Constructing a New World – Source Analysis

The two sources chosen could be said to follow self-interested agendas. ‘The Solemn Entrance’ depicts Charles V and Francis I as grand and important, which they were, but their entry into Paris was a façade to demonstrate unity and a show of power to Europe. It is now known that they were not united, fought regularly and were often in competition. Galileo’s letter to Duchess Christina also has an element of self-promotion, although the main motivation for writing the letter was to convince others of his arguments.

The painting portrays a new allegiance following a remarkable change in Francis’ foreign policy in 1538\(^1\) when he decided he wanted Charles as his ally again. At Aigues-Mortes the monarchs exchanged vows of friendship and agreed to forget their differences. Francis’ ulterior motive was to recover Milan and he “was now prepared to try conciliation” rather than force\(^2\). Their allegiance was confirmed in 1539-40 when Francis invited Charles to travel back to the Netherlands through France.

‘The Solemn Entrance’ has historical importance, Francis and Charles were influential monarchs, Charles from the famous Habsburg family and Francis a successful King. Russell and Visentin write; “Entries were meant to promote the prestige of the royal personage for whom they had been organised and the prestige of the city that organised them”\(^3\) suggesting they were a common custom in Renaissance Europe as a way to promote superiority. The popularity of Royal Entries is supported by R.J. Knecht in his book ‘French Renaissance Monarchy’ “[royal entries] were now a spectacular pageant”.\(^4\) It was seen as an effective form of royal propaganda.

Zuccari was recognised as a successful Italian artist, completing paintings and interior design in prestigious buildings and for people throughout Rome. Italy was seen as the birthplace of the Renaissance and at the forefront of art, music, science and literature. People in a position of power in Europe saw the benefit of using Italian artists to create their propaganda as it enabled them to be perceived as contemporary and forward-thinking.

It is apparent from the painting that there was a desire for Francis to be compared favourably with Charles. The canopy over the two monarchs being carried by the French king’s courtiers, and they are on a journey designed to show him the wealth and sophistication of Francis’ realm\(^5\). The canopy was traditionally used in processions to signify the sanctity of the monarchy. They are dressed luxuriously, as are their horses and courtiers, suggesting Francis went to huge effort to match the Roman Emperor’s wealth and power. Francis’ motivation was not to help Charles by allowing him to pass through France, rather to prove to Charles that he was equally as powerful and grand, and to promote to the rest of the world their new ‘allegiance’. It is also possible that the entry into Paris was designed by Francis to scare Henry VIII, as there were rumours of a Franco-imperial entente plotting against England.\(^6\) Though this was untrue, it would have been beneficial to keep Henry at a distance by fearing invasion. Despite being painted some years subsequent to the actual

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2 Knecht, Francis I, p.289.
6 Knecht, Francis I, p.294.