Basilius and his diptych again: career titles, seats in the Colosseum, and issues of stylistic dating

Alan Cameron

1. The problem

The Uffizi in Florence and the Castel Sforzesco in Milan each possess one panel of a consular diptych that identifies its honorand as follows: Anicius Faustus Albinus Basilius v(ir) c(larissimus) et inl(ustris) ex com(ite) dom(esticorum) pat(ricius) cons(ul) ord(inarius). The offices and titles listed are: ex-count of the domestics, patrician and ordinary consul. The top register of the front (Florence) panel shows Basilius in full consular regalia holding mappa and cross-surmounted sceptre, with Roma to his left placing one hand on his right shoulder; the lower register shows racing chariots, a scene from his consular games (fig. 1). In contrast to this thoroughly conventional iconography, that of the rear (Milan) panel is unique (fig. 2): a winged victory seated above a spread eagle, holding up a shield that bears the consul’s portrait together with an acclamation no less unique: bono rei public(a)e et iterum (‘for the good of the state again’).