Visible Spirit

The Art of Gianlorenzo Bernini

Vol. I

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Bernini’s Death

A REMARKABLE picture of Bernini’s death emerges from the biographies by Filippo Baldinucci and the artist’s son, Domenico. They mention two works of art in this connection. One is Bernini’s Sangue di Cristo composition engraved by François Spierre, which can be dated to the year 1670 (Fig. 1). The Crucified Christ is shown with the Virgin, God the Father and a host of angels, suspended above a sea formed by the blood pouring from His wounds. Two texts referring to the blood of Christ are inscribed at the bottom of the print, one from Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, ‘The blood of Christ, who offered himself without spot to God, will purge our conscience,’ the other from St. Maria Madalena de’ Pazzi, ‘I offer you, eternal Father, the blood of the incarnate word; and if anything is wanting in me I offer it to you, Mary, that you may present it to the eternal Trinity.’

The second work is a bust of the Savior, the last sculpture by Bernini’s hand. He began it in his eightieth year in 1679, and willed it to his friend and patron, Queen Christina of Sweden (cf. Figs. 9–14). It was more than life-size (103 cm. high) and represented Christ with His right hand slightly raised, as if in the act of blessing. Bernini evidently attached particular importance to ‘this divine simulacrum,’ which he called his ‘favorite’ and to which he devoted ‘all the forces of his Christian piety and of art itself’; in the Savior he ‘summed up and concentrated all his art.’ Although technically weak, it demonstrated for him the triumph of ‘disegno’ over the physical depredations of old age. Both works were regarded by contemporaries as extraordinary achievements, even for Bernini, and fitting capstones to the artist’s extraordinary career.
No less impressive than these creations, however, was the manner of Bernini’s passing — not the fatal illness as such, normal for an octogenarian, but the way in which he approached his own end. His attitude toward dying, his thoughts and actions in preparation for it, which only culminated during his final weeks, led Baldinucci to remark that Bernini’s death seemed truly like his life. This may be simply a biographer’s banal protestation of his hero’s Christian piety. Yet the aptness of Baldinucci’s comments about Bernini’s life and art in other contexts suggests that he perceived something more in his subject’s demise.

The purpose of the present essay is to demonstrate that Baldinucci’s perception was indeed correct. Bernini’s death was in more than the usual sense like his life; it was, in fact, a kind of artwork, diligently prepared and carefully executed to achieve the desired effect. The Sangue di Cristo and the bust of the Savior were not simply pious works by an old man of genius and faith, but were intended to illustrate specific aspects of Bernini’s art of dying. His preparations for death and the works he made in anticipation of it may thus be understood as intimately related and mutually illuminating parts of his artistic legacy.

Since various details of Baldinucci’s and Domenico Bernini’s descriptions will be referred to subsequently they are printed here together, in translation:1

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1 The translation from F. Baldinucci, Vita del Cavaliere Gio. Lorenzo Bernini, Florence, 1682, ed. S. S. Ludovici, Milan, 1948, 132, 134–37, is taken with slight modifications from that of C. Enggass, The Life of Bernini by Filippo Baldinucci, University Park, Pa., and London, 1966, 66 f, 68–72; the translation from D. Bernini, Vita del Cav. Giovan. Lorenzo Bernino, Rome, 1713, 167, 169–77, is my own. See also S. Fraschetti, Il Bernini, Milan, 1900, 422 ff, who summarizes Bernini’s testament and an inventory of his possessions. Some further notices are in V. Martinelli, ‘Novità berniniane. 3. Le sculture per gli Altieri,’ Commentari, X, 1959, 224 ff. The Bernini family tomb slab in Santa Maria Maggiore (of later date since the arms bear a crown of nobility), and what is evidently the artist’s sword of knighthood, found in the tomb in 1931, are reproduced in C. D’Onofrio, Roma vista da Roma, Rome, 1967, Figs. 69, 135.

We may add the following: ‘Venerdì 15 di Novembre il Cavaliere Bernino fù soprafatto da morbo apopletico, e perciò fù subito comunicato, e si mandò a prendere la Benedizione dal sommo Pontefice: dicono essere nell’età di ottantatré anni’; ‘Il Cavaliere Bernino tuttavia vive, ma à giorni, ò siano hore.’ ‘Giovedì 28 di Novembre passò all’altra vita il medesimo Cavalier Bernino e fù poi esposto solennemente nella Basilica Liberiana, nella quale Monsig. r suo figlio è Canonico, essendo stato esposto con 60 torcie. Dicono ascendere il suo avere à seicento, e più mila scudi’ (Rome, Archivio di Stato, Carte Cartari Febeo, busta 87, fols. 273v, 267v f); ‘Qui è anco passato all’ altra vita di Indispos.ne di febre il sr. Cav.re Gio. Lorenzo Bernino famoso scultore, et Architetto sepolto nella Basilica di S. Maria Mag.re con superbo funerale, et ha lasciato Herede con Institutione di Primog. ra il Sig.r Paolo
Bernini was already in the eightieth year of his life. For sometime past he had been turning his most intense thoughts to attaining eternal repose rather than to increasing his earthly glory. Also, deep within his heart was the desire to offer, before closing his eyes to this life, some sign of gratitude to Her Majesty the Queen of Sweden, his most special patron. In order, therefore, to penetrate more deeply into the first concept and to prepare himself better for the second, he set to work with the greatest intensity to create in marble a half-length figure, larger than life-size of Our Savior Jesus Christ.

This is the work that he said was his favorite and it was the last given the world by his hand. He meant it as a gift for the monarch, but in this intention he was unsuccessful. The Queen’s opinion of, and esteem for, the statue was so great that, not finding herself in circumstances in which it was possible to give a comparable gift in exchange, she chose to reject it rather than fail in the slightest degree to equal the royal magnificence of her intention. Bernini, therefore, as we will relate in the proper place, had to leave it to her in his will. In this divine simulacrum he put all the forces of his Christian piety and of art itself. In it he proved the truth of his familiar axiom, that the artist with a truly strong foundation in design need fear no diminution of vitality and tenderness, or other good qualities in his technique when he reaches old age; for thanks to this sureness in design, he is able to make up fully for those defects of the spirits, which tend to petrify under the weight of years. This, he said, he had observed in other artists . . .

And while the city of Rome was preparing to acclaim him on the propitious outcome of the restoration and strengthening of the palace [the Palazzo della Cancelleria], Bernini had already begun to lose sleep, and his strength and spirits were at such a low ebb that within a brief time he was brought to the end of his days.

But before speaking of his last illness and death, which to our eyes truly seemed like his life, we should here mention that, although it may be that up until his fortieth year, the age at which he married, Cavalier Bernini had some youthful romantic entanglements without, however, creating any impediment to his studies of the arts or prejudicing in any way that which the world calls prudence, we may truthfully say that his marriage not only put an end to this way of living, but that from that hour he began to behave more like a cleric than a layman. So spiritual was his way of life that, according to what was reported to me by those who know, he might often have been worthy of the admiration of the most perfect monastics. He always kept fixed in his mind an intense awareness of death. He often had long discussions on this subject with Father Marchesi, his nephew who was an Oratorian priest at the Chiesa Nuova, known for his goodness and learning. So great and continual was the fervor with which he longed for the happiness of that last step, that for the sole intention of attaining it, he frequented for forty years continuously the devotions conducted toward this end by the fathers of the Society of Jesus in Rome. There, also, he partook of the Holy Eucharist twice a week.

He increased the alms which he had been accustomed to give from his earliest youth. He became absorbed at times in the thoughts and in the expression of the profound reverence and understanding that he always had of the efficacy of the Blood of Christ the Redeemer, in which, he was wont to say, he hoped to drown his sins. He made a drawing of this subject, which he then had engraved and printed. It shows the image of Christ Crucified, with streams of blood gushing from his hands and feet as if to form a sea, and the great Queen of Heaven who offers it to God the Father. He also had this pious concept painted on a great canvas which he wanted to have always facing his bed in life and in death.

His time then came; I do not know whether I should say expected because of his great loss of strength or because of his yearning for the eternal repose that he had so long desired. He was ill of a slow fever followed at the end by an attack of apoplexy which took his life. Throughout it all he was very patient and resigned to the Divine Will. Nor did he as a rule converse about anything but his trust in it. His words were so striking that those in attendance, among whom
Bernini's death

Cardinal Azzolino did not disdain to find himself often, marveled greatly at the concepts that divine love suggested to him. Among these the following is worthy of remembrance. He urgently implored Cardinal Azzolino to supplicate Her Majesty the Queen to make an act of love to God on his behalf. He thought, as he said, that that great lady had a special language which God understood, while God used a language with her that she alone could understand.

The thought of that final step which was always present in his life had suggested to Bernini many years before his death the idea of asking Father Marchesi to assist him at his deathbed in all that he had to recall at that time. And since he feared that in the final extremity he might not be able to use his voice, which did in fact happen, he wished to be able to communicate with Father Marchesi by certain gestures and external motions which he had worked out to express the innermost feelings of his heart. It was a marvelous thing that, although Bernini could speak only brokenly during his illness as a result of the inflammation in his head, and that later, as a consequence of the new attack, he lost almost all power of speech, Father Marchesi always understood him. He gave such suitable replies to his proposals that they sufficed to lead him with admirable calm to his end.

Bernini's last breath was drawing near when he made a sign to Mattia de' Rossi and Giovan Battista Contini, his architectural assistants. Speaking as well as he was able, he said jokingly, while pointing to a precision instrument adapted to pulling heavy weights, that he was surprised that their invention would not serve to draw the catarrh from his throat. When his confessor asked about his soul's state of calm and whether he was fearful, he replied, 'Father, I must render account to a Lord who in His goodness, does not count in half-pennies.' Later because of the apoplexy his right arm and whole right side were paralyzed and he said, 'It is good that this arm which has so wearied itself in life should rest a bit before death.'

Meanwhile, Rome wept at her great loss. Bernini's house was filled by a continual flow of men of high rank and people of every station seeking news and wishing to visit him at the end. Her Majesty the Queen of Sweden, many cardinals, and ambassadors of princes came or sent messages at least twice a day. Finally, His Holiness sent his benediction, after which, at the beginning of the
twenty-eighth day of the month of November of the year 1680, at about midnight, after fifteen days of illness, Bernini went to that other life. He was eighty-two years old less nine days.

In his will Bernini left His Holiness the Pope a large painting of Christ by his own hand. To Her Majesty the Queen of Sweden he left the beautiful marble image of the Savior, the last work by his hand, of which we have spoken; to the Most Eminent Cardinal Altieri, a marble bust-length portrait of Clement; to the Most Eminent Cardinal Azzolino, his most kind protector, a similar bust of Innocent X, his supporter. Not having anything else in marble he left Cardinal Rospigliosi a painting by his own hand. He most strictly enjoined that his beautiful statue of Truth be left in his own house. It is the only work by his chisel that remains the property of his children.

It would take too long to tell of the sorrow that such a loss brought to all Rome. I will only say that Her Majesty the Queen, whose sublime intellect knew through long experience the subtle gifts of so great a man, paid extraordinary tribute to him. It seemed to her that with Bernini's death the world had lost the only begotten child of virtue in our century. On the day of Bernini's death the Pope sent a noble gift to that Queen by means of his privy chamberlain. The Queen asked the chamberlain what was being said in Rome concerning the estate left by Bernini. When she learned that it was worth about four hundred thousand scudi, she said, 'I would be ashamed if he had served me and had left so little.'

The pomp with which the body of our artist was borne to the church of Santa Maria Maggiore where his family had their burial place, corresponded to the dignity of the deceased and the capabilities and love of his children, who ordered a most noble funeral and distributed both candles and alms on a grand scale. The talents and pens of the learned were exhausted in the composition of eulogies, sonnets, lyric poems, erudite verses in Latin, and the most ingenious vernacular poetry was written in praise of Bernini and publicly exhibited. All the Roman nobility and the ultra-montane nobility then in the city gathered together. There was, in short, a crowd so numerous that it was necessary to postpone somewhat the time for the interment of the body. Bernini was buried in a lead coffin in the previously mentioned tomb, with a record of his name and person.
Domenico Bernini

But by now near death and at the decrepit age of eighty, the Cavaliere wished to illustrate his life and bring to a close his practice of the profession he had conducted so well till then, by creating a work with which a man would be happy to end his days. This was the image of our Savior in half figure, but larger than life-size, with the right hand slightly raised in the act of blessing. In it he summarized and condensed all his art; and although the weakness of his wrist did not correspond to the boldness of the idea, yet he succeeded in proving what he used to say, that ‘an artist excellent in design should not fear any want of vivacity or tenderness on reaching the age of decrepitude, because ability in design is so effective that it alone can make up for the defect of the spirits, which languish in old age.’ He destined this work for the very meritorious Queen of Sweden who, being unable to compensate its value, chose rather to refuse it than descend from her royal beneficence. But she was constrained to accept it two years later, when the Cavaliere left it to her as a legacy . . .

Before beginning our narration it is well to turn back the discourse somewhat, and demonstrate how singular the goodness of life was in the Cavaliere Bernini, and with what union of Christian maxims he rendered notable the many beautiful gifts of his soul. He was a man of elevated spirit who always aspired to the great, not resting even at the great if he did not reach the greatest; this same nature carried him to such a sublimity of ideas in matters of devotion that, not content with the ordinary routes, he applied himself to those which are, so to speak, the shortcut to reach heaven. Whence he said that ‘in rendering account of his operations he would have to deal with a Lord who, infinite and superlative in his attributes, would not be concerned with half-pennies, as they say’; and he explained his thought by adding that ‘the goodness of God being infinite, and infinite the merit of the precious Blood of his Son, it was an offense to these attributes to doubt Forgiveness.’ To this effect he had copied for his devotion, in engraving and in paint, a marvelous design which shows Jesus Christ on the Cross with a Sea of Blood beneath, spilling torrents of it from his Most Holy Wounds; and here one sees the Most Blessed Virgin in the act of offering it to the Eternal Father, who appears above with open arms all softened by so piteous a spec-
tacle. And he said, ‘in this Sea his sins are drowned, which cannot be found by Divine justice except amongst the Blood of Jesus Christ, in the tints of which they will either have changed color or by its merits obtained mercy.’ This trust was so alive in him that he called the Most Holy Humanity of Christ ‘Sinners’ Clothing,’ whence he was the more confident not to be struck by divine retribution which, having first to penetrate the garment before wounding him, would have pardoned his sin rather than tear its innocence. He was wont for many, many years before his death often to discourse at length with learned and singular priests; he became so inflamed with these ideas and the subtlety of his thought ascended so high, they were amazed how a man who was not even a scholar could often not only penetrate the loftiest mysteries, but also propose questions and provide answers concerning them, as if he had spent his life in the Schools. Father Giovanni Paolo Oliva, General of the Company of Jesus, said that ‘discourse with the Cavaliere on spiritual matters was a professional challenge, like going to a thesis defense.’ Nor did he nurture these noble thoughts in his soul without fruit, but he continually practiced virtue with solid works. For the space of forty years he frequented every Friday the devotion of the good death in the Church of the Gesù, where he often received Holy Communion at least once a week. For the same long space of time, each day after finishing his labors he visited that Church, where the Holy Sacrament was exposed, and left copious alms for the poor. Besides giving many dowries to poor unmarried girls during the year, he always contributed one on Assumption Day, and obligated his children to six more in his will. To gain merit by avoiding gratitude he even distributed copious alms through one of his servants, with the obligation not to reveal the benefactor. Although the practice of philanthropy was, so to speak, born and raised with him, yet in the last years of his life he took it so much to heart that, not considering himself sufficiently able to find the poor, he gave charge, and funds, to many religious to pass on the aid. And because he loved secrecy in such works, we may judge that he made many more of them than we have notice of. From some notices he kept in a volume of household finances we learn that, having three months before his death placed two thousand scudi in a prayer-stool, only two hundred were later found there; he ordered his children also to use these in a pious work,
with clear indication that what remained was to make a similar exit. In a letter written from Paris he orders his son, the Monsignore, to double the amount of alms he had left instructions to give ‘because God is a Lord who will not be won over with courtesy.’ Often during the year he took his family to some hospital, where he wanted his small children to follow his example in comforting the sick, presenting them with various confections he kept ready for the purpose. It was an amazing thing for a man employed in so many important occupations devoutly to hear Mass every morning, to visit the Holy Sacrament everyday, to recite every evening on his knees the Crown and Office of the Madonna, and the seven Penitential Psalms, a custom he constantly maintained until his death. When he then saw himself approaching death he thought of and discussed nothing else than this passing; not with bitterness and horror, as is usual with the aged, but with incomparable constancy of spirit and using his memory in preparation for doing it well. To this end he had continuous conferences with Father Francesco Marchese, priest of the Oratorio of San Filippo Neri in the Chiesa Nuova at Rome, son of his sister Beatrice Bernini, a person venerable for the goodness of his life and noteworthy for his doctrine, of whom the Cavalier availed himself to assist at his death. And he said, ‘that step was difficult for everyone because everyone took it for the first time’; hence he often imagined himself to die, in order by this exercise to habituate and dispose himself to the real struggle. In this state he wanted Father Marchese to suggest to him all those acts usually proposed to the moribund, and doing them he arrived, as if in preparation, at that great point. Assuming also that, as is usual, words would fail him at the extremity of life, and he would suffer the anguish of one who cannot make himself understood, they worked out a special way in which he could be understood without speaking. With such precautions, with his soul completely reinforced, he finally reached the proof.

We have already said how debilitated and strained he was left from undertaking the restoration of the Palazzo della Cancelleria. Whence he finally fell ill with a slow fever, to which was added at the end an attack of apoplexy that took his life. Through the whole course of the illness, which lasted fifteen days, he wanted a sort of altar set up at the foot of his bed, on which he had displayed the picture of the Blood of Jesus Christ. What were the colloquies he held
now with Father Marchese, now with other religious who stood by, concerning the efficacy of the most precious Blood and the confidence he had in it, can rather be conjectured than reported. For none of those present could help bursting into tears on hearing with what firmness of sentiments he then spoke, of whom neither the burden of age and sickness, nor powerful enemies, had been able to obfuscate that clarity of intellect which always maintained itself equal and great in him to the last breath of his life. Realizing that he could no longer move his right arm because of the aforementioned attack of apoplexy, he said, 'it is only right that even before death that arm rest a little which worked so much in life.' To Cardinal Azzolino, who honored him with several visits in those days, he said one evening that 'he should implore in his name Her Majesty the Queen to do an act of love of God for him, because he believed that that great Lady had a special language with God to be well understood, while God had used with her a language which she alone was capable of understanding.' The Cardinal did his bidding, and received from the Queen the following note.

'I beg you to tell the Cavaliere Bernini for me that I promise to use all my powers to do what he desires of me, on condition that he promises to pray God for me and for you, to concede us the grace of His perfect love, so that one day we may all be together with the joy of love, and enjoy God forever. And tell him that I have already served him to the best of my ability, and that I will continue.'

Meanwhile his house was a continuous flux and reflux of the most conspicuous personages of Rome; they came or sent word, with sentiment no less distinguished from the common convention, than was distinct and particular in each of them his esteem and regret to lose so great a man. Finally speech failed him, and because he felt exceedingly pressed by the catarrh, he made a sign to the Cavaliere Mattia de Rossi and to Giovanni Battista Contini, who, together with Giulio Cartari and all his pupils stayed always by his bed, as if amazed that they could not recall a method of drawing the catarrh from his breast; and with his left hand he strained to represent to them an instrument designed to lift exceptional weights. As he had agreed with Father Marchese before taking ill on the method of making himself understood without speaking, it astonished everyone how well he made himself understood with only the movement of his
left hand and eyes — a clear sign of that great vivacity of spirits, which did not yield even though life withdrew. Two hours before passing he gave the benediction to all his children, of whom, as has been said, he left four boys and five girls. Finally, having received the blessing of the Pope, who sent it through one of his chamberlains, early on the twenty-eighth day of November of the year 1680, the eighty-second of his life, he expired. The great man died as he had lived leaving it doubtful whether his life was more admirable in deeds or his death more commendable in devotion.

In his testament he left the Pope a most beautiful picture by Giovanni Battista Gaulli representing the Savior, his last work in marble; to the Queen, the Savior itself by his hand; to Cardinal Altieri, the portrait of Clement X; to Cardinal Azzolino that of Innocent X; and to Cardinal Giacomo Rospigliosi a picture also by his hand, having nothing else at home in marble other than the Truth, which he left in perpetuity to his descendants.

Mourning for the loss of this man was universal in the city of Rome, which recognized its majesty greatly enhanced by his indefatigable labors; and as was his life so also was his death the subject of many ingenious compositions at the Academies. The following day, when the Pope sent a gift to the Queen, she asked the chamberlain, ‘What was being said concerning the legacy of the Cavaliere Bernini?’ And having received the reply, ‘About four hundred thousand scudi,’ she added, ‘I would be ashamed if he had served me and left so little.’

His body was exposed with pomp in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, with a funeral, distribution of wax, and charities to the poor; attendance was so great that the burial was postponed till the following day. He had already prepared the tomb for himself and his family in that church, and he was placed in it in a lead box, with an inscription giving his name and the day of his death.

* * *

Two major themes stand out in the biographer’s accounts, the devotions concerned with death sponsored by the Jesuits, and the ministrations of the artist’s nephew, the Oratorian priest Francesco Marchese. We shall first consider these factors in relation to Bernini’s death and the Sangue di Cristo composition, and then discuss the bust of the Savior.
1. The *Ars Moriendi* and the *Sangue di Christo*

Bernini and the Jesuit ‘Ars Moriendi’

The idea of preparing for death received the widest possible currency in the late fifteenth century through the *Ars Moriendi*. This was one of the most popular publications of the period, reprinted throughout Europe in dozens of editions, translations and adaptations.\(^3\) It was specifically an instruction manual in the ‘art’ (‘crafte’ or ‘cunnynge,’ as it was often rendered in English) of dying well, that is, the method of achieving salvation during the final hours of life. In its extended version, the only one used in Italy, the work is divided into six parts.\(^4\) The first is a commendation of death in which the reader is urged, when the time comes, to give up willingly and gladly, without any grudging or contradiction. Part 2, the real core of the work, is devoted to the wily temptations used by the devil in his ultimate struggle with God for the soul of the dying man, and the countering responses offered by *moriens*’ guardian angel. The essential character of the book, which was determined by its divulgatory purpose, lies in the relation between the text and the pictures in this and the following section. The five temptations (against Faith, to Despair, Impatience, Vainglory and Avarice) and the responses to them, are each described and illustrated in a woodcut, in which *moriens* is shown on his deathbed alternately beset by devils and rescued by angels. Part 3 is devoted to the Interrogations, a series of questions posed to the dying man which, answered rightly, will help to assure his salvation. This section is accompanied by an eleventh woodcut showing the death scene, with the soul of the deceased received by his guardian angel (Fig. 2).\(^5\) Text and illustrations thus proceed *pari passu*, and are independent of yet complementary to one another. Part 4 contains an


\(^{5}\) Reproduced from *Dell’arte del ben morire . . . Opera . . . rivista . . . e . . . corretta . . . da Tomaso Costa . . .*, Naples, 1591; the latest illustrated Italian edition I have found is *L’arte del ben morire*, Rome, 1596.
Instruction to the dying man, which is that he should take Christ’s death on the Cross as his model. Part 5 gives instructions to those present, such as not to deceive moriens with false assurances of his recovery, or to give precedence to medical over spiritual aid in their ministrations. The dying man must also have before him holy images, especially the Crucified Christ and the Virgin. Chapter 6 provides prayers to be said by a faithful friend.

It is evident that Bernini’s death was in many respects a literal enactment of the Ars Moriendi. His prodigal charities, which displayed his ultimate disdain for the things of this world; his patient, indeed willing acceptance of the inevitable; the very scene of the end conjured up by the biographers’ accounts — including the pious image by his bed and the colloquies with Father Marchese — all seem to fulfill the recommendations of the Ars Moriendi. The imagery of the Sangue di Cristo composition, the Crucifixion with the Virgin Mary and the angels, especially the guardian angel, recalls that of the early illustrations. Even the use of a special sign language to communicate without speech belongs in this context, since its purpose no doubt was to enable Bernini to respond to the crucial interrogations.

To find an echo of the Ars Moriendi in the late seventeenth century is in itself remarkable since the impetus of the original work in Italy was by then long spent, although it was never forgotten. But no less significant are the differences in Bernini’s death from that envisaged in the Ars Moriendi: style in the Art of Dying Well had changed considerably. Some of these differences were personal to Bernini, while others reflect more general developments in the Ars Moriendi tradition.

Apart from editions of the Ars Moriendi itself, a number of Italian works of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, for which it served more or less directly as the model, give a measure of its immediate influence. Such, for example, are the De modo bene moriendi written about 1480 by Pietro Barozzi, Bishop of Padua and chancellor of the university there, published in Venice in 1531, and the Dottrina del ben morire by one Pietro di

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6 Also known as ‘Anselm’s questions’ (cf. J. P. Migne, Patrologiae cursus completus, Paris, 1844 ff, Series latina, CLVIII, cols. 685 ff), the interrogations had been a standard part of the ritual of death until they were omitted in the official Ritual Romanum of 1614; but they continued to be popular (e.g., V. Auruccio, Rituario per quelli, che havendo cura d’anime . . . , Rome, 1615, 49 ff, reprinted 1619, 1624, 1625), and O’Connor, Art of Dying Well, 31 ff, esp. 35, records a number of instances of their use into the nineteenth century.

7 For what follows, see ibid., 172 ff. and Tenenti, Senso della morte, 112 ff, 330 ff.
Lucca, published at Venice in 1515. The intimate connection between text and pictures that characterized the original *Ars Moriendi* determined the very structure of its most famous emulation in Italy, the sermon preached in Florence by Savonarola on All Souls’ Day in 1496, published afterwards with the title *Predica dell’arte del ben morire.* The sermon develops around three images, illustrated as woodcuts in the published editions, which Savonarola exhorted his listeners to have painted for themselves. The first of these is a reminder of the Last Judgment, a grandiose composition representing Heaven and Hell, which the still-healthy listener was urged to keep in his room and look at frequently, while he thought of death and said to himself, ‘I might die today.’ The second picture shows the man sick in bed, with death as a skeleton knocking at his door. The third scene shows the man now on the point of death, with the skeleton seated at the foot of his bed.

A common tendency may be discerned in these treatises. Savonarola is concerned not only with death as such and the immediate preparations for it, but also with the healthy man, to whom his first image is directed. The same concern is evident in the works of Pietro Barozzi and Pietro di Lucca. Thus the Art of Dying was extended into a life-long process, and contemplation of death and preparation for it became in themselves a kind of art of living well. In the course of the sixteenth century the literature devoted to the art of dying diminished, and ultimately almost disappeared. In the early seventeenth century, however, there was a great revival of interest in the theme, which centered at Rome in the Jesuit order. Two factors were particularly significant in this revival, both of which incorporate the tendency to extend the preparations for death back from the deathbed to include the individual’s whole life.

One was the publication in 1620 of the *De arte bene moriendi* by Roberto Bellarmino, the great theologian for whose tomb in the Gesù, the mother church of the Jesuits, Bernini carved the portrait two years later.
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Bellarmino’s treatise is divided almost equally into two parts, of which only the second is devoted to the preparations for death at the time it comes near. Here he follows the Ars Morienti tradition closely, including the temptations of the Devil (where he cites Pietro Barozzi among his sources), and the ministrations of the faithful friend. Part I, on the other hand, deals with remote preparations for death, which include practice of the theological and moral virtues, and the sacraments beginning with Baptism and ending with Extreme Unction. Bellarmino devotes most of the book to these central acts of faith, and places particular emphasis on the Eucharist, ‘the greatest of the sacraments, in which is contained not only copious grace but also the very author of grace.’ In contrast to Savonarola’s exhortation to the constant contemplation of death, the keynote for Bellarmino is provided by his title to the opening chapter, ‘He who would die well, should live well.’

The second major factor in the Ars Morienti revival, a direct outgrowth of Bellarmino’s concern with the subject, was the foundation of the Confraternity of the Bona Mors at the Gesù.13 The congregation differed from earlier such organizations devoted to death in that it was not conceived primarily to carry out an act of mercy, that of burying the dead, but to institute a program of devotions and exercise through which its members might assure themselves the benefits of a good death. The essence of its spiritual program is evident from the organization’s full name, ‘Congregazione del Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo moribondo sopra la Croce e della Santissima Vergine Maria sua Madre Addolorata, detta della Buona Morte.’ The congregation was founded in 1648 by Vincenzo Caraffa, who was then praepositus generalis of the Society of Jesus, of which the principal activity was regular Friday devotions to the Crucified Christ and His wounds, to the Sorrows of the Virgin, and to the Eucharist. A great altarpiece, now lost, showing the Crucified Christ and the Mater Dolorosa was painted for the congregation and unveiled before the High Altar of the church each Friday.14 The Bona Mors was a phenomenal success, and by the end of the century branches had been established throughout Europe.

14 Piazza, Opere pie, 685 f, and Manni, Breve ragguaglio, 100 f (cited in the following note).
From Bellarmino’s treatise and the foundation of the Bona Mors a continuous tradition was established at the Gesù, in which Bernini directly participated. In 1649 the first moderator of the congregation, Giovanni Battista Manni, published a volume describing its Friday devotions, and subsequently brought out several illustrated works concerned with death.  

The confraternity’s second moderator during Bernini’s lifetime was one Giuseppe Fozi. In 1669, in connection with the canonization of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi in that year, Fozi put into print a life of the saint that had been left in manuscript by one of her early biographers, the Jesuit Virgilio Cepari. Since Bernini, as his son reports, attended the devotions of the Bona Mors for forty years, he must have participated from its very inception. In the true spirit of the revived Ars Moriendi, preparation for death became for him a life-long process. The basic imagery of his Sangue di Cristo composition was clearly inspired by the congregation’s invocation of the Crucifixion and the sorrowing Virgin, and its particular devotion to the Eucharist. Bernini himself explained that he made the work as a personal votive offering for the benefit of the world at large; this may well

15 A list of moderators is in the Archive of the Gesù: *Catalogus Moderatorum Primariae Congregationis sub invocatione D. N. G. C. in Cruce moribundi ac Beatissima Mariae Virginis ejus Genetricis Dolorosae vulgo Bonae Mortis ab ejus Fundatione anno 1648 ad annum 1911.*


*Cf.* De Backer and Sommervogel, *Bibl. de la Compagnie*, V, cols. 500, 502. Manni was later closely involved in the negotiations for the decorations of the Gesù (see n. 32 below); Pecchias, *Il Gesù*, 113 ff.


17 ‘1671. Il Sig. Cavalier Bernino dice che havendo in vita sua fatti tanti disegni per Pontefici, Rè, è Principi, uole sigillare con farne uno à gloria dell’offerta che si fà al Padre Eterno del pretiosissimo Sangue di Christo; stanto in questo pensiero gli è parso, che si possi pregare la gloriosissima Vergine, a fare lej per noi, à Padre Thèologhi, et altri spirituali. Jl pensiero gliè parso bellissimo, è molto utile per tutti; stante questo hà fatto il presente disegnio, et in sua presenza l’ha fatto intagliare per poterne dare à molti, è mandarne per Jl
have been in fulfillment of the members’ obligation to assist others to obtain a good death.

Giuseppe Fozi, in preparing the biography of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi, must certainly have become familiar with the passage, cited on the *Sangue di Cristo* engraving, in which she invokes the Holy Blood and the intercession of Christ and the Virgin; he must have noted its striking correspondence to the dedication and devotions of the Bona Mors, and he may have originally brought it to Bernini’s attention.

**Father Francesco Marchese**

The son of Bernini’s older sister, Beatrice, was born in 1623. He became a priest of the Oratorio, the order founded by St. Philip Neri with its headquarters in the building by Borromini adjoining Santa Maria in Vallicella. Father Marchese is described as very learned, a fervid and assiduous executor of the rules and obligations of the order, to which he added his own severe application to studies sacred and profane. He is best known as a zealous opponent of the Quietist leader Miguel de Molinos, whose downfall he was instrumental in bringing about during Molinos’s trial by the Inquisition in the 1680s; an important manuscript volume of the materials he gathered against Molinos still exists in the Vallicella library. Apart from four other works which he left unpublished at his death in 1697, the standard bibliography of Oratorian authors lists no fewer than twenty-one books by Marchese, which bear a strongly individual stamp and display a remarkable development. They are mainly of two kinds, biographies of saints and devotional works. While they do indeed show a formidable knowledge of sacred and profane history and literature, they are neither scholarly reconstructions of the past, nor abstract theological speculations. Of the three works Marchese published before 1670 (the significance of...
which date will emerge presently), the first was a vast compilation in three volumes of prayers to the Virgin gathered from an incredible variety of sources and so organized as to provide devotions for every day of the year;\textsuperscript{20} the second was a book of meditations on the Stigmata, and the third a life of the Spanish mystic, St. Pietro d’Alcantara.\textsuperscript{21} They are thus eminently practical and edifying works, and focus primarily on the mystical nature of piety. This was characterized by Marchese not in quietistic terms of passive contemplation, but as a process of active, passionate devotion. This gifted nephew, at once learned and intensely concerned with the welfare of the human spirit, must have provided an ideal counterpoint for Bernini’s own reflections on death and salvation — the ‘faithful friend’ of the \textit{Ars Moriendi}. Although Marchese was the man of letters, their conversations must have been truly reciprocal: witness Giovanni Paolo Oliva’s remark that talking to Bernini on spiritual matters was like discoursing with a professional.

In 1670 Father Marchese published two books which have as their central theme the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ to save the sinner who repents before he dies. The message of one is stated in its title, \textit{Unica speranza del peccatore che consiste nel sangue del N. S. Giesù Cristo}. The other book, entitled \textit{Ultimo colpo al cuore del peccatore}, is conceived as the final call to the hard of heart to accept the gift of grace offered by the Crucifixion. A third work by Marchese, published posthumously, belongs explicitly to the genre of the \textit{Ars Moriendi}; the \textit{Preparamento a ben morire} is a spiritual guide to salvation through penitence, devotion to the Eucharist, invocation of the Virgin, the saints and angels, and through prayer.\textsuperscript{22}

Many of the most striking aspects of Bernini’s death are elucidated in the writings of Father Marchese. The \textit{Unica speranza}, an octavo volume of two hundred pages, was actually written to accompany the \textit{Sangue di Cristo} print; Marchese states this in the preface, where he describes the design and

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Diario sacro dove s’insegnano varie pratiche di divotione per honorare ogni giorno la Beattissima Vergine raccolte dall’istorie de’ santi, e beati correnti in ciascun giorno dell’anno e dalle vite d’altri servi di Dio . . . . 3 vols.}, Rome, 1655–58.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Unica speranza del pecatore che consiste nel sangue del N. S. Giesù Cristo spiegata con alcune verità, con le quali s’insegna all’anima un modo facile d’applicare a se il frutto del medesimo sangue . . . . Rome, 1670; Ultimo colpo al cuore del peccatore}, Rome, 1670; \textit{Preparamento a ben morire opera postuma del Vener. Servo di Dio Francesco Marchesi preposto della Congregazione dell’Oratorio di Roma . . . .}, Rome, 1697.
urges him who desires salvation either to fix his eye upon the image, or to read the text.23 The print in turn served as the frontispiece to Marchese’s book.24 The Sangue di Cristo and the Unica speranza were thus conceived together as complementary parts, text and illustration, of a modern Ars Moriendi. It is in the light of this specifically propagatory function that the original format of Bernini’s work, a drawing intended to be engraved, may be understood.

The text of the Unica speranza helps clarify the meaning of Bernini’s image, both in itself and as part of a sequence of ideas leading to salvation. The substance of the work lies in ‘fifteen truths’ formulated by Father Marchese.25 The first three describe the unhappy condition of the sinner in
Christo sperì di far una buona morte. 14. E difficilissimo, e quasi impossibile ottenere il frutto del Sangue di Christo da chi del continuo non l’apprezza. 15. Il Sangue del Redentore infiamma il cuore del Peccatore ad abbracciare le verità conosciute.

26 I quote the entire passage: ‘Doue sono ora quelle anime timorose, e diffidenti d’ottener dal Signore il perdono delle loro colpe? Considerino, che il Sangue del Salvatore è paragonato ad vn fonte, il quale non è racchiuso, e occulto; ma à tutti è esposto; di cui ragionò in spirito il Profeta Zaccaria. In illa die erit fons patens Domui Jacob, & habitoribus Jerusalem in ablutionem peccatorum. [i.e., Zac. 13:1 In die illa erit fons patens domni David et habitantibus Jerusalem in ablutionem peccatoris et menstruatae.] Il Sangue sagratissimo del Verbo Divino è vn fonte, che si spande in abbondanza per tutta la Casa del vero Giacobbe, cioè per la Santa Chiesa: e questo principalmente serve à mondar l’anima dalle macchie di tutti gli errori. Anzi che rassembra vn gran flume, che vscito del proprio letto, corre liberamente per le vie, e giunge ad inondar le case, e da’ luoghi sotterranei ascende infìn’ alle stanze, oue dimoriamo. Tale appunto ci si rappresenta l’immenso fiume del Ságue Diuinissimo del Redentore: esce tal’hora da’ confini della sua ordinaria, e sufficiente gratia, e con modi speciali d’ impulsi interni penetra l’ interiore del cuore, dentro al quale brama entrare per lauarlo, e purificarlo da ogni macchia di colpa; e doue troua resistenza, colla forza possente della sua gratia, foranina parat ubi ipse vult [Gilbert of Holland, Serm. 43 in Cant.; Cf. Migne, Patr. lat., CLXXXIV, col. 228], si fà apertura in quel cuore à se chiuso; e indurato nell’ empietà, à fine d’ inondarlo cull’ affluenza della sua infinita misericordia.

‘Ma dissi poco: non solo il Sangue di Christo è vn fonte perenne, è vn vasto fiume; ma forma vn mare profondissimo, e senza termine; anzi forma vn mare assai più vasto & ampio dell’ Oceano: perche à questo sono prescritti i confini dall’ Autore della natura. Hic confringes tumentes fluctus tuos: ma il Sangue di Giesù Christo inonda, e ricopre tutta la faccia della terra, ne è ristretto da alcun lido e confine; imperciocche la sua immensa misericordia, che dispensa senza misura questo Sangue Diuino, non ha verun termine, ò dimensione. Quindi è, che Santa Maria Madalena de’ Pazzi hebbe à dire, che due volte il Signor Iddio haueua mandato al Mundo il diluuio: il primo fù à tempo di Noè nell’ inondazione vniuer- sale della terra, e l’ altro era stato negli anni della pienezza della gratia [Mandò (sono le sue parole) ancora in questo picciol Mundo il Verbo vmanato il diluuio; e che diluuio è questo?
The succeeding truths assert that the Blood of Christ is communicated easily through the Holy Sacraments, especially Penitence and the Eucharist. The treasure of the Blood can also be obtained with the assistance of indulgences, but neither good works nor penances actually erase sins, only the Blood itself. The twelfth truth is specifically related to Bernini’s composition, and states that the treasure of the Blood is offered and dispensed through the hands of the Virgin; it is here that the passage from Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi, which in abbreviated form provided the subtitle to the *Sangue di Cristo* engraving, is cited in full from the source, Part II, Chapter 6 of Vincenzo Puccini’s life of the saint: ‘I offer you, Eternal Father, the Blood of the humanity of your Word; I offer it to you yourself, Divine Word; I also offer it to you, Holy Spirit; and if anything is wanting in me, I offer it to you, Mary, that you may present it to the Most Holy Trinity.’ Marchese’s thirteenth truth establishes the relevance of the others to death, which is that he who lives devoted to the Blood of Christ may hope to die well.

Other aspects of Bernini’s death find a context in Father Marchese’s *Ultimo colpo*. In particular, echoes may be heard here of those aphoristic
statements of doctrine and belief which Domenico Bernini calls his father’s ‘shortcut’ to heaven. For example, in the Ultimo colpo Marchese thus expresses the notion that it is an insult to God’s magnanimity to doubt His forgiveness: ‘It would be a manifest injury to the sovereign Goodness to doubt obtaining from it the remission of our sins, while such efficient means of reaching it are offered to us.’ Marchese uses the fiscal metaphor of God as a beneficent capitalist in His dealings with the sinner, in a long passage in the same work, which concludes, ‘Who would not wish to deal with such a liberal merchant, who sells his very rich goods at so low a price?’ The idea of sins being drowned or tinted to another color in the sea of Blood also occurs in the Ultimo colpo: ‘Therefore, make therein this happy shipwreck of yourself, and of all sins, precisely in the way that a drop of water thrown into a river is immediately absorbed by it and transmuted into it. Do you not see that the benign aura of Divine goodness often lifts its amorous odes toward you from the breast of this bloody sea, to drown you in itself, and then, having become all white, to raise you up as high as the Throne of God, where it illuminates you?’

Above all, the extraordinary thought of preparing for death by practicing dying must have been a matter of special study by Bernini and his nephew. In the Preparamento a ben morire Father Marchese devotes no less than four chapters to exercises of this kind. For one of the most important of them he follows the ancient Ars Moriendi tradition which recommended contemplation of the Crucifixion and the Virgin at the time of death. Marchese urges the reader, ‘turned in his heart and with his eyes toward a Crucifix, to take great confidence in the immense value of the Blood of the Savior shed for his love, and to offer it by the hands of the Blessed Virgin

28 ‘Si farebbe adunque manifesta ingiuria alla sourana Bontà, diffidare d’ottenere da essa la rimissione delle nostre colpe, mentre ci si offeriscono mezzi tanto efficaci à conseguirla.’ ‘Chi non volesse negoziare con si liberal mercante, che à si basso prezzo vende le sue ricchissime merci?’; ‘Adunque fà iui questo felice naufragio di te stessa e di tutte le colpe, in quella guisa appunto che vna goccia d’acqua gettata in vn fiume, resta da esso incontanente assorbita, e in quello trasmutata. Non vedi, che l’aura benigna della Diuina carità solleva bene spesso verso di te dal seno di questo sanguinoso mare l’òde sue amorose, per annegarti in se, e poi diuenuta tutta candida innalzarti tanto in alto, quàto e alto il T rono di Dio, oue ti sublima?’ (Cf. Ultimo colpo, 33, 32, 29 f).

Mary, our most clement advocate, to the Divine Trinity — as was often done by Santa Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi in satisfaction of the grave debt contracted by her with eternal justice.30 It is here, one may suppose, that the Sangue di Cristo was to serve its primary purpose, as it did for Bernini himself when he subsequently had the composition painted and placed before his own deathbed.

The Genesis of the ‘Sangue di Cristo’ Composition

The essential point of the Sangue di Cristo is that Salvation is achieved through the sacrifice of Christ, which His mother offers to the Father.31 The genesis of this deceptively simple concept may best be approached through a drawing in Leipzig which perhaps represents a prior stage in Bernini’s thinking, and which in any case follows a closely related tradition (Fig. 3).32

30 ‘Rivolto nel cuore, e con gli occhi ad un Crocifisso prenda confidenza grande nel valore immenso del Sangue del Salvatore per suo amore sparso, e per le mani della Beatissima Vergine MARIA nostra clementissima Avvocata l’offerisca alla Divinissima Trinità; sicome spesso soleva fare Santa Maria Madalena de Pazzis, in sodisfazione del gravissimo debito da lei contratto con l’eterna giustizia’ (ibid., 121).


On the various painted versions of the composition, see L. Grassi, Bernini pittore, Rome, 1945, 49 f, Figs. 81–82; V. Martinelli, ‘Le pitture del Bernini,’ Commentari, I, 1950, 103; Canestro Chiovenda, ‘Ancora del Bernini.’

32 Brauer and Wittkower, Zeichnungen, 166 f, Pl. 128, regarded the Leipzig sketch as a study for the Sangue di Cristo (cf. R. Wittkower, Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque, 2nd ed., London, 1966, 257). The precedence of the Leipzig drawing is doubtful, however, and it may have been made for another purpose: it was evidently the point of departure for the dome fresco of the Gesù, executed 1672–75 by Baciccio with advice from Bernini (cf. K. Lanckorońska, Dekoracja kościoła ‘Il Gesù’ na tle rozwoju baroku w rzymie, Lwów, 1936, 19 ff, 51 f; F. Haskell, Patrons and Painters, New York, 1963, 82; R. Enggass, The Painting of Baciccio, University Park, Pa., 1964, 32 ff, 135 f).

Presuming a direct connection between the Leipzig sketch and the Sangue di Cristo, Lanckorońska was led to the conclusion that certain Baciccio drawings related to the latter, in Düsseldorf and Berlin, were studies for an alternate version of the Gesù dome. B. Canestro Chiovenda suggested, instead, that the Baciccio drawings were preparatory for the
Christ is shown seated with His back to the spectator on a bank of clouds, arms extended around a cross; the hands are opened, palms up, in a gesture of offering to the Father, who appears above with arms outstretched. The Virgin kneels facing Christ at the right, head inclined, her hands pressing her breast. Panofsky, who first published the drawing, showed that the composition refers to a late medieval devotional formula, derived from the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (Fig. 4).33 This illustrates the intercessional roles in the process of salvation of Christ, who offers His sacrifice to the judging Father, and of the Virgin, who offers her motherhood.

What requires emphasis, here is the fact that this theme was central to the ideology of death in general, and to the *Ars Moriendi* in particular. It appears, notably, in the interrogations, where *moriens* is advised, should God wish to judge him, to reply thus: ‘‘Lord, I will place the death of your son and our Lord Jesus Christ between me and your damnation to the torments; I have no wish to contend with you.’’ And if He should say that you deserve eternal death, say thus, “I place the death of the same Jesus Christ between you and my demerits, and I offer the merit of His most worthy passion for the merit I should have and, woe is me, do not yet have.” And add, “I also put the death of Our Lord Jesus Christ between me and your wrath’’34 The thought and phraseology of these passages seem to reverberate in that from Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi cited on the engraving, and in

mosaic in the dome of the vestibule of the Baptismal Chapel in Saint Peter’s, a commission Baciccio received and began but never completed (‘Cristina di Svezia, il Gaulli e il libro di appunti di Nicodemo Tessin d. y. [1687–1688],’ *Commentari*, XVII, 1966, 177); it appears that this hypothesis is substantially correct, since the composition envisaged in the drawings is reflected in the mosaic subsequently executed by Francesco Tévisani (*cf.* F. R. DiFederico, ‘Documentation for Francesco Tévisani’s Decoration for the Vestibule of the Baptismal Chapel in Saint Peter’s,’ *Storia dell’ Arte*, VI, 1970, 155 ff).


34 ‘Se Iddio ti volesse giudicare, di così, Signore, io metterò la morte del tuo figliuolo, e Signor nostro Giesu Cristo fra me, e il giudizio tuo ai tormenti: con teco non voglio contendere. E se egli dicessi, che tu hai meritato la morte eterna; dirai così; Io metto la morte dello stesso Giesu Cristo infra te, e i miel demeriti; & il merito della sua dignissima passione offrono per lo merito, che io douerei hauere, e, misero à me, non ho ancora. E soggiunga, Io pongo medesimamente la morte del nostro Signor Giesu Cristo fra me, e l’ira tua’ (*Dell’arte del ben morire*, Naples, 1591, 28).
Bernini’s idea, recorded by his son, of the humanity of Christ as the protective ‘Veste de’ Peccatori.’

In the *Ars Moriendi* itself the invocation had been illustrated paratactically, as it were, by the presence of the Crucifixion with the grieving Virgin at the deathbed (cf. Fig. 2); the full dedication of the Bona Mors confraternity also juxtaposed the Crucifixion and the Mater Dolorosa with death. The *Speculum humanae salvationis* and the *Ars Moriendi* thus represent two complementary but distinct conceptions; the one focuses upon the process of intercession through which salvation is attained, the other upon the sacrificial act which the dying man invokes.

In the *Sangue di Cristo* engraving these ideas are merged. Bernini was not the first to combine them. Indeed, striking evidence that he intended the merger is provided by the fact that a similar line of thought produced what is in some respects the nearest antecedent for his design. This occurs in a stained-glass votive window in the cloister of the Cistercian monastery at Wettingen, Switzerland, dated 1590 (Fig. 5).35 *Moriens* is shown below giving up the ghost, while the interceding Virgin, Christ Crucified, God the Father and the Dove are represented above as a cloud-borne apparition. The chief difference between this and ordinary intercessional scenes is that, as in the *Ars Moriendi*, Christ is shown on the Cross; as in the *Speculum* tradition, however, He points with one hand to the chest wound. The key to such a depiction evidently lies in the donor: since the historical Crucifixion is invoked by him, he is the subject of the scene; and since the symbolic intercession is enacted for him, he is also the object.

This is the context to which the *Sangue di Cristo* belongs, and its fundamental innovation was the superimposition of the Eucharist as the dominant theme. Though always present in the ritual of death in the form of the viaticum, we have seen that the Eucharist had been given new emphasis in Bellarmino’s *De arte bene moriendi*; special devotions to and exposition of the Sacrament had followed upon prayers to the Crucified Christ and the Mater Dolorosa in the Friday services of the Bona Mors congregation; for Father Marchese the Eucharist was the *sine qua non* of the dying man’s aspiration. In the *Sangue di Cristo* it is, literally and figuratively, the solution in which the act of sacrifice and the process of intercession are fused. The result was, in effect, a new, synoptic presentation of the scheme of salvation, and it entailed a variety of changes in the old formulations. One important inven-
tion concerned the Virgin. Kneeling beneath the Crucifixion, she no longer presses her breast, but extends her hands to receive and offer the Blood to God the Father. Shown thus, the figure is a conflation of the interceding Virgin with the personification of Ecclesia, often represented standing beneath the Crucifixion holding a chalice to collect the Blood, in allusion to the sacrificial liturgy of the Mass. From a theological point of view the conflation was wholly justifiable, since Mary intercedes as Mater Domini while as Mater Ecclesia she expresses the intermediary role of the Church. By having her kneel, and giving her a gesture of offering as well as receiving the Blood, Bernini was able to make the Virgin intercede through the Eucharist — in conformity with the pious sentiment of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi, as Father Marchese says in the preface to *Unica speranza.*

The most dramatic new feature of the design, however, was the introduction of the Sea of Blood metaphor to portray the universality of redemption. The metaphor had ancient roots: witness Father Marchese’s own citations and that from Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews which provided the main caption for the engraving. The liquidity and universality of the Eucharist had often been linked, as through the imagery of the Fountain of Life and the river of blood, to which Marchese refers.

36 On Ecclesia with the chalice, cf. C. Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst,* 2 vols., Gütersloh, 1966–68, II, 117 ff. As a floating figure the Virgin also recalls the flying angels that often receive the Blood in chalices in Crucifixion scenes. The Virgin and angels occasionally have upturned hands, but as a gesture of dismay, not in connection with the Blood.

The notion of the Virgin offering the sacrifice is related to that of her priesthood; in a Flemish engraving of the early seventeenth century she is shown kneeling, cloud-borne, before an altar, and offering the chalice to God the Father and the Holy Spirit above (G. Missaglia, *et al.,* *La madonna e l’eucaristia,* Rome, 1954, Fig. 102).

The emphasis placed in the *Sangue di Cristo* and by Father Marchese on the transmission of the offering through the Virgin’s hands, is based on St. Bernard: ‘É Sentimento assai comune de’ Santi Padri, e singolarmente di S. Bernardo non dispensarsi a’ fedeli alcuna gratia dal Signor’ Iddio, che non passi per le mani della Beatissima Vergine nostra signora’ (*Unica speranza*, 82); compare St. Bernard’s ‘. . . si quid spei in nobis est, si quid gratiae, si quid salutis, ab ea noverimus redundare, quae ascendit deliciis affluens,’ and ‘Forte enim manus tuae, aut sanguine plenae, aut infectae muneribus, quod non eas ab omni munere excussisti. Ideoque modicum istud quod offere desideras, gratissimis illis et omni acceptione dignissimis Mariae manibus offerendum tradere cura, si non vis sustinere repulsam’ (*De aquae ductu,* Migne, *Patr. lat.*, CLXXXIII, cols. 441, 448).

37 Panofsky also saw the relationship of the *Sangue di Cristo* composition to the Fons Vitae and the Christ in the Wine Press (see below); *Imago Pietatis,* 284. For the relation to the Fons Vitae, see recently M. Wadell, *Fons Pietatis. Eine ikonographische Studie,* Göteborg, 1969, 84 f.
whose visionary character anticipates Bernini is a woodcut design by Botticelli, to which Vasari gives the title *Triumph of the Faith* (Fig. 6).\(^{38}\) This depicts an actual vision described by Savonarola in one of his sermons; the Crucifixion is shown in a circular landscape signifying the world, and the Blood pours down from the Cross to form a river in which converts to the faith cleanse themselves of sin. An analogous theme is that of Christ in the Wine Press, which, in the frontispiece to a Protestant bible of 1641 is accompanied by the passage from Hebrews cited on the *Sangue di Cristo* engraving.\(^{39}\) Yet, none of these texts explicitly identifies the Eucharist as an ocean, and the idea had not to my knowledge been depicted before. As evident from the very title of Marchese's *Unica speranza*, it was the desire to convey the eschatological aspect of the Sacrament, again to relate death and salvation, that motivated the extension of the metaphor to a universal deluge.\(^{40}\)

A final innovation in the engraving is that the Crucifixion forms the central focus of the composition and is shown on a diagonal axis viewed from below, floating in mid-air. The perspective treatment has been related to the diagonally oriented crosses that had become popular in narrative scenes of the Crucifixion, probably on the basis of Northern depictions of the three crosses on Mount Calvary.\(^{41}\) The device helps to create the impression that the observer is an incidental bystander, hence specifically a witness of the event. But Bernini seems to have been influenced by other, visionary themes. The arrangement, with God the Father above, recalls depictions of the Trinity in which the Crucifixion appears aloft, often in sharp perspective. Though Bernini omits the Dove, a reference to the Trinity is implicit from the text of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi quoted on the print, in which the sinner's ultimate appeal is to the Trinity. The idea of a monumental cross suspended in foreshortening was familiar from sacramental images illustrating the Exaltation or Triumph of the Cross. An example Bernini certainly knew was the fresco by Cherubino Alberti in the Aldobrandini...

7. Cherubino Alberti.


15. Reconstruction of Bernini’s *Bust of the Savior* (drawing by Paul Suttman).


21. Louis XIV, engraving by E. Gantrel after a design by P. P. Sevin.
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.

23. Antique base and 17th-century pedestal of the *Colonna Claudius*. Madrid, Museo del Prado (photo: Mas).
chapel, dedicated to the Sacrament, in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, where
the Cross is borne by angels through a circular opening painted in the vault
(Fig. 7).42

In the case of Alberti’s fresco the foreshortening is calculated for the
spectator approaching the chapel from the front. The angle of vision in
Bernini’s engraving bears an uncanny resemblance to that from which
moriens sees the Crucifixion in the Ars Moriendi illustrations (Figs. 2, 8).43
One cannot repress the suspicion that the whole image was conceived to be
seen exactly as Bernini saw it, at the foot of his own deathbed. Whereas the
artists of the Ars Moriendi represented the death scene, Bernini isolated the
vision and made the viewer its witness.

2. The Bust of the Savior

The second work mentioned by the biographers, the bust of the Savior,
has been lost since the early eighteenth century.44 It was noted in Queen
Christina’s palace by Nicodemus Tessin, Jr. on his visit to Rome in
1687–88; when Christina died in 1689 she left it to Pope Innocent XI
Odescalchi, and thereafter it was listed in a 1713 inventory of the Palazzo

42 For this fresco, datable 1609–11, see L. Venturi, Storia dell’arte italiana, 11 vols.,
Milan, 1901–07, IX, pt. 5, Fig. 539; F. Württenberger, ‘Die manieristische Deckenmalerei in
Mittelitalien,’ Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte, IV, 1940, 112 ff. See also the examples
by Pietro da Cortona in the sacristy of the Chiesa Nuova, and by Lanfranco in the Cappella

43 The striking parallel illustrated in Fig. 8 is from David de la Vigne, Spiegel van een
salighe Doodt, with engravings by R. de Hooghe, probably published at Antwerp in 1673 (cf.
J. Landwehr, Romeyn de Hooghe as Book Illustrator, Amsterdam, 1970, 79). De Hooghe’s
imagery is also closely analogous to that of the chapel of St. Anne and the Beata Ludovica
Albertoni in San Francesco a Ripa, which Bernini designed at this same period; there the
altar painting appears as a devotional picture beside Ludovica’s deathbed.

Other scenes of visions of the Crucifixion should be compared as well; e.g., Pietro Liberi,
Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice, before 1660 (F. Zava Boccazzi, La basilica dei Santi Giovanni
e Paolo in Venezia, Padua, 1965, Fig. 113), Luca Giordano, Santa Maria del Pianto, Naples,
1660–61 (O. Ferrari and G. Scavizzi, Luca Giordano, Naples, 1966, Fig. 94).

44 What is known of its history will be found in Wittkower, Bernini, 265, and B.
Canestro Chiovenda, ‘Cristina di Svezia’ (cited in n. 32 above), 172 ff.
Odescalchi.45 Nothing more is known concerning its history.46 A ‘belle copie’ of the sculpture was commissioned by Bernini’s friend and would-be biographer Pierre Cureau de la Chambre, Abbé of Saint-Barthélemy in Paris, where it was brought soon after the artist’s death.47 There is no further record of the copy; the Church of Saint-Barthélemy was destroyed in the French Revolution.48 Until now the only dependable indication of the bust’s appearance has been a preparatory drawing by Bernini in the Corsini collection in Rome (Fig. 9). The drawing suffices to show that it differed markedly from ordinary representations of its kind: the drapery engulfs the

45 The descriptions in Tessin and the 1713 inventory are as follows: ‘Im zimber inwendig vor der andern Antechambre, stehet dass halbe grosse Christbildt von Marmer, welches Cav. Bernini im Testament Ihr Maijesteten verlassen hat; unter ist die plinthe darvon von zweijen grossen knienden vergulten Engel artig sousteniret, die eine grosse plinthe unter sich wieder haben’ (O. Sirén, Nicodemus Tessin d.y:s Studieresor, Stockholm, 1914, 184).

‘Un busto di Marmo, che rappresenta il Salvatore con una mano, e panneggiamento scolpito dal Bernini; alto palmi di passetto 4 e due terzi, il suo piedistallo è di diaspro di Sicilia, alto palmo uno et un quarto, largo di sotto due palmi et un quarto, qual busto vien sostenuto con ambi le mani da due angoli, che sono in ginocchio sopra un gran piede il tutto di legno dorato, quali assieme col zoccolo son alti palmi nove di passetto ’(Brauer and Wittkower, Zeichnungen, 179, n. 1).

Cf. also an Avviso of April 23, 1689, in which the base is said to be of porphyry (E. Rossi, ‘Roma ignorata’ Roma, XX, 1942, 215).


Wittkower suggested (Bernini, 265) that the Savior may have been taken to Spain in 1724, when a large number of Odescalchi sculptures was bought by Philip V. But it does not appear in the list of works, ancient and modern, included in the sale (Rome, Archivio Odescalchi, V.B.1, fasc. 20; cf. Brummer, ‘Two works,’ 123, n. 12); in fact, it was among the objects entailed in a fidecommisso by Livio Odescalchi (died 1713), none of which was sold (Arch. Odescalchi, XI.B.F.4, fasc. 139, ‘Mobili sottoposti dal Test.re D. Livio primo Odescalcho alle leggi di Maggiorasco . . .’, fol. 15r).

47 ‘Il n’a rien fait depuis qu’un Ouvrage de devotion dont on verra bien-tost une belle Copie à saint Barthelemy. C’est un Buste d’un Christ à my-corps avec deux mains [italics mine] donnant la benediction, par où il a fini sa vie. Il l’a laisst à la Reine Christine de Suede, qui dit fort obligeamment à sa Famille, quand on le luy presenta, que le Cavalier le luy avoit offert plusieurs fois de son vivant, mais qu’elle l’avoit toujours refusé, parce qu’elle n’avoit pas dix-mille escus pour l’en récompenser’ (‘Éloge de M. la Cavalier Bernin par M. l’Abbé de la Chambre de l’Academie Françoise,’ Journal des Savans, February 24, 1681, 61).

48 The copy was in Saint-Barthélemy in 1686, but is not mentioned in later descriptions of the church, which was pulled down in 1792 (Canestro Chiovenda, ‘Cristina di Svezia,’ 172).
body, rendering the torso indistinguishable; the head and raised arm move in opposite directions.\(^49\)

In the Chrysler Museum at Norfolk, Virginia, is a marble bust of Christ which corresponds so closely to the descriptions in the sources and the Corsini drawing that it must be either Cureau’s copy or the original (Figs. 10–14).\(^50\) In the course of studying the piece my own opinion has shifted from the former to the latter attribution. Initially the work seems perverse, not to say repellent. The proportions are curiously awkward; the massive body, long neck and tapered head lack the classical balance and harmony with which Bernini usually conceived the human body. The strained and rather withdrawn pose is a reversal of Bernini’s predilection for open and fluid movement. The surfaces of the face and drapery are generalized and abstract, compared with the tremulous warmth and intimacy and fine differentiation of textures that ordinarily distinguish his autograph works. The handling of the back, rough-hewn in the body, left unfinished at the head, shows a degree of neglect almost unprecedented in his busts — hardly evidence of the particular care he is reported to have lavished on the Savior.

These seemingly negative factors may actually speak in favor of the Norfolk sculpture, given the subject and the special circumstances under which the Savior was created. According to Baldinucci, Bernini himself described the work as ‘wanting in vivacity and tenderness and other good

\(^{49}\) I am not convinced (see Brauer and Wittkower, \textit{Zeichnungen}, 179) that the head at the right in this drawing is by a later hand; certainly it is not copied after the final work, as is shown by the differences from the Norfolk marble. An anonymous drawing at Chatsworth (Wittkower, \textit{Bernini}, 265) seems unrelated to Bernini’s \textit{Savior}.

\(^{50}\) Unpublished. I am indebted to Robert Wallace, author of \textit{The World of Bernini}, 1598–1680 (Time-Life Library of Art), New York, 1970, for bringing this work to my attention. Height 93 cm.; width 92 cm. The three last fingers of the right hand have been broken and reattached; otherwise the condition is excellent.

Mr. Chrysler has given me, in litteris, the following account of its provenance. Purchased in Paris in 1952 from the Vicomte Jacques de Canson (died 1958). De Canson, who knew of Bernini’s gift to Queen Christina, reported that the sculpture had never left Italy before entering his possession; he had received it from a pope (unnamed), to whom it had been given before his election by Baron Giorgio Franchetti (died 1922), founder of the Galleria Franchetti at the Ca d’Oro in Venice. My efforts to verify this account have been almost fruitless. De Canson’s daughter, Mme Jean Deschamps of Evry, remembers the piece vaguely, and confirms that her father was received in private audiences by Puis XI and XII. Giorgio Franchetti’s son, Baron Luigi Franchetti of Rome, has no knowledge of the sculpture but recalls that his uncle Edoardo Franchetti had contacts with De Canson concerning works of art. The Vatican secretariat of state was unable to help without more precise information.
qualities of technique,' owing to his advanced age. It was, in fact, his right, working arm that ultimately gave way. One can readily imagine that Bernini determined to husband his remaining energies, and concentrate on finishing the front. A no less important consideration than the artist's physical state is the ambiguous character of the image itself. A degree of austerity and abstraction was inherent in the Salvator Mundi theme. We shall see that Bernini deliberately referred to this traditional iconic type, in order to reinterpret it and achieve a new fusion of Christ's heroic and human qualities. Strongly affirmative, in my estimation, are passages like the subtly modelled hands and arm and the loosely curling locks of hair, laced with running drill holes, which are wholly in keeping with Bernini's late style and match his most brilliant technical effects. The very unevenness of quality is more readily understood as the work of a decrepit genius rather than a copyist, especially an able one, who would tend to transform the model uniformly according to his lights.

Original or copy, the Norfolk sculpture serves to clarify and in some respects correct the impression of the Savior given by the Corsini drawing, the differences being due either to the angle of vision in the latter or, more likely, I suspect, to a development in Bernini's ideas between the drawing and the final execution. The head is not only turned sideways, but upward as well. The right arm is not extended forward, but held close to the torso; nor is the gesture a conventional one of blessing, but the hand is raised vertically and the palm is turned slightly outward. Thus, the qualification implicit in Domenico Bernini's description of the gesture, 'alquanto sollevata, come in atto di benedire,' becomes significant. Finally, the marble makes quite plain what is barely discernible in the drawing and was observed only by the Abbé de la Chambre, namely, that Bernini in fact included both hands; the wrist and upper part of the left hand are visible under the right arm, lying against the breast.

The bust was completed by a monumental pedestal, which is described by Tessin and in the 1713 inventory (cf. Fig. 15). Under the bust was a base of Sicilian jasper 28 cm. high and 50 cm. wide at the bottom. This was in turn held in both hands by two angels who knelt on a large socle; angels and socle together, which were of gilded wood, measured 198 cm. high. Overall the work stood about 300 cm., or ten feet high. There is no proof that the pedestal was made during Bernini's lifetime, but there can be no doubt that it was his invention. The general effect must have been similar to that seen in a late drawing by Bernini for a sacrament altar, in which angels kneel on
the mensa and hold aloft by the base a monstrance containing the Eucharist (Fig. 16).  

The bust of the Savior belongs typologically to the tradition of independent, bust-length sculptured portraits and images of holy personnages that emerged in Italy around the middle of the fifteenth century. Within this context the Savior is related to a class of busts in which both arms are included; the bust appears 'complete' and has a specific histrionic content. Though common for reliefs and sculptures in niches or attached to architecture, the type is rather rare among independent busts. A few antique examples are known; it was used from the Middle Ages on for reliquaries, and was revived for ordinary busts by Verrocchio in the quattrocento. Characteristically such independent busts in the Early Renaissance were cut through horizontally at the waist or above, worked fully in the round, and displayed without a base, or on a low plinth. When in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the imperial Roman bust form was revived —
shaped at the bottom, hollowed at the back and set on a tall, narrow base — the two-armed type failed to conform. So far as I know, Bernini’s *Savior* is the first monumental marble bust since antiquity that is hollowed at the back, stands free on a pedestal, and includes both arms. It combines, in an unprecedented way for a Christian image, the living and dramatic quality of a narrative figure with the commemorative and idolous quality of a classical bust monument.

The *Savior* is equally unprecedented in the treatment of the bust form itself. The crossed arms that conceal the lower torso and the arrangement of the drapery that envelops the body make the bust seem virtually self-sufficient, that is, not arbitrarily severed. Visually speaking, it is practically impossible to say whether we are confronted by the upper half of a whole human being, or a whole being in half-human shape. Furthermore, there was an obvious reciprocity between the bust and its pedestal: the jasper base served as an abstract support for a material weight, the bust as such, the angels served as figurred supports for a metaphorical weight, the image of Christ.

In the sections that follow we shall explore the background for Bernini’s treatment of the bust and its pedestal, and seek to define the religious significance of the work.

**The Portrait Bust as Apotheosis**

The idea of a reciprocal and explicitly meaningful relationship between the bust and its support was revived toward the middle of the sixteenth century as part of a general tendency to charge the portrait with significance beyond that of simply commemorating the individual represented. The cope of Guglielmo della Porta’s *Paul III* in Naples (1546–47) is adorned

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55 A possible antecedent is Algardi’s bust of Paolo Emilio Zacchia in Florence, but its base is not original (A. Nava Cellini, ‘Per l’integrazione e lo svolgimento della ritrattistica di Alessandro Algardi,’ *Paragone*, 1964, No. 177, 23) and I suspect it was meant to be displayed without one, perhaps in a niche.

At the beginning of his career, in the portrait of Antonio Coppola in San Giovanni dei Fiorentini (1612), Bernini had revived the ancient type of bust with one arm showing and set on a base (I. Lavin, ‘Five New Youthful Sculptures by Gianlorenzo Bernini and a Revised Chronology of His Early Works,’ *Art Bulletin*, L, 1968, 223 ff).

with an elaborate cycle of allegorical and Old Testament scenes by which the Pope is ‘invested’ as the patriarchal harbinger of heaven-sent peace and wisdom; the strapwork base intended for the bust is inhabited by two reclining male nudes, a shell and a floral garland. The precise meaning of the base is not certain; presumably it alludes to the underworld and eternity. In any case the bust and base surely complement one another, although there is no overt expression of a dynamic relationship between weight and support.

This appears in the work of Leone Leoni, who used the idea to convey the imperialist program of the Hapsburg dynasty. Leoni’s bronze Charles V in the Prado (1553–55; Fig. 17) is conceived as a victor’s trophy held aloft by two allegorical figures and the imperial eagle — both devices based on ancient Roman precedents. The torso itself is part of the message; its edges

57 See the exemplary study by W. Gramberg, ‘Die Hamburger Bronzbüste Paul III. Farnese von Guglielmo della Porta,’ Festchrift für Erich Meyer zum 60. Geburtstage, Hamburg, 1959, 160–72, where it is shown that the bases of this and a simplified workshop version, also in Naples, were exchanged.

Reclining allegories of Ocean and Earth had appeared beneath the medallion portraits of the deceased on Roman sarcophagi, a type that Michelangelo had earlier adapted in the Medici Chapel (C. De Tolnay, The Medici Chapel, Princeton, 1948, 66, 166).

E. Plon, Leone Leoni sculpteur de Charles-Quint et Pompeo Leoni sculpteur de Philippe II, Paris, 1887, 289 ff; H. Keutner, Sculpture Renaissance to Rococo, London, 1969, 308, No. 50, suggests that the allegories may represent Mars and Minerva. L. O. Larsson, Adrian de Vries, Vienna, 1967, 36 ff, has recently studied Leoni’s bust in connection with the portrait of Rudolph II made by de Vries in 1603 as a pendant to a version of the Charles V in Vienna.

coincide with the actual edges of an armored corselet, hence nothing is ‘cut off.’ This treatment represents an ingenious solution to the problem that had confronted the Renaissance sculptor when the ideally shaped and supported classical bust form was revived, namely, how to allude to the whole person of the sitter, an effect achieved automatically by the arbitrary truncation of the Renaissance type.\(^5^9\) Leoni’s empty cuirass is a visual pun, which suggests that the bust not only ‘contains’ the sitter, whom the viewer inevitably imagines in toto, but is also a self-contained object, a commemorative monument in its own right.\(^6^0\)

Other devices had been introduced by Benvenuto Cellini to suggest a whole, living person. In his cuirassed Cosimo I (1545–47), Cellini, for the first time, gave an asymmetrical movement to the arms, and almost completely disguised the cut-off (Fig. 18).\(^6^1\) At the right the amputation of the arm coincides with the end of the epaulette; at the left the drapery, which appears folded under itself rather than cut, hides the truncation as it moves across to the knot at the center. Only the sheer, curving slice of the torso at the right reminds the observer that the bust is an artificial, abstract thing, rather than the upper part of a human being.


See the observations in my article cited above, n. 52.

\(^5^9\) Early precedents for the cuirass bust may be the problematic portrait of Alfonso I of Naples in Vienna (*Katalog der Sammlung für Plastik und Kunstgewerbe. II Teil*, Vienna, 1966, 9 f, No. 193; cf. *Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien. Meisterwerke*, Vienna, 1955, Pl. 68), and that of Francesco Gonzaga by Gian Cristoforo Romano in Mantua (Venturi, *Storia*, VI, Fig. 778). A conceit analogous to Leoni’s allusion to the empty corselet occurs in Francesco Segala’s portrait of Girolamo Micheli (died 1557) in the Santo in Padua, where the bust appears to rest on an armor stand (Venturi, *Storia*, X, 3, Fig. 144).

It should be emphasized that the Charles V also owes a considerable debt to the tradition of reliquary busts (as suggested by J. Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance*, London–New York, 1966, 177).

Bernini seems to take up Cellini’s thought in his portrait of Francesco I d’Este of 1650–51 (Fig. 19). Here the severed edges of the body are completely hidden by the drapery, which acquires a ‘miraculous’ dual existence—forming part of the sitter’s clothing, and enveloping the bust itself. The image may thus be read alternatively as the upper part of a whole person, or as a bust wrapped in a cloth of honor. The supporting function is also fulfilled ambiguously: understood literally, the weight is borne by the conventional, abstract base; understood figuratively, it is sustained by an unseen force that discharges upward through the drapery at the right.

In the portrait of Louis XIV (Fig. 20), made during his stay in Paris in 1665, Bernini developed these devices further, and combined them with the idea of a bust-base monument that had lain virtually dormant since Leone Leoni. The work must be imagined with the pedestal Bernini proposed for it, described in Chantelou’s diary of the artist’s visit. It was to be mounted
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on an enameled copper globe of the world, which in turn rested on a drapery of copper emblazoned with trophies and virtues; the whole was to be placed on a kind of platform. The globe was to bear the inscription ‘Picciola basa’ as a punning reference to its physical size, geographical form and supporting function (cf. Fig. 21).

In the Louis XIV, the bust, as such, is scarcely perceptible behind the screen of drapery; only at the left elbow is the viewer free to decide whether the arm is cut off or continues across the chest, in a vital contrapposto movement unprecedented in bust portraiture. Conversely, the drapery is


65 How the bust was to be mounted on the globe is clear from another passage: ‘Le cavalier durant cela était auprès du scarpelin qui travaillait au pied du buste. Il lui a demandé de quelle qualité était son marbre. Il lui a répondu: Cotto. “Il est donc, ça dit le Cavalier, de même que celui du buste”’ (M. Roland Bossard of the Musée de Versailles kindly informs me that the base is in fact made of a separate piece of the same marble as the bust). . . . Je lui ai demandé, voyant l’assiette de ce pied de buste carrée, comment elle se pourrait adapter au globe de la base. Il m’a répondu qu’on creuserait cette assiette à la proportion de la globulence’ (ibid., 166).

Concerning the platform on which the whole was to rest: ‘Le douzième, j’ai trouvé le Cavalier dessinant son buste pour y faire le piédestal, qu’il a projeté en forme de globe. Il le pose comme sur une espèce d’estrade’ (ibid., 228).


67 A likely source for the pose was the portrait attributed to Titian of Pier Luigi Farnese, now in Naples, which was in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome until 1662 (R. Pallucchini, *Tiziano*, Florence, 1969, 286, Pl. 313); cf. also the Julius Caesar of Titian’s series of the emperors in the Palazzo Ducale at Mantua (ibid., 341 f, No. 608; E. Verheyen, ‘Jacopo Strada’s Mantuan Drawings of 1567–1568,’ *Art Bulletin*, XLIX, 1967, 62–67). The composition was taken up by Bronzino for his portrait of Cosimo I (A. Emiliani, *Il Bronzino*, Busto Arsizio, 1960, Pl. 90) and, in reverse, by Giulio Romano for his portrait of Alexander the Great (E. Hartt, *Giulio Romano*, New Haven, 1958, 218, Fig. 466.; be it recalled that the armor Bernini used for the bust was said to have been designed by Giulio Romano, and given to Francis I by a Gonzaga duke; Chantelou, *Journal* 49, 151).

On Alexander see further, n. 71 below.
now scarcely perceived as clothing, but rather as a kind of magic carpet on which the image rides.\textsuperscript{68} Since the ambiguity between person and thing is now virtually complete, the base plays a new and crucial role. The edge of drapery at the lower right curls up, revealing the expanding curve of the support. Instead of a severed body on a base, as in the traditional bust, one imagines a transition between human and abstract form, as in the traditional herm — the one explicitly commemorative ancient portrait type. This implied but hidden fusion of reality and idea is the visual equivalent of the metaphorical apotheosis expressed by the superimposition of the floating bust above the global pedestal.

The globe had often served as the base for imperial portrait busts in antiquity, in reference to the monarch’s apotheosis.\textsuperscript{69} I know of only one

\textsuperscript{68} To my knowledge, the only one who seems to have remarked on this effect of the drapery, albeit negatively, was Charles Perrault: ‘... l’écharpe, à laquelle on donne tant de louages, n’est pas bien entendue. Comme elle enveloppe le bout du bras du Roi, ce ne peut être qu’une écharpe qu’on a mise sur le buste du Roi, et non pas l’écharpe qui étoit sur le corps du Roi quand on a fait son buste, parce que cette écharpe alors n’environnoit pas son bras de la manière qu’elle l’environne’ (P. Bonnefon, ed., Mémoires de ma vie par Charles Perrault. Voyage à Bordeaux [1669] par Charles Perrault, Paris, 1909, 63).

The idea recalls the curtains on which portraits of the deceased on ancient sarcophagi are often borne aloft (F. De Royt, ‘Études de symbolisme funéraire. A propos d’un nouveau sarcophage romain aux Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire, à Bruxelles,’ Bulletin de l’Institut historique belge de Rome, XVII, 1936, 160–64; W. Lameere, ‘Un symbole pythagoricien dans l’art funéraire de Rome,’ Bulletin de correspondance hellénique, LXIII, 1939, 43–85), and medieval depictions of the soul carried heavenward on swaths of drapery (H. s’Jacob, Idealism and Realism. A Study of Sepulchral Symbolism, Leiden, 1954, 121 ff. E. Panofsky, Tomb Sculpture, New York, [1964], 93). Bernini first revived this motif in his memorial of Alessandro Valtrini in San Lorenzo in Damaso (Wittkower, Bernini, 210, No. 43; dated 1639 by the inscription), and adapted it frequently thereafter in a variety of ways.

\textsuperscript{69} On this motif, whose connection with the Louis XIV seems not to have been observed, see the literature concerning the Conservatori Commodus cited by H. von Heintze, in W. Helbig, Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertumer in Rom, 4th ed., Tübingen, 1963 ff, II, 306 ff, especially S. A. Strong, ‘A Bronze Bust of a Iulio-Claudian Prince (Caligula) in the Museum of Colchester; With a Note on the Symbolism of the Globe in Imperial Portraiture,’ Journal of Roman Studies, VI, 1916, 27–46; H. Jucker, Das Bildnis im Blätterkelch, Olten, 1961, esp. 154, n. 11; T. Hölscher, Victoria Romana, Mainz, 1967, 10, 25, 44, 47. A spheroid object, probably a fruit but easily to be taken for a globe, also appears under busts of private individuals on sarcophagi (De Ruyt, ‘Études de symbolisme,’ 154–59). Monumental examples Bernini might have known in Rome are the porphyry columns with projecting imperial busts on globes, now in the Louvre (R. Delbrueck, Antike Porphyrwerke, Berlin–Leipzig, 1932, 52 ff). The motif was revived from ancient
instance, however, in which the globe and military spoils are combined, the former resting on the latter. This was a splendid and once famous monument of the Emperor Claudius, excavated in the Via Appia near Rome in the 1640s (Fig. 22). It was displayed on an elaborately carved pedestal in the Palazzo Colonna in Rome until the year before Bernini’s trip to Paris, when it was taken to Spain. The bust has since disappeared, but the base and pedestal added by the Colonna, which together stand six feet high (184 cm.), are still to be seen in the Prado (Fig. 23). The Colonna Claudius showed the Emperor wearing the aegis, looking to the side and slightly upward, with a radiate crown on his head; the bust was supported on the outspread wings of the Jovian eagle, which held the globe and the thunderbolt in its claws, and rested in turn on a wide pile of military spoils. Bernini

coins by Leone Leoni in a medal of Charles V (cf. Larsson, *Adrian de Vries*, Fig. 93). See also the bust of Cybele in Mantegna’s *Triumph of Scipio* in the National Gallery, London.

In connection with the Louis XIV, Keutner, *Sculpture*, 325, No. 170, refers to a medal bearing the date 1661 which shows the King as the Sun God seated on a globe; however, the medal was made in 1687 (cf. *La médaille au temps de Louis XIV*, exh. cat., Paris, 1970, 181, No. 259). On the other hand, something analogous to Bernini’s conception had appeared in a medal of 1664 illustrating the King’s motto *Nec Pluribus Impar*, where the radiant face of the sun rises over a terrestrial globe (*ibid.*, 89, No. 123, ill. page 90); this is the device referred to by Chantelou (n. 64 above), and the same juxtaposition is made in the engraving by Sevin and Gantrel (Fig. 21; cf. n. 66 above), where in the center the sun appears above the bust resting on the globe and the impresa is illustrated in the upper left corner.

70 A. Blanco, *Museo del Prado. Catalogo de la escultura. I. Esculturas clasicas*, Madrid, 1957, 115 f, No. 225-E, Pl. LXVI. Blanco reports that a copy of the bust, by V. Salvatierra (1790–1836), is in the depot of the Prado; my inquiries after it have been in vain. The engraving of the ancient portions of the monument reproduced here in Figure 22, which reverses the original, is from B. de Montfaucon, *L’antiquité expliquée*, 5 vols., Paris, 1719, V, Pl. CXXIX.

There has been some confusion concerning the dates involved, arising apparently from errors in R. Lanciani, ‘La villa castrimeniese di Q. Voconio Pollione,’ *Bollettino della commissione archeologica comunale di Roma*, XII, 1884, 196. Pietro Santi Bartoli (1637–1700) recorded that the work, to which he refers as ‘la famosa deificazione di Claudin,’ was found ‘ne tempi, che il card. Francesco Barberini si trasferi in Francia.’ and that a cardinal Colonna brought it as a gift when he transferred to the court of Spain (Memorie, first published in *Roma antica*, Rome, 1741, 351; reprinted in C. D. Foa, *Miscellanea filologica critica e antiquaria*, 2 vols., Rome, 1790–1836, I, CCLXIV f.). Lanciani interpolated the date 1654 for the discovery, probably a misprint for 1645; Antonio Barberini fled to France late in the latter year, Francesco fled in January, 1646 and stayed until 1648. Lanciani also slipped in calling the Colonna cardinal ‘Ascanio’ (died 1608); in fact it was Girolamo (died 1666), who went to Spain in 1664 for the wedding of Margarita Teresa and Leopold I (A. Ciaconius, *Vitae et res gestae pontificum romanorum et S.R.E. Cardinalium*, 4 vols., Rome, 1677, IV, col. 568).
must have remembered this extraordinary work when he designed the Louis XIV. The pose is transformed from one of divine inspiration into one of personal vigor and nobility. The role of the crown is played by the wig, which recalls the ‘leonine mane’ of Alexander the Great. The symbolic protection of the aegis and the levitational force of the eagle are embodied in the shielding, airborne drapery. The globe, instead of symbolizing the heavens, Jove’s realm, actually represents the earth.71 Whereas Claudius was literally divinized through metaphorical identification with the celestial ruler, Louis XIV is metaphorically apotheosized by being literally identified as the terrestrial ruler *par excellence*.

71 On the sideward turn and upward tilt of the head, see H.P. L’Orange, *Apotheosis in Ancient Portraiture*, Oslo, 1947, Chap. 2, 19 ff, ‘Heavenward-Gazing Alexander.’

Concerning the resemblance to Alexander, it is remarkable that Vasari in speaking of Giulio Romano’s portrait of Alexander (see n. 67 above), and a coin collector who saw Bernini’s *Louis XIV* in progress, both refer to medals of Alexander (‘Le doyen de Saint-Germain est aussi venu, et lui qui est curieux de médailles a trouvé que le buste a beaucoup de l’air d’Alexandre et tournait de côté comme on voit aux médailles d’Alexandre,’ Chantelou, *Journal*, 183, also 178). So far as I can see, portraits of Alexander on ancient coins and medals are always in profile (one exception, much disputed, appeared in 1902, *cf.* M. Bieber, *Alexander the Great in Greek and Roman Art*, Chicago, 1964, 79 f, Fig. 114). One possible explanation is that Giulio was using a profile type of the helmeted Alexander (K. Kraft, ‘Der gehelmte Alexander der Grosse,’ *Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte*, XV, 1965, 7–32), whereas Bernini’s visitor recalled one of the facing types, such as Helios (*le Roi Soleil*), that were minted in the time of Alexander (*cf.* A. Baldwin, ‘Facing Heads on Greek Coins,’ *American Journal of Numismatics*, XLIII, 1908–09, 213–31). On the other hand, another passage in Chantelou shows that ‘medals’ might also include gems (*Journal*, 235), and a number of these with facing heads have been identified as Alexander (K. Gebauer, ‘Alexanderbildniss und Alexandertypus,’ *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung*, LXIII–LXIV, 1938–39, 30 f, also 25). In any case, the turning, tilting head of Alexander became ubiquitous as the ‘Dying Alexander’ (E. Schwarzenberg, ‘From the *Alessandro morente* to the *Alexandre Richelieu*,’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXII, 1969, 398–405).

Bernini was certainly thinking of Alexander when portraying the King (*cf.* R. Wittkower, *Bernini’s Bust of Louis XIV*, London, 1951, 13 f), and it is possible that the whole image — upward and sideward glance, as well as terrestrial globe below — echoed the famous passage in Plutarch describing Lysippus’s portrait of Alexander and quoting its inscription: ‘When Lysippus first modelled a portrait of Alexander with his face turned upward toward the sky, just as Alexander himself was accustomed to gaze, turning his neck gently to one side, someone inscribed, not inappropriately, the following epigram: ‘The bronze statue seems to proclaim, looking at Zeus: I place the earth under my sway; you O Zeus, keep Olympus’ (J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Greece 1400–31 B.C., Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965, 145). Perhaps this passage was in the mind of the observer who commented that the world-pedestal enhanced the resemblance to Alexander (Chantelou, *Journal*, 178).
With the bust of the Savior Bernini carried these ideas from the secular to the religious sphere.

The ‘Divine Simulacrum’

In a formal sense the contrapposto relationship between the head and right arm of the Savior may be viewed as a development from the composition of the Louis XIV. But the pose was motivated by more than formal considerations. The Savior belongs thematically to the class of isolated, bust-length depictions of Christ that include both arms. Such images may be roughly divided into two groups, the Salvator Mundi and the Imago Pietatis, according to whether Christ’s triumph or His human sacrifice is stressed.72 Usually the Salvator Mundi shows the figure alive and clothed, the left hand holding a globe, symbol of the universality of redemption, the right hand raised in blessing, and the gaze fixed upon the observer in a frontal stare.73 In the Man of Sorrows Christ is shown dead, the body is nude, the head droops obliquely to the side, and the arms are folded across each other on the breast.74 It seems clear that Bernini sought to amalgamate the two traditional embodiments of the deity. In that the figure is clothed and the right hand suggests a blessing, it evokes the Salvator Mundi; the averted head and crossed arms allude to the Man of Sorrow. In expressive terms the result is an almost ineffable combination of heroic suffering and inspired benignity.

Bernini’s figure further recalls an intermediate type which has been termed the ‘rhetorical’ Man of Sorrows.75 Christ is shown alive, the nude body exposed but draped in a mantle, the head bent downward to the side and the glance oblique; one hand calls attention to the chest wound, the other is raised in a gesture of pathetic exclamation. While Bernini must have had this type in mind also, his Savior differs from it in two funda-

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74 The fundamental study is still that of Panofsky, ‘Imago Pietatis,’ who regarded this as the original form of the Man of Sorrows; for subsequent bibliography, see Eiser, ‘The Golden Christ of Cortona,’ III, n. 24.
75 Panofsky, ‘Imago Pietatis,’ 289 f.
mental respects: the position of the head and eyes, and the gesture of the right hand. The upward glance had become familiar in bust-length depictions of Christ, for example, in variants of the Salvator Mundi based on the inspired figure in Federico Barocci’s Last Supper in Urbino, and in pictures of the agonized Ecce Homo crowned with thorns, by Guido Reni and Guercino. But in these the head, though sometimes tilted, is not turned to the side, and the eyes look directly aloft. Conversely, busts of Christ often showed the head in three quarters, but the face and glance were not directed upward. The Savior’s gesture, with the arm held close to and across the body and the hand raised vertically, is also sui generis. It is as suggestive of intervention and rejection as of benediction or exclamation, and carries a clear eschatological implication. In sum, Christ acts as though He were interposing Himself between a threat coming from His upper right and directed toward His lower left, the side of damnation, which He abhors.

It will have become apparent that essentially the same idea expressed in Bernini’s Savior underlay the devotional pictures of intercession derived from the Speculum humanae salvationis (Fig. 4). There Christ was represented with one hand indicating the chest wound, the other directed in sympathy toward the spectator; the head and eyes turned to the side and imploringly up toward God the Father. The ‘rhetorical’ Man of Sorrows was itself rooted in this tradition, which had already played a seminal part in the development of the Sangue di Cristo composition. Bernini’s Savior, who communicates with God, alludes to His own death, and conveys protection to the observer, seems to act in response to the dying man’s invocation in the Ars Moriendi interrogations, ‘I also put the death of Our Lord Jesus Christ between me and your wrath.’

Like the Sangue di Cristo the Savior constitutes in effect a new subject, motivated once again by the desire to relate previously separate traditions to the idea of death. The bust incorporates the act of intercession in which Christ the sacrifice and Christ the redeemer are united. Hence the deeper

meaning of the pedestal becomes clear. The abstract base, traditional for portraits, bears Christ’s mortal aspect. In general terms the kneeling and supporting angels echo the ancient *imago clipeata*, where the medallion framing a hallowed image was often lifted by winged genii; Christ and God the Father had frequently been carried by angels; angels grasp the drapery in many depictions of the Man of Sorrows; in reliquary busts the body might appear angel-borne. But there was no real precedent for the bust held aloft by its base. Most of all, Bernini’s arrangement recalls, as we have seen, his own design for an altar of the Holy Sacrament (Fig. 16): the kneeling angels elevate the image as if it were the tabernacle of the Host. Thus, both the figure and the pedestal — the former through its expressive pose and invisible truncation, the latter through its abstract and angelic supports — conveyed the dual nature of Christ and His work of atonement. At once suffering and exultant as a portrait, the *Savior* is at once human and divine as a bust.

The work belongs to still another tradition, which might be defined as that of the sculptor’s last will and testament. The sixteenth century had produced several notable instances in which sculptors gave direct expression to their own hopes for redemption, the Pietà groups by Michelangelo and Baccio Bandinelli, and Crucifixes by Benvenuto Cellini and Giambologna. The shift from the dead to the living Christ is symptomatic: Bernini’s primary concern is not with Christ as the prototype of pathetic self-sacrifice, but with His quintessential role as mediator in the process of salvation. It is also symptomatic that, in contrast to these overtly narrative works, Bernini chose the bust to express his thought; he created a kind of icon-portrait monument because it enabled him to evoke more completely than any other form the mystery of Christ, half god, half man. It is symptomatic, finally, that these works were intended for the artists’ own tombs (and might even contain autobiographical elements: Michelangelo’s and Bandinelli’s include self-portraits, Cellini’s alludes to a vision he had had in

78 For examples of the latter, see Toesca, *Il trecento*, 900, Fig. 746, and J. Montagu, ‘Un dono del Cardinale Francesco Barberini al Re di Spagna,’ *Arte illustrata*, IV, 1971, 50, Fig. 8.
79 The concept has an analogue in Bernini’s adaptation of the framed image carried by symbolic figures, which played a new and important role in his work; his use of this motif in altarpieces has been the subject of an excellent study in an unpublished dissertation by R. Jürgens, ‘Die Entwicklung des Barockalters in Rom,’ Hamburg, 1956, 160 ff (typescript in the Biblioteca Hertziana, Rome).
prison), whereas Bernini intended the Savior to be given away, and his sepulcher was marked only by an inscription with his name and the date of his death.

* * *

The *Sangue di Cristo* engraving and the bust of the Savior are related beyond the obvious fact of their common concern with salvation. The one concentrates upon Christ as the victim, the other upon Christ as the savior; the one is predominantly public and universal, the other is predominantly private and personal. Both make radical changes in the traditions from which they are derived, and the changes were inspired mainly by the desire to relate those traditions to death. They are related to death not simply as pious votives but as part of a concerted plan, conceived and executed by Bernini over a period of forty years, to achieve salvation by preparing for death. The idea for such a program and many of its elements stem from the heritage of *The Art of Dying*, but the focus has shifted. In place of the temptations to sin and heresy, the accent is on the central mystery of the Eucharist as the key to redemption. This new emphasis was present from the beginning of the *Ars Moriendi* revival, in Bellarmino's treatise and in the devotions of the Bona Mors confraternity. It became to Father Marchese and Bernini the only hope. The good death was no longer largely a dialectical victory over the devil but an extreme act of faith, performed successfully after acquiring the necessary skills.

Panofsky defined the unprecedented role of the personification Death in Bernini's funerary monuments as that of 'a “witness to life” . . . a power which delimits and shapes the indefinite and places in perspective what otherwise could not be perceived as a whole.'\(^80\) The observation might be extended to Bernini himself: his enactment of death, his vision of redemption and his portrayal of the Redeemer concluded a life-long process of objectification in which what had been obscure or but faintly perceived became conscious and deliberate.\(^81\)


\(^81\) The opening invocation of Bernini's testament, though conventional in such documents, contains a variety of thoughts and phrases that are of interest in the light of what has been said in this essay; I transcribe it here, along with some of the relevant provisions:
Filippo Baldinucci

Correva già il Bernino l’ottantesimo anno di sua vita e fin da alcun tempo avanti aveva egli più al conseguimento degli eterni riposi, che all’accrescimento della gloria mondana voltato i suoi più intensi pensieri e forte premevagli il cuore un desiderio di offrire, prima di chiuder gli occhi a questa luce, alcun segno di gratitudine alla maestà della gran Regina di Svezia, statua sua singolarissima protettrice; onde per meglio internarsi ne’ primi sentimenti e disposti ad effettuare i secondi, si pose con grande studio ad effigiare in marmo in mezza figura maggiore del naturale il nostro 'A gloria della SS.ma Trinità, e della gloriosa sempre Vergina Maria, e di tutti li Santi miei Protettori; Essendo la morte quel punto tremendo, d’onde dipende un’Eternità, ò di bene, ò di pene, quindi è che conforme l’huomo deue in ogni’hora pensare à ben uiuere per ben morire, così è inescusabile errore il volere trasportare in quell’ultimo passo l’aggiustamento delle cose humane, quando l’anima deue con gran timore prepararsi all’inappellabile rendimento de conti alla Divina Giustitia. Da ciò mosso io infrascritto testatore al presente sano per la Dio gratia di mente, di senso, et intelletto hò pensato di fare il presente mio testamento scritto de uerbo ad uerbum d’ordine mio, e poi da me più volte letto, e maturamente considerato

Primieramente raccomando l’anima mia alla SS.ma Trinità, dalla cui infinita Bontà, conforme hò riceuto abondanza di gratie, così la supplico di quella maggiore, senza la quale nulla uale il mondo tutto, cioè il perdono de miei peccati, e per conseguenza la salute dell’anima mia, mi raccomando inoltre all’intercessione della gloriosissima Vergine Madre Maria, dell’Angelo mio Custode, e di tutti li Santi miei Auocati, e particolarmente di S. Giuseppe . . .

Lascio à titolo di semplice Cappellania à nutum amouibile, che dall’infrascritti miei heredi à gloria del pretiosissimo Sangue del Nostro Redentore Giesù Christo si faccia celebrare una messa quotidiana in perpetuo suffragio, prima dell’anima mia, e poi delli miei parenti, e finalmente di quell’anima del Purgatorio, la liberatione della quale sarà di maggior gloria di Dio.

In oltre à gloria della Beatis.ma Vergina Madre Maria lascio ch’ogni anno in perpetuo nel giorno dell’Assunta si diano dall’infrascritti miei heredi scudi uenticinque m. per dote ad una pouera zitella honesta, . . . Item lascio al Padre Don Francesco Marchesi Prete della Chiesa Noua mio Nipote scudi cento moneta per una sol uolta pregandolo à raccordarsi dell’anima mia nelle sue orationi, e diuini offitij . . .'


It came to my attention after completing this article that Hans Kauffmann, with characteristic insight, speaks of Bernini as having been deeply concerned with the Ars Moriendi (Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini. Die figürliche Kompositionen, Berlin, 1970, 334 f).
Salvator Gesù Cristo, opera, che siccome fu detta da lui il suo beniamino, così anche fu l’ultima, che desse al mondo la sua mano, e destinolla in dono a quella maestà, ma tal pensiero però gli venne fallito, perché tanto fu il concetto è la stima, che della statua fece la maestà sua che non trovandosi in congiuntura di poter per allora proporzionatamente contraccambiare il dono, elesse anzi di ricusarlo che di mancare un punto alla reale magnificenza dell’animo suo; onde il Bernino gliela ebbe poi a lasciare per testamento, come noi a suo luogo diremo. In questo divino simulacro pose egli tutti gli sforzi della sua cristiana pietà e dell’arte medesima, e fece conoscere in esso quanto fusse vero un suo familiare assioma, cioè, che l’artefice, che ha grandissimo fondamento nel disegno, al giugner dell’età decrepita, non dee temere di alcuno scemamento di vivacità e tenerezza e dell’altre buone qualità dell’operar suo, merecedché una tal sicurezza nel disegno possa assai bene supplire al difetto degli spiriti, i quali coll’aggravar dell’età si raffreddano, ciò che egli diceva aver osservato in altri artifici... 

E così mentre dalla città di Roma si apprestavano applausi al suo valore per lo prospero riuscimento della restaurazione e assicuramento del palazzo, egli avendo già incominciato a perdere il sonno, dide in sì fatta debolezza di forze e di spiriti, che in breve si condusse al termine de’ giorni suoi. Ma prima di parlare dell’ultima sua infermità e della morte, la quale veramente apparve agli occhi nostri qual fu la vita, è da portarsi in questo luogo, che quantunque il cavalier Bernino fino al quarantesimo anno di sua età, che fu quello, nel quale egli si accasò, fusse vissuto allacciato in qualche affetto giovenile, senza però trarne tale impaccio, che agli studi dell’arte e a quella, che il mondo chiama prudenza, alcun pregiudizio recar potesse, potiamo dire con verità, che non solo il suo matrimonio ponesse fine a quel modo di vivere, ma che egli, fin da quell’ora, incominciasse a diportarsi anzi da religioso, che da secolare e con tali sentimento di spirito, secondo ciò, che a me è stato riferito da chi bene il sa, ch’e’ poté sovente esser d’ammirazione ai più perfetti claustrali. Teneva egli sempre fisso un vivo pensiero della morte, intorno alla quale faceva bene spesso lunghi colloqui col padre Marchesi suo nipote sacerdote della Congregazione dell’Oratorio nella chiesa Nuova, uomo della bontà e dottrina, che è nota; e con tal desiderio aspirò sempre mai alla felicità di quell’estremo passo, che per questo solo fine di conseguirla durò quarant’anni continavi a frequentar la divozione, che a tale effetto fanno i padri della Compagnia di Gesù in Roma; dove pure due volte la settimana si cibava del sacramento eucaristico. Accresceva le limosine, esercizio stato suo familiarissimo fino dalla prima età. Si profondava talora
nel pensiero e nel discorso d’un’altissima stima e concetto che egli ebbe sempre dell’efficacia del Sangue di Cristo Redentore, nel quale (come era solito dire) sperava di affogare i suoi peccati. A tale oggetto disegnò di sua mano e poi fecesi stampare un’immagine di Cristo Crocifisso, dalle cui mani e piedi sgorgano rivi di sangue, che formano quasi un mare e la gran Regina del Cielo, che lo sta offrendo all’Eterno Padre. Questa pia meditazione fecesi anche dipingere in una gran tela, la quale volle sempre tenere in faccia al suo letto in vita e in morte.

Venuto dunque il tempo, non so s’io dica da lui a cagione del grande scapito di forze aspettato, o per l’anelanza dell’eterno riposo desiderato, egli infermò d’una lenta febbre, alla quale sopravvenne in ultimo un accidente di apoplessia, che fu quello che lo privò di vita. Stavasene egli tra tanto paziente e rassentato nel divino volere, nè altri discorsi faceva per ordinario, che di confidenza, a segno tale che gli astanti, fra’ quali non isdegnò di trovarsi assai frequentemente l’eminentissimo cardinal Azzolino forte si maravigliavano de’ concetti, che l’amore gli suggeriva e fra questi il seguente è degnessimo di memoria. Pregò egli instantemente quel porporato, che per sua parte supplicasse la maestà della regina a fare un atto d’amore di Dio per se stesso, stimando (come egli diceva) che quella gran signora avesse un linguaggio particolare con Dio da esser bene intesa, mentre Iddio avea con lei usato un linguaggio, che essa sola era stata capace d’intenderlo.

Il continuo pensare, ch’ei fece in vita a quel passaggio, gli aveva suggerito molti anni prima del suo morire un pensiero, e fu di rappresentare al nominato padre Marchesi, il quale egli desiderava, che gli fusse assistente, tutto ciò, che egli gli doveva ricordare in quel tempo, e perché egli dubitò, ch’è potesse avvenire ciò che veramente accadde, di non potere in quel l’estremo usar la voce, volle ch’ei fusse informato dei gesti e moti esterni ch’egli aveva stabilito di fare per espressione dell’interno del suo cuore; e fu cosa mirabile, che non avendo egli nella malattia, a cagione della flussione del capo, potuto parlare se non balbettando ed avendo poi per lo nuovo accidente perduta quasi del tutto la parola, il padre Marchesi l’intendesse sempre così ed alle sue proposte desse così adequate risposte, che bastarono per condurlo con ammirabil quiete al suo fine. Avvicinavasi egli all’ultimo respiro, quando fatto cenno a Mattia de’ Rossi e Giovan Battista Contini, stati suoi discepoli nell’architettura quasi scherzando disse loro nel miglior modo, che gli fu possibile, molto maravigliarsi, che non sovenisse loro invenzione per trarre altrui il catarro dalla gola, e intanto additava colla mano un instrumento matematico attissimo a tirar pesi eccedenti.
L’interrogò il suo confessore sopra lo stato di quiete dell’anima sua, e se egli si sentiva scrupoli; rispose: ‘Padre mio, io ho da render conto ad un Signore, che per sua sola bontà non la guarda in mezzi baicocchi’. Si accorse poi d’aver il destro braccio impedito insieme con tutta quella parte a cagione dell’apoplessia e disse: ‘Bene era dovere, che questo braccio si ripossasse alquanto prima della mia morte, avendo egli tanto fatigato in vita’. Intanto piangeasi in Roma la gran perdita e la sua casa era occupata da un flusso e reflusso di personaggi d’alto affare e gente d’ogni sorte per intendere novelle e visitarlo in quello stato. Vennero, e mandarono due volte il giorno almeno la maestà della regina di Svezia, più eminentissimi cardinali, e gli ambasciatori de’ principi. E finalmente la Santità di Nostro Signore gli mandò la sua benedizione; dopo la quale, all’entrare del giorno 28 del mese di novembre dell’anno 1680, circa alla mezza notte, dopo quindici giorni d’infermità, egli fece da questa all’altra vita passaggio nell’età sua di 82 anni meno nove giorni.

Lasciò per suo testamento alla santità del papa, un gran quadro di un Cristo di sua mano ed alla maestà della regina di Svezia il bel simulacro del Salvatore in marmo, ultima opera delle sue mani, della quale sopra abbiam parlato. All’eminentissimo Altieri una testa di marmo con busto ritratto di Clemente X, all’eminentissimo Azzolino, stato suo protettore cordialissimo, una simile di papa Innocenzo X suo promotore e non avendo altra cosa di marmo, lasciò al cardinal Rospigliosi un quadro pure di sua propria mano. E con fidecommisso strettissimo lasciò in casa propria la bella statua della Verità, che è l’unica opera di scarpello, che è restata in potere de’ suoi figliuoli.

Cosa troppo lunga sarebbe il parlare del dolore, che apportò una tal perdita a tutta Roma; dirò solo, che la maestà della regina, al di cui intelletto sublimissimo poterono per lunga consuetudine esser note le finezze dei talenti di si grand’uomo, ne diede straordinari segni, parendole che fusse stato tolto con lui al mondo l’unico parto, che aveva prodotto la virtù nel nostro secolo. Lo stesso giorno della morte del Bernino mandò il papa per mano di un camerier segreto un nobile regalo a quella maestà, al quale domandò la regina, che si dicesse per Roma dello stato lasciato dal cavalier Bernino, e sentito che di quattrocentomila scudi incirca: ‘Mi vergognerei’ diss’ella ‘s’egli avesse servito me, ed avesse lasciato sì poco’.

La pompa, colla quale fu il corpo del nostro artefice portato alla chiesa di S. Maria Maggiore, ove è la sepoltura di sua casa, corrispose alla dignità del soggetto ed alle facoltà ed amore de’ figliuoli, che gli ordinaron un nobilissimo funerale con distribuzione di cere e limosine alla grande. Si
stancarono gl'ingegni e le penne de' letterati di comporre elogi, sonetti, canzoni, ed altri eruditi versi latini, e volgari spiritossissimi, che in lode di lul si videro pubblicamente esposti. Concorse tutta la nobiltà di Roma e con essa tutti gli oltramontani, che allora si trovavano in quella città ed in somma un popolo si numeroso, che fu necessario l’indugiare alquanto di tempo a dar sepoltura al corpo, il che poi fu fatto nella nominata sua sepoltura, in cassa di piombo, con lasciarvi memoria del nome e persona di lui.

**Domenico Bernini**

Ma prossimo ornai il Cavaliere alla morte, & in età decrepita di ottanta-t’anni volle illustrar sua vita, e chiuder l’atto di sua fin’ a quell’hora tanto ben condotta Professione, con rappresentare un opera, che felice è quell ’Huomo, che termina con essa i suoi giorni. Questa fu l’Immagine del nostro Salvadore in mezza figura, mà più grande del naturale, colla man destra alquanto sollevata, come in atto di benedire. In essa compendiò, e ristirnse tutta la sua Arte, e benché la debolezza del polso non corrispondesse alla gagliardia dell’Idea, tuttavia gli venne fatto di comprovare ciò, che prima ci dir soleva, che *Un’Artefice eccellente nel Disegno dubitar non deve al giunger dell’età decrepita di alcuna mancanza di vivacità, e tenerezza, perché è di tanta efficacia la prattica del Disegno, che questo solo può supplire al difetto degli spiriti, che nella vecchiaia languiscono*. Destinò quest’Opera alla sua tanto benemerita Regina di Svezia, che elesse più tosto rifiutarla, che coll’impossibilità di contracambiarne il valore, degenerare dalla sua Regia beneficenza; Mà fu poi costretta di accettarla indi a due anni, quando dal Cavaliere le fu lasciata in testamento . . .

Avanti dunque di entrare nella narazione delle cose proposte, convien rtrarre alquanto indietro il discorso, e dimostrare, quanto singolare nel Cavaliere Bernino fosse la bontà della vita, e con quanta unione di massime Christiane rendesse riguardevoli le belle, e molte doti del suo animo. Conciosiacoche com’egli era un ’Huomo d’ingegno elevato, che sempre al grande aspirava, e nel grande istesso non si quietava, se non giungeva al massimo, questa medesima sua naturalezza lo portò ad una subblimità tale d’Idee in materia di divozione, che non contento delle communi, a quelle si appigliò, che sono per così dire la scortatoja per giungere al Cielo. Ond’ei diceva, che *Nel rendimento di conto delle sue operazioni haveva da trattare con Signore, che Infinito e Massimo ne’ suoi attributi, non havrebbe guardato, come*
si suol dire, a’ mezzi bajocchi, è spiegava il suo sentimento con soggiungere, che La bontà di Dio essendo infinita, & infinto il merito del prezioso Sangue del suo Figliuolo, era un’offendere questi attributi il dubitare della Misericordia. A tale effetto egli fece per sua divozione ritrarre in Stampa, & in Pittura un maraviglioso disegno, in cui rappresentasi Giesù Christo in Croce con un Mare di Sangue sotto di esso, che ne versa a torrenti dalle sue Santissime Piaghe, e qui si vede la Beatissima Vergine in atto di offerirlo al Padre Eterno, che compaia discorso di sopra colle braccia spese, tutto intenerito a sì commissionevele spettacolo: Et In questo Mare, egli diceva, ritrovarsi affogati i suoi peccati, che non altrimenti dalla Divina Giustitia rinvenir si potevano, che frà il Sangue di Giesù Christo, di cui tinti o haverebbono mutato colore, o per merito di esso ottenuta mercede. Ed era sì viva in lui questa fiducia, che chiamava la Santissima Humanità di Chiristo, Veste de’ Peccatori, e perciò tanto maggiormente confidava, non dover esso esser fulminato dalla Divina vendetta, quale dovendo prima di ferir lui, passar la veste, per non lacerare l’innocenza, haverebbe perdonato al suo peccato. E come che ei fù solito, molti, e molti anni prima di sua morte trattenersi spessissimo in continui discorsi con dotti, e singolari Religiosi, tanto s’infiammava in questi sentimenti, e tanto alto ascendeva la sottigliezza del suo ingegno, che ne stupivano quegli, come un’huomo, per altro dedito alle lettere, potesse molte volte non solo giungere alla penetrazione più intima di altissimi Misterii, mà motivarne dubbi, e renderne ragioni, come se sua vita condotta havesse nelle Scuole. Diceva il P. Gio. Paolo Oliva Generale della Compagnia di Giesù, che Nel discorrere col Cavaliere di cose spirituali gli faceva di mestiere di un’attenzione tale, come se andar dovesse ad una Conclusione. Nè senza frutto nutriva ci nell’animo questi nobilissimi pensieri, mà con opere fondate era in un continuo esercizio di Virtù. Per lo spazio di quarant’anni frequentò ogni Venerdì la divozione della buona morte nella Chiesa del Giesù, in cui bene spesso riceueva la Santissima Communione almeno una volta la settimana. Per il medesimo lungo spazio di tempo ogni giorno, terminati i suoi lavori, visitava quella Chiesa, ove si ritrivava esposto il Santissimo Sacramento, e vi lasciava elemosine copiose per i poveri. Oltre a molti doti, che dava frà l’anno a povere Zitelle, una sempre ne contribuiva nel giorno della Santissima Assunta, & a sei di esse volle ancora obbligare nel suo Testamento i Figliuoli; Anzi bene spesso per ricever merito dalla fuga dell’applauso, consegnava copiose elemosine ad un suo Famigliare con obbligo di non rivelarne il benefattore, E benche l’uso dell’elemosina fosse con lui, per così dire, nato, e cresciuto, tuttavia negli ultimi anni di sua vita gli fù
cotanto a cuore, che non stimandosi esso sufficiente a rinvenire i poveri, a molti Religiosi diede l’incumbenza, & il denaro, per somministrarne ad essi l’aiuto. E perché ci in somiglianti opere amava la secretezza, molte più sono quelle, che possiam giudicare, ch’ei facesse, che a nostra notizia siano pervenute. Da alcune Note, ch’egli di mano sua stendeva in un libretto appartenente agli’interessi di Casa, si hà, che havendo posti tre mesi avanti sua morte due mile scudi d’oro dentro un’inginocchiatore, non ve ne furono poi trovati che ducento, e questi ordinò a’ suoi figliuoli, che gl’impiegassero ancora, come segui, in un tale Opera pia, con indizio manifesto, che i rimanenti simil’esito sortissero. Et in una lettera scritta da Parigi ordinò a Monsignor suo figliuolo, che oltre alle Elemosine, che gli lasciò in nota da farsi, ne facesse al doppio, Perche Iddio è un Signore, che non si lascia vincere di cortesia. Soleva poi molte volte frà l’anno condurre la sua famiglia in qualche Hospedale, e quivi voleva, che i suoi piccoli figliuoli ad esempio di lui poggesero ristoro agli ammalati, con presentar loro diverse confezioni, che a tale effetto teneva preparate. Ed era cosa di stupore, come un’ Huomo impiegato in tante, e sì riguardevoli occupazioni, ogni mattina udisse divotamente la Messa, ogni giorno visitasse il Santissimo Sacramento, & ogni sera recitasse la Corona della Madonna Santissima, & in ginocchi l’Uffizio di lei, e li sette Salmi Penitenziali, costume ch’egli tenne costantissimo sino alla morte. Quando poi si vide a lei più prossimo, ad altro che a questo passaggio non pensava, e di altro non ragionava, e ciò, non con displicenza, & horrore, cosa solita de’ vecchj, mà con costanza di animo impareggiabile, e con servirsi della sua memoria per preparamento a ben farla. A tale effetto haveva continue conferenze col P. Francesco Marchese Prete dell’Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri nella Chiesa Nuova di Roma, figlio di Beatrice Bernini sua sorella, Soggetto Venerabile per bontà di vita, e riguardevole per dottrina, di cui si prevalse il Cavaliere, acciò assistere dovesse alla sua morte: E perché ei diceva, che Quel passo a tutti era difficile, perche a tutti giungeva nuovo, perciò si figurava spesse volte di morire, per poter con questo finto esercizio assuefarsi, e disporsi al combattimento del vero. Et in questo stato voleva, che il P. Marchese gli suggerisse tutti quegli atti soliti a proporsi, a chi stà in passaggio, & egli col farli si veniva, come preparando, a quel gran punto. Suppongendo poi, che gli dovesse, conforme è solito, mancar la parola in quel estremità di vita, e poi ridursi nell’angustie che pruova, chi non puol’esser inteso, concertò con lui un modo particolare, con cui anche senza parlare in quell’hora potesse essere inteso. Con si fatte diligenze, con animo del tutto confermato giunse finalmente al cimento.
Habbiamo di sopra già detto, quanto debilitato rimanesse di forze, &
agitato ancora nel rimanente del Corpo per l’intrapresa ristaurazione del
Palazzo della Cancellaria. Onde infermò finalmente di lenta febre, a cui
sopravvenne in ultimo un’accidente di apoplessia, che lo tose di vita. In
tutto il corso del male, che durò quindici giorni, volle, che a piedi del letto
si alzasse come un’Altare, & in esso fece esporre il Quadro rappresentante il
Sangue di Giesù Christo: E quali fossero i suoi colloquii, ch’ei faceva hora
col P. Marchese, hora con altri Religiosi, che assistevano, sopra l’efficacia di
quel preziosissimo Sangue, e la fiducia, ch’ei haveva, possono più tosto
congetturarsi, che riferirsi. Poiche non vi era alcuno degli Astanti, a cui non
iscaturissero le lagrime in udire, con quanta sodezza di sentimenti parlasse
allora quell’Huomo, a cui nè l’età nè l male, gravi ambedue, e potenti
nemici, havevano potuto offuscare quella chiarezza d’intelletto, che sem-
pre in lui si mantenne uguale, e grande fin all’ultimo respiro di sua vita. i
Accortosi, che non poteva più muovere il braccio destro per l’accidente
accennato di apoplessia,
E ben ragione, disse, che anche avanti la morte riposi
alquanto quella mano, che in vita hà tanto lavorato
. Al Cardinal Azzolini, che
volle più volte honorarlo della sua presenza in que’ giorni, disse una sera,
che
Pregasse in suo nome la Maestà della Regina a far un’atto di amor di Dio
per lui, perche ei credeva, che quella gran Signora havesse un linguaggio parti-
colare con il Signore Dio per essere bene intesa, mentre Iddio haveva con lei
usato un linguaggio, che essa sola era stata capace d’intenderlo. Fece la parte il
Cardinale, e ricevè dalla Regina il seguente Viglietto:
Io vi prego di dire al Sig. Cavalier Bernino da mia parte, che gli prometto
di fare tutti i miei sforzi per far quel che desidera da me, a condizione, ch’egli
mi prometta di pregar Dio per me, e per voi, a concorderci la grazia di un per-
fetto amor suo, affinché Noi possiam trovarci un giorno tutti insieme con la
gioia d’amore, e goder Dio in eterno. E ditegli, che io già l’hò servito al meglio
che hò potuto, e che continuerò.
In tanto la sua Casa era un continuo flusso, e rilusso de’ più cospicui
Personaggi di Roma, che ò venivano, ò mandavano con attestazione altrettanto
distinta dall’uso comune di convenienza, quanto distinta, e partico-
lare era in ciascuno la stima, & il rammarico di perdere un sì grand’Huomo.
Mancògli finalmente la parolà, e perché si sentiva fuor di modo angustiato
dal catarro, accennò al Cavalier Mattia de Rossi, e a Gio: Battista Contini,
che unitamente con Giulio Cartarè tutti suoi Allievi si ritrovarono sempre
presenti al suo letto, quasi maravigliandosi, come ad essi sovvenir modo non
potesse di cavargli il catarro dal petto, e colla sinistra mano sforzavasi di rap-
presentargli un'Istrumento attissimo a tirar pesi eccedenti. Come, ch'è
avanti la sua malattia haveva concertato il modo col P. Marchese di essere
inteso senza parlare, stupore in tutti fù, come ben da lui si facesse intendere
col moto solo della sinistra mano, e degli occhj: Segno manifesto di quella
gran vivacità di sentimenti, quali nè pure allora mostravan di cedere, benche
mancasse la vita. Due hore avanti di passare diede la benedizione a tutti li
suoi figliuoli, che lasciò in numero, come si disse, di quattro Maschi, e
cinque Femmine, e finalmente ricevuta quella del Pontefice, che per un suo
Cameriere mandògli, nell'entrare del ventottesimo giorno di Novembre,
dell'anno 1680, & ottantesimo secondo di sua vita, spirò: E morì da quel
grand'Huomo ch'ei visse, lasciando in dubbio, se più ammirabile nelle oper-
azioni fosse stata la sua vita, ò commendabile nella divozione la sua morte.

In Testamento lasciò al Papa un bellissimo Quadro di mano di Gio:
Battista Gauilli rappresentante il Salvadore, sua ultima opera in Marmo, alla
Regina il Salvadore medesimo di sua mano, al Cardinal'Altieri il Ritratto di
Clemente X., al Cardinal'Azzolini quello d'Innocenzo X., & al Cardinal
Giacomo Rospigliosi un Quadro pure di sua mano, non havendo in Casa
altra cosa di marmo, oltre alla Verità, che lasciò con perpetuo fidecommisso
alla sua Discendenza.

Fù universale il cordiglio per la perdita di quest'Huomo nella Città di
Roma, che si riconosceva di tanta Maestà accresciuta dalle sue indefesse
fatiche, e siccome la sua vita, così ancora la morte fù Soggetto all'Accademie
di molti ingegnosi componimenti. Il seguente giorno coll'occasione, che
mandò il Papa a regalar la Regina, richiese questa al Cameriere di Sua
Sanità, Che si dicesse dello stato lasciato del Cavalier Bernino? e rispostogli,
che Di quattrocento mila scudi in circa, essa soggiunse, Io mi vergognarei,
s'egli havesse servito mi, & havesse lasciato così poco.

Il suo corpo con pompa fù esposto nella Basilica di S. Maria Maggiore,
con funerale, distribuzione di cera, & elemosine a Poveri: E fù tanto il con-
corso della gente, che convenne differirne per il seguente giorno la
sepoltura. Haveva già egli preparata questa a sé, & a i suoi nella medesima
Chiesa, onde in essa fù posto dentro Cassa di piombo, con iscrizione dinot-
tate il nome, & il giorno della sua morte.