most probably

to October 1520, however, leads — inevitably, I think — to the conclusion that these doubts are unjustified (see Dok. 42, 45-48). It is, moreover, highly possible that a pen drawing in the British Museum is connected with the Presentation of Prisoners mentioned as a projected subject for the SdC in Sebastiano's letter of 6 September 1520 (Dok. 46). The graphic style of the sheet is very close to Raphael's. It has just been published and attributed to Giovanfrancesco Penni, but without any reference to the SdC (J. A. GERE & P. POUNCEY, with the assistance of R. WOOD, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Artists working in Rome c. 1550 to c. 1640*, London 1983, 225 No. 363, Pl. 353: "Scene from Roman history: barbarian captives brought before an enthroned King"). The following criteria tell in favour of the hypothesis that this drawing is connected with the decoration of the SdC: the emperor dressed and placed in close correspondence with the Constantine of the Vision of the Cross (cf. armour, crown, and waist-high platform in front of a sequence of tents), the Roman ensigns (cf. signa, legion's eagle, vexillum), and the armour of the victorious soldiers.

<sup>6</sup> K. Weil-Garris & J. F. D'Amico, 114 n. 99; J. Kliemann, 322.

<sup>7</sup> My doubts about Polidoro's participation in the painting of the SdC, which were prompted by chronological considerations (Polidoro is documented in Naples in March 1524), seem to be shared by L. RAVELLI, *Polidoro Caldara da Caravaggio*, Bergamo 1978 (Monumenta Bergomensia XLVIII), who does not even discuss Polidoro's possible share in the SdC, but see his 49f.

<sup>8</sup> P. Joannides, 243 No. 442, 246 No. 450; K. Oberhuber (1983), 616 No. 591, 130 fig. 122, 136f.; R. Bacou, 33f. No. 29f. More recently Oberhuber (lecture given in London in November 1983) tends to reattribute to Raphael several of the pen and wash modelli usually thought to be by Penni (among them RZ 485). — The modello of the papal niche (RZ 477) was not executed although it seems to have been enlarged into a carton, a fragment of which with the head of the angel on the pope's left is preserved in Budapest and now attributed to Raphael himself by P. Joannides, 246 No. 451 and K. Oberhuber (1983), 616f. No. 596.

the Vision of the Cross, which is likely to have adjoined the pope on the Paris drawing (RZ 477) at the right side, which has been cut. Raphael's responsibility for the Battle is also evidenced by his undisputed nude study in Oxford (RZ 487)<sup>9</sup>.

The figures of the niche to the right of the Battle are also based on Raphael's designs. The following three drawings have all been accepted as Raphael's by Konrad Oberhuber: the caryatid in Frankfurt (RZ 481), and two studies for Charity in Oxford (RZ 479) and Paris (RZ 480)<sup>10</sup>. If not autograph, they certainly follow Raphael's ideas, as does the figure of Justice, executed in oil immediately after Raphael's death. I am also convinced that Raphael conceived the figure of Pope Urban I, whose impressive gestures meaningfully relate to Justice and Charity. The angels behind the pope fulfill an act of papal ceremony (241-250), and echo the arrangement of the saints behind Raphael's Sta. Cecilia in Bologna.

The groups of Alexander I and Clement I may also reflect — at least in part — Raphael's intentions, no matter whether we regard — as did Oberhuber — a pen study of Religio in the Uffizi (RZ 478a) as Raphael's first idea for this figure<sup>11</sup>. Also controversial is the attribution of a portrait of Leo X in Chatsworth (RZ 482), which served as a cartoon for Clement I. John Shearman gave it to Raphael, Oberhuber — more convincingly, I think — to Giulio Romano<sup>12</sup>, who was also the draftsman of the caryatids in Amsterdam (RZ 481a/b), which were used on the East wall<sup>13</sup>. Comitas, however, painted in oil, is so close to Raphael's Roxana and Fornarina, both in motif and quality of design, that its cartoon may well have been prepared before Raphael died (209-211).

Raphael's responsibility for the Vision of the Cross is easily argued, if we accept the attribution of the nude study of a soldier for this fresco in the Uffizi (RZ 484) to Raphael<sup>14</sup>. If we don't, we must base our attribution of the Vision on an assessment of the composition, especially in its early state, reflected in a compositional study assumed to be by Penni in Chatsworth (RZ 483)<sup>15</sup>, which is more spacious

<sup>9</sup> P. Joannides, 120, 243 No. 441f; K. Oberhuber (1983), 616 No. 592; J. A. Gere & N. Turner, 223ff. No. 181. The attribution of the other two nude studies for the Battle in Chatsworth (RZ 486) and Paris (RZ 489) is still controversial. Both drawings are given to Raphael by K. Oberhuber (1983), 616f. Nos. 593, 598. RZ 486 is attributed to Giulio Romano by P. Joannides, 243 No. 440 and J. A. Gere & N. Turner, 225f. No. 182; RZ 489 is attributed to Raphael by P. Joannides, 242 No. 439, and to Giulio Romano by R. Bacou, 37f. No. 36.

<sup>10</sup> K. Oberhuber (1972), 72, 195-197; see also P. Joannides, 124 Nos. 452-454; K. Oberhuber (1983), 616 Nos. 588-590. An attribution to Penni is favoured by J. A. Gere & N. Turner, 229 No. 184 (RZ 479) and R. Bacou, 29 No. 23 (RZ 480).

<sup>11</sup> K. Oberhuber (1972), 194f. (Raphael); K. Oberhuber (1983), 616 No. 594 (Raphael); S. Ferino Pagden, 350 No. 39 (Raphael); not mentioned by P. Joannides.

<sup>12</sup> J. SHEARMAN, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty The Queen and the Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel*, London 1972, 60f. n. 88; K. Oberhuber (1972), 199f. Shearman's attribution is accepted by P. Joannides, 246 No. 455; Oberhuber's by A. BLUNT, in: *Treasures from*

*Chatsworth*, exhibition catalogue, Fort Worth-Toledo-San Antonio-New Orleans-San Francisco 1979-80, 43f. No. 63; K. Oberhuber (1983), 141f. fig. 148 and J. A. Gere & N. Turner, 226-229 No. 183.

<sup>13</sup> My attribution of RZ 481a/b to Giulio Romano has been accepted by L. C. FRERICHS, *Italiaanse Tekeningen II de 15de en 16de eeuw*, Amsterdam 1981, 40 No. 76. An attribution of RZ 481a/b to Penni is favoured by K. Oberhuber (1972), 197f.; K. Oberhuber (1983), 141f. fig. 149f. and S. Ferino Pagden, 351 fig. 124f.

<sup>14</sup> RZ 484 has been attributed to Raphael as early as 1674, and most recently again by K. Oberhuber (1972), 201; A. FORLANI, in: *Omaggio à Leopoldo de' Medici, Parte I, Disegni*, Firenze 1976 (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi XLIV), 78 No. 54; A. PETRIOLI & P. DE VECCHI, *I disegni di Raffaello nel Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe degli Uffizi*, Milano 1982, No. 29; P. Joannides, 244 No. 444r; K. Oberhuber (1983), 617 No. 599 and with some hesitation by S. Ferino Pagden, 348f. No. 38.

<sup>15</sup> P. Joannides, 244 No. 445; K. Oberhuber (1983), 617 No. 600; J. A. Gere & N. Turner, 244f. No. 197.

than the fresco, and in which the attention of the figures is more strongly directed towards the celestial apparition of the cross. In these respects as well as in the creative assimilation of antique prototypes the Vision of the Cross is characteristic of the late Raphael.

In the following I would like to concentrate on two aspects of Raphael's contribution to the decoration of the SdC: the decorative scheme, and the history paintings "all'antica". The decorative scheme of the SdC furnishes yet another demonstration of Raphael's sensibility to problems resulting from a manifold program and the unfavorable structure of the room to be painted (131-140). The imaginary architecture with niches framed by pilasters and pedestals at the two ends of each wall, and the figurative tapestries of varying width in between, have a double function. This well-proportioned articulation not only simulates symmetry in this room of irregular shape, but also allows an ingenious arrangement of the popes and allegorical figures on the one hand, and of the episodes of Constantine — clearly separated from them — on the other. In principle the static relationship between the feigned architecture and the original flat ceiling is comparable to solutions in the Stanze, and, particularly, in the Sala dei Palafrenieri which still has its low coffered ceiling dating from the Leonine period. The illusionistic treatment of the wall as a relief with projecting and receding members is comparable to the basamento of the Stanza dell'Incendio, and to Raphael's executed architecture as seen for instance in the Palazzo dell'Aquila.

Raphael derived the idea of an architectonic framework, providing space for four different categories of figures, from Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling; but he made rearrangements to meet the different requirements of the SdC. The prophets and sibyls with their genii became the popes and angels, the ignudi the personifications, and the pairs of putti decorating the pilasters of the thrones were transformed into single atlas figures and caryatids supporting the beams of the ceiling with the help of the Leonine yoke<sup>16</sup>. The placement of the personifications slightly lower than the seated popes on either side of a shell-decorated niche may owe something to a fresco of Filippino Lippi in S. Maria sopra Minerva (142). Enriching this unit by a baldacchino suspended over each "vicarius Christi", Raphael showed his sense for ceremonial decorum (180, 653f. n. 610), and introduced an illusionistic device, which stresses the spatiality of the decoration, and the variety of precious materials.

The device of feigned figurative tapestries, filling the spaces between the niches (148-150) is so effective, that I should like to regard it as worthy of Raphael, although there are no indications of this idea in the drawings. But Raphael had used this illusionistic motif before in the vaults of the Stanza d'Eliodoro and of the Villa Farnesina<sup>17</sup>. In the SdC this device solved several problems. The rolling of the tapestries at the borders masks the perspective break within the painted architecture, since each niche has a vanishing point of its own<sup>18</sup>. The tapestries provide a change of reality, which underlines the independence of the two cycles of the program<sup>19</sup>. More-

<sup>16</sup> The Sistine Ceiling also provided the inspiration for many individual figures in the SdC; cf. 140, 145, 183, 232, 234, 242-245, 271f., 285, 363, 385, 507, 617 n. 465.

<sup>17</sup> It is difficult to ascertain the amount of truth behind Vasari's anecdote of a confused palafreniere, deceived by a tapestry painted on the end wall of the Vatican Logge by Giovanni da Udine (VasMil VI, 554; see my 148f.). On the one hand this sounds very much like the Plinian episode of Zeuxis, being deceived by a veil painted by Parrhasius in a trompe-l'oeil manner (see n. 21 below),

on the other hand, there still exist painted tapestries on the South wall of the Vatican Logge on the floor below Raphael's Logge; see illustration in: *Raffaello architetto*, ed. C.L. Frommel & S. Ray & M. Tafuri, Milano 1984, 370 and the view of the same wall in Francesco La Vega, *Disegni della prima e seconda loggia vaticana fatti... l'anno 1745*, Biblioteca Vaticana, Ms. Vat. lat. 13751, fol. 3r, in: *Raffaello in Vaticano*, Milano 1984, 214 No. 85.

<sup>18</sup> See J. Kliemann, 317.

<sup>19</sup> There can be no doubt, however, that in sum, i.e. on a more general level of meaning, both

over the tapestries are part of a variety of imitated materials: stone-coloured caryatids and bronze reliefs in the basamento, flesh-coloured figures in and around the niches, brocade baldacchini, woven tapestries, and real stucco reliefs in front of a wall of fictive marble panelling (153-155). Feigned tapestries, which were regarded by Sebastiano Serlio as "uno apparato per qualche trionfo"<sup>20</sup>, are fitting for the subject matter of the Constantinian episodes, and could serve as a substitute for real tapestry, used as a pompous background during official ceremonies in the Vatican Palace. Finally Raphael may have sought to emulate the antique painter Parrhasius, who according to Pliny had succeeded in deceiving Zeuxis with a tapestry painted in a *trompe-l'oeil* manner<sup>21</sup>.

In the SdC Raphael was — to say it in his own words — aiming at "ornamenti... di materia tanto preziosa come li antichi"<sup>22</sup>; and the idea to paint the walls in oil also may have been an attempt to rival antique painting (155f.). "El paragone de li antichi, aguagliarli et superarli" is another formulation in Raphael's letter to Leo X<sup>23</sup>, which highlights central aspects of his artistic creed as embodied in the Vision of the Cross and the Battle at the Milvian Bridge. In these history paintings Raphael turns out to be both an archaeologically minded historian and an original poet; and one cannot but agree with Vasari and Dolce, who praised Raphael as an eminent history painter<sup>24</sup>.

The Vision and the Battle both illustrate passages from the Vita Constantini of Eusebius. But when picturing them Raphael shaped the scenes of action like a historian. Although Eusebius does not say where the vision of the cross took place, Raphael settled on Rome, and in the right background gave a faithful view of ancient Roman topography. The imaginative reconstructions of antique monuments are evidence of Raphael's famous attempt to prepare a map of Ancient Rome (330-334)<sup>25</sup>. The same topographical accuracy can be observed in the Battle at the Milvian Bridge. I only mention the course of the Tiber, Monte Mario with Villa Madama and Monte Soracte (351 f.). Raphael's attention to topographical details is already obvious in the Battle of Ostia with its fortress and lagoon<sup>26</sup> and in the Fire in the Borgo with the facade of Old St. Peter's<sup>27</sup>, the tower of Leo IV<sup>28</sup> and the "Saxorum Langobardorumque domus ac porticus" mentioned in the Liber Pontificalis<sup>29</sup>.

cycles of the program, the popes with their personifications and the Constantinian episodes should be read together as illustrations of the historical foundation of papal primacy and of a God-given Imperium Christianum submitted to the Vicar of Christ (511). For renewed emphasis on this point see L. Partridge and B. Wollesen-Wisch.

<sup>20</sup> S. SERLIO, *Regole generali di architettura...*, Venezia 1537, LXXV (quoted from V. Golzio, 285).

<sup>21</sup> *Naturalis Historia* XXXV, 65. — P. Barolsky, 131 has recently interpreted the SdC device of fictive tapestries as "a witty commentary on the artfulness of art ... (and) on the conventions of illusionism."

<sup>22</sup> Letter to Leo X (V. Golzio, 85).

<sup>23</sup> V. Golzio, 84.

<sup>24</sup> VasMil IV, 375f.; L. Dolce, 39, 41.

<sup>25</sup> On close inspection of the background of this fresco from a scaffold during the Convegno it became clear that among the reconstructions of ancient Roman monuments there are also some, which do not belong to this topographical area.

Arnold Nesselrath has kindly pointed out to me the reconstruction of a building from Tivoli.

<sup>26</sup> See the early 17th century *Pianta del Borgo di Ostia* (Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Piante e carte geografiche, Inv. 1-5-08 n. 55) reproduced in: *Il Borgo di Ostia da Sisto IV a Giulio II*, Catalogo a cura di S. Danesi Squarzina e G. Borghini (Ostia 1980), Roma 1981, 15 fig. 1.

<sup>27</sup> See H. BELTING, Das Fassadenmosaik des Atriums von Alt St. Peter in Rom, in: *WallRjb* 23 (1961), 37-54, esp. 41ff.

<sup>28</sup> See J. SHEARMAN, *The Vatican Stanze: Functions and Decoration*, London 1972 (from The Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 57), 58 n. 151.

<sup>29</sup> L. DUCHESNE (ed.), *Le Liber Pontificalis*, 3 vols., Paris 1886-1957, vol. 2, 111; cf. esp. Raphael's representation of the "porticus". — I have dealt with these aspects of the Stanza dell'Incendio in greater detail in my *Päpstliches Geschichtsdenken und seine Verbildlichung in der Stanza dell'Incendio*, in: *MüJbBK* 3rd Ser. 35 (1984), 83-128, esp. 96, 103.

For the illustration of the action Raphael made use of prototypes in antique art, related in subject matter, which he then transformed to suit his own purposes. The first adlocution of Trajan's Column provided the model for the Vision of the Cross, both events being a prelude to the battle. But the introduction of the celestial apparition made it necessary to change the action of the figures. Constantine is the Trajan of the adlocution with his arms reversed, thus responding to the cross in the sky. A similar reversal can be observed in the upper part of the body of the soldier seen from the back; as a result of this his attention, too, is focused on the cross.

The surprise of the army, mentioned by Eusebius, was given visual expression by changing the quiet audience of the adlocution into an agitated one, modelled upon a fighting formation on Trajan's Column. The detailed representation of military equipment again shows Raphael's meticulous study of ancient prototypes. I must confine myself to one example from the Column of Trajan, which has the hides covering head and back of the standard-bearer, and the various ensigns (334-339).

The Vita Constantini of Eusebius again provided but a few clues for the illustration of the Battle at the Milvian Bridge. Raphael's keen sense of fidelity to historical truth made him turn to the reliefs of the Arch of Constantine as a model of iconographic relevance. The center of the composition — the victorious emperor on horseback followed by standard-bearers, trumpet and horn blowers, and the presentation of two enemy's cut off heads — are taken directly from the Trajanic reliefs on the Arch of Constantine, which Raphael had praised as "spoglie... eccellentissime e di perfetta maniera"<sup>30</sup>. Obviously, Raphael, like Giuliano da Sangallo before him, realized that the Trajanic reliefs, separated today, were once part of a continuous frieze<sup>31</sup>. To this compositional center Raphael added a great number of individual episodes.

The divine support given to Constantine, also noted by Eusebius, is illustrated by three allegorical victories, the central of which is derived from one on the Arch of Titus. The confrontation of victor and defeated enemy was again developed from the Trajanic frieze of the Arch of Constantine. Even Maxentius owes something to the Dacian prince with his flowing paludamentum, and to the naked left arm holding the bridle at the horse's neck on the far right. The idea of a rider on a horse half-sunken in the water was inspired by a scene on Trajan's Column; and the animal itself is reminiscent of one of the horses on Monte Cavallo.

Such an assimilation and amalgamation of several borrowings is typical of the late Raphael<sup>32</sup>. The fight between the two horsemen is derived from the Small Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. Raphael slightly turned the horse at the left clockwise, and combined the legs of the left soldier, sliding down from his mount, with the upper part of the body of a similar figure on Trajan's Column. The technique of adaptation by turning a borrowed figure as if it were a three-dimensional model, which Giovanni Battista Armenini was later to recommend<sup>33</sup>, is also evident in the foot-soldier clad

<sup>30</sup> Letter to Leo X (V. Golzio, 85).

<sup>31</sup> A drawing in the Codex Barb. Lat. 4424, fol. 19v (C. HUELSEN (ed.), *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo, Codice Vaticano Barberiniano Latino 4424*, 2 vols., Lipsia-Torino 1910, Codices e Vaticanis Selecti II, Testo 29, Tavole fol. 19v) seems to indicate that Giuliano had already realized that the Trajanic reliefs came from one frieze. Giuliano, however, combined the two reliefs of the pathway wrongly. It remained, therefore, for Raphael to give a correct reconstruction of the Trajanic frieze, which was based on close scrutiny

of the borders of each relief.

<sup>32</sup> See my comments on Raphael's Triumph of Bacchus of 1517, in: "Aemulatio veterum" — Zu Studium und Rezeption der Antike bei Peruzzi und Raphael (to be published in the *Atti del Congresso "Baldassare Peruzzi 1481/1981, Pittura, scena e architettura nella prima metà del Cinquecento"*, Roma-Siena, 20-30 ottobre 1981).

<sup>33</sup> G.B. ARMENINI, *De' veri precetti della pittura libri tre*, In Ravenna 1587 (Reprint Hildesheim-New York 1971), 78. — I have dealt with this



in armour at the extreme left of the Battle when he is compared with the model on Trajan's Column. The Column of Trajan also provided the inspiration for the cavalry in echelon and for the javelin-thrower. Raphael transformed the bearded dead soldier clad in garments of this very Trajanic scene into a young standard-bearer, whom he correctly dressed in a hide, thus obeying the laws of "convenevolezza", which on the basis of Horace's *Ars poetica* had been introduced into the theory of painting by Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo, and others: "... quanto alla convenevolezza, si dee... conformar l'habito al costume delle nationi, e delle conditioni"<sup>34</sup>. The bearded comrade, who is kneeling down at this dead standard-bearer's side in solicitude, is composed of the Torso Belvedere and the Gaul in Paris (361). 16  
17  
16, 18, 19  
18  
16

It is this joining together of borrowed motifs not only for the composition of new figures but also for the creation of new episodes, which are uninfluenced by textual or visual sources, which reveals Raphael's power of poetic invention. Raphael's poetic license was controlled, however, by his striving for historical exactitude and authenticity. For this reason he was even stimulated by those Constantinian reliefs on the Arch of Constantine, which as to their style he regarded as "sciocchissime"<sup>35</sup>. It seems that Raphael realized that they were the only contemporary visual documents of the Battle at the Milvian Bridge. From that source he borrowed several ideas: the soldier with his right arm raised, falling backwards into the Tiber<sup>36</sup>, the shield with a stud in the center, and scales transferred from the coat of mail of the nearby soldiers; and on the far right the swimming shield without an owner, as well as the horse's head looking out of the Tiber. 20, 21

A deeper understanding of Raphael's adapting use of antique battle reliefs for his Constantinian episodes may be gained by a look at Vasari's famous letter to Benedetto Varchi of 1548. Discussing the paragone between painting and sculpture Vasari mentions representations of battle scenes in antique sculpture, and adds that they lack, however, those details and characterizations of texture, which only the art of painting is able to imitate: "il sudore e la spuma alle labbia e' lustrati de' peli de' cavagli, e' crini e le code di quegli sfilate, e lo abigliamento delle armi et i rinverberi delle figure in esse... Di più il raso, (il) velluto, l'argento e l'oro, e le gioie con i lustrati delle perle"<sup>37</sup>. In the SdC these very qualities of pictorial detail can be observed in the individual motifs, which were "translated" from ancient battle reliefs into painting. Since antique history painting had been lost, Raphael attempted to emulate the remains of ancient sculpture, adapting its motifs in order to create for his visualizations of events from ancient history some sort of authentic "all'antica" painting.

It is no surprise that Raphael should borrow above all from reliefs of the period of Trajan, since he himself regarded these as "di perfetta maniera"<sup>38</sup>. They ranked as a typical example of antique magnificence, as is evident from Benedetto Varchi's somewhat later question to the same effect: "Ma che maggior magnificenza et ornamento si può vedere, che a Roma la Colonna di Traiano...?"<sup>39</sup>.

aspect in greater detail in: "Imitatione d'altrui" — Anmerkungen zu Raphael's Verarbeitung entlehnter Motive, in: *De Arte et Libris, Festschrift Erasmus 1934-1984*, Amsterdam 1984, 349-367.

<sup>34</sup> L. Dolce, 34; see R. W. Lee, 229f. and n. 145.

<sup>35</sup> Letter to Leo X (V. Golzio, 85).

<sup>36</sup> D. Summers, 339 and figs. 1,7 has suggested that the second soldier falling into the Tiber (with shield and dagger) was derived from a torso of the Discobolos known to have been bought from Michele Ciampolini by Giulio Romano and Gio-

vanfrancesco Penni in 1520.

<sup>37</sup> P. Barocchi (1960-62), vol. I, 63; P. Barocchi (1971-77), vol. I, 499.

<sup>38</sup> Letter to Leo X (V. Golzio, 85).

<sup>39</sup> *Due lezioni di M. Benedetto Varchi, nella prima delle quali si dichiara un sonetto di M. Michelagnolo Buonarroti, Nella seconda si disputa quale sia più nobile arte, la scultura o la pittura ...* (lectures given in 1547, published in 1549), quoted from reprint in: P. Barocchi (1960-62), vol. I, 51; see also P. Barocchi (1971-77), vol. I, 543.

Finally I can but briefly indicate that Raphael also made use of modern visual sources. The horse on Filarete's bronze door of St. Peter's, which — nota bene — is collapsing on the banks of the Tiber, was the model for Raphael's horse in the same topographical position, slightly modified and turned counter-clockwise. Raphael's horseman, however, is very close to Michelangelo's Jonah on the Sistine Ceiling in reverse, whose action has been given an altogether different interpretation (352-366).

A passage in the *Cortegiano*, written by Raphael's close friend Baldassare Castiglione and probably finished by 1518, may help us to understand the implications and the ultimate goal, which are behind this method of uniting so great a number of transformed borrowings: i.e. the striving for a universal concept of beauty. In a discourse on single and universal beauty Castiglione has Pietro Bembo say: "... (lo amante) aggiungerà nel pensier suo a poco a poco tanti ornamenti, che cumulando insieme tutte le bellezze farà un concetto universale e ridurrà la moltitudine d'esse alla unità di quelle sola che generalmente sopra la umana natura si sponde; e così non più la bellezza particular d'una donna, ma quella universale, che tutti i corpi adorna, contemplarà;..."<sup>40</sup>.

Raphael's familiarity with these ideas is perhaps indicated by his famous letter to Castiglione of 1514 (if it is genuine): "per dipingere una bella, mi bisognaria veder più belle, con questa conditione, che V.S. si trovasse meco a far scelta del meglio. Ma essendo carestia e di buoni giudici, et di belle donne, io mi servo di certa Idea, che mi viene nella mente"<sup>41</sup>. Lodovico Dolce's characterization of Raphael's aims sounds very similar: "Non dipingeva a caso, o per pratica, ma sempre con molto studio; & haveva due fini: l'uno d'imitar la bella maniera delle statue antiche; e l'altro di contender con la natura, in modo, che veggendo le cose dal vivo, dava loro piu bella forma, ricercando nelle sue opere una perfettione intera, che non si truova nel vivo: percioche la natura non porge a un corpo solo tutte le sue bellezza; e mendicarle in molti è difficile; ridurle poi insieme in una figura, che non discordino, è quasi del tutto impossibile"<sup>42</sup>.

The story of Zeuxis, who created the ideal beauty of Helen by combining the best parts of five Crotonian maidens, clearly stands behind these three quotations<sup>43</sup>, as well as behind Vasari's appreciation of Raphael in the *Proemio alla Parte Terza* of his *Lives*: "... Raffaello... studiando le fatiche de' maestri vecchi e quelle de' moderni, prese da tutti il meglio; e fattone raccolta, arricchì l'arte della pittura di quella intera perfezione, che ebbero anticamente le figure di Apelle e di Zeusi, e più se si potesse dire, o mostrare l'opere di quelli a questo paragone"<sup>44</sup>.

The truth of Vasari's assessment is underlined by Raphael's contribution to the decoration of the SdC. Here, for the last time, we see Raphael's power of assimilation, his virtuosity in the handling of different techniques of adaptation, his multifarious and critical occupation with the Antique, his "paragone de li antichi, aguagliarli et superarli", his striving for exactitude in historical and antiquarian matters, finally his immense wealth and ease in inventing new solutions; in short: we see his creativity as historian and poet.

<sup>40</sup> *Il libro del Cortegiano* IV, lxxvii (B. MAIER, *Il libro del Cortegiano con una scelta delle Opere minori di Baldesar Castiglione*, 2a ediz. Torino 1964, 534f.).

<sup>41</sup> V. Golzio, 31. — The authenticity of this letter has been called in question by V. Golzio, 30 himself, by M. W. Roskill, 289, 309, and by K. OBERHUBER, in: D. A. BROWN & K. OBERHUBER, "Monna Vanna" and "Fornarina": Leonardo and Ra-

phael in Rome, in: *Essays presented to Myron P. Gilmore*, vol. 2, Florence 1978, 25-86, esp. 84 n. 196.

<sup>42</sup> L. Dolce, 61f.

<sup>43</sup> See M. W. Roskill, 288f.

<sup>44</sup> VasMil IV, 11f.

In conclusion I would like to call back to mind a remark of Annibale Carracci. Asked whom he regarded as the greater poet, Ariosto or Tasso, Annibale, thinking of Raphael's Battle at the Milvian Bridge, is said to have replied: "il più gran poeta presso a me... è Raffaele"<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> C. C. MALVASIA, *Felsina pittrice, Vite de' pittori bolognesi* (1678), ed. G. P. Zanotti, 2 vols., Bologna 1841, vol. I, 344. — This assessment as well as Dolce's and Vasari's praise of Raphael as a history painter referred to above (see n. 24) must be viewed against the background of the Horacian topos of "ut pictura poesis" (see R. W. Lee), the more so since Annibale is to have recited the opening lines of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* in front of Raphael's Battle at the Milvian Bridge: "E veduto in Vaticano ... la bellissima, e eruditissima battaglia di Costantino, assalito da un estro poetico, tutto furore, cominciò a dire: 'Canto l'armi pietose, e l'Capitano ec.'" Parts of Malvasia's anecdote appeared already in Bellori's *Vita di Anni-*

*bale Carracci*, where, however, the Battle at the Milvian Bridge is given to Giulio Romano; see G. P. BELLORI, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, In Roma 1672, 74f. (ed. E. Borea & G. Previtali, Torino 1976, 85). — In this connection it is interesting to note that comparisons between painting and literature often focused on descriptions of battle scenes; see LEONARDO DA VINCI, *Treatise on Painting (Codex Urbinas Latinus 1270)*, ed. A. Ph. McMahon, 2 vols., Princeton/N.J. 1956, vol. I, 18§30, 24f. §36, and L. MENDELSON, *Paragoni, Benedetto Varchi's "Due Lezioni" and Cinquecento Art Theory*, Ann Arbor 1982 (Studies in the Fine Arts: Art Theory. No. 6). 274 n. 123, 286f. n. 31.

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1. Workshop of Raphael, Presentation of Prisoners, London, British Museum



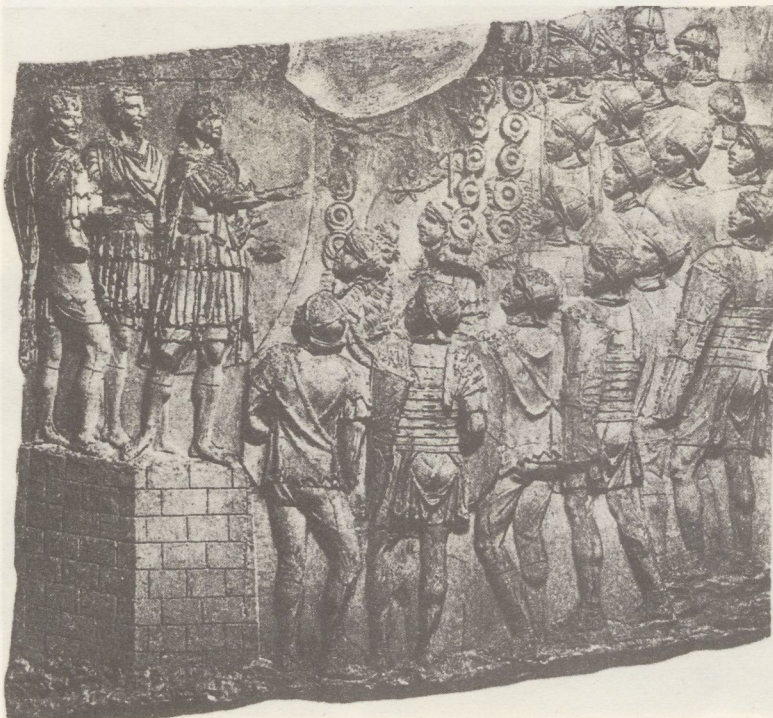
2. Michelangelo, Sistine Ceiling, detail



3. Sala di Costantino, South wall



4. Sala di Costantino, Vision of the Cross



5. Trajan's Column, scene X



6. Trajan's Column, scene LXXI



7. Sala di Costantino, Battle at the Milvian Bridge



8. Arch of Constantine, Trajanic frieze, photo montage





9. Sala di Costantino, Battle at the Milvian Bridge, detail, Maxentius



10. Arch of Constantine, Trajanic frieze, detail of Fig. 8



11. Trajan's Column, scene XXXI, detail



12. Antonio Lafreri, Dioscuri of Monte Cavallo, engraving (representation reversed), detail



13. Sala di Costantino, Battle at the Milvian Bridge, detail



14. Small Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus, Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, detail



15. Trajan's Column, scene IX, detail



16. Sala di Costantino, Battle at the Milvian Bridge, detail



17. Trajan's Column, scene LXXII, detail



18. Trajan's Column, scene XXXVII



19. Trajan's Column, scene XXIV, detail



20. Sala di Costantino, *Battle at the Milvian Bridge*, detail



21. Arch of Constantine, *Battle at the Milvian Bridge*, detail