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CARAVAGGIO REVOLUTIONARY OR THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SEEING

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«Vere tu es Deus absconditus, Deus Israel salvator» («Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior», *Isaiah* 45:15).
Some readers will recognize that the alternate of my essay borrows (and turns) a phrase from the title of Philip Guston's moving meditation on a comparably challenging painter, *Piero della Francesca: The Impossibility of Painting*, (1965).

> [...] certain anxiety persists in the painting of Piero della Francesca. What we see is the wonder of what it is that is being seen. Perhaps it is the anxiety of painting itself [...]. It is an extreme point of the "impossibility" of painting. Or its possibility. Its frustration. Its continuity [...]. Possibly it is not a "picture" we see, but the presence of a necessary and generous law[1].

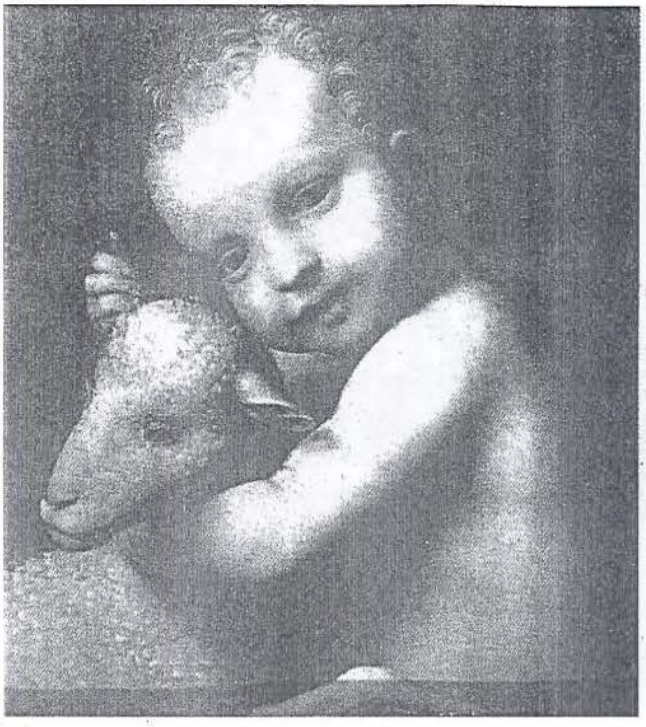
Caravaggio is always revolutionary. The novelty of his art is most commonly perceived in the social sense. Not only did he portray people of humble status with what, in the Italian tradition especially, appeared to be an unvarnished and quite unclassical realism; he introduced such characters in contexts, notably in religious subjects, where their presence seemed, to say the least, inappropriate. His pictures were rejected with astonishing frequency by the no doubt bewildered patrons, a fact that contributed immeasurably to his reputation as a kind of proletarian socialist *avant la lettre*. However, he was also revolutionary in another, less common and less commonly appreciated sense, which I would define as intellectual, or rather spiritual. These two aspects of his work are intimately connected, and any view that tends to separate them, or undervalue either of them, runs the risk of misunderstanding both. The underlying genetic factor in the Caravaggio mutation was that he viewed the world in a new perspective that inverted not only traditional social relationships, but also religious, and even theological concepts. Caravaggio's viewpoint is apparent stylistically in his use of drastic chiaroscuro, intense color, extravagant foreshortening, and many other "radical" devices familiar in his work. One of these devices seems to me particularly important in the present context: his use of what we would call the dramatic close-up. The figures, often greatly reduced in number compared with earlier depictions of the same subjects, are shown very near, and seem either to be engulfed by or to emerge from a very dark background. The pictures were often meant for private viewing in salons or galleries, and the dramatic close-up served, in effect, to focus intensely and intimately on the actions and reactions of the figures, who are given a powerful physical presence and are portrayed full scale, *al vivo*, as contemporaries were wont to say. At the same time, the dramatic close-up involves an almost existential paradox, precisely at the intersection between the social and spiritual aspects of Caravaggio's art: the paradox of perceiving the macrocosm through the microcosm, humanity as a whole through the single individual, even the most humble. I interpret many of Caravaggio's paintings this way, especially those around 1600, three of which form the subject of this essay. The *St. John* in the Capitoline Museum (Rome) and the *Supper at Emmaus* in the National Gallery (London) have long been known. The *Taking of Christ*, now in the National Gallery of Ireland (Dublin), has only recently been re-discovered, along with a series of documents that showed that all three works were commissioned 1602-1603, by one of Caravaggio's important early patrons, the Marchese Ciriaco Mattei, for his palace in Rome[2].
My purpose here is to suggest that the three works are indeed closely related thematically, as well as visually, and they should be considered as they were intended to be seen, together. Following close upon the monumental chapel decorations with which Caravaggio had burst into the public limelight, the Mattei paintings were his first religious works intended for private contemplation, in the home of one of the most devout and cultivated Roman aristocrats (let me take note here, once and for all, since it is germane to my main argument on behalf of the intellectual content of Caravaggio's art, that despite the violently negative reaction of many contemporaries to his refractory work and personality, Caravaggio also had loyal and enthusiastic patrons at the highest level of Roman society – a fact which, not incidentally, poses some challenge to our own, rather too conveniently monolithic notion of the Counterreformatory world in which he lived). The three pictures are similar in size; they are all dramatic close-ups; and unlike the saintly narratives of the chapel decorations, they portray critical moments and aspects of the history of salvation, which Caravaggio "represents" in a way that reaches well beyond the normal confines of painting as it was conceived by his contemporaries. I shall discuss the pictures in what might be called their temporal sequence.

ST. JOHN

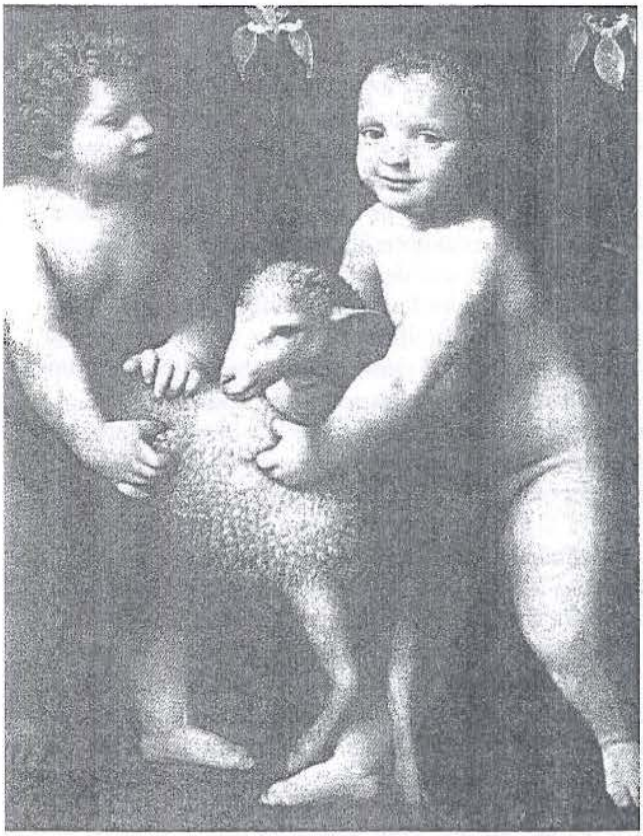
In the Capitoline *St. John* (fig. 1) Caravaggio represented the Baptist as a provocatively smiling, adolescent nude seated on his hairy raiment embracing a ram. The painting is so extraordinary that only the recently discovered documents have resolved, to my mind definitively, the nature of the subject. We now know that it was consistently referred to as a *St. John* in the Mattei family's own inventories, and it can be no accident that when Ciriaco Mattei

1. Caravaggio, *St. John in the Desert*, Capitoline Museum, Rome

divided his collection among his heirs he willed this picture to his son Giovanni Battista[3]. As a portrayal of St. John, however, the work presents fundamental problems of interpretation, which Caravaggio challenges us to confront. Numerous representations of the Madonna with Christ and John shown as nude, embracing infants offer a partial background for the figure. There are also many depictions of Christ embracing the sacrificial lamb, the attribute of St. John, who announced, «this is the lamb of God»[4]. These themes were particularly popular in Caravaggio's native Lombardy, in the wake of Leonardo's period in Milan. In a painting by Leonardo's follower Bernardino Luini a lamb is lovingly embraced by a smiling infant – identified as Christ by the owner, Cardinal Federico Borromeo, but easily taken as John since there is no halo (fig. 2); Caravaggio might actually have seen the picture during his early apprenticeship in Milan[5]. Equally remarkable is another work by Luini in which both children embrace the lamb, which in this case is actually a young, horned ram – a significant point to which we shall return presently (fig. 3)[6]. In an altarpiece by Lorenzo Lotto the relationship between John, the lamb and the spectator is positively ecstatic (fig. 4)[7]. Caravaggio's figure is drastically different, however. John is an adolescent, and his nudity has a new, erotically suggestive aspect. The nubile figure embodies the notion of love in both its aspects, physical and divine[8]. There is a precedent, albeit limited, for this figure. Tradition held that the young Saint John entered the desert with only a vague notion of his vocation; Christ then instructed him as to his true mission and he becomes the first convert. The two youths are often shown greeting one another (fig. 5), but Domenico Veneziano isolated this pivotal moment of transformation in the life of the Precursor: John, a beautiful, nude adolescent, with one hand discards his former toga and with the other assumes his new, ascetic robe (fig. 6). In effect, Veneziano conceived the moment of conversion as a return to the time before the Fall, when Adam was young, innocent, and nude. Veneziano's illustration of this epochal transition of moral states, at once penitential and redemptive, illuminates one of the most conspicuous and provocative features of Caravaggio's portrayal of the Baptist, that is, the unmistakable reference to the *ignudi* of Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling (figs. 7, 8)[9]. The reference, often taken as perverse and personal, is in fact meaningful in principle, since the role of the *ignudi* in the context of the ceiling may be understood as analogous to that of St. John in the process of salvation. The *ignudi* are the only "flesh and blood" figures who exist in this world and represent the present, rather than the historical past: they link the Old Testament histories and prophecies to their fulfillment in the living church of the papal chapel itself. They perform this role not only by their very presence but by their actions, grasping the interlocking swaths of drapery that pass from the structure of the ceiling proper through the "commemorative" medallions to themselves, like the change of raiment that signaled John's conversion to the New Dispensation. Above all, their nudity embodies the perfect state of innocence to which the New Adam



2. Bernardino Luini, *Infant Christ or Baptist Embracing the Lamb*, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan



3. Bernardo Luini, *Infant Christ Embracing the Lamb*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

4. Lorenzo Lotto, *Virgin and Child with Saints*, Santo Spirito, Bergamo

is returned in baptism. In particular, Caravaggio appropriates the figure seated above the *Erythrean sibyl* and between the scene of the *Flood* and that of the *Sacrifice of Noah*, in which the patriarch upon leaving the salvific ark gives thanks by offering to God a "clean" ram (*Genesis* 8:20). In this context the seated, turning figure may fairly be described as pivotal. The Erythrean oracle, who identifies herself as the daughter-in-law of Noah, had foretold the Last Judgment and described the flood itself, toward which the youth, who faces the sacrifice, looks back apprehensively[10]. The sacrifice of the ram was thus an act of penitential expiation – rams' heads provide the *leitmotiv* of the entire central framework of the ceiling – and Caravaggio evidently saw in Michelangelo's beautiful, changeling nude an ideal precursor of his own Precursor.

Other elements in the Capitoline picture refer to different aspects of the Precursor's character. John is, above all, he who commands us to renounce the life of sin, that is, to repent. In *Matthew* 3:2, the Precursor admonishes: «Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand». The command to repent is the saint's primary attribute, as it were, and Caravaggio vests this mission not only in John's innocent, suggestive nudity, but also in his radiant, duplicitous smile, at once congratulatory and conspiratorial. In the first instance the smile expresses the ultimate significance of a famous passage in the gospel of *St. John* (3:28-29), in which the Baptist says to his followers,

> I am not the Christ, but [...] I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

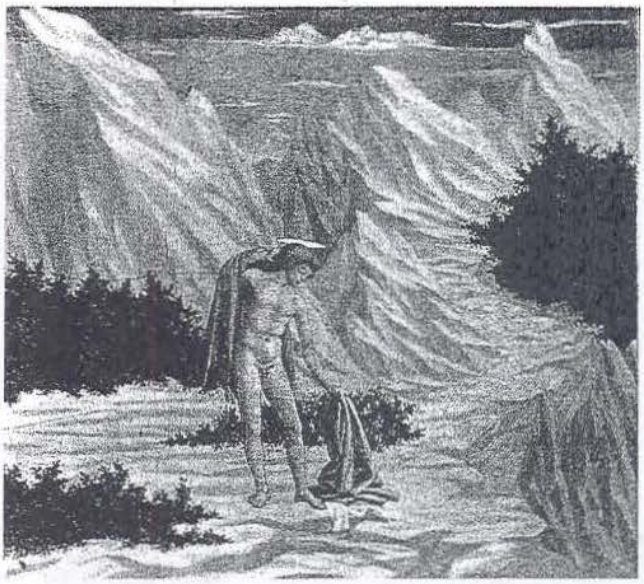
The reference to the bride and the bridegroom announces the marriage of Christ and the Church, that is, the body of the faithful, and the face of St. John manifests the joy inherent in friendship with the bridegroom, and in heeding his call to salvation through penitence.

For the devastating smile of Caravaggio's Precursor is also a rebuke. The idea of a young, isolated and attractive St. John – conceived as a nude, androgynous, and wingless angel of the Lord – who with an ingratiating smile entices to penance and announces the coming of salvation, was an invention of Leonardo, to whom Caravaggio was also indebted for many lessons on style (fig. 9)[11]. The theme of matrimony is evoked in Caravaggio's picture by John's act of embracing the sacrificial animal, as Christ embraced his fate and the salvific church. The substitution of the he-sheep, symbol of lust, for the lamb, symbol of innocence, is as provocative as the figure of John himself, and it has a specific connotation: John the herald of repentance, embraces sin, and the animal responds, literally, in kind. The love that unites our lascivious St. John and the animal of carnality can be understood only in the sense of admonition to penitence, and the point rests on the famous passage in the Gospel of Matthew (25:32-33) in which Christ announces the Last Judgment, declaring: «And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left». To comprehend the links between John's action, his admonition to penitence and invitation to salvation, as well as the matrimony of Christ and the Church, another text of Matthew becomes relevant (9:12-13). At the feast in the house of Levi, after the Jewish tax-collector had been called by Christ and became Matthew himself, the Pharisees ask why Jesus supped with publicans and sinners; the reply was: «They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance». Because Jesus came to induce sinners to penitence, John suggests the sins of the flesh and represents the moment when the love he embodies is transformed from carnal to spiritual; in this instant he smiles the joy of the bridegroom's friend for the universal cataclysm of salvation. The macrocosm in the microcosm: a single figure emerges from an almost black background to proclaim the salvation of humanity through love. Where did Caravaggio get these radical ideas? I can offer one admittedly limited, but I think nevertheless incisive suggestion. It is well known that the Mattei family and Caravaggio himself were closely connected with the leading humanitarian religious movement of the period, namely the Oratorian reform of St. Filippo Neri. The Oratorians combined a humble, populist view of the mission of Christ with an intellectually historicist rediscovery of the early church as the model for spiritual simplicity, humility, purity and perfection. Inspired by St. Filippo, Cardinal Baronio, who was an Oratorian, studied the primitive church with new zeal and sensibility, producing his monumental annals of the early church. Of di-

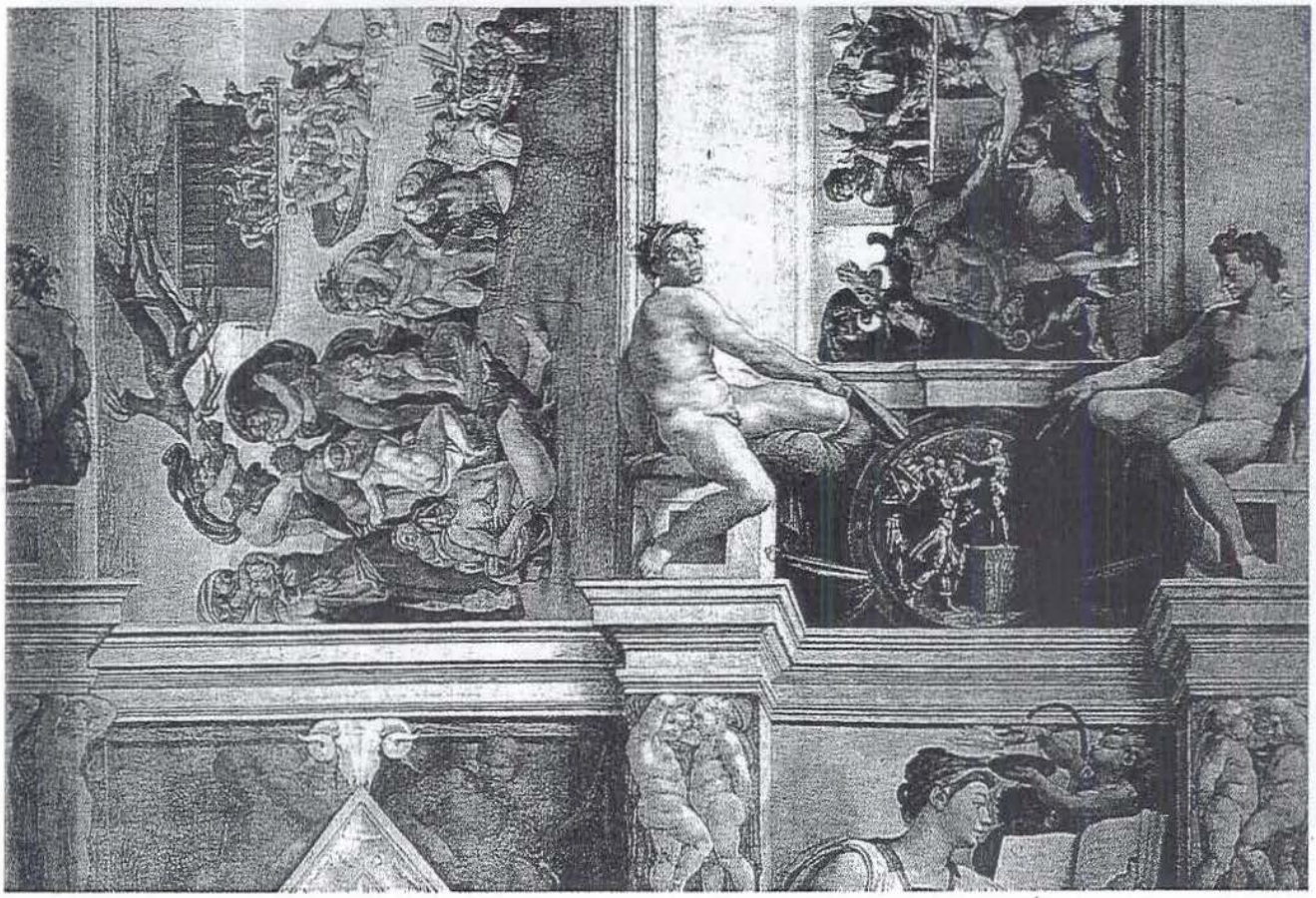
5. Follower of Filippo Lippi, *Christ and the Baptist Meeting in the Desert*, Bode-Museum, Berlin

rect interest to Caravaggio were the studies by Antonio Bosio (1575-1629) of the archeology of the early church, especially his pioneering explorations of the catacombs, which, beginning in 1593, resulted posthumously in his famous illustrated tome, *Roma sotterranea*[12]. Here he discussed what must have been one of the most striking discoveries of the period, namely the image of the Good Shepherd, which he was the first to discuss as an emblem of Early Christianity. The theme was based primarily on Christ's pronouncement in the Gospel of St. John: «I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine» (*John* 10:14). Bosio identifies the sheep as representing human nature, and he quotes the writings of both saints Ilarius and John Chrysostom to explain that the single animal in the Good Shepherd image was specifically intended to refer, one for all, to mankind in general. As with the error of one man, Adam, all fell, so in his beneficence God sheds his grace on all men as one[13].

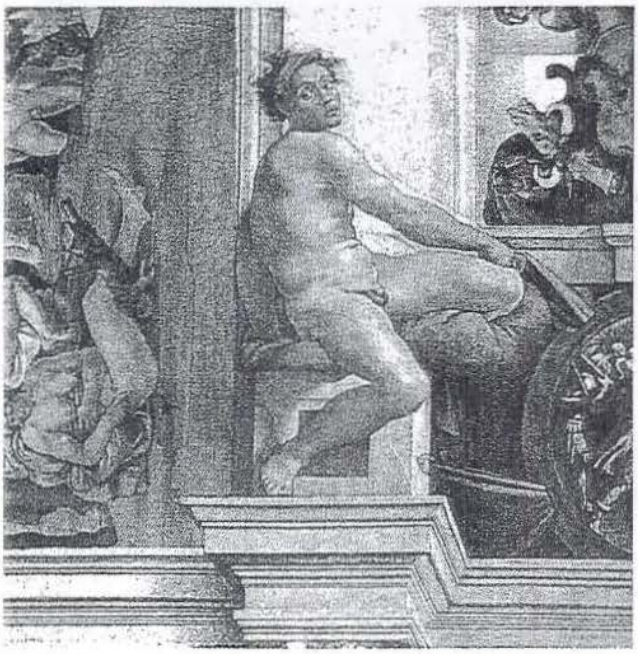
Equally perspicacious and important for our case is Bosio's observation that the Good Shepherd frequently carries not a lamb, but a full grown ram – a point that even modern commentators tend to disregard (fig. 10)[14]. For Bosio, however, first-rate iconographer that he was, the distinction was not casual, but embodied what he called a «mystery»[15]. He explicitly identifies the horned animal with the goats in the parable of the shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats, the good from the bad, on judgment day. And like a first-rate historian he offers as the key to his interpretation the testimony of a contemporary writer, the commentary by Theodoretus on a verse in the *Song of Songs*, in which the Spouse, interpreted as Christ, says to his beloved, interpreted as the body of the church: «If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents» (Cant. 1:8). Theodoretus invokes the physician who heals the sick, not the



6. Domenico Veneziano, *St. John in the Desert*, National Gallery, Washington



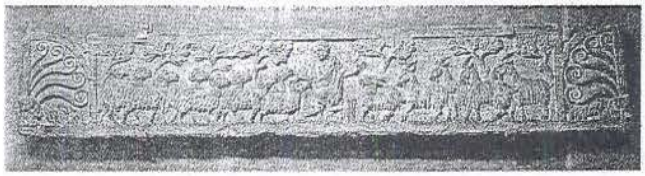
7. Michelangelo, Sistine ceiling, detail, Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Rome



8. Detail of fig. 7

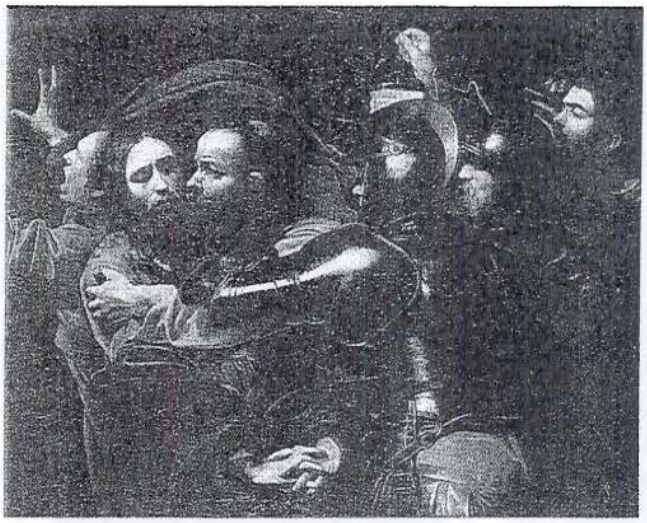
9. Leonardo, *St. John*, Louvre, Paris

10. Good Shepherd, sarcophagus, detail, Museo Lateranense, Vatican City, Rome



11. Separation of Sheep and Goats, sarcophagus lid, detail Metropolitan Museum, New York

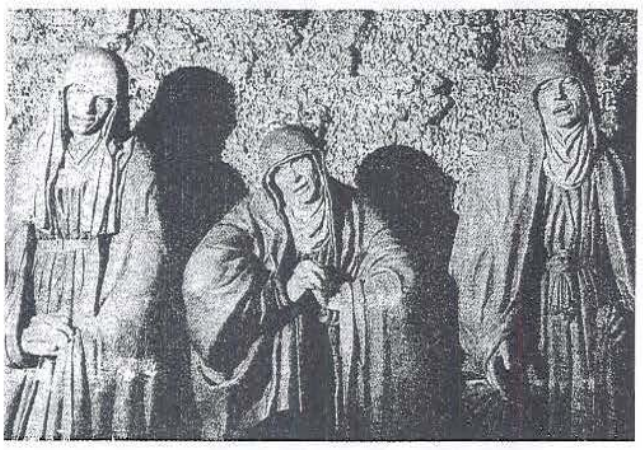
well, who calls not the just but the sinner to penitence, and who benevolently desires that we, too, fervently *embrace* («complectamur» – here referring specifically to the parable of the sheep and the goats) *not only the just but also the sinner* [emphasis mine][16]. Surprising confirmation of Bosio's intuition appears on the lid of a fourth-century sacrophagus in which the beardless shepherd is shown stroking the docile sheep, in the form of horned rams, with his right hand, while rejecting the unruly goats with his left (fig. 11)[17]. Thinking along similar lines, Federico Borromeo in his treatise on sacred painting, discussing the theme of the Good Shepherd as represented in the catacombs, specifically identifies the sheep as a *lost* soul redeemed by Christ[18]. The comment of Theodoretus must have struck Bosio as a veritable God-send because it seemed to combine in one formula all the elements necessary to understand this alternate, apparently unsavory image of the Savior. Bosio discusses both these image-types together, in one chapter, as contrasting but complementary manifestations of the Good Shepherd theme; and so, too, Caravaggio's St. John fuses the two incarnations of the redeemer in the complex persona of the precursor.



12. Caravaggio, *Taking of Christ*, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin

13. Demosthenes, Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen

14. Caravaggio, *Madonna of the Serpent*, Galleria Borghese, Rome

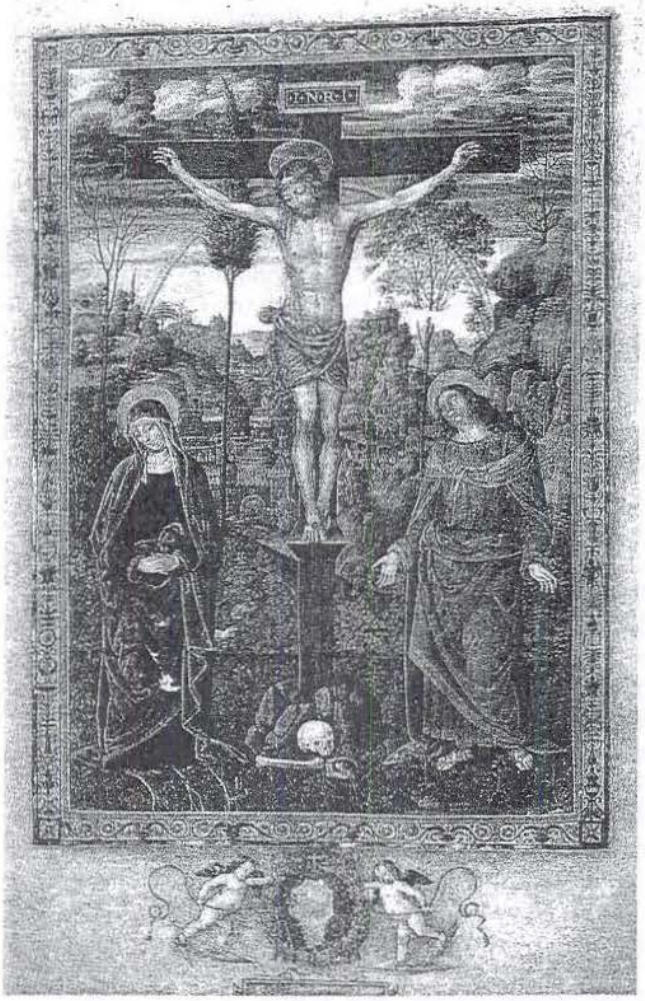


15. Guido Mazzoni, *Pietà*, detail, S. Maria degli Angeli, Busseto

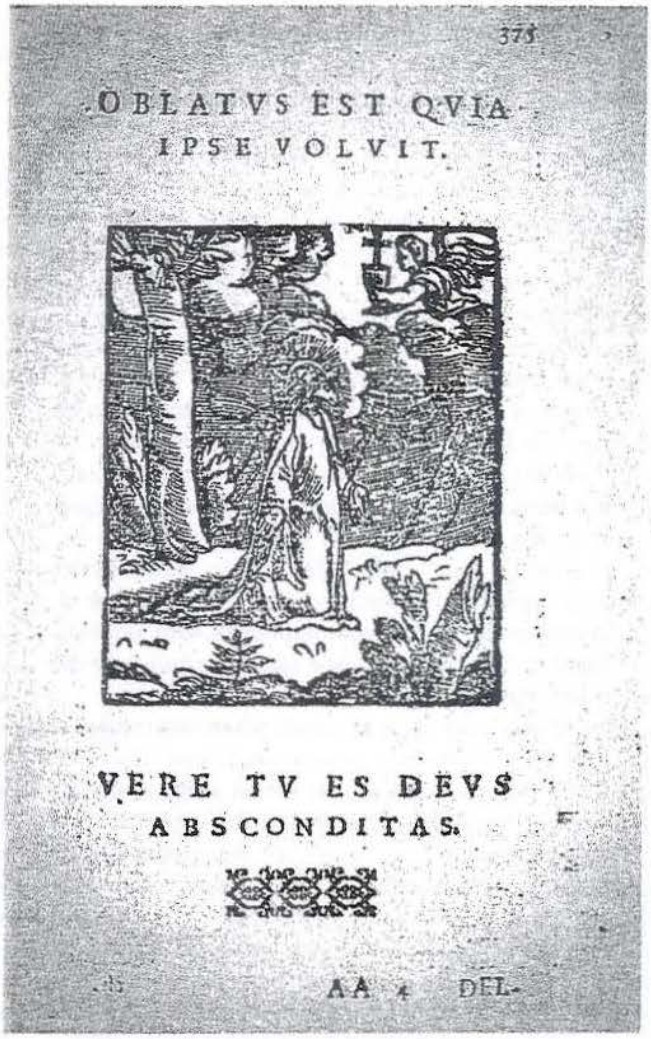
TAKING OF CHRIST

The *Taking of Christ* (fig. 12) also represents a crucial moment: the Passion proper starts with the betrayal of Judas. At the instant of the kiss, darkness descends upon humanity, initiating the process of salvation, and the old world begins to pass into the new. Caravaggio portrays the most profound mystery of Christianity, the death that brings life, and Caravaggio invests this "minimal" episode with maximum significance: in the instant when darkness descends, the passion of Christ illuminates the world. In *Matthew* 5:17, Jesus says, «Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill». This is precisely what is happening at the kiss of Judas. For Caravaggio, the figure of Christ is the heart of the action, and the physical locus of a new revolution. In fact, the figure is remarkable in that here Caravaggio, the realist and anticlassical painter par excellence, clearly evokes a classical model, the famous Greek orator Demosthenes (fig. 13). Such classical references are always surprising in Caravaggio, but especially so here because of the changes he introduced[19]. In his *Parallel Lives* of Cicero and Demosthenes Plutarch describes a statue in which the Greek orator was portrayed with his hands joined, the fingers intertwined (*Demosthenes* 30,5; 31,1). Caravaggio evidently alluded to this statue, of which several copies exist (Caravaggio attributes the same pose to the figure of St. Anne, who meditates on the significance of the theological event she witnesses, in *Madonna of the Serpent*, fig. 14). The reference involves not only the pose of the figure, however, but also its visage. In his Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero (1,3,6), Plutarch contrasts the former's gravity and austerity with the latter's cordiality and humor, noting even in Demosthenes's face the traits of his intensely serious, thoughtful and anxious character. In Caravaggio's time the relationship between Demosthenes's moral rectitude and his oratorical manner was given a quasi-physiognomical cast in Nicholas Caussin's hugely influential treatise on sacred and profane oratory; citing John Chrystomos's famous discussion of the Grave Character, or mode, of oratory, Caussin likens Demosthenes's unadorned gravity and simplicity to the "majesty of the lion" – the leonine character, with furrowed brow and piercing eyes, was perhaps the dominant type in contemporary physiognomical theory[20]. Caravaggio clearly evokes these psychological qualities in the features of Christ, who utters his fateful question to the traitor (*Luke* 22:48): «Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?» – an ironic question indeed, which focuses less on the betrayal than on the manner: with false love, that is, the absolute negation of Christ's primary message. Plutarch also reports (*Demosthenes* 31,2) a story about the statue of Demosthenes that is peculiarly relevant to Caravaggio's interpretation. An Athenian soldier, having hidden his savings of gold in the hands of the statue, returned after some time and found the treasure still there under an accumulation of leaves. Demosthenes had been accused of corruption by the supporters of the Macedonian party and the anecdote concerning the statue had a clear political significance, affirming for the Athenians the innocence and probity of the great orator. The contrast with Judas is evident. While referring trenchantly to this politico-artistic tradition, Caravaggio inverted it, literally as well as figuratively: he turned the hands upside down.

This version of the motif of joined hands with interlaced fingers also has a marked and familiar tradition in religious art. The gesture occurs, for example, in one of the mourning women, whose face expresses her grief, in a terra-cotta group of the *Pietà* by Guido Mazzoni at Bus-



16. Crucifixion, Vatican Library, Vatican City, Rome, Ms. Barb. lat. 614, fol. 219v



17. Agony in the Garden, woodcut (after Capaccio, 1584, p. 375)

seto (fig. 15)[21]. John or the Virgin may assume the same pose as they lament the death of Christ at the crucifixion (fig. 16). The inversion of the hands transforms the sense of the gesture from one of stoic reserve into an expression of anxiety, a trait that Plutarch also attributes to Demosthenes. The face, which had carried the marks of the orator's intractability and irascibility, now conveys anguish and compassion. The inversion of gesture and emotion, however, is only the beginning of Caravaggio's departure.

One of the remarkable features of Caravaggio's picture, found in no previous depiction of the subject, is the way the three heads are clearly and deliberately isolated and juxtaposed at the left of the composition. The malevolent stare and aggressive embrace of Judas are countermatched by the profile of a beautiful youth who flees in utter terror with a wide-mouthed scream. The youth refers to Mark's account of the event (14:50-52):

> And they all forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

Following an ancient tradition identifying the youth mentioned by Mark as John the Evangelist, Bellori in his biography of the artist identified Caravaggio's cowardly deserter as St. John, despite the fact that he is shown clothed[22]. Indeed, the figure's red and green draperies – the colors traditionally associated with the Evangelist – are precisely what identifies him as St. John, rather than simply the anonymous youth of the gospel[23]. At the same time, Caravaggio refers explicitly to the episode described by Mark by showing the figure being disrobed by a pair of hands that lay hold on his cloak, which billows up and around to envelop the heads of the two main protagonists, like a blood-red version of the canopy of heaven. Caravaggio would have been familiar with this ancient drapery motif from a scene of Christ enthroned in Heaven on the famous Early Christian sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (cf. fig. 30), which we shall see was also important in his portrayal for Mattei of the *Supper at Emmaus*[24]. The presence and unmistakable identity of the fleeing John the Evangelist were clearly of great importance in Caravaggio's understanding of the betrayal, and the explanation is provided by one of the seminal works in the development of a Christological interpretation of

the Old Testament, Gregory the Great's *Moralia* on the book of Job. Commenting on *Job* 19:20 («My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh [...]»), Gregory identifies the young man mentioned by Mark as John, the youngest of the apostles, who forsook his master along with the other apostles, though he would later return at the Crucifixion and be entrusted by the Lord with His own mother[25]. The basic sense of Gregory's reference to John in the context of Job's Lamentation stems from Job's grievance in the previous verse that «All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me» (19:19), which Gregory took as a reference to the behavior of all the apostles at the taking of Christ. And since the Evangelist was by his own testimony the disciple whom Christ loved best – his head seems virtually to emerge from that of his Master – John's uniquely egregious desertion matches Judas's uniquely egregious betrayal of Christ's love[26]. John's frantic cry expresses his unthinking flight from inward love, as Judas's intense silence expresses his duplicitous approach with outward love. Together they frame Christ's utter destitution at the hour of darkness.

The most illuminating surprise comes when one considers the reason for the anguish painted on Christ's face. At first glance one may surmise that Christ suffers because he has been betrayed, cruelly assaulted and captured. Not so. To understand the Lord's pain, we must recall Luke's account of the event (22:52), in which Christ says to his assailants, «When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness». The passage establishes a metaphorical relationship between the nefarious dissimulation of the deed and the fact that it was done at night – a conjunction of form and content that was congenial to Caravaggio's style, and fundamental to his interpretation of the story[27]. In fact, the church fathers had already perceived the tragic irony inherent in the failure of Christ's benighted assailants to recognize his luminous innocence. Leo the Great, whose sermons on the Passion were among the most influential of all Gospel commentaries, clearly articulates the point, «[...] the children of darkness rushed against the True light. Though using torches and lanterns, they did not avoid the night of their infidelity, because they did not recognize the Author of Light»[28].

A much more novel and provocative point comes into play here, when taken in conjunction with another passage, referred to by Leo and illustrated in Caravaggio's picture, in John's account of the Betrayal: «Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons». Caravaggio's interpretation is derived, as I suspect, from the work of a now largely forgotten but in Caravaggio's time well known theologian, antiquarian, historian, poet and administrative functionary: Giulio Cesare Capaccio (1552-1634)[29]. In a series of tracts in which ideas of divinity are suggested through the evocative power of metaphor, Capaccio expounded his brilliant and provocative theory of the «occult» nature of God. Combining philosophy, theology, metaphysics, and devotional rhetoric, it is a profoundly moving and deeply mystical view of the relation between divinity and the visible world. Capaccio introduced his vision of a divine paradox though a densely argued concatenation of what might be called indirect revelations, in a sermon on the Passion titled *On the Occult Nature of God*, first published in 1582[30]. The underlying theme is announced by the woodcut that precedes the sermon, showing Christ's agony in the garden when he accepts the sacrificial cup, immediately before Judas and his accomplices appear and the passion begins (fig. 17). The woodcut is captioned by two texts from the prophet Isaiah, which together express the conundrum of Christ's salvific mission: «He was offered because it was his own will»; «Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself»[31]. God is hidden in one who sacrifices himself voluntarily; Christ effects the redemption of the world through his own immolation. God presents himself in three faces. The first is in his actions, as he performed them in the time of the prophets. The second face is that in which he is seen by all the blessed who live for eternity in the aspect of God. The third face is that which God assumes for benignity and delight to allow himself to be seen, so that those who cannot see the inner face may, in their incapacity, yet have life. Although God comprises all things, He is nevertheless absent and separated from all things, as the principle above all principles. Although according to St. Paul we can know God from all things, this knowledge is indirect («posterior»), enigmatic, like knowing an animal from its tracks; as Paul says: «For now we see though a glass darkly; but then face to face» (1 Cor. 13:12). God is hidden in Christ, we are hidden in Christ, and Christ is hidden in us[32].

Capaccio developed his ideas further in two volumes, published 1594-1600, which provide a vast compendium of what he called «Spiritual Conceits» intended to be useful to people of every status, especially preachers. In volume the second Capaccio devotes the twenty-fifth «discourse» to John's words, «[Judas] comes with lanterns and torches» («venit illuc cum Lanternis, & facibus»), elaborating his theory of the occult nature of God in this particular context under the aspect of light – for both of which reasons, it seems particularly relevant for Caravaggio. Capaccio's point of departure here is the idea that the two sources of light mentioned by John, in which Judas appears in the taking of the Lord, constitute a great symbol of the truth of Christ: in one form, the lantern, the light is occult, in the other, the torch, the light is manifest[33]. There are two corresponding kinds of knowledge or understanding – «scienza». The scienza proposed by divine light was day; the scienza of the fallen angel was night, in which death reigned from the fall of Adam until the day Christ was born in the hearts of men. Divine light is occult in the inspiration of the spirit, which also signified the life of the soul, the light that is enveloped in this lantern of the body; manifest light is the scienza promised by the devil, which does not make known that immortal life[34]. Christ is seen in an occult way, as in a lantern, because it was impossible actually to see him, God in himself being a substance that is only intelligible, not visible[35].

18. Caravaggio, *Burial of St. Lucy*, S. Lucia al Sepolcro, Syracuse

19. Albrecht Dürer, *Taking of Christ*, woodcut

Elsewhere, Capaccio equates the lamp with Christ himself, whose body hides his divinity because the nature of God cannot be seen with the corporeal eye; the lamp represents Christ as man, because as God he has in common with the Father that the «glory of God did lighten it [the Heavenly Jerusalem]» (Apoc. 21:23)[36]. In my view, Capaccio's sublime paradox – a divinity whose nature is hidden, like the light in a lantern, the true, inner source of which is intelligible but not visible – provides a glimpse of the very essence of Caravaggio's art.

Christ's words to his captors, «this is your hour, and the power of darkness», also had another significance for Caravaggio, which in turn linked Capaccio's identification of the night with the devil to the very process of salvation, expressly formulated in Christ's *willing* surrender to his assailants, as reported by Matthew: «Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?» (*Matthew* 26:53-54). In the passage quoted earlier, Leo the Great made exactly this point in relation to those who failed to see the light in the darkness:

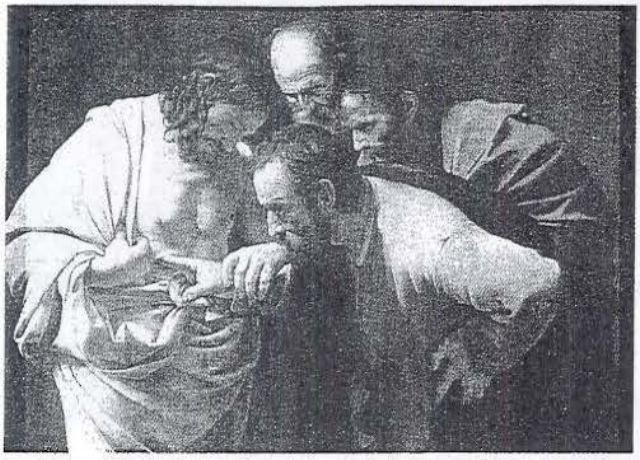
> They apprehended someone who was willing to be held. They took away someone who was willing to be taken away. If he had wanted to oppose them, their wicked hands could bring no injury on him, but the Redemption of the world would be delayed. If unharmed, he would save no one, he who was to die for the salvation of all[37].

With his pained expression and anxious gesture, Caravaggio's Christ foresees the crucifixion and does not suffer for himself, but for humanity. Leo relates the voluntary Passion itself specifically to Christ's desire to save his own persecutors:

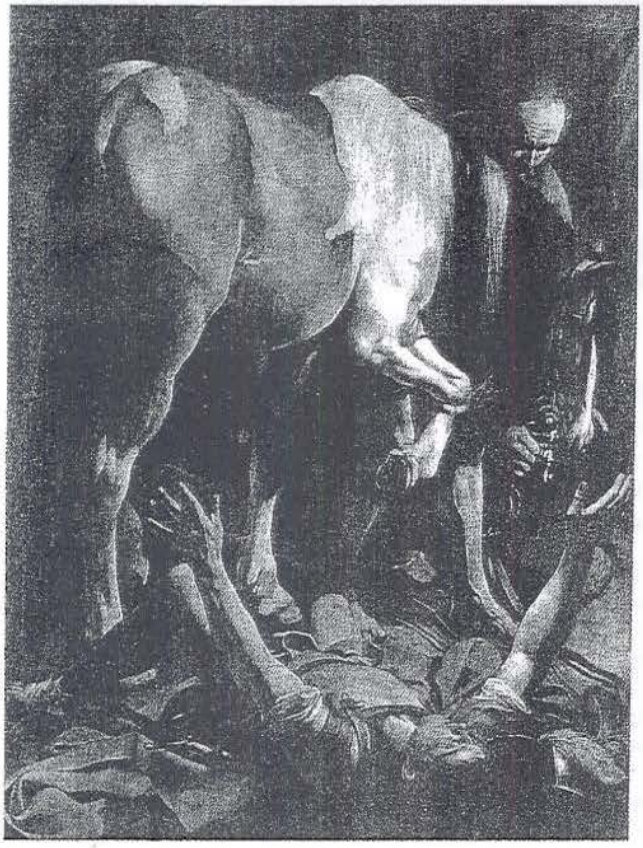
> Whatever mockery and disgrace, whatever harassment and punishment the rage of wicked people inflicted on the Lord, it was not tolerated through necessity but undertaken by free will. 'The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost'. Thus he used the malice of his persecutors for the redemption of all, so that even his murderers could be saved if only they would believe in the mystery of his Death and Resurrection[38].

And speaking of Christ's redemption of St. Peter despite the denial, Leo has Jesus say, «Let not the weakness I have taken upon Me perplex thee; I was trembling for thy fate, be not thou anxious for mine»[39].

Christ's followers at the crucifixion and lamentation suffer not for themselves but for him, so in the *Taking of Christ* the Son of Man suffers not for himself but for those who are lost in darkness. This is Caravaggio's revolutionary theme. Caravaggio represents the suffering of Christ for humanity that does not comprehend, does not «see». Also in the *Burial of St. Lucy*, painted years later, a figure with pensive face and hands joined like Christ's, displays compassion for another's fate (fig. 18). In fact, I would say that for the painter Caravaggio the capacity to «see» was equivalent to the possibility of salvation: see, in the double sense of the term, as it used even in the bible,



20. Caravaggio, *Incredulity of Thomas*, Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten, Potsdam

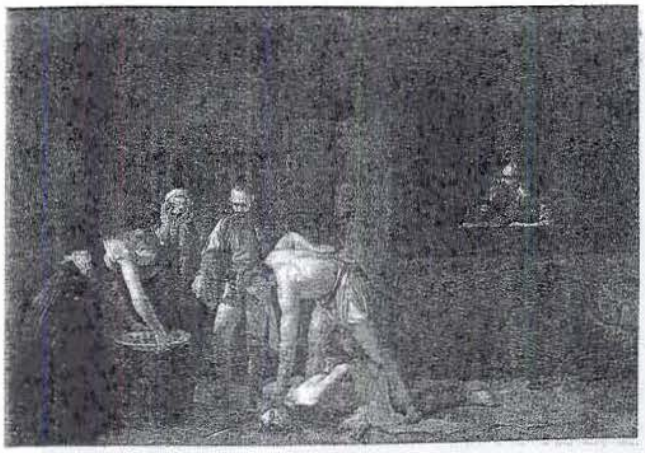


21. Caravaggio, *Conversion of St. Paul*. S. Maria del Popolo, Rome

with the eyes, and with the spirit. Salvation consists in seeing the light in the darkness, and Caravaggio portrays himself in the traditional role of the figure who brandishes the light to illuminate the betrayal of Christ, as in the engraving by Dürer, which Caravaggio surely knew (fig. 19)[40]. Offering the lantern, the occult light of Christ's body, in place of the torch, the manifest light of evil, the painter suggests that the capacity to see, and hence to be saved, depends on faith: external, physical vision is of no use to one able to see with the inner, spiritual eye. This idea of «seeing the light», inwardly rather than outwardly, has a specific place in the gospel of St. John, which I be-

22. Caravaggio, *David with the Head of Goliath*, Galleria Borghese, Rome

lieve Caravaggio must always have borne in mind (*John* 20:29). Jesus, having appeared after his death to the disciples, responds to Thomas, who doubted the miracle until he had thrust his hand into the wound in Christ's side: «Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed». This is the light Caravaggio carries, and it entails a fateful paradox that explains the artist's preoccupation with the text: the painter must depict that which should not need to be seen. The dilemma, terrifying for a painter, is evident in other works by Caravaggio. In the *Incredulity of Thomas* (fig. 20), where Christ's speech is evident in his open mouth, the almost grotesque physicality of the gestures and expressions conveys, by inversion, as it were, the extraordinary importance Caravaggio attached to interior and spontaneous faith. In the *Conversion of St. Paul* (fig. 21), for the first time in the history of that subject, neither the saint's companion nor his horse shows any sign of wonderment; indeed, one might say that they are conspicuously unaware of what is really happening. On the other hand, in the face of the saint, his closed eye is a clear indication that he has been blinded by the miracle of light and words that converted Saul into Paul. Hence, we are aware that the true, grand illumination on the road to Damascus was inward, private: losing his exterior sight, Paul gained interior vision. The artist may try to escape from this dilemma in various ways. He can assume that Christ's admonition was addressed to his contemporaries and not to posterity. And ordinarily the painter evokes an



23. Caravaggio, *Beheading of John the Baptist*, Cathedral, Valletta, Malta

24. Detail of fig. 23

25. Caravaggio, *Supper at Emaus*, National Gallery, London

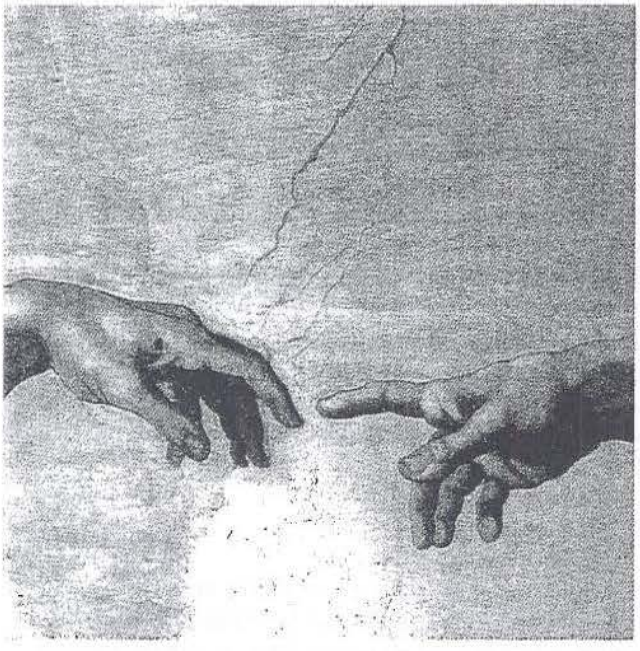
26. Veronese, *Supper at Emmaus*, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden

episode of the past for a future not able to see for itself. Caravaggio's approach is totally different: in his sacred representation, faith does not seek proof, but finds a challenge. Caravaggio visualizes the past to challenge the future to believe, not in what it has not seen, but in what is not, and never was, visible (I would argue that this contradictory, indeed self-sacrificial nature of painting in relation to divinity underlies much of the autobiographical content in Caravaggio's works, including the various self-portraits, most notably as the head of the proud and defeated giant Goliath [fig. 22], and culminating with his signature [«F(ra) Michel A(ngel...)»] in the blood of John the Baptist in the late picture of the *Martyrdom*, figs. 23, 24). In the *Taking of Christ* at the far right of the composition, counterbalancing the fleeing St. John at the far left, Caravaggio himself holds the lantern forward and aloft: among those whose eyes are veiled in shadow the illuminated painter leads the way toward Jesus, so that all may see by the inner light that true faith has no need to see. The lips of the self-portrait are open, to my mind, in a very specific speech – also in contradiction to John's inarticulate cry – proclaiming Christ's words, «blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed». Christ's lips, too, are open – for the first time in the history of the subject, as far as I know. Portrayed as orator and mourner, he pronounces a cosmic fate, at once tragic and redemptive, «this is your hour, and the power of darkness». Here, in the visage and posture of Christ captured, the austere morality of the Greek is suffused with the compassionate love of the Christian[41].

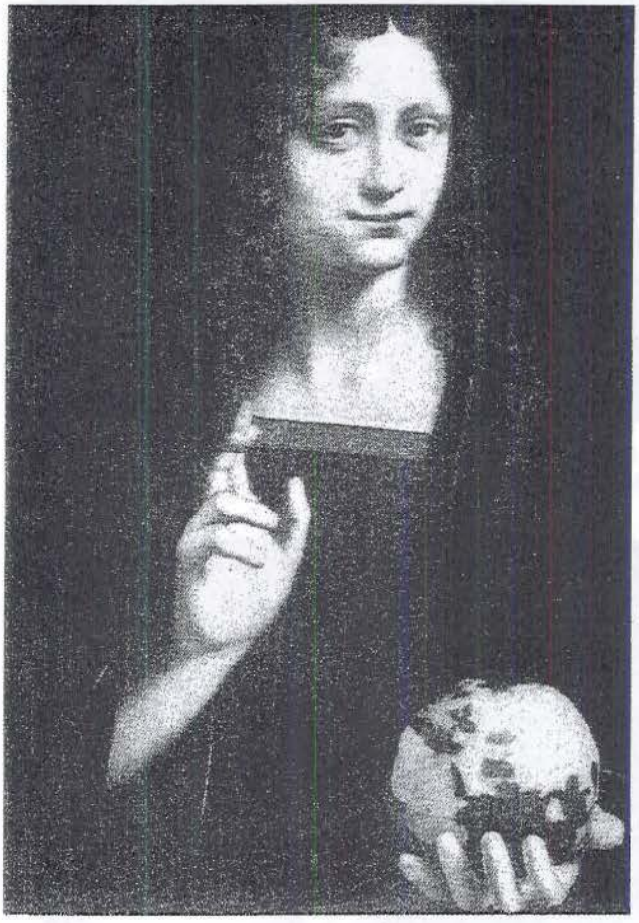
SUPPER OF EMMAUS

In the *Supper at Emmaus* (fig. 25), Christ appears miraculously after his death, young and beardless, to two of his disciples, who fail to recognize him in this unwonted guise; they do not even look at him. Presenting the subject in this way, Caravaggio was following a particular tradition, based on the account of the episode in the gospel of Luke:

27. Michelangelo, *Last Judgement*, detail, Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican City, Rome



28. Michelangelo, *Creation of Adam*, detail, Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican City, Rome



29. Marco d'Oggiono, *Salvator Mundi*, Galleria Borghese, Rome

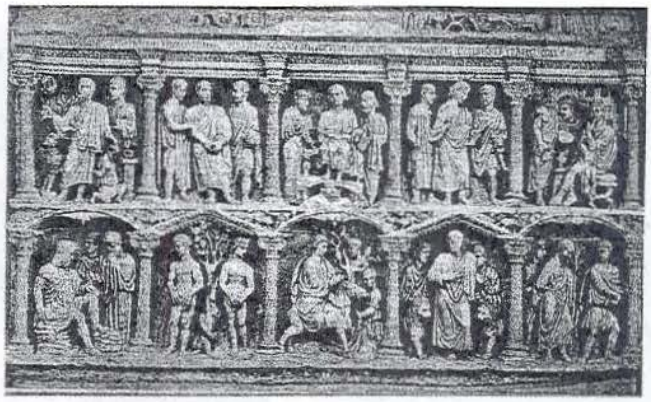
> And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden («oculi [...] tenebantur») that they should not know him [...]. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight (24:15-16, 30-31).

The essential point of the episode as it was interpreted from the beginning by the fathers of the church, was the recognition of Christ not in his visage, but in the sacrament, at the precise moment of the mass when the priest blesses the bread, consecrating it in the body of the Savior[42]. To apprehend Christ in the sacrament is to apprehend him not externally, but in a deeper sense. Like the two apostles, the true Catholic must reach the Son of God through the sacrament and faith, which constitute for the community of the Ecclesia and for the individual faithful, the most authentic and intimate aspect of religiosity. This exemplum of the mystical nature of faith was illustrated in a painting from the shop of Veronese (fig. 26), where the apostles express the shock of recognition as they stare in astonishment at the blessing hand of Christ. In a sense, the key to the event is the apostles' failure to recognize Christ, which for Luke was caused by a kind of spiritual blindfold removed by the Eucharistic blessing.

To understand Caravaggio's understanding of the event,

however, we must turn to the very different, visibly evident reason for the apostles' obtuseness that was provided by a single, laconic sentence alluding to the event and its inherent test of cedulity, in the gospel of Mark: «After that he appeared in another form» («in alia effigie») «unto them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue; neither believed they them» (*Mark* 16: 12-13). Mark says that Christ appeared to the apostles in another guise, but he makes no reference to the supper and none to the miraculous recognition. For Luke the apostles eyes were «beholden» and the emphasis was on the Eucharist; for Mark, their eyes were unaffected, and the emphasis was on Christ's appearance – the common denominator in both cases was the miraculous transformation of the body of the Savior. The connection between the two passages had been illustrated in a tradition, to which Veronese's picture belongs, that focused on the fact that the encounter with the apostles took place on the road to Emmaus, where Christ is shown in the guise of a pilgrim. For Caravaggio the revolutionary, by contrast, the difference lay not in a change of costume but in a change of persona.

I believe the key to Caravaggio's interpretation was a passage in St. Augustine's famous treatise reconciling the gospels, in which he says specifically that at Emmaus a change had come over the countenance of Christ, as it had earlier at the Transfiguration. Augustine alludes to Luke's report of that mystical exultation in which, as Christ prayed, «the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering» («Et facta est, dum oraret, species vultus eius altera et vestitus eius albus et refulgens», *Luke* 19:29). According to Matthew, Christ was «transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light» («et transfiguratus est ante eos, et resplenduit facies eius sicut sol, vestimenta autem eius facta sunt alba sicut nix», Matt. 17:2). For Augustine «in alia effigie» meant a change in Christ's physiognomy which became the obstacle to recognition that was overcome, as it were, when the apostles recognized Christ not physically (indeed, he immediately vanished), but in the blessing of the bread. Augustine does not actually describe the altered visage, but Matthew's description of Christ's transfigured face as «resplendent like the sun», inevitably suggested the glorified and rejuvenated body of Christ after the resurrection and at the Second Coming. This Christ of the Second Coming, when he will separate the damned and the saved and take his place on the throne of heaven, had been portrayed as a beardless youth in two contexts to which Caravaggio clearly refers. Both reflect the solar imagery suggested by Matthew's description, and both prefigure Caravaggio's retrieval of the early Christian type of the juvenile *Maiestas Domini*, in which Christ as the world ruler was given the features of the ancient sun-god Apollo (fig. 30). In the Sistine chapel Michelangelo related this theme to one of the fundamental traditions of biblical exegesis, identifying the Transfiguration with the Last Judgment (fig. 27): the judging Christ conspicuously evokes the most famous of all portayals of Apollo, then, as now, in



30. Christ Enthroned in Heaven, sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, detail, Grotto of St. Peter's, Rome

the Vatican Belvedere[43]. And in a similar vein, Leonardo invented a portrait-like icon that showed the triumphant savior of the world as an ephebic youth, best known from a painting attributed to the master in Caravaggio's time (fig. 29); the work belonged to Paul V who kept it in the papal apartment until 1611 when he gave it to his nephew, Cardinal Scipione Borghese[44]. Caravaggio seems deliberately to have fused these two prototypical representations of the ultimate acts of God's plan for salvation into one surpassing image of divine intervention at the Eucharist. Christ's features and long, flowing tresses recall Leonardo, and he lifts his right hand in a similar Trinitarian gesture of benediction which, however, also suggests the raising of the dead. Following Michelangelo, Christ points with his left hand toward the lance wound in his side, in a gesture that also recalls the vivifying hand of God in the *Creation of Adam* (fig. 28). These precedent evocations of an Apollonian god suggested by Matthew's description of the transfigured Christ, acquired a powerful new resonance in the Rome of Filippo Neri. Another great discovery of Antonio Bosio, which again he was the first to ponder over, was the youthful, beardless Jesus who appeared in many contexts in Early Christian art, including acts or miracles performed late in Christ's life[45]. Indeed, it has been observed that Christ as miracle-worker was generally shown as an ideal, heroic youth[46]. In the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, a spectacular discovery in 1595 in excavations for a new high altar for St. Peter's, the youthful type appears in the scene of the taking of Christ and in that of Jesus enthroned in heaven between two apostles (fig. 30); this latter depiction was particularly relevant in both composition and theme to Caravaggio's image of the resurrected Christ imparting the sacrament to the two disciples at Emmaus. Again Bosio opines that the youthful type did not occur by chance, but contains a mystery; and here he cites in explanation the view of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, that in the presence of God nothing is old or passé, but everything is in the present[47].

Caravaggio's Christ, therefore, returns from the tomb in the ideal form of the pristine, florescent, and everlasting church. The painting visualizes two primary concepts: the idea of salvation through a direct, unmediated, inner illu-

31. Caravaggio, *Inspiration of St. Matthew*, destroyed, formerly Berlin

mination of faith in the sacrament, and the historicizing notion of a pure and innocent Christianity. Both concepts are perfectly vested in persons of humble status, for Christ promised that the meek shall inherit the earth. The reactions of Caravaggio's apostles in fact exemplify two complementary modes of response to the inward revelation of Christ's sacrificial act: to follow and to imitate, in death and resurrection. The figure on the left, doubtless the Cleopas mentioned by Mark, who questioned the stranger whether he had heard of the death and resurrection of Jesus, rises as if levitated by force of the Lord's salvific gesture: Mark says that the apostles «rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem» («Et surgentes eadem hora regressi sunt in Jerusalem», 24:33). In one of the most important mystical bible commentaries of the period, Emmaus is called the «way of pursuing beatitude, opened by the resurrection of Christ» («viam consequendae beatitudinis: quae per resurrectionem Christi aperta est»)[48]. The apostle at the right extends his arms in imitation of the crucifixion, as did Peter in his martyrdom – Mark also mentions Simon as one of the apostles to whom the risen Christ appeared (24:34), and Baronio considered him the first apostle to be so privileged[49]; wearing the cockle shell of the pilgrim he also imitates Jesus, whom Cleopas had called «peregrinus» (24:18). Caravaggio's redeemer seems to extend the promise to the spectator with the outward-directed, uplifting gesture of his right hand, which anticipates his action at the universal resurrection and judgment that will take place on the last day at the end of time. While the Oratorian movement has been appreciated as relevant for Caravaggio's proletarian concerns, we have not yet fully grasped its importance for the intellectual content of his art[50].

It is evident that all three paintings for Ciriaco Mattei embodied a dilemma that reached Philip Guston's extreme point of the impossibility of painting, in that Caravaggio sought – in what I imagine was a kind of agony of self-contradiction and anxiety – to demonstrate visually the necessary law that God cannot be seen with the naked eye. He did so by creating in each case a similar fusion of outwardly different but inwardly analogous personas. Precisely the same kind of conflation took place during the same years in the first altarpiece for the Contarelli chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi (fig. 31). Here, the greatest Greek philosopher Socrates, who said both «know thyself» and «all I know is that I know nothing», was merged with the Hebrew tax-collector Levi, who responded without thought or reason to Christ's call; together, they became the first of the evangelists, Matthew, who recounted Christ's coming and sacrifice on behalf of mankind[51].

Our paintings may thus indeed be seen and understood together, since they convey a common message of vast dimensions, reaching beyond the confines of art and religion, to flourish in the domain of humanity itself: a message of illumination, revelation, and truth. And Caravaggio emerges as of one of the great minds in the history of humanity. On this account I wish to add a concluding plea. I confess that I have grown impatient with discussions of Caravaggio in which great importance is attached to the question of who may or may not have been his «advisor» for this or that creation. Caravaggio's reputation, at least intellectually speaking, suffers from a chronic inferiority complex. In this context, a friend recently invented a wonderfully incisive joke; he reported that documents had been discovered that demonstrated that when Caravaggio's body was recovered on the beach at Porto Ercole in 1610, a second body was found nearby, that of his equally famous advisor! The pictures painted for Mattei amply confirm the rapidly accumulating evidence that the conceptual level of Caravaggio's art is both consistent and highly sophisticated. It is time we abandoned, or rather redirected, the search for advisors. Caravaggio had only one advisor – like St. Matthew's angel – who accompanied him all the way from his native village of Caravaggio to the beach at Porto Ercole, his own inspiring genius. Certainly, he was a great researcher, and hence what he did not know he found in books (what would we give to know the titles of the twelve volumes found in a box in his modest dwelling in Rome in 1605?!)[52], or he inquired of people more knowledgeable than himself, as I have often done in trying to decipher his messages; but we cannot continue to attribute to others the intellectual content of his achievements. Masterpieces created over a lifetime, in which such depth of thought is endowed with such power to move, are surely the visions of a single spirit.

A brief version of this essay was published in Italian in I. Lavin, «Caravaggio rivoluzionario o l'impossibilità di vedere», in: *Quadri e Sculture*, III, 15, 1995, pp. 25-29.

[1] P. Guston, «Piero della Francesca: The Impossibility of Painting», in: *Art News*, LXIV, 3, 1965, pp. 38-39. The present essay is in the nature of a premise and companion piece to a study of Georges de la Tour's *Penitent St. Peter* in the Cleveland Museum of Art: «Georges de la
642 Tour: the Tears of St. Peter and the 'Occult' Light of Penitence», in: *L'Europa e l'arte italiana. Per i cento anni della fondazione del Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz*, ed. by M. Seidel, Venezia 2000, pp. 353-376.

[2] The information concerning these pictures, including the new documentation by F. Cappelletti and L. Testa, will be found in the catalogue of an exhibition, occasioned by the rediscovery of the *Taking of Christ*, that sought to reconstruct the Mattei collection (*Caravaggio e la collezione Mattei*, Milano 1995). Additional material on the Mattei collection and our three pictures will be found in E. Schröter, «Caravaggio und die Gemäldesammlungen der Familie Mattei. Addenda und Corrigenda zu den jüngsten Forschungen und Funden», in: *Pantheon*, LIII, 1995, pp. 62-87.

[3] *Caravaggio*, 1995 (as in n. 2), pp. 120-123; cf. H. Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, New York 1985, p. 306. The recent attempt by C. Gilbert, *Caravaggio and His Two Cardinals*, University Park/PA 1995, to identify the figure as the Phrygian shepherd Paris (a contemporary guidebook calls him «Pastor friso») seems to me misguided, as does Slatkes's identification (L. Slatkes «Caravaggio's Painting of the Sanguine Temperament», in: *Actes du XXVIIe congrès internationale d'histoire de l'art*, vol. II, Budapest 1972, pp. 17-24; Id., «Caravaggio's *Pastor friso*», in: *Nederlands kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XXIII, 1972, pp. 67-72) as Phryxus, who rode on a sheep; neither character is ever shown embracing the animal, or smiling, both common attributes of St. John. However, Caravaggio's portrayal of the Baptist with a ram and without his reed cross, though not unprecedented, *is* extraordinary, and efforts to offer alternative identifications are understandable, if erroneous.

[4] For both these themes, see M.A. Lavin, «Giovannino Battista. A Study in Renaissance Religious Symbolism», in: *The Art Bulletin*, XXXVII, 1955, pp. 85-101.

[5] See P.M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana. Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan*, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 121, 218, 249, no. 63; cited also in this connection by M. Calvesi, *La realtà del Caravaggio*, Torino 1990, p. 245.

[6] *Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada. European and American Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts*, ed. by M. Laskin, Jr. and M. Pantazzi, vol. I, Ottawa 1987, pp. 174-176.

[7] P. Humphrey, *Lorenzo Lotto*, New Haven/London 1997, p. 48.

[8] My argument here overlaps that of Calvesi, 1990 (as in n. 5), pp. 242-247, who interprets the Capitoline picture as an emblem of Divine Love.

[9] On the relationship see particularly W. Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, Princeton 1955, pp. 89-91, who, while treating the reference as a «persiflage», notes the relevance of Erythrea, the Sacrifice of Noah and the sacrificial ram.

[10] These attributes of Erythrea were noted by C. de Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, vol. II, Princeton/NJ 1945, pp. 155s.; on the oracle, see R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudoapocrypha of the Old Testament*, vol. II, Oxford 1913, p. 393.

[11] See M.A. Lavin, «The Joy of the Bridegroom's Friend: Smiling Faces in Fra Filippo, Raphael and Leonardo», in: *Art the Ape of Nature. Essays in Honor of H.W. Janson*, ed. by M. Barasch et al., New York 1981, pp. 193-210, who relates Leonardo's picture in the Louvre to the traditional identification of the Baptist as an angel, based on Christ's own reference to him as *angelum meum* (Matt. 11:10). I suspect the same theme may underlie Caravaggio's often-noted reference in the Capitoline picture to the *ignudi* of the Sistine ceiling. H. Röttgen, *Il Caravaggio. Ricerche e interpretazioni*, Roma 1974, p. 119, cites an imporant passage in Paolo Valeriano's immensely popular *Hieroglyphica* (first edn. 1556) where the ram is identified with the Cross, in reference to the sacrifice of Isaac, an event commonly taken as proleptic of the sacrifice of Christ. Hence, Caravaggio's *Baptist* might be seen as «foretelling» the ubiquitous motif Christ embracing the Cross.

[12] On Bosio see *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. XIII, Roma 1971, pp. 257-259; on the context of Christian archeological exploration in Rome, G. Wataghin Cantino, «Roma sotterranea. Appunti sulle origini dell'archeologia cristiana», in: *Ricerche di storia dell'arte*, X, 1980, pp. 5-14.

[13] A. Bosio, *Roma sotterranea*, Roma 1632, p. 625: «Ne si perdeuano d'animo in veder'una pecorella sola nelle spalle del Pastore; sapendo che quella rappresentaua l'humana natura; come trà gli altri proua S. Ilario con quelle parole: *Ouis vna, homo intelligendus est; et sub homine vno vniuersitas sentienda est: sed in vnum Ade errore omne hominum genus aberrauit, etc.* Sapeuano ancora, che Dio benedetto conferisce le sue gratie à tutti, come se tutti fossero vno solo: così l'afferma San Giouanni Chrisostomo, dicendo: *Ideò denique et in illa boni Pastoris parabola non dicitur quia venit multas oues quaerere, sed vnam. Vna namque est: quia sic omnibus, quasi vni, diuina beneficia conferuntur*» («Nor did they loose heart to see a single lamb on the shoulders of the shepherd, knowing that it represented human nature; among others, St. Hilarius bears witness with his words, A sheep is to be understood as a man, and by one man all are to be considered: by the sin of Adam alone the race of all men erred, etc. They also knew that the Good Lord gives forgiveness to all, as if all were only one. This is confirmed by John Chrisostomus, saying: Therefore the parable says that he has not come for many sheep, but for one. One, that is, because divine grace is conferred on all, as if on one»).

[14] F.W. Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, vol. I: *Rom und Ostia*, Wiesbaden 1946, pp. 62s., no. 66.

[15] C.W. Kirwin, «Cardinal Baronius and the Misteri in St. Peters», in: *Baronio e l'arte*, Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, ed. by R. de Maio et al., Sora 1985, p. 12, states that Cardinal Baronio uses the word «misteri» for Christian narrative paintings, but the evidence he cites (M.L. Chappell & C.W. Kirwin, «A Petrine Triumph: The Decoration of the Navi Piccole in San Pietro under Clement VIII», in: *Storia dell'arte*, VI, 1974, p. 129, n. 88), is in fact a workmen's contract of December 1599 for the provision of slate for altar paintings in St. Peter's!

[16] Bosio, 1632 (as in n. 13), p. 625: «Si uede in alcune delle sopradette Tauole Cimiteriali il medesimo Pastore, non con la pecorella, ma con un Irco, ò Capro nelle spalle; ne ciò senza misterio: poiche per quell'animale essendo significati i peccatori, come per la pecorella i giusti (*statuet quidem oues à dextris, haedos autem à sinistris*, disse il Signore parlando della separatione, che sarebbe fatta nel giorno del Giuditio de'buoni, e de'cattiui) si daua ad intendere, che l'istesso Signore, e Pastor buono, era uenuto non solo per i giusti, ma per i peccatori ancora: così disse Teodoreto, ponderando quelle parole della Cantica: *Pasce haedos tuos*, cioè: *Vult enim benignus Dominus, ut non modo iustos, uerum etiam peccatores omni studio, et cura complectamur. Non enim egent (inquit) qui sani sunt medico, sed qui malè habent. Non ueni uocare iustos; sed peccatores ad poenitentiam. Haedorum autem nomine* (seguita più a basso) *peccatores intelligit divina scriptura: Hos enim dominus à sinistris ait locatum iri, seiunctos ab agnis, qui dextrum locum obtinebunt. Nam in lege quoque pro peccatis, non ouis, sed Hircus ex Capris mactabatur [...]*» («In some of the tombstones one sees the shepherd not with a lamb, but with a ram, or goat, on his shoulders; this is not without mystery: because since that animal signifies sinners, as the lamb signifies the just [let the sheep be on the right, but the goats at the left, said the Lord speaking of the separation that will be made on the day of the Judgment af the good and the bad], it is understood that the Lord himself, the Good Shepherd, had come not only for the just, but also for the sinners: so said Theodoretus, meditating the words of the Song of Songs, Feed your sheep, that is, the good Lord wishes ut to embrace assiduously and with care not only the just but also the sinners; he said the well do not require a physician, but the sick. I have not come to call the just, but the sinners to repentance. Further on, divine scripture understands sinners by the name of goats. For the Lord bad them go to the left, separated from the lambs, who obtained the right. For indeed, in the law not a sheep but a ram or goat is sacrificed for sins [...]»).

[17] C. Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christlichen Kunst des ersten Jahrtausends. Studien zur Geschichte des Weltgerichtsbildes*, Wien 1966, pp. 38s., who identifies the subject as the Last Judgment; cf. *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, Stuttgart 1991, vol. XV, cols.

603-607. According to R. Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana nei primi otto secoli della chiesa*, vol. v, Prato 1879, p. 14, the sculpture was once in the Palazzo Sciarra alla Corbognana in Rome.

[18] F. Borromeo, *De pictura sacra*, Milano 1624, pp. 28-29; cited by Jones, 1993 (as in n. 5), p. 121. On the Good Shepherd and the lost soul, see M. Dulaey, «La parabole de la brebis perdue dans l'Église ancienne: De l'exégèse à l'iconographie», in: *Revue des étues augustiniennes*, XXXI, 1993, pp. 3-22.

[19] The relevance for Caravaggio of the Demosthenes type and its meditative significance was first noted in connection with the figure of St. Anne in the *Madonna of the Serpent*, by S. Settis, «Immagini della meditazione, dell'incertezza e del pentimento nell'arte antica», in: *Prospettiva*, 2, 1975, pp. 4-18 (On the type, see also P. Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates. The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*, Berkeley 1995, pp. 85-87). As Settis observed, the portrait statue itself was only identified in the eighteenth century, but the litery sources were well known, as were many other contexts in which the pose occurs. The reference to the type in the *Taking of Christ*, but not the differences, was noted in a fine article by K. Herrmann Fiore, «Caravaggio's *Taking of Christ* and Dürer's woodcut of 1509», in: *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXVII, 1995, pp. 24-27.

[20] N. Caussin, *De eloquentia sacra et humana*, Paris[3] 1630, p. 964: *Chrysostomus, sive idea: [...] Character Gravis. Concionatoris*; p. 972: Inde plausus, inde hominum admiratio: neque enim caetera animalia quantumvis pulchra, & velocia, & callida tantum admiramur quantum unius Leonis maiestatem: sic ista gravitas, etiam levioribus ornamentis destituta, nuda, & simplex nos vehementiùs afficit quàm caetera. On the leonine type see P. Meller, «Physiognomical Theory in Renaissance Heroic Portraits», in: *The Renaissance and Mannerism. Studies in Western Art*, Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art, vol. II, Princeton 1963, pp. 53-69; for particularly meaningful instances the metaphorical use of physiognomical typology in the work of Georges de la Tour and Ribera, see Lavin, 2000 (as in n. 1).

[21] T. Verdon, *The Art of Guido Mazzoni*, New York/London 1978, pp. 321s.

[22] G.P. Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, [Roma 1672], ed. by E. Borea, Torino 1976, p. 223.

[23] The significance of the drapery colors and Gregory's identification of Mark's deserter as St. John were first noted by S. Benedetti, «Caravaggio's *Taking of Christ*», in: *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXVII, 1995, pp. 37s.; the traditional association of these colors with John was noted by M. Meiss, «A Documented Altarpiece by Piero della Francesca», in: *The Art Bulletin*, XXIII, 1941, p. 59, followed by A. Di Lorenzo, *Il politico agostiniano di Piero della Francesca*, Milano 1996, p. 18.

[24] On the motif of Ouranos-Caelus holding a swath of drapery overhead as the canopy of heaven, see *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, vol. VII/1, München/Zürich 1994, pp. 132-136. On the Junius Bassus sarcophagus see recently E.S. Malbon, *The Iconography of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus. Neofitus iit ad Deum*, Princeton 1990.

[25] «Sed cum ad crucis horam ventum est, eius discipulos gravis ex persecutione Iudaeorm timor invasit: fugerunt singuli [...]. Stetit etiam Ioannes, cui ipso crucis tempore dictum est: Ecce mater tua. Sed perseverare minime potuit, quia de ipso quoque scriptum est quod: Adolescens [...] ab eis (*Mark* 14:51-52). Qui etsi post, ut verba Redemptoris sui audiret, ad horam crucis rediit, prius tamen territ fugit»; cf. A. Bocognano, *Grégoire le Grand. Morales sur Job* (Sources bibliques, 212), vol. I, Paris 1974, p. 404.

[26] On John as Christ's favorite, see my essay «Michelangelo: la Madonna dei Medici, figlio e sposo», in: M.A. & I. Lavin: *La liturgia d'amore. Imagini dal Cantico dei Cantici nell'arte di Cimabue, Michelangelo, e Rembrandt*, Modena 1999.

[27] The passage in Luke was cited by Herrmann Fiore, 1995 (as in n. 19) in relation to the obscurity of Caravaggio's depiction of the scene.

[28] «As a result, the children of darkness rushed against the True light. Though using torches and lanterns, they did not avoid the night of their infidelity, because they did not recognize the Author of Light. They apprehended someone who was willing to be held. They took away someone who was willing to be taken away. If he had wanted to oppose them, their wicked hands could bring no injury on him, but the Redemption of the world would be delayed. If unharmed, he would save no one, he who was to die for the salvation of all» (Leo the Great, *St. Leo the Great. Sermons*, transl. by J.P. Freedland and A.J. Conway, Washington/DC 1996, p. 254). «Irruerunt ergo in lumen verum filii tenebrarum, et utentes faculis atque laternis non evaserunt infidelitatis suae noctem, quia non intellexerunt lucis auctorem. Occupant paratum teneri, et trahunt volentem trahi: qui si vellet obniti, nihil quidem in injuriam ejus impiae manus possent, sed mundi redemptio tardaretur, et nullam salvaret illaesus, qui pro omnium salute erat moriturus» (Leo the Great, *Léon le Grand. Sermons*, [Sources chrétiennes, 74], ed. by R. Dolle, vol. III, Paris 1961, pp. 56s.). For a recent discussion of Caravaggesque light and light symbolism generally, see M. Gregori et al., *La luce del vero. Caravaggio, La Tour, Rembrandt, Zurbarán*, exhibition catalogue, Bergamo 2000.

[29] A substantial biography of Capaccio will be found in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. XVIII, Roma 1975, pp. 374-380.

[30] I have used the corrected printing of 1584.

[31] «Oblatus est quia ipse voluit; Vere tu es Deus absconditus» (*Isaiah* 53: 7; 45: 15). I have used the Douai translation of the first passage because it more accurately reflects the Vulgate than King James.

[32] «Tre faccie si attribuscono a Dio. La prima è delle sue attioni che esteriormente operò in quel tempo dei Profeti, come fu questa di Mosè, Et haec quidem demonstratio, non communis, sed foris est facta [dice S. Bernardo] nimirû exhibita per imagines extrinsecus apparêtes. Quae aut ab ijs uidebâtur erât similitudines claritatis domini, dice Ireneo. Che uolete piu chiaro? La secôda è q'lla faccia in cui tutti i beati. Vident Deum & uiuunt. Angeli eorum semper uident faciê patris, perche tutti per questo là uiuono eterna vita perche vedono Dio; e si come quei che in uno specchio si mirano, sono dêtro l'istesso specchio, cosi vedêdo Dio, sono dêtro l'istesso Dio, e riceuono la sua chiarezza, e uiuono, perche uiuere senza la uita è impossibile. La sossistentia della uita uiene dalla participatione, e la participatione di Dio è vederlo, e goderlo. La terza faccia è quella che per benignità, e per diletti ne assunse per lasciarsi vedere, acciò che quei che non ponno ueder la faccia interiore, in quella incapacità, hauessero ancor la uita [...] E si bene ômpie il tutto, è nientedimanco dal tutto assente e separato come principio sopra tutti i principij [...] E benche da tutte le cose possiamo conoscerlo come dice l'Apostolo, Inuisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt intellecta con spiciuntur; chi negarà che questa non sia la parte posteriore, che questa conoscenza non sia enigmatica, come se dal uestigio uolessimo saper la natura di alcun'animale? Per speculum, per speculum uidimus nunc in aenigmate, dice l'istesso in un'altro luogo. [...] ecco la diunità nascosta in Christo, Et vos in me. Ecco che in Christo siamo nascosti noi, Et ego in vobis; ecco che in noi è nascosto Christo, Iesus autem abscondit se» (G.C. Capaccio, *Delle prediche quadragesimali [...]*, Venezia 1584, pp. 384, 391, 397, 406).

[33] «Gran Simbolo della verità di Cristo, sono queste due qualità di Lumi, che seco fa apparir Giuda nella Cattura del suo Signore, vn lume occolto, Cum Lanternis; & vn manifesto, Et Faccibus» (G.C. Capaccio, *Della selva dei concetti scritturali*, vol. II, Venezia 1600, p. 193).

[34] «La scienza proposta dalla luce diuina, fù giorno; la scienza di colui, che in Angelo di luce si trasforma fù notte, oue l'anima mancò di veder la luce, che gli mostraua il sentiero, *Nescierunt neque intellexerunt; in tenebris ambulant nescientes, ponentes tenebras lucem, & lucem tenebras*; e non rimase in Adamo scienza di salute, onde campasse la morte, e cagionò notte spirituale sopra tutti gli huomini, finche nascesse il giorno Cristo ne i cuori à quelli. Hor vedi due qualità di lume, quel primo occolto nell'inspiratione nello spirito, che pur significaua la vita dell'anima la quale quasi luce stà inuolta in questa Lanterna del corpo; e quel secondo, manifesto, nella scienza promessa dal diauolo, percioche quella vita immortale non fè conoscere» (*ibid.*, p. 197v).

The Latin passage here is itself a remarkable conflation of two Old Testament texts combining elements that resonate in Caravaggio's picture – «knowledge and understanding, light and darkness, the moral path»: Ps. 81:5. «They know not, neither will they understand; they walk in darkness» («Nescierunt neque intellexerunt, in tenebis ambulant»), and *Isaiah* 5:20: «Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness» («Vae, qui dicitis malum bonum et bonum malum, ponentes tenebras lucem et lucem tenebras»).

[35] «[...] Christo in vna maniera occulta si vede, come in Lanterna, perciò che era impossible, che propriamente si vedesse, essendo in noi l'incapacità, che perciò *Deum nemo vidit unqam*; e questo, perche, dio secondo se stesso è sostanza solamente intelligibile, e non visible», in: Capaccio, 1600 (as in n. 33), vol. II, p. 199.

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 139v-140: «*Et Lucerna eius est Agnus*, sia detto questo per l'Humanità di Cristo, perche non potendo ueder gli occhi corporei la natura di Dio, nè fruir quell'inuisibile chiarezza, se gli rappresenta la Lucerna cioè Cristo come huomo, perche come Dio hà comune col Padre quel che segue, *Claritas Dei illuminavit eam (et lucerna eius est Agnus)*».

[37] See n. 26 above.

[38] *Leo the great*, 1996 (as in n. 28), p. 234: «Quidquid Domino illusionis et contumeliae, quidquid vexationis et paenae furor intulit impiorum, non de necessitate toleratum, sed de voluntate susceptum est: *Venit enim Filius hominis quaerere et salvare quod perierat* (*Luke* 19:10); et sic ad omnium redemptionem utebatur malitia persequentium, ut in mortis ejus resurrectionisque sacramento, etiam interfectores sui posss(??)ent salvi esse, si crederent» (Leo the Great, 1961 [as in n. 28], vol. III, p. 32).

[39] «Non te confundat infirmitas quam recepi. Ego de tuo fui trepidus, tu de meo esto securus» (*Ibid.*, p. 35).

[40] In the background at the left of the engraving Dürer also showed the fleeing nude youth with drapery flying, pursued by a tormentor. The relation of the composition to that of Dürer's *Taking of Christ* in the small woodcut Passion series was first noted by H. Wagner, *Michelangelo da Caravaggio*, Bern 1958, p. 110, and further explored by Herrmann Fiore, 1995 (as in n. 19). The way Caravaggio's Christ leans back and averts his face from Judas's also recalls the scene in Dürer's large woodcut *Passion*.

[41] For analogous themes of recognition and conversion in Caravaggio, see my essays («Divine Inspiration in Caravaggio's Two St. Matthews», in: *The Art Bulletin*, LVI, 1974, pp. 59-81; Id., «Addenda to 'Divine Inspiration'», in: *The Art Bulletin*, LVI, 1974, pp. 590-591; Id., «A Further Note on the Ancestry of Caravaggio's First Saint Matthew», in: *The Art Bulletin*, LXII, 1980, pp. 113-114), and the chapter «Caravaggio's *Calling of St. Matthew*: The Identity of the Protagonist», in: I. Lavin, *Past-Present. Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso*, Berkeley/CA 1993, pp. 85-99. Incidentally, pace A. Prater, «Matthäus und kein Ende? Eine Entgegnung», in: *Pantheon*, LIII, 1995, pp. 53-61, who was unaware of my essay, no depiction of the *Calling* has ever been cited in which the protagonist is unaware of Christ's call – nor could there be since the whole point of the event, in the gospels and in all interpretations, is Levi-Matthew's immediate, unreflective response. Nor had Levi the tax collector ever been portrayed as a beardless youth. P. Askew, «Caravaggio: Outward Action, Inward Vision», in: *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. La vita e le opere attraverso i documenti*, Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, ed. by S. Macioce, Roma 1996, pp. 249, 256, n. 9, has even offered the rather desperate suggestion that there are, in effect, two St. Matthews!

[42] On the London *Supper* see the work of my former pupil, C. Scribner, «'In Alia Effigie': Caravaggio's London Supper at Emmaus», in: *The Art Bulletin*, LIX, 1977, pp. 375-382.

[43] On this subject see J.M. Greenstein, «'How Glorious the Second Coming of Christ': Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* and the Transfiguration», in: *Artibus et historiae*, XX, 1989, pp. 33-58.

[44] On Leonardo's *Salvator Mundi* see J. Snow-Smith, «The Salvator Mundi of Leonardo da Vinci», in: *Arte lombarda*, L, 1978, pp. 69-81. The most complete discussion to date of the youthful Leonardesque type will be found in D.A. Brown, *The Young Correggio and his Leonardesque Sources*, New York/London 1981, pp. 25-29, 45s.; see also S. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative. The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, Buekenlaan 1984, pp. 177s. In the 1611 inventory of Paul V's gift it is said that the Borghese painting «esisteva nelle Camere del Vaticano» (P. della Pergola, *Galleria Borghese. I dipinti*, vol. I, Roma 1955, p. 152, Doc. no. 8). On the relevant type of portrait bust, cut off below the waist with both arms showing, see I. Lavin, «On the Sources and Meaning of the Renaissance Portrait Bust», in: *Art Quarterly*, XXXIII, 1970, pp. 207-226 (reprinted in *Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, ed. by S.B. McHam, Cambridge 1998, pp. 60-78).

[45] Bosio, 1632 (as in n. 13), p. 623, explains the «mystery» quoting Philo the Jew's thought that «with God nothing is old or passé, but all is present»: «Si vede in molte delle sopradette Tauole Cimiteriali Nostro Signore in aspetto giouenile, e senza barba; ancorche rappresenti le operationi, ò miracoli fatti doppo li trent'anni della sua uita. Il che non fecero que' Christiani benedetti senza misterio, nè à caso; ma uollero significare quello, che dichiarò Filone Hebreo, cioè che appresso Dio non ci è cosa uecchia, nè passata; ma ogni cosa è presente. Queste sono le sue parole: Sed à Deo numquam senescente, semperq; Iuuene, nova recentiaq, bona copiosè accipiendo, discant credere, non esse quicquam vetus apud eum, aut omninò praeteritum. Sed subsistens absque tempore, nascensque, [...]».

[46] Zanker, 1995 (as in n. 19), pp. 299s., esp. 392, n. 48. The Early Christian type has been studied from a different point of view by T.F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods. A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*, Princeton 1999, pp. 116-141.

[47] See note 45 above.

[48] H. Lauretus, *Silva allegoriarum totius Sacrae Scripturae*, [Barcelona 1570; ed. cit.: Köln 1681], Reprint, München 1971, p. 390.

[49] As noted by Hibbard, 1985 (as in n. 3), p. 79.

[50] Ciriaco Mattei himself, and his brother, Cardinal Girolamo, were both closely connected with St. Philipp, cf. M. Calvesi in: *Caravaggio*, 1995 (as in n. 2), pp. 17-20. It is also interesting to note that the famous processional «Visit» of the populace to the seven patriarchal basilicas of Rome, which took place on Maundy Thursday and included devotions on Christ's Passion, inaugurated by Filippo Neri as an alternative to the carnival celebrations, paused for refreshments at the hottest part of the day at the Villa Mattei; cf. *La regola e la fama. San Filippo Neri e l'arte*, exhibition catalogue, Roma 1995, pp. 480-481. Caravaggio's connection with Neri and the Oratorians was first emphasized by Friedlaender, 1955 (as in n. 9), pp. 122s., but primarily with respect to the context of the "proletarian" aspect of Caravaggio's art, not its intellectual content.

[51] On this triune conflation of identities in the first *St. Matthew*, see Lavin, 1974 (as in n. 41).

[52] R. Bassani & F. Bellini, *Caravaggio assassino. La carriera di un 'valentuomo' fazioso nella Roma della Controriforma*, Roma 1994, pp. 203s.