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THE BARBERINI AND THE NEW CHRISTIAN EMPIRE : A STUDY OF THE *HISTORY OF CONSTANTINE* TAPESTRIES BY PIETRO DA CORTONA

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ABSTRACT

This study traces the genesis and development of the *History of Constantine* tapestries designed by Pietro da Cortona and woven on the looms established by Francesco Barberini shortly after his return from France in December 1625. The circumstances surrounding the creation of the series provide a foundation and a framework for exploring its meaning and purpose. Though inspired by an earlier *Constantine* suite of tapestries designed by Rubens, the "Cortona" panels should be read as an independent entity, the significance of which can only be fully appreciated within the context of the *gran salone* of the Palazzo Barberini, which I propose was their intended destination. This conclusion is supported by the many links between the tapestries and Barberini ideology, papal politics, the palace and the ceiling fresco in the *Salone.* Like the *Divine Providence* fresco, the "Cortona" series is a *summa* of the virtues and religious, political, intellectual and social initiatives of the family. The series emerges finally as a promotionally Italian endeavour, a showcase of Italian art and culture.

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Cette étude retrace l'origine et le développement de la série de tapisseries de l'*Histoire de Constantin* dessinée par Pierre de Cortone et tissée dans l'atelier établit par Francesco Barberini peu après son retour de la France en Decembre 1625. Les circonstances entourant la création de cette série fournissent un base et un encadrement pour une enquête sur sa signification ainsi que son objet. Bien qu'elle soit inspirée par une série de tapisseries *Constantin* antérieure dessinée par Rubens, celle de Cortone devrait être considérée comme une entité indépendante, la signification de laquelle ressort pleinement dans le contexte du grand salon du palais Barberini, ici proposé comme étant sa destination projetée. Ces conclusions sont soutenues par les nombreuses liaisons entre les tapisseries et l'idéologie Barberini, la politique papale, le palais et, finalment, la fresque sur le plafond du grand salon. Comme la fresque de la *Divine Providence*, la série du Cortone est un *summa* des vertus et des initiatives réligieuses, politiques,

intellectuelles et sociales de la famille. Finalement, les tapisseries apparaissent comme une tentative promotionelle italienne, c'est à dire une vitrine de la culture et l'art italien.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The "*History of Constantine*" series of tapestries is a monumental decorative ensemble that was initiated by one of Rome's most powerful figures, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, and designed by one of the period's most influential artists, Pietro da Cortona. It was produced on looms established in Rome by Francesco himself and its creation coincides with the execution of Cortona's exhilarating testament to Barberini glory, the *Triumph of Divine Providence*. In spite of all this, the *Constantine* series remains strangely enigmatic. The purpose of this project is to trace the genesis of the series and the circumstances surrounding its creation as a prelude to establishing its true meaning and, most importantly, its intended location.[1]

Many of the facts surrounding the creation of the tapestries were brought to light in Urbano Barberini's seminal work of 1950.[2] The series was catalogued and scholarly information pertaining to the history of the panels and the workshop assembled in 1964 by David Dubon.[3] There has since been no literature devoted exclusively or in large part to Cortona's tapestries, and with one qualified exception, no study has presented a detailed case for the intended location of the series.[4]

The *Constantine* tapestries could only have had but one logical destination: the *Salone* of *Palazzo Barberini*, where it would have formed part of a unified program with Cortona's vault fresco of *Divine Providence*. I therefore agree with scholarship placing the tapestries in this location because only by reading the series as part of the ensemble of the *Salone* and, in a larger sense, the *Palazzo Barberini* itself, can one properly appreciate the intentions of Pietro da Cortona and Francesco Barberini.

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[1] The tapestries are presently located in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. For the location of the series' accessory panels, as well as the cartoons and preparatory work, see appendix C.

[2] Urbano Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona e l'arazzeria Barberini," Bollettino d'arte XXXV (1950): 43-51, 145-152.

[3] David Dubon's *Tapestries From the Samuel H. Kress Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art: The History of Constantine the Great, designed by Peter Paul Rubens and Pietro da Cortona* (Aylesbury and Buckinghamshire, U.K.: Phaidon Press for the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1964).

[4] In her dissertation on the connections between Rubens and the Barberini, Simone Alaida Zurawski discusses Cortona's tapestries and the Barberini *salone* among other focal points of intersecting interests and rivalry (*Peter Paul Rubens and the Barberini, ca. 1625-1640* [Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1980]).

As a classic paradigm of pious, victorious, and divinely ordained leadership, the Constantinian history played out in the tapestry suite complements and enriches the notion of Divine Providence that is at the center of Barberini ideology and imagery. The first Christian emperor is also a metaphor for the lay powers of the papacy as guaranteed by God's agent, and an icon of ancient, imperial splendor. In this respect the theme addresses Barberini concerns for legitimacy and dynastic prestige that are incorporated in the concept of Divine Providence and are discernable in the symbols by which the Barberini defined and promoted themselves. These include their heraldry, titles, monuments, and the *Palazzo Barberini* itself.

Constantinian imagery is also a classic topos of Italian Renaissance art extending into the Counter-Reformation years and beyond, particularly in connection with the papacy and specifically in politically charged residential settings. In this respect the tapestries possess a distinctly local flavor, and recall the most august decorative cycles of Renaissance Rome. They continue this rich papal tradition in the *Palazzo Barberini*, secular seat of the pontifical household, and, in a sense, the new imperial residence.

Francesco's manufactory also revived a native tradition of tapestry weaving and design distinct from that of northern Europe in its princely patronage, private function and uniquely heraldic character. The *History of Constantine*, as a woven decorative ensemble, reflects this formative component of its Italian heritage.

While I am in agreement with others who situate the "Cortona" series in the *Salone* of *Palazzo Barberini*, I disagree with the dispositions already offered. These are addressed in Chapter 2. What I do propose is that though inspired by the "Rubens" tapestries on the same general theme, which entered the Cardinal's collection as a gift from Louis XIII of France in 1625, Cortona's project is a separate, coherent unit. Rather than completing or adding to the Parisian series, the Roman ensemble functions as an independent entity with a genesis and meaning of its own. That the Roman series should be considered independently from the Parisian one is supported by the circumstances surrounding the commission, as well as the ultimate fate of both sets. Above all, however, it functions

alone because it is no less than a showcase of Italian artistic tradition, and herein lies the key to understanding it.

In its form and function the series is distinctly, indeed promotionally, Italian, as is the message the ensemble is charged with conveying. Once appreciated as a separate whole, and in its proper context, the *Constantine* set of tapestries designed by Cortona reveals its true nature as a touchstone for Barberini political, spiritual, and dynastic pretensions, invoking the grand Italian tradition as a means of reinforcing the propagandistic aims of the pontifical family.

2. OTHER BARBERINI PROJECTS AND THE *GRAN SALONE*

The Roman *Constantine* series can be seen as one of four decorative programs conceived to adorn the walls of the *Salone* of *Palazzo Barberini*. The others are a projected fresco cycle illustrating the life of Urban VIII, and two additional tapestry series woven on the Barberini looms depicting the lives of Christ and Urban VIII. These four projects, along with the "Rubens" series of *Constantine* tapestries received by the Cardinal in 1625, have formed the basis of a number of decorative scenarios that scholars have proposed for the decoration of the *Salone*.

Earliest among these competing programs is the fresco cycle related to Urban VIII, documented by Federico Ubaldini, secretary to Francesco Barberini.[5] While he specifically indicated that the plan was destined for the walls of the *Salone*, the document itself has been dated to between 1637 and 1642, when the *Constantine* cycle and the vault decorations were either completed or close to completion.[6] Furthermore, it has been suggested that the project reflects the author's own initiative, rather than a plan under serious consideration by Francesco.[7]

Though the fresco plan was never realized, the subject later came to be depicted in the form of a tapestry series, the *Life of Urban VIII*, begun in 1663, a decade after the Cardinal's return from exile in France, and completed in 1679.[8] In her thesis, Lee maintains that this sequence of tapestries represents the original and final decorative

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[5] This document is discussed by the following: Walter Vitzthum, review of *Tapestries from the Samuel H. Kress Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art – The History of Constantine the Great designed by Peter Paul Rubens and Pietro da Cortona*, by David Dubon, *Burlington Magazine* 107 (May 1965): 262; Zurawski, 242-244 (appendix III); Mary Alice Lee, *'Hic Domus': The decorative programme of the Sala Barberina in Rome* (Ph.D. diss., The John Hopkins University, 1993), 163-164.

[6] While Zurawski (243) only goes so far as to say the document must postdate 1637, Lee (164) assigns it a date of 1642 based on the timing of historical events the program was to represent.

[7] Zurawski, 244.

[8] For the Urban VIII series see Marguerite Calberg, "Hommage au Pape Urban VIII," *Bulletin des Musees royaux d'art et d'histoire* (1959): 99-110 and Gertrude Townsend, "Four Panels of Baroque Tapestry," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts-Boston* (Spring: 1957): 11-15; Urbano Barberini, "Gli arazzi e i cartoni della serie 'Vita di Urbano VIII' della arazzeria Barberini," *Bollettino d'Arte* LIII (1968): 92-100; Catherine Johnston, Gyde Vanier Shepherd and Marc Worsdale, *Vatican Splendour: Masterpieces of Baroque Art* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1986), 132-139; Anna Maria De Strobel, *Le arazzerie*

program conceived for the *Salone*. Her conclusion is based on the earlier projected fresco plan on the same theme, and the quantity of tapestries, which fit comfortably on the room's available wall space. Most importantly, she asserts, the life of the pope tapestries provide a complementary history to the ceiling fresco while featuring Urban VIII as the "living hero" of the apotheosis it portrays.[9]

Before the *Urban VIII* series was begun, however, another set of tapestries was woven in the Barberini *arazzeria*. Produced between 1643 and 1656, that is, in large part during Francesco's exile, it illustrates twelve scenes from the life and passion of Christ.[10] It has been pointed out on a number of occasions that Baldinucci, in his biography of Romanelli, reported that the *Life of Christ* series was intended to hang in the *Salone*.[11] Vitzthum proposes a tiered arrangement for the room comprising both this set of tapestries and the fresco plan relating the story of Urban VIII. When the fresco plan was abandoned, Vitzthum continues, the French and Roman *History of Constantine* tapestries were an ideal substitute until the Urban VIII theme was finally realized in the later tapestry series. Together with the vault decoration, these parallel spheres representing Christ, and in turn, his Vicar, would have resulted in what Vitzthum terms a "baroque analogy to the walls and ceiling of the Sistine Chapel."[12]

What Vitzthum's scheme fails to consider, however, is that the quantity of tapestries involved could not possibly fit onto the walls of the *Salone*. As noted by Ferrari, the *Life of Christ* series alone exceeded the available wall space in the room.[13]

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romane dal XVII al XIX secolo, Quaderni di Storia dell'arte (*n.p.*: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani, 1989), 42-50; and most recently: Lee, 164-242.

[9] Lee, 170-171.

[10] For the *Life of Christ* series see the following: Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 150-151; Oreste Ferrari, *Arazzi italiani del seicento e del settecento* (Milan: Antonio Vallardi Editore, 1968), 18; De Strobel, 36-40; Lee, 165-167.

[11] The following have made reference to Baldinucci's remark: Vitzthum, 262; Ferrari, 18; Lee, 165. Barberini ("Pietro da Cortona," 45) refers to Baldinucci's biography of Romanelli, but only as a record of the workshop's existence.

[12] Vitzthum, 262-263.

[13] Ferrari, 18; Lee also refers to Ferrari's statement (168 and n. 355). Ferrari also asserted that the *Life of Christ* series could not have hung in a secular papal residence for reasons of decorum (18), though Lee believes that Vitzthum's proposal is wholly tenable in theory, if not in practice (169).

Furthermore, both Vitzthum and Lee disregard the chronology of events. The projected fresco plan as well as the *Urban* and *Christ* tapestry series came long *after* the Roman *Constantine* suite, executed between 1630 and 1641, was planned and well underway. Not only does it significantly pre-date the other programs, the *Constantine* series also coincides with Cortona's work on the vault, executed from 1632-33 to 1639. Despite the documentation pointing to the *Salone* as the destination for these later projects, neither can have represented the original scheme. It is difficult to imagine that a project intended to be integrated with a work as monumental and politically significant as the *Triumph of Divine Providence* would have been planned only after the fact. Moroever, the very existence of both the *Christ* and *Urban* sequences suggests either a progression in the planning of the *Salone*'s decoration, whether for practical or ideological reasons, or the simultaneous existence of alternate cycles. It has been observed, in fact, that paintings and other wall coverings were at various times recorded in the room and that tapestries were normally stored in a palace wardrobe. The artwork and other decorations in the *Salone*, therefore, may have rotated, and the tapestries, being the most expensive items and subject to damage, only brought out on special occasions.[14]

The *Constantine* series therefore can be seen as the earliest and, therefore, the original program for the *Salone*. Zurawski, in her reconstruction of the *Salone*, makes the same observation.[15] While asserting that the *Constantine* suite was intended for the *Salone*, she, however, along with others, assumes that both the French and Roman suites hung together as a single ensemble.[16] Zurawski in particular asserts that the meaning of the French series was appropriated by the Barberini for their purposes and integrated with the Cortona panels to create a grand statement of Christian triumph.[17] While plausible in its interpretation, this thesis is problematic as well, as is clearly evinced by Zurawski's

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[14] Zurawski, 167, 188 n.5, citing Barberini, 100; Hugh Honour, review of *Tapestries in the Kress Collection*, by David Dubon, *Connoisseur* 162 (June 1966), 139.
[15] Ibid., 167.
[16] Dubon, 16; Zurawski, passim, but in particular 110-120, 168-178; John Beldon Scott, *Images of Nepotism: The Painted Ceilings of Palazzo Barberini* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 187-190 (following Zurawski); Vitzthum, 262-263, however with the reservations noted earlier.
[17] Zurawski, 120, 180.

proposed reconstruction. In order to accommodate all thirteen large tapestries, the central doorway leading to the *Sala Ovale* would have to have been obstructed.[18]

As noted by Lee and Honour, the wall space in the *Salone* simply does not permit both series to be displayed together.[19] The logical conclusion is that only one of the *Constantine* sets could be hung on the walls of the *Salone*; and it was the Roman series. This is supported by a 1633 inventory indicating the removal of six tapestries to the *Cancelleria*,[20] which it will be shown, must refer to six of the "Rubens" panels, as well as by other circumstances that are explored in the following chapters.

A final alternative that has been suggested is that the *Constantine* sequences were not intended to hang in the *Palazzo Barberini* at all, but rather in the *Palazzo della Cancelleria*, the official residence of Francesco Barberini from the time of his appointment as Vice Chancellor in 1632.[21] The only evidence that has been cited to support this argument is a 1649 inventory of the *Cancelleria* in which all the *Constantine* tapestries are listed (appendix A).[22] Aside from the fact that this inventory is irrelevant for the period that interests us most (that is the 1630's, when work on the vault of the *Salone* was underway and Barberini power was at its apogee), it is also possible that the tapestries were moved after Urban VIII's death in 1644 when the family's fortunes dramatically changed.[23]

But the most compelling reason to dismiss the possibility that the Roman series was meant for the *Cancelleria* is that it was surely designed to occupy one specific location,

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[18] Zurawski, 168-178, 172 (ill.)
[19] Lee, 168; Honour, 139.
[20] Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *Seventeenth-Century Barberini Documents and Inventories of Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), Doc. 424a (p. 54).
[21] John Coolidge, review of *Tapestries from the Samuel H. Kress Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, The History of Constantine the Great, designed by Peter Paul Rubens and Pietro da Cortona*, by David Dubon, *Art Bulletin* 47 (December 1965), 529; Ferrari, 16; The prevalence of this opinion is noted by De Strobel, 24, though with no references.
[22] Coolidge, 529.
[23] Following Urban's death in 1644 the palace was handed over to the French government to prevent its seizure by the Vatican and the Barberini fled into exile in France until 1652. After the 1649 inventory, the "Cortona" series next appears in a 1689 inventory of Prince Maffeo Barberini's possessions at the palace (Lavin, VIII. Inv. 86.p.142ff. [p. 394]).

and that is the *Palazzo Barberini*. Aside from the large tapestries, the set also includes accessory pieces, including a baldachin, four *portiere* and seven *sopraporte*. These elements are consistent with the function and layout of the *Salone*, as we argue below. Furthermore, the series was undertaken in 1630 and the accessory pieces came off the looms throughout the decade.[24] Even if plans were altered between 1630 and 1632, when Francesco was appointed Vice Chancellor, there would have been no need to weave the accessory panels. And as this study shows, there is ample evidence to indicate that the meaning of the series is inexorably tied to the *Salone* of the *Palazzo Barberini*.

[24] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona e l'arazzeria Barberini," 145-147.

3. RECEIPT OF THE "RUBENS" TAPESTRIES AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BARBERINI LOOMS

While it is the *Constantine* series produced in Rome that is the object of this inquiry, its story begins in Paris with the "Rubens" tapestries received by Francesco from Louis XIII. Paris is, therefore, the logical point of departure for this discussion. This French sequence of panels was a catalyst, not only for the production of the Roman tapestries but also for the establishment of the Barberini *arazzeria*. What therefore follows is a reconstruction of the events that led to the creation of the new *Constantine* series as well as an investigation of the historical models or precedents that may have inspired Francesco. This then provides a foundation for an analysis of the tapestries' purpose and role.

Receipt of the "Rubens" Tapestries in Paris

Cardinal Francesco Barberini arrived home in Rome on December 17, 1625 with seven tapestries woven in gold and silk after designs by Rubens and illustrating the life of the emperor Constantine. This extremely valuable gift had been presented to him by representatives of Louis XIII on the night before his departure from Paris, where he had spent the previous months as Papal Legate engaged in arduous, and ultimately fruitless, negotiations with the French king and Cardinal Richelieu.[25] Barberini's receipt of the tapestries is related by Cassiano dal Pozzo, a member of his retinue, who reports that Francesco initially refused them out of deference to the Pope's orders against accepting gifts, but was eventually persuaded otherwise. The Cardinal himself wrote in two dispatches that he accepted the tapestries in order to avoid disappointing the King and was grateful to have left on civil terms.[26]

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[25] For a detailed account of the Valtellina question and the progress of negotiations see Ludwig Freiherr von Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, vol. 28, ed. Dom Ernest Graf (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1938), 62-3, 67-82, 87.

[26] These events were first documented by Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 46-47. Cassiano actually reported a gift of eight, not seven, tapestries. This discrepancy was noted but not addressed by Barberini. Dubon suggests that the eighth was not taken to Rome because it was unfinished (12, n.42).

The tapestries Francesco received from Louis XIII are first listed in an inventory of his Wardrobe compiled between 1626 and 1631, which documents all his possessions at his various residences, including the *Palazzo Barberini*, under construction at the time.[27] Unfortunately, the tapestries are noted in a separate entry of July 18 that provides no location. Clearly indicated as a gift from the King of France, the panels listed are: *The Marriage of Constantine, The Baptism of Constantine, The Battle of the Milvian Bridge, The Entry into Rome, Saint Helena and the True Cross, The Building of Constantinople,* and *The Death of Constantine* (Figs. 1-7).[28] All are fifteen or sixteen feet in length, and vary from fifteen to twenty-four feet in width. Of the seven episodes represented, five are based on historical events in the life of Constantine, while two, *The Baptism*, and *Saint Helena and the True Cross* are legendary.

Francesco's new tapestries were actually part of a set of twelve designed by Rubens and woven on the looms of Francois de La Planche and Marc de Comans, the Flemish directors of the Saint-Marcel shop in Paris.[29] The five remaining panels were still in production at the time of the bequest[30] and were listed in a report soon thereafter as: *The Campaign Against Licinius-Land Battle, The Apparition of the Monogram of Christ, The Labarum, The Trophy,* and *Constantine's Domination over Sea and Land.*[31] Of this group, *The Trophy* is an allegory of the crowning of Constantine; *The Apparition* is a legend, and the others are drawn from history.

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[27] Lavin, III. Inv. 26-31.135 (79-80).

[28] I have indicated the tapestries by the English titles assigned to them by Dubon (see cat.nos. 1-7, p. 107-115) which are based on the subject represented. The Italian inventory entry is slightly, though not significantly, different.

[29] The complete set is listed in a report from Paris dated c. 1630 (Barb. Lat. 4373 fol. 79) and published by Barberini ("Pietro da Cortona," 49). I have transcribed this document in full in appendix B. He also noted that another, though very similar, version of the same document had been published in 1874 by Eugène Muntz (48). This document appears in Dubon (13-14 n. 48). Regarding the Saint-Marcel shop see Dubon (3, 5, 132-135).

[30] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 48; Dubon 12; Mercedes Viale Ferrero, *Arazzi italiani* (*n.p.*: Electa Editrice, 1961), 46.

[31] This title of this last panel is problematic. Entitled "*Constantine and Crispus*" in Dubon's translation (14) from the original report as published by Eugène Müntz, where it is described as "*Un altro, con un Nettuno per mostrare il dominio per mare*" (quoted in Dubon, 13 n. 48), it is described in Barberini ("Pietro

Organization and Activities of the Barberini workshop : 1627-1679

What needs to be considered now are the events leading up to the design of additional tapestries by Pietro Da Cortona, also based on the life of the emperor Constantine, and woven in Rome between 1630 and 1641.

Less than two years after the Paris legation, the tapestry manufactory established by Francesco Barberini was already in production. Its earliest recorded project, the so-called *Castle* series of tapestries, was on the looms by 1627 and completed in 1631.[32] Among its various panels—all of which are lost but one--were four pieces designed by Cortona. Along with the other artists who collaborated on the project, he designed compositions that were transposed into full-scale cartoons for use by the weavers. Cortona's role in the workshop, while modest at this early phase, ultimately broadened to that of artistic director and chief artist. The master weaver was a Fleming known as Giacomo della Riviera or Giacomo de la Rivière, translated from Jacob van den Vliete, who was later succeeded by Gasparo Rocci, his son-in-law.[33]

There is both direct and indirect evidence to show that the Cardinal himself sponsored and closely supervised the *arazzeria*. Bookkeeping and inventory entries in the Barberini archives, cited here throughout, establish that Francesco financed the activities of the workshop. They also refer to him by his formal title of address, *Sua Eminenza*.[34] Correspondence among Barberini manuscripts on the subject of tapestry manufacturing also mentions the Cardinal by title, though not by name, in a way that strongly suggests his involvement.[35] It is a letter cited by Adolph Cavallo, however, and written much later, in 1646 during the Barberini's exile from Rome, that spells out Francesco's role as protector of the workshop and indicates his continuing interest in its activities.[36]

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da Cortona," 49) as "*un'altra con un Neptuno per mostrar il suo dominio per mare e per terra,*" as it appears in Barb. Lat. 4373. I have chosen to follow Barberini.

[32] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 43-45; Adolph Cavallo, "Notes on the Barberini Tapestry Manufactory at Rome," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts-Boston* (Spring: 1957), 17-26.

[33] Cavallo, 21-22; Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 44-45, 145; De Strobel, 14-15, 17, 21-22

[34] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 43-44, 145-52 passim; Cavallo, 17-26 passim; De Strobel, 13-24 passim.

[35] Cavallo, 23.

[36] Ibid., 18. The author cites an excerpt from the letter, which is addressed to Francesco, as follows: "...so that I may recommend to you this *arazzeria* which Your Eminence has always so kindly protected and the care of which it has pleased you to place in my hands..." The letter is from Pietro Lascotti, then director of

An important aspect of Francesco's role as patron of the new tapestry works concerns the independent nature of his enterprise. The Barberini looms had no connection to the Vatican and operated in a capacity that was private in orientation. This is confirmed by the origin and nature of the commissions it undertook. Repairs to or restoration of tapestries already in the Vatican and Barberini collections were given out to *tappezziere*—tapestry workers retained by the *Palazzo Apostolico* and the Barberini family.[37] Nor was the Barberini *atelier*'s production dedicated to filling Vatican orders. Of the eight sets known to have been woven in the workshop, only two were papal commissions while the other series were woven for private patrons and the Barberini family.[38] The Barberini workshop clearly operated not as an agent of the Vatican but rather under the aegis of a private, cultivated aristocrat.

That the cardinal should undertake such a venture comes as no surprise given what we know about his character, interests, and background. Well-versed in literature and history, renowned as a passionate collector of books, art and antiquity, Francesco is considered to have been something of an expert on tapestries as well.[39] Extensive exposure to these woven treasures had been available to him throughout his youth in the rich Barberini family collections. His uncle Maffeo is known from his correspondence to have acquired tapestries during his Paris nunciature on behalf of Sixtus V's nephew.[40] Francesco himself had occasion to visit the French royal collections in the Louvre and at Fontainebleau as well as the Parisian tapestry workshops during his diplomatic mission there in 1625, and in the following year, his mission to Spain furnished the opportunity to admire the extensive royal tapestry collections in Madrid.[41] It is also known that

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the workshop, who wrote to the Cardinal to report on specific matters pertaining to its operations—this when the Barberini fortunes had taken a dramatic downturn. Evidently the manufactory was of sufficient importance for Francesco to provide for its continued operation and supervise it from afar.

[37] De Strobel, 13; Cavallo, 21.

[38] Cavallo, 21; De Strobel, 12-13. The eight known series produced on the Barberini looms are: the *Castles*, *The Life of Constantine*, a set for the *Capella Pontificia* (Vatican commission), *Putti at Play* (Vatican commission), the *Life of Christ*, the *Life of Urban VIII*, a story of Apollo, and a set of armorial tapestries with the Colonna family arms. Additional miscellaneous panels were also woven for private commissions (De Strobel, 14-42, Cavallo, 21-23).

[39] Barberini, 47; De Strobel, 11;Cavallo, 18; Ferrero, 45-46.

[40] De Strobel, 11; Cavallo, 18.

[41] Ferrari, 11-12.

Francesco did not miss the opportunity to purchase a set of tapestries on his return from Paris from the deceased Cardinal del Monte.[42]

Finally, the chronology of events leaves little doubt as to who was reponsible for establishing the manufactory. In order for the *Castles* series to have been underway in 1627, preparation and set-up of the workshop would have had to have begun shortly after Francesco's return from Paris late in 1625 with the seven Rubens tapestries. This is especially true given the careful and deliberate manner in which he embarked on his new project. Since Rome lacked a local tradition of tapestry weaving, information about the industry on everything from yarns, dyes and prices to suppliers, samples and materials, were requested and obtained from abroad in reports sent to the cardinal between 1627 and 1635.[43]

It has been pointed out that for this detailed exchange of information to take place through his agents as early as 1627, Francesco would have had to set events in motion substantially earlier, probably at the time of his return from Paris in 1626. His decision to found the workshop therefore must have been made by the time he returned to Rome or very shortly after.[44] This supports the probability that the gift of tapestries from the French king was the catalyst for the cardinal's decision to establish his own workshop in Rome.

Tapestry Weaving : A History and Model of Noble Patronage

Tapestries were passionately collected in Italy long before they came to be woven there. By the fourteenth century, at least, vast quantities of hangings produced in the workshops of the North were making their way across the Alps and into the inventories of Italian princes, who coveted them for their luxuriousness and rarity. And while by the mid-fifteenth century local *ateliers* began to appear, even tapestries purchased from the commercial looms of northern Europe featured distinctive characteristics that adumbrated

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[42] Lorenza Machi Onori, "Pietro da Cortona per i Barberini," in *Pietro da Cortona 1597-1669*, ed. Anna Lo Bianco (Milan: Electa, 1997), 75, 84 n. 38. Onori refers to a 1626 letter by Cassiano dal Pozzo, in which he recalled the display of the panels in the newly-acquired Barberini palace prior to Francesco's purchase.
[43] Barberini, 47-49; Cavallo, 21-23; De Strobel, 17-18.

the Italian approach to the art of weaving. When the Gonzagas and Estes placed their orders with a certain agent from Brussels, they frequently supplied designs for borders—only rarely used in the north at the time--and heraldic elements that would not only customize the finished product but also clearly tie it to its patron and intended destination.[45] This tendency toward the personal, the site-specific, and the unique, distinguished Italian tapestry from its northern counterpart, which functioned rather as sumptuous yet portable decoration and insulation.[46]

The Italian conception of tapestries as a unique and integral component of a room or palace's decorative scheme and, therefore, by extension, a personal statement by and about its occupants, would determine the course of weaving as an industry as well as an art south of the Alps. The burden of creative genius was assigned to the painter who supplied the designs, while that of meticulous replication fell upon the weaver. This process was distinct from the northern approach, which employed the pictorial model as a starting point only and allowed the weaver much greater scope for personal expression.[47] The particularities involved in producing such one-of-a-kind tapestries for the Italian market were hardly conducive to the large-scale commercial enterprises of the north, however. The Italian taste for custom ensembles that functioned as part of a cohesive program is what ultimately encouraged the development of individual *ateliers* attached to the courts of northern princes.[48]

The history of the tapestry industry in Italy up to the seventeenth century is therefore limited to a number of minor shops in northern Italy, and two more important ones in Ferrara and Florence, set up by the Este and Medici respectively, both supervised by Flemings. The Ferrara looms had been established around the middle of the fifteenth century and operated until 1559, while Cosimo de'Medici had established a successful

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[44] Ferrero, 46; De Strobel, 12.
[45] Mercedes Viale Ferrero, "Arazzo e pittura," in *Storia dell'arte italiana*, ed. Paolo Fossati, no. 11, part III of *Situazioni momenti indagini*, vol. IV of *Forme e modelli* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1982), 119-120.
[46] Ibid., 137. However, the author also notes that the tapestries commissioned by Francis I at Fontainebleu are an important exception.
[47] Ibid., 120, 122, 125, 131
[48] Ibid., 120-122, 136.

shop that flourished for a time but declined throughout the seventeenth century. In Rome there was no such sustained encouragement of the industry. Nicholas V had set up a manufactory that produced one series around 1455 before it was closed by the following pope; and in 1558, Paul IV had imported one of Cosimo's weavers from Florence with the intention of organizing his own shop, but nothing ever materialized.[49]

In France, the Paris workshops competed with the Flemish producers for royal commissions until Francis I organized his own looms employing foreign weavers. Then followed Henry II who promoted the Paris workshops, and Henry IV, who established a successful manufactory in the Louvre and did much to revitalize the local weaving industry. It was Henry IV who in 1601 issued an edict that gave the Comans and La Planche workshop a virtual monopoly in the French market with special privileges, banned foreign imports, and even conferred noble status on the Flemish partners, whose arrival in Paris had been announced by royal warrant.[50]

What Cosimo de'Medici, Francis I, Henry II and Henry IV all had in common was the desire to free themselves from dependence on the Flemish weaving industry. Tapestries were a staple item among European aristocratic households, and the Flemings had dominated the field since the Middle Ages. In Italy the collections of princes and dukes were largely comprised of Flemish pieces, acquired through importation or purchased from the itinerant workshops that had colonized the northern regions.[51] Since tapestries often followed their owners from residence to residence, and were moved in and out of storage, they wore out and required repair or even replacement at great expense. They were thus objects of conspicuous consumption and great prestige for both their inherent and artistic value.

If Francesco had occasion to visit the Saint Marcel shop of Comans and La Planche, then he was no doubt aware of their status as "*directeurs de la fabricque de tapisseries du*

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[49] Joseph Jobé, ed., trans. Peggy Rowell Oberson, *Great Tapestries : The Web of History from the 12th to the 20th Century*, (Edita S.A. Lausanne, 1965), 83-85; Cavallo, 17.
[50] Jobé., 84, 86-90.
[51] Ibid., 79-83.

Roy" and of Henry IV's role in their promotion, particularly since Urban himself, in his aforementioned correspondence, had referred to the "royal workers" in Paris.[52] The cardinal would no doubt have also been familiar with the history of the Medici manufactory, particularly since his detailed collection of reports on the weaving industry included information about the prestigious Florentine shops.[53] Could the French kings and Cosimo de'Medici not have provided Francesco, a learned and avid collector, with a model of noble patronage? Just as the French kings and the Florentine duke had stimulated the local weaving industry while filling their palaces with tapestries produced on demand and *in situ*, it seems logical that for Francesco (whose upwardly mobile family was busy accumulating titles, wealth, and property) a private tapestry manufactory may well have represented yet one more symbol of arrival into the highest echelons of Roman society.

It is very likely, then, that Francesco returned from Paris with the seed of this grand new enterprise in mind, especially since, as we shall see, another major project was in the works at the time that would also promote the Barberini family and provide a showcase for the production of the future Barberini looms.

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[52] Dubon, 9, 12-13; Cavallo, 18; De Strobel, 11 n. 6.
[53] Cavallo, 25.

4. THE RISE OF THE BARBERINI AND ANCIENT ROME AS "SYMBOLIC CAPITAL"

The glory of Rome's ancient past was harnessed by the Barberini as a vehicle for self-promotion. Their social and political pretensions were buttressed by symbols evoking the imperial grandeur of antiquity. Archaeology, a serious pastime for Urban VIII and Francesco, also formed the basis of the family's public image.

The family's transformation from prosperous Florentine wool merchants to members of the wealthy new Roman nobility had begun only a generation earlier. Maffeo Barberini's advancement in the Curia had promoted the fortunes of Francesco's father, Carlo, who in 1600 transferred his young family to Rome. With Maffeo's *nunziature* in Paris from 1604 to 1606 and his subsequent elevation to the cardinalate came additional wealth, a new family palace, and the construction of a new Barberini chapel at S. Andrea della Valle in Rome[54]—in short, all the physical trappings necessary for the reconstitution of the dynasty along patrician lines.

To this aristocratic lifestyle the Barberini added a new history. Not only was the Florentine family name changed from *Da Barberino*, which pointed to their early roots as rural inhabitants of the Tuscan county or *comune* of Barberino in Valdelsa,[55] but its heraldry as well. It was Maffeo who, during or following his Paris *nunziature*, transformed the horseflies of his merchant ancestors into bees. Not only did the insect count among the royal emblems of the French monarchs, including Henry IV,[56] it was

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[54] Pio Pecchiai, *I Barberini* (Rome: Biblioteca d'arte editrice, 1959), 140-144. This was the palace on Via dei Giubbonari and remained the property of the Barberini even after the construction of the new palace on Via Quattro Fontane, purchased in 1625; For the chapel see Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters: Art and Society in Baroque Italy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), 25-26; Maffeo had also inherited a fortune from his uncle in 1600 (Pecchiai, 120; Haskell, 25).

[55] Pecchiai, 3, 19, 132. While their uncles had occasionally signed the name "Barberini" on official documents, Maffeo and Carlo were the first to use it commonly as well. The name "Da Barberino" was not attached to an ancient feudal estate but rather derived from a thirteenth-century fortification built by Florentines to defend their borders against Siena and was the appellation of all the inhabitants residing in the vicinity of the castle.

[56] Ibid., 143; Torgil Magnuson, *Rome in the Age of Bernini*, vol. I., *From the election of Sixtus V to the Death of Urban VIII* (Stockholm, Almquist and Wiksell, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1982), 377 n. 2; Haskell, 26.

also a powerful ancient symbol with ties to Virgil.[57] While the meaning of Barberini emblems is one to be considered in detail below, the future pope's concern for his family's image and social standing exemplified the ambitions of a dynasty as preoccupied with noble pretensions as it was with the acquisition of material wealth.

As a result of careful marriage and the ruthless acquisition of feudal principalities from the old Roman nobility, the Barberini were among the most titled princes of Italy.[58] The need for self-legitimization, however, was still discernable. A spectacular joust staged by Antonio Barberini in the Piazza Navona in 1634 in the form of a great sea battle identified the Barberini with Rome's illustrious past and feudal nobility.[59] Meantime, evidence of their mercantile origins was suppressed and vague rumors of an ancient, feudal estate were circulated.[60] Even Francesco, who had enjoyed a privileged upbringing in a patrician *milieu* light years from his family's bourgeois roots, inherited the same resolve to erase all traces of their ordinary beginnings. In 1636, when Barberini power was at its apogee, he ordered the wool merchant's shears which appeared on the family arms in the Tuscan county of Barberino plastered over—this notwithstanding the evident pride with which his ancestor had displayed the humble instrument of Barberini prosperity.[61]

If their fortune had initially been founded on the sale of wool, it was the papal tiara that promoted their social standing. Never before had a pope been so brazenly indulgent toward his family as was Urban VIII. Even in Rome, where the systemic nepotism of papal government was a basic fact of life and pontifical families enjoyed fringe benefits as a matter of course, the titles, honors and privileges conferred by Urban on his male relatives were without precedent.[62] While it was standard practice for the pope's nephew,

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[57] See chapter 6 in which the heraldic motif of the Barberini bee is discussed in detail.
[58] Pecchiai, 168; Haskell, 31. See also Pecchiai for Taddeo's marriage to Anna Colonna (163-164) and the unscrupulous acquisitions of Palestrina from Francesco Colonna (165-166), and Valmontone from the Sforza (175-176).
[59] Haskell, 55-56. See Maurizio Fagiolo Dell'Arco and Silvia Carandini, *L'effimero barocco*, vol. I (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1977), 89-92 for a description of the event and illustrations by Andrea Sacchi.
[60] Pecchiai, 3-4, 76.
[61] Ibid., 158; These accounts were circulated by a historian, Carlo di Tommaso Strozzi, engaged by Carlo Barberini and later embellished by his descendents (3-4).
[62] Haskell, 31; Von Pastor, 28: 39-48, for an account of Urban's promotion of his nephews.

in this case Francesco, to be appointed a cardinal and to assume a powerful role as secretary of state and "*cardinale padrone*,"[63] Urban also raised his younger brother Marcello-Antonio and Francesco's brother Antonio to the purple, the latter when he was only nineteen.[64] For his other nephew, Taddeo, whom Urban had already married into Rome's high aristocracy, he revived the ancient and defunct title of Prefect of Rome and bequeathed it with a pompous investiture ceremony. Moreover, the dormant prerogatives attached to the office were used to insist upon Taddeo's precedence among the ambassadors of Rome—an absurdity that resulted in a number of diplomatic skirmishes.[65]

This sort of flagrant self-aggrandizement was symptomatic of the Barberini's social pretensions and their quest for what has been aptly termed by Nussdorfer as "symbolic capital."[66] In Rome the venerable patrician families, though weakened financially, still wielded enormous influence by virtue of their supreme social status. Just as the Catholic sovereigns and Italian states were forces to be contended with on an international level, the old Roman aristocracy posed a challenge on the local political landscape.[67] They regarded the new papal nobility with disdain and hostility, not only for their plebeian bloodline but also because they themselves were reduced to a stockpile of titled brides and feudal principalities to be scavenged by the wealthier upstarts. Urban, who valued his authority in the secular realm no less than in the spiritual one, was determined that he should be the exclusive recipient of secular honors in his capital.[68] As a consequence, social aspiration and political strategy coalesced in a fervent drive to advance the Barberini line.

This he did by drawing on the unassailable authority and prestige of Rome's ancient past. Tradition had already furnished a major opportunity to exploit the powerful civic

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[63] Madeleine Laurain-Portemer, "Absolutisme et népotisme, la surintendance de l'état ecclésiastique," *Biblioteque de l'école des chartes* 131 (1973): 515-516.
[64] Pecchiai, 189. This occurred in 1627.
[65] Ibid., 167, 169-171. The title that had long-since ceased to exist except in name and had traditionally been carried by the dukes of Urbino..
[66] Laurie Nussdorfer, *Civic Politics in the Rome of Urban VIII* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 37.
[67] Ibid., 33.
[68] Ibid., 178. Urban was reported to have declared that "In Rome I am king of the Romans". See also 178 for the incident involving the Hapsburg emperor and the Farnese.

associations of the Capitoline Hill in the form of the *possesso*, the ritual by which the pope was welcomed by the Roman people and took possession of his cathedral, St. John Lateran. The procession from the Vatican passed through a triumphal arch laden with imperial imagery on the side facing the Capitol and papal imagery on the other as part of a pointed statement about the dual nature of papal authority.[69] At the same time the ceremony symbolized his assumption of temporal power.[70] More specifically, it underlined the subordination of the Roman Senate to the rule of the pontiff—a dynamic that deliberately recalled not the republican model but rather the imperial one, in which the patrician magistrates were subject to the emperor.[71] A statue of Urban VIII commissioned by the Senate in 1635, after they had repealed a law prohibiting statues of living popes on the Capitol, was as much a monument to its obsequious patronage of the papacy as it was a tribute to Barberini majesty.[72] Even Urban's brother Carlo, General of the Church, was memorialized on the sacred Capitol with a portrait bust mounted on an ancient torso of Julius Caesar.[73]

Like the Prefecture of Rome, the ancient office bestowed on Taddeo and the insignia of which was prominently displayed on the façade of the Barberini palace,[74] these monuments were potent emblems of civic rule. Their association with the Senate, the Capitol and ancient Roman authority, all embodiments of Rome's secular identity, validated Barberini claims of social pre-eminence.[75] By recasting themselves within the august history and institutions of Rome's ancient past, the Barberini could justifiably lay claim to all the dignities owed the family of a resident prince.

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[69] W. Chandler Kirwin, *Powers Matchless: The Pontificate of Urban VIII, the Baldachin, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, vol. 6, Hermeneutics of Art, ed. Moshe Barasch (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 18-19. For a contemporary description and illustration of the arch see Dell'Arco and Carandini, 63-64.

[70] Kirwin, 18.

[71] Nussdorfer, 61-63, 165; it is important to note that during Urban's reign power was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the pope himself, which, like the marginalization of the Roman nobility on the local political scene, paralleled the emergence of absolutist regimes throughout Europe and in Italian states like Tuscany (Magnuson, 222).

[72] Haskell 41; Nussdorfer, 181-182.

[73] The head was commissioned by the Senate from Bernini after Carlo's death in 1630 (Haskell, 41).

[74] Onori, 76.

[75] Nussdorfer, 180.

The importance of antiquity as a source of "symbolic capital" for the Barberini extended beyond social climbing and civic rule, however, to the very heart of their authority, ecclesiastical and political. Counter-Reformation rhetoric and larger papal claims of temporal power had also found legitimacy in the past, while the prestige of Rome itself derived from its antique heritage and apostolic sanctity. The early Christian martyrs, their relics and burial grounds were revered as icons of Catholicism's paleo-Christian foundation, symbols of the *Ecclesia triumphans* and the Church's eternal faith. Antonio Bosio's study of the Roman catacombs, the final resting place of the early saints and martyrs, was published posthumously by Francesco Barberini in 1632.[76] Urban VIII's lavish patronage at St. Peter's highlighted its role as the martyrium of the first bishop so as to emphasize the ancient origins and validity of papal authority.[77] The bees that populate the Baldacchino tie the Barberini pope in perpetuity to the apostles Peter and Paul, whose tomb it marks, and to Constantine, who first established a memorial on this site.[78] The Barberini also had the churches of Santa Bibiana (1624-1626) and Saints Martina and Luca (1635-1650) rebuilt and decorated following the discovery of the early Christian martyrs' remains beneath them.[79] A medallion panel from the *Life of Urban VIII* tapestry series documents the pontiff's patronage at Santa Bibiana among the great achievements of his pontificate. The panel was derived from a papal medal struck during Urban's reign and features the restored church of Santa Bibiana along with the Barberini arms and an inscription referring to the work executed there under Urban VIII.[80] Both the commemorative medal and the tapestry it later inspired attest to the Barberini's desire to identify themselves with the symbolic power of these early witnesses to Catholic truth and salvation.

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[76] Magnuson, 238. The work is entitled *Roma sotterranea*.
[77] Kirwin, 77, 82-86; Hibbard, 159.
[78] Kirwin, 14, 97.
[79] For the Church of Santa Bibiana, architecture and sculpture by Bernini, frescoes by Cortona, see Hibbard, 71-75, Haskell, 37, and Rudolf Wittkower, Art and Architecture in Italy: 1600-1750, 3rd ed., rev. and enl. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), 145-146, 175; for SS. Martina and Luca, architecture by Cortona, see Wittkower, 235-241 and Briganti, 72-73. Regarding SS. Martina and Luca, it is noteworthy that Cortona undertook the excavations that led to the discovery during work on his own crypt, and contributed his own funds to the construction of the new sanctuary to Saint Martina (Karl Noehles, "Cortona architetto, osservazioni sull'origine toscana e la formazione romana del suo fare architettonico," in Lo Bianco, 143-144).
[80] Townsend, 12.

Ever concerned with reaffirming the foundations of their spiritual and princely prerogatives, the Barberini appropriated ancient sources and Christian icons as symbols of their divinely ordained supremacy. They bound up in the heritage of classical Rome, in the spilled blood of apostles and martyrs, and in the story of the emperor Constantine, their own history and right to govern as universal lay and spiritual sovereigns.

5. THE PATRON AND THE ARTIST

What was true of all high level artistic patronage at the time was especially true of Pietro da Cortona's relationship with the Barberini, and with Francesco in particular. Promotion by Rome's ruling dynasty guaranteed Cortona's stratospheric success, while his images in turn reflected and amplified the power and prestige of the Barberini. Circumstances may have brought about their initial contact, but the forces of Cortona's talent and Barberini ascendancy converged as they did because Francesco recognized in the artist a unique ability to interpret the long-held aspirations of the Barberini as well as the glory of their ultimate triumph.

Francesco's decision to enlist the talent of Pietro da Cortona not only for the design of the *Life of Constantine* series but also as chief artistic personality of the new tapestry works is a revealing one, especially when considered within the context of Cortona's other activities during the 1630's. The status he had attained by this time, as well as the scale and prestige of other Barberini commissions occupying him throughout the decade, suggest the high priority assigned by the Cardinal to his new *arazzeria.*

Cardinal Francesco Barberini

Urban VIII's munificent support of arts, letters and learning was rooted in his own humanist predilections and was seconded by his nephews, especially Francesco.[81] French culture in particular had left a profound impression on both him and his uncle; and French scientists, intellectuals, writers, and artists were a significant presence at the papal court.[82] Urban himself was a poet, and upon his election he lost no time calling to Rome the literary luminaries of his day. His support for neo-Latin rhetoric and poetry has been

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[81] Pecchiai, 157-158; Haskell, 43; Magnuson, 237-239.

[82] Haskell, 26, 44; Fumaroli, "Eloquence et autorité pontificale," in *L'Age de l'éloquence: Rhétorique et "res literaria" de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique* (Geneva : Librairie Droz, 1980), 202-204; It will be recalled that Urban was papal nunzio in Paris from 1604 to 1606, while Francesco spent several months there as a papal envoy during the Valtelline negotiations in 1625. Urban's ties to France ran deep: Henri IV's support had been crucial in obtaining his cardinalate (Pecchiai, 143, Haskell, 26), Urban's poetry was first published in Paris, in 1620 (Fumaroli, 202), and as indicated above, he brought home from Paris great wealth and a new emblem, the bees of the French royal arms.

credited with encouraging a classical revival of letters that propelled Rome back to the forefront of literary activity.[83]

As a cardinal Maffeo had already been a serious art collector and as pope he extended his patronage in the service of God, Rome, and his family, as befitted his dual role as a spiritual and temporal ruler.[84] Inevitably it was St. Peter's, the most visible and potent symbol of his authority, as well as the embodiment of its divine foundation, that received the bulk of his attention. Meantime, the decoration of the family's secular seat of power, the new *Palazzo Barberini*, fell primarily within Francesco's orbit.[85] And though it became the prime venue for his own patronage and humanist pursuits, its fundamental purpose as a shrine to Barberini grandeur and an instrument of papal and princely authority was intrinsic to every element of its design and decoration.

Francesco's interests included books, artwork, and antiquity.[86] He was in fact a keen student of archaeology and had extensive collections of ancient sculpture, coins and medals.[87] His friendship with Cassiano dal Pozzo, the respected antiquarian and connoisseur who has been described as Francesco's cultural advisor, had a decisive impact on his taste and patronage and was also a member of his retinue during the legation in Paris in 1625.[88] His possible role in the genesis of subjects for the additional panels and the selection of Cortona for their design, especially given the archaeological potential of the subject matter, cannot be ruled out. What is certain is that Francesco's archaeological and numismatic interests, which he shared in common with Dal Pozzo, are reflected in the Roman *Constantine* series, as is demonstrated below, and that the project

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[83] Fumaroli, 202-204.
[84] Haskell, 30, 34-37, 41-43.
[85] It should be noted that Urban's authoritarian nature and concentration of decision-making in his own hands (Pecchiai, 155; Magnuson, 222) as well as his personal interest in matters of art and Barberini imagery, suggest his involvement here too; certainly Francesco's objectives would not have deviated from those of his uncle given the official function of the palace (see Magnuson, 274). Treatises on the design of the palace were in fact submitted by individuals from Urban's circle (Magnuson, 272-273).
[86] Haskell, 44-46; Pecchiai, 157-158.
[87] Giuseppina Magnanimi, *Palazzo Barberini* (Rome: Editalia, 1983), 127, 147, regarding his collections of antique sculpture, coins, medals and gems; Magnuson, 238. As noted above, Francesco also brought to publication Antonio Bosio's study of the Roman catacombs, *Roma sotterranea* (1632) (ibid.). For links between Francesco and Pieresc, the Provençal antiquarian, see Zurawski, 30-37, 51-54.
[88] Onori, 73.

would have been a topic of discussion in Francesco's circle of artists, humanists and intellectuals.[89]

Pietro da Cortona

May of 1630 is the earliest date for which we have a record of Cortona's involvement in the *Life of Constantine* series. Bookkeeping records of this date document payment to Pietro Paolo Ubaldini for transposing Cortona's oil sketch of "*...li angeli e li trofei attorno la portiera grande*" into a cartoon, indicating that by this time the design for at least one of the *portiere* was complete.[90] That he was also responsible for the large *Constantine* panels is confirmed by a 1634 wardrobe entry documenting his oil sketch for *Constantine Burning the Memorials*,[91] and corroborated by all the surviving preparatory work for the series, which have been definitively attributed to Cortona.[92] Since there is no further documentation of his work on the tapestries, it is impossible to attach a specific date or time frame to his execution of the sketches. Thus, the chronologies advanced by scholars have all been constructed around documented completion dates for the actual tapestries.[93] While it may be logical to suppose that the weavers' progression from one panel to the next was tied to the execution of the related *bozzetti* and cartoons, it is equally possible that the preparatory work for the series was produced in spurts or even all at once. Consequently all that can be said with certainty is that work on the tapestries occupied him *at some point* between early 1630 and April, 1641, by which date the last of the *sopraporte* had been woven.[94]

By 1630 the thirty-two year-old artist was already established as one of Rome's leading young painters and a favorite within the Barberini orbit. Cortona's ascent to the rarified

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[89] Magnanimi, 58, documenting the many consultations among members of Francesco's circle of letterati concerning the design of the *Palazzo Barberini*.
[90] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 145 and 152 n. 36.
[91] Ibid., 145.
[92] Ibid., 147-148; Giuliano Briganti, *Pietro da Cortona o della pittura barocca*, (Florence: Sansoni, 1962), 206-208; Dubon, 17; De Strobel, 21-22; Onori, 75; Ferrari, 16; A. Nesselrath, "Apparizione della Croce a Costantino," in *Raffaello in Vaticano, catalogo di mostra*, cat.no. 72 (Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Electa, 1984), 194-197; One question mark only remains with respect to a sketch of "*Constantine Destroying the Idols*," which is identified by Barberini ("Pietro da Cortona," 145) as Cortona's but rejected as a copy by Briganti (207). His opinion is supported, though with reservations, by Dubon (122).
[93] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 145-147; Briganti, 206-207; Dubon, 117-125 (cat.nos. 8-13).
[94] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 147.

sphere of the pontifical household had begun earlier in the decade with the patronage and protection of individuals with close ties to the future pontiff and cardinal nephew. Around 1620 or so the young artist came to the attention of the wealthy Marcello Sachetti, Maffeo Barberini's friend, fellow poet and art collector who, along with his brother Giulio, became generous patrons and promoters of Cortona throughout the decade.[95] During this period he also came into contact with Cassiano dal Pozzo, for whom he drew and painted antique monuments and works of art.[96] Through this group of *literati* he was introduced to Francesco, whose earliest known commission for Cortona dates to the period immediately following his uncle's election to the pontifical throne in 1623.[97]

Cortona's virtuosity in recreating the ancient world had special appeal for the connoisseurs and antiquarians in the Barberini circle including Francesco himself.[98] At the same time, the warmth, spirit and grandeur of his style was in line with the Cardinal's personal tastes,[99] and was especially appropriate to the decorative requirements of the pontifical dynasty with its inevitable appetite for grand, eulogizing statements.

By the turn of the decade Cortona was occupied with Barberini projects as diverse as they were numerous. An altarpiece, designs for public ceremonial events connected to the family, stage design for a dramatic presentation at the palace, illustrations for a treatise on botany dedicated to Francesco, a design for the reconstruction of the temple at Palestrina, and the new Barberini palace chapel were all completed by 1633.[100] This flurry of

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[95] Sergio Guarino, "'Con grandissima leggiadria et diletto dei riguardanti': Note su Pietro da Cortona e i Sacchetti," in Lo Bianco, 67-72; Haskell, 38-39; Briganti, 136-138, 155-156.

[96] Briganti, 57-58, 136; Onori, 73-74; Haskell, 101-102. See Onori in particular for recent information and references for dal Pozzo's *Museo Cartaceo*, to which these drawings were destined, and Cortona's copies of Roman paintings, particularly the *Aldobrandini Wedding* and the *Barberini Landscape*.

[97] Onori, 74. The project was a funerary design and though relatively minor in scope it was of personal significance to Francesco, who had close ties to the deceased.

[98] Haskell, 39-40.

[99] Haskell,45-46.

[100] For altarpiece in the Capuchin church, whose protector was the Cardinal Sant'Onofrio, brother of Urban VIII, see Briganti, 193. For the ceremonial events and stage design see Onori, 76, Briganti, 139, and Dell'Arco and Carandini, 82. Among these was a model for the prefectural crown for Taddeo Barberini's investiture as Prefect of Rome in 1631. For the Barberini chapel see Briganti, 139 and Onori, 76; For the Palestrina project see Onori, 74 and Wittkower, 232; For the Jesuit Giovan Battista Ferrari's *De Florum Cultura*, (1633) see Briganti, 139 and Onori, 78 and 84, n. 57 which includes an excerpt of the introduction praising Cortona and underlining his role as Francesco's court artist.

activity would only intensify throughout the decade with additional commissions not only from the Barberini, but also from the Oratorians and Ferdinand II of Tuscany.[101]

Cortona's star was thus clearly on the rise when he was engaged by Francesco to design tapestries for the new Barberini looms, around the beginning of 1630. He had established his career and name within the privileged circle of the Barberini and he was at the threshold of his greatest triumphs. Completion of the Barberini palace on the Via Quattro Fontane promised unrivalled opportunities for large-scale decorative enterprises and of these the *Salone* vault was the most prestigious. Construction on the ceiling was not completed until late in 1629 or early in 1630, however; and the commission was not assigned until shortly thereafter.[102] The *Constantine* cycle, therefore, under way by spring of 1630 or sooner, and destined to adorn the vast walls of the Barberini *Salone*, may be seen as Cortona's first palace commission and first grand decorative ensemble dedicated to the glory of the pontifical household.

There is every reason to believe that the Cardinal's tapestry enterprise was an unprecedented occasion for Cortona to advance his position as a premiere Barberini artist, particularly in connection with the palace, Rome's latest venue for showcasing up and coming artistic talent. Already by virtue of its breadth (comprising large panels, baldachin, *portiere* and *sopraporte*) the design of the *Constantine* series surpassed all of Cortona's previous Barberini commissions. The aristocratic pedigree attached to the art of tapestry, a pedigree ennobled by Raphael's revolutionary *Acts of the Apostles*, would not have been lost on Cortona. He may also have been aware of the contributions in tapestry design of artists like Mantegna and Giulio Romano as well as Bronzino and Francesco Salviati, both of whom designed cartoons for the Medici manufactory founded

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[101] See Briganti's chronology, 139-141 and catalogue, 196-221; For the Barberini projects see also Onori, 76-83; For the Chiesa Nuova see Jörg Martin Merz, "I disegni di Pietro da Cortona per gli affreschi nella Chiesa Nuova a Roma," *Bollettino d'arte* 79, nos. 83-88 (July-Oct 1994): 37-76; For the *Ages of Man* in Florence see Malcolm Campbell, *Pietro da Cortona at the Pitti Palace: A Study of the Planetary Rooms and Related Projects* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 3-62.

[102] Briganti, 82.

by Cosimo I in Florence.[103] Perhaps most tantalizing to an ambitious young painter of the generation inspired by Rubens' altarpiece at the Chiesa Nuova[104] would have been the unique opportunity to confront his own work directly with that of the Flemish master. The seven *Constantine* episodes brought home from Paris by the Cardinal were the obvious standard against which Cortona's panels would be compared. However daunting or inspiring this prospect may have been, its potential for enhancing Cortona's status is unquestionable.

[103] Ferrero, "Arazzo e pittura," 122 (Mantegna), 129-131 (Raphael), 133-134 (Giulio Romano), 138-139 (Bronzino), 140 (Francesco Salviati); for the Medici workshop see 137-143; for its activities in the Seicento, see idem, *Arazzi italiani*, 41-43.

[104] Anna Lo Bianco, "Pietro da Cortona: Carriera e fortuna dell'artista," in *Pietro da Cortona 1597-1669*, 22; Briganti, 67.

6. THE *CONSTANTINE* TAPESTRIES WOVEN IN ROME

By April of 1630, Cortona's designs for the sopraporte of the *Constantine* series were at least partially complete, and the first major piece, the Apparition of the Cross was underway in 1632. In April, 1641 the set along with its garnitures and baldachin pieces was complete.[105]

The five main panels are: *Constantine Fighting the Lion, The Apparition of the Cross, The Campaign against Licinius, Sea Battle, Constantine Burning the Memorials,* and *Constantine Destroying the Idols* (Figs. 8-12). In addition, there were four *portiere* featuring the Barberini arms (Fig. 14); seven *sopraporte* (over-door) panels consisting of round and oval medallions illustrating monuments or figural reliefs related to Constantine (16-18);[106] and a baldachin comprised of a ceiling depicting the Barberini bees (Fig. 15) as well as a dossal, featuring the golden *Statue of Constantine* (Fig. 13). There were also seven pendants that went with the baldachin, and four friezes along with another unidentified piece, all of which have not been accounted for.[107] The main panels and the *Statue of Constantine* are about sixteen feet high and vary in width from nine to twenty-three feet.[108]

On the basis of the varying sizes of the main panels and the numerous accessory pieces produced for the Constantine set, it has been concluded that the series was conceived to occupy a specific location.[109] Other suites of tapestries woven in the Barberini *arazzeria* also included garnishing panels, these being the *Castles* series already mentioned, the *Putti at Play*, produced between 1637 and 1642 or so, and the later *Life of Urban VIII*, begun in 1663. All were apparently commissioned for the use of the Barberini themselves, though not necessarily in the permanent context that we might envisage

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[105] Barberini, 145-147; Followed by Briganti, 207-208; Cavallo, 22; Dubon 18-20.
[106] The seven *sopraporte* are described below in chapter 8, p. 58.
[107] See appendix A for the 1649 Barberini inventory entry from which this data is derived. The inventory is partially transcribed in Lavin (218) and reproduced in full by Barberini, 50-51 and Dubon, 15-21.
[108] See Dubon, cat.nos. 8 through 13, p. 117-125.
[109] Dubon 16; De Strobel, 20; See also Ferrari, 14. The "Rubens" tapestries also vary in size, but have no accompanying accessory pieces.

today.[110] It has been pointed out that tapestries, by virtue of their mobility, served different functions, usually in connection with special occasions. They might be hung outside the façade of a palace during processions, they could be brought out on occasion to decorate certain rooms, and they were also hung in churches during celebrations. A stock of valuable tapestries available for display was a matter of prestige among noble families.[111]

Francesco's Decision to Produce a New Series on his own Looms

Among the reports sent to Francesco from the various tapestry centers of Europe was one that came from Paris, dated sometime before 1630. It provides a detailed account of the entire *Constantine* set designed by Rubens divided into the group of seven panels given to Francesco in 1625, and the remaining five tapestries, for which a price is indicated (appendix B).[112] Also in this report is a listing of other pieces available along with their prices. Of these Francesco purchased two mythological sets.[113] Clearly this was an opportunity for him to complete the series he had received from Louis XIII, and he was obviously in a spending mood with no apparent qualms about doing business with the French *atelier*. Nevertheless Francesco passed on the remaining "Rubens" panels and decided to have additional tapestries woven on his own looms. His reason for doing so is one of the central questions surrounding the Roman *Constantine* series and is the focus of my explanation of the tapestries' purpose and general meaning.

It is frequently acknowledged that the Cardinal received the "Rubens" panels and subsequently "completed" the ensemble with panels woven on his own looms though depicting episodes different from those in the French series.[114] What has not been fully addressed is the fundamental question posed by Francesco's course of action: Why would

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[110] Cavallo, ibid.; for the *Urban VIII* series see chap. 2, n. 8; for *Putti at Play* see: Thomas Campbell, "Two Putti Trying to Stop a Monkey Abducting a Child," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (v. 54, Fall 1996), 27; De Strobel, 32-36; Ferrero, "Arazzo e pittura," 132-134; Ferrari, 17-18; for the theme's Renaissance origins see R. Quednau, "Quattro incisioni con giuochi di putti," in *Raffaello in Vaticano. Catalogo di mostra*, sch. no. 135 (Milano: Gruppo Editoriale Electa, 1984), 357-358.

[111] Townsend, 15; Cavallo, 21.

[112] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 49; Dubon, 13, n. 48. See chap. 2, n.29 above.

[113] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 48.

an avid collector such as himself not profit from the aforementioned occasion to complete a set designed by no less a celebrated artist than Rubens?[115] Implicit in this question are the central issues of subject matter, artist, and place of production, all of which have crucial bearing for the meaning of the Roman series and all of which therefore merits closer examination.

Subject Matter

Evidently Francesco was dissatisfied with the scenes depicted in the five remaining "Rubens" panels, or at least with what he might have been able to surmise from the titles indicated in the report entries. It has been pointed out that some of them may have spawned confusion or appeared repetitive. The "*battaglia contra Maxentio,*" for example, might have recalled the "*battaglia sopra il ponte di Mola*" which the Cardinal had already received from Louis XIII, while the "*dove Costantino eresse il nome de Cristo nelle sue bandiere*" and "*dove apparisce in aria il nome di Xto*" could have seemed too similar.[116] Furthermore the Cardinal may have been put off by the fact that the entire "Rubens" series was commercialized, and with great success, by the Comans and Laplanche shop, which had retained ownership of the cartoons and, therefore, the right to reproduced the set freely.[117] By substituting new episodes in the place of all but one (the *Apparition* panel) of the five remaining "Rubens" scenes, Francesco created a new set of *Constantine* tapestries that was unique. The numerous accessory pieces woven to accompany the series would have further customized the collection, making the whole an original ensemble. Therefore by departing from the French program, Francesco accomplished two things: he avoided repetition within his own collection and assured himself of complete exclusivity. Furthermore, and perhaps most significant given the importance he evidently attached to his newly-founded manufactory, he distinguished the

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[114] Ibid., 46-47; Dubon, 11-14; Cavallo, 22; De Strobel, 20; Ferrero, *Arazzi italiani*, 47; Ferrari, 14; and Magnanimi, 162. All describe the new Roman panels as a "completion" of the French series.

[115] Alone in even considering this question is Zurawski, 102-104. Barberini ("Pietro da Cortona"), Dubon, and Magnanimi (note 58 above) go only so far as to speculate that the report from Paris might indicate the Cardinal was considering the purchase of the additional panels but ultimately decided against it.

[116] Zurawski, 103. The author also asserts that Francesco would have been unfamiliar with the "*Neptuno*" subject, however it seems unlikely to me that the erudite Cardinal would have been unable to connect the notion of sea domination with Constantine's landmark victory over Licinius in the Bosphorus.

[117] Dubon, 22-24. For example, the report from Paris also advertises a smaller-scale version of the "Rubens" set (13).

production of his own looms from the tapestries he had received in Paris and from the French workshop in general.

Alongside a quest for originality there were other reasons to pass on the five "Rubens" panels and the subjects they represented, the most important being their inherent meaning. The original iconography of the suite designed by Rubens had been conceived with the French king in mind, as is suggested by the French royal arms in the borders.[118] Whether or not the program was appropriated to suit the ideological purposes of the Barberini once the seven tapestries reached Rome, as Zurawski has asserted, is open to question.[119] Regardless of how the "Rubens" tapestries already in his collection were perceived, the Cardinal, rather than make do with the episodes readily available for purchase, elected to devise new ones that better served his purposes.

With the exception of the *Apparition*, the six tapestries designed by Cortona depict unprecedented scenes from the life of Constantine that, rather than highlighting his military conquest and leadership, emphasize his Christian devotion and his role as the divinely-elected founder of the new Christian Empire.[120] Through history and allegory, the new series celebrates the virtues, deeds in the service of the Church, and final apotheosis of Constantine, the noble ancestor of the pontifical family and source of their spiritual and princely authority.

The Roman Constantine Series as a New, Independent Cycle

Not only do the "Cortona" panels allude specifically to Urban VIII and the Barberini, but they also function as a coherent ensemble, in no way dependent on the "Rubens" episodes for their meaning. As closer inspection shows, the Roman series proceeds logically from Constantine's youth to the climax of his career, pausing along the way to

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[118] For possible connections between the "Rubens" tapestries and Louis XIII see Dubon (9) and John Coolidge, "Louis XIII and Rubens: The Story of the Constantine Tapestries," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* LXVII (1966): 271-292.

[119] Zurawski, 112-113, 117-119. This interpretation is based on a scheme in which the new tapestries are interpolated with the "Rubens" panels, for which a "Roman" reading is proposed.

[120] The following all agree on this general shift in emphasis: De Strobel, 21; Magnanimi, 169-170; Ferrero, *Arazzi Italiani*, 47, and "Arazzo e pittura," 146-147; Ferrari, 15; The novelty of Cortona's scenes, as

illustrate his devotion to the Church and the milestone events through which his empire came into being. That the suite stands successfully on its own is of singular importance, because, while it has generally been taken for granted that Cortona's tapestries were hung together with the seven French panels,[121] there is evidence to suggest otherwise. An inventory from January 1633 indicates that six unidentified *Constantine* tapestries, along with a matching *portiera*, were shipped to the *Cancelleria*.[122] Since by this date only two *portiere* from the new *Constantine* series had come off the Barberini looms,[123] the entry must refer to six of the "Rubens" panels.

That all but one of the French tapestries ended up in the *Cancelleria* while the Roman series was still in production (and for which there is no similar evidence of shipment) weakens the thesis that the Cardinal had sought to *complete* the "Rubens" series. For had the additional episodes been commissioned to enhance or, to paraphrase Zurawski, "fill gaps"[124] in the narrative of the panels he already possessed, and in the process shift their meaning to promote the Barberini agenda, Francesco would have had to display all thirteen tapestries together in order for the ensemble to have any coherence.[125]

The tapestries woven on the Barberini looms should therefore be viewed not as a completion of the French series, but rather as a new and separate *Constantine* suite possessing its own meaning and logic. Though inspired by the gift of tapestries received from Louis XIII, the Roman series was conceived and produced under particular circumstances—circumstances that bear upon its symbolic value. Woven on the Cardinal's own looms after cartoons by Pietro da Cortona, the series, like the Barberini workshop, is an emblem of Rome's artistic and cultural hegemony.

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opposed to Rubens' classic historical episodes, will become clear when Constantinian iconography and the individual tapestries are discussed in detail below.

[121] Dubon, 16 (referring to the "completed Constantine series"); Barberini, 45 (though not spelled out this conclusion is strongly implied); Zurawski 171-174; Other comments about the location of the series have failed to consider the possibility of the two sets being separated: Onori, 84 n. 40; De Strobel, 24; Honour, 529; Vitzthum, 262-263. See also chap. 2 above.

[122] Lavin, Doc. 424a (p. 54). The *Palazzo della Cancelleria* was the official residence of the Cardinal during his tenure as vice-chancellor from 1632 to 1679.

[123] Barberini, 145; followed by Dubon, 19. The *portiere* were completed by July, 1632. The first large panel, the *Apparition of the Cross*, was only completed in February, 1633.

[124] Zurawski, 108.

[125] See, for example, Zurawski's proposal for their arrangement (171-179).

Francesco's Choice of Artist

If the Cardinal's goal was simply to alter the meaning of the series by substituting episodes, why did he not engage Rubens to provide the additional panels? Both practical and aesthetic considerations have been advanced as possible explanations. Rubens' diplomatic mission to England in 1629 on behalf of the Spanish Crown to engineer a treaty inimical to French interests placed him at odds with Urban VIII's pro-French sympathies. This may have dissuaded the Cardinal from approaching him with a commission.[126] More probable, however, is that Francesco already had in mind Pietro da Cortona, artistic director and chief designer of the new *arazzeria*, a personality at the forefront of the Roman art scene, and the Cardinal's protegé.

Cortona's reputation at the time was such that his affiliation with the workshop, it has been observed, virtually assured its prestige and artistic success.[127] His participation on the *Castles* series, furthermore, had furnished him with experience in low-warp tapestry design, which required that cartoons be prepared in reverse, as a mirror image of the final product.

The subject matter of the *Constantine* series was particularly suited to an artist who was an assiduous student of archaeology and who had established his name through grandiose and erudite interpretations of the classical past that appealed to the humanist sensibilities of his patrons.[128] Cortona's drawings for Dal Pozzo's *Museo Cartaceo*, particularly his painstaking illustrations of Trajan's column,[129] his copies of Roman paintings, and his expert reconstruction of the temple at Palestrina all bespeak a cultivated interest in antiquity that is articulated in the *Trattato della Pittura e Scultura* on which Cortona collaborated.[130] The heroic and archaeologically precise rendering of the tale of an early

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[126] Zurawski, 103-104. For Ruben's mission in London see C.V. Wedgwood, "Rubens and King Charles I," *History Today* 10 (1960) : 809-820.
[127] Ferrero, *Arazzi Italiani*, 47; Ferrari, 13; Zurawski, 104.
[128] Wittkower, 247.
[129] Briganti, 137.
[130] Gian Domenico Ottonelli and Pietro Berretini, *Trattato della pittura e scultura, uso et abuso loro (1652)*, ed. Vittorio Casale (Rome: Libreria Editirice Canova, 1973), 178-179 and editor's remarks, 76.

Christian martyr, Santa Bibiana, had in fact been the artist's first major triumph for the Barberini.[131]

In addition, at about the time he began work on the *Constantine* series, Cortona had either received, or was a serious candidate for, other commissions at the *Palazzo Barberini*, including the gallery, chapel, and *Salone* vault.[132] Since there is good reason to believe that the Roman *Constantine* series was intended as an integral component of the *Salone*'s decorative scheme, as will be demonstrated below, it is logical and appropriate that the overall *concetto* should have been in the hands of a single artist.

That the Cardinal held Cortona in particularly high regard is denoted by the special nature of his relationship with the artist. Whereas other Barberini painters such as Andrea Sacchi and Andrea Camassei received direct cash payments for specific work they completed, Cortona was paid, from 1632 onward, through venal offices purchased on his behalf by the Cardinal. Besides producing an annual return for the duration of the holder's lifetime, they also carried a certain prestige, one being the office of "Knight" and the other a "Janissary," and thus publicly acknowledging his preferred status at court.[133] And while Cortona was never documented as a member of Francesco's *famiglia* as Sacchi was in connection to Antonio Barberini,[134] it is clear from the quantity and variety of Barberini projects that went to him, as well as from Ferrari's remarks in the introduction to *Flora*,[135] that he enjoyed the Cardinal's highest esteem and exalted patronage.

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[131] Haskell, 38-40; Wittkower, 247; Briganti, 72-73.

[132] Cortona began work on the *Constantine* series at the end of 1629 or very beginning of 1630, while by 1631 he was already at work in the gallery and chapel, and had received the commission for the vault of the *salone*. See Onori, 76; John Beldon Scott, "Pietro da Cortona's payments for the Barberini salone," *Burlington Magazine* 131 (June 1989): 416; Briganti, 82, 139.

[133] Scott, 416-418. The *Cavalierato Pio* and higher Janissary were the two non-ecclesiastical offices issued through the *Cancelleria*. They also bore additional value in that they could be sold for the principal. The only two cash payments Cortona ever received from Francesco were in 1631(for the gallery and chapel) and 1640 (as final payment for the vault and all other work at the palace) (416).

[134] Haskell, 7; Onori, 78.

[135] See chap. 5, n. 100 above.

And so, eminently qualified to relate the ancient, heroic tale of Constantine, a favorite Barberini artist poised to immortalize the family's glory in the *Salone* of the new palace, and familiar with the technical aspects of tapestry cartoon design, Cortona represented an obvious choice for a project so vast in its implications.

Conclusions about the General Meaning of the Series

The *Constantine* cycle would be the first figural series to be produced on the new looms, a first true test of the weavers and *cartonniers* alike. Not only was it to be the manufactory's grand, inaugural statement that would launch its success and prestige,[136] it was also an audacious response to Rubens and the Comans and Laplanche workshop. For the Cardinal would not have been oblivious to the significance of substituting the French panels by Rubens with *Constantine* episodes designed by a young, Italian artist and woven on his own looms, founded not three years earlier. I would submit, in fact, that Francesco engineered the *Constantine* project to be a spirited challenge of the centuries-old French weaving establishment and the venerable Rubens. In this respect Cortona was selected not only because the Cardinal considered him the best artist in Rome for the job; he was also selected because the Cardinal saw him as the Roman answer to Rubens. Though a generation's worth of time and experience separated them, the breadth and exuberance of Cortona's style as well as the recherché quality of his classical interpretations, qualified him to confront Rubens' work head-on.

This would explain Francesco's decision to have additional cartoons designed not by Rubens, who served the other Catholic sovereigns of Europe, but by Cortona, the rising star at the Barberini court. It also explains why he had the panels woven at his own *arazzeria*. Inspired by the tapestries he had received from Louis XIII, the *Constantine* series was intended to rival the Rubens group created on the royal looms in Paris. It offered a tantalizing opportunity to demonstrate the virtuosity of the Cardinal's own weavers and premiere painter. And so it may be said that Francesco did not care to own all twelve pieces of the "Rubens" set. He wanted to create his own suite of tapestries that

[136] Barberini (147), Magananimi (174), and Ferrari (17) all note that the *Constantine* series demonstrated how remarkably far the workshop had come in so little time, the quality of the tapestries being equal to those produced in the Comans and Laplanche shop, which benefited from a long and venerable tradition.

would be an impressive response to the Paris pieces, displaying the fruits of his own enterprise while advertising Rome's continued artistic ascendancy, and imbued with meaning relevant to him and his family.

7. THE TAPESTRY BORDERS AND THEIR HERALDRY

Though the borders of the Roman *Constantine* series were not designed by Cortona, they derive special significance from their display of Barberini heraldry. These devices are charged with specific meaning that complements our appreciation of Barberini ideology and consequently completes our understanding of the tapestries.

The Border Designs

As documented in detail by Dubon in his catalogue, the borders on the Roman *Constantine* series are nearly identical to those of the French series, which were designed not by Rubens, but by the Saint Marcel shop where the panels were woven.[137] The Roman tapestries repeat the same patterns of cartouches, garlands, wreaths, clusters of flowers, fruit, and leaves, trumpets, scrolls, masks and sphinxes.[138] Also reappearing in the Roman set is the Chi-Rho that figures in the central cartouche at the top of the "Rubens" panels, while the contents of the side and bottom cartouches have been substituted with heraldic devices pertaining to the Barberini. The royal arms of France and Navarre on the sides, along with the crowns surmounting them (Fig. 19), have been replaced with bees flanked by laurels and coronets above (Fig. 20). Below, laurels take the place of the French eagle and serpent, and are disposed either as a wreath or bound with their branches crossed.

We find the same emblems on the *portiere* and *sopraporte* of the *Constantine* series as well as on the ceiling of the baldachin that surmounted the *Statue* panel (Figs. 14-18). The *imprese* feature most predominantly on the *portiere* which display the Barberini coat-of-arms, consisting of three bees enclosed within an elaborate cartouche framed by laurel branches, as well as on the baldachin ceiling, where three bees appear again, this time enclosed within an oval laurel garland disposed laterally, and framed by an oval moulding. Four more bees are arranged in the corners of the complex ornamental design

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[137] Dubon, 11.

[138] See Dubon's catalogue entries 1-7 for the "Rubens" tapestries (107-116) and 8-13 for the "Cortona" tapestries (117-125). With respect to the ornamental motifs, he notes that they were copied directly from the French borders with occasional passages misunderstood (117).

surrounding the oval. Laurel wreaths also surround the central images of the *sopraporte*, and the corners here too are occupied by bees superimposed on *rinceaux*.[139]

Dubon has noted that the ornament of the oval moulding on the baldachin ceiling, as well as the outer frames of the *sopraporte*, are derived from the Paris series.[140] Of special interest for their borrowed elements are the *portiere* carrying the Barberini arms (Fig. 14). While the Chi-Rho held aloft by the victories must also have been inspired by the French tapestry borders, the coronet that surmounts the cartouche repeats that of the Roman tapestry borders. A glance at the surviving *portiera* from the *Castles* series, moreover, reveals the source of the coronet motif (Fig. 21). The *Castles portiera* features the Barberini arms, comprised of three bees floating within a cartouche, superimposed on a laurel tree with a coronet floating above. A banner displaying the Barberini motto "Hic domus" unfurls on either side of the arms, the significance of which is discussed below. Since the *Castles* series, it will be recalled, predates the *Constantine* tapestries,[141] and since the coronet does not appear in any other variation of the Barberini arms,[142] it is reasonable to assume that this earlier *portiera* provided the source for the coronet that appears in the borders of the Constantine panels and above the arms on the *portiere*.

In the case of the *Castles* panel, the inclusion of the coronet is easily explained by the fact that the subject of the tapestry is the principality of Palestrina, which the Baberini had just acquired and a distant view of which appears in the background. The coronet evidently points to the status of the Barberini as princes of this prestigious territory.[143] Its purpose in the *Constantine* tapestries is not unrelated: That the coronet, rather than the expected papal tiara, should substitute the French royal crown reveals an express desire to

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[139] See Dubon's descriptions of the accessory pieces (18-21) for details difficult to spot in the illustrations.
[140] Dubon, 19-20.
[141] The *Castles portiera* was completed in April, 1630, while the Constantine *portiere* were completed in 1632, 1637, and 1638 (Barberini, 44, 145-146).
[142] For example, it does not appear in the Barberini papal escutcheon, nor in the arms on the family chapel at S. Andrea della Valle , nor in the versions of the family arms appearing in Girolamo Teti's *Aedes Barberinae ad Quirinalem* (Rome, 1642) and in Giovanni Ferro's *Teatro d'imprese* (Venice, 1623).
[143] Given what we know about the Barberini's unbridled social aspiration, it comes as no surprise that they should have included in this series (the theme of which was the great castles of Europe) two *portiere* featuring views of their own newly acquired fiefdoms – Monterotondo and Palestrina—with the Barberini arms and coronet above to reinforce the message.

insist upon the royal status of the Barberini as princes is their own right, on a par with the French king and independent of papal authority. For since the papal tiara symbolizes the royal, imperial and spiritual spheres of pontifical authority,[144] the use of the coronet in the *Constantine* series clearly signifies a deliberate separation of papal power and aristocratic prerogatives.

Though ubiquitous throughout the reign of Urban VIII, not only in art and architecture but also in literary and scientific works,[145] the Barberini bees, drawn from the family's coat-of-arms, were not employed merely to identify the Barberini as patrons. Heraldic emblems, one seventeenth-century writer observed, were an embodiment of the family's morals and virtues.[146] Charged with specific meanings which they inevitably imparted to the object on which they were displayed, the Barberini device contains layers of significance and flattering associations that affect our reading of the *Constantine* tapestries.

The Barberini Bees

Maffeo Barberini appropriately selected emblems that flattered and ennobled himself and his family. As noted earlier he had adopted the bees of the French royal arms as his predominant heraldic device following his nunziature in Paris. Besides possessing a royal pedigree the bee was also a powerful symbol that contained levels of interconnected meanings. It enjoyed a reputation for industriousness, chastity, and intelligence that stretched back to antiquity.[147] Vergil himself had associated bees with "...divine intelligence, and a draught of heavenly ether."[148] Bees also figure in the Christian tradition in which they are lauded in the writings of Ambrose as symbols of virtue and organization,[149] and are alluded to by Wisdom in Ecclesiasticus in the following passage: "For my spirit is sweet above honey: and my inheritance above honey and the

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[144] Scott, "S. Ivo alla Sapienza and Borromini's Symbolic Language," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* XLI, no. 4 (1982): 306.
[145] For an overview of the phenomenon he terms "apimania" see Scott, "S. Ivo alla Sapienza," 300, n. 32.
[146] Ibid., 300, citing A. Cellonese, *Specchio simbolico overo delle armi gentilitie* (Naples, 1667), 46.
[147] Ibid., "S. Ivo alla Sapienza," 300-301.
[148] *Georgics*, as quoted in Scott, "S. Ivo alla Sapienza," 300. Vergil is also cited in connection with the bee by Giovanni Ferro in *Teatro d'imprese*, Part 1, 66.
[149] Scott, "S. Ivo alla Sapienza," 300-301; Ferro, 66, 77.

honeycomb."[150] The connection with Divine Wisdom, adumbrated by Vergil and confirmed in Scripture, proved a fertile one, developing into an important facet of Barberini imagery[151] and elaborated in the volumes of encomiastic works devoted to the bee during Urban's reign.[152]

Giovanni Ferro's *Teatro d'imprese*, dedicated to Maffeo Barberini while still a cardinal and published in 1623, is a precursor to this phenomenon. The chapter on bees opens with a long enumeration of the insect's many virtues, including chastity, diligence and long life, as well as eloquence and poetry, the latter undoubtedly emphasized for the benefit of the Cardinal.[153] Ferro, moreover, subscribing to the traditional association of bees with knowledge and wisdom, credits the insect and its honey for inspiring the likes of Plato, Pindar, and St. Ambrose.[154] Most suggestive, however, is the significance of the bee motif as a metaphor for the Barberini's illustrious destiny, which meaning it derives from its source in ancient poetry.

Ferro relates the story behind Maffeo's invention of the Barberini *impresa*, explaining how the Cardinal, "*con deliberato consiglio*" devised the image of the bees above the laurel tree and accompanied by the Virgilian motto "*Hic domus*" (here is our home).[155] According to Ferro, Maffeo found in Vergil's *Aeneid* an appropriate (and obviously flattering) parallel between the voyage of Aeneas to Latium and his own family's arrival in Rome.[156] Ferro quotes from the seventh book of the *Aeneid* the passages that describe how a swarm of bees settled in the tree of Apollo, foreshadowing the arrival of Aeneas in Latium, and the moment when Aeneas recognized his new land as the home of the Latin race, declaring "Here is our home."[157] He goes on to illustrate how the ancient and

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[150] 24:27, as quoted in Scott, "S. Ivo alla Sapienza," 300.
[151] Andrea Sacchi's *Divine Wisdom* in the *Palazzo Barberini* is an important example. See also Scott, "S. Ivo alla Sapienza," 298-301, for an architectural example, and Kirwin, 24-25, for a reading of the ephemeral arch of the *possesso* in this connection.
[152] See n. 145 above.
[153] Ferro, 66, 73, 77.
[154] Ibid., 66, 77.
[155] Ferro, 73.
[156] "Volendo dunque egli far Impresa per mostrare come I suoi maggiori vennero da Fiorenza à Roma; dove aprendo casa, si fermarono. ... e trovò corpo in Virgilio à proposito di questo suo pensiero talmente appropriato. ...." Ferro, 73.
[157] These passages are translated and explained in Lee, 149-150.

distinguished Barberini of Florence fulfilled the Virgilian prophecy by founding a powerful dynasty in Rome.[158]

With the invention of this *impresa* the Barberini bee was invested with a new layer of meaning that identified the Barberini with the destiny of Rome, interweaving their history and lineage with ancient epic, thus positing the Barberini as heirs to Aeneas. Lee, in her discussion of the Barberini emblems in the vault of the *Salone*, goes further in her analysis. Maffeo's election to the papacy, she asserts, both fulfilled and justified the Virgilian prophecy to an extent that could never have been anticipated. Bracciolini's poem *L'Elettione di Urbano Papa VIII* (Rome, 1628) continued the Virgilian allusions inherent in Maffeo's *impresa* by tracing a direct line from Aeneas down to Augustus Caesar and finally to Urban VIII, the "new 'Caesar'" and heir to the "Christian empire."[159]

It will be recalled that the Barberini arms in the *Castles* series appear in precisely the form described and illustrated by Ferro, with the single exception that the swarm of bees illustrated by Ferro is reduced to three. In the context of the view of Palestrina the motto "Hic domus" acquires another, more literal meaning. For explicit here is a reaffirmation of Barberini aristocratic pride and pretension. Like the coronet, and in tandem with it, the Virgilian motto corroborates and legitimizes the status of the Barberini as princes and Palestrina as their "ancestral" home. Just as prophecy foretold that Aeneas would found a new empire in what would become Rome, so, too, were providential forces and the weight of ancient tradition behind the elevation of the Barberini to feudal barons—a preemptive strike perhaps at potential detractors.

As a potent symbol of the destiny assigned to the Barberini by Providence, the bee reached its full maturity following the election of Urban VIII, as noted by Lee. Before that it nevertheless encompassed a wealth of associations and meanings that spoke to the

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[158] Ferri, 73-75. In particular, "Vuole dunque dire HIC DOMUS, questa casa, che in Roma fiorisce dall'addotto tempo fin'hora è quella medesima, che in Fiorenza si trovava, e ch'è quivi antichissima, dove hebbe in ogni tempo huomini principali in ogni sorte di maneggio, e di lettere, ...," Ferro, 74-75.
[159] Lee, 150-152.

Barberini's aspirations and achievements. Through its association with French royalty as well as its auspicious role as a symbol of Aeneas and the Trojan people, the bee provided a metaphor for the myth of noble lineage that the Barberini had endeavoured to construct. It was also a symbol of virtue, triumph, and, as noted earlier, Divine Wisdom. Above all it was a symbol of prophecy fulfilled and divine approbation. In this respect it became a matrix for the encomiastic imagery centered on providential intervention initiated by Bracciolini and immortalized by Cortona in the *Salone* of the *Palazzo Barberini* as well as in the *Constantine* series of tapestries under discussion.

8. THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE: A MODEL FOR THE SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL PRINCE

The tapestries clearly depict events derived from the life of Constantine. Be these episodes historical, (whether actual or allegorical) imaginary, or otherwise, any attempt to identify or describe them must proceed from a strong understanding of the subject matter. Constantine is problematic, not only because his story is a complex one but also because his quasi divine status gave rise to a legacy as legendary as it was historical. His reign, we find, was extolled as victorious, revolutionary, and divinely ordained. To the Christian world, Constantine was a model of princely virtue, a leader who served the faith, defended it, and enabled it to flourish. His achievements qualified him as a hero among sovereigns, subject to adulation, glorification and idealization. The Martyrologium Romanum refers to him as "the Most Pious Emperor, who, by fostering and building up the Church, gave a most outstanding example to other princes."[160] The image of the first Christian emperor, with all its pious and imperial associations, had special resonance for monarchs and popes in particular. Separating the resulting embroidery of his life from historical fact exposes the various sources that might have been employed in the design of the tapestries and consequently the meaning of the scenes represented.

Constantine's Biography

Constantine was born around 280 in Naissus, today eastern Yugoslavia, the son of a highly-placed Roman officer.[161] He grew up following in his father's footsteps and succeeded him in 306 to become Augustus and Co-Emperor of the western empire, while he also held the title of Caesar in the Eastern provinces. In 312 he defeated his rival Maxentius in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, a victory Constantine attributed to the Christian god whose sign, the Cross, he had seen in a miraculous vision prior to the battle. Now sole ruler in the West, he became co-ruler of the empire with Licinius, who ruled in the East. Together, in 313, they issued the Edict of Milan, which decreed religious tolerance while openly favoring Christianity. Among other measures was the

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[160] *Martyrologium Romanum* (Rome: *n.p.*, 1922), 195; quoted in John Holland Smith, *Constantine the Great* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1971), 310.

[161] The following remarks are based on Ramsay Macmullen, *Constantine*, Classical Lives (London, New York and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1987).

return of confiscated property to the Church. Political rivalry led to a civil war in 324 in which Constantine defeated Licinius at the Battle of Chrysopolis and so then ruled as sole Emperor. He presided over the council of Nicaea in 325 and established the eastern city of Byzantium as the new imperial capital, Constantinopolis, officially dedicated in 330. His imperial policy was dominated by his belief in the power of the Christian god, whose favor he strove to maintain. His lavish patronage of the Church included the development of the Lateran complex in Rome with its cathedral and palace, as well as a great basilica erected over St. Peter's tomb. Constantine's support of the clergy, extension of numerous privileges to its members, and efforts to curtail heresy and fragmentation advanced the cause of Christianity and promoted its spread throughout the empire. He was finally baptized in Nicomedia on the eve of his death, in 337.

The Legends and Myths Surrounding Constantine

While Constantine's military triumphs, political career, and patronage of the Church are accepted as historical truth, the epic tradition exalting his status is a patchwork of legends.[162] To this category belongs the so-called "Donation of Constantine," the medieval forgery which purportedly documented the emperor's grant of the western empire to the papacy and on which the latter's claim to temporal power rested until the fifteenth century. Another great source of Constantine lore is the *Vita Silvestri*, an early biography of Sylvester I (314-336) from which were derived legendary stories of the conversion and baptism of Constantine in Rome at the Lateran.[163] These episodes appear in some versions of the Legend of the True Cross, an epic tale incorporating some of Constantine's deeds and attributing the discovery of the Cross to his mother Helena.[164]

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[162] See the following related entries in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*: Vol. 4, s.v. "Constantine I, the Great, Roman Emperor" by F. X. Murphy, 226-229; Vol. 4, s.v. "Donation of Constantine" by W. Ullmann, 1000-1001; Vol. 13, s.v. "Sylvester I, Pope, St." by J. Chapin. 857-758; see also Smith, 316-320.

[163] For a useful description and interpretation of the Sylvester legend in connection with Constantine, as well as literary sources, see Jack Freiberg, *The Lateran in 1600: Christian Concord in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 81-129 passim.

[164] For Helen's discovery of the True Cross see Smith 321-324 and the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. Vol. 4, "Cross, Finding of the Holy" by H. Chirat, 479-482.

Constantine and Rome

Nowhere was the Constantine myth more relevant than in Rome, capital of ancient emperors and their Catholic heirs the popes. Here, on the hallowed ground of imperial and ecumenical authority, the revolution wrought by Constantine had an especially rapt audience. To the ecclesiastical community for whom Rome was a theatre of power, to the faithful for whom Rome was a beacon of salvation, and to ordinary citizens of the Papal States for whom Rome represented governmental authority, the story of Constantine, with all of its august imperial and spiritual associations, was particularly resonant. Here the Constantinian tradition was an efficient, instantly recognizable metaphor for the lay powers of the papacy guaranteed by God's agent, the emperor, and enshrined in ancient imperial law. It is in Rome, in fact, that we find a concentration of great painted cycles celebrating the life of the first Christian emperor that are of particular interest in connection with the *Constantine* tapestries under discussion.

The Papal-Residence Context

Freiberg noted that sixteenth-century Rome witnessed a revival of the Constantine theme that coincided with the advent of the Reformation and the emergence of the new Protestant threat. From the early 1520's to the turn of the century major decorative programs in some of the Catholic world's most venerable locations addressed the *res gestae* of the Emperor Constantine. These cycles expressed concerns about the papacy's claim to temporal authority in the face of Protestant assaults on the legitimacy of the Catholic hierarchy, fueled by the controversy over the Donation of Constantine. These new decorative programs provided a celebratory reaffirmation of Christianity's early triumph through Constantine, and of his bequest as the foundation of the pontiff's supreme authority over all rulers.[165]

Within this trend Freiberg also discerned a second pattern, the recurring use of the Constantine theme in residential contexts by popes and the clerical elite.[166] The decoration of the *Sala di Costantino* in the Vatican palace, conceived by Raphael and

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[165] Jack Freiberg, "In the Sign of the Cross: The Image of Constantine in the Art of Counter-Reformation Rome," in *Piero della Francesca and His Legacy*, ed. Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, Studies in the History of Art, no. 48 (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1995), 67-87.

executed by his pupils from 1520 to 1524 for the Medici popes Leo X and Clement VII is the most renowned example (Fig. 22).[167] The cycle relates Constantine's deeds, beginning with his vision of the Cross (*Constantine Addressing His Troops*) followed by the *Battle at the Milvian Bridge*, the *Baptism of Constantine* and finally the *Donation of Constantine*. Observing the emperor's Christian revolution are popes from the early Church who flank each scene, enthroned beneath regal canopies and accompanied by allegorical figures. What is most illuminating about this program in connection with the Barberini tapestries is its location. As observed by Freiberg, the papal claim to secular authority is advanced for the first time in a *secular* setting.[168]

The Vatican Palace was the official residence of the popes from the mid-fifteenth century onward and an emblem of the pontiff's sovereign majesty distinct from the sacred space of St. Peter's, where his holy authority was supreme. The program's clarity is thereby enhanced and its pertinence augmented by its residential- palace context, the grandeur and prestige of which in turn reinforces the pope's case for temporal domination.

Renovation of the vault of the *Sala di Costantino*, initiated by Gregory XIII (1572-1585), consisted of decorations painted by Tommaso Laureti that complement the biographical scenes below by illustrating the consequences of Constantine's patronage of the Church.[169] In the lunettes are allegories and personifications of territories of that devolved to the papacy through the spread of Christianity and the emperor's Donation, while in the center is the triumph of Christianity, depicting a statue of the crucified Christ while a shattered pagan idol lies on the ground (Fig. 31).[170] Constantine's achievements are again highlighted in a contemporary project nearby, in the Vatican's *Galleria delle Carte Geografiche*. Constructed by Gregory XIII and conceived as an ideal atlas of the

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[166] Ibid., 68, 70, 82.
[167] See Luitpold Dussler, *Raphael: A Critical Catalogue of his Pictures, Wall-Paintings and Tapestries* (London and New York: Phaidon, 1971), 87 and Mario Salmi, ed., *Raffaello: L'opera, le fonti, la fortuna*, (Novara: Istituto Geografico de Agostini, 1968),1:293.
[168] Ibid., 68, 70. This is in contrast to the church or chapel settings of all previous Constantine cycles (83, n. 9).
[169] Von Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, vol. 20, ed. Ralph Francis Kerr (1930), 613-614. Work was executed between 1582 and 1585.
[170] Freiberg, "In the Sign of the Cross," 71; Von Pastor, 20: 614.

Church's longed-for greater Italy, or "Magna Italia," as it has been described,[171] the dozens of historical episodes in the vault chronicle the heroic struggles of the Church over the centuries in the creation and protection of its faith and homeland.[172] Against this idealized Catholic history are set key scenes from the life of Constantine, thereby establishing the early foundations of the faith and providing an analogy of the Christian triumph close at hand as the Counter Reformation progressed toward ultimate triumph and unification.

Constantine was commemorated in another major palace cycle before the century was out, this time at the Lateran, official seat and residence of the popes from the fourth to the fourteenth century.[173] The Lateran Palace was believed to have been ceded to the papacy by the emperor along with San Giovanni in Laterano as part of the legendary Donation.[174] Constantine was once more called upon to invest the secular space of a palace hall with the divinely-ordained imperial majesty conferred upon the popes through the *res gestae*. As at the Vatican decades earlier, the pope's imperial dignities were nowhere more eloquently expressed than within the walls of a palace—the definitive emblem of sovereign rule.

A naval battle that appears as a subsidiary scene in the Lateran *Sala di Costantino* is of particular importance in connection with the *Constantine* tapestries under discussion (Fig. 23). Identified as the *Battle of Lepanto*, a crucial victory by the papal fleet in 1571 in which Catholic forces reclaimed from the Turks the strategic straits of the Dardanelles, it was hailed in its time as the first step toward reconquering the holy lands of the Church

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[171] Freiberg, "In the Sign of the Cross," 72-75; Iris Cheney, "The Galleria delle Carte Geografiche at the Vatican and the Roman Church's View of the History of Christianity," in *Renaissance Papers: 1989, The Southeastern Renaissance Conference*, ed. Dale B.J. Randall and Joseph A. Porter (Durham: Duke University, 1989), 21; Von Pastor, 20: 616-621. The forty maps in the Galleria were designed by Ignazio Danti while the dozens of vault scenes were painted by a team of artists including Girolamo Muziano and Cesare Nebbia. The decorations were completed by 1581 (Cheney, 21 n. 1, 34 n. 15 and Von Pastor 20: 617).

[172] Cheney, 23.

[173] For the decorations undertaken by Sixtus V in the Lateran Palace, see Freiberg, *The Lateran in the Sixteenth Century*, 23-36; for Clement VIII's transept in St. John Lateran, see ibid., chap. 2, 37-64; in connection with Constantine in particular, Freiberg, "In the Sign of the Cross," 75-76, 78-82.

[174] Freiberg, "In the Sign of the Cross," 75.

from the Turkish infidel.[175] Its inclusion in a cycle celebrating Constantine's achievements can only suggest, as Freiberg has pointed out, the new emblematic role of the Constantine myth as a model of longed-for Christian unity that would be achieved by his heir, the pope.[176]

Two further cycles dedicated to Constantine appear in sixteenth-century palaces closely connected to the papacy.[177] In 1540 the *Palazzina della Viola* in Bologna became the property of the cardinal legate and was decorated with a series of frescoes in the main *salone* that illustrated the emperor's cure from leprosy and subsequent conversion.[178] Though outside Rome these frescoes would have been known to Urban VIII, who served as legate to Bologna from 1611 to 1614.[179] Several decades later in Rome, the theme was the subject of ten scenes decorating a room in the *Palazetto Felice*, the residence of Cardinal Felice Peretti Montalto, the future Sixtus V.[180]

Each of the palace programs discussed here is rich in layers of meaning specific to its own context. To even begin to explore them would be to venture well beyond the mandate of this study. What emerges from their treatment here is the existence of a convention or precedent in the representation of Constantine that may be seen to have relevance for the location and purpose of the *Constantine* tapestries.

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[175] Ibid., 76-77, 86 n. 42.
[176] Ibid., 77.
[177] These two cycles are signaled by Freiberg in "In the Sign of the Cross," 70, 77.
[178] Umberto Beseghi, *Palazzi di Bologna*, (Bologna: Tamari Editori, 1964), 298-305. The frescoes, of which only portions remain, were painted by Prospero Fontana (ibid., 302, 305).
[179] Pecchiai, 137, 145.
[180] Freiberg, "In the Sign of the Cross," 77, 86 n. 47. The palace was demolished in the nineteenth century.

9. ANALYSIS OF THE TAPESTRIES

Constantine Fighting the Lion (Fig. 8), the first panel in chronological order, depicts the emperor as a young and intrepid warrior, thrusting a dagger into the throat of an attacking lion while soldiers behind look on in amazement. Unlike most of the other episodes, which are derived from recorded events in history, this scene is a richly layered allegory that acts as a prologue to the series, setting out the broad themes of divine destiny and universal papal sovereignty that are its leitmotifs.

Legendary accounts of the emperor's childhood in the court of Diocletian report that Constantine was forced to combat successively a bear, a panther, and a lion, as a result of which he earned a reputation for great bravery and strength.[181] The tapestry episode may well be an illustration of the future emperor's youthful prowess. An insightful passage from Eusebius' history, that is cited by Zurawski, discloses the auspicious significance of the scene. Describing how he quelled a barbarian revolt early in his career, Eusebius wrote of Constantine: "He drove from his dominions like untamed savage beasts, those whom he perceived to be altogether incapable of the settled order of civilized life."[182] In light of this prescient record of evil dispersed by the noble and courageous Caesar, the lion panel might be seen to foreshadow Constantine's destiny as a crusader and defender eof the faith, aptly alluding at the same time to Urban VIII's battle against heresy and corruption on behalf of the Church.

In fact, in his fight against heresy in the cultural sphere, the Barberini pope himself resorted to an analogous image from the Old Testament, that of David slaying Goliath.[183] Urban VIII strongly opposed the worldly, profane poetry popularized at the time by the work of Gianbattista Marino. Directed against this sort of poetry is Urban's elegy in the *Poemata*, a 1631 collection of his verse published by the Jesuits in Rome and featuring a

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[181] José Ruysschaert, "Essai d'interprétation synthétique de l'arc de Constantin," *Rendiconti, Atti della Pontificia AccademiaRomana di Archaeologia* 35 (1962-63): 92-93; Macmullen, 21-22; Dubon also describes the scene in connection with "a legendary story illustrating the bravery of the Emperor when a boy" (36) however provides no source.

[182] Quoted by Zurawski, 110, from Eusebius, Vita, Book I, Chapter 25.

title page by Bernini of a battling David. The biblical hero, revered in the Christian tradition as a patron of sacred cultural activity, is invoked by the pope as an example to Rome's youth of how, by "taking up David's lyre and driving out the monster," worldly poetry might be supplanted by a *poesia sacra*--verse of a spiritual kind.[184] To Urban VIII, therefore, David was a model of virtue and an exemplar in the battle against heresy. Bernini's statue of *David* (1623-1624) may well be charged with this significance since evidence suggests that Barberini was at least partly responsible for its meaning.[185] And so Cortona's *Lion* tapestry, executed for the Barberini a decade later, can be read as a classical variation on the same theme, that is, the triumph of faith over evil and heresy as symbolized by brute strength.

The parallels between David and the early Christian emperor go even further: As evidence of his worthiness to join the army of Israel in battling the Philistines, David recounts to Saul how he slew a lion and a bear that had attacked his father's sheep.[186] Constantine's legendary trials seem to echo this episode, while his valiant struggle against the lion portrayed in this panel recalls the biblical hero's steadfast faith and valor in defending his flock as he then defended the army of Israel in the name of God, and as Urban VIII defended against heresy the flock entrusted to him by Christ.

In a moral and Christian sense, therefore, the lion figures as an embodiment of evil forces.[187] To this we may add a second layer of meaning, one that refers to the temporal powers bequeathed by Constantine to the papacy. The defeated lion, Ferrero has pointed out, also symbolizes earthly authority subdued by the higher, divinely ordained authority of Christ's Vicar.[188] Parallel imagery appearing in the *Putti at Play* (1637-1642) series of

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[183] Thomas L. Glen, "Rethinking Bernini's *David*: Attitude, Moment and the Location of Goliath," *RACAR* 23, no. 1-2 (1996): 90-91. I am grateful to Prof. Glen for alerting me to his article in connection with Urban VIII and heresy.
[184] Ibid., 91, quoting Rudolf Preimesberger, "Themes from Art Theory in the Early Works of Bernini," in Irving Lavin, ed., *Gianlorenzo Bernini: New Aspects of His Art and Thought* (University Park, PA and London: Pennsylvania State University Press for The College Art Association of America, 1985), 13.
[185] Ibid., 90-91.
[186] I Samuel 17.33-37 AV.
[187] Ferrero, "Arazzo e pittura," 146 and n. 5, citing the writings of Church Fathers interpreting the lion as a diabolical image.
[188] Ibid., 146, seconded by De Strobel, 24.

tapestries, also produced in the Barberini workshop, corroborates this thesis. A panel depicting a lion, the traditional symbol of royalty, overcome by the Barberini bees, is seen as an allegory of the Barberini's triumph over terrestrial kings.[189] Implicit in both images is the political supremacy of the papacy, and by extension, the pontifical family. On a local level, the lion's association with the Campidoglio, as a symbol of Roman civil authority and law going back to the Middle Ages,[190] might also suggest the deference of the Senate to Barberini authority, asserting their supremacy in the administration of the affairs of the capitol.

Also recalled in this episode is the mythical battle between Hercules and the Numean lion, a source that reflects Francesco Barberini's well-documented passion for coin collecting. The scene was depicted on a rare Constantinian coin with the emperor in the guise of Hercules slaying the lion. It was an uncommon issue in that the lion was much more frequently represented in coinage only by its skin.[191] Constantine is cast in a similar role on another Roman coin, struck in 315. Here the emperor is featured on horseback hunting a lion with the inscription *Liberator Orbis* on the reverse, referring to the victory at the Milvian Bridge.[192] Cortona's redeployment of this theme as an allegory of Constantine's triumph over his enemies would no doubt therefore have been informed by the Cardinal's numismatic expertise. The conceit also lends itself to interpretation in terms of the Barberini's effective administration of the Papal States, particularly since the same allegory appears in the vault fresco, where Hercules chases the Harpies away from Rome, symbolizing the strong, temporal governance of the Barberini.[193]

The temporal authority inherited from the first Christian emperor is thus joined to the spiritual authority inherited from Christ, present in the Chi-Rho adorning the border above. Together they represent the exalted and divinely appointed destiny of the

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[189] Ferrero, *Arazzi italiani*, 47. The scene in question in entitled *Il leone vinto delle Api* (the lion defeated by the bees). For illustrations see Ferrari, 17 and 59. See chap. 6, n. 110 above for sources on this series.
[190] Shelley Perlove, "Bernini's Androclus and the Lion: A papal emblem of Alexandrine Rome," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 45 (1982): 293.
[191] Ferrero, *Arazzo e pittura*, 146 and n. 4; seconded by De Strobel, 24. Both cite G. Mazzini, Monete imperiali romane, vol. V (Milan: 1958), table XXVIII.
[192] Ruysschaert, 93.
[193] See Magnanimi, 115-118, for a concise yet thorough description of the vault.

Barberini that is implied by the bees present in the border, foreshadowed by the early triumph of the youthful Constantine, and celebrated overhead in the fresco of the vault.

The ***Apparition of the Cross*** (Fig. 9) refers to the account in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* of the emperor's miraculous vision of the cross in the afternoon sky, with the words *in hoc vince* (by this conquer) the day before his battle against Maxentius.[194] As noted earlier, the *Apparition* is the single episode adopted by Cortona that also counted among the five "Rubens" panels that remained in Paris (appendix B) (Fig. 24).[195] This comes as no surprise since, as we have already seen, the event occupies a place of revolutionary importance in the story of Constantine and as such is a standard image in Constantinian iconography.

Formally, the *Apparition* is closely related to ancient Roman *Allocutio* scenes as represented on the Arch of Constantine (Fig. 25), as well as in Giulio Romano's fresco in the *Sala di Costantino* in the Vatican (Fig. 22).[196] Cortona, who had studied Rome's monuments extensively, also drew upon the *Allocutio* scene later, in the *Age of Bronze* fresco at the Pitti Palace (1641) (Fig. 26). His admiration for Romano's *Constantine* frescoes is documented by Cortona himself in the *Trattato* on which he later collaborated.[197] The fact that the Vatican fresco simulates tapestry--with the top edge

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[194] The event is described by Eusebius as follows: "He saw with his own eyes the trophy of the Cross in the Heavens, placed over the Sun, made up of Light, and an inscription annexed to it containing the words, BY THIS CONQUER." (Eusebius of Caesarea, Bishop of Caesarea, ca. 260-ca. 340, "Life of Constantine," in *The History of the Church: from our Lord's Incarnation, to the twelfth year of the Emperor Mauricius Tiberius, or the year of Christ 594* (London: Printed by J.M. for Awnsham and John Churchill, 1709), 1.28.540.)

[195] See chap. 6, p. 32 above.

[196] Both sources have been amply cited, however the Aurelian *Allocutio* relief on the Arch of Constantine appears first in Dubon (26) while Giulio Roman's *Vision of the Cross* is first cited by Barberini (149). The composition also recalls an earlier tapestry designed in Antwerp by Rubens, *Decius Mus Relating His Dreams* (1616) which may well have figured in Rubens' thoughts when he executed his *Apparition* scene, particularly since the iconography of Decius Mus, with whom the gods also communicated in a vision, has parallels with Constantine. There is no evidence to indicate, however, that Cortona might have seen the Decius Mus tapestry, though it is possible he had heard of the series through the Flemish weavers at the Barberini shop. In any event Rubens' source for this tapestry was also the *allocutio* motif. See Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens: A Critical Catalogue*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press for the National Gallery of Art, 1980), 21-25. I am indebted to Prof. Thomas L. Glen for alerting me to the Decius Mus series as well as for the reference.

[197] Referring to the frescoes in the Vatican *Sala*: "il parlamento con la visione della Croce, & il suo Battesimo, opere degne di gran comendatione" (Ottonelli and Berretini, 122). See also editor's remarks (54 n. 20) assigning authorship to Cortona himself for these passages.

seemingly sagging from its weight, illusionary fringe on the bottom edge, and the sides appearing to curl inwards--may have held additional appeal. The conceit offered Cortona the opportunity to transform the fictitious hanging into the real thing. Like Romano, Cortona employs the flaming Cross recorded by Eusebius, instead of the Chi-Rho used by Rubens and derived from another version of the tale.[198] The emperor's broad gesture and the round *tempietto* structure in the background, apparently adapted from Romano's circular building behind the emperor, also point to the Vatican frescoes. At the same time, however, the compressed space of Cortona's composition as well as his positioning of the emperor on the right, reversing Romano's arrangement, more immediately recall the *Allocutio* relief. The result is a hybrid image that invokes the authority and prestige of the Vatican cycle, while underlining at the same time the ultimate source of this depiction, which like the miraculous event it portrays, goes back to antiquity.

The *Apparition of the Cross* is an iconic image containing a multitude of powerful associations. Loaded with Counter-Reformatory significance, this visionary episode evokes Catholicism's early history, the drama of revelation and conversion—for according to legend, Constantine was miraculously converted when he beheld the sight of the Cross,[199] and the Cross itself, by which Protestantism, like Maxentius, would be vanquished. These meanings were later exploited in Bernini's equestrian statue (1655-70) in the *Scala Reggia* at St. Peter's and were no doubt apparent to Francesco in the Byzantine ivory relief of the same subject that he had received from Peiresc in 1625.[200] Most important to the Barberini, though, would have been the *Apparition* as a sign of God's selection of Constantine for his unique mission and destiny in promoting the Church.

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[198] The Chi-Rho appears in the version related by Lactantius, the tutor of Constantine's son, Crispus (MacMullen, 72 and Smith 102-103). As Zurawski points out, the title of the "Rubens" panel in the Paris report would have disclosed the use of the Chi-Rho by the Flemish artist (112).

[199] MacMullen, 74-75; Smith, 105; Dubon, 34.

[200] Entitled *Triumph of Constantine*, the sixth century relief is also known as *the Barberini Ivory*, and was offered to Francesco by Peiresc in Aix-en-Provence as the cardinal was making his way back to Rome. Marc Fumaroli, "Cross, Crown, and Tiara: The Constantine Myth between Paris and Rome (1590-1690)," in *Piero della Francesca and His Legacy*, ed. Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, Studies in the History of Art, 48 (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1995), 96.

Just as God assigned a glorious role to Constantine which was communicated to him in the miraculous vision, and in whose name Constantine triumphed and was hailed for his great piety and valor, so did God intervene in the fortunes and destiny of the Barberini. Thus the *Apparition* should be understood above all as an illustration and corroboration of the theme of divine election so central to Barberini iconography, forming the basis of the monumental vault decoration by Cortona.[201]

The ***Campaign Against Licinius, Sea Battle*** (Fig. 10), commemorates the Battle of Chrysopolis in 324. This crucial victory at sea under the command of Constantine's son, Crispus, allowed the emperor to cross the Bosphorus and land at Byzantium, uniting the eastern and western empires under his rule.[202] While the battle played a seminal role in the history of Constantine, it was not part of the standard repertoire of imagery related to the emperor. This episode, therefore, must be considered Cortona's invention, though the general idea may have been suggested by the "Rubens" panel listed in the Paris report as "*con un Neptuno per mostrar il suo dominio per mare e per terra*" (with a Neptune to show his domination over sea and land) (Fig. 27).[203] Rather than portraying the event allegorically, however, Cortona chose to illustrate the action and turbulence of the battle itself.

Like the *Apparition of the Cross*, the *Sea Battle* seems to draw consciously upon Roman reliefs, its overlapping elements and frieze-like arrangement close to the picture plane recalling, in particular, Trajanic reliefs on the Arch of Constantine.[204] The intricately ornamented ships with their elaborate prows reappear later in Cortona's oeuvre, in the

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[201] Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 130, 180.
[202] Macmullen, 137-138.
[203] As previously noted, a second version of the same report lists this panel as "*con un Nettuno per mostrare il dominion per mare*." (Dubon, 13 n. 48) which is incorrectly translated by Dubon as "*Constantine and Crispus*," (14) but which actually translates as "with a Neptune to show his domination over sea." Dubon likely had in mind the actual tapestry cartoon by Rubens which indeed depicts Constantine and his son (Fig. 27).
[204] Ferrero, *Arazzi italiani*, 47; Magnanimi, 170.

Sala di Marte at the Pitti Palace (1641-47), as well as in the gallery of the Pamphilj Palace (1651-54) (Fig. 28).[205]

While it has already been observed that Francesco, for a number of reasons, customized the tapestry series woven on his own looms by choosing subjects entirely different from those already depicted by Rubens, the *Sea Battle* stands out as an adaptation of Rubens' *Neptune* allegory. This implies that considerable importance was attached to the event. Indeed, while the *Sea Battle*, Constantine's milestone campaign in the eastern part of the empire, has been related to Urban VIII's missionary campaigns in the East,[206] it may also hold a deeper meaning, at once more precise and sweeping in its implications. The key is another naval battle also appearing within a series dedicated to Constantine, the aforementioned *Battle of Lepanto*, depicted in the *Sala di Costantino* in the Lateran Palace as well as in the map gallery at the Vatican (Fig. 23).[207]

A landmark victory (in 1571) by Catholic forces in the crusade to reunite the Christian empire, this triumph of the papal fleet was charged with the revolutionary fervor of a holy war and likened in its own time to Constantine's heroic mission.[208] That the battle was fought in the same geographical location as the battle of Chrysopolis, in the Dardanelles near the shores of Constantinople, made the analogy all the more appropriate. Just as Constantine defeated the tyrant Licinius and united the empire, so would his heir, Urban VIII, conquer heresy and reclaim Europe and Asia for Catholicism, reuniting the Christian Empire under his universal rule in fulfillment of the legacy of holy triumph symbolized in modern times by the Battle of Lepanto.

Constantine Burning the Memorials (Fig.11), like ***Constantine Destroying the Idols*** (Fig. 12), refers to the documented activities of Constantine in promoting the Church, though not to any specific event. The former depicts the emperor surrounded by priests

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[205] Barberini, 149; For the Pamphilj gallery see John Beldon Scott, "Strumento di Potere: Pietro da Cortona tra Barberini e Pamphilj" (87-98), and for the Pitti Palace, Malcolm Campbell, "Cortona tra Firenze e Roma" (99-106), both in Lo Bianco, *Pietro da Cortona*.
[206] Zurawski, 114.
[207] Freiberg, "In the Sign of the Cross," 76-77; Cheney, 24, 27. See also chap. 8, p. 48 above.
[208] Freiberg, "In the Sign of the Cross," 86 n.40.

in an elaborate architectural space, holding a scroll over the fire burning in a brazier carried by a kneeling figure. According to Dubon, the former represents tax concessions granted to the Church and clergy,[209] while Zurawski proposes a broader meaning that encompasses the body of legislation and edicts instituted in favor of Christianity and through which the emperor transformed it into the state religion.[210] As noted by one Constantine scholar, these reforms not only empowered the clergy but also politicized it, with vast consquences for the history of the papacy, which would be condemned to the "pursuit of the chimera of universal sovereignty."[211] The scene may therefore refer to the activities of the Inquisition under Urban VIII, particularly the destruction of heretical, Protestant literature challenging the legitimacy of the papacy, as Zurawski suggests, observing that Urban VIII was a militant supporter of traditional clerical privilege.[212]

That the *Memorials* episode in fact refers to the destruction of heretical material is perhaps confirmed by Andrea Sacchi's later painting in the Lateran Baptistery of *The Destruction of Pagan Writings at the Nicene Council* (1646-47), which is part of a Constantine cycle begun during the pontificacy of Urban VIII (Fig. 29).[213] The kneeling attendant stoking the flames in the brazier of Sacchi's painting, the gesticulating bishop, and the emperor at his side who looks toward him while holding a document over the flames, all echoe Cortona's earlier image. While there is no record of such an event occuring at the Council of Nicaea, the image effectively conveys the post-Tridentine concern for Catholic orthodoxy. A second painting belonging to the same series in the Lateran, depicting *Constantine Establishing the Christian Religion and Ordering the Destruction of Pagan Idols* (c. 1647) supports the possibility that Sacchi's subjects are related to Cortona's tapestry series, as does the trompe l'oeil statue of Constantine and the medallions enclosed in laurel wreaths also featured in the Lateran cycle (Fig. 30).[214]

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[209] Dubon, 36; see also Macmullen, 104 and Eusebius, "Life of Constantine," 2.20 ("How Constantine made Laws in favour of the confessors"), 2.21 ("How [He made Laws] concerning the Martyrs and concerning the Estates of the Churches"), 557-558.
[210] Zurawski, 115-116.
[211] Smith, 325-326.
[212] Zurawski, 116.
[213] Ann Sutherland Harris, *Andrea Sacchi: Complete Edition of the Paintings with a Critical Catalogue* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1977), 84-85, cat.no. 53.8 and plate 115. While Zurawski also mentions Sacchi's painting (131 n.76) she makes no attempt to relate it to the tapestry.
[214] Harris, 84-85, cat.nos. 53.1 and 53.7, plates 103 and 110-112.

Constantine Destroying the Idols (Fig. 12) illustrates the desecration of pagan temples and idols ordered by imperial edict around 330-332 in a series of suppressions of pagan worship in the eastern empire.[215] Constantine, again accompanied by prelates, directs the erection of a statue of the blessing Christ while on the pavement lie the shattered remains of a pagan god. The setting seems to be a temple that has been converted into a Christian place of worship, to which will be added the large crucifix carried by an attendant.

Implicit in the shattered pagan idol is the idea of heresy defeated. At the same time, the substitution of a statue of Christ in its place offers a defiant and triumphant response to Protestant accusations of idolatry. In this sense the episode, like the *Apparition of the Cross*, is a potent Counter-Reformatory image. A possible prototype for this scene can be found in the ceiling decoration of the *Sala di Costantino* at the Vatican, painted by Tommaso Laureti between 1582 and 1586 (Fig. 31).[216] In the center is depicted a statue of the crucified Christ standing on an altar with a shattered pagan idol lying before it on the ground. The message imparted in this iconic image is identical to that delivered in narrative terms by Cortona in the tapestry panel. Both proclaim the triumph of Christianity over paganism, achieved through Constantine, the divinely willed agent of reform. And just as the Vatican scene complements the Constantine frescoes below by illustrating the consequence of the emperor's patronage of Church,[217] so does the tapestry panel show the result of the emperor's promotion of Christianity as exemplified in the *Memorials* scene. Under the providentially ordained steerage of Urban VIII, then, the Church emerges triumphant.

The ***Statue of Constantine*** (Fig. 13) stands apart from the narrative episodes comprising the rest of the series, since it is not an independent panel but the dossal of a baldachin assembly that also included a canopy and seven pendant pieces.[218] A golden statue of the emperor in armor, carrying a standard topped by a crucifix in his right hand and an orb in his left, stands on a pedestal before a marble arcade decorated with Victories in the

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[215] Smith, 287, citing Jerome's Chronicles and Eusebius; see also Eusebius, 3.54-56, 596-598.
[216] This work is signaled and analyzed by Freiberg in "In the Sign of the Cross," 72. See also chap. 8, p. 47 above.
[217] Freiberg, "In the Sign of the Cross," 71; Von Pastor, 20: 613-614.

spandrels. On the pedestal, which rests on a pavement of marble inlay, is borne the inscription "Our Ruler, Flavius Constantine, Liberator of Rome, Founder of Peace, The Senate and the People of Rome."

In 312, following the victory at the Milvian Bridge, Constantine entered Rome triumphant and was confirmed senior Augustus by the Senate. In his honor was erected a colossal seated statue in the western apse of the basilica, with a cross in its right hand and an inscription beneath that proclaimed, as reported by Eusebius: "By this savior sign, the true test of bravery, I saved and freed your city from the yoke of the tyrant, and restored the senate and the Roman people, freed, to their ancient fame and splendor."[219] The golden *Statue of Constantine* is usually understood to refer to this great statue erected by the people and the Senate, particularly since it would neatly parallel a statue of Urban VIII commissioned by the city government of Rome that was in the works from 1635.[220]

Sources show, however, that in 330, on the day of the founding of Constantinople, there stood in the center of the new marble forum with its two story portico a porphyry column, on top of which was a gilt statue of the emperor carrying a scepter in his right hand and an orb in his left that contained a piece of the True Cross.[221] Not only does this description correspond more closely to the golden statue illustrated in the tapestry as well to its setting, with the structure in the background and the marble pavement, it also explains the iconography of the panel. The golden statue in the tapestry only has meaning as an imperial image of the empire's sole and universal ruler—signified by the orb-- if it refers to the monument of 330 in Constantinople. The final great battle, we will recall, was won in 324 at Byzantium, not at the Milvian Bridge in 312, while legend has it that the True Cross was found between 325 and 328 or 330.[222] This panel, then, should be related to the statue erected in Constantinople in 330 and belongs at the end, rather than in the middle, of the narrative chronology of the tapestries. Furthermore, since this

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[218] See chap. 6, p. 29.
[219] *Life of Constantine*, book I, chapter 40, quoted in Macmullen, 84.
[220] Dubon, 37 and cat.no. 13; Zurawski, 113; Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 187 and n.38; Haskell, 41.
[221] Macmullen, 150; Smith, 225-226.
[222] Macmullen, 187-88; Dubon, 35.

piece is the dossal of the baldachin, it is entirely logical that it should represent the dramatic culmination of the program.

Though it refers to the monument in Constantinople, the panel also alludes to the city of Rome, which is represented by the inscription on the base of the pedestal as well as by the background architecture, which lends itself to interpretation as a triumphal arch. In particular, given its context, it might be understood to refer to the Arch of Constantine. These deliberate recollections of Rome emphasize the universality of papal authority in the temporal and spiritual spheres. When Constantine proclaimed that all bishops would be subject to the Bishop of Rome, and, according to the Donation of Constantine, rewarded the pope with absolute power in the Western Empire, Rome became the Christian capital of the papal dominions. The imperial court was consequently moved to the east and reestablished at Constantinople.[223] While the emperor is celebrated in this panel as the victorious military commander who reunited east and west, we are reminded that Urban VIII is heir not only to the imperial, secular realm of Constantine, but also to the spiritual realm bequeathed by Christ, the capital of which is Rome.

Above all Rome's apostolic sanctity derived from its unique status as the bishopric of the supreme pontiff. The interpolation of Roman elements in the *Statue* panel draws attention to Urban VIII's role as bishop of Rome, part of an unbroken line of succession descending back to Peter, the first Vicar of Christ and the ultimate and unassailable source of all papal authority. As Panofsky has shown, it is the pope's spiritual mission as Christ's Vicar rather than his secular rule as temporal lord that is underscored in Urban's tomb in St. Peter's by the presence of the theological virtue *Caritas* (Charity or Love), a symbol of divine mercy.[224] In this way the pontiff's majesty is seen to devolve first and foremost from his role as Peter's successor and bishop of Rome. Urban VIII's crusading valor and imperial command as evokes by Constantine's triumph in the *Statue* panel is similarly tied to and legitimized by his sacred charge as commanded by Christ.

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[223] Smith, 311-317, 319-320.

[224] Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, ed. H. W. Janson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1964), 94. I am grateful to Prof. Thomas L. Glen for this reference.

An historical work on Rome authored by a minor civic official in the 1630's, Giacinto Gigli, is of interest in this connection. Its frontispiece design features St. Peter and an angel displaying a coat of arms with the letters S.P.Q.R., employed since antiquity as the initials for the Senate and the Roman People, as it is still used today by Rome's municipal administration,[225] and as it was on the base of the Roman Constantine monument documented by Eusebius. Gigli, however, who had also dedicated eulogizing poems to Urban VIII and Francesco Barberini, transformed the letters' meaning to represent the words "*Sanctus Petrus Quirites Regit*" (Saint Peter rules the citizens of Rome).[226] If this adaptation of the ancient S.P.Q.R. were more than an isolated instance, for which there is no evidence at this time, it would suggest an alternate reading for the inscription on the *Statue* panel that would reaffirm this dual statement of power.

Evident as well in the *Statue* tapestry is an assertion of Rome's age-old primacy as a center of religious and political power. Though it was in Constantinople that the victorious reunification of the eastern and western empires was celebrated, Rome is advanced as the capital of the global imperial dominions represented by the orb in the emperor's left hand. Rome, the ancient seat of empire, heart of Catholicism, and the pontiff's capital, is reaffirmed as *caput mundi*. Thus not only is the *Constantine* series an instrument of artistic rivalry with France, it is also a vehicle of political rivalry. It reflects Urban VIII's fervent desire to restore Rome's historic ascendancy on the European stage at a time when the growing power of the Continent's nation states and the increasingly sideline role of the Papal States in foreign affairs meant that Rome's importance depended more and more on her symbolic status—historical and, above all, spiritual.[227]

The emblematic character of the image stems from the ceremonial function of the baldachin. As noted by Dubon, since Urban VIII would have been enthroned before it, the dossal was "visually the most important of the series."[228] The practice of sheltering the pope beneath a baldachin was centuries old and featured prominently in public

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[225] Nussdorfer, 3. The letters stand for the Latin "*Senatus populusque romanus.*"
[226] Ibid., 111, 113 n. 53.
[227] Haskell, 32; Magnuson, 115; Kirwin, 35-36.
[228] Dubon, 37.

appearances such as the papal coronation and possession ceremonies. Just as the baldachin guarded and identified as sacred those relics or sites housed beneath it, as in the case of the reliquary niches and Baldachin at St. Peter's, it symbolically protected the pope and denoted his exalted nature.[229]

As a symbol of his august person, the baldachin also represented the pope's secular authority. A canopy depicted on the emblem of the Vacant See, featured on coins and edicts issued during the interregnum, signified the secular powers of the pontiff that were interrupted during this temporary suspension of absolutist government.[230]

That Urban VIII should have been enthroned beneath a baldachin, the dossal of which proclaimed the majesty of the emperor Constantine, was therefore not only appropriate, but it also crystallized the significance of the series. The pope is visually identified with the first Christian emperor and the founder of universal papal sovereignty. With Constantine standing behind him, also crowned by the baldachin, Urban VIII is asserted as his modern heir and legitimate successor to his legacy of imperial and Christian triumph. Above all Urban is proclaimed as the fulfillment and final instrument of the same divine will that had guided his ancestor and which similarly guided his own ambitions and achievements on behalf of the Papal States and Christianity. These were commemorated overhead in the vault that has been described as a "fictive canopy"[231] and a "pergola,"[232] that in turn distinguishes the entire *Salone* as a regal and papal precinct.

Recalled in this arrangement is the Vatican *Sala di Costantino*, where the ceiling's decorations articulate it as a giant canopy that shelters the actual pope in the same way that Pope Sylvester is honored beneath a baldachin in the Donation scene, and just as popes from the remote and recent past are enthroned in their canopied niches (Fig. 22).[233] They, like the real pope, are witnesses to the Christian revolution wrought by Constantine that is played out in the fictive tapestries on the walls. In the Barberini *Salone* these three

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[229] Kirwin, 14-16, 18-19.
[230] Nussdorfer, 228-229, citing John Beldon Scott for the iconography of the Vacant See emblem.
[231] Kirwin, 204.
[232] Magnanimi, 82.

layers of reality are coalesced in the person of Urban VIII who, seated beneath the tapestry baldachin is visually and iconographically inserted into the history of Constantine, becoming, like Sylvester in the Donation fresco, a participant in the action unfolding around him; like the past popes too, he observes the emperor's triumph from his distinguished position beneath the baldachin; and like Sixtus V before him and those who succeeded him, Urban VIII is signaled by the ceiling canopy as the exalted heir to the Christian Empire, the seat of which is in this sacred space.

The final tapestries that need to be considered here are the group of **sopraporte**, which, as their name implies, would have hung above the doorways of the *Salone* (Figs. 16-18). Of the seven original *sopraporte*, three have been lost and are known solely from their descriptions in the 1649 Barberini inventory (appendix A). Still extant are the panels depicting, in their order of production, the *Sarcophagus of Saint Helen* (Fig. 16); a *winged figure (or victory) and putto* (Fig. 18); the *goddess Roma presenting a dove to a seated figure of Constantine* (enigmatically described in the inventory as "*two figures, one standing with an animal and the other seated*"); *and an angel (or victory) writing the name of Constantine on a shield* (Fig. 17). Those lost represented the *Arch of Constantine*, the *Baths of Constantine*, and a mysterious scene involving *an owl above a column with a shield and trophies below.*[234]

Three of the *sopraporte* depict monuments built by Constantine (the *Arch of Constantine*, the *Sarcophagus of Saint Helen*, and the *Baths of Constantine*). The other four are clearly related to military triumph, since three include victories and/or trophies, while the fourth, *Roma Presenting a Dove to Constantine*, suggests a peaceful resolution to war. In particular, this panel may allude to the battle against Maxentius, which was followed by the emperor's triumphal entry into Rome as depicted by Rubens in his Constantine series.

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[233] See chap. 8, p. 47 above.

[234] While Dubon (20-21) translates the subjects directly from the Italian inventory (appendix B) appearing in Barberini (51), I have translated them from Barberini's descriptions (146-147) for the sake of information and clarity.

Clearly conceived as medallions in simulated bronze relief, the *sopraporte* exemplify a recurring motif in Cortona's work. Visible as early as in the *Palazzo Mattei di Giove* frescoes (c. 1622) (Fig. 32) as well as in the Villa Sacchetti at Castelfusano (c. 1624-28), and repeated following the *Constantine* series in the *Sala di Apollo* at the Pitti Palace (1641-1647),[235] the theme is also prominently employed in Cortona's *Salone* vault fresco (Fig. 33), with important implications for our understanding of the tapestries. Appearing in the corners of the vault, the four octagonal medallions in simulated bronze gilt enclose scenes from Roman history that illustrate the cardinal virtues. Of these, Barberini notes, the story of Mucius Scaevola symbolizing Fortitude, has particularly striking compositional affinites with the *sopraporta* of *Roma and Constantine*.[236] Generally speaking, however, these scenes reflect a common aesthetic and conceptual approach that establishes a strong visual link between the tapestries and the ceiling decoration.

Barberini also connects the *sopraporte* to an illustration by Cortona for the second edition of Girolamo Teti's *Aedes Barberinae ad Quirinalem* (1647). Like the *sopraporte*, it was designed as a figural relief scene enclosed in a circle and surrounded by a laurel wreath, while its composition recalls the *sopraporta* depicting the *winged figure and putto*.[237] Since the *Aedes Barberinae* is an encomniastic description of the Barberini Palace, Cortona's reemployment of the medallion theme evinces a common thread linking his work there.

There is, furthermore, a strong archaeological component to the medallions that figure in the *sopraporte*, one of which, the *Victory inscribing the name of Constantine on a shield*, has been linked to a Roman medal.[238] According to Dubon, they are part of the arsenal of accessories employed by Cortona to create an antique setting appropriate to the subject matter.[239] They, like the narrative panel representing *Constantine Fighting the Lion*, also

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[235] Dubon, 31; for the Palazzo Mattei see Jörg martin Merz, "Cortona Giovane," in Lo Bianco, 62; for the *Sala di Apollo* see Malcolm Campbell, *Pietro da Cortona at the Pitti Palace*, 108-121.
[236] Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona e l'arazzeria Barberini," 150.
[237] Ibid., 149-150; the design was engraved by Bloemaert.
[238] De Strobel, 24.
[239] Dubon, 31.

reflect Francesco Barberini's numismatic interests, and, more broadly, his fascination with antiquity and archaeology.

That the motif alludes to Francesco, the patron of the series and of the workshop itself, is perhaps confirmed by its reappearance in another series woven on the Barberini looms, the *Life of Urban VIII* (1663-1679). Just as the *Constantine sopraporte* refer to the emperor and monuments constructed by him, the medals on the side panels of the *Urban VIII* series depict his relatives as well as buildings commissioned or rebuilt by the late pope (Fig. 34). Here, however, the conceit is employed in a manner appropriate to the subject, for each medallion is a reproduction of a pontifical medal issued during Urban's lifetime.[240] In the *Constantine* series, while there is no such immediate source, the *sopraporte*, by virtue of their form and context, evoke the roundels on the Arch of Constantine, which were also employed as emblems to exalt the emperor and his achievement. In this respect the *Lion* tapestry might even be related to the Hadrianic roundel portraying the lion hunt.[241]

As the object of yet another illustration of the Cardinal's archaeological erudition, the Arch of Constantine could not be more pertinent. For not only is it a monument that immortalizes the virtuous and divinely inspired triumph of the emperor, it is also one that bears crucial testimony to the Christian revolution that began in 312.[242]

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[240] Townsend, 12; Barberini, "Gli arazzi e i cartoni della serie 'Vita di Urbano VIII'," 93. See also chap. 4, p. 21 above.
[241] For a description and analysis of the medals see Ruysschaert, 90-94.
[242] Ruysschaert, 99-100.

10. THE *PALAZZO BARBERINI* AND THE *TRIUMPH OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE*

There is compelling architectural and iconographical evidence to support the thesis that the *Constantine* tapestries were intended to hang in the *Salone* of the *Palazzo Barberini*. The first component of this argument concerns the plan of the Salone, while the second relates to Cortona's ceiling decoration, the *Triumph of Divine Providence* and is sustained by the chronology of events. Taken together, the numerous links between the two projects point to their integration in a unified decorative scheme.

On 18 December, 1625, the day after he had returned from Paris, Francesco Barberini finalized the purchase of the Sforza palace on the north slope of the Quirinal Hill in Rome. The existing building would ultimately form the north wing of the magnificent *Palazzo Barberini alle quattro fontane* (Fig. 35), a family residence conceived upon the election of Maffeo to the papacy in August 1623 and built between 1629 and 1637.[243] Its distinctive form reflects the bipartite structure of a clan that, as we have seen, methodically pursued the avenues of ecclesiastical and secular advancement in their pursuit of power and wealth. The north and south wings were designed to house on the one side, Taddeo Barberini, and his family, and the other, Francesco. In the center, the great loggia represented the shared areas including the main reception room, the *Salone*.[244]

A glance at the plan of the palace's *piano nobile* (Fig. 36) seems to confirm that the tapestry series was conceived with the *Salone* in mind. The seven doorways in the *Salone* correspond neatly with the seven *sopraporte*, while the four *portiere* would have hung in the four entrances that access the room from the main staircases and private apartments of Anna Colonna and Francesco Barberini. The remaining three doors lead

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[243] Patricia Waddy, *Seventeenth-Century Roman Palaces: Use and the Art of the Plan* (New York, Cambridge, MA, and London: The Architectural History Foundation and The MIT Press, 1990), 227. Carlo Maderno was in charge of design and supervising construction until his death in January 1619, after which Gianlorenzo Bernini took over with the assistance of Borromini (231, 239, 241-42). See 173-271 for an analysis of the plan, design, construction, and function of the palace.

[244] Ibid., 128-131, 179-180.

into the adjoining *Sala Ovale* overlooking the gardens, which, because of its sunny exposure and largely private function,[245] would have had no need for partitions.

Situated on the *piano nobile*, the *Salone* was principally accessed via a monumental square staircase designed by Bernini. Its optically enhanced proportions and slow, processional quality anticipated the *Scala Regia* at the Vatican[246] and logically so, since its function was analogous. Visitors to the *Salone*, which Teti significantly referred to as the "royal hall,"[247] alluding to its function as an audience hall, proceeded past statues of Roman emperors and Apollo that symbolically documented the ancient lineage of the Barberini. Following this prologue, the visitors entered the *Salone* and were confronted by an exhilarating exposition of the foundations of Barberini power, illustrated in allegorical terms in the vault fresco and historically in the *Constantine* tapestries.

As Cortona began work on the series in late 1629 or early 1630, the decision had already been made to fresco the newly completed vault in the *Salone*. This intention was manifest in its design as a broad expanse of masonry.[248] Furthermore, from the outset, it is believed that the artist was instructed to make Bracciolini's theme of Divine Providence behind the election of Urban VIII the focus of his ceiling decoration (Fig. 31).[249] It is therefore possible that Francesco had the same concept in mind when he commissioned Cortona to prepare sketches for the tapestry series. This would tie both projects together even at the planning stage. A contemporary account of the ceiling decoration describes how the history of the Barberini is interwoven with that of ancient Rome:

> The dynasty of the Caesars and that of the Barberini converge, and the Roman Empire, which was translated into that of the Caesars, has traveled on the same path that is conducted today in that of the Barberini. . . .This long disposition of the facts, and this admirable chain, of which one link

[245] Overlooking the gardens and lacking a fireplace, the room appears to have been intended for use in the summer and probably served as a private chamber (ibid., 220).
[246] Magnanimi, 80. There was also an elliptical staircase that was used primarily to reach the library.
[247] Lee, 296-300 (appendices II, III, and IV, translation from Latin of excerpts from *Aedes Barberinae*).
[248] Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 125-126; see also Magnanimi, 106.
[249] Ibid., 175.

> depends on the other, was perfectly set in order by Divine Providence, . . .[250]

The Barberini are thus identified with the glorious past of antiquity. Their virtues, ambitions, and achievements are symbolized by the heroic activities of ancient gods and goddesses, and their divinely inspired triumph is heralded as the fulfillment of the noble legacy of the caesars, alluded to in the laurel wreath (or diadem) that forms part of the *impresa*. Might not the Emperor Constantine, in this context, provide a crucial link between the pagan past and the Christian present? Uniting in his person the grandeur of imperial Rome and the piety of the new Christian era, and as the force of change itself, Constantine is the ideal bridge between the Barberini and their ancient precursors.

Also implicating Constantine in the iconography of the *Salone* is Kirwin's thesis that important connections exist between its decorative program and that of the crossing in St. Peter's.[251] Recalled in this assertion is Constantine's fundamental role in consecrating the site of the graves of Peter and Paul.[252] This act of devotion started a practice that would be emulated by successive generations of popes, and ultimately by Urban VIII with the great Baldachin.[253] It is therefore fitting that Constantine should be represented in the *Salone* as well. Not only was he the Barberini's first Christian ancestor and source of the temporal authority referred to in the ceiling, he was also the founder of St. Peter's and the originator of a tradition stretching all the way back to antiquity, a tradition that formed the basis for Urban's defininitive decorative campaign in the basilica.

As a large, ceremonial space within a papal residence decorated with a monumental ceiling fresco, the *Salone* readily invites comparison with the Sistine Chapel.[254] The fact

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[250] From a longer passage quoted by Kirwin (201-202) from "The Pilgrim, or the Declaration of the paintings in the Barberini Hall." For the same excerpt in the original Italian text with editing, see Lee, 250-251 (Appendix I, Codice Barberini Latino 4335). While Kirwin noted that "The Pilgrim" had been tentatively attributed to Federico Ubaldini, Lee provides evidence that points to Bracciolini as the author (17-21).

[251] Kirwin, 205-212.

[252] Constantine constructed the first *martyrium* on the site of Peter's supposed burial in c. 320 A.D. (ibid., 14).

[253] Ibid., 233. Bernini's baldachin was commissioned in 1624 and completed in 1633.

[254] This observation is made by Kirwin as well, who also relates the *Salone* ceiling to the Sistine Chapel, though with no reference to tapestries (200-201). The Sistine Chapel decorations include: wall frescoes by

that Urban VIII's lavish and inspired patronage has been likened to that of Julius II, and that Urban himself apparently wished to be regarded as a modern version of the Renaissance pope,[255] suggests that the parallel would have been self-evident to him as well. While the combination of the vault fresco and the *Constantine* tapestries in the *Salone* is cited by Zurawski as evidence of a conscious emulation of the Sistine Chapel program,[256] it seems equally possible that it was this inevitable comparison that motivated the design of tapestries as part of the decorative ensemble of the *Salone*. How better to immortalize the triumph of the Barberini than through a deliberate recollection of the most prestigious and venerable of "papal *salas*"?[257] And not only does the *Salone* repeat the combination of the painted vault and tapestry, but the corroborative interplay of both elements is imitated as well. In the Sistine Chapel the evolution of history illustrated in the frescoes is realized in and underscored by Raphael's tapestries narrating the role of the two founders of the Roman Church, Peter and Paul.[258] Similarly the celebration of the origins of the Barberini dynasty and its immortal triumph is a fulfillment and reaffirmation of Constantine's divinely ordained mission and victory.

Taddeo only lived here for two years, from 1632 to 1634, and Francesco, owing to his appointment in 1632 as Vice-chancellor with an entitlement to residence at the *Cancelleria*, while the south wing was under construction, never even moved in.[259] Nevertheless, as Patricia Waddy has shown, the *Palazzo Barberini* only has meaning as two pendant apartments, one secular, the other ecclesiastical, united by the great loggia, where Urban VIII, as represented by the *Triumph of Divine Providence*, presides as the nucleus and head of the family.[260]

Perugino, Botticelli, Signorelli and others depicting episodes from the life of Moses and Christ, Michelangelo's ceiling fresco showing scenes from *Genesis*, and Raphael's tapestries illustrating the *Acts of the Apostles*, with episodes from the lives of Peter and Paul.

[255] Fumaroli, *L'age de l'éloquence*, 203; Zurawski, 186.

[256] Zurawski, 183-186. Her argument is based on the "stylistic duality" resulting from the juxtaposition of a painted vault and "Early Christian" tapestries, as well as Rubens' quotations from the *Apostles* series in the *Constantine* panels he designed.

[257] The term is employed by Zurawski (185).

[258] See Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 101-118; John K. G. Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen and the Tapestries from the Sistine Chapel* (London: Phaidon, 1972).

[259] Waddy, 201, 243-244.

[260] Ibid., 218-220.

Echoed in the arcades of the palace loggia is the *Cortile di San Domaso*, directly across town and visible from the *Salone* in the precinct of St. Peter's and the Vatican.[261] Reflected back in these venerable buildings was the spiritual and temporal authority of the papacy, joined in the person of Urban VIII, whose power devolved from Divine Providence, and who, in turn, made possible the exalted status of the Barberini. Urban is advertised in the fresco and outside, in the papal escutcheon adorning the façade, as the force behind the palace as well as the prestige and wealth that it represents. Just as the north and south blocks are given integrity and luster by the magnificent loggia in between, it is Urban's presence that unifies the two sides of the family into a greater whole, elevating it to pontifical status and their residence into a second papal palace.

[261] Ibid., 219.

11. RECONSTRUCTION AND GENERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE TAPESTRIES

As indicated earlier in our review of the literature and problems surrounding this question, the five large tapestries and baldachin dossal easily fit into the available wall space of the *Salone*. Furthermore, the placement of the accessory panels is, to a certain extent, dictated by the plan of the *Salone* and the *piano nobile* (Fig. 34). The four *portiere* were most likely intended for the four entrances that access that *Salone* from the main staircases and private apartments of Anna Colonna and Francesco Barberini. Corresponding with the seven doorways in the room are the seven *sopraporte*, though determining precisely which one hung over which door is difficult to assess. The three panels depicting monuments built by Constantine may well have hung together as a set above the three doors leading to the adjoining *Sala Ovale*.

Proposed Arrangement

Due to the three sets of doors leading to the adjoining room on one end, and the wall of windows on the other, only the two long walls of the *Salone* can accommodate large tapestries. Assuming that the intended arrangement would have been symmetrical, the six panels would have had to have been divided into two groups of three, bearing in mind that while all the panels are approximately the same height, the *Sea Battle* is double the width of the other panels.[262] At the same time, in order for the cycle to be coherent, it had to respect the chronological order of events as far as possible. Finally, the fireplace mantle obstructing the central, lower portion of one wall, as well as the principle entrance to the room located on the same wall, must also be considered.

Taking all these factors into account, I propose the following arrangement (Fig. 37). Since the baldachin would have been the focal point of the room, I have placed the *Statue of Constantine* in the center of the wall facing the visitor as he enters the *Salone*. Flanking the *Statue* are *Constantine Burning the Memorials* on the right, and *Constantine*

[262] All the panels are about 16 feet 5 inches tall. Their width, with the exception of the *Sea Battle*, ranges from 9 feet 8 inches, to 14 feet 11 inches. The Sea Battle is 23 feet 3 ½ inches wide (Dubon, cat. nos. 8-13, p. 117-125).

Destroying the Idols on the left. The pope is thus seated between the two images illustrating the emperor's patronage of the Church, while behind him is be the panel proclaiming Constantine's victorious unification of the empire under the umbrella of divinely-inspired leadership.

Opposite the baldachin, from left to right, are *Constantine Fighting the Lion*, the *Sea Battle*, and the *Apparition of the Cross*. In these three episodes are depicted the events leading up to the ultimate triumph. The *Lion* episode, the earliest in terms of chronology, foreshadows Constantine's glorious crusade. In the *Apparition*, on the other side of the fireplace, is this promise fulfilled through the miraculous vision that is at once a sign of his heavenly mission and the symbol by which he will be victorious. In the center, above the mantle, is the giant *Sea Battle*, the climactic struggle from which Constantine will emerge as sole leader of the empire.

While the position of the *Sea Battle* between the *Lion* and *Apparition* episodes disrupts the chronological continuity of the cycle, its extraordinary size makes it difficult to place anywhere but in the center of a long wall.[263] It fits, moreover, into the category of heroic combat as a prelude to the post-war consolidation episodes on the facing wall. The *Apparition* scene belongs here as a clear reference to the Battle against Maxentius that immediately followed Constantine's vision. Zurawski's reconstruction, though untenable for reasons already discussed,[264] makes a similar distinction between the episodes depicting Constantine's military and peacetime accomplishments.[265]

The time line is again disrupted by the *Memorials* and *Idols* scenes flanking the *Statue*, since they belong to the period following the Milvian Bridge and before the sea battle against Licinius. Nevertheless, as noted above, they are ideal accompaniments to the *Statue of Constantine* with its message of universal sovereignty, since they illustrate the spread of Christianity throughout the empire. In terms of Urban VIII, who would be

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[263] Even if the main entrance could be disregarded in orienting the baldachin, which it should not, the fireplace on the opposite wall makes it impossible for a baldachin to have been set up before it.
[264] See chap. 2, pp. 6-7 above.
[265] Zurawski, 174-178.

seated before the *Statue*, the explicit implication of the three panels would be his fight against heresy in order to reconcile the Christian Empire under the universal leadership of the Holy See.

While this arrangement of the *Idols* and *Memorials* panels is complemented by their compositions, so that the emperor in each case faces the baldachin, the same is only true of the *Apparition* scene on the facing wall, whereas in the *Lion* episode Constantine faces left, away from the fireplace.

General Interpretation

Together the tapestries document Constantine's divinely ordained Christian revolution. In chronological order they progress from the emperor's youth through his milestone military triumphs and initiatives on behalf of the Church, and conclude with his unification of the eastern and western empires. In broad strokes the series sums up the goals of Urban VIII's pontificate. Inspired by his namesake, Urban II (1088-99), who had initiated the Crusades, Urban VIII was determined to reunite the Christian world and assert the universal supremacy of the Holy See.[266] To this end he rearmed the Papal States, fought heresy, and promoted the zealous missionary activities of the *Collegio di Propaganda Fide*.[267] Embodying the qualities of both an ideal priest and prince, Urban brought to bear the full weight of his temporal and spiritual offices in a campaign to reconcile, strengthen, and expand the "Christian Republic."[268]

At the same that it represents symbolically the ambitions and achievements of Urban VIII's papacy, the *Constantine* series also contributes to the program of the vault fresco by enriching it with the patina of historical legitimacy. Visually and conceptually, Cortona's *Triumph of Divine Providence* represents the culmination of the divine plan set in motion during Constantine's lifetime and that is fulfilled in the modern era by his successor, Urban VIII. The dynastic claims of the Barberini, buttressed in the vault

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[266] Kirwin, 11-12.
[267] Ibid., 37-39, 232-233; Magnuson, 223-224, 228-232.
[268] Kirwin, 12-13. The term "Christian Republic" is quoted from Kirwin's excerpt of Urban's proclamation shortly after his election (12).

decorations and outside the *Salone* in the stairway by recondite allusions to the ancient past, receive their ultimate corroboration in the history of their ancestor and exemplum.

Above all, Constantine represented the ultimate secular model of divine intervention in the affairs of men in order to assure the fulfillment of the mission of the Church.[269] The idea that celestial forces were behind the scenes, guiding the events in Constantine's life, is indicated by the monogram of Christ in the central cartouche at the top of all six tapestries, as well as by the prophetic Barberini bees. Not only was Urban VIII the latest successor to the throne of St. Peter, he was also the successor of Constantine, and like him, had been granted temporal authority by Divine Providence in return for his unwavering protection of the Church. The Barberini family, by extension, had been promoted to their exalted status by the same divine hand.

The notion of Divine Providence in connection with papal elections was an established convention that even figured in the standard suffix to the Pope's signature: "Supreme Pontiff by Divine Providence," a designation derived from Roman imperial tradition and panegyric. It was appropriated by Bracciolini in his epic poem celebrating the election of Urban VIII, published in 1628,[270] and from there, as we have seen, became a staple device of Barberini iconography. Not only was it particularly suited to the unprecedented outcome of the election that elevated Maffeo Barberini to the papacy, it legitimized the rising fortunes of the Barberini family, who had been catapulted from relative obscurity to aristocratic status.[271] Thus the will of God was manifestly behind their success as well.

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[269] Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 187.
[270] The poem was actually begun shortly after Urban VIII's election in 1623, and was originally entitled "Divina Providenza" (Lee, 2 n.9)
[271] Scott, *Images of Nepotism*, 172-173, 180 n. 2, 181.

12. CONCLUSION

We have seen that the *Constantine* tapestries provide an historical example of divine agency at work, guiding Constantine through his military and spiritual conquests and uniting in his person the secular authority of the emperor and the ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Church. The vault fresco of *Divine Providence* is an allegorical representation of divine agency, glorifying the ideal virtues and accomplishments of Pope Urban VIII and rewarding him with the crown of immortality. Thus both the spiritual and temporal authority of the Barberini are shown as part of a greater divine plan.

Lest any visitors should miss the point of these decorations, they would only have to look out the window of the *gran salone* to see St. Peter's and the Vatican, where the Pope would give his blessings *Urbi et Orbi.* Just as the world community of Christians was represented by the throngs gathered in the Piazza,[272] so was it symbolized in the *Salone* by the orb in Constantine's hand in the *Statue* panel. In St. Peter's the great *Baldacchino* marks the tomb of Christ's first vicar and the divine source of papal authority, whereas in the *Salone*, the baldachin, with its golden statue of Constantine displaying the orb of the imperial dominions, would have marked the source of the papacy's temporal authority, and more specifically, the rule of the Barberini over the entire Christian universe.

Inspired by the "Rubens" tapestries, the *Constantine* series designed by Cortona showcased Rome's continued artistic ascendancy and the success of the Barberini looms by producing a set of tapestries based on a grand theme traditionally associated with great leaders, and which had been designed by the Flemish master and woven on the royal looms in Paris. Most significantly, the subject matter was ideally suited for adaptation and appropriation to suit the propagandistic ends of the Barberini. In the context of the new family residence under construction with elaborate decorations planned throughout, it might be said that the opportunity presented itself to complete *not* the gift set received from Louis XIII, but rather the unified iconographic program of the palace and, in particular, the *bel composto* that the *Salone Barberini* was to have been.

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[272] Hibbard, 152.

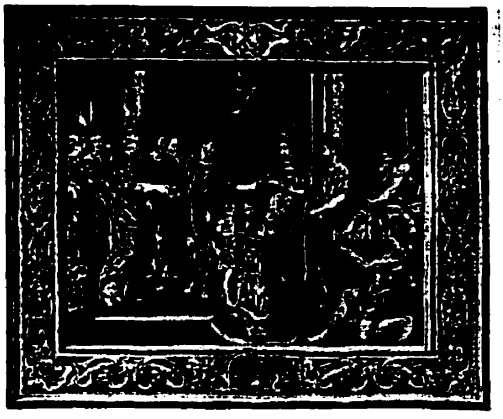
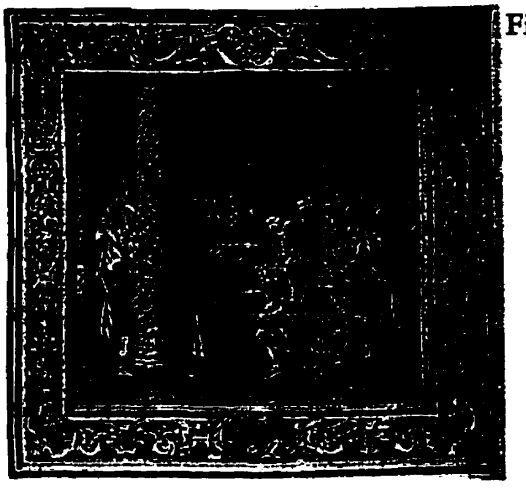


Fig. 1



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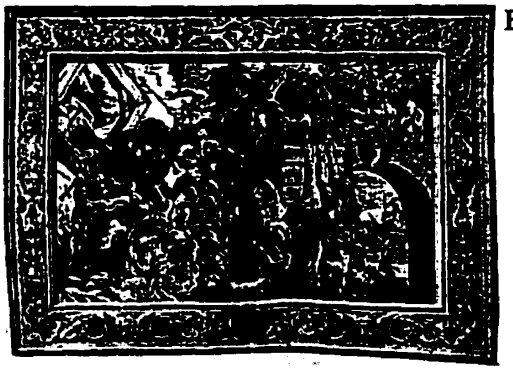

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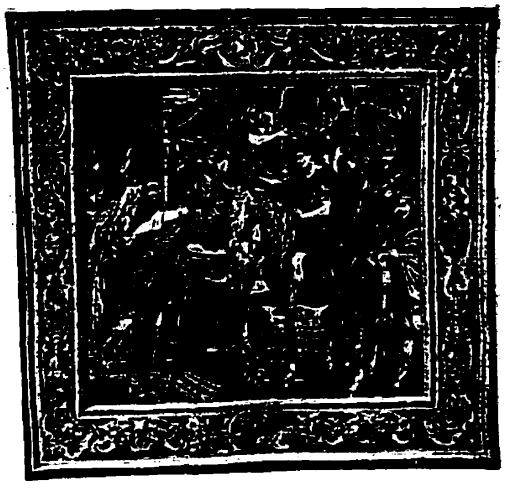

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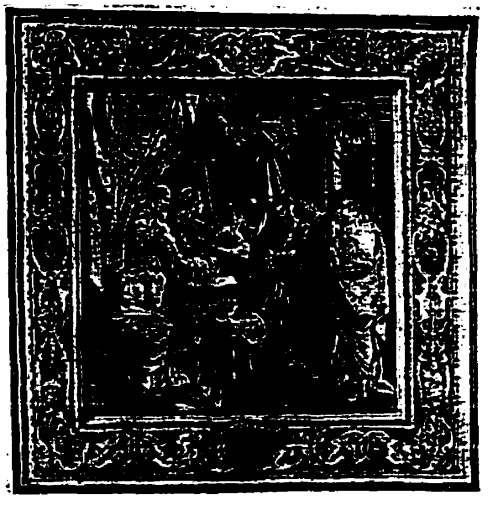

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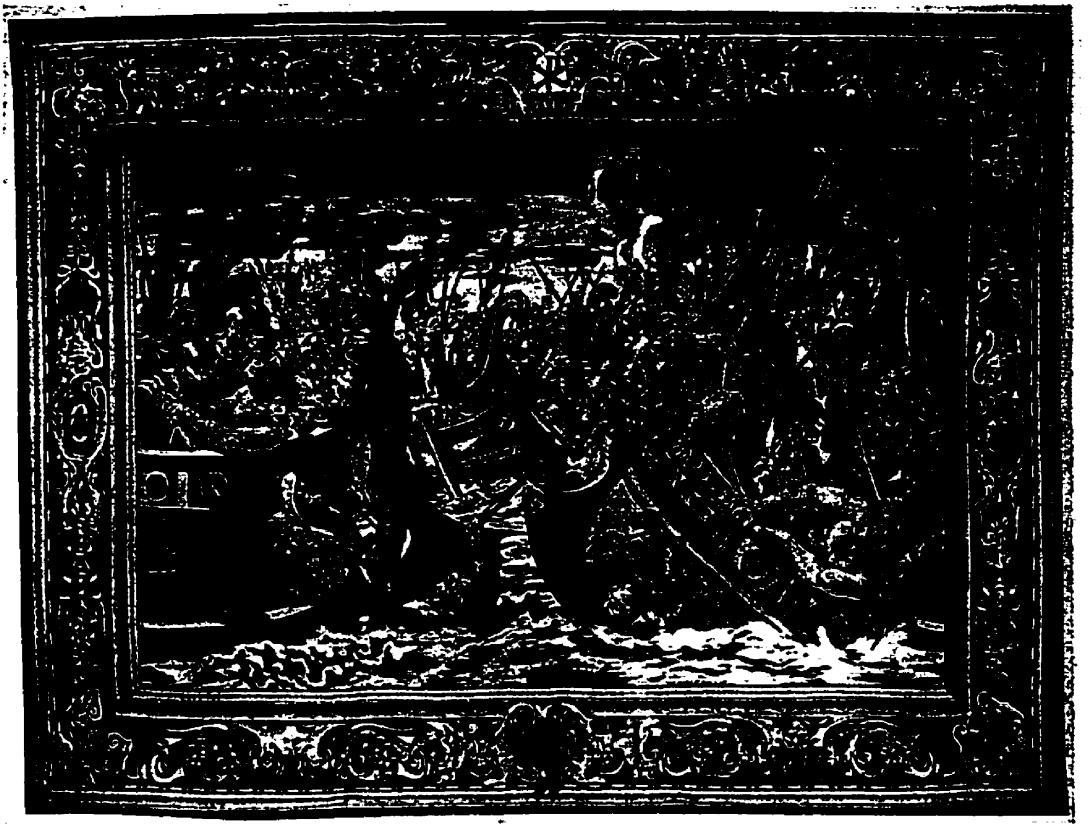

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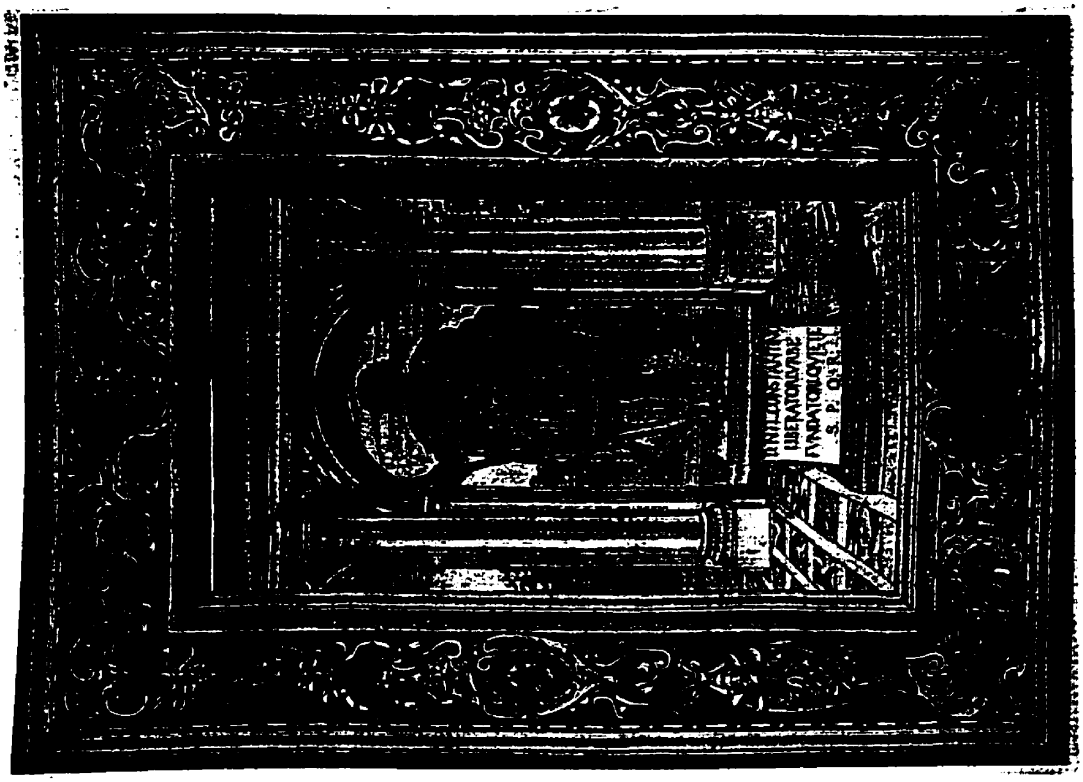
Fig. 11



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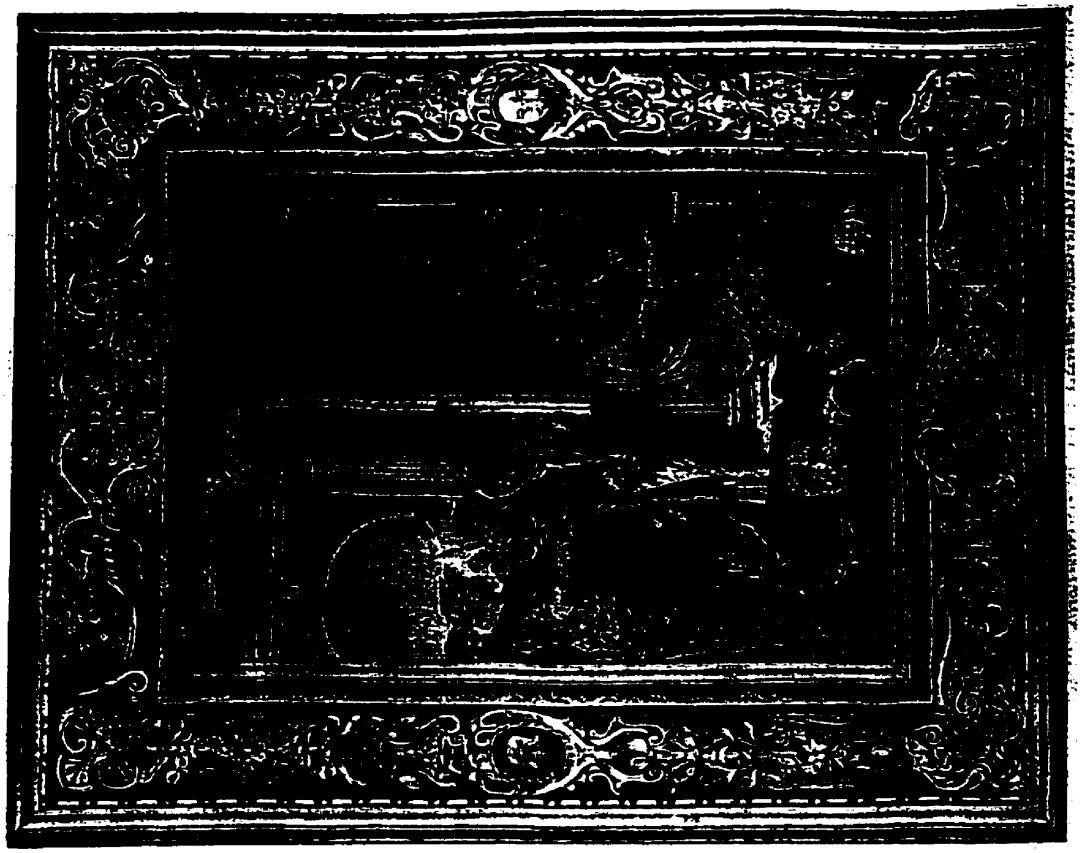

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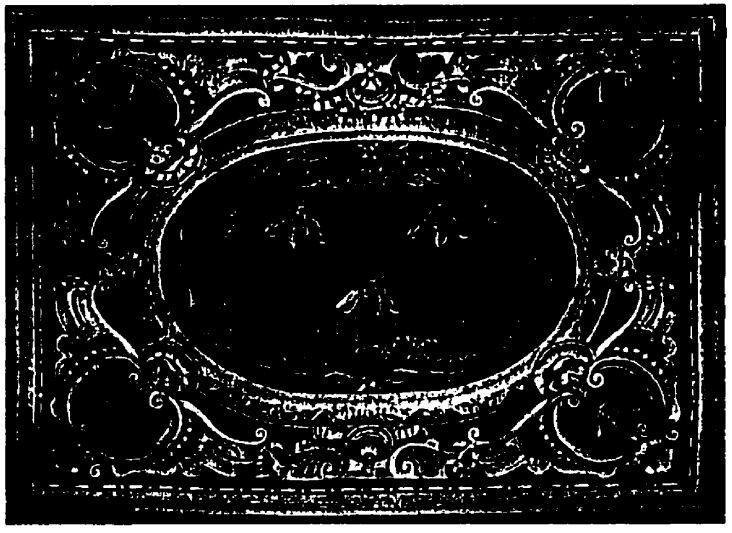

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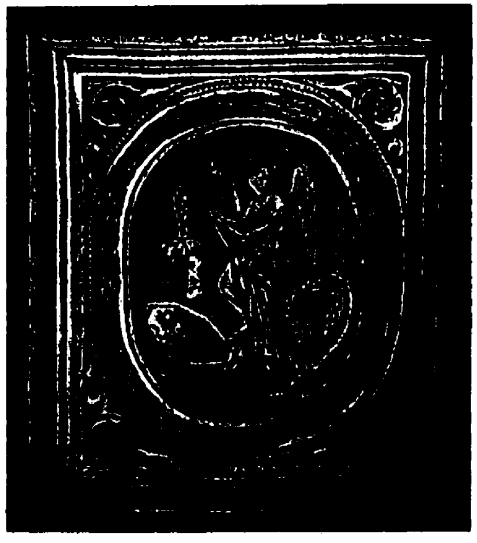
Fig. 16



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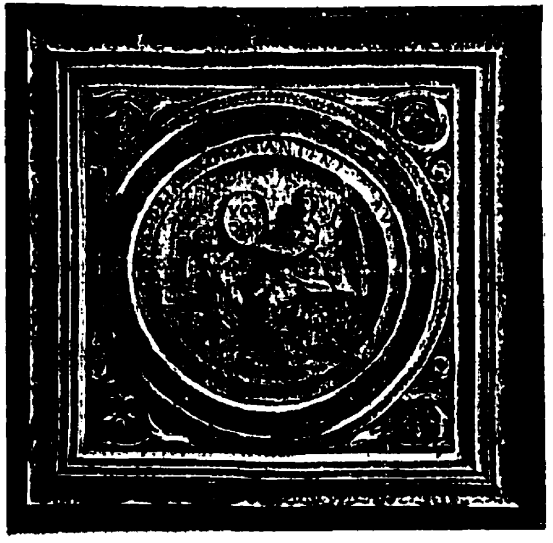

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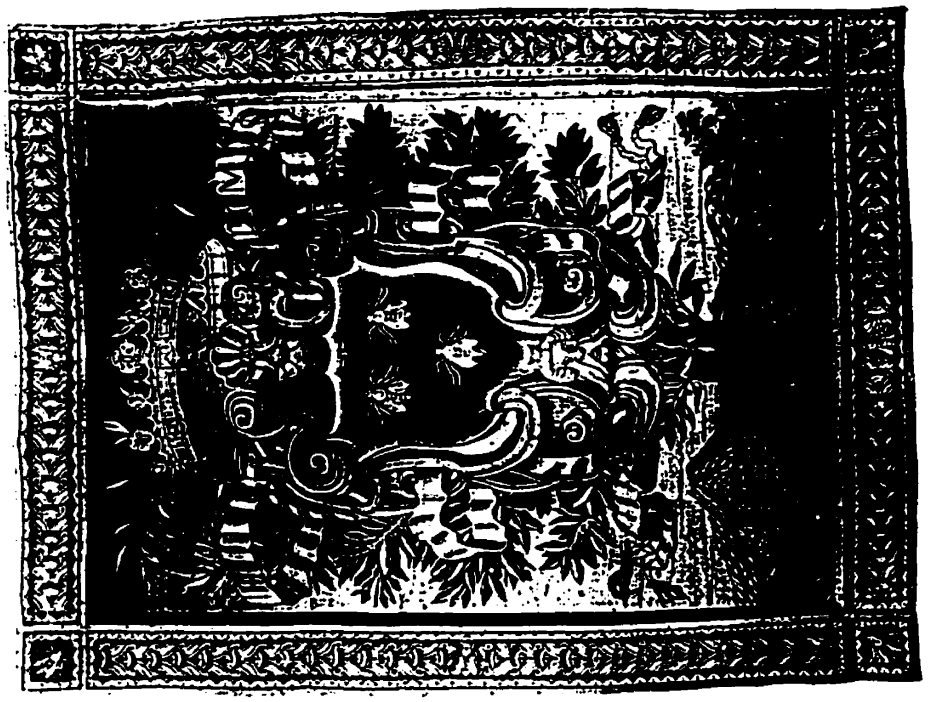

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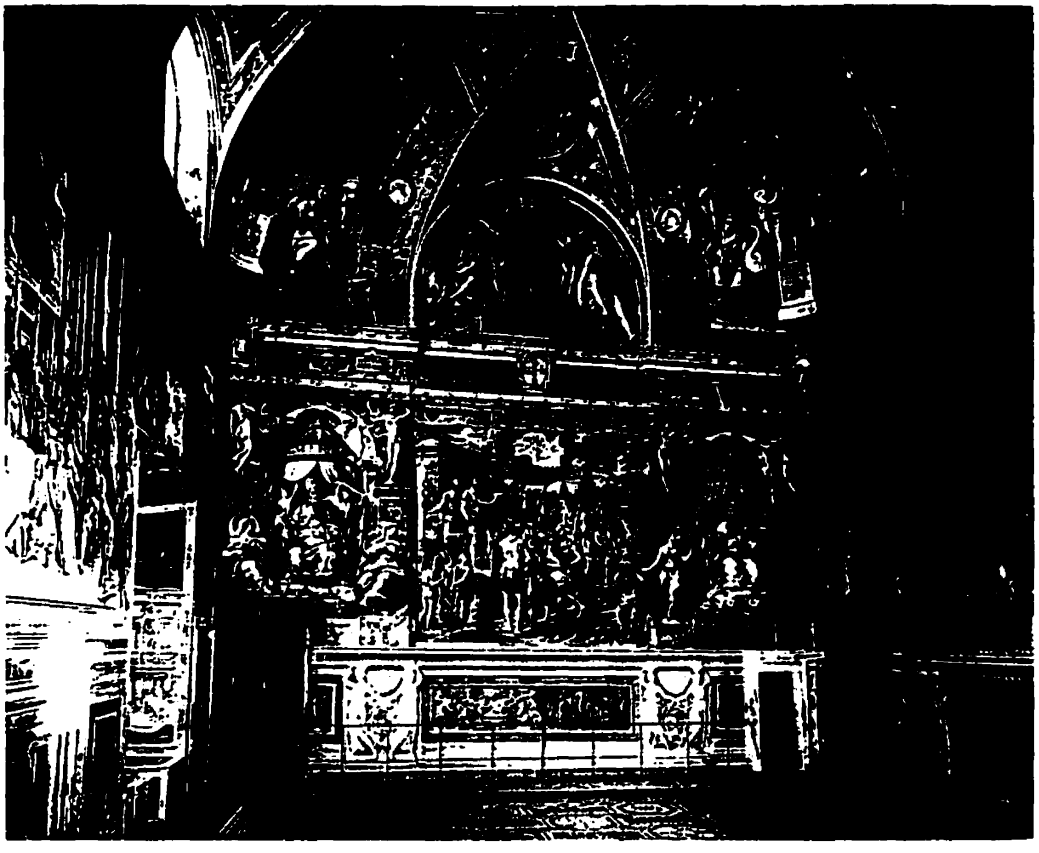

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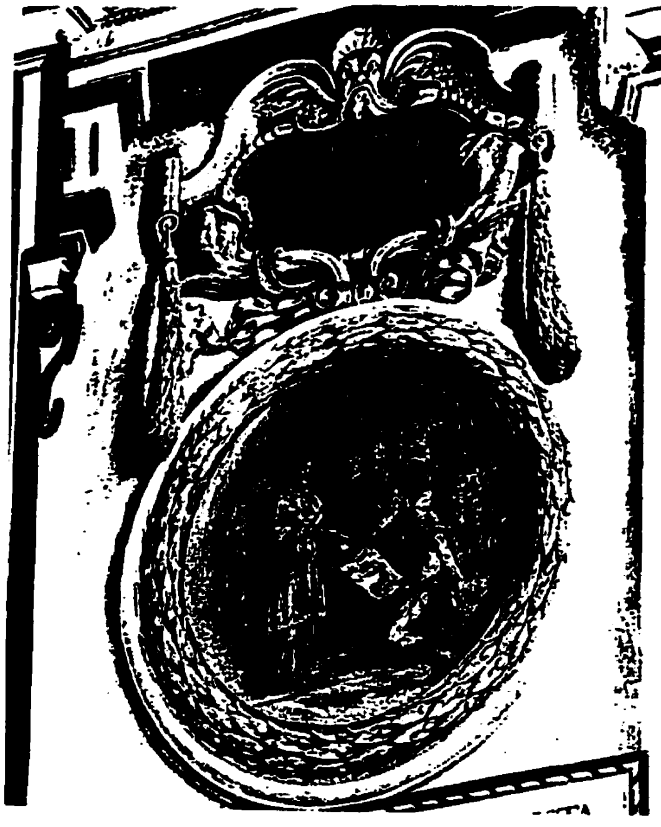

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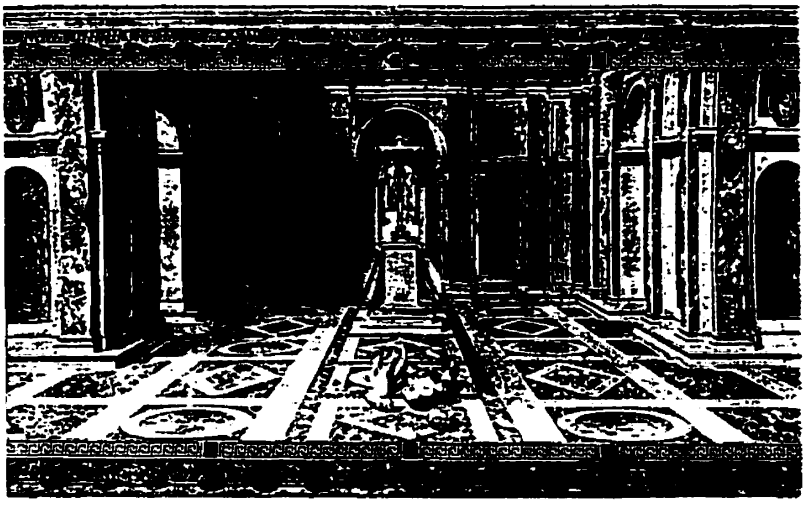

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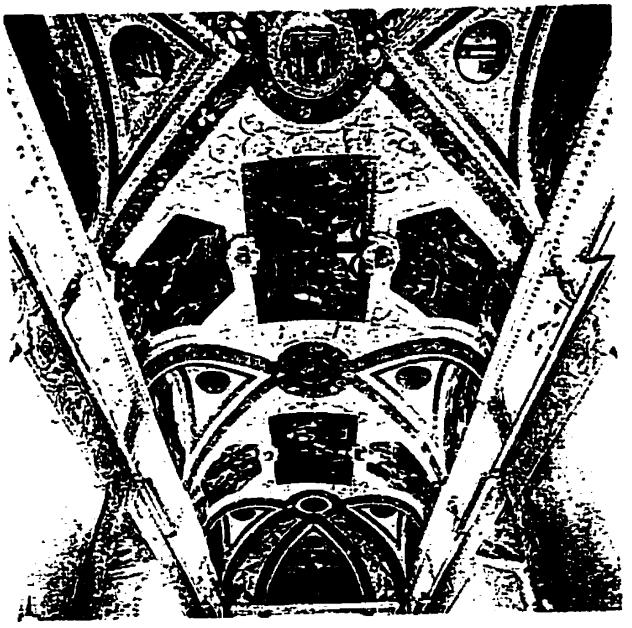

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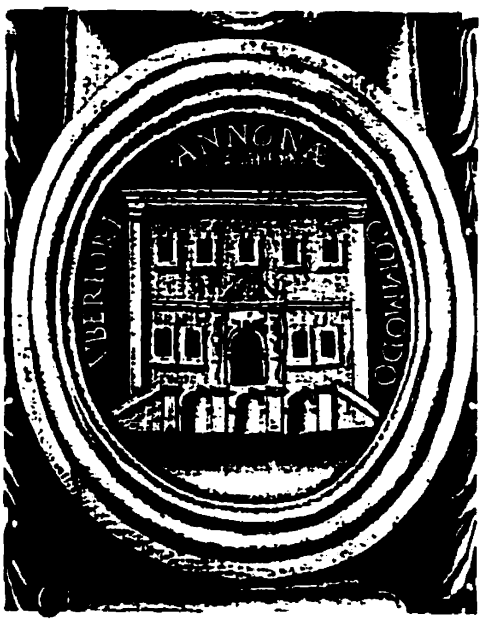

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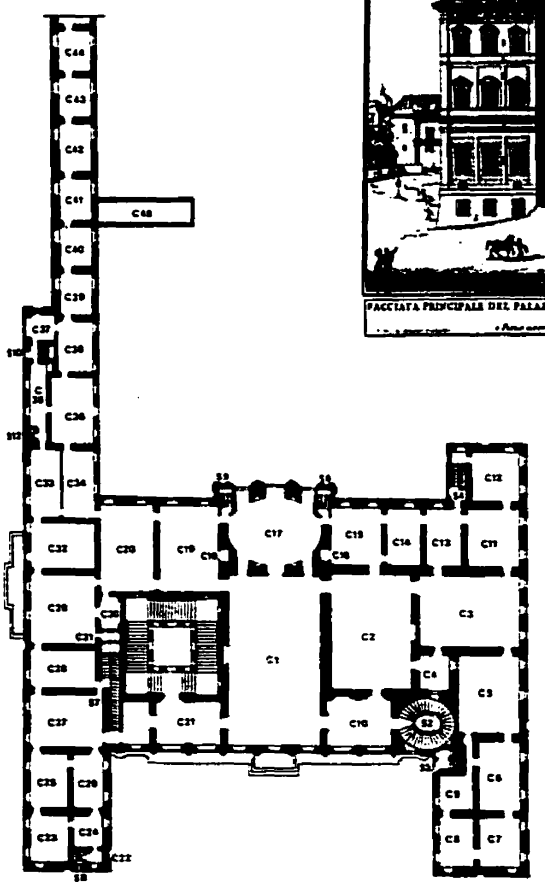

Fig. 36

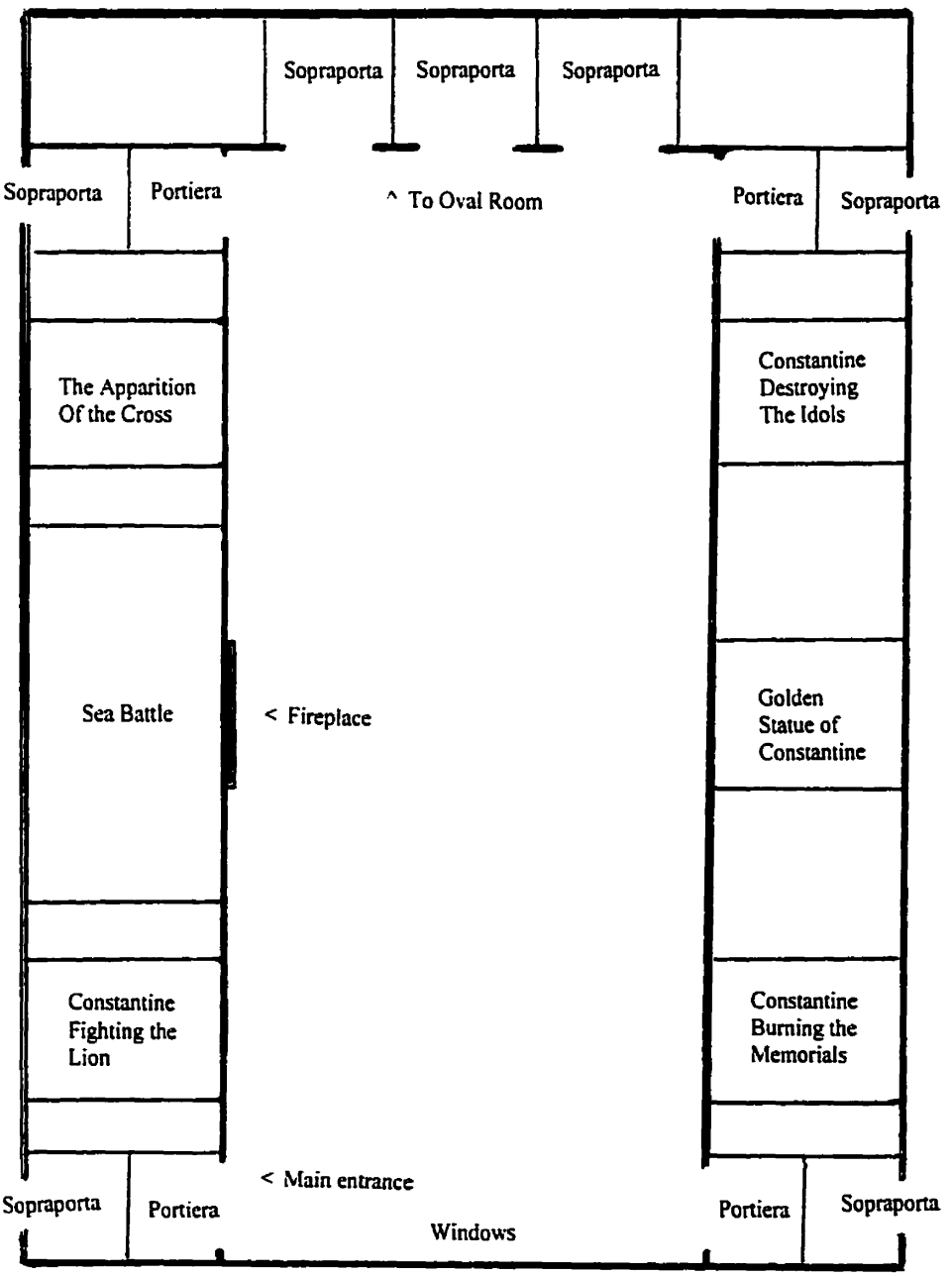

Fig. 37 Proposed reconstruction of Pietro da Cortona's *History of Constantine* tapestries in the *Gran Salone* of *Palazzo Barberini* (not to scale)

APPENDIX A

Excerpt from Francesco Barberini's Inventory of October 1, 1649

Pezzi sette d'arazzi tutti di stame e seta ed oro, quali furono donati a Sua Eminenza dalla Corona di Francia quando vi andò Legato a Latere, sono alti l'uno ale sette e mezzo romane. Rappresentano l'historia di Costantino Imperatore tutti armati di treliccio, cioè:

I pezzo vi è il Matrimonio longo palmi 25 alto palmi 19 ½;
II pezzo vi è la Vittoria contro Massenzio longo palmi 30;
III pezzo vi è il Trionfo di Costantino longo palmi 22 ½;
IV pezzo il Battesimo di detto Costantino longo palmi 22 ½;
V pezzo la fondazione di Costantinopoli longo palmi 19 e due terzi;
VI pezzo l'Inventione della Croce longo palmi 21 e un quarto;
VII pezzo il Testamento di detto Costantino longo palmi 20 ½;

Pezzi numero cinque arazzi fatti fare in Romana da Sua Eminenza con Api, da Giacomo della Riviera ch'accompagnano li sopradetti sette pezzi et historia. Di stame, seta et oro di guardarobba armati di treliccio bianco, come li suddetti, cioè:

I pezzo rappresenta l'apparizione della Croce alto ale 7 ½ largo ale 3 ¾;
II pezzo--quando Costantino abbrugia li memoriali--largo ale 5 ½;
III pezzo rappresenta la battaglia di mare longo ale 11 ¼;
IV pezzo--quando leva l'idoli e mette la Croce -- longo ale cinque e sett'ottave;
V pezzo--quando Costantino combatte nello steccato con un leone – largo ale 4 ¾;

E a tutti li sopradetti dodici pezzi vi sono le tele fatte di cortinella avvolte nelle stanghe di legno, longhe quanto l'altezza dell'arazzi.

Un Baldacchino ch'accompagna li suddetti arazzi cioè cielo con un festone di laoro in mezzo et ape foderato di sangalla roscia, largo ale 4 ¼ e longo ale 5 ¾;

Sette pendenti ch'accompagnano detto cielo senza frangia e foderati di sangalla roscia e più la sua cascata quale rappresenta una statua d'oro di Costantino larga ale 5 e 7 dodicesimi, armata di traliccio come l'altri e tela di cortina con una stanza per accogliergli come l'altri.

Un pezzetto d'arazzo ch'accompagna li fresci d'arazzi di Costantino fatto di stame e seta longo palmi tre in circa e altro palmi due.

Un fregio d'arazzo che accompagna l'arazzi di Costantino longo palmi 19 1/3 largo palmi 1/3.

Un altro simile largo palmi 3 ½.

Due fregi d'arazzi ch'accompagnano dalle bande l'arazzi di Costantino, alti palmi 19 ½ e larghi palmi 3 ½ l'uno che detti fregi staccati sono numero quattro.

Sopraporte numero sette di stame, seta e oro quali accompagnano li sopradetti arazzi di Costantino, armati di treliccio bianco cioè uno con un ovato in mezzo che finge una medaglia con l'arco di Costantino, alto ale 4 largo ale 3 e 5/8, un altro simile alto ale 4 e largo ale 2 5/8. [Questo sopraporta di cui è omessa la descrizione doveva rappresentare il Sarcofago di S. Elena].

Un altro simile *con una medaglia con una figura con ale ed un putto che tengono tutti doi un ovato con questo motto* VOT
XX
alto ale 3 ¼ largo simile, un altro simile *con una medaglia di bronzo con le terme di Costantino, due cavalli et homino avanti detto termine* alto ale 4 e tredici sedicesimi e largo ale 3 [disperso].

Un altro simile *con doi figure, una in piedi con un animale a l'altro a sedere* alto ale 3 e quattro sedicesimi e largo ale 3 3/8, un altro simile *con un Angelo che tiene in mano uno scudo quale scrive il nome di Costantino,* alto ale 3 undici dodicesimi, largo ale 3 e cinque dodicesimi, un altro simile *con una medaglia et una colonna e sopra detta colonna una civetta, e sotto uno scudo, e trofeo* alto ale 3 1/8 e largo ale 3 ½ [disperso].

Portiere numero quattro fatte di stame, seta et oro con arme del Signor Principe Prefetto tenuta da doi angioli alte l'una ale 6 in palmi 16 e larga 4 in palmi 11 cioè due foderate di capicciola verde e guarnita attorno con una frangetta di seta et oro e l'altre due senza niente.[273]

[273] Quoted from Urbano Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 50-51. Italics as well as comments within parentheses are Urbano Barberini's and have been included for their usefulness to the reader. A complete English translation of the above is available in Dubon (15).

APPENDIX B

Report from Paris Detailing French Constantine Series In *Barberiniano Latino* 4373 fol. 79

Relazione scritta in Francia su pezzi della serie di Costantino.

Fattura delle petze sette di tapezzaria de historia de Costantino Magno con oro sopra ale 7 ¼ d'altezza delle quali sua Magestà ne fece gratificatione all'Illustrissimo Monsignore Cardinale Barbarino, Legato di Sua Santità in Francia.

Una pezza che representa una **battaglia sopra il ponte di Mola**, longa alle 11 ½; un'altra **dove l'architetto mostra la pianta di Costantinopoli**, longa alle 7 ¼; un'altra dove se fa il **sposalitio de Costantino**, longa alle 7 ½; un'altra **l'intrata in Roma de Costantino**, longa alle 8 ½; un'altra del **baptisterio de Costantino**, longa alle 8 ½; un'altra **dove muore Costantino**, longa ale 7; un'altra **dove S. Helena presenta la vera Croce al patriarca**, longa alle 7 ½.

Segue la fattura d'altre petze cinque della suddetta historia che sono in ordine che fa il compimento de tutta l'historia con le 7 petze soprascritte consistendo tutta l'historia in 12 petze di che ne erano finite alcune petze. Da quel tempo il resto si fabricorno da poi in magior numero sino a 12 petze et le cinque che mancano al compimento delle 7 sopradette sono le seguenti: Una petza rapresenta un **altra battaglia contra Maxentio** alle 10 ¼; un'altra **dove aparisce in aria il nome de Xto** in cifra alle 8 ½; un'altra **dove Costantino eresse il nome de Cristo nelle sue bandiere** all 6 ½; un'altra **dove si portano trophei d'arme** longa alle 6 ½; un'altra **con un Neptuno per mostrar il suo dominio per mare e per terra** alle 6 ½.

Montano le cinque petze sopradette alle 38 ¼ di longhezza sopra alle 7 ¼ di altezza fanno in tutto alle 27 ¼ mesura di Fiandra a ragione de lire settanta tornesi per alla, monta la summa de lire vingti milla trecentosette a soldi vinti l'una L. 20307 anzi L. 19407...[274]

[274] Urbano Barbernini, "Pietro da Cortona," 49. Tapestry titles are indicated in bold for the reader's convenience.

APPENDIX C

Location of the Tapestries and Related Works

1. The six tapestries woven on the Barberini looms

Samuel H. Kress Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art (with the seven French tapestries).

2. Related sketches and cartoons

Constantine Fighting the Lion. Cartoon at the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini (De Strobel, 21-22).

Apparition of the Cross. Pen and brown ink drawing at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Codex Ottob. Lat. 3131, fol. 49 (Nesselrath, cat.no. 72, 194-197.);

The Campaign Against Licinius, Sea Battle. Cartoon at the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini (De Strobel, 21-22). Preliminary drawing at the Uffizi (1408 F) (Barberini, "Pietro da Cortona," 145).

Constantine Burning the Memorials. Cartoon at the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini (De Strobel, 21-22). Oil sketch at the Museo di Roma (De Strobel, 22 followed by Onori, 75, 84 n. 42).

Constantine Destroying the Idols. Cartoon at the Galleria nazionale di Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini (De Strobel, 21-22), oil sketch (private collection – Rome; identified by Barberini, 145 and Onori, 75, 84 n. 42 but rejected by Briganti, 207 and Dubon, Cat. No. 12, 121-122 with reservations).

The Statue of Constantine. Pen and wash drawing sold at auction in 1923 (V. Winthrop Newman Sale, American Art Galleries), present location unknown (Dubon, Cat. No. 13, 122-125).

3. Accessory pieces

Ceiling of Baldachin (Barberini heraldry). Museo di Roma (Carlo Pietrangeli, "Un arazzo della fabbrica Barberini donato al Museo di Roma," *Bollettino dei Musei comunali di roma* 20 (1973): 21-26).

Pendants. Lost (recorded in Barberini, 145; Dubon, 22).

Portiere (Coats of Arms). Location of two of the original four: Milan, Collection of the heirs of Ugo Ferrraguti (DuBon, 18) and Rome, Property of Prince E. Barberini (Barberini, 51).; drawing for portiere : Windsor Castle, Royal Library (Dubon, 18). Others: unknown.

Sopraporte (over door panels) (seven) – *The Sarcophogus of Saint Helena*, Milan, Collection of the heirs of Ugo Ferraguti (Dubon, 20); *Angel writing the name of Constantine on a shield*, Milan, Collection of the heirs of Ugo Ferraguti (Dubon, 20); *Winged figure and putto*, Milan, Collection of the heirs of Ugo Ferraguti (Dubon, 21); *The Goddess Rome and Constantine*, Milan, Private Collection (possibly same as above) (Barberini, 50); *The Arch of Constantine*: lost (DuBon, 20 and Barberini, 146); *The Baths of Constantine with two horses and men*: lost (Dubon, 21 and Barberini, 146); *With a medal and a column and aboe this an owl, and below a shield and trophies*: lost (Dubon, 21 and Barberini, 147).

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