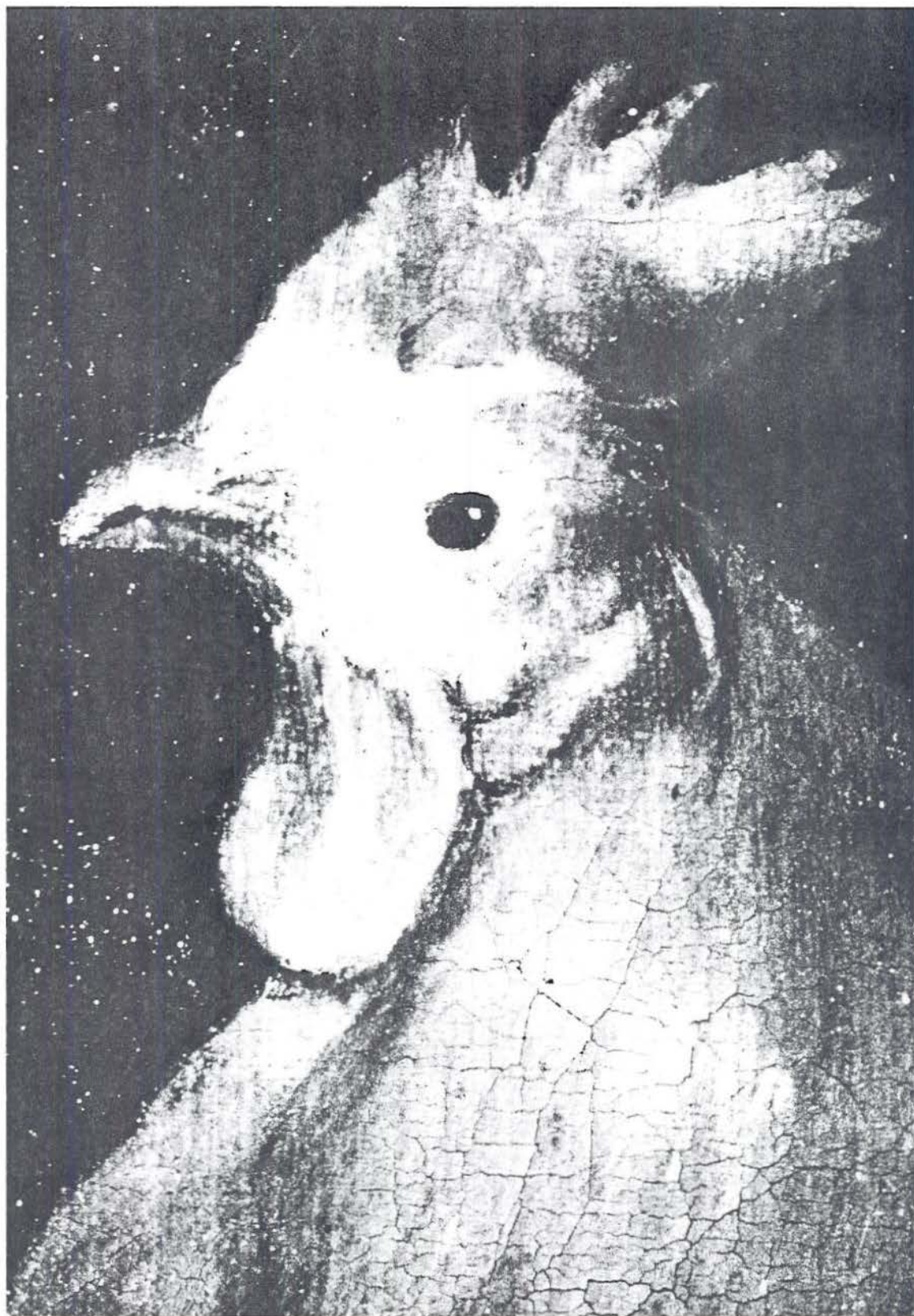


Irving Lavin

GEORGES DE LA TOUR:
The Tears of St. Peter and the “Occult” Light of Penitence

FROM: *L'Europe e l'arte italiana*, a cura di Max Seidel (Venice, 2000): 353-375.



Vere tu es Deus absconditus,
Deus Israel salvator (ISAIAH 45:15)

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. 31. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night [...]. 33. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. 34. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee [...]. (MATT. 26:30)

Judas, then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. (JOHN 18:3)

Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? 52. 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. (LUKE 22:51)

(Kiss of Judas, taking of Christ, Christ before the High Priest.)

But he denied before them all, saying I know not what thou sayest [...]. 72. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. [...] 74. Then began he to curse and swear, saying I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. 75. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly. (MATT. 26:70)

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. (LUKE 22:61)

To my mind no art historian has been as sensitive as Emile Mâle to the correlation between works of art and the grand sweep of ideas that constitute the intellectual history of Europe. His books on medieval and early modern iconography do much more than trace the development of subject matter in religious art; they demonstrate that the works of art are themselves expressions of the concepts and currents of thought found in the often abstruse but passionately argued treatises by contemporary thinkers. In Emile Mâle's vision the works of art were

equally grand intellectual achievements, sometimes profound and innovative, in visual rather than written form. One of Mâle's most brilliant insights was to discern a deep shift in the interpretation of traditional subjects and the introduction of a vast range of new subjects in the wake of the Council of Trent.¹ One of the new themes he discusses in this way is that of the penitent St. Peter, a subject which Mâle perceived as representing the Catholic response to the Protestant challenge to the sacrament of penance. Penance was a key doctrine, essential not only to the theological and moral coherence of Catholic belief; it was also essential – especially through the adjudicating role of the priesthood and the related practice of indulgences as a means of giving satisfaction for sins committed – to the very existence of the church as an institution. The Protestant view of the matter was expressed visually through the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), an extremely popular subject in sixteenth and seventeenth-century art in Northern Europe. The argument there ran as follows, according to one recent writer on the subject:

Though Protestant theologians stress the importance of confessing and repenting of one's sins and urge one to follow the prodigal's example in this regard, they insist that forgiveness is not contingent upon the performance of particular acts. The prodigal did nothing to deserve his father's forgiveness. Man is saved not by his own but by Christ's merit: he is redeemed by grace alone. The prodigal son, Luther writes, trusts in God and confesses his sins, which demonstrates that one is saved through faith without works. Calvin, too, denies human action a role in the process of redemption, and in his commentary on the parable, he specifically rejects the Catholic argument that the prodigal atoned for his sins through penance, thereby meriting his father's forgiveness.²

In Italy, too, the matter of repentance was epitomized by the possibility of redemption from the utmost depths of depravity, but here the focus was not on an invented parable but on the life-facts of the two most notable New Testament reprobates, one whose sins were of the flesh, Mary Magdalen, the other whose sins were of the word, St. Peter. Shown isolated and in a state of absolute contrition, depictions of the two saints, in tandem or separately, were among the most common and affective motifs of Counterreformation iconography. The case of St. Peter was especially piquant, however, partly because of the nature of his transgression – he broke faith with the very

1. *Georges de la Tour, St. Peter Penitent, Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, detail*



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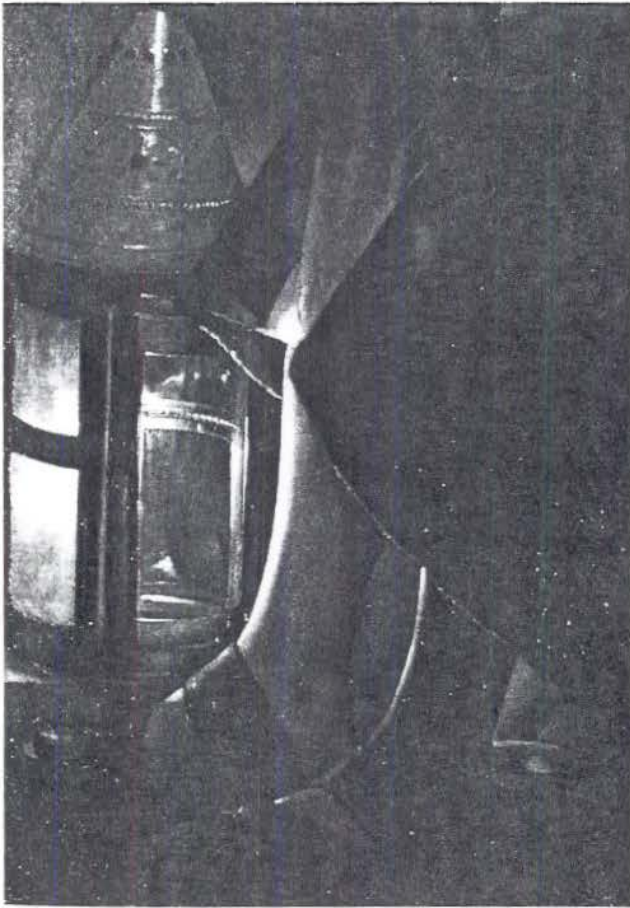
2. Georges de la Tour, *St. Peter Penitent*, Cleveland.
The Cleveland Museum of Art

Lord of faith: only Judas was more dastardly – and partly for the apparent paradox inherent in the role Christ had assigned to Peter, as his successor, the Prince of the Apostles, and the rock on which He would build His church.

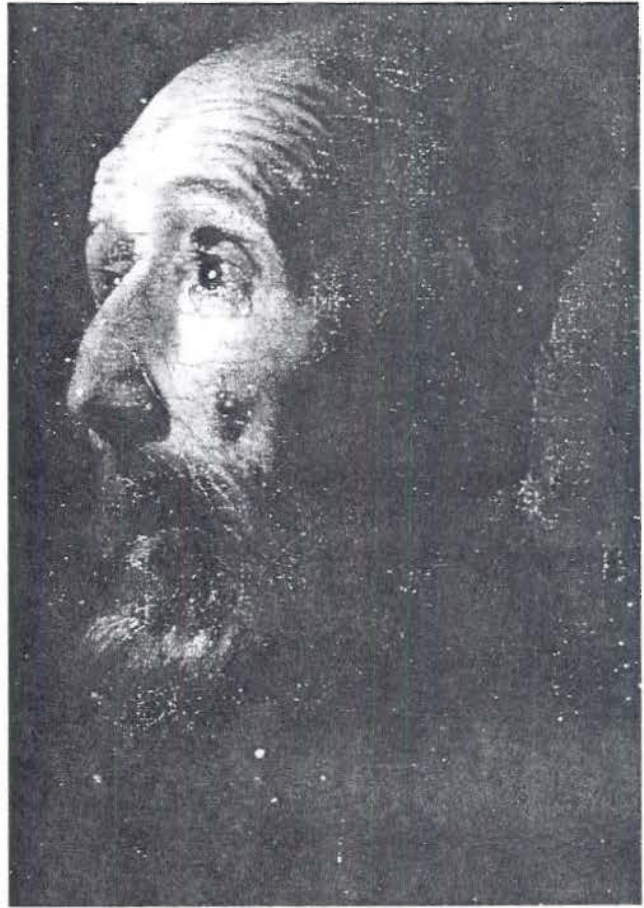
The central issue in the problem of penance lay in the concept of satisfaction, which the believer was obliged to offer to God in atonement for his sins, in the hope of receiving the grace of salvation. For the Protestants, forgiveness was the pure act of God's mercy, freely given and independent of any human volition. With respect to Peter's crime and repentance Calvin argued that while he regretted denying Christ the apostle's recuperation was not complete because he did not retract his sin before the Jews themselves; instead he went out and cried alone. Calvin comments: «It is likely that Peter went out through fear, not daring to weep where witnesses could see: again he displayed his weakness. We gather that he did not win pardon by any satisfaction, but from the kind fatherly affection of God.»¹

Calvin cited an observation of St. Ambrose that seemed specifically to contradict the principle of satisfaction in the case of St. Peter: «I read of the tears of Peter, but not of his satisfaction.»

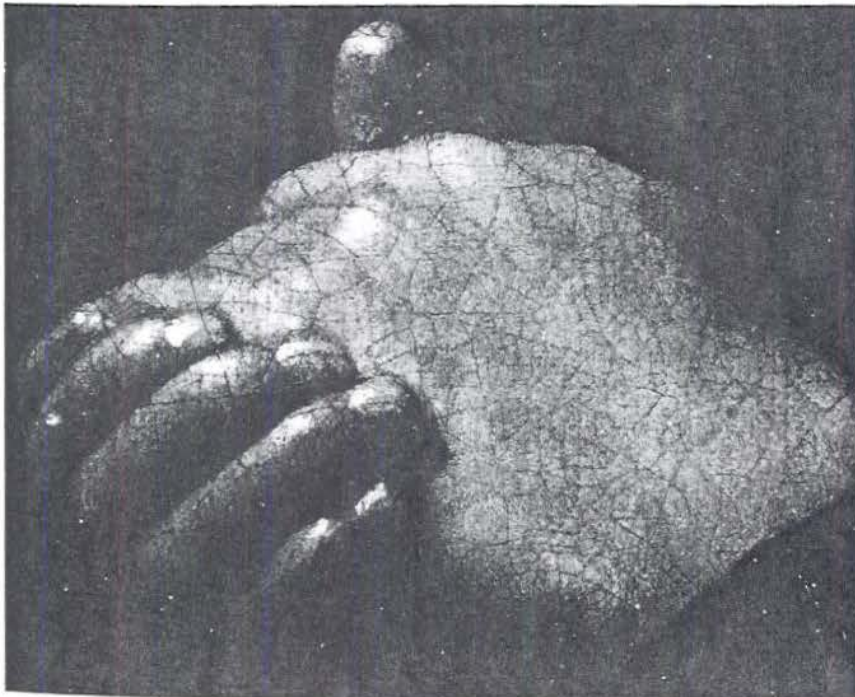
Catholic responses to these objections were of course legion, but I want to emphasize those of one writer in particular, Cornelius a Lapide, of whose work I suspect – but certainly cannot prove – La Tour may have been directly or indirectly aware. Although not widely known today, Lapide was one of the most prolific and important polemicists of the seventeenth century; according to the *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, he is still useful to those concerned with combating heresy and propagating church doctrine. Cornelis Cornelissen van den Steen, born near Liège in 1567, entered the Jesuit order in 1592, and first taught Holy Scripture and Hebrew at Louvain.⁴ In 1616 the General of the order called him to Rome, where he was professor at the Collegio Romano until his death in 1637. His fame and utility was based above all on his massive commentaries on the Bible, which assembled an enormous array of material, traditional as well as original, providing a comprehensive body of Catholic argument and interpretation on virtually every verse of both Old and New Testaments. The first volume, which probably occasioned his call to Rome, appeared in 1614, and others



[3.]



[4.]



[5.]

3-5. Georges de la Tour, *St. Peter Penitent*,
Cleveland, *The Cleveland Museum
of Art*, details



6. Georges de la Tour, *St. Peter Penitent*, Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, detail

continued in a steady stream in many editions; the first complete, posthumous edition filled eleven massive folio volumes, a reference work of the first order.

Lapide's reply to Calvin on the nature of Peter's contrition explains the theological significance attached to the subject, and hence its importance in the visual repertory of the Catholic reform. Lapide quotes another passage from Ambrose in which the great church father defends Peter because he proved his ultimate innocence inasmuch as he sincerely regretted his action and made no attempt to excuse it in any way: «I read that Peter lamented his sin, and did not excuse it, as guilty men are wont to do.» Lapide then adds the crucial point: Peter «[...] shed bitter tears in satisfaction for his sin. [...] But Peter confessed his sin with loving tears. And there is no question among the orthodox that such works are satisfactory.»⁵ Indeed, for Lapide one of the chief reasons that Peter's sin of denial served the cause of redemption was that it confirmed the validity of penance itself, in that «he, the future head of the Church, might learn to have compassion for the fallen, and set a pattern of true penitence to all sinners.»⁶ St. Peter's tears thus become the very cornerstone of the process of salvation. This physical manifestation of what might be called a psycho-emotional moral state acquires a significance of central importance theologically, and, as we shall see, visually for Georges de La Tour.

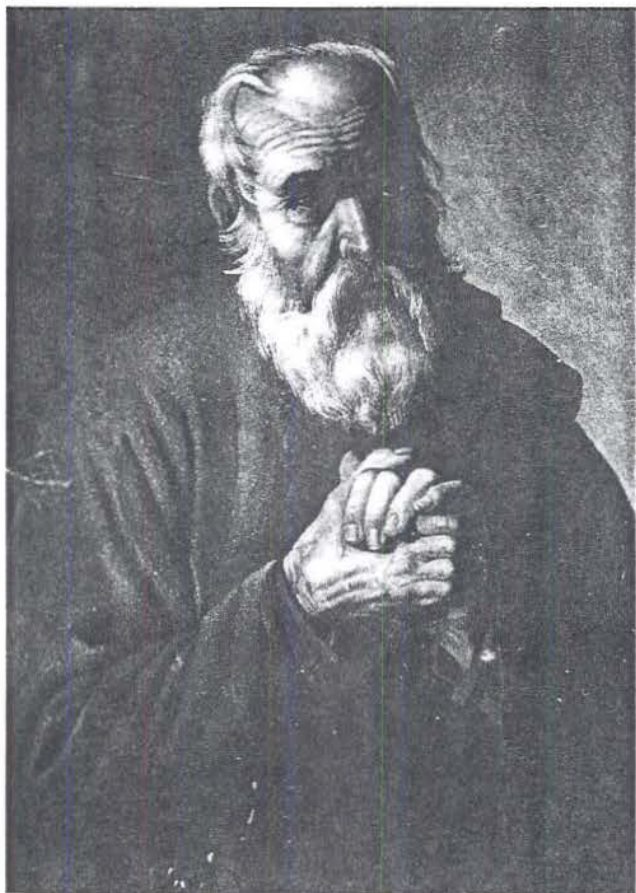
In the plethora of modern images of the penitent Peter, Georges de La Tour's version, now in the Cleveland Museum, embodies four major anomalies, features that occur, so far as I can discover, in no previous representation of the subject (figs. 1-6).⁷ Firstly, it comes as a shock to notice – and I do not think it has been observed heretofore – that there is an astonishing facial likeness between Peter and his gorgeous cock. Both have what might be called long chins, both have beaked noses, and both have a cockscomb sweeping up and to the back from the forehead. To be sure, in the description I have deliberately used words that force the analogy, but the resemblance is unmistakable (even the lantern, with its odd-shaped lid, seems to participate in the simile – and I suspect pointedly so, as we will see). Other artists had suggestively juxtaposed the two, as in a picture formerly attributed to Guido Reni in which, moreover, the crowing of the cock is clearly an onomatopoeisis for Peter's plaintive plea for redemption (fig. 7).⁸ In our case, the physiognomies are



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7. After Guido Reni, St. Peter Penitent, Florence, Pitti Palace

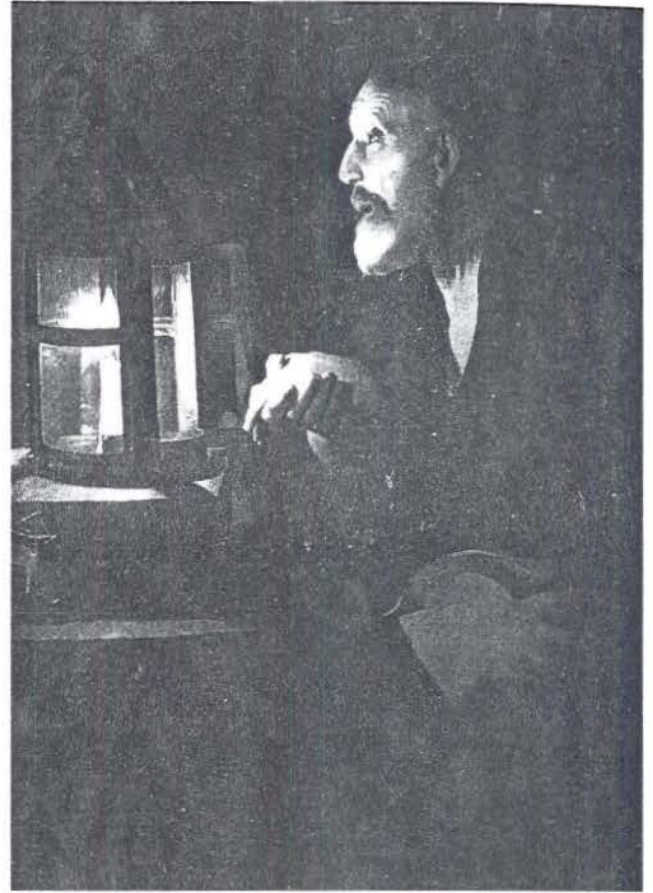
8. Bolognese School, St. Peter Penitent, Milan, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana

9. Georges de la Tour (copy), St. Peter, Albi, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec

10. Georges de la Tour, St. Peter Penitent, engraving after a lost painting (after A.J. Prenner, *Theatrum artis pictoriae in qua tabulae depictae quae in cesarea vindobonensi pinacotheca servantur leviori caelatura aeri insculptae*, 4 vols., Vienna 1728-1733, vol. 3, pl. 120)

as similar as two such different species can be, and while Peter speaks, the cock remains silent. Secondly, La Tour includes his famous, resplendent lantern, placed beside the saint's feet; following the gospel accounts, other artists had shown the event in darkness and sometimes with illumination from above alluding to cockcrow, the break of day, identifying the dawn with the divine illumination that inspired Peter's recriminations. Thirdly, the work is unique in all of La Tour's oeuvre, as has often been noted, in that it includes two sources of illumination, the lantern and the faint glow coming from the upper left, above Peter's fervent gaze.⁹ A fourth distinction of the picture is the disposition of Peter's conspicuously displayed hands. Peter does not gesticulate in open-handed appeal, or pray with interlaced fingers (fig. 8), which were the most common ways of interpreting Matthew's words, «flevit amare».¹⁰ Rather, his fingers are together and his palms pressed against one another, so that he literally wrings his hands in his utter despair. The motif must have held special significance for La Tour since he used it for Peter, and only for Peter, in every depiction of the saint associated with his name, beginning with what are generally taken to be his earliest known works, including, as I suppose, a St. Peter, now lost, commissioned by Henry II of Lorraine in 1624 (figs. 9, 10, 11).¹¹

My purpose is to consider La Tour's *Penitent St. Peter* in the light of these innovations, which I believe are interrelated, and which taken together may help to explain another anomaly of the painting, that is, the special significance it evidently held for the artist personally – for it is the only fully authentic work on which he inscribed his name and the date, 1645, seven years before his death at age 59 in an epidemic of 1652.¹² Appropriately for the ever-mysterious La Tour, absolutely nothing is known about the early history of the painting, which itself remained practically unknown until it was purchased by the Cleveland Museum in 1951. Thereafter, however, it became a veritable keystone of La Tour's art, partly of course because of the unique signature and date, but surely also because the *Penitent St. Peter* is one of the most moving and enigmatic images of the seventeenth century.



[11.]



[12.]

11. Copy after a lost original by Georges de la Tour. St. Peter Penitent, Private collection

12. Denial of St. Peter, detail of a sarcophagus, Rome, Museo Sacro Lateranense

PETER AND HIS COCK

It is important to bear in mind that representations of Peter and his cock had been a prominent part of the repertory of Christian art from its very beginnings (fig. 12), and no doubt the general reprise in the sixteenth century of the values and practices of the primitive church was an important factor in the popularity of the saint and his inveterate companion in the Catholic Reformation.¹³ But one of the most revealing indexes of the change of attitude and circumstances is that the subject changed: early on it was Peter's denial, the betrayal by his chosen follower being one of the chief indignities Christ suffered in the Passion, with which the scene was often associated; the cock was frequently shown perched on a column, in allusion to the idolatry and false religion of his captors. The Counterreformation shifts the focus of significance from betrayal to contrition, so that what had been seen as Christ's extreme degradation now became Peter's promise of redemption. The role of Peter's cock changed accordingly.

The cock had many associations relevant to St. Peter, of whom it was an attribute almost as common as the keys to heaven, with which it was often pointedly combined. The most obvious was as a stimulus to memory, so that the cock came to symbolize vigilance in the effort to guard against the temptations of sin.¹⁴ In the same vein the cock symbolized the preacher who incites the weak and neglectful to prayer; this was the bird's function when placed atop the church tower. The Ambrosian hymn that serves as the first hymn for Lauds on Sunday is devoted to the song of the cock, in terms of a verbal metaphor that is exactly the equivalent of the visual metaphor that inspires La Tour's conceit: Ambrose actually identifies the crowing of the cock with Peter's plaint of repentance, through which he, the very rock of the Church, washed away his sin. The crowing of the cock, moreover, arouses the recumbent, awakens the somnolent, scolds the recalcitrant; hope returns, health is restored to the sick, the sword of the thief is sheathed, and – absolutely appropriate to the Counterreformatory spirit – the faith of those who had lapsed returns.¹⁵ In his treatise on the creation of the world, Ambrose stressed the role of the cock in the divine plan for salvation and as the harbinger of hope to all sinners who follow Peter's example:

Jesus has regard for those who stumble and corrects the errant. Hence he paid heed to Peter and forthwith the sin departed. Peter revoked his denial and his confession was completed. That this was God's plan and not a mere accident is revealed in the words of the Lord. It is written that Jesus said to Simon: «Before the cock crows, thou wilt deny me three times». [...] Have regard, Lord Jesus, for us, also, that we may acknowledge our errors, efface our faults with tears of devotion and merit indulgence for our sins. And so we have purposely prolonged our discussion in order that the cock may come also to us as we speak. Wherefore, if any error has obtruded itself in our speech, we pray that Christ forgive our sin. Grant us the tears of Peter. Deliver us from the sinner's exultation. [...] May Peter, who wept so well for himself, weep also for us and may the benign countenance of Christ turn toward us. Let there come upon us the Passion of the Lord Jesus which daily forgives us our sins and effects the office of remission.¹⁶

We shall see that Ambrose's image of Christ «having regard» for Peter, and Peter «washing away» his sin (*diluit culpam*) were important concepts, as well. But here Ambrose's reference to the Passion may have inspired a striking image of Lapide's, which added a distinct sacramental cast to his reply to Calvin on the significance of Peter's penitential tears. Lapide cites a beautiful apothegm from one of St. Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs, understood as an allegory of the marriage of Christ and the Church: «the tears of penitents are the wine of angels». The sermon, entitled *Mystical Vineyards and the Prudence of the Flesh* comments on the verse «They made me the keeper of the vineyards (1:5)», where «they» are the angels:

This is the wine that gladdens man's heart, the wine that even the angels drink with gladness. In their thirst for men's salvation they rejoice in the conversion and repentance of sinners. Sinners' tears are wine to them; their sorrow has the flavor of grace, the relish of pardon, the delight of reconciliation, the wholesomeness of returning innocence, the gratification of a peaceful conscience.¹⁷

To my knowledge no one before had made this connection between Peter's tears and Bernard's angelic wine, and indeed, the vine branch that La Tour conspicuously juxtaposed with Peter's face seems to allude to the redemptive power of the tears he sheds – perhaps pointedly in reference to the fact that Communion was, along with Baptism, one of the only two sacraments accepted by the

Protestants.¹⁸ The tears of St. Peter, he being the arch-priest of the Church, were, as we shall see, also often equated with the waters of baptism. This equation was specifically linked to the sacrament of penance by another contemporary Jesuit writer Gregorio Mastrilli (1560-1633), who taught philosophy and was a noted preacher and rector of the Jesuit House in Rome in the early years of the seventeenth century;¹⁹ he and Cornelius a Lapide must have been closely acquainted. In his popular meditation on the Passion, first published in 1607, speaking of Peter's happy tears, happy lament, happy sighs, Mastrilli quotes two key writers on the tears of St. Peter: Leo the Great, who in his sermons on the Passion, attributed to Peter's tears the same force as baptism, and St. Ambrose, who in his treatise on the gospel of Luke, attributed to them the virtue of contrition, confession, and satisfaction together.²⁰

The ultimate key to La Tour's rendering of the subject lies precisely in this merger of the personas of cock and saint. The animal does not crow, but rather sits impassively, wide-eyed and alert, on the stone that is the emblem of Peter's name and the foundation on which Christ would build his church with the souls of the faithful as its solid masonry.²¹ The stones may also allude to an actual church in Jerusalem, that of St. Peter's *ad Gallicantum*, at the cock's crow, built in the fifth century and recorded in many early sources, on the site of a grotto where Peter was supposed to have retired to shed his tears.²² This is the guardian cock of vigilance, and he and Peter are alike because they share the same understanding of the nature and significance of penitence. His vigilance is as eternal as that of Peter and the Church itself. The entire metaphorical structure built on the relationship between Peter and his cock is based on the "nature" of the cock to crow in the morning, which was normally taken for granted. But La Tour asks the simple, awesome question, *why* does the cock crow, what is the *inner* connection here between man and beast? This psychological and ultimately moral insight must again have been derived from Cornelius a Lapide, who linked Peter's cock with a most extraordinary cock of the Old Testament, thereby incorporating Peter's redemption from sin into the grand process of salvation achieved by the fulfillment of the Old Law in the New. Commenting on Christ's prediction that Peter would deny him before cockcrow, Lapide adumbrates the

point by averring that the cockcrow was a *gift* to Peter as a *sign*, «in order that whenever he hears it he may remember Christ's prophesy, may penitently acknowledge his sin of denial and presumption, and seek for pardon.»²³ The crucial point, however, comes in the comment on Peter's final act of penitence, where the cock is identified with the conscience itself; like the cock,

our own conscience is given to us by God, which cries out against us as oft as we sin, and says, Why committest thou this great sin? Why dost thou offend God? Why dost thou hurt thyself, and expose thyself to the peril of hell? This cry wounds the conscience, and stimulates it to repentance; and whoso hears and regards it feels true compunction with S. Peter, and does away his sin by penitence. (*Laur. Justin de Christi agone, cap. IX*).

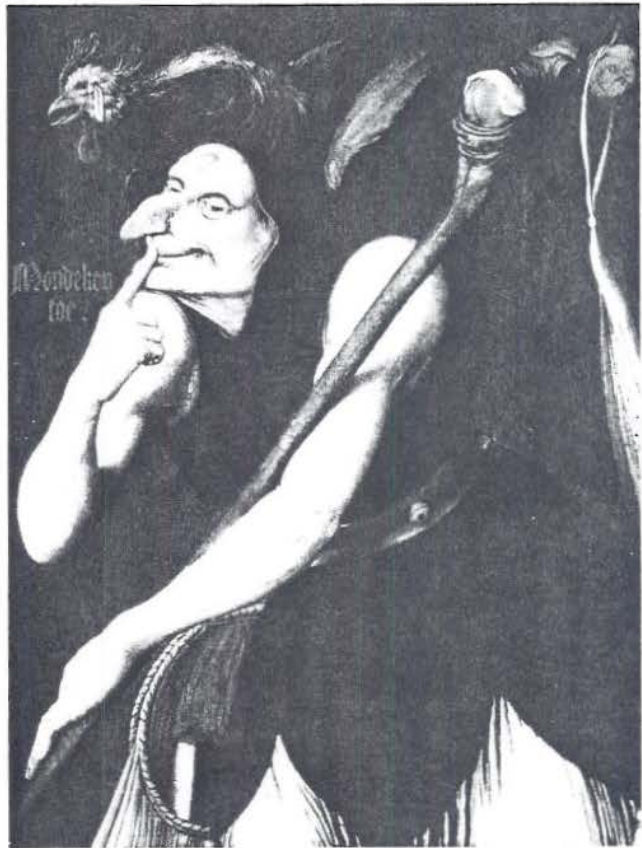
And at this point Lapide gives the significance attached to Peter's cock an entirely new spin by referring to a truly stunning passage in the Lamentations of Job that was of profound importance for the theme of penitence generally and for La Tour in particular.²⁴

To comprehend fully the significance of the reference it is well to recall that the story of Job – very much like that of St. Peter – is itself one of repentance and redemption: having suffered all the afflictions brought down upon him by Satan and yet persisted in his faith, Job is finally given to realize that he cannot pretend to comprehend the ways of God, which bring tribulation, as well as reward; and after all his suffering his final words to God are, «I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.» (42:4-6) Thereupon Job is abundantly restored. In defending his faith despite adversity, Job distinguishes between two complementary and essential requisites for realizing justification, wisdom and understanding, asking (28:20) the devastating questions «Whence cometh wisdom? And where is the place of understanding?» Job then reports God's own definition of the meaning of those terms, «And unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding.» (28:28) Finally, responding to Job out of the whirlwind God repeats the same questions in terms that Lapide and La Tour perceived as directly relevant to St. Peter: God asks, «Who hath put wisdom in the inner parts of man? Or who hath given understanding to the cock?» (38:36).²⁵

Traditionally, the cock in this passage was referred to the preacher. As far as I can discover, Lapide was the first writer to associate Peter's cock with that of Job. More important than the reference itself, however, is the context in which his reference is couched, namely, the cock as symbol of the psyche. The animal that reminds Peter of his sins and provokes his lament, is, in fact, his conscience, that is, God's gift of the moral awareness that is the *sine qua non* of salvation. Job's verses explicitly assimilated the wisdom of man with the intelligence of the cock, both cognitive endowments whose divine origin – and this is the essential point – is evident to those who understand. La Tour's physiognomical assimilation expresses this underlying theme of psychological and moral awareness – the intelligence of the cock to announce the penitential mode of redemption, and the wisdom of Peter to respond to its call.

I know of one other instance of such a clear identification of a person and a cock, in a painting attributed to Quinten Massys, where the grotesque face of a Fool is assimilated to that of a cock, with which he is closely juxtaposed (fig. 13).²⁶ In this case the meaning is made clear by the clown's gesture of silence and the inscription «Mondeken toe», or «keep your mouth shut!» The vacuity of useless chatter is graphically expressed by the flatulent exposure of the clown's scepter. Surprisingly, the motto was evidently borrowed from a classical source, namely, the Roman satirist Juvenal, whose phrase «put your finger to your lip» (*digito compesce labellum*), was translated precisely as «mondeken toe» in a later Flemish emblem book.²⁷ The context in Juvenal is that it is dangerous to tell the truth; better to keep quiet than risk reprisal for being honest (exactly what Peter feared). In Massys's ironic inversion, only the fool, admonishing silence while the cock and scepter pass wind, tells the truth. Underlying the identity of speaker and companion in Massys's and La Tour's pictures, and the reversal of their roles, is the complementarity of the messages of the two works – both are concerned with empty versus true testimony.

The primary ideological and visual basis for La Tour's provocative confrontation, as no doubt also for that of Massys, lies in a particular branch of an ancient psychophysiological tradition that sought to define a relationship between the inner psychological and moral nature of ani-

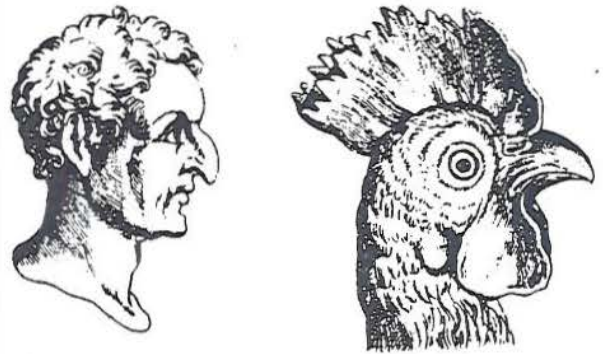


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13. Quinten Massys, *The Fool*. Worcester/MA, Worcester Art Museum

mal species, including man, and their outward appearance. One of the most important subcategories of this enterprise, physiognomics, concerned the face, and La Tour was certainly inspired by the encyclopedic and immensely popular tract on the subject by Giambattista della Porta (1535-1615), whose *De humana physiognomia* was first published in 1586 and subsequently in many editions and translations.²⁸ One section of della Porta's work deals with the analogies between animal and human physiognomies, the principle being that people will tend to have the same psychological and moral traits as their animal homologues.²⁹ In his section dealing with the nose, della Porta confronts the profiles of a man and a rooster, focusing on the male bird's libidinous nature (fig. 14). Men who look like this are not only sexually ravenous but also commit unnatural venereal acts; della Porta testifies that he knew many friends who had cock-like noses and were guilty of this sort of behavior! For La Tour this negative aspect of the rooster's reputation coincided with Peter's depravity in denying Christ. The relationship thus reinforced the quintessential significance of Peter's history, that even the most depraved can be redeemed by confessing and repenting their sins.

della Porta's cock-man, however, is a generic type, not a specific individual. There are a number of comparisons between animals and historical characters from antiquity, based partly on portraits in the collection of the author's brother, Vincenzo: Plato-dog, Socrates-stag, Galba-eagle, Vitellius-owl.³⁰ La Tour would have found a modern prototype in the portrait of one of the most famous humanists of the Renaissance, Angelo Poliziano, juxtaposed – also under the category of outstanding noses – with one of the most exotic animals of the Renaissance, the rhinoceros (fig. 15).³¹ In a recent study of this extraordinary image, Nicole Hegener recalled that Poliziano was indeed notorious for his outlandish features, described by contemporaries and recorded in various portraits of which della Porta made use. The underlying common denominator, signified in this case by the great nose, was again a matter of intelligence: della Porta associated the animal's reputation for ingenuity, astuteness, cheerfulness and facility, with Poliziano's fabled, often caustic wit.³² La Tour may have become acquainted with della Porta's work through his widely cultivated and devoutly religious friend, patron and mentor, Alphonse de Rambervillers,



14.

Libro Secondo.

54

Leitor hai qui il gran naso del Rinocerote, dal cui mezzo nasce vn corno, con la vna effigie d' Angelo Poliziano.



Naso molto grande.

Naso molto grande dimostra huomo che riprende l'opere altrui, e che non gli piacciono se non le cose sue, e di sprezzare si burla dell'altrui. Plinio. Han dedicato al naso il rideri, & il dir mal sotto finta irrisione. Quintiliano dice, che con le nari, e col naso dimostrano il fastidio, & il disprezzo, onde quelli che disprezzano le cose d'altrui si chiamano nasuti, & è già in proverbio, il naso per il giuditio. Il Rinocerote è riguarduole per vn corno, che ha sopra il naso, e più nasuto di tutti gl'animali, onde da lui solo si piglia il naso in proverbio. E animal d'ingegno, astuto, allegro, & facile. Martiale.

Et i felini le ancora

De lo Rinocerote hanno il gran naso.

Si troua ancora nel medesimo autore vn' elegantissimo epigramma, con trovn nasuto, che riprendeua l'opre sue.

Su naso, e finalmente tutto naso.

De Latino per certo non potrai

Quanto potessi mai portar prigione

Dare più mal di me di quel, che hai detto.

Dei, se ch' ha l'ur più nassì sempre

Perfè parlando del medesimo;

di dice

Et à le sorte nari dà piacere.

Horatio.

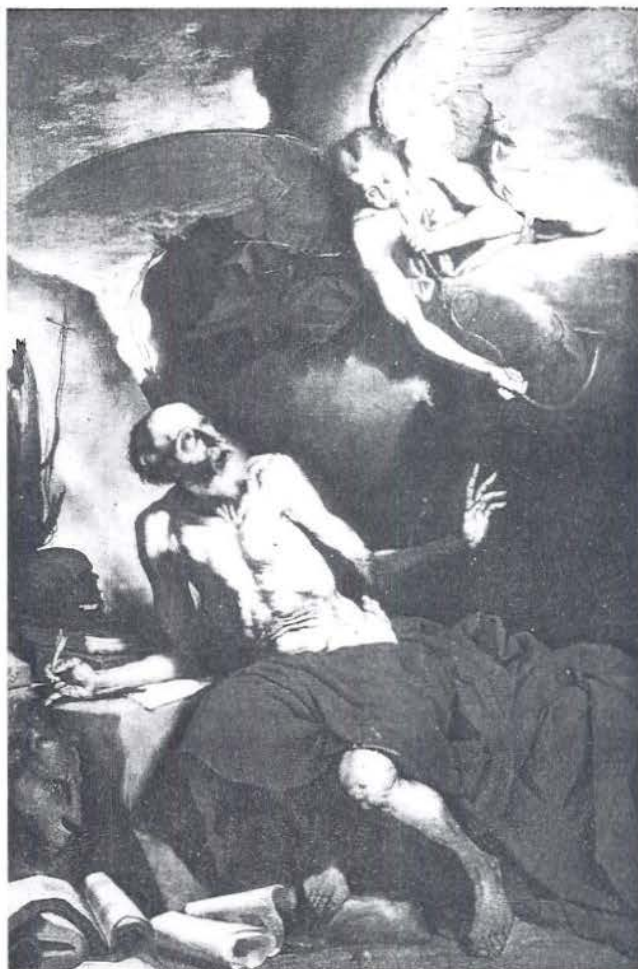
E lo sberdi nell' d'unco na'o.

Angelo Poliziano fu di naso affai sproporzionato, e però d'ingegno pungente

15.

poet, savant and public functionary of La Tour's native town of Vic-sur-Seille. Rambervillers, who was frequently in touch with the great scholar and humanist, Peiresc, corresponded as well with Vincenzo della Porta.³³

Nevertheless, the specific idea of identifying saint and animal attribute may have come to La Tour from another source, an artist who was evidently indebted to della Porta's physiognomics, as well. It is interesting to recall that an evolution analogous to that which occurred in the treatment of the Denial and Penitence of St. Peter, also took place with other saints, notably St. Jerome; the familiar Renaissance formula showing Jerome as the studious scholar in his study, often meditating upon a *memento mori*, was now commonly replaced by the penitential hermit in the desert, violently interrupted in his labor by the apparition of a trumpeting angel whose awesome sound announces the imminent arrival of the day of judgment. And indeed, La Tour's profound association, inward as well as outward, between saint and symbol, was prefigured in a portrayal of this subject by Ribera (figs. 16, 17, 18).³⁴ Here, too, the saint and his mascot look very much alike, especially in the nose, which is precisely the rubric under which della Porta had compared man and his leonine counterpart (fig. 19). The primary reference here is to one of the main traits of the male lion in the ancient bestiary tradition, its regal magnanimity, which Jerome reciprocated in kindness, as it were, when he removed an irritating thorn from a lion's paw. Thereafter the proud and ferocious animal became his humble friend and faithful servant. The lion and Jerome had another trait in common, however, that was particularly relevant in the context of the contemporary battle against heresy, namely, fortitude. For the taming of the wild beast by Christian virtue was the equivalent of Jerome's moral and intellectual fortitude in dominating the sinful temptations he suffered in the desert, and especially in renouncing – at the command of the divine judge whom he saw in dream – the pagan writers he loved and instead devoting himself thenceforth exclusively to the sacred texts. The equivalence Ribera illustrated was adumbrated by writers who referred to the saint and his feline counterpart in the same terms: Jerome was called a *prudens animal*, and the lion a *domesticum et tranquillum animal*.³⁵ The analogy between the physiognomical conceits of La Tour and Ribera may be more than fortuitous. About 1621 Ribera made an



[16.]

14. Man-Rooster (Giacomo della Porta, *Della fisionomia dell'uomo*)

15. Poliziano-Rhinoceros
(Giacomo della Porta, *Della fisionomia dell'uomo*)

16. Jusepe de Ribera, *St. Jerome Hearing the Trumpet of the Last Judgment*, New York, Piero Corsini



[17]



[19]



[18]

17-18. Jusepe de Ribera, *St. Jerome Hearing the Trumpet of the Last Judgment*, New York, Piero Corsini, details

19. Man-Lion (*Giacomo della Porta, Della fisionomia dell'uomo*)

20. Jusepe de Ribera, *St. Jerome Hearing the Trumpet of the Last Judgment*, etching

etching of his composition (fig. 20) that was endlessly reprinted and imitated, so La Tour may well have been aware of its literally animated presentation of the saint's devotion.³⁶

Finally, I think La Tour must also have been cognizant of what was the supreme paradox in the relationship between Peter and the cock, that is, the forgetfulness of both. This complex but moving irony was developed by Gregorio Mastrilli, in his chapter titled – again significantly, as we shall see – «The Glance of Christ and the Penitence of Peter» (*Lo sguardo di Cristo e penitenza di Pietro*). Mastrilli's point of departure was the immediate reason for Peter's change of heart, that is, Christ's glance, which caused him to remember: «And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter (*Et conversus Dominus respexit Petrum*). And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.»³⁷ The paradox is built on the forgetfulness of man himself, whose very name, Mastrilli points out, citing Eusebius, in Hebrew means forgetful, whence the greater wonder that he does remember God. It was to augment this wonder that God caused Peter to be reminded ever after by the most forgetful of animals (*frà tutti gli animali più smemorato*) of a sin that even the blind would have seen. The whole episode, therefore, revealed the two things that converge regularly in the conversion of sinners, the preaching of preachers in the voice of the cock, and the divine motion engendered by the glance of Christ. And Mastrilli conceives of the whole episode under the metaphor that must have been very congenial to La Tour, that of “seeing” the truth.³⁸

ILLUMINATION

In a magisterial study of emblematic and symbolic thought in the Lorraine of Georges de La Tour, Paulette Choné has suggested what I believe is a key to the understanding this extraordinary feature of the Cleveland picture. Part of her discussion concerns *La Selva de' concetti scritturali*, published in two volumes (Venice 1594, 1600) by Giulio Cesare Capaccio (1552-1634), an important though largely neglected rhetorician and emblemist of the period.³⁹ Capaccio also, perhaps not incidentally,



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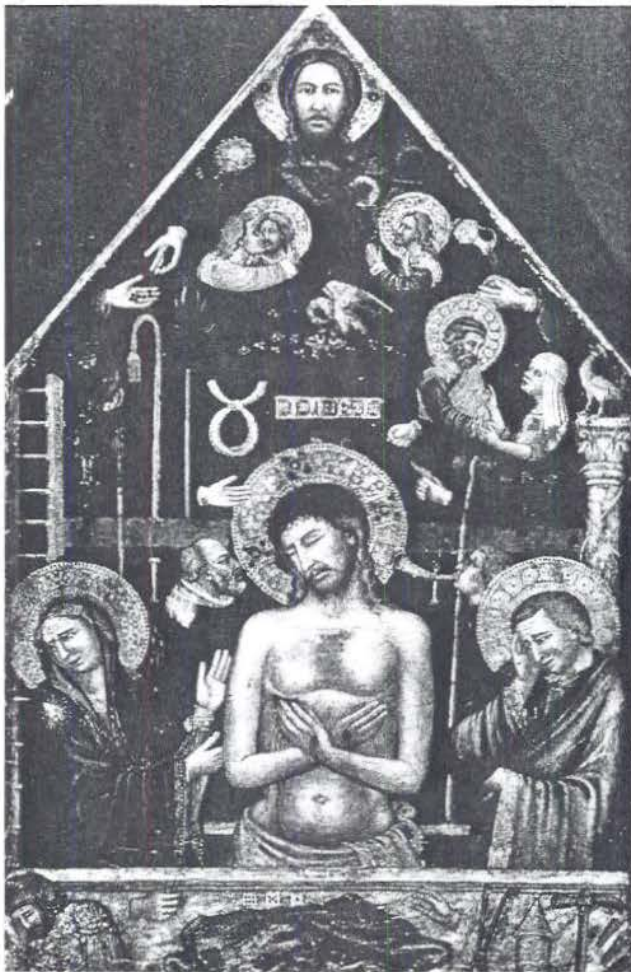


21. Allegory of Light and Dark (Athanasius Kircher, *Ars magna lucis et umbrae*, frontispiece)

22. Roberto Oderisi. *Arma Christi*. Cambridge, MA, Fogg Art Museum

23. Psalter of Yolande of Soissons, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 10435, fol. 150r

composed the arguments for the fifteen sections, called *Pianti* of Luigi Tansillo's (1510/68) epic poem *Le lagrime di San Pietro* (1585), one of the seminal Italian contributions to what became a veritable flood of lachrymose literary treatments of the theme throughout Europe, including France. This relationship may in fact be relevant for La Tour, since Tansillo was in turn the direct model for one of the great French works in the same genre, Malherbe's *Les Larmes de Saint Pierre*.⁴⁰ Of particular interest here is a chapter in Capaccio's *Selva* devoted to the taking of Christ at night, with lanterns and torches, as described by John 38:3 «Venit illuc cum lanternis et facibus.»⁴¹ In a section captioned *Notte, e luce misticamente interpretate*, Capaccio co-opted a long tradition involving writers such as Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Basil, and Francesco Patrizi, which came to play a considerable role in the debates about the nature of light that were fomented by Galileo and his discoveries. Commingling mysticism with philosophical and scientific speculation, they distinguished between two forms of light, one divine and eternal, hidden and occult – *Lux*, *Luce* – the other – *lumen*, *lume* – natural and visibly manifest. The principle is illustrated, for example, in the frontispiece (fig. 21) to one of the most famous and influential scientific treatises of the day, by the great Jesuit polymath, Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680). Kircher's monumental study of the nature of light and the science of optics, *Ars magna lucis et umbrae*, was first printed in 1646, but already approved for publication in 1644.⁴² At the upper left, light emanating from Heaven illuminates the sacred authority of Scripture held by God, while at the lower left, light from the candle of a lantern held by man illuminates a book of profane knowledge; between the divine and the artificial appears the personification of the sun, shedding its rays on the sensible world. It seems clear to me that this is exactly the distinction La Tour makes in the two forms of illumination in the *Penitent St. Peter*.⁴³ What is especially significant about Capaccio's text is that he makes this distinction between natural and divine light precisely in reference to the taking of Christ at night, when his captors came to arrest him bearing lanterns and torches. For Capaccio light is a metaphor for *scienza*, knowledge or understanding, and the lantern is the symbol of the light divine that is hidden, or occult, «Now you see two kinds of light, the first occult in the inspiration of the spirit, which



[22.]



[23.]

also signified the life of the soul, the light that is enveloped in this lantern of the body»; manifest light is that of the devil, which does not make known that immortal life.⁴⁴ And it will be recalled that the lantern was indeed traditionally a primary symbol of the passion, one of the *Arma Christi* – as was Peter's cock itself, and hence the lantern's similar physiognomy – deployed by God in his paradoxical plan to beat the devil by achieving man's salvation through the sacrifice of his only son (fig. 22).⁴⁵ For Capaccio, indeed, the lamp is the Lamb and represents 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], and the Lamb is the light thereof.»⁴⁶ (Apoc. 21:23) La Tour's lantern is thus a legacy and reminiscence of Christ's passion, and in this sense it recalls – perhaps deliberately – the Early Christian attitude toward Peter's denial. In a related passage Capaccio conjoins this two-fold illumination in a single lapidary formulation, specifically with regard to penitence, that seems almost the verbal equivalent of La Tour's portrayal. Capaccio speaks of the two lights between which Christ manifests himself to us, and which here illuminate the quintessential elements of the sinner's sacramental plea for absolution: remorse and confession. «The occult light of Christ appears in penitence, and the clear light in the revelation of sins to the priest.»⁴⁷ A fundamental element in Cornelius a Lapide's understanding of the meaning of the betrayal of Christ is the fact that it took place at night. Commenting on Matthew's account, he quotes Christ's words as reported by Luke (22:53), «This is your hour, and the power of darkness.» Lapide's interpretation makes the whole episode into a moral, indeed, theological metaphor that might be applied verbatim to La Tour's picture, even to distinguishing between the two sources of illumination. Darkness is the mantle of evil, over which no artificial light, only the light of true belief can prevail. Paraphrasing Christ's words, Lapide begins, «And ye therefore fittingly come to seize me by night, because I am the light of the world, and have openly taught the light of truth in the light of day. But ye as children of darkness shun the light and love darkness, and therefore do ye seize Me in the darkness.» Lapide then quotes the church fathers as follows, «So say



[24.]

24. Copy after a lost original by Georges de la Tour, St. Sebastian Succored by St. Irene. Fort Worth/TX, Kimbell Art Museum

Bede and Theophylact, and S. Leo (Serm. VIII. de Pass.), "The sons of darkness rushed against the true Light, and though using torches and lanterns, yet escaped not the darkness of unbelief, because they know not the Author of light," etc.» The darkness and the lantern in La Tour's picture are, like the cock itself, reminders of Peter's participation in that benighted betrayal of the savior, while the hidden illumination he sees is the dawn of a new era, that of salvation through recollection, contrition and penance.

The peculiar location of the lantern, at Peter's feet, must be understood in relation to the fundamental theme that permeates this painting, and indeed, as I believe, all of La Tour's work, that is, the notion of intelligence, in the sense of understanding, as a divine gift to man to permit his salvation. These are in fact the terms in which the apparent inspiration for the motif is couched, a passage in Psalm 118 that links the understanding of God's precepts to the contempt of evil: «Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore, I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.»⁴⁸ Capaccio cites this very passage to illustrate the revelation that God redeems the sinner by virtue of his compassion. He equates the lamp with the vision of the uncreated Word, which allowed itself to be seen with the oil of compassion to redeem us, and with the light of illumination to sanctify us as a guiding light.⁴⁹ In a late medieval psalter illustration of the passage a personification of the Word of God literally leads the way with just such a lantern as ours (fig. 23).⁵⁰ La Tour's Peter does not trod a physical path, however, but follows the distant vision he discerns with his inner eye.

La Tour's lantern has a character all its own, which must have held particular meaning for him since the same object appears in several of his paintings, all religious subjects, always depicted in the same way, with the door open to the right (fig. 24, cf. fig. 11).⁵¹ The metaphor of Christ's body as the lantern masking the light within is distinctly elicited by the cruciform pattern formed by the sections of the lantern frame, as if to suggest that the light emanates from within and passes through the open door, as Christ shed his blood through his wounds on the cross. The metaphor seems especially pointed in the Cleveland picture because here alone among all the examples in La Tour's work, as if to illustrate specifically the view of Christ's divinity hidden within his body, the source of illumination is actually hidden behind the cruciform frame.

LAVABO

Prior uses of the hand-wringing gesture are not as common as one might think, and it may not be coincidental that perhaps the most powerfully expressive precedents occur a century earlier in the *Isenheim altarpiece* of Matthias Grünewald (fig. 27), at Colmar in Alsace, the province adjoining La Tour's native Lorraine. In the first quarter of the seventeenth century there was a minor explosion of the motif among the Dutch painters of the Utrecht school, the so-called *Caravaggisti*, with whom the art of La Tour is closely linked. It is worth recalling in this connection that the origins of La Tour's Caravaggism, whether directly from a trip to Rome, or indirectly from the Dutch tenebrists, is still a matter of debate: it has yet to be demonstrated that La Tour ever left his home territory for either of those destinations.

In this closely related group of works, the clasped hands motif served principally as a sign of lamentation, as with St. Peter himself (fig. 26), or the philosopher Heraclitus despairing at the sorry state of the world (fig. 25). Most important here, however, is the appearance of the device in a different moral context, that of Pilate washing his hands, when he declares himself innocent and yet turns Christ over to the Jews for punishment (fig. 28): «[Pilate] took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.» (Matt. 27:24). Evidently, for La Tour and his contemporaries, as for us still, the motif also carried the sense of a spiritual cleansing. Surprisingly, however, I can find no evidence that any of these Dutch artists adopted the gesture for Peter before La Tour.⁵²

The important point here is that La Tour has, as seems clear, conflated the two meanings of the gesture, applying the notion of spiritual cleansing to the penitential act of the Prince of the Apostles. His reason for doing so also seems clear when one recalls the obvious fact that Peter, as Christ's vicar, was the first priest and through his own contrition earned the power to absolve the sins of others through penitence. This act of purification has its ritual counterpart above all in the offertory of the Mass, when the priest washes his hands prior to re-enacting Christ's sacrifice in the redemption of the sins of mankind; the exterior washing of hands alludes to the interior washing of the thoughts. The Lavabo, as it is called, has its scriptural

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[25.]

25. Workshop of Dirck Baburen, Heraclitus, formerly Stockholm, Langenskiöld collection

26. John Moreelse, St. Peter Penitent, engraving after a lost painting

27. Matthias Grünewald, St. John the Baptist, Isenheim Altar, Colmar, Musée d'Unterlinden

28. Hendrick Terbrugghen, Pilate Washing his Hands, Kassel, Gemäldegalerie

29. Lavabo of the Mass, with Pilate Washing his Hands (after Le Tableau de la Croix.... 1651, pl. 15)



[27.]



[26.]



[28.]



[29.]

basis in a passage in Psalm 25, which gave the ritual its name: «I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked. I will wash my hands in innocence: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.»⁵³ The first part of the text seems pertinent also to Peter's stiffly seated pose, especially in view of the fact that the papal ceremonial specifically provided that he perform the Lavabo while seated.⁵⁴

Two New Testament associations traditionally attached to the Lavabo are particularly relevant here, as they are explained in the most authoritative commentaries on the liturgy. Bishop Durandus of Mende, in his treatise on the Divine Office, and Pope Innocent III in his treatise on the Mass.⁵⁵ One is that the Lavabo ritual was indeed explicitly likened to Pilate's ritual act of washing his hands, which was cited to demonstrate his belief in Christ's innocence. Durandus gives as one of the primary explanations for the Lavabo that the priest washes his hands to assure that he will not be guilty of the body and blood of Christ, referring to Pilate's declaration of innocence in the gospel of Matthew. The contemporary vitality of this conception of ritual cleansing as a parallel between the Lavabo of the priest and Pilate's washing of his hands was manifest visually in an illustrated explication of the celebration of the mass printed in Paris in 1651, only a few years after La Tour painted his picture. At the point where the priest performs his ablution at the offertory, Pilate is shown above as if in a cloud-borne vision, washing his hands (fig. 29).⁵⁶

However, for both Durandus and Innocent III, the primary reason for the ablution of the hands before offering the sacrifice was that the priest must wash his conscience with the tears of penitence and compunction. And both authors cite as the model Christ himself, who before the one and true sacrifice on the altar of the cross, shed abundant tears of compassion before resurrecting Lazarus: «[Jesus] groaned in spirit, and was troubled [...] Jesus wept» (John 12:33, 35) This association of the Lavabo with the tears of compassion shed by Christ when he raised Lazarus from the dead was crucial, because it alluded to the salvific power of the penitential offering of the mass itself.

What seems to me a decisive confirmation of this sense of La Tour's interpretation of the penitence of St. Peter is found in a depiction of the same subject by one of the

Dutch masters with whom La Tour is closely associated, Johan Moreelse (fig. 26).⁵⁷ The painting is lost, but was recorded in a contemporary engraving. Peter is shown with the same clasped-hand gesture and I have no doubt that there is some connection with La Tour. Moreelse was a decade younger than La Tour (born after 1602) and there is little likelihood he anticipated La Tour's use of the gesture. But he died in 1634, so that the Cleveland picture certainly postdates Moreelse's penitent Peter, which makes a crucial point by showing Peter's tears streaming down his face, with the obvious implication that they are the cleansing waters in which he washes his hands. Peter's tears thus actually become part of the priestly ritual and illustrate the entire process of salvation though penitence. Moreelse clearly understood the full meaning of the gesture, which La Tour exploited for a larger purpose.

The larger purpose emerges from a final singularity of La Tour's painting that I shall consider. Although there are indeed two sources of illumination in the painting, Peter in fact seems unaware of either. Rather, he seems focused on a distant vision not visible to the eye. We are here reminded of Capaccio's formulation that the nature of God and its invisible glory cannot be seen with the bodily eye, and that Christ manifests himself to us *between* the two lights of penitence, remorse and confession. This point is of special relevance in the case of St. Peter because it reflects one of the key details of the story of Peter's penitence as recounted in the gospel of Luke, repeatedly emphasized by writers on the subject. After denying Christ three times Peter came to acknowledge his fault only, but immediately, upon Christ's turning to look at him. The point was singled out by commentators because it was a striking illustration of the thaumaturgic power of Jesus – the power to change men's souls at a word, as when he called Peter the fisherman to follow him, or at a glance when Peter faltered in his faith.⁵⁸ Commenting on the same passage in Luke Mastrilli cites one of the most splendid of all images of Christ, that of the Prophet Malachi, who announces that the savior will appear to those who understand as the rising sun of a new age of the spirit: «But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness (sol iustitiae) arise.»⁵⁹ Between the two lights of penitence described by Capaccio, La Tour's Peter sees the face of the Lord.

It might be said, in sum, that La Tour's picture is constructed of a series of interlocking concepts no one of which is sufficient, but each of which is essential to a full comprehension of his conception of the theme. In a narrow sense the picture may be regarded as a sophisticated and challenging affirmation of the sacrament of Penitence as it was understood by the Counterreformatory church. Mastrilli expresses the idea succinctly in reference to Peter: «And if all of us Christians, until now have been your imitators in sin, beseech for us the grace that we might follow you in repentance, and obtain the same pardon that you obtained with your lament.»⁶⁰ But La Tour's vision is also an expression of a profound and disturbing anxiety that is perhaps inherent in our human nature – to regret our failings, and aspire to a better way.

This essay is in the nature of a sequel and companion piece to a study of Caravaggio's newly rediscovered painting of the *Taking of Christ*, in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, to be published soon. Titled «Caravaggio Revolutionary, or the Impossibility of Seeing», a preliminary version appeared in Italian in *Quadri & Sculture*, 3/15, July/August 1995, pp. 25-29.

¹ E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux de la fin du XVI^e siècle du XVII^e siècle et du XVIII^e siècle. Etude sur l'iconographie après le concile de Trente*, Paris 1972 (1932).

² Quoted from B. Haeger, «The Prodigal Son in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Art: Depictions of the Parable and the Evolution of a Catholic Image», in: *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 16, 1986, pp. 128-138, here p. 128, to whose work on the subject of penance, including *id.*, «Cornelis Anthonisz's Representation of the Parable of the Prodigal Son: A Protestant Interpretation of the Biblical Text», in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 37, 1986, pp. 138-150 and *id.*, «Philips Galle's Engravings after Maarten van Heemskerck's *Parable of the Prodigal Son*», in: *Oud Holland*, 102, 1988, pp. 127-140, I am much indebted.

³ J. Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke*, 3 vols., Edinburgh 1972, vol. 3, p. 173.

⁴ On Lapidè and the numerous editions of his works, see A. De Backer & C. Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 12 vols., Brussels etc. 1890-1960, vol. 4, cols. 1511-1526; *Enciclopedia cattolica*, 13 vols., Vatican City 1948-1954, vol. 6, cols. 569 s.; *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols., Palatine/ILL 1967-1979, vol. 8, col. 384; *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, 19 vols., Paris 1932-1995, vol. 9, cols. 253-255. I am indebted to Father Servus Gieben O.F.M., who years ago called my attention to the riches of Lapidè's compendia and the importance of many of his observations.

⁵ C. Lapidè, *The Great Commentary of Cornelius a Lapidè*..., 8 vols., London 1876-1908, vol. 3, p. 247 (on Matthew 26:75); *id.*, *Commentaria in scripturam sacram.*, 21 vols., Paris 1886-1888, vol. 15, p. 593: «Lego quod Petrus flevit peccatum suum, non quod illud excusavit, uti solent facere rei apud homines: at non ita fecit Petrus, qui peccatum suum confessus est cum amoris lacrymis, quae proinde satisfactoria fuisse opera, apud orthodoxos non est dubium.»

⁶ Lapidè, 1876-1908 (as in n. 5), vol. 3, p. 243 (on Matthew 26:70); *id.*, 1886-1888 (as in n. 5), vol. 15, p. 591: «ut futurus ipse Pastor Ecclesiae, suo lapsu disceret lapsis compati et omnium peccatorum misereri, atque suo exemplo omnibus peccatoribus verum poenitentiae daret exemplum. Ita S. Chrysostomus hic; S. Leo, serm. 10 *De Pass.*; S. Gregorius, hom. 21, et alii.» See also G. Mastrilli, *Discorsi... sopra la passione e morte di Christo*..., Rome 1607, p. 201: «ma qui non solo l'abbandona, ma vergognandosi di conoscerlo, pare, ch'egli prima di tutti gli altri Pontefici dia la sentenza, che sia peccatore, e scelerato» and p. 218: «Permesse secondo Iddio questo peccato in Pietro, acciòche dovendo esser pastore universale della Chiesa in sua persona imparasse à compatir alli sudditi peccatori: così dice S. Gregorio: "Omnipotens Deus idcirco principem apostolorum permisit cadere, ut culpa sua disceret, qualiter aliis misereri deberet."»

⁷ A complete bibliography on the painting will be found in *Georges de La Tour*, exhibition catalogue, ed. by J.-B. Cuzin et al., Paris 1997, pp. 224 s.

⁸ E. Borea, *Pittori bolognesi del Seicento nelle gallerie di Firenze*, Florence 1975, p. 150, no. 109.

⁹ This point was suggested by H.S. Francis, «The Repentant St. Peter by Georges de la Tour», in: *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 39, 1952, pp. 174-177, p. 177, followed by P. Conisbee, *Georges de La Tour and his World*, exhibition catalogue, Washington 1996, pp. 114 s., and others.

¹⁰ The picture illustrated in fig. 8 is of particular interest because it was in the collection of Federico Borromeo: see P.M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana. Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan*, Cambridge/New York 1993, vol. 3, pp. 128 s., discusses the work in relation to Roberto Bellarmino's defense of penitence.

¹¹ St. Peter in an apostles series at Albi, known only in a copy, dated about 1614-1620 (*Georges de La Tour* [as in n. 7], p. 85); a St. Peter in the collection of Archduke Leopold-Wilhelm in 1659, known from an engraving (*ibid.*, pp. 128 s.); a St. Peter thought to copy a lost work by La Tour, in a private collection (*ibid.*, pp. 254 s.). Since all these have the gesture, one may assume that it appeared also in a St. Peter commissioned from La Tour in 1624, concerning which a document of payment has recently been published by P. Choné, «Deux Autographes de Georges de la Tour», in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 129, 1997, pp. 37-42.

¹² The *Denial of St. Peter* at Nantes is signed and dated 1650, but the picture may not be fully autograph (*Georges de La Tour* [as in n. 7], pp. 272-275).

¹³ The early history of Peter's cock in art has been traced by S.A. Callisen, «The Iconography of the Cock on the Column», in: *The Art Bulletin*, 21, 1939, pp. 160-178, and E. Dassmann, «Die Szene Christus-Petrus mit dem Hahn. Zum Verhältnis von Komposition und Interpretation auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen», in: *Pietas. Festschrift für*

Bernard Kötting, ed. by E. Dassman & K. Suno Frank, Münster 1980, pp. 509-527; see also *Lexikon der christliche Ikonographie*, 8 vols., Rome, etc., 1968/76, vol. 2, cols. 206-210; a great deal of material on Peter's denial and repentance will be found in S. Hahn, *Die Darstellung der Verleugnung und Reue Petri. Ikonographische Studie*, Diss., Munich 1977.

¹² Ripa's account of Vigilance seems particularly appropriate for La Tour because the attributes of the personification are a cock as well as a lamp: «Donna vestita di bianco, con un Gallo & con una Lucerna in mano, perche il gallo si desta nell'hore della notte, all'essercitio del suo canto, nè tralascia mai di obedire alli occulti ammaestramenti della natura, così insegna à gl'huomini la vigilanza. E la Lucerna mostra questo medesimo usandosi da noi accioche le tenebre non siano impedimento all'attioni lodevoli.» (C. Ripa, *Nuova iconologia*, Padua 1618, p. 562).

¹³ «Hoc, ipsa petra Ecclesiae / Canente, culpam diluit. / [...] / Gallus iacentes excitat / Et somnolentos increpat. / Gallus negantes arguit. / Gallo canente, spes redit. / Aegris salus refunditur. / Mucro latronis conditur. / Lapsis fides revertitur.» Cited in part by J. Sauer, *Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes und seiner Ausstattung in der Auffassung des Mittelalters*, Münster 1964, p. 144, n. 2.

¹⁴ St. Ambrose, *Hexameron*, v. 88 s., in *id.*, *Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, transl., by J.J. Savage, New York 1961, pp. 224 s., cited in part by Sauer (as in n. 15), p. 396.

¹⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, III. *On the Song of Songs II*, (Cistercian Fathers Series 7), Kalamazoo etc. 1976, p. 114.

¹⁶ R.E. Spear, *Caravaggio and His Followers*, New York 1975, p. 118, understandably aptly related the vine branch to a passage in the Gospel of John that distinguishes between the vine and its branches, as between those who do and those who do not keep faith: «I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.» (John 15:5-6) Unlike Lapidé's wine metaphor, however, the passage is not referred to Peter.

¹⁷ On Mastrilli see De Backer & Sommervogel (as in n. 4), vol. 5, cols. 713-715.

²⁰ «Felici lagrime, felice pianto, felici sospiri furono questi, tanto efficaci, e potenti ad ottenere perdono del peccato commesso, che S. Leone dà loro la medesima forza del battesimo: "foelices. Sancte apostole, lachrymae suae" (sono parole sue) "quae ad diluendam culpam negationis virtutem sacri habuere baptismatis; adfuit enim dextera Domini Iesu Christe qui labentem te priusquam deicereris, exciperet, & firmitatem standi in ipso cadendi periculo recepit?" Et anche S. Ambrogio dà loro virtù di contrizione, confessione, e soddisfazione insieme: udite di gratia / quel ch'egli dice: "Petrus doluit, & flevis, quia erravit ut homo: Non invenio, quid dixerit: invenio quod flevit: lachrymas eius lego, satis factionem non lego; sed quod detendi non potest, abluui potest: lavant lachrymae delictum, quod pudor est confiteri: & veniae fletus consulunt: & verecundae lachrymae sine horrore culpam loquuntur; lachrymae crimen sine offensione verecundiae confitentur: lachrymae veniam non postulant, sed merentur: inveni, cur tacuit Petrus, ne tam cito veniae petitio plus of-

fenderet: ante flendum est, quam petendum."» (Mastrilli [as in n. 6], pp. 227 s.) On penitence as a second baptism, see the valuable note by R. Dolle in: Leo the Great, *Sermons*, ed. by R. Dolle, 4 vols., (Sources Chrétiennes 22, 49, 74, 200), 1947-1973, vol. 3, pp. 67 s., n. 2.

²¹ The reference to this theme in the stones beside Peter was noted by A. Lacau-St Guily, *La Tour, une lumière dans la nuit*, n. p., 1972, p. 89.

²² See J. Germer-Durand, «La Maison de Caïphe et l'église Saint-Pierre à Jérusalem», in: *Revue biblique internationale*, 11, 1914, pp. 71-94, and E. Power, «The Church of St. Peter in Jerusalem. Its Relation to the House of Caïphas and Sancta Sion», in: *Biblica*, 9, 1928, pp. 167-186.

²³ Lapidé, 1876-1908 (as in n. 5), vol. 3, pp. 197 s. (on Matthew 26:34); *id.*, 1886-1888 (as in n. 5), vol. 15, p. 565: «"Petrus, ait S. Hieronymus, de ardore fidei promittebat, et Salvator quasi Deus futura praedicebat." Gallicinii signum Christus dat Petro ut cum gallum cantantem audierit, meminerit praedictionis Christi sibi in signum negationis ab eo datae, ideoque et negationis et praesumptionis suae poenitens culpam agnoscat et veniam petat, uti reipsa fecit.»

²⁴ Lapidé, 1876-1908 (as in n. 5), vol. 3, p. 246 (on Matthew 26:75); *id.*, 1886-1888 (as in n. 5), vol. 15, p. 592: «gallus cuique a Deo datus est sua conscientia, quae quoties quis peccat, ei oclamat dicitque: Cur tantum scelus committis? cur Deum offendis, te laedis et periculo Gehennae exponis? Hic clamor conscientiam remordet et stimulat ad poenitentiam, quem qui audit et exaudit, vere cum Petro compungitur, et poenitendo peccatum abolet. Ita Laurentius Justinianus lib. De Christi agone, cap. ix. Rursum gallus est concionator, qui sua voce peccatum peccatori aperit, eumque ad poenitentiam stimulat. Ita S. Gregorius, lib. xxx *Moral.*, cap. iv, explicans illud Job, cap. xxxviii: "Quis dedit gallo intelligentiam?"»

²⁵ «Quis posuit in visceribus hominis sapientiam, / vel quis dedit gallo intelligentiam?» Evidently failing to grasp the traditional symbolism of the cock as moral vigilant, and hence the complementarity of the passage, the translators of King James altered it by omitting the reference to man in the first part and rendering «gallo» in the second as heart: «Who hath put wisdom in the inner parts? Or who hath given understanding to the heart?» The Catholic tradition adhered to the Vulgate, however, and La Tour and Lapidé accepted its words for both man and beast at face value. La Tour literally so! Ripa (as in n. 14), p. 458, described and illustrated Divine Wisdom as a figure wearing a helmet with a cock as the crest; the attribute was based of Plato's location of intelligence and reason in the head, and the cock's identification with the soul and association with Pythagoras and Socrates, as well as the passage in Job: «Il Gallo per cimiero in testa il pigliaremo per l'intelligenza, & lume rationale, che risiede nel capo, secondo Platone. Che si figuri il gallo per l'intelligenza non è cosa absurda. Da Pithagora, & Socrate misticamente per il gallo è stata chiamata l'anima, nella quale sola vie è la vera intelligenza, perché il gallo ha molta intelligenza, conosce le stelle, & come animale Solare, riguarda il Cielo, & considera il corpo del Sole, & dal suo canto si comprende la quantità del giorno, & la varietà de' tempi, per la qual sapere, & intelligenza di varie scienze, & arti liberali. Oltre che Dio di sua bocca disse a Job nel cap. 28. *Quis dedit Gallo intelligentiam*, nel qual luogo da gli scrittori il gallo è interpretato per il Predicatore, & Dottore Ecclesiastico, che canta, & pubblica nella Chiesa Santa la Sapienza Divina.»

²⁶ On this picture, see in particular L. Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, Montclair/NJ 1989, pp. 146-148, 227 s.

²⁷ J. David, *Den christelijken Waerseggher*, Antwerp 1602, p. 149 (cited by Silver [as in n. 26], p. 228). Juvenal, *Satire* 1, 160 (Juvenal, *Juvenal and Persius*, ed. by G.G. Ramsay, Cambridge/London 1918, p. 16); in fact, the whole passage is singularly, if ironically, appropriate to St. Peter's denial, including Juvenal's famous reference to the Christians martyred in the arena.

²⁸ Most recently, G.B. della Porta, *Della fisionomia dell'uomo*, ed. by M. Circognani, Parma 1988.

²⁹ On this aspect of della Porta's work and the underlying tradition 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. 2, Princeton 1963, pp. 53-69, and the chapter on Animal Physiognomy in J. Baltrušaitis, *An Essay on the Legend of Forms*, Cambridge/London 1989; also J. Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions. The Origin and Influence of Charles Le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière*, New Haven/London 1994.

³⁰ Vincenzo's collection is mentioned in the caption to the Plato-dog illustration, della Porta (as in n. 28), p. 117.

³¹ della Porta's provocative confrontation has been studied in an illuminating essay by N. Hegener, «Angelus Politianus enormi fuit naso», in: *Antiquarische Gelehrsamkeit und bildende Kunst. Die Gegenwart der Antike in der Renaissance*, ed. by G. Schweikart, Cologne 1996, pp. 85-122.

³² «Naso molto grande [...] Il Rinoceronte è riguardevole per un corno, che ha sopra il naso, et è il più nasuto di tutti gli animali: onde da lui solo si piglia il naso in proverbio. È animal d'ingegno, astuto, allegro, e facile.» (della Porta [as in n. 28], p. 159). «Angelo Poliziano fu di naso assai sproportionato, epperò d'ingegno pungente et invidioso, lodando le cose sue e burlando quelle degli altri; e vituperando l'altrui, non potea patir ch'altri vituperasse le sue.» (*ibid.*, p. 160).

³³ A. Reinbold, *Correspondance Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc - Alphonse de Rambervilliers (1620-1624)*, Paris 1983, pp. 16, 83 n. 55.

³⁴ P. Corsini, *Ricerche e proposte. 1. Jusepe de Ribera*, New York 1992.

³⁵ See E.F. Rice, Jr., *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, Baltimore/London 1985, p. 41 for this and for all matters Jeromine in the Renaissance.

³⁶ J. Brown, *Jusepe de Ribera. Prints and Drawings*, Princeton 1973, pp. 67 s., no. 5.

³⁷ Luke 22:61 «Et conversus Dominus respexit Petrum. Et ricordatus est Petrus verbi Domini, sicut dixerat: "Quia priusquam gallus cantet, ter me negabis." 62. Et egressus foras flevit amare.»

³⁸ «[...] che maraviglia, che Pietro uscito fuor di se stesso ne meno di se stesso si ricordasse? si bene, se questa tempesta fusse stata contra di lui ma fu contra di Christo solo. Ah huomo oblioso, e trascurato, ben hai corrisposto al nome tuo: già che *Homo* in Ebreo, secondo Eusebio altro non vuol dire, che smemorato: e pure di quest'huomo si ricorda Iddio, cosa certo ammirato con ragione dal profeta David, quando dice, "quid est homo, quod memor es eius?" (What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Ps. 8:4) e per che causa vi pensate, che

ordinò Iddio, che dal canto d'un gallo fra tutti gli animali più smemorato, secondo i naturali, si destasse Pietro, se non per tanto più confonderlo, che animale tanto oblioso gli riducesse a memoria fallo, che li ciechi stessi havrebbero visto: "Et ricordatus est Petrus." Ecco le due cose, che ordinariamente concorrono alla conversione del peccatore, la predicatione del predicatore nella voce e del gallo, e la motione divina nello sguardo di Christo.» (Mastrilli [as in n. 6], p. 224). Mâle (as in n. 1), p. 66, n. 4, referred to Mastrilli, without further comment, as one of the contemporary writers on the penitence of Peter.

³⁹ P. Choné, *Emblèmes et pensée symbolique en Lorraine (1525-1633)*, "Comme un jardin au cœur de la chrétienté", Paris 1991, pp. 513-515, 521 s. Capaccio was noted as an emblemist by R. Klein, *Form and Meaning. Writings on the Renaissance and Modern Art*, Princeton/NJ 1981, p. 13. On Capaccio, see *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Rome 1960 ss., vol. 18, pp. 374-380.

⁴⁰ On Tansillo and the influence of his poem see *Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana*, 4 vols., Turin 1986, vol. 4, pp. 239-242; on Malherbe's version, *id.*, *Oeuvres poétiques*, ed. by R. Fromilhague & R. Lebègue, 2 vols., Paris 1968, vol. 1, pp. 173-186, vol. 2, pp. 90-97.

⁴¹ G.C. Capaccio, *Della selva dei concetti scritturali*, 2 vols., Venice 1594-1600, vol. 2, fol. 193 ss.

⁴² A. Kircher, *Ars magna lucis et umbræ*, Rome 1646. The title page of the first edition bears the date 1646, but the 1671 edition includes three imprimaturs dated December 1644. On the treatise see P. Conrilly, *Athanasius Kircher S.J. Master of a Hundred Arts*, 1602-1680, Wiesbaden/Rome 1974, pp. 72-86; on the frontispiece W. Ashworth Jr., «Divine Reflections and Profane Refractions: Images of a Scientific Impasse in Seventeenth-Century Italy», in: *Gianlorenzo Bernini. New Aspects of His Art and Thought. A Commemorative Volume*, ed. by I. Lavin, University Park/London 1985, pp. 179-208, here pp. 187 s. The same *authoritas sacra* and *profana* motifs had appeared, without the intermediate personification of the sun, in the frontispiece of the treatise by Kircher's predecessor Christoph Scheiner (1575-1650), *Rosa ursina sive sol*, Bracciano 1626-1630 (Ashworth, [as in this n.], pp. 165 s., fig. 10).

⁴³ So also Conisbee (as in n. 9), p. 114.

⁴⁴ «La scienza proposta dalla luce divina, fu giorno: la scienza di colui, che in Angelo di luce si trasforma fu notte, ove l'anima mancò di veder la luce, che gli mostrava il sentiero, *Nescierunt neque intellexerunt: in tenebris ambulantes nescientes, ponentes tenebras lucem, & lucem tenebras* [Esa. 5]; 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 a quelli. Hor vedi due qualità di lume, quel primo occulto nell'inspiratione nello spirito, che pur significava la vita dell'anima la quale quasi luce stà involta in questa Lanterna del corpo: e quel secondo, manifesto, nella scienza promessa dal diavolo, percioche quella vita immortale non fè conoscere.» (Capaccio [as in n. 40], vol. 2, fol. 197v) The Latin passage here is itself a remarkable conflation of two Old Testament texts combining elements that resonate in La Tour'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 tenebris ambulantes*.) 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).

⁴⁵ On the *Arma Christi* see R. Berliner, «Arma Christi», *Münchener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 6, 1955, pp. 35-152; interestingly, the cock and the washing hands are often closely associated (*ibid.*, figs. 11, 23, 24).

⁴⁶ Capaccio (as in n. 40), vol. 2, fol. 139v s.: «Et Lucerna eius est Agnus», sia detto questo per l'Humanità di Cristo, perche non potendo veder gli occhi corporei la natura di Dio, nè fruir quell'invisibile chiarezza, se gli rappresenta la Lucerna cioè Cristo come huomo, perche come Dio ha comune col Padre quel che siegue, «Claritas Dei illuminavit eam (et lucerna eius est Agnus).» » Choné (as in n. 38), p. 523; cf. Conisbee (as in n. 9), p. 114.

⁴⁷ Capaccio (as in n. 40), vol. 2, fol. 199r «Nella penitenza, l'occulto lume del rimorso, e l' chiaro lume di scoprire le sue vergogne al Sacerdote. [margin: Trà due lumi Cristo si manifesta à noi.]»

⁴⁸ Ps. 118: «104. A mandatis tuis intellexi: propterea odivi omnem viam iniquitatis. 105. Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum et lumen semitis meis.»

⁴⁹ Capaccio (as in n. 40), vol. 2, fol. 179v-180r: «E lucerna, per la visione del Verbo increato, così detto dal Profeta, perche si lasciò veder al mondo con l'oglio della misericordia per ricomparci, e con la luce d'illuminatione per santificarci, accioche essendo Lucerna à gli affetti nostri, «Lucerna pedibus meis Verbum tuum.» vedessimo Abramo, «A longe», e Lazzaro nel suo seno e ci facessimo scorta la luce, che illumina; e non la fiamma, che brucia. [In margin: Ps. 18.]»

⁵⁰ *Psalter of Yolande of Soissons*, fol. 150r, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 10435; K. Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, Cambridge/MA 1978, fig. 55.

⁵¹ Besides the Cleveland picture, the lantern appears in one version of *The St. Sebastian Succoured by St. Irene* (fig. 24, Georges de La Tour [as in n. 7], pp. 166-181), and the *St. Peter* in a private collection (fig. 11); but in the latter cases the candle inside is visible.

⁵² The most convenient way to trace the many version of these themes is through the index of B. Nicolson, *Caravaggism in Europe*, 3 vols., Turin 1989; a valuable subsequent contribution is that by P. Rosenberg, «Notes sur l'art lorrain au XVIIe siècle (de Callot à Watteau, de La Tour à Saint-Aubin)», in: *Jacques Callot (1592-1635)*, Actes du Colloque organisé par le service culturel du Musée du Louvre et la ville de Nancy, Paris 1993, pp. 398-422, here pp. 403-405. The earliest dated example I have found is the Heraclitus reproduced here (fig. 25), attributed to the shop of Baburen, which is inscribed 1622 (Nicolson [as in this n.], p. 56, no. 1084).

⁵³ Psalm 25 (26) «5. odivi ecclesiam malignantium / et cum impiis non sedebo, / 6. lavabo inter innocentes manus meas / et circumdabo altare tuum, Domine.» On the Lavabo see most conveniently J. A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)*, 2 vols., Westminster/MD 1966, vol. 2, pp. 76-82.

⁵⁴ «Et postea iterum sedet et, detractis sibi annulo pontificali et cyrothecis, lavat manus dicens: «Largire sensibus nostris, omnipotens Deus, ut, sicut exterius abluuntur inquinamenta manuum, sic a te mudentur interius cogitationes cordium et crescat in nobis sanctarum virtutum augmentum.» » Durandus, *Pontificale* III, XVIII, 37 (M. Andrieu, *Le Pontifical romain au moyen-âge. III. Le Pontifical de Guillaume Durand*, (Studi e Testi 88), Vatican City 1940, p. 640).

⁵⁵ I quote here both the relevant passages in full. Durandus, *Rationale* IV, XXVIII, 2-3: Cap. XXVIII De Manuum ablutione.: «[...]3. Sacerdos itaque hostiam oblaturus manus lavat, ad significandum quod lavare ac mundare debet conscientiam lacrimis penitentiae et compunctionis, iuxta illud: «Lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum, lacrimis meis stratum meum rigabo.» et ideo tunc dicit: «Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas.» id est opera. Et Ysaías: «Lavamini et mundi estote»; nam et Christus, priusquam verum et unicum sacrificium in ara crucis offerret, in resuscitatione Lazari lacrimas miseratus effudit. Evangelista testante: «Jesus.» inquit, «infremuit spiritu, turbavit semet ipsum et lacrimatus est.» Lavat etiam manus, ne reus sit corporis et sanguinis Domini, iuxta illud: «Munde sunt manus mee a sanguine iusti huius.» et ut munde sint a terreno pane, iam in populi oblatione recepto, vel a terreno desiderio.» (A. Davril & T.M. Thibodeau, *Guglielmi Duranti rationale divinarum officiorum I-IV*, Turnhout 1995, pp. 377 s.) Innocent III, *De sacro altaris mysterio*, Caput IV, De ablutione manuum antequam sacrificium offeratur: ««Amplius.» inquit, «lava me ab iniustitia meo, et a delicto meo munda me.» (Psal. L. 2). Sacerdos igitur hostiam oblaturus, debet conscientiam lavare lacrymis poenitentiae, secundum illud: «Lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum, lacrymis meis stratum meum rigabo.» (Psal. VI. 6) Nam et Christus antequam verum et unicum sacrificium in ara crucis offerret, in resurrectione Lazari, lacrymas effudit miseratus, Evangelista testante: «Jesus.» inquit, «infremuit spiritu, turbavit, semetipsum, et lacrymatus est.» (Joan. XI)» (J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*, 221 vols., Paris 1844-1902, vol. 217, cols. 831D-832A)

⁵⁶ *Le Tableau de la croix représenté dans les ceremonies de la S. messe ensemble le trésor de la devotion aux souffrances de N. S. I.C. le tout enrichi de belles figures*, Paris 1651, pl. 15.

⁵⁷ C.H. De Jonge, *Paulus Moreelse. Portret- en Genreschilder te Utrecht. 1571-1639*, Assen 1938, pp. 129 s.

⁵⁸ «This look, then, as S. Ambrose teaches, caused Peter, who had not noticed the first cock-crowing, to notice this, to call to mind his warning, and to begin to repent and weep. «Christ looked upon Peter», says S. Leo, «and then raised him up.» » (Lapide on Matt. 26:74, Lapide 1876-1908 [as in n. 5], vol. 3, p. 244) «Respectus Christi ergo quo respexit Petrum, ut docet S. Ambrosius, fuit causa, ut Petrus, qui priorem galli cantum non adverteret, hunc posteriorem adverteret, eoque praedictionis Christi recordaretur, et poenitere ac flere inciperet. Repexit ergo, et respiciendo erexit Christus Petrum, ait S. Leo.» (Lapide, 1866-1888 [as in n. 5], vol. 15, p. 592).

⁵⁹ Malachi 4:2: «Et orietur vobis timentibus nomen meum sol iustitiae.» See Mastrilli (as in n. 6), p. 120.

⁶⁰ «E se noi tutti Christiani, sin' hora siamo stati tuoi imitatori nel peccare, impetraci gratia, che seguire ti possiamo nel pentire, & ottenere il medesimo perdono, che ottenesti tu col tuo pianto.» (Mastrilli [as in n. 6], p. 228).