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ATTI E MEMORIE DELL'ATENEIO VENETO

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ON RENAISSANCE LIBRARY DECORATIONS AND THE MARCIANA\*

It has long been recognized that the rich decorative program of the Marciana Library is complex and learned.<sup>1</sup> No less would be expected of a library built by the proud Venetian Republic to house Cardinal Bessarion's precious bequest of Greek and Latin manuscripts. Bessarion's provision that the library be open to all associated it from the start with the great public libraries of antiquity. Marino Zorzi, building on and reconsidering the earlier work of Nicola Ivanoff, proposed in 1987 that the procurators Vettor Grimani and Antonio Cappello may have devised the program in consultation with other distinguished persons: the librarian Pietro Bembo and perhaps their friend Daniele Barbaro.<sup>2</sup> Certainly the program was devised by Venetians well aware of the significance of a public library, of ancient precedents, and also of recent and contemporary examples of built libraries in Italy. The lack of a full contemporary description of the Library and the loss or transfer of the original wall decorations of the Vestibule as well as many elements of the wall decorations in the

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<sup>1</sup> As organizer of the Renaissance Society of America session on the Marciana Library held in the Marciana Reading Room in April 2010 I wish to thank all the collaborators who contributed to the event: Sarah McHam, Marino Zorzi, Deborah Howard, Dorit Raines, Amalia Donatella Basso. We are grateful to the *Ateneo Veneto* for publishing the session papers. Many thanks to my colleagues at Pratt for their generous consulting: Dimitri Hazzikostas for references on ancient sites and Dorothy Shepherd for medieval manuscript references. Marino Zorzi has kindly brought to my attention additional references for this publication.

<sup>2</sup> MARINO ZORZI, *La Libreria di San Marco: libri, lettori, società nella Venezia dei dogi*, Milan 1987, p. 140. Possible connections with the Casa Barbaro are suggested, p. 143, in the discussion of the relationship of the Accademia Veneziana or della Fama to the Library program. In this context further patrician roles are noted, including Federico Badoer, founder of the Accademia, and Bernardino Loredan, librarian. For Ivanoff, see note 3.

Reading Room have thwarted efforts by many serious scholars to fully understand the program.<sup>3</sup> In the process some implied, I think incorrectly, that there is no underlying system and others that there is no almost religious content.<sup>4</sup>

Here I propose to look at the decorations in the context of some other Renaissance libraries, common ancient sources their designers may have consulted, and earlier and contemporary systems of visually organizing knowledge in the hope of giving some further perspective to the interior decorations of the Marciana Library. The impressive abundance of the decorations when new is attested by Vasari's description in 1568: «bellissima e ricchissima [...] piena di pavimenti ricchissimi, di stucchi, di istorie, per le sale di quel luogo e scale pubbliche adornate da varie pitture».<sup>5</sup>

Vitruvius, ever famous, was readily available in the printed and well-illustrated edition of Fra Giovanni Giocondo da Verona published in Venice in 1511 and in Daniele Barbaro's edition illustrated with Palladio's woodcuts, published in Venice in 1556 (fig. 1), precisely when the decoration of the Reading Room ceiling was commissioned. Vitruvius tells a compelling story about how the fine

<sup>3</sup> NICOLA IVANOFF, *Il ciclo allegorico della Libreria Sansoviniana*, in *Studi di storia dell'arte: Raccolta di saggi dedicati a Roberto Longhi in occasione del suo settantesimo compleanno*, «Arte Antica e Moderna», XIII-XVI (1961), pp. 248-266, figs. 112-115. NICOLA IVANOFF, *Il ciclo dei filosofi della Libreria Marciana a Venezia*, «Emporium», CXL (1964) n. 839, Nov., pp. 207-210; NICOLA IVANOFF, *La Libreria Marciana: arte e iconologia*, «Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell'Arte», VI (1968), pp. 35-78; UGO RUGGIERI, *La Decorazione Pittorica della Libreria Marciana*, in *Cultura e società nell'Italia del Rinascimento tra riforme e manierismi*, a cura di Vittore Branca e Carlo Ossola, Firenze 1984, pp. 313-333, focused on the Reading Room.

<sup>4</sup> N. IVANOFF, *La Libreria Marciana*, p. 75, saw Christian content in only one of the 21 roundels, as will be discussed below. JUERGEN SCHULZ, *Venetian Painted Ceiling of the Renaissance*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1968, pp. 93-96, provided a clear list of the known subjects of the roundels, summarizing the content as a "cycle of learned allegories acted out by ad hoc assemblies of gods, heroes, and personifications". CHARLES HOPE, *The Ceiling Paintings in the Libreria Marciana*, in *Nuovi Studi su Paolo Veronese*, ed. Massimo Gemin, Venice 1990, pp. 290-298, disagreeing with Zorzi, proposed that the subjects of the twenty-one roundels were chosen by the seven painters as part of the competition for the best *tondo*. This would be an unusual approach for a commission from the Republic of Venice in the mid Cinquecento; typically the subject was controlled by the patrons; the artist's genius was shown in the interpretation. MARIA LUISA RICCIARDI, *Biblioteche dipinte*, Rome, 1996, pp. 33-44, is closer to Zorzi.

<sup>5</sup> GIORGIO VASARI, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* [1568], Florence 1963, VII, p. 26.

library built by the Attalid kings at Pergamum, inspired jealous Ptolemy to build a great library at Alexandria. Ptolemy, we are told, then set up a poetry competition in honor of the Muses and Apollo, and Aristophanes (one of the judges) became the librarian after proving that all but one competitor had submitted poetry that was plagiarized.<sup>6</sup> Could this story have inspired the famous competition set up by the Procurators for the best ceiling *tondo* at the Marciana?<sup>7</sup> Although we know little of the appearance of the Alexandria library, some archeological evidence exists for Pergamum: it shows that the books, in the form of papyrus rolls, were stored on the upper level on shelves, that there was a colonnade, that there was a 12 foot statue of Athena, and that stone inscriptions document lost portrait statues of Herodotus, Alcaeus, Timotheus, Balacrus, Apollonius, and 20 lines from Homer (fig. 2).<sup>8</sup>

Sarah McHam drew attention to Pliny's words on library portraits:

likenesses made, if not of gold or silver, yet at all events of bronze are set up in the libraries in honor of those whose immortal spirits speak to us in the same places.... At Rome this practice originated with Asinius Pollio, who first by founding a library made works of genius the property of the public. Whether this practice began earlier, with the kings of Alexandria and of Pergamum, between whom there had been such a keen competition in founding libraries, I cannot readily say.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *I Dieci libri dell'Architettura di Vitruvio tradutti et commentati da Monsignor Barbaro eletto patriarca d'Aquileggia*, Venice 1556, p. 181; *Vitruvius on Architecture*, trans. Frank Granger, 2 vols, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA, 1934, II, vii, pp. 64-65; *M. Vitruvius per Iocundum solito castigatior factus cum figuris et tabula ut iam legi et intelligi possit*, Venice 1511, book VII, pp. 68-69; the figures here are also woodcuts.

<sup>7</sup> For the early accounts of the competition: G. VASARI, *Le vite*, V, pp. 571-72 and CARLO RIDOLFI, *Le meraviglie dell'arte* [1648], Berlin 1914, I, pp. 305-307, II, 26. As is well known, Paolo Veronese's *Musica* won.

<sup>8</sup> ESTHER V. HANSEN, *The Attalids of Pergamon*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Ithaca 1971, pp. 272-74.

<sup>9</sup> SARAH BLAKE MCHAM, *The Role of Pliny's Natural History in the Sixteenth-Century Redecoration of the Piazza San Marco, Venice*, in *Wege zum Mythos*, ed. Luba Freedman and Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich, Berlin 2001, p. 102. GAIUS PLINIUS SECUNDUS, *Naturalis Historiae*, XXXV, II, 8-11 (Pliny, *Natural History*, Cambridge, MA 1952, Books 33-35, Latin with English trans by H. Rackham, p. 267).

And Deborah Howard, with reference to the Marciana, noted the following passage in Pausanias on buildings constructed by Hadrian in Athens. Significantly, a printed edition of Pausanias was published in Venice in 1516.<sup>10</sup>

Hadrian constructed other buildings also for the Athenians: ... most famous of all, a hundred pillars of Phrygian marble. The walls too are constructed of the same material as the cloisters. And there are rooms there adorned with a gilded roof and with alabaster stone, as well as with statues and paintings. In them are kept books.<sup>11</sup>

Here again, despite damage as early as 267AD, archeological remains confirm many columns, and outer walls exist in situ, although not the interior colonnade of Phrygian marble or the gold of the ceilings. The roll books were stored in niches (fig. 3).

Alberti in *De Re Aedificatoria*, book 8, says that Pysistratus was the first in Athens to make a public library, that the Ptolomaic kings of Egypt «had a library of seven hundred thousand volumes », and that he remembered reading «that there was at Tivoli a famous public library». On the ornament of libraries he adds that their chief ornament is the books, but also notes, from ancient accounts, the following examples: Posidonius made a mechanical model of the seven planets; Aristarchus made in metal a map of the world; Tiberius recommended images of ancient poets.<sup>12</sup>

Thus ancient texts recorded and the Renaissance knew of rich important libraries made of fine materials with columns, gold, and statues or pictures of famous writers, and books stored on upper levels. When the great libraries of antiquity had been destroyed, even in Western Europe some traditions about libraries survived. One key to

<sup>10</sup> PAUSANIAS, *Opera*, Venetiis, in aedibus Aldi et Andreae soceri, 1516.

<sup>11</sup> DEBORAH HOWARD, *Jacopo Sansovino: Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice*, New Haven and London 1975, p. 26; PAUSANIAS, I, XVIII, p. 9 (PAUSANIAS, *Description of Greece*, Greek with English trans. by W. H. S. Jones, 4 vols, Cambridge, MA 1918, pp.90-91).

<sup>12</sup> LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI, *De Re Aedificatoria*, c. 1450, first printed edition: Florence, 1485/86. First printed edition in Italian was published by Vincenzo Valgrisi, Venice, 1546, followed quickly by the illustrated Italian edition Florence, 1550. See L. B. ALBERTI, *L'architettura*, Florence 1550, trans. Cosimo Bartoli, Bk 8, pp. 317-18, also *Leon Battista Alberti on the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwett, Neil Leach, Robert Tavernor, Cambridge MA and London 1988, Book 8, ch 9, pp. 286-87.

this survival, given the importance of Benedictine monasticism, is the *Regula Benedicti* or St Benedict's *Rule* of the early sixth century. The *Rule* teaches that the whole monastery is a school for learning, reading is prescribed at meals, at eight prayer services a day, reading offers tools for the cultivation of virtue, and a book is to be taken from the library (*librarium*) during Lent and read completely by each monk.<sup>13</sup> The *librarium*, however, was usually just an *armarium* or cupboard in which manuscripts were stored, with choir books kept in the sacristy or sanctuary. Such inventories as survive show small numbers of manuscripts, often fewer than 100, for example 70 in an inventory as late as 1362 at San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice.<sup>14</sup> Most library rooms known in the later middle ages were storage vaults or niches housing several cupboards (*armarii*), although some examples of scriptoria and reading rooms are recorded. Examples of library decorations from this period are not available, but we do have manuscript illustrations that demonstrate systems of knowledge.

Let us look at an image from the manuscript *Speculum Virginum* of a *Tree of Virtues* designed in the twelfth century (fig. 4). *Humilitas* is its root, and each branch designates one of the seven standard virtues, which each spawn seven sub-virtues, except that *Caritas* is featured at the center and at the top and produces ten sub-virtues.<sup>15</sup> In addition to illustrating the virtues of Justice, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, Faith, Hope and Charity, and their flowerings of sub-virtues, the illustration shows that Humility is the root of all virtue and that Charity is the most important and fruitful virtue.

<sup>13</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, ed. Timothy Fry, O.S.B., Collegeville, MN 1981, Prologue 48-50, Chapters 38, 48,73. See DIANA GISOLFI and STAAL SINDING-LARSEN, *The Rule, the Bible and the Council: the Library of the Benedictine Abbey at Praglia*, Seattle 1998, Chapter III, pp. 19-26. For printed editions of the *Rule* See FRANCESCO TROLESE, *Edizioni della Regola di San Benedetto*, Padua 1980.

<sup>14</sup> GIORGIO RAVEGNANI, *Le biblioteche del monastero di San Giorgio Maggiore*, Florence and Venice 1976, p. 12; JAMES O'GORMAN, *The Architecture of the Monastic Library in Italy 1300-1600*, New York 1972, p. 16, lists several Trecento monastic inventories of over 100 manuscripts, the greatest listing circa 800.

<sup>15</sup> Thirteen illustrations in surviving manuscripts of the *Speculum Virginum* are analyzed by JUTTA SEYFARTH, *Speculum Virginum, (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis) V*, Turnhout 1990, pp.134-137. The earliest are of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Ms 72 in the Walters Gallery, Baltimore, reproduced here, is of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

From the same manuscript we have a complex image of *The Temple of Wisdom* (fig. 5), based on Proverbs 9:1: «See, where Wisdom has built herself a house, carved out for herself those seven pillars of hers», here conflated with the tree of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-3). The temple is supported by seven columns and from these pour forth seven virtues collated with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit labeled *Spiritus Sapientie*, *Spiritus Intellectus*, *Spiritus Consiliis*, *Spiritus Fortitudinis*, *Spiritus Scientie*, *Spiritus Pietatis*, *Spiritus Timoris*. On each of the leaves are fragments of the Pater Noster, the Beatitudes, Psalm 28, the Credo, sources of divine guidance (such as *lex scripta*) and the seven virtues. Such layered meanings are displayed in diagram form here, and indicate a way of thinking or, perhaps better, a system of knowledge that continues into and is expanded in the Renaissance.<sup>16</sup>

By the fifteenth century we have surviving examples of library reading rooms in Italy, such as the library of San Marco in Florence (1438-43, 1457) and the former library room of 1461 at Sta. Giustina, Padua, with some fresco fragments showing the Madonna on the end wall.<sup>17</sup> The standard original furnishings were the bench and desk system with a central aisle, but, as in most cases, these are gone (fig. 6). In the former library room of the Augustinian Canons in the previously Benedictine monastery of San Giovanni di Verdara in Padua (now a military hospital and clinic) Stratton Green noted frescoes of scholars below the oculi and allegorical figures of the seven Virtues and the seven Liberal Arts above the windows. In such a system the virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, joined by the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity nicely complement the seven Liberal Arts: the *quadrivium* of geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music and the *trivium* of grammar, logic and rhetoric.<sup>18</sup> In addition to these 14 half figures in *tondi* are one sibyl

<sup>16</sup> Imagery combining virtues, liberal arts and biblical personifications of virtues appear in fresco cycles and in other contexts as well. The Baroncelli Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence, with interior wall frescoes by Taddeo Gaddi (1332-1336) depicting the life of the Virgin, has biblical personifications of virtues on the soffit of the entrance arch and liberal arts in the vaults as part of the elaborate program.

<sup>17</sup> For images of the room, see D. GISOLFI and S. SINDING-LARSEN, *The Rule, the Bible and the Council*, figs 20-22, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> STRATTON GREEN, *The Piccolomini Library and its Frescoes*, doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley 1991, pp. 119-121. See note 20.

and one prophet on each side near the end wall and images of scholars seated at desks along the walls under all the allegorical figures (fig. 7). This library was begun after 1455 and the frescoes by Pietro Antonio degli Abati were completed in 1492.<sup>19</sup>

The Franciscan library room at San Bernardino, Verona of 1494-1503, decorated with frescoes by Domenico Morone, shows pairs of doctors and cardinals of the Franciscan order all around the walls, with a spacious view of Lake Garda behind the Enthroned Madonna and the donors on the end wall (fig. 8). In the 18 medallions of the frieze are depicted the *beati* or Blessed of the Observant Franciscans. The painted architectural setting includes pilasters with grotesques set against an ochre ground (perhaps a vow of poverty gold?) and two columns on the end wall. It has been argued that the Franciscan scholars depicted on the feigned pedestals around the walls were selected for having advocated the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Armano Amadio wrote that the books specifically by the various painted «doctors» were placed on the lecterns near their images.<sup>20</sup>

The Malatesta Library Room at Cesena of the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century (1447-52) provides one of the few examples where the original system of benches and desks with a center aisle, common to Renaissance libraries in Italy, survives. The other, of course, is the Medici Library at San Lorenzo in Florence, finished, except for the famous staircase, in the 1530's just as the Marciana was begun. Lost is the Quattrocento library at San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. Cosimo dei Medici, having found refuge at the Abbey in 1433, had funded a library room for the Benedictines that was built in 1467-78 with over 3000 ducats from the Medici. Bessarion's gift, as we know, had briefly been intended for San Giorgio, and the planners of the Marciana decorations

<sup>19</sup> The condition of the frescoes appears, based on a visit in July 2010, to be mixed. The scholars on the left seem better preserved. Scholars on the right were probably added in the Seicento. A modern St. Francis has been added on the right wall near the entrance.

<sup>20</sup> ARMANNO AMADIO, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Bernardino*, Verona 1957, pp. 65-70. GENE PETER VERONESI, *Domenico Morone and the Sagramoso Library in the Church of San Bernardino, Verona*, Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 2001, pp. 181-209, studies Fra Pisanus' *De conformitate* as a basis for the program. My student Hilary Thompson carried out further work on S. Bernardino and S. Giovanni di Vardara Libraries, Pratt Institute Masters thesis in Theory, Criticism and History of Art Design and Architecture, submitted September 2011: see also *Storia, conservazione e tecniche nella Libreria Sagramosa in San Bernardino a Verona*, Treviso, 2010.



surely knew the Abbey's library, which is described as having had a «soffitto tutto dorato all'infuori di alcune nicchie con elegante pitture; alle pareti erano numerosi quadri in cui spiccavano le insigne dei Medici».<sup>21</sup> Also ambitious was the library that Pope Sixtus IV had opened to the public circa 1484 at the Vatican, containing over 2500 volumes, which had been decorated in 1474-77 with frescoes that included images of ancient and Christian philosophers.<sup>22</sup> As is well known, in 1509-12 his relative, Julius II, employed Raphael to decorate the Segnatura, where a tribunal and Julius' private library resided, decorated with an erudite program involving four disciplines (Theology, Philosophy, Law, Literature), the four cardinal virtues, and biblical examples that unite them.

Undoubtedly Pius II's elaborate library room (1502-1508) attached to the Siena Duomo, with his exploits depicted in frescoed scenes by Pinturricchio and an ornate ceiling, was also known to the planners of the Marciana (fig. 9). Recalling that the Hadrianic library at Athens was described as having rooms with gilded roof it may be important that the lost library room at San Giorgio had a gold framework, while ceilings of both the Segnatura and the Piccolomini libraries richly incorporate gilding and grotesques.

Clearly, the magnificent design, materials and decoration of the Marciana Library, inside and out, and perhaps especially the splendid ceiling, were intended to rival the libraries of antiquity, and, we might guess, also intended to surpass recently built papal libraries.

<sup>21</sup> G. RAVEGNANI, *Le biblioteche del monastero*, p. 23. Among the many monastic and private libraries in Renaissance Venice was also that of the convent of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, once outstanding in its rich inventory; see MARINO ZORZI, «Le vicende delle biblioteche veneziane e la libreria dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo», in *La Scuola Grande di San Marco: I saperi e l'arte*, ed. Nelli Elena Vanzan Marchini, Treviso 2001, pp. 79-96.

<sup>22</sup> Some elements of the frescoed decoration by Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio and Melozzo da Forlì survive, including Aristotle, Diogenes, St. Jerome and St. Augustine. See CARLO PIETRANGELI, GUIDO CORSINI and ANNA MARIA DE STROBEL, *Dipinti del Vaticano*, Udine 1996, figs. 180-82; S. GREEN, *The Piccolomini Library*, p. 121. JOHN WILLIS CLARK, *The Care of Books: an Essay on the Development of Libraries and their Fittings from the Earliest Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Cambridge 1901, pp. 220-224 and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Cambridge 1902, pp. 214-218 transcribed the inventories of the library of 1481 and 1512. He showed 2527 volumes when Platina was appointed librarian in the late Quattrocento and a total of 3499 volumes in 1512.

Two distinguished Benedictine library rooms of the Cassinese Congregation with rather complex decorations that are contemporary with the Marciana decorations, or finished shortly after, are at Praglia (1560's-1570) and at Parma (1573-75). Both are on the upper level overlooking cloisters, as was typical, and both had original furnishings similar to Cesena. The encyclopedic fresco decorations with inscriptions in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and maps along the walls at San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma were programmed by Stefano da Novara, Abbot in 1573-75, expert in all the biblical languages, present at Trent and having served at other major abbeys in the reform Benedictine Cassinese Congregation, to which San Giorgio Maggiore, Praglia and Cesena also belonged. The maps and views of Jerusalem at Parma are copied from the 1572 *Biblia Regia* commissioned by Philip II and published in 1572.<sup>23</sup>

Praglia's program, dating from shortly after the close of the Council of Trent, is more doctrinal and the decoration is on canvases, so that when the original walnut benches were recycled to create *scaffali* in the Settecento, the Old and New Testament scenes from the side walls were moved to the Refectory. The program emphasizes Wisdom, right learning (assigning key roles to the Church Fathers), and Old Testament personages as models of virtue coordinated with selected Old and New Testament scenes on the walls.<sup>24</sup> Both of these programs featured the Holy Spirit on the end wall toward which the benches faced, as the continuing source of true Wisdom.

At Praglia the central octagon of the ceiling shows Religion/Faith with the Evangelists (in this context a reaffirmation of the importance of both Scripture and Tradition). Before and after her on the central axis are the Latin Fathers of the Church eliminating heresy and providing right teaching); on the end wall was Pentecost with the Dove of the Holy Spirit (fig. 10). The eight surrounding Old Testament ceiling figures provide models of Virtues, the standard seven and Humility (much emphasized in Benedict's Rule and personified by

<sup>23</sup> ANGELO GALLETI, O.S.B., ALESSIO CANCARI, BOERA PINOTTI, *La Biblioteca monumentale dell'Abbazia di San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma*, Parma 1999, pp. 19-23. D. GISOLFI and S. SINDING-LARSEN, *The Rule the Bible and the Council*, pp. 53-54. Also, M. RICCARDI, *Biblioteche dipinte*, pp. 45-52.

<sup>24</sup> See the reconstruction and analysis of the program in D. GISOLFI and S. SINDING-LARSEN, *The Rule, the Bible and the Council*, particularly Chapters IV, VI-VII and figs. 26-30.

Jacob). Below were the coordinated Old and New Testament scenes, with Solomon and Sheba and Christ Preaching in the Temple in the central positions (fig. 11). Nearer the entrance were Moses Breaking the Tablets paired with Christ Expelling the Money Changers, and closer to the end wall were Moses Receiving the Tablets and the Sermon on the Mount. I would stress that the program shows a progression from themes of expelling incorrect practice, through good lessons taught, toward the divine wisdom given at Pentecost; the coordinated ceiling images move from banishing Heresy to Faith to good teaching to Salvation, with Daniel Saved directly over Pentecost.<sup>25</sup>

With these examples in mind, let us return to the Marciana vestibule and Reading Room (fig. 12).<sup>26</sup> While earlier sources do not identify Titian's figure in the octagon of the Vestibule ceiling as Wisdom, and Ridolfi mentioned that she might represent History,<sup>27</sup> the bright cloud, I think, links Titian's image clearly with the passage spoken by Wisdom in Ecclesiastes 24:7 «my throne a pillar of a cloud».

As is well known, the Vestibule, serving at first as an academy for young patricians, was originally decorated on the walls with images on canvas described as philosophers and with histories resembling bronze reliefs by Tintoretto and Domenico Molin, and perhaps Franco, finished probably by 1564; these were removed in 1591 when the Vestibule received the statues and reliefs of the Grimani Bequest.<sup>28</sup>

The furnishings of the Reading Room, although lost, were originally the normal bench and desk system; at the Marciana this ap-

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, especially pp. 81-87.

<sup>26</sup> I do not address the content of the stuccos and frescoes in the vaults of the stairway by Battista Franco and Battista del Moro, but refer to Nicola Ivanoff's convincing analysis (followed by M. ZORZI, *The Library*, particularly pp. 143-45) that the images represent an ascent via disciplines and virtues conducive to contemplative life toward Divine Wisdom on the ceiling of the Vestibule, and are complemented by emphasis on the active life in the Reading Room. M. RICCIARDI, *Biblioteche dipinte*, pp. 38-42 further connects the program of the stairway to the numerical program planned by Francesco Zorzi in Sansovino's S. Francesco della Vigna.

<sup>27</sup> C. RIDOLFI, *Le Maraviglie*, I, 202. The scroll, book and myrtle wreath could also suit Philosophy, mother of the Liberal Arts, here possibly suggested as an aspect of Wisdom.

<sup>28</sup> GIULIO LORENZETTI, *Un disperso ciclo pittorico cinquecentesco nel Vestibolo della Libreria di San Marco di Venezia*, «Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti», CII, 1942-43, part ii, pp. 419-72. M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 152-158, provides a careful analysis of the changes in descriptions of the wall paintings both fixed and mobile considering also the accounts of Marco Boschini and Antonio Maria Zanetti.

parently was arranged to allow a narrow aisle along the walls as well as the main aisle between the rows of benches.<sup>29</sup> Sadly the original pavement of both rooms, described by Vasari as «ricchissima», is also gone. One could wonder if the seven bays of the Reading Room are meant to refer to the seven columns in the Temple of Wisdom referred to in Proverbs 9:1 quoted above (fig. 13).<sup>30</sup> The center *tondi*, except the one over the entrance, are arranged to be seen from the vestibule direction, while the side *tondi* are best seen by facing the lateral walls, and could have been contemplated from the benches. The corner *tondi* are best seen by facing each corner. In this regard the program has a dominant direction, from Vestibule to Campanile; scholars and students were meant to enter the Vestibule from the beautiful two-ramp staircase embellished with frescoes, stucchi and gilding, and proceed from Vestibule to Library Room.

As noted to above, Ivanoff saw religious content only in De Mio's *tondo* with the theological virtues.<sup>31</sup> Zorzi, however, emphasized the unity of all study and virtue under Divine Wisdom and showed how fundamentally connected learning and virtue were to the virtuous upright active life intended for the young patricians, who studied in the Vestibule. Furthermore he linked the 21 *tondi* with 21 aspects of knowledge as classified in the program of the short-lived Accademia directed by Federico Badoer.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> FRANCESCO SANSOVINO, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, Venice 1580, ed. Lino Moretti, 2 vols, reprint of Giustiniano Martinioni edition of 1663, Venice 1968, I, p. 311, «c - partita c diversi banchi dalla diritta & dalla sinistra». D. HOWARD, *Jacopo Sansovino*, p. 166, note 101, indicates, based on the contracts for the pavement, that the two rows of *banchi* flanked a wide central aisle and also (differently than the surviving examples at Cesena and the Laurenziana) allowed “gangways” or narrow aisles along the lateral walls.

<sup>30</sup> The monastic library of the San Domenico in Perugia has two rows of seven columns separating the aisle from the bench areas. See the ground plan in J. O'GORMAN, *The Architecture of the Monastic Library in Italy*, Fig. E.

<sup>31</sup> N. IVANOFF, *La Libreria Marciana*, p. 75, contrasts the Marciana decoration with other examples, saying «l'unico tentativo di coordinare la Sapienza antica con quella Cristiana, consiste nel tondo di Demio[...]raffigurante la *Teologia*, ma anche questa in travestimento mitologico, in quanto il Padre Eterno è raffigurato come un Giove»

<sup>32</sup> M. ZORZI, *La Libreria*, pp. 143-52; ID., *Le biblioteche, tra pubblico e privato*, in *La ragione e l'arte*, ed. Giovanni da Pozzo, Venice 1995, pp. 35-48, especially p. 43.; ID., *La circolazione del libro a Venezia nel Cinquecento*, «Ateneo Veneto», XXVIII ( 1990 ), pp. 117-189, shows the richness of the book culture in Renaissance Venice.

This diagram of the Reading Room ceiling (fig. 14) looks at the subjects from the Vestibule entrance going toward the Campanile end. It is evident that religious elements are in central positions: over the entrance door the Theological Virtues and God represented by Jupiter; at the center of the ceiling Glory and Beatitude flanked by the related *tondi* of Vigilance and Patience to the right and Virtuous Acts (originally) to the left, making the central bay very virtuous! At the center in the last triad, representing professions of the patrician class, is the Priesthood.

Thinking of this program and of the decorations in the slightly later Library at Praglia, the centrally placed themes seem to have key importance, and there is an intended progression from entrance to the far end. In both cases it might reflect Wisdom 6:20: «A royal road it is, then, this desire for Wisdom».

The Marciana program is larger, far more ornate, and has suffered even more than the Praglia cycle. That virtues and various disciplines as well as philosophers are included has always been recognized. At the Marciana the progression moves, roughly, from a general introduction to philosophy theology and natural science over the entrance (fig. 15), to issues of choosing the right path in Salviati's trio (fig. 16), to elements of hard work in Franco's triad, to the virtuous state and activities of the central band (fig. 17), moving through determined study and humility in Zelotti's *tondi* (fig. 18) to the more abstract disciplines favored since antiquity in Veronese's *tondi* (*Music*, *Geometry*, *Arithmetic and Honor*) to arrive finally at the professions appropriate to the patrician male (fig. 19). The placement of the *tondi* clearly was worked out to be read both in lateral bands reflecting aspects of study and progressing longitudinally through virtue and effort toward the professions.

I would like to suggest, specifically, that some of the images meant to discipline and inspire patrician youth and other library patrons use imagery from the book of Wisdom. For example: Wisdom 6:1 «Wisdom avails more than Strength» (Giuseppe Salviati's *Hercules and Pallas*, fig. 17); Wisdom 8:7 «Temperance and Prudence she teaches, Justice and Fortitude» (Salviati's *Pallas Choosing Virtues over Fortune*, fig. 17); Wisdom 6:18 «The very first step toward wisdom is the desire for discipline» (Zelotti's *Study*, fig. 12); Wisdom 8:10 «Through her I shall win fame in the assembly and find honor»

(Veronese's *Honor*, fig. 19). Note that *Honor* precedes the profession of governing in the progression from Vestibule to Campanile. Perhaps, Psalm 16:16 «How much better than gold is it to gain Wisdom» might be applied to the ensemble: the splendid ceiling with Battista Franco's grotesques and gilded framework, *tondi*, and depicted wise men, books, desks and benches below. Finally, the verse from Wisdom quoted above concerning the «royal road» to Wisdom may further support ancient traditions concerning gilding of ceilings as well as relating to the direction of the subjects. In the Book of Wisdom there are repeated exhortations to hold to the «path of life» (Wisdom 1:12) and repeated associations of discipline, hard work, prudence and wisdom. Wisdom herself is from the power of God, radiant and lucid, valued above «all the gold in the world» (Wisdom 7:9, 22, 29).<sup>33</sup>

The wall decorations, thoroughly disordered by the Napoleonic and Austrian rules, and originally far richer than the installation of 1929 that we see today, at least seem now to include six «Philosophers» of the original program of the Reading Room. These are, I believe in agreement with Monique Rollins, the six, four by Tintoretto and two by Veronese, that have niches similar to Sansovino's on the Loggetta.<sup>34</sup> Ridolfi praised one of these «Philosophers», Tintoretto's *Diogenes*, in a lengthy description, as in the Reading Room in 1648.<sup>35</sup> This would argue that Tintoretto's two *savi* without the spandrel figures, the two by Giuseppe Salviati, and originally two by Franco (as Vasari said) were in the vestibule where there was space between windows for four, and perhaps two on the entrance wall, as Rollins proposed.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> When I delivered my talk at the Marciana in April 2010, I had not known Ricciardi's publication, which is rare. M. RICCIARDI, pp. 42-44, cites references to Proverbs and also sees the path-like arrangement of the *tondi*.

<sup>34</sup> MONIQUE ROLLINS, *Tintoretto's Philosophers in the Marciana Library and a Glimpse of the Original Program of the Library Decoration*, Masters Paper, Pratt Institute, 2006. I concur with the idea that Veronese's two, called Plato and Aristotle, may have been originally on the end wall opposite their present location.

<sup>35</sup> C. RIDOLFI, *Le maraviglie*, II, p. 26.

<sup>36</sup> G. LORENZETTI, *Un disperso ciclo*, Appendix II, 467, mentioned four paintings of figures and six monochromes: «6 quadri de chiaro et schuro che vano soto ali balconi della libreria et 4 de figure in piedi et vano tra li balconi» in a restoration record of 6 June 1609. See also Nicola Ivanoff, *note e commenti*, «Emporium», CXL (1964), pp. 207-210, and Ettore Merkel, *Paolo Veronese. Le fonti, le stampe, la critica*, «Miscellanea Marciana», II-IV (1987-1989), pp. 319-332.

If Borghini was correct that there were in 1584 12 philosophers in the Reading Room by Tintoretto, it is unknown which places specifically were occupied by the surviving four «savi» of Tintoretto and the two by Veronese with similar niches, but one can propose that the original arrangement of the books may have been tied to these images. In other words the «philosophers», identified by the lost feigned bronze images at their feet probably numbering 14 (presumably 12 by Tintoretto and the two by Veronese called Aristotle and Plato, perhaps respectively on the lateral walls and the wall near the campanile), would have marked various disciplines and, in effect, were part of the cataloguing system, as was thought to have been the case at San Bernardino in Verona discussed above. For example, Aristotle might have marked books on logic. It is not irrelevant that Armenini, prescribing library decorations in 1586, says that images of the liberal arts should be placed near the *banchi*.<sup>37</sup> According to Rossi's account from 1806, a catalogue system involving the placement of images of illustrious men was the case in the subsequent Seicento Longhena Library at the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore. Here the later system of wall shelves was adopted, yet there were carved walnut figures representing 56 learned men atop the *scaffali* (one over each of the elegant walnut columns) whose placement indicated the shelf places of the various disciplines. Unfortunately many were lost after the suppression of 1806 and in the Cini restoration of the 1950's the remaining 22 figures were simply arranged at equal intervals (fig. 20). But the names of 52 of the 56 carved figures were recorded in 1806, among them Homer Hippocrates Virgil Petrarch Pausanias Moses Paul Pliny Jerome Augustine Thomas Cicero Plato and many more «uomini illustri» of the ancient world and Judeo-Christian tradition.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> GIOVANNI BATTISTA ARMENINI, *De' veri precetti della pittura* [Ravenna, 1586], Turin 1988, pp. 193-94. HILARY THOMPSON'S master thesis «*Un ritorno all'antico: the use of uomini illustri in library decorations of reformed monasteries in the Veneto*», Pratt Institute, Fall 2011, looks further at the relation of *savi* to book organization.

<sup>38</sup> G. RAVEGNANI, *Le biblioteche del monastero*, pp. 37-39, especially note 95 on p. 38. Four of the surviving statuettes are unidentified. Ravegnani relies on Giovanni Rossi's description from a visit of 1806, published in EMMANUELE ANTONIO CICOGNA, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, IV, Venezia 1834, pp. 241-80.

Descriptions of ancient libraries were surely known to the well educated patrician patrons of the Marciana Library. Beautiful columns (whether exterior or interior), gold on ceilings or roofs associated with royalty and wisdom, statues or pictures of learned men and maps were common elements in the examples known from written sources. The programmers had at hand, in San Giorgio Maggiore, a fine Renaissance library in addition to numerous other monastic library rooms in the Veneto. Allegories of virtues, biblical personages or references, and representations of liberal arts or various disciplines as well as illustrious persons and maps were other elements that had constituted library decoration in earlier monastic and papal libraries. The Marciana's complex program of interior decoration incorporates most of these elements, competes in splendor with earlier examples, and marks its specific context by showing study, virtue and discipline leading to appropriate professions for patrician males in an active life guided by Divine Wisdom. Even though many elements are missing, it would seem that the program as a whole is intended to represent a system of knowledge comprising ancient and biblical sources in a disciplined, structured arrangement that by its images and design advocates for and supports virtuous useful lives. That the programmers consulted the book of Wisdom should not surprise us!





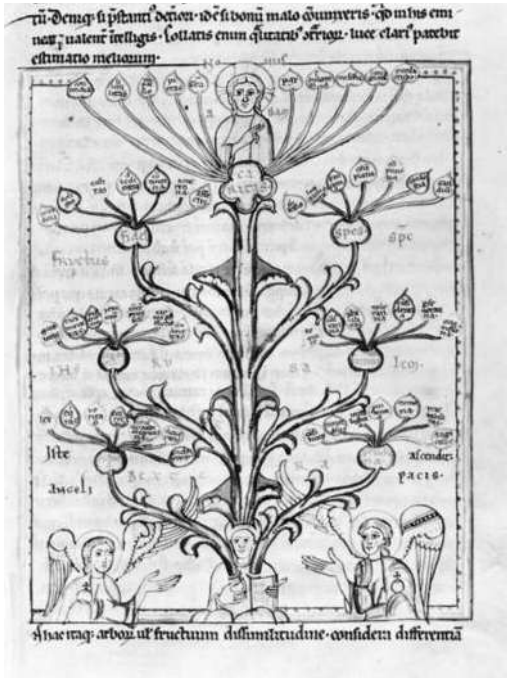
1. Palladio woodcut, frontispiece of Vitruvius, *I Dieci Libri*, ed. Daniele Barbaro, Venice, 1556, NYPL, Spencer Collection.



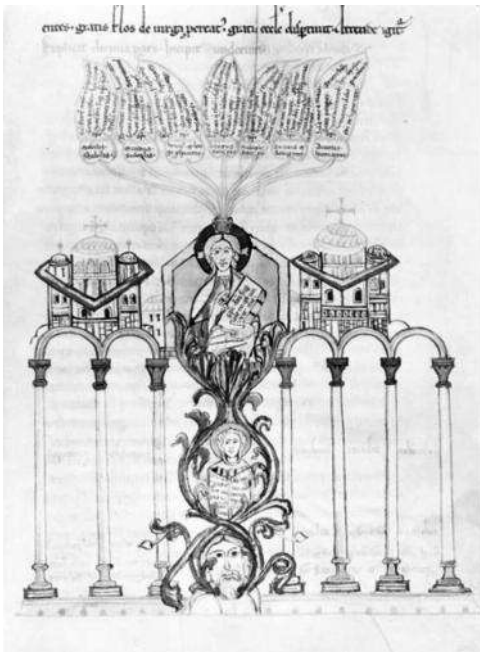
2. Columns of the Library at Pergamum.



3. West wall of Hadrian's Library, Athens.



4. Tree of Virtues, *Speculum Virginum*, Ms 72, fol. 26, Baltimore, Walters Gallery.



5. Temple of Wisdom, with Seven Gifts of the Spirit, collated with Virtues, Beatitudes, Pater Noster, Credo, and inscriptions from Proverbs 9:1 and Isaiah 11:1-3, *Speculum Virginum*, Ms 72, fol. 104r, Baltimore, Walters Gallery.



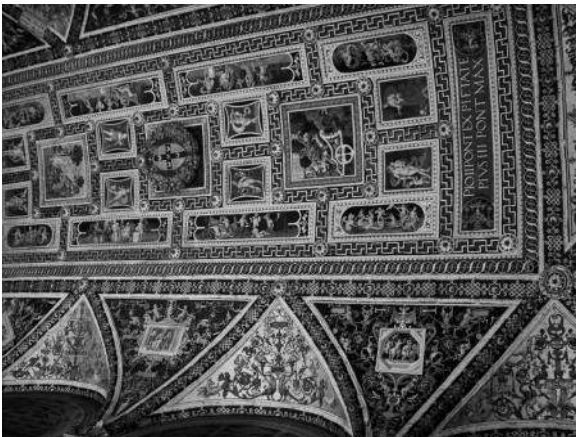
6. Former library Room, Abbey of Santa Giustina, Padua, c. 1461.



7. Left wall, former Library Room, San Giovanni di Verdara, Padua 1455-92.



8. Former Library Room, Convent of San Bernardino, Verona, frescoes by Domenico Morone, 1494-1503.



9. Ceiling of Piccolomini Library, Siena, 1502-08.



10. Library at Praglia Abbey, canvas paintings by Battista Zelotti, c. 1570.



11. reconstruction of Praglia Library; Gisolfi and Sinding-Larsen.



12. Titian, *Wisdom*, ceiling of Marciana Library vestibule, c. 1560.



13. View of Marciana Library Reading Room, toward Campanile, ceiling 1556-57. original wall decorations 1560's.



14. plan of Marciana Reading Room ceiling.



15. De Mio, (over entrance wall). Theology (center) Natural Philosophy (corner).



16. Salviati, Mercury and Pluto, Pallas chooses Cardinal Virtues over Fortune.



17. Licinio, Glory and Beatitude, at center of ceiling.



18. Zelotti, Good Habits, Study (discipline).



19. Marciana Library ceiling, end opposite the vestibule entrance Veronese, Music, Geometry and Arithmetic Honor; Schiavonem, Military, Priesthood, Government.



20. Longhena, Library of Benedictine Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice.