Lorenzo Bernini, Excerpts from

Art Humanities Primary Source Reading 25

Filippo Baldinucci

Excerpts from THE LIFE OF CAVALIERS GIOVANNI
LORENZO BERNINI, 1682

Filippo Baldinucci (1624-1696) was a Florentine employed by the Cardinal Leopold de’ Medici and Cosimo III to put in order the Medici collection of drawings. Baldinucci studied the lives of the artists and wrote the Notizie de’ professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua (Accounts of Professors of Design) of which three volumes were published in 1681 and three more posthumously in 1781. This work, which corrects and continues Vasari’s Lives, is the first universal history of the figurative arts in Europe. He wrote the first history of engraving and etching (Florence, 1686) and the first dictionary of artistic terms (Florence, 1686). Queen Christina of Sweden commissioned him to write the biography of Bernini. It appeared in 1682, two years after the death of the artist.

Marvelous, and almost like a miracle, is the force of that hidden seed which nature, always a wise conserver of its finest elements, prudently infuses into spirits of the finest temper and highest aspirations, as into receptive and obedient matter. Nor, in my opinion, must it seem very strange to those who look at the essence of things with subtlest discernment that his seed is of heavenly origin and wedded to our spirits. So this seed, because of its place of origin and the immortality which was bestowed on it, can boast of the closest kinship with Heaven. It is reasonable that such a seed implanted in our minds, as in a suitable field, should settle there with all its force and thrive in the same way as we observe a real seed sown in good and favorable soil, soon to sprout above the earth and then produce a rich cluster of numberless ears of corn. Although one can observe its presence more or less generally in all, it is doubtless more obvious and apparent in those destined and chosen by nature to accomplish great and miraculous deeds. And to tell the truth, whether their spirits be jewels of greater brilliance and higher value than others, or whether it be that, in those of finer clay and gentler substance, the jewels set, as it were, in gold shine through the body just as light shines through glass, there appear occasionally those whose eyes even from infancy flash out the sparks from their soul in such profusion and so brilliantly that the beholder can scarcely endure not only the direct light, but even its reflection.

It seems then in reality as if the whole soul, showing itself through the windows of the face, disdains to mix with matter and, despite the body, wants to show by its actions, glances, words, and gestures a sample of its hidden beauties.

Such extraordinary vivacity and spirit fell in our time to the lot of Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini, a man who in the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture was not only great but exceptional, and would have ranked with the most brilliant and renowned masters of the ancient and modern world had he not had the misfortune of being born in the wrong age.

The marble blocks which, thanks to his chisel, live and speak in Rome and in many other parts of the world would perhaps be silent and alone in the maternal rocks if the master's hand had not subjected them to the torment of his industrious chisel. Likewise, in my opinion, the great creative talents of Bernini would have been dissipated in the frivolous pleasures and habits of youth if he had not placed himself at an early age under the discipline of incessant industry and severe studies, thereby showing that great talent uncontrolled is like the most spiritual substance of flowers, which, when pressed into an essence and poorly seated in vases, evaporates in a few hours and vanishes because of its extreme volatility.

How judiciously Bernini utilized the splendid gifts of the soul, bestowed upon him through special grace, is shown clearly enough by the great number of his works and the excellence of their execution. If one were to measure his life by them, one could consider it to have been very long; if measured by the number of years that he lived it was not short, but, measured by the desire of men and the entire world, it was exceedingly short indeed.

Wherefore, although he created a living history unto himself so that to bear witness to future generations there is no need of written testimony, nevertheless it is commendable to relate something of his life to our descendants as much for encouragement as for fitting praise of ability. This task I have undertaken to do as briefly as possible. I did this not so much to gain renown for my pen as to place in my debt future generations who
will, I am convinced, be envious of the fortune that is ours in having seen, thanks to Bernini, the three noblest arts maintained in legitimate possession of their ancient dignity. These arts, which nearly met with complete degeneration and ruin, were reinstated in their proper place by the never sufficiently praised Michelangelo.

Pietro Bernini, the father of the Cavaliere, was a man of unusual reputation in painting and sculpture. In order to learn these arts, he left his native town of Florence when quite a young man and went to Rome, where, under the direction of Cavaliere Giuseppe d’Arpino, he worked in a praiseworthy manner in both fields, in the service of Alessandro Cardinal Farnese and many others. Because others have already written of his works and because what he accomplished is so well known, it is not necessary to speak of them.

Tempted by the hope of greater advantages, Pietro went to Naples. There he married Angelica Galante, a Neapolitan, who in addition to their other children, on the 7th of December, 1598, bore a son to whom he gave the name of Giovanni Lorenzo. This is the person of whom we shall now speak. In truth he was born through divine dispensation to fill two centuries with his brilliance for the benefit of our Italy.

It seemed as if nature had employed all the strength of her skill in this boy. She granted to him a beautiful and vivacious charm, a sparkling and impressive talent, and she made it exceedingly easy for him to learn his father’s art, which he loved beyond all measure, so that when he was eight years old he executed in marble a small head of a child to the wonder of all....

But since the father’s fame was daily spreading through Italy, when Paul V planned to have a marble group executed for the façade of the Pauline Chapel, he desired the services of such a master and obtained them from the Viceroy. Therefore when Pietro came to Rome with his numerous family and established his home here in this most celebrated capital of the world, a larger opportunity opened itself for the happy ascent of Giovanni Lorenzo's genius. For only in this city can one see the famous works of both ancient and modern painters and sculptors, as well as the priceless remains of ancient architecture, which braving time, no mean enemy, still stood as wonderful and glorious ruins. Thus it was easy for Bernini, through serious and continual study of the most noteworthy art works, especially those of the great Michelangelo and Raphael—in which is found an epitome of all that is exquisite and choice—to develop, in accordance to his talent, inspirations comparable to the lofty ones of those sublime spirits.

For this purpose he spent three continuous years from sunrise to Ave Maria closeted in the rooms of the Vatican, there drawing the finest and rarest things, trying with all his ability to attain a similarity to his models, the old masters. He immediately rose to such fame that in the academies of Rome one spoke of him as something incredible and never before seen.

The first work that came from his chisel in Rome was a marble head, now located in the church of S. Pudenziana. He was just ten years old at that time.

For this reason, the Pope, Paul V, filled with admiration at the outcry that greeted such ability, desired to see the youth. He had him brought before him and then asked Bernini in jest if he knew how to make a pen sketch of a head. Giovanni Lorenzo asked what head His Holiness wished. The Pope said that if this is so he can draw any head and ordered him to draw a head of St. Paul. In half an hour, Bernini had finished it with boldly drawn outlines, to the great delight of the Pope.

Then the Pope earnestly desired that the still delicate and youthful talent of Giovanni Lorenzo be guided by some authoritative hand in order that it might reach that degree of perfection of which it already gave promise. Therefore he entrusted the lad to the care of Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, who was fortunately in Rome at that time and who was a great lover and patron of letters and the arts. The Pope strictly ordered the Cardinal not only to watch zealously over the studies of Bernini but furthermore to see that they were done with fire and enthusiasm and made him answerable for the brilliant success that was expected of Bernini.

After encouraging the boy with affectionate words to continue with good spirit the career he had begun, the Pope gave him twelve gold medallions, which was as many as he could hold with both hands. Turning to the Cardinal, he said prophetically: "We hope that one day this boy will become the Michelangelo of his century"

The boy, instead of growing conceited over the fortunate success of his efforts and the praise of the great—as is the custom of only small spirits who are destined for everything else but the acquisition of true glory-indefatigably subjected himself to new and continuous studies. But what cannot an able spirit accomplish when fostered by wise and careful guidance! He showed his beautiful efforts to his father, who pointed out to him both the good and the bad. He praised the drawings but told his son that he would not again execute such good things, almost as if he thought that the perfection of the first work was due rather to a stroke of fortune than to his son’s skill. It was indeed a clever idea, for in this way he induced the boy to carry on a constant competition with himself. Thus it is not to be wondered at that Bernini from then on was possessed by so great a zeal and an eagerness to surpass himself that, as he confessed when he became older, whenever he compared a work with another executed later or with some new ideas that he had conceived and desired to execute, he was never entirely satisfied.

At this time the boy Bernini was so enamored of art that not only did it occupy all his intimate thought, but
furthermore, to associate with artists of the greatest reputation was his greatest pleasure. It happened one day that he was in the Basilica of St. Peter with the celebrated Annibale Carracci and other masters. After all had performed their devotions and were leaving the church, the great master turned again to the tribuna and spoke these words: "Believe me, some prodigious genius must come, whenever it may be, who shall create two great works in correct proportion to the vastness of this temple: one here in the middle and the other at the end." So much and no more sufficed to enflame Bernini with the desire that he might execute them. Unable to arrest an inner impulse, he said with all the passion of his heart: "O, would that I were he!" And so unawares, he interpreted Annibale's prophecy and himself later fulfilled it, as we shall see when we come to speak of the wondrous things that he executed for those places ....

In the meantime, when he was fifteen, Bernini did a St. Lawrence on the Grill for Leone Strozzi which was placed in his villa. For the . . . Cardinal Borghese he executed a group, rather more than lifesize, of Aeneas carrying the aged Anchises. It was the first large work he had done. Although something of the manner of Pietro, his father, is recognizable, one can perceive how from this time on by following his own excellent taste he approached more and more the sensitive and the true. This is especially evident in the head of the old man.

It is no wonder, then, that this same Cardinal immediately ordered from him a David of the same size as the first group. In this work Bernini far surpassed himself. He executed it in the space of seven months, thanks to the fact that even at that youthful age, as he later used to say, he was able to devour the marble and never make a useless stroke. Such a mastery is not usual even in men long expert in the art; but belongs only to those who have raised themselves above the art itself. The magnificent head of this figure, in which he portrayed his own features, the vigorous downwarddrawn and wrinkled eyebrows, the fierce fixed eyes, the upper lip biting the lower, expresses marvelously the righteous anger of the young Israelite taking aim at the forehead of the giant Philistine with his sling. The same resoluteness, spirit, and strength is found in every part of the body, which needs only movement to be alive. It is also worth noting that while Bernini was working on it in his likeness, the Cardinal Maffeo Barberini came often to Bernini's studio and held the mirror for him with his own hand ....

At this time Cardinal Maffeo Barberini was elevated to the Papacy [on August 6, 1623] with the name of Urban VIII. After having previously been a colleague of Gregory Ludovici in the College of the Clerics of the Apostolic Chamber, he now became his fortunate successor in this highest of offices.

Thus the widest opportunity opened itself to Bernini. For this great Pontiff had scarcely ascended the Holy Chair when he had Bernini called to him and after receiving him in an affectionate manner spoke to him in the following way:
"Great is your fortune, Cavaliere, to see the Cardinal Maffeo Barberini as Pope, but far greater is ours to have Bernini living in our Pontificate . . . ."

From the time when His Holiness, Paul V, had entrusted the supervision of this lofty genius to the Cardinal, he had lived in the expectation that Bernini would accomplish great things. Also he had conceived the ambition that Rome during his pontificate and under his influence should produce another Michelangelo. This desire was increased because he already had the magnificent suitable project in mind for the high altar in St. Peter's at the place that is called the Conferential; and also for the painting of all the Loggia della Benedizione. For this reason the Pope had given Bernini to understand that it was his wish that the artist devote a large part of his time to the study of architecture and painting in order that he might add to his other eminent gifts the knowledge of these arts. The youth was not slow in listening to the advice of his friend, the Pontiff, and undertook these studies without other masters than the ancient statues and buildings of Rome, for, he was wont to say, as many of them are found in that city as masters paid for by the young scholars.

For the space of two continuous years Bernini devoted himself to the study of painting; that is, skill in the handling of color, for he had already mastered by his intensive study the great difficulties of drawing. During this time, without neglecting the study of architecture, he executed a large number of pictures both large and small, which are splendidly exhibited today in the most celebrated galleries of Rome and other worthy places; but we will speak in detail of these in another place.

The Pope determined then to carry out his great plan for the decoration of the above-mentioned Conferential of St. Peter and St. Paul in the Vatican Basilica, and gave Bernini the commission, allowing him three hundred scudi monthly for this purpose.

Now it would seem to be my duty to give a description of the great work Bernini undertook; of the four wonderful bronze columns that support the Baldachin crowned with the beautiful ornament and finally with the cross. But I believe I need not describe either this or the other works in that church that may still be seen and that were executed by Bernini himself or from his designs ....

The Cavaliere used to say that it was due to chance that this work came out so well. He wished to infer that artistic ability alone would not have been able to supply the correct measurements and proportions under such a large dome and in so vast a space and among piers of such enormous size, had it not been that the genius and the mind of the artist knew how to conceive without any rule what that correct measure ought to be.

I must not pass over, at this point, the fountain that Bernini executed\(^5\) in the Piazza di Spagna at the
suggestion of Pope Urban, because in it, in his customary fashion, he demonstrated the brilliance of his genius. Because of the fact that there was not sufficient pressure for a fountain in the Piazza, a monument which was to give the impression of either richness or magnificence presented no small problem to any artist, no matter how skillful he might be. Bernini, therefore, made a large, beautiful basin that was to be filled with the water from the fountain. In the middle of the basin, almost as if floating on the waves of the sea, he placed a noble and gracious ship from several points of which, as from so many gun barrels, water was made to spring forth in abundance. This idea appeared so beautiful to the Pope that he designed to express it in the following beautiful verses:

Bellica Pontificum non fundit machina flammis,
Sed dulcem, belli qua pent ignis, aguam

. . . But since we speak of fountains, I shall say that it was always Bernini's opinion that in designing fountains a good architect ought to give them some real significance or at least an illusion of something noble taken from either reality or imagination. Even during the lifetime of Pope Urban, this principle was practiced by Bernini, as is seen in the beautiful fountain of Piazza Barberina executed from his design and by his chisel, in which three dolphins support a basin above which is a beautiful figure of Triton blowing a shell from which water gushes . . .

But the Pope, whose opinion of Bernini grew with every day, desired, so to speak, to immortalize him and continually urged him to marry, not so much in order that some of his children might remain in Rome as heirs of his skill as to have someone who would look after Bernini's needs so that the artist would have more time and quiet for the practice of art. Although the Cavahere disdained the idea, saying that his statues would be his children which would keep his memory alive in the world for many centuries, he finally decided to give in to the Pope's advice and reconciled himself to marriage. In the course of the year 1639, he chose from among the many excellent offers made to him the daughter of Paolo Tezio, secretary of the Congregation of the Santissima Nunziata, a good and able man. Bernini lived with his wife thirty-three years and had numerous children.

But to return, so many were the works that he executed during the lifetime of that great Pope, that in order not to tire the reader we will discuss them with brevity and without binding ourselves to chronological order. He made the designs for the Palazzo Barberini, for the Campanile of St. Peter, and for the façade of the Collegio de Propaganda Fide. This building, which was threatening to collapse, was reinforced by Bernini by such artistic means that the ornament itself served as support for the building-a thing that no one ignorant of the fact would ever suspect . . .

Ordinarily as often as a man loses what he has grown accustomed to have, or fails to obtain what he wishes, he gives way to violent feelings which, like enemies assailing a city, destroy his peace and keep him in continual torment; wherefore those are esteemed the wisest who permit themselves to be carried away the least by such passions. It seemed necessary, therefore, that a man like Bernini should be subjected to the ordeal of persecution, and that he should for a while be denied that acclaim which his talents were wont to receive, so that the world might learn thereby the constancy and other qualities of his character. These were brilliantly demonstrated both by the fortitude with which he bore so many blows and by the complete control of his feelings which enabled him to live quietly and at the same time produce the most beautiful works of his career.

These were in the first place, the design for the chapel of the Cardinal Federigo Cornaro in the Church of S. Maria della Vittoria of the Barefooted Carmelites, not far from the Porta Pia, and surpassing all, the admirable group of St. Teresa with the Angel who, while she is transported into sweetest ecstasy, wounds her heart with the arrow of divine love. This is a work which, because of its great delicacy and all its other qualities, was always an object of admiration. I shall not exert myself in praising it and shall only say that Bernini himself was accustomed to say that this was the most beautiful work that ever came from his hand . . .

So strong was the sinister influence which the rivals of Bernini exercised on the mind of Innocent X that when he planned to set up in the Piazza Navona the great obelisk brought to Rome by the Emperor Antonino Caracalla, which had been buried for a long time at Capo di Bove, for the adornment of a magnificent fountain, the Pope had designs made by the leading architects of Rome without giving an order for one to Bernini. But how eloquently does true ability plead for its possessor, and how effectively does it speak for itself! Prince Niccolò Lodovisio, whose wife was a niece of the Pope and who was at that same time an influential friend of Bernini, persuaded the latter to prepare a model. In it Bernini represented the four principal rivers of the world, the Nile for Africa, the Danube for Europe, the Ganges for Asia and the Rio della Plata for America, with a mass of broken rocks that supported the enormous obelisk. Bernini made the model and the Prince arranged for it to be carried to the Casa Pamfili in the Piazza Navona and secretly installed there in a room through which the Pope, who was to dine there on a certain day, had to pass as he left the table. On that day, which was the day of the Annunciation, after the procession, the Pope appeared and when the meal was finished he went with Cardinal Pamfili and Donna Olimpia, his sister-in-law, through that room and, on seeing such a noble creation and the sketch for such a vast monument, stopped almost in ecstasy Being a Prince of the keenest judgment and the loftiest ideas, after
admiring and praising it for more than half an hour, he burst forth, in the presence of the entire privy council, with the following words: "This is a trick of Prince Lodovisi. It will be necessary to employ Bernini in spite of those who do not wish it, for he who desires not to use Bernini's designs must take care not to see them?" He sent for Bernini immediately. With a thousand demonstrations of esteem and affection and in a majestic way, almost excusing himself, he explained the reasons and causes why Bernini had not been employed until that time. He gave Bernini the commission to make the fountain according to the model.

The sun had not yet set upon the day which was the first of Cardinal Chigi in the Highest Pontificate, when he summoned Bernini to him. With expressions of affectionate regard, he encouraged Bernini to undertake the great and lofty plans that he, the Pope, had conceived of for the greater embellishment of the Temple of God, the glory of the pontifical office, and the decoration of Rome.

This was the beginning of a new and still greater confidence that during this entire pontificate was never to be ended. The Pope wished Bernini with him every day mingling with the number of learned men he gathered around his table after dinner. His Holiness used to say that he was astonished in these discussions how Bernini, alone, was able to grasp by sheer intelligence what the others scarcely grasped after long study.

The Pope named him his own architect and the architect of the Papal Chamber, a thing which had never before happened to Bernini because each former pope had had his own family architect on whom he wished to confer the post. This practice was not observed by popes after Alexander VII because of the respect they had for Bernini's singular ability, so that he retained the office as long as he lived.

Bernini, with a monthly provision of 260 scudi from the Pope, began to build the Portico of St. Peter, which in due time he completed. For the plan of this magnificent building he determined to make use of an oval form, deviating in this from the plan of Michelangelo. This was done in order to bring it nearer to the Vatican Palace and thus to obstruct less the view of the Piazza from that part of the palace built by Sixtus V with the wing connecting with the Scala Regia. The Scala Regia is also a wonderful work of Bernini and the most difficult he ever executed, for it required him to support on piles the Sala Regia and the Paolina Chapel, which lay directly over the stairs, and also to make the walls of both rest on the vault of the stairs. Furthermore, he knew how to bring, by means of a charming perspective of steps, columns, architraves, cornices, and arches, the width of the beginning of the stairway most beautifully into harmony with the narrowness at its end. Bernini used to say that this stairway was the least bad thing he had done, when one considered what the stairway looked like before. The supporting of these walls was the boldest thing he had ever attempted, and if, before he applied himself to the task, he had read that another had done it, he would have not believed it.

It is wonderful how at this same time Bernini was able to carry forward the great work of the Portico and to apply himself also, at the order of Alexander VII, to the execution of the Cathedral of St. Peter, filling the end of that great basilica with the mighty monument in accordance with the abovementioned prophecy of Annibale Carracci. The Cathedra was supported by four great bronze colossi representing the four doctors of the church: the two Greeks, Gregorius of Nazianzen and Athanasius, and the two Latins, Augustine and Ambrose. With a singular grace they support a base on which the Cathedra lightly rests. Here one must admire the incomparable patience of Bernini, who, having made with his own hands all the clay models of this great work, found that the colossal figures were too small and did not hesitate to remake it in the exact size in which the figures now appear.

In the year 1664 of the Roman calendar, before the end of March, His Majesty the King of France, Louis XIV, decided to restore and enlarge the Louvre with regal magnificence. Plans and projects had already been made by his own architects, but wishing to satisfy his own exquisite taste, impossible unless the plan met the approval of even the most cultured eye, he wanted the opinion of our architect. M. Colbert, one of his principal ministers, was directed to write the following:

**Monsieur:**

The rare products of your genius which make you admired throughout the world and of which the King, my master, has a perfect knowledge, would not permit him to finish his superb and magnificent edifice, the Louvre, without showing the plans to a man as excellent as yourself and obtaining your opinion. Thus is it that he has commanded me to write these lines to request you particularly to give a few of those hours you spend with such glory in the embellishment of the first city of the world to view the plans which will be presented to you by Monsignor the Abbot Ellipidio Benedetti. His Majesty hopes that you will not only give him your opinion of these plans, but will also put on paper some of those admirable ideas that occur so frequently to you, and of which you have given such ample proof. He desires you to give complete credence to all the Abbot will tell you about this subject. I assure you in these few lines that I am truly,

**Monsieur,**

Your Most Humble and Obedient Servant,

Colbert
Since he had received such an order, Bernini studied the plans and went to work on designs of his own which he sent to the King, meanwhile continuing his work on the Cathedra and the Portico of St. Peter's. In proof that his design for the palace greatly pleased the King, I shall not cite the very valuable gift of his portrait studded with diamonds worth three thousand scudi, for to attempt to evaluate the King's esteem by this gift would be an obvious mistake, since it might better be interpreted as a token of the King's great generosity. The real proof of the King's esteem lies rather in the letter which he sent to the artist and still more in that written to the Pope. Both letters I shall quote . . .

Letter of His Majesty the King.
Signor Cavaliere Bernini:
I have so high a regard for your merit that I have a great desire to see and know better so illustrious a personage, provided that my wish is compatible with the service you are rendering our Holy Father, and with your own convenience. My desire prompts me to send this by special courier to Rome, to invite you to honor me with a journey to France when the Duke of Crequi, my Cousin and special Ambassador, returns. He will tell you about the urgent cause which makes me wish to see you and discuss with you your beautiful plans which you have sent me for the building of the Louvre. As to the rest, my Cousin will let you know my good intentions. I pray God that he may have Signor Bernini in his Holy custody.

From Lyon
Written in Paris, April 11, 1665
Louis

Letter of the Most Christian King to the Pope.
Most Holy Father:
Having already received by order of Your Holiness two plans for my edifice, the Louvre, by so celebrated a hand as the Cavaliere Bernini's, I should thank you for that favor rather than demand others of you. But as it is a question of a building that for many centuries has been the principal residence of Kings who are the most zealous in all Christendom for the Holy See, I believe I may dare approach Your Holiness with every confidence. I implore you, (if his service permits him) to command the Cavaliere to travel here to finish his work. The Holy Father could not grant me a greater favor under the circumstances. I shall add that there will never be anyone who will show him more veneration and sincere respect than I, Most Holy Father,
Your most devoted son,
Louis

His Majesty's letters arrived at a time when the Duke of Crequi, Royal Ambassador to Rome, had already taken leave of His Holiness and was on the point of departure. It was necessary for him to reappear at the Palace with the customary ceremony to present the letters. He went to Bernini with the same pomp, explaining that His Majesty wished him to journey to France, not only for the sake of the Louvre, but also because of his great desire for a portrait bust by him. At such a great summons, Bernini felt joy and fear at the same time. His joy persuaded him to go and reap the fruits of his long and unceasing efforts to attain this great honor the Monarch offered by calling him to his own service, but his heart failed him at the thought of exposing himself at the age of sixty-eight to the dangers of such a long journey. His great anxieties were quickly dispelled by the care, the eloquence, and the affectionate love of his dearest friend, Father Gianpaolo Oliva, General of the Company of Jesus, who was as much a credit to that noblest of all orders as he is the glory of our century. Obeying his own dictates, desiring to please the King, and urged by Cardinal Antonio Barberini in the King's name, Father Oliva persuaded Bernini to accept the invitation. He quieted with hope the Cavaliere's just fears and confirmed the belief that to obey such a summons was a beautiful act, even at the cost of one's life. Therefore we see Bernini, hesitating no longer, determined upon and ready for the journey...

But before speaking of Cavaliere Bernini's last illness, and of his death, which appeared to our eyes truly like his life, it should be stated here that although until his fortieth year-which was the year he married-he had been entangled in certain youthful affairs, it was, however, without any consequences which could have been prejudicial to his studies of art and to what the world calls "prudence." We may say with truth that not only did his marriage put an end to that manner of living, but from that time he began to behave like a religious rather than a secular man, and with such sincerity, according to what was reported to me by those who knew him well, that he
might have been admired by the most perfect monastics.

The idea of death he kept always present before his mind and on this subject he often held long discussions with his nephew, P Marchesi, the priest of the congregation of the oratory of the Chiesa Nuova, a man who is well known for his goodness and learning. With such desire did Bernini always long for the happiness of this a step that, for this sole end, he continued for forty years to frequent the special devotions celebrated for this purpose by the Jesuits in Rome. Here, too, he went twice a week to partake of the sacrament. He increased the alms which from an early age it had been his custom to give.

He lost himself in contemplation of this thought of death and in the expression of the most profound reverence and understanding that he always had of the efficacy of Christ's blood, in which he was wont to say he hoped to drown his sins. For this same reason he drew and then had printed an image of Christ crucified from whose hands and feet gushed rivers of blood which formed almost a sea while the great Queen of Heaven stands there offering it to the
Eternal Father. This same sacred meditation he also had painted on a great canvas which he wished to have hung always before his bed in life and in death.

When the time had come, I know not if I should say whether because of the great loss of strength which was to be expected or because of his longing for the eternal repose so long desired, he fell ill of a slow fever which was followed at the last by a stroke of apoplexy which then deprived him of life.

He was about to breathe his last when he made a sign to Mattia de' Rossi and Giovanni Battista Contini, who had been his pupils in architecture. Almost jokingly he expressed as best he could his amazement that they could not think of some contrivance to draw the catarrh from his throat, and pointed with his hand to a mathematical instrument for raising exceedingly heavy weights. His confessor then questioned him about the state of his soul and asked if he had any fears. He replied: "My father, I have to account to a Lord who in bestowing His goodness does not count His farthings." Then he observed that his right arm and side were somewhat incapacitated by apoplexy and added: "It is fitting that this arm should rest somewhat before death because it has worked so hard in life."

Meanwhile Rome wept for her great loss and his house was filled with persons of high rank and people of every kind seeking news of him and wishing to visit him. The Queen of Sweden, many Cardinals and the ambassadors of many princes come in person or sent messengers at least twice a day. Finally His Holiness sent Bernini his blessing, and about midnight, early on the twenty-eighth day of November, after fifteen days of illness, Bernini passed from this life to another, just nine days short of eighty-two years of age.

NOTES


2. He was employed for the decoration of the Villa of Caprarola.


4. In S. Prassede. Baldinucci confused the churches. It is on the tomb of Bishop Santoni. It is questionable that he executed it at the age of ten, as Fraschetti suggests. See Riegl. pp. 42 ff.

5. 1640.

6. "The warlike machine of the Pontiff does not pour out flames but sweet water by which it extinguishes the flames of war."

7. As a result of the necessary demolition in 1646 of the two bell towers which Bernini had built for St. Peter's, he incurred the disfavor of Innocent X.

8. Sant' Andrea al Quirinale.

June 6th [1665]. On the sixth, while the tables were being made and other things necessary for drawing were being prepared, the time was passed in conversation. As the Cavalier Bernini is a man with a famous name and a great reputation, I, in agreement with you, my very dear brother, have deemed it a useful thing for our common study and for our amusement to preserve some record of what I have heard said by him. You who have never seen him will perhaps be glad if I make a rough draft, or as the Italian painters say, a schizzo, of him and his character.

So I will tell you that the Cavalier is a man of short stature but well-proportioned, thin rather than fat, and of a fiery temperament. His face resembles an eagle's, especially the eyes. He has very long eyebrows and a large forehead that is a little caved in toward the middle and rises gently from the eyes. He is bald, and what hair he has is curly and white. By his own admission, he is sixty-five. Nevertheless, he is vigorous for that age, and walks firmly as though he were only thirty or forty. One might say that his mind is one of the most perfect nature has ever formed, for, without having studied, he has almost all the gifts which the sciences give a man. Besides, he has a fine memory, a lively and quick imagination, and his judgment seems clear and sound.

His enunciation is very beautiful and he has a special talent for explaining things with words, expressions, and gestures, and for making them vivid as well as the greatest painters have been able to do with their brushes. No doubt this is why he has succeeded so well with the comedies he has written. They have won, it is said, universal approval, and they caused a great stir in Rome because of the decorations and the astonishing contraptions he introduced, which deceived even those who had been forewarned. On every occasion Bernini likes to quote Pope Urban VIII, who loved and cherished him from his early youth. One of the first things I remember his telling me is that the Pope, at that time only a cardinal, was once at the house of Bernini's father, who was also a sculptor. After seeing a work that the Cavalier had finished at the age of eight, Cardinal Barberini (for so Urban VIII was then called) laughingly said to Bernini's father: "Signor Bernini, take care! That child will surpass you and doubtless will be more skillful than his master." He said that his father replied brusquely, "Your Eminence knows that in this game, he who loses wins."

Speaking of sculpture and of the difficulty of achieving success, especially in obtaining a resemblance in marble portraits, he told me one remarkable thing, and this he has since repeated on all occasions: that if some one whitened his hair, beard, eyebrows, and, if it were possible, the pupils of his eyes and his lips, and in that state showed himself to those who are wont to see him every day, they would scarcely recognize him. In order to prove this he added: when a person faints, the pallor alone which spreads over his face makes him almost unrecognizable, and it is often said "He no longer seems himself." It is equally difficult to achieve a likeness in a marble portrait, which is all of one color. He said another thing even more extraordinary: sometimes in order to imitate the model well it is necessary to introduce in a marble portrait something that is not found in the model. This seems to be a paradox, but he explained it thus: in order to represent the darkness that some people have around the eye, it is necessary to deepen the marble in the place where it is dark in order to represent the effect of that color and thus make up by skill, so to speak, the imperfection of the art of sculpture, which is unable to give color to objects. However, he said, the model is not the same as the imitation. Afterwards, he added a rule which, according to him, should be followed in sculpture, but of which I am not as convinced as of the preceding ones. He said: a sculptor creates a figure with one
hand held high and the other hand placed on the chest. Practice teaches that the hand in
the air must be larger and fuller than the one resting on the chest. This is because the air
surrounding the first alters and consumes something of the form or, to express it better,
something of the quantity of the form. I myself believe that this diminution would take
place in nature itself; therefore it is not necessary to represent in the figure what is not in
nature. I did not tell him so and since then I have thought that the ancients followed a rule
of making the columns which they placed at the corners of the temples one-sixteenth
larger than the others, because, as Vitruvius says, being surrounded by a large quantity of
air, which consumes their quantity, they would have appeared less large than their
neighbors, even though they were not so in reality.

Then, speaking of painting as compared to sculpture, each having its partisans
who have disputed at length in recent centuries, as much as in the time of the Greeks,
the question to which of the two arts must be given precedence and the place of honor,
the Cavalier endeavored to show by well-contrived arguments that painting is much
easier and that a great deal more effort is required to attain perfection in sculpture. In
order better to prove his proposition, he offered an example: "The King wants a beautiful
work of sculpture, and discusses it with a sculptor to whom he allows the liberty of
choosing the subject after his taste. For the task, His Majesty gives the sculptor one, two
or three years, in short as much time as he may desire to perfect his work. The King
makes the same proposition to a painter for a work of painting and allows the painter the
same freedom of time and of subject. If the painter is asked, when the time has expired
and his work is finished, whether he has put all the perfection of art of which he was
able into his work, he can freely answer in the affirmative since he has been able to
put into his painting what he knew when he began the work, but also to add what he
acquired in studying his subject during the entire time he had for the execution, whether
six months, a year, or longer. The same is not true of the sculptor, the Cavalier said, for
when his work is completed and he, too, is asked if it represents the best he could do, he
might answer negatively, and be right, that it only represents what he knew when he
began the work and that what he has learned since he could not add to this work, for he
could neither change the pose he had decided to choose at the beginning nor correct it in
accord with the progress he was making through study in his profession.

Afterwards he went from his room, where we were, onto his gallery. There he told
me that he has a gallery almost exactly like this one in his house at Rome and that it is
there that he creates most of his compositions as he walks around; that he notes on the
wall with charcoal the ideas as they come to him; that it is usual for agile and imaginative
minds to pile up thought upon thought on a subject. When a thought comes to them, they
draw it; a second comes, and they note it also; then a third and a fourth; without
discarding or perfecting any, they are always attached to the last idea by the special love
one has for novelty. What must be done to correct this fault is to let these different ideas
rest without looking at them for one or two months. After that time one is in a condition to
choose the best one. If by chance the work is urgent and the person for whom one works
does not allow so much time, it is necessary to have recourse to those glasses that change
the color of objects or those that make objects seem larger or smaller, and to
look at them [the sketches] upside down, and finally to seek through these changes in
color, size, and position to correct the illusion caused by the love for novelty, which
almost always prevents one from being able to choose the best idea.

AUGUST 19TH.

On the nineteenth, having come to the house of the Cavalier, I learned that M.
Colbert had just left; that he had brought back the plans of the Louvre and had left a
memorandum of the things necessary in the apartments for the convenience of the King,
the two queens, the Dauphin, and the officers of their retinue; and others in charge of the
kitchens, provisions, glasses, the five pantries, the offices and rooms for the tables of the
Grand Maître, chamberlain, maîtres, etc.; also of the things necessary for the construction
of a water reservoir from which water could be pumped in case of fire, and of room for
storing the implements necessary in case of such an accident; a plan for the banquet and
ballrooms, and for the adaptation of the theater room; for a large armory in the Louvre.

At noon M. Villeroï came to see the bust (our fig. 5) in the southern apartment and served as an advance courier for the King, who came subsequently with a great crowd. The Cavalier had begun to give form to the nose, which was as yet only blocked in. M. de Creviqui came forward to whisper in the King's ear. The Cavalier said laughingly, "These gentlemen have the King with them at their pleasure all day and they do not wish to leave him to me even a half-hour; I am tempted to do a caricature portrait of one of them." No one understood the remark. I said to the King that those were portraits in which the resemblance was in the ugly and the ridiculous. Monsignor Butti took up the conversation and remarked that the Cavalier was excellent at that sort of portraiture and that one should be shown to His Majesty. As a portrait of a woman was mentioned, the Cavalier said, "One must make a caricature of women only at night." M. de Prince, who was there, affirmed that under the hand of the Cavalier the resemblance of the bust to the King increased from one time to the next. The Marshal de Villeroï agreed. After three quarters of an hour, His Majesty left, saying to the Cavalier that he would not come back the next day but that on the following Thursday he would sit for him two or three hours. As he left the room, Madame de la Baume approached the King, who stationed himself near a window and gave her an audience of a good quarter of an hour. Then M. Colbert gave her a long audience too, after which he came to see the bust and remained in the room for some time. I told him that I had taken the Cavalier to Vincennes and that he was pleased by it, that he had said that the King was nowhere so well lodged and that he had thought the woodcarving, the gilding and the pictures very beautiful.

After Colbert had gone, the Cavalier said it would be enough for the King to come twice more; however, if His Majesty wished to come more often, the bust would not only resemble him but would be a speaking image of him. I forgot to say that Varin was there the entire time the Cavalier was working. Every one questioned Varin about the bust. He said to me that he believed the Cavalier had removed too much from the forehead and that it was impossible to replace marble. I assured him that this was not so and that the Cavalier's intention was to make the part of the forehead above the eyes very high, it being so in the model apart from the fact that one sees this treatment of the forehead in all the beautiful antique heads; and that the Cavalier and I had discussed the point at the beginning of the work.

In the afternoon, M. le Nonce came. Lefebvre, the painter, came with him. They admired the resemblance of the bust. After having studied it from all sides, Lefebvre exclaimed that even in the back there was a resemblance. Hearing this, the Cavalier said something worthy of note: that in the evening, if a candle is placed behind some one in such a way that his shadow falls on a wall, one will recognize the person from the shadow, for it is true that no one's head is set on his shoulders in the same way as another's. The same is true of the rest of the body. The first thing the artist must consider in working for a resemblance is the general impression of the person rather than the details.

In the morning, the Cavalier had told me he had observed, while working on the King's nose, that His Majesty's was of a peculiar shape, the lower part which joins the cheek being narrower than the front of the nose. This observation would aid in the resemblance.

SEPTEMBER 5TH.

On the fifth the Cavalier worked as usual, and in the evening he went to the Academy MM. du Metz, Nocret, and de Sève, as delegates of the group, came to receive him at the street door. The Cavalier went first to the place where one draws from the models, who when they saw him assumed the poses assigned them. After remaining there sometime, he went into the hall where the academic lectures are held. The place of honor was offered him, but he did not wish to occupy it. The assembly was very large. M. Eliot, counselor at the Cour des aides, was there. The Cavalier glanced at the pictures in the hall which did not happen to be of the greatest value. He also looked at some bas-reliefs by some sculptors of the Academy. Afterwards, standing in the center of the
hall surrounded by all members of the entire Academy, he said that in his opinion there
should be in the Academy casts of all the beautiful antique statues, bas-reliefs, and busts
for the instruction of the young students, who should be required to draw in the antique
style in order to form first from these works the idea of beauty which would then serve
them all their life. The students would, in his opinion, be ruined if at the beginning they
were set to draw from nature, for nature is almost always feeble and trifling. As a result,
their imagination being filled only with the model in nature, they would never be able to
produce anything great or beautiful which is not found in nature. Those who make use of
nature should be sufficiently skilful to recognize its defects and correct them. Young
people with no background are incapable of doing this. To prove his contention, he said
that sometimes parts in the model that appear in relief should not be so and other parts
that should be in relief do not appear so at all. He who possesses a good sense of
design, disregards what the model shows when it should not appear in the work of art
and emphasizes what ought to be there but does not appear in the model. He also said
that a young man who has never possessed a knowledge of the beautiful is not capable
of doing this. The Cavalier said that when he was very young he often drew from the
antique and that in the first figure he did, when he was not sure of something he went to
consult the Antinous as his oracle, and he noticed from day to day beauties in this figure
which he had never seen and never would have seen had not he himself been working
with a chisel. For this reason he always advised his students and all others not to
abandon themselves so much to drawing and modelling that they did not work at the
same time either in sculpture or painting, combining production and copying, or, so to
speak, action and contemplation from which procedure progress results. I cited as an
example, the better to confirm that actual work with the material is absolutely necessary,
the late Antoine Carlier, known to most of the Academy, who had spent a good part of his
life in Rome modelling in an incomparable fashion all the beautiful antiques, and I made
them [the Academicians] confess that, as he had begun too late to work from his
imagination, his genius had become sterile through the slavery of imitation, and it then
became impossible for him to produce any original work. With regard to painters, the
Cavalier added that besides drawings that could be made from antique bas-reliefs and
statues, it was also necessary to help the students by providing copies of the artists who
painted in the grand manner, like Giorgione, Pordenon, Titian, and Paul Veronese, rather
than Raphael, even though he was the most correct of all. It has been said of this painter
that no one else was comparable to him in composition because he had had for friends
Bembo and Balthazar Castiglione, who helped him by their knowledge and their genius.
Then the Cavalier said that it was an Academic question whether a painter should allow a
picture to be seen as soon as it was finished, or whether it would not be better to put it
away for awhile, and then look at it again before exhibiting it to the public. It was Annibale
Carracci's choice to exhibit a picture immediately in order to learn its faults—whether it was
too dry, too hard or had other errors—so as to correct them. The Cavalier added that in
order to stimulate competition in the Academy it was good to give prizes as Cardinal
Barberini gave in the Academy in Rome, of which he [Bernini] was a member. The prize
to whoever does the best drawing ought to be an order for a picture from the drawing,
and it should be liberally paid for and similarly the sculptor who made the best model
should receive an order for a statue for the Louvre and should be well paid for it. And
then he said that, having worked nearly sixty years, he could give a little advice. I
answered that it was true and that a man of his genius and experience who would speak
frankly would do more good in an hour of instruction than many years of research and
study. M. Le Brun arrived at that moment. The Cavalier greeted him courteously and
went on to say that three things were necessary for success in sculpture and painting: to
see the beautiful early and accustom oneself to it, to work hard, and to have good advice.
A man who had worked hard was able with very few words to save one a lot of trouble
and to point out corrections and short-cuts. He repeated that Annibale Carracci believed
in exhibiting a picture to public criticism as soon as it was completed, for the public was
not deceived, did not flatter, and never failed to say, "It is dry, it is hard," when it was. He
added that it was necessary for each person to correct the fault he may have by its
Opposite, the sober by the easy going, the meager and feeble by the bulky and substantial, the airy by the sober. Some one then showed him the Crucifixion by Sarrazin, which he contemplated and then said that it was beautiful, but it was done in such a way that one sees to see a body slumping under the impact of torture. From the Scripture, one learns that the body of Our Lord was pulled with ropes to stretch it; thus the body could not slump as it does in that crucifix.

Then he returned to the place where the models were and saw the drawing of two or three academicians, among others, one by a young boy ten or twelve years old which he found very advanced. He said to me, in a low voice, that one should not study by lamp in the summer because of the heat, but by the light of day.

Afterwards, he took leave of the entire Academy, which descended to see him out, and among the others MM. du Metz and Perrault, who had arrived in the meantime.

**OCTOBER 6TH**

On the sixth, I did not go to the Cavalier’s house until the afternoon. He was still resting, I found a great crowd looking at the bust, among others Madame Colbert. I had given the order for the King’s carriage to come to the Cavalier’s house as he had requested.

... The Nuncio and the Ambassador having left, we went to the Louvre. There the Cavalier requested me to learn if the King was in council so that he might see, if His Majesty had gone out, whether there would be an advantageous place for the bust in his apartment. The King was in council; so we went to the new apartment of the Queen Mother, where Bernini had planned to place the bust on the platform for the audiences and the little Christ in the cabinet behind. From there we went to see the Queen and then the Cavalier came back, as M. Perrault[1] had sent word that he would come at five o’clock. Not finding him there, Bernini asked me to go with him to the Feuillants. When we returned we found M. Perrault. My brother, who desired to be present, was with us. The Cavalier said that he hoped the foundation [of the Louvre] would be ready on Saturday so that the first stone could be laid. M. Perrault replied that the coins [to be buried in the foundation] would not be ready for that day. The Cavalier replied that they would go under other stones, that he wished to leave the following Tuesday because of the cold.

M. Perrault talked to him of the arches of the kitchen court façade and the difficulty there would be in closing them. The Cavalier took a pencil and showed in what manner it should be done. I said that these were little difficulties that were not pressing and there would be time to think of them in three or four years; that in the new apartment of the Queen Mother were similar arches for which frames had been made. Perrault replied that this had been done with the greatest difficulty. I repeated that these were all minor matters that were in no way pressing, that all was clear in the plan. M. Perrault told me that he had a notebook full of the difficulties which were to be faced. The Cavalier had the plan brought so that Perrault could show the things he wished explained. There was one matter that deserved explanation, Perrault said: not only he but a hundred others would like to know why this part of the new pavilion on the river side is smaller than the other, that being contrary to symmetry and having no relation to the dome in the middle of this façade. From Perrault’s pointing to the plan, and from what he [Bernini] had understood of the conversation, although he does not know French, he had grasped that Perrault was talking of his work and asserting that there was a fault in the design. He looked at two Italians who were there and told them to go away. Then he took the pencil and said that if he had drawn this new part of the pavilion on the level of the angle of the façade it would have been a gross error; it sufficed that there should be a relation between this part of the pavilion and the other, although this part was not so large; he wished Perrault to know that it was not for him to make these difficulties; he was ready to listen to discussions on the convenience of the palace, but for the composition of the design, it must be someone cleverer than he (the Cavalier pointed with his finger to himself) who tried to correct it; in this matter Perrault was not worthy to clean the soles of his shoes; but this was not the question of the moment; his design had pleased the King; he would make his complaints to the King, and presently he was going to M. Colbert to tell him of
the insult he had received. M. Perrault, seeing that the Cavalier took the matter in this way, was very much alarmed. He begged me to soothe the Cavalier and to make him understand that he did not seek to find fault with the Cavalier's work, but to have some reply ready for those who would make the same objection. This I told the Cavalier. I begged him to consider that if he brought the matter to this point he would deprive a young man of his career, and I implied that the Cavalier was too good to wish to be the cause of M. Perrault's disgrace. His son and Signor Mathie, who were there, tried to appease him, but it was useless. He went into the other room, saying that he was going to see now M. Colbert, now the Nuncio. M. Perrault begged me to make the Cavalier understand that he had had no intention of hurting him. "That a man of my sort," said the Cavalier to himself, "I, whom the Pope treats with consideration and for whom he has respect, that I should be treated thus! I will complain of it to the King; even if my life is at stake, I shall leave tomorrow. I do not know why I should not take a hammer to the bust after such an insult. I am going to see the Nuncio." As he walked away I begged Signor Mathie to stop him. He told me in a low voice to let him spend his anger; that I should trust him to smooth things over. Signor Paul also made excuses to the Cavalier for Perrault when he implored him to do so, saying that what Perrault had said was without any intention of giving offense. Finally the Cavalier, instead of leaving to go to the Nuncio as was his intention, was led upstairs. My brother and I went to accompany M. Perrault to M. Colbert's house. He told us he was going to inform him of the Cavalier's anger. I replied that he had better refrain from doing so, and that he should find out first if the affair could be quieted. He should not speak of it to anyone and my brother and I would not speak of it either. He begged us to leave it this way.

OCTOBER 10TH.

On the tenth when I went to the Cavalier's house, I found Signor Paul leaving to see M. Colbert. On his return, he said M. Colbert was going to the Louvre. The Cavalier, having heard from someone that the Prince was here, wished to go to his lodgings to see his Highness, but he was not in Paris, and the Duke had just left for Chantilly to see his father. From there we went to the Gobelins, where M. Le Brun received the Cavalier. First he gazed intently at a tapestry design of an *Endymion in the Arms of Sleep*. He said it was in good taste and praised it highly. Then he saw the two great pictures of the *Battle of the Granicus* and the *Triumph of Alexander*. After the Cavalier had studied them intently, M. Le Brun had the picture of the *Battle of the Granicus* taken in the courtyard, as he had done when the King was at the Gobelins. The Cavalier looked at it for a long time, withdrawing from it as far as he could. Afterwards he said several times, "It is beautiful, it is beautiful." Canvas had been placed above as a ceiling to focus the vision. He had it removed and looked at the picture again for a long time. He had previously seen the great picture by Paolo Veronese which the Venetians gave to the King and which was formerly at the Servites Convent in Venice. He returned to look at it and found some admirably painted heads, which he said were portraits of the Senators of that time and even of the Doge. He praised its grand execution, but he found in this work several bungled parts, and some poorly drawn hands. He said the Magdalen at the feet of our Lord was painted with marvelous plasticity but from the waist down the figure was not well drawn; the leg of Christ nearest the beholder was entirely wrong, and the arm and right hand were equally bungled. He admired above all a figure seated at the table near Christ, which one only sees from the rear. M. Le Brun pointed out to me that there were several points of view in the picture and that, even though the horizon is lower than the table, one nevertheless sees the top of the table; that the buildings were not correctly drawn in relation to this horizon and that they were not painted by Paolo Veronese. He said the King on seeing this picture praised the Magdalen and found the right part of the picture the most beautiful, which is correct. Afterwards, we saw another picture by Paolo Veronese, which had belonged to M. Fouquet, in which is portrayed an Andromeda Rescued by Perseus. It is well painted, as are most of the works by this painter. But the Cavalier thought that the Perseus is in a strange position, as though squatting. I pointed out that the left leg of the Andromeda seemed very badly drawn.
The Cavalier drew Le Brun to one side, gave him some information, then said to him, "I have told you this honestly, for to a man who possesses eighteen out of twenty parts one can say what one sees, but to those who lack eighteen out of twenty one has nothing to say. Annibale Carracci was right in saying often: 'One should speak to him who knows, not to him who doesn't know.'" The Cavalier went on to say that a rather talented sculptor one day begged Michelangelo Buonarroti to come to his studio to see a figure he had made. While Michelangelo looked at it—the light not being as the sculptor would have desired—he now shut one window, then opened another, and because of the sun did not find a light such as he would have wished to illuminate his figure. Michelangelo, seeing this, said to him: "There is no light better than in the place where the statue will stand. There the people will see it and they will say whether it is good."

The Cavalier was shown the drawings copied from the *Triumph of Alexander* by an eleven-year-old boy. He found them very good and was astonished that at that age the lad should be so advanced. They brought him some of the boy's original drawings, which amazed him even more. The Cavalier said that the boy should be helped, sent to Italy, and kept there for nine or ten years. After the boy showed him some of his academy drawings, the Cavalier said: "It spoils young men to make them draw so soon from life when they are not yet capable of choosing the beautiful and leaving the ugly, the more so since the models available in France are not very good." He said that the King should send for some models and that they should be chosen from the Levantine slaves. He said that the Greeks had the bestformed bodies and that they could be bought. Turning to me, he told me he had forgotten to put that in his recommendations for the Academy, and that it should be added to them. The Cavalier sent Signor Paul, who had accompanied him, to see the places where the Gobelins are made.

"Do you think," I asked him, "a picture of Annibale Carracci would not be more praiseworthy?" The Cavalier replied that it would be, and by far; that if Annibale had lived at the time of Raphael, he would have given cause for jealousy to him and, with greater reason, to Paolo Veronese, Titian, and Correggio, all of whom had been colorists. Michelangelo was right in saying that God had not permitted these men to know how to draw, for then they would have been supermen. The Cavalier added that if the pictures of all the masters were compared to those of Raphael it would be seen that Raphael's were of uniform excellence, whereas in those of the others there would be many parts worth consideration. Raphael had precision in drawing, clever composition, dignity in drapery, grace, beautiful adornments, beautiful and symmetrical disposition of figures according to perspective, none of which the others had had. In truth Raphael had lacked the beautiful color of the Lombards, but they on their part lacked proportion, drawing and dignity in drapery. One sees that Poussin, who was the most learned and the greatest painter, after having imitated Titian for a time finally focussed on Raphael, thereby showing that he esteemed Raphael above the others. Monsignor Butti said that he had seen Poussin's beautiful picture *Germanicus*.

The Cavalier said, "You should see those M. Chantelou has: they are something different. He has seven representing the 'Sacraments' which I could look at for six months without tiring." Monsignor Butti asked their size. He said, "Of ordinary size with figures two feet in height. Nothing is more beautiful than that. There is a man who based his study on the antique and who in addition had great genius. I have always held him in high regard and because of it I have made enemies in Rome. You must see them," the Cavalier continued to Monsignor Butti, "he has done, however, some things since that are not equal to those: the picture of the *Adulterous Woman*, the *Flight into Egypt* that I saw at that merchant's, and your *Samaritan* (turning toward me) no longer have this force. A man should know when to stop."

I forgot to mention that he said that Paolo Veronese and Titian sometimes took their brushes and executed things they had not planned, letting themselves be carried away by a kind of frenzy of painting; that was the cause of the marked differences among their works; those of them which had been carefully handled were incomparable while others sometimes were only color without composition or thought. The Queen of Sweden had nine or ten good and bad Paolo Veroneses, and there were only three truly good ones among them.
The Cavalier said that as most of the time nature is not beautiful, he had had
brought to him from Civitavecchia and from the Marches of Ancona some of those
Levantines to serve as models, and he considered himself fortunate to have found them.
There was a general rule to give to those who were drawing from nature: to be on their
guard and examine the model well, to draw the legs long rather than short, for the little
more you give them augments the beauty, and the little less makes the figure awkward
and heavy; it is always necessary to add a little more width to the shoulders of the man,
rather than depict the narrowness observed in nature; to make the head a little smaller
rather than large; in women, the shoulders should be a little narrower than one sees in
nature, God having given to men width in the shoulders for strength and for work, and
width in the hips to women so they may be able to carry us in their flanks. One should
make feet small rather than too large; this is observed in beautiful models and in the
ancient ones. He repeated that the King should have some models brought from Greece.
He would put it on the list of recommendations he had made for the Academy.
Furthermore, the heads of the Academy should give lectures for the instruction of the
young students and should vary them according to the different classes, of which there
should be three. He said, speaking of the students’ drawings which he had just seen, that
he had found through his study one factor of the greatest importance in the posing of
figures: namely, their distribution of weight; rarely does a man, if he is not too old, put his
weight on both legs, one should therefore represent the weight of the body as really
resting on one leg and the shoulder on the side of the supporting leg should be lower
than the other shoulder, and if an arm has been raised it should always be on the
opposite side to the leg which supports the body; otherwise there is no grace in the
drawing, and nature is forced. In his studies of the beautiful antique statues, he had found
them all posed thus.

M. du Metz, who was there, said he would remember these beautiful
observations. I said it was of great benefit to those who studied art to have such good
teaching, for it would shorten the years that they would have to devote, perhaps
fruitlessly, to their studies; that there were few persons who were not jealous of their
particular knowledge; the general rules of art were taught enough, but the ones the
particular artist had made for himself were never or very rarely taught; we were greatly
obliged to the Cavalier for speaking so openly. The Cavalier replied that what we have is
given us by God and to teach it to others is to return it to Him; there are three things: “to
see, to listen to great men, and to practice.”

The little Blondeau showed him some of his academy studies. The Cavalier
found them quite good for a young man. "But you must go to Rome," he said to him. "At
this age young men should go to Rome, for the trip must be made before they are twenty,
but they should not be too young either." He said Annibale Carracci had advised him
when he himself was young to draw for at least two years from the judgment of
Michelangelo in order to learn the rhythm of the muscles; later when he was drawing from
nature at the Academy, Scivoli, watching him draw, said, "You are a clever one. You do
not draw what you see. This is from Michelangelo." It was the result of the study he had
done before ....

NOTES
The text was first published by L. Lalanne, "Journal du voyage du Cavalier Bernin en France,"
Gazette des beaux-arts, xv-xxxii,1877-1885.
See also: Henri Chardon, Les Frères Fréart de Chantelou, Le Mans, 1867; L. Mirot, "Le Bernin en
2. Marshal of France: Nicole de Villeroi (1598-1685)
3. Claude Perrault (1613-88) succeeded Bernini. His plan for the columned façade of the Louvre
189-190.
5. Death of Germanicus painted for Cardinal Barberini, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Exact
dating disputed, c. 1627.

7. These pictures are no longer extant.

Ovid, Daphne and Apollo

EXCERPT FROM THE METAMORPHOSES, C. 1 AD

Every courtier invited to the lavish Borghese villa in Rome would have known and perhaps been able to recite the lines from the epic poem by Ovid (43 BCE-17CE?) that gave rise to Bernini’s extraordinary sculpture of Apollo and Daphne. Ovid was a leading poet of ancient Rome, but his Metamorphoses provided much inspiration for seventeenth-century Rome as well: poets and musicians were quick to adapt his themes for their dramatic performances. Paintings of Daphne’s transformation into a laurel tree were commonplace, but sculptors had yet to tackle the subject. Bernini, ever ready to demonstrate his virtuosity, effected a double transformation, as cold hard marble became an image of soft flesh, itself springing roots and sprouting leaves.

The sculpture finds a visual as well as a textual source in antiquity: the famed Apollo Belvedere, star of the papal collections in Rome, underpins Bernini’s figure of the young god. The Apollo and Daphne was an instant sensation upon its installation in the Borghese villa, where visitors might also have been invited to stroll through a laurel grove planted outside the windows.

Other animals of different kinds were produced by the earth, of its own accord, when the long-lingering moisture was warmed through by the rays of the sun. Then the mud and soggy marshes swelled under the heat, and fertile seeds, nourished in the life-giving earth as in a mother’s womb, grew and in the fullness of time acquired a definite shape. This is what happens when the Nile, the river with seven mouths, recedes from the flooded fields and returns its streams to their original bed. The new mud becomes burning hot under the sun’s rays, and the farmers, as they turn over the sods of earth, come upon many animals. Among these creatures they see some just begun, but already on the point of coming alive, others unfinished, lacking their full complement of limbs; and often in one and the same body one part is alive, while another is still only raw earth. Indeed, when heat and moisture have reached the proper balance, they bring forth life, and all things are born from these two elements. Although fire and water are always opposites, none the less moist heat is the source of everything, and this discordant harmony is suited to creation.

So when the earth, all muddied by the recent flood, grew warm again, under the kindly radiance of the sun in heaven, she brought forth countless forms of life. In some cases she reproduced shapes which had been previously known, others were new and strange. It was at that time that she gave birth to the huge Python, among the rest, though indeed she had no wish to do so; and this snake, whose body covered so great a stretch of the hillside, struck terror into the newborn race of men, for they had never known its like. The archer god, Apollo, who had never before used such weapons against anything but fleeing deer or timid wild goats, almost emptied his quiver to destroy the serpent, overwhelming it with a thousand arrows, till the venom flowed out from all its dark wounds. Then, in case the passage of time should blot out the memory of his glorious deed, the god established sacred games, which he called Pythian, after the serpent he had vanquished. Contests of many kinds were held at these games, and when the young athletes had been successful there in wrestling, running, or chariot-racing, they received a wreath of oak-leaves as a prize. There was no laurel in those days, and any tree served to provide the garland which Phoebus wore around his temples, to crown his handsome flowing locks.
Daphne, the daughter of Peneus, was Phoebus' first love, and it was not blind chance which brought this about, but Cupid's savage spite. Not long before, the Delian god, still exultant over his slaying of the serpent, had seen Cupid bending his taut bow, and had said: 'You naughty boy, what have you to do with a warrior's arms? Weapons such as these are suited to my shoulders: for I can aim my shafts unerringly, to wound wild beast or human foe, as I lately slew the bloated Python with my countless arrows, though it coveted so many acres with its pestilential coils. You be content with your torch to excite love, whatever that may be, and do not aspire to praises that are my prerogative.' But Venus' son replied: 'Your bow may pierce everything else, Phoebus, but mine will pierce you: and as all animals are inferior to the gods, your glory is to that extent less than mine.'

With these words he swiftly winged his way through the air, till he alighted on the shady summit of Parnassus. From his quiver, full of arrows, he drew two darts, with different properties. The one puts love to flight, the other kindles it. That which kindles love is golden, and shining, sharp-tipped; but that which puts it to flight is blunt, its shaft tipped with lead. With this arrow the god pierced the nymph, Peneus' daughter, but Apollo he wounded with the other, shooting it into the marrow of his bones. Immediately the one fell in love; the other, fleeing the very word 'lover,' took her delight in woodland haunts and in the spoils of captured beasts, emulating Diana, the maiden goddess, with her hair carelessly caught back by a single ribbon.

Many a suitor wooed her but, turning away from their entreaties, she roamed the pathless woods, knowing nothing of men, and caring nothing for them, heedless of what marriage or love or wedded life might be. Again and again her father said: 'It is your duty to marry and give me a son-in-law, my child.' Often he repeated: 'My child, it is your duty to give me grandchildren.' But she blushed, hating the thought of marriage as if it were some crime. The modest colour crimsoned her fair face and, throwing her arms round her father's neck, she cried imploringly: 'My dear, dear father, let me enjoy this state of maiden bliss for ever! Diana's father granted her such a boon in days gone by!' Her father did, indeed, yield to her request, but her very loveliness prevented her from being what she desired, and her beauty defeated her own wishes.

As soon as Phoebus saw Daphne, he fell in love with her, and wanted to marry her. His own prophetic powers deceived him and he hoped to achieve his desire. As the light stubble blazes up in a harvested field, or as the hedge is set alight, if a traveller chance to kindle a fire too close, or leaves one smouldering when he goes off at daybreak, so the god was all on fire, his whole heart was aflame, and he nourished his fruitless love on hope. He eyed her hair as it hung carelessly about her neck, and sighed: 'What if it were properly arranged!' He looked at her eyes, sparkling bright as stars, he looked at her lips, and wanted to do more than look at them. He praised her fingers, her hands and arms, bare almost to the shoulder. Her hidden charms he imagined lovelier still.

But Daphne ran off, swifter than the wind's breath, and did not stop to hear his words, though he called her back: 'I implore you, nymph, daughter of Peneus, do not run away! Though I pursue you, I am no enemy. Stay, sweet nymph! You flee as the lamb flees the wolf, or the deer the lion, as doves on fluttering wings fly from an eagle, as all creatures flee their natural foes! But it is love that drives me to follow you. Alas, how I fear lest you trip and fall, lest briers scratch your innocent legs, and I be the cause of your hurting yourself. These are rough places through which you are running-go less swiftly, I beg of you, slow your flight, and I in turn shall pursue less swiftly!'

'Yet stay to inquire whose heart you have charmed. I am no peasant, living in a mountain hut, nor am I a shepherd or boorish herdsman who tends his flocks and cattle in these regions. Silly girl, you do not know from whom you are fleeing: indeed, you do not, or else you would not flee. I am lord of Delphi, Claros, and Tenedos, and of the realms of Patara too. I am the son of Jupiter. By my skill the past, the present, and the future are revealed; thanks to me, the lyre strings thrill with music. My arrow is sure, though there is one surer still, which has wounded my carefree heart. The art of medicine is my invention, and men the world over give me the name of healer. All the properties of
herbs are known to me: but alas, there are no herbs to cure love, and the skill which helps others cannot help its master.’

He would have said more, but the frightened maiden fled from him, leaving him with his words unfinished; even then, she was graceful to see, as the wind bared her limbs and its gusts stirred her garments, blowing them out behind her. Her hair streamed in the light breeze, and her beauty was enhanced by her flight. But the youthful god could not endure to waste his time on further blandishments and, as love itself prompted, sped swiftly after her. Even so, when a Gallic hound spies a hare in some open meadow he tries by his swiftness to secure his prey, while the hare, by her swiftness, seeks safety: the dog, seemingly just about to fasten on its quarry, hopes at every moment that he has her, and grazes her hind quarters with outstretched muzzle, but the hare, uncertain whether she has not already been caught, snatches herself out of his very jaws, and escapes the teeth which almost touch her.

Thus the god and the nymph sped on, one made swift by hope and one by fear; but he who pursued was swifter, for he was assisted by love’s wings. He gave the fleeing maiden no respite, but followed close on her heels, and his breath touched the locks that lay scattered on her neck, till Daphne’s strength was spent, and she grew pale and weary with the effort of her swift flight. Then she saw the waters of the Peneus: ‘O father,’ she cried, ‘help me! If you rivers really have divine powers, work some transformation, and destroy this beauty which makes me please all too well!’ Her prayer was scarcely ended when a deep languor took hold on her limbs, her soft breast was enclosed in thin bark, her hair grew into leaves, her arms into branches, and her feet that were lately so swift were held fast by sluggish roots, while her face became the treetop. Nothing of her was left, except her shining loveliness.

Even as a tree, Phoebus loved her. He placed his hand against the trunk, and felt her heart still beating under the new bark. Embracing the branches as if they were limbs he kissed the wood: but, even as a tree, she shrank from his kisses. Then the god said: ‘Since you cannot be my bride, surely you will at least be my tree. My hair, my lyre, my quivers will always display the laurel. You will accompany the generals of Rome, when the Capitol beholds their long triumphal processions, when joyful voices raise the song of victory. You will stand by Augustus’ gateposts too, faithfully guarding his doors, and keeping watch from either side over the wreath of oak leaves that will hang there. Further, as my head is ever young, my tresses never shorn, so do you also, at all times, wear the crowning glory of never-fading foliage.’ Paean, the healer, had done: the laurel tree inclined her newmade branches, and seemed to nod her leafy top, as if it were a head, in consent.

There is a grove in Haemonia, shut in on every side by steep wooded slopes. Men call it Tempe. Through this grove flow the foaming waters of Peneus, gushing out from the bottom of Pindus’ range. As the river roars downwards, it gathers mists of light spray, and scatters its drops on the treetops. The noise of its waters wearies the ear, far beyond its own neighbourhood. This was the home, the dwelling, the most secret haunt of the great river. Sitting here, in a cave hewn out of the cliffs, he was dispensing justice to the waves and to the nymphs who inhabited his stream.

To this spot there came first the rivers of his own country-Spercheus, poplar-fringed, the neverresting Enipeus, old Apidanus, gentle Amphrysus, and Aeas: none of them knowing whether to congratulate or to console with Daphne’s father. Then all the other rivers came, all the streams which, wherever their course has carried them, at last bring down their waters, weary with wandering, to the sea.

Only Inachus was not present, but remained hidden away in the depths of his cave, swelling his stream with tears, and in utter misery lamenting the loss of his daughter Io. He did not know whether she was alive or among the Judges of the dead: but since he could not find her anywhere he assumed that she was nowhere to be found, and his heart feared worse than he knew.

Jupiter had caught sight of her as she was returning from her father’s stream, and had said: ‘Maiden, you are fit for Jupiter himself to love, and will make someone divinely happy when you share his couch. Now, while the sun is at its zenith, seek shelter
from its heat in the depths of the greenwood,‘and he indicated the shady grove—do not be afraid to go alone into the haunts of wild beasts: you will be safe, though you make your way into the very heart of the forest, for you will be under the protection of a god; no common god at that, but the one who holds heaven's great sceptre, and launches the roving thunderbolt. Do not run away from me!’—for the girl was already fleeing. She had left the pasture lands of Lerna behind her, and the Lyrcean fields, thickly planted with trees, when the god spread darkness over the wide earth, concealing it from view. Then he halted the maiden's flight, and robbed her of her maidenhood.

Meanwhile Juno looked down over the heart of Argos, and wondered that floating clouds should give the appearance of night during the bright daytime. She realized that these were no river mists, nor were they exhaled from the damp earth. She looked round to see where her husband was: for by now she knew well the deceptions practised by that husband, who had so often been caught behaving as he ought not. When she could not find him in the sky, 'Unless I am mistaken,' she said, 'he is doing me some wrong.' Then, gliding down from high heaven, she stood on earth and bade the clouds disperse.

Jupiter had sensed his wife's arrival before she appeared, and had changed Inachus' daughter into a sleek heifer. Even as a cow she was lovely. Juno, though against her will, admired the look of the animal, and inquired whose it was, where it came from, and from what herd—as if she did not know the truth! Jupiter lied to her, and to stop her asking further questions about its parentage, said that it had been born of the earth. Then Saturn's daughter asked to have it as a present. What was he to do? It would be cruel to hand over his darling to another, but not to give her looked suspicious. On the one hand shame persuaded him to yield, but on the other love made him reluctant. His love would have triumphed over his sense of shame: but if a gift as trivial as a cow were refused to one who was his sister and his wife, it might seem to be more than a cow.

"The Fall of Icarus & Daphne and Apollo" is reprinted from Metamorphoses by Ovid, Mary M. Innes, trans., Copyright ©1955 Penguin Books.
Saint Teresa of Avila

Saint Teresa (1515-1582) was a mystic and an active reformer of the Catholic church in her native Spain. With unparalleled concreteness, she described and analyzed the intense bliss of her mystic visions in her "Life," a spiritual autobiography. Teresa's text demonstrates how the love poetry of troubadours was often recycled by religious mystics, who replaced the name of a human beloved with the name of God.

To reveal an inner, spiritual state through visual form is one of the fundamental challenges of art, and around 1647 Bernini was given the commission to make Teresa's divine rapture visible to all. The setting was the Cornaro family chapel in Rome, the patron perhaps hoping that the ecstasy that the saint experienced in life would be his in the afterlife. In essence, Bernini's sculpture is an illustration of Teresa's text, but it is also an exercise in devotion designed to convince us of the truth of her vision.

Teresa was canonized in 1622, the same year as Saint Ignatius Loyola. The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, a book Bernini read many times, urges that we seek the divine through essentially visual means, conjuring up images of the holy persons in order to converse with them. Bernini often said his sculpture of Saint Teresa was the most beautiful thing he had ever done.

EXEMPLARY FROM THE LIFE OF
SAINT TERESA OF AVILA BY HERSELF, 1562-65

She treats of the difference between union and rapture, and explains what a rapture is. She also says something about the good that a soul derives from being, by the Lord's goodness, brought to it. She speaks of its effects:

I wish that I could explain, with God's help, the difference between union and rapture, or elevation, or flight of the spirit or transport-for they are all one. I mean that these are all different names for the same thing, which is also called ecstasy. It is much more beneficial than union, its results are much greater, and it has very many other effects as well. Union seems to be the same at the beginning, the middle, and the end, and is altogether inward. But the ends of rapture are of a much higher nature, and their effects are both inward and outward. As the Lord has explained things hitherto, let Him do so now. For if His Majesty had not shown me ways and means of saying something, I certainly should never have found any.

Let us now reflect that this last water of which I have spoken is so abundant that, if the ground did not refuse to receive it, we might suppose the cloud of His great Majesty to be with us here on earth. But when we are thanking Him for this great blessing, and drawing near to Him by means of such works as are in our power, the Lord catches up the soul just as one might say the clouds gather up the mists of the earth, and carries it right out of itself just as I have heard it said the clouds or the sun actually do catch up the mists. Then the cloud rises to heaven, taking the soul with it, and begins to show it the features of the kingdom He has prepared for it. I do not know whether this is an accurate comparison, but in point of fact that is how it happens.

In these raptures, the soul no longer seems to animate the body; its natural heat therefore is felt to diminish and it gradually gets cold, though with a feeling of very great joy and sweetness. Here there is no possibility of resisting, as there is in union, in which we are on our own ground. Against union, resistance is almost always possible though it costs pain and effort. But rapture is, as a rule, irresistible. Before you can be warned by a thought or help yourself in any way, it comes as a quick and violent shock; you see and
feel this cloud, or this powerful eagle rising and bearing you up on its wings.

You realize, I repeat, and indeed see that you are being carried away you know not where. For although this is delightful, the weakness of our nature makes us afraid at first, and we need a much more determined and courageous spirit than for the previous stages of prayer. Come what may, we must risk everything and leave ourselves in God's hands. We have to go willingly wherever we are carried, for in fact, we are being born off whether we like it or not. In this emergency very often I should like to resist, and I exert all my strength to do so, especially at such times as I am in a public place, and very often when I am in private also, because I am afraid of delusions. Sometimes with a great struggle I have been able to do something against it. But it has been like fighting a great giant, and has left me utterly exhausted. At other times resistance has been impossible; my soul has been carried away, and usually my head as well, without my being able to prevent it; and sometimes it has affected my whole body, which has been lifted from the ground.

This has only happened rarely. Once, however, it took place when we were all together in the choir, and I was on my knees, about to take Communion. This distressed me very much, for it seemed a most extraordinary thing and likely to arouse considerable talk. So I ordered the nuns -- for it happened after I was made prioress-not to speak of it. On other occasions, when I felt that the Lord was about to enrapture me again, and once in particular during a sermon-it was our patron's feast and some great ladies were present-I lay on the ground and the sisters came to hold me down, but all the same the rapture was observed. Then I earnestly beseeched the Lord to grant me no more favours if they must have outward and visible signs. For worries on this score exhausted me, and whenever He gave me these raptures I was observed. It seems that, of His goodness, he has been pleased to hear me. For I have never had them since, although it is true that this was not long ago.

It seemed to me when I tried to resist that a great force, for which I can find no comparison, was lifting me up from beneath my feet. It came with greater violence than any other spiritual experience, and left me quite shattered. Resistance requires a great struggle, and is of little use in the end when the Lord wills otherwise, for there is no power that can resist His power. At other times He is graciously satisfied with our seeing that He desires to grant us this grace, and that it is not His Majesty that is withholding it. Then, when we resist out of humility, the same effects follow as if we had given a complete assent.

The effects of rapture are great. One is that the mighty power of the Lord is made manifest. We see that against His Majesty's will we can do nothing to control either the soul or the body. We are not the masters; whether we like it or not, we see that there is One mightier than we, that these favours are given by Him, and that, of ourselves we can do absolutely nothing. This imprints a deep humility upon us. I confess that in me it aroused a great fear, at first a very great fear. One sees one's body being lifted from the ground; and though the spirit draws it up after itself, and does so most gently if it does not resist, one does not lose consciousness. At least I myself was sufficiently aware to realize that I was being lifted. The majesty of One who can do this is so manifest that one's hair stands on end, and a great fear comes over one of offending so great a God. But this fear is stifled by very great love, newly enkindled, for One who has, as we see, so great a love for so vile a worm, that He does not seem satisfied with actually raising the soul to Himself, but will have the body also, mortal though it is, and though its clay is befouled by all the sins we have committed.

Rapture leaves behind a certain strange detachment also, the real nature of which I shall never be able to describe. All that I can say is that it is somewhat different from that caused by purely spiritual graces. For although they produce a complete detachment of the spirit from all things, here the Lord seems to wish the body to be detached also. Thus a new estrangement from the world takes place, which makes life much more painful. It also leaves a distress behind, which we cannot bring about ourselves and which we can never remove, once it has come. I should very much like to explain this great distress, but I do not think I shall be able to. Still I will say something
about it, if I can.

It must be noted that these events are much more recent than the visions and revelations of which I am now going to write, and which belong to the time when I was practising prayer and the Lord was giving me such great joys and favours. Although I still have these occasionally, this distress that I am going to describe is now a far more frequent and ordinary experience with me. Its intensity varies, but I will speak of it at its most severe. Later I shall describe the great shocks I used to suffer when the Lord chose to throw me into these transports, but they have, in my opinion, no more connexion with this distress of mine than has any completely physical experience with one that is entirely spiritual. I do not think that I am greatly exaggerating. For although the distress caused by these shocks is felt by the soul, it is also felt by the body. Both seem to share in it. It does not cause the extreme abandonment, however, that comes with this purely spiritual distress.

We play no part, as I have said, in bringing a rapture on. Very often there comes an unexpected desire—I do not know what impels it—and with that desire, which permeates the whole soul in a moment, it begins to become so weary that it rises far above itself and above all creation. God then so strips it of everything that, strive though it may, it can find no companion on earth. Nor, indeed does it wish for one; it would rather die in its solitude. It may be spoken to and make every possible effort to reply, but all to no avail. Whatever the spirit may do, it does not escape from its solitude; and although God seems at that moment very far from the soul, He sometimes reveals His grandeur to it in the strangest way imaginable. This way is indescribable; and I do not think that anyone could believe or understand it who has not already experienced it. It is a communication made not to comfort the soul, but to show it the reason why it is weary—which is because it is absent from that Good that contains all good things within itself.

In this communication the desire grows, and so does the extreme loneliness in which the soul finds itself, and with it there comes a distress so subtle and piercing that, placed as it is in this desert, the soul can, I think, say literally with the Royal Prophet: 'I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.' It is possible that King David was experiencing this same loneliness when he wrote although, since he was a saint, the Lord may have granted him this experience in a higher measure. This verse comes to my mind at these times in such a way that it seems to be fulfilled in me. It is a comfort to me to know that others have felt these extremes of loneliness, and an even greater comfort that they have been people of such quality. The soul, then, seems to be not in itself but on a house-top or roof, raised above itself and all created things. I think it is far above even its own highest part.

At other times the soul seems to be in a state of destitution, and to be asking itself: 'Where is Thy God?' It must be remembered that I did not know the Spanish meaning of this verse, and that later, when I found out, it used to comfort me to think that the Lord had brought them to my mind without any effort of mine. At other times I used to remember St Paul's saying that he was 'crucified unto the world.' I do not mean that this is true of me—I clearly see that it is not. But the soul seems to me to be in this state when no comfort comes to it from heaven and it is not there itself, and when it desires none from the earth and is not there either. Then it is as if crucified between heaven and earth, suffering and receiving no help from either.

The help that comes from heaven is, as I have said, a most wonderful knowledge of God, so far above anything that we can desire that it brings with it greater torment. For the desire then grows so intense that its extreme distress, as I see it, sometimes robs it of all consciousness. But such states last only a short time. One seems to be on the point of death; only the agony carries with it so great a joy that I do not know of any proper comparison. It is a harsh yet sweet martyrdom. If any earthly thing is then offered to the soul, even one that it usually finds most sweet, it will not accept it, but seems to throw it away at once. It clearly realizes that it wants nothing but God, but loves no particular one of His attributes. It wants Him entire, and has no knowledge of what it desires. I say that it has no knowledge because the imagination can picture nothing; and indeed, I think that during much of this time the faculties are in suspense. As joy suspends them in union
and rapture, here they are suspended by their distress.

O Jesus! How I wish that someone could really explain this to you, my Father, if only so that you could tell me what it means. For this is the habitual state of my soul, nowadays. Whenever I am not busy with something, it is plunged into these death-like yearnings; and I am afraid when I feel them coming on, because I know that I shall not die. But once I am in them, I long to suffer like this for the rest of my life, although the pain is so extreme as to be nearly unbearable. Sometimes my pulse almost ceases to beat at all, as I have been told by the sisters who sometimes see me in this state, and so understand better now. My bones are all disjointed and my hands are so rigid that sometimes I cannot clasp them together. Even next day I feel a pain in my wrists and over my whole body, as if my bones were still out of joint.

Sometimes I really think that if things continue as they are at present, it must be the Lord's will to end them by putting an end to my life. The pain seems to me enough to cause death; only, I do not deserve it. All my longing at these times is to die. I do not remember purgatory or the great sins that I have committed, for which I deserve hell. I forget everything in my longing to see God; and this abandonment and loneliness seems better than all the company in the world. If there can be any comfort for one in this condition, it is to talk with some person who has passed through the same torment. Then she finds that, despite her complaints, nobody seems to believe her.

The soul in this state is further tormented because its distress has now so increased that it no longer seeks solitude as it did before, or company, except of those to whom it can complain. It is like a person with a rope round his neck, who is strangling but tries to take breath. The desire for company seems to me the product of our weakness, for our distress puts us in peril of death. This I know for certain since, as I have said, I have several times been in this situation myself during the crises of my severe illnesses, and I think I can say that the peril is as great as any I have known. The desire for the body and soul not to be parted, therefore, is like a voice crying out for help to take breath. By speaking of its pain, and complaining and seeking distractions, the soul is endeavouring to live, though much against the will of the spirit, or of the higher part of the soul, which wishes never to come out of this distress.

I am not sure if I am correct in what I say, or if I am expressing it properly, but to the best of my belief things happen in that way. I ask your Reverence what rest I can have in this life, now that the relief I once had in prayer and solitude, in which the Lord used to comfort me, has turned to an habitual torment. Yet at the same time this pain is so sweet, and the soul is so conscious of its value, that it now desires this suffering more than all the gifts that it used to receive. It believes this to be the safer state, too, because it is the way of the Cross; and, in my opinion, it contains a joy of exceeding worth, because the body has no part in it but agony, whereas the soul, even while suffering, rejoices alone in the bliss and contentment that this suffering brings.

I do not know how this can be, but it is so. This grace comes from the Lord; and I do not think I would exchange this favour which the Lord bestows on me-for it is highly supernatual and comes from His hand and, as I have said, is in no way acquired by me for any of the favours of which I shall speak later on; I do not say for all of them at once, but for any one of them separately. It must not be forgotten that this state, in which the Lord is keeping me now has come after all the others described in this book; I mean that these transports have succeeded the favours that I received from the Lord and have written of already.

In the beginning I was afraid, as is almost always the case with me when the Lord grants me a new grace, until His Majesty reassures me as I proceed. He told me to have no fear, and to value this favour above all those that He had given me before, for the soul was purified by this pain; it was burnished or refined, like gold in the crucible, the better to take the enamel of His gifts, and the dross was being burnt away here instead of in purgatory. I had perfectly understood that this was a great favour, but I was much more certain of it now; and my confessor tells me that all is well. But though I was afraid because I was so wicked, I could never believe that it was anything bad. On the contrary, the supreme greatness of the blessing frightened me, when I remembered how little I
deserved it. Blessed be the Lord who is so good! Amen.

I seem to have wandered from my subject. I began by speaking of raptures, and what I have been describing is something greater than a rapture, and so leaves behind the effects that I have recorded.

Now let us return to raptures, and to their most usual characteristics. Very often they seemed to leave my body as light as if it had lost all its weight, and sometimes so light that I hardly knew whether my feet were touching the ground. But during the rapture itself, the body is very often like a corpse, unable to do anything of itself. It remains all the time in whatever attitude it was in when the rapture came on; seated, for example, and with the hands open or closed. The subject rarely loses consciousness; I have occasionally lost it entirely, but not very often and only for a short time. Generally the senses are disturbed; and though absolutely powerless to perform any outward action the subject still sees and hears things, though only dimly, as if from far away. I do not say that he can see and hear when the rapture is at its height; and by 'its height' I mean those times when the faculties are lost, because closely united with God. Then, in my opinion, it neither sees nor hears nor feels. But, as I said in describing the previous prayer of union, this complete transformation of the soul in God is of short duration. While it lasts, however, none of the senses perceives or knows what is taking place. We can have no way of understanding this, while we are on earth at least or rather God cannot wish us to, since we have not the capacity for such understanding. This I have learnt for myself.

You will ask me, Father, how it is that a rapture sometimes lasts for many hours. Very often my experience is as I have described it in relation to the previous stage of prayer, the rapture is discontinuous. And very often the soul is absorbed, or to put it better the Lord absorbs it into Himself. But after He has held it for a moment, the will alone remains in union. The two other faculties appear to be always moving, like the pointer on a sundial, which is never at rest, though if the Sun of Righteousness wishes, He can make them stand still.

What I am describing lasts only a moment. But as the surge and impulse of the spirit have been violent, the will remains absorbed, even when the other faculties begin to stir again, and remains mistress over all these workings in the body. For though the two restless faculties try to disturb it, it thinks that the fewer enemies it has the better, and so takes care that they shall not do so. Therefore it suspends them entirely, that being the Lord's wish. The eyes are generally closed, although we may not wish to close them, and if occasionally they remain open, the soul, as I have just said, does not perceive anything or pay attention to what it sees.

A person can do very little in this condition, and so will not be capable of doing much when the faculties come to themselves again. But let him to whom the Lord grants this favour not be discouraged when he finds himself in this state, with his body unable to move for many hours, and with his understanding and memory wandering at times. True, generally they are absorbed in the praise of God, or in an attempt to comprehend or understand what has happened to them. Yet even for this they are not sufficiently awake, but are like people who have slept and dreamed for a long time, and have not yet properly woken up.

I stress this point because I know that there are persons now, even in this place, to whom the Lord is granting these favours; and if their directors have no experience of this—more especially if they have no learning — they may suppose that persons enraptured should be as if dead. It is a shame that such suffering should be caused by confessors who do not understand what I am saying. But, if I have spoken at all to the point, you will understand me, sir, since the Lord has already granted you this experience, though, as this happened only recently, perhaps you have not considered these matters as much as I have. So then, however hard I try, my body has not enough strength to move for quite a long time; the soul has taken it all away. But often a person who was previously very ill, and racked with severe pain, is left healthy at the end and stronger than before. For a very great gift is received in rapture, and the Lord sometimes wishes the body, as I have said, to enjoy it also, because at such times it is obedient to the will of the soul.
Our Lord was pleased that I should sometimes see a vision of this kind. Beside me, on the left hand, appeared an angel in bodily form, such as I am not in the habit of seeing except very rarely. Though I often have visions of angels, I do not see them. They come to me only after the manner of the first type of vision that I described. But it was our Lord’s will that I should see this angel in the following way. He was not tall but short, and very beautiful; and his face was so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest rank of angels, who seem to be all on fire. They must be of the kind called cherubim, but they do not tell me their names. I know very well that there is a great difference between some angels and others, and between these and others still, but I could not possibly explain it. In his hands I saw a great golden spear, and at the iron tip there appeared to be a point of fire. This he plunged into my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he pulled it out, I felt that he took them with it, and left me utterly consumed by the great love of God. The pain was so severe that it made me utter several moans. The sweetness caused by this intense pain is so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease, nor is one’s soul then content with anything but God. This is not a physical, but a spiritual pain, though the body has some share in it—even a considerable share. So gentle is this wooing which takes place between God and the soul that if anyone thinks I am lying, I pray God, in his goodness, to grant him some experience of it.

Throughout the days that this lasted I went about in a kind of stupor. I had no wish to look or to speak, only to embrace my pain, which was a greater bliss than all crested things could give me. On several occasions when I was in this state the Lord was pleased that I should experience raptures so deep that I could not resist them even though I was not alone. Greatly to my distress, therefore, my raptures began to be talked about. Since I have had them, I have ceased to feel this pain so much, though I still feel the pain that I spoke of in a previous chapter—I do not remember which. The latter is very different in many respects, and much more valuable. But when this pain of which I am now speaking begins, the Lord seems to transport the soul and throw it into an ecstasy. So there is no opportunity for it to feel its pain or suffering, for the enjoyment comes immediately. May He be blessed for ever, who has granted so many favours to one who has so ill repaid these great benefits.

NOTES
1. Psalm cii, 7. [Vulg. ci. 7]
2. Psalm xlii, 3. [Vulg. xli. 4]