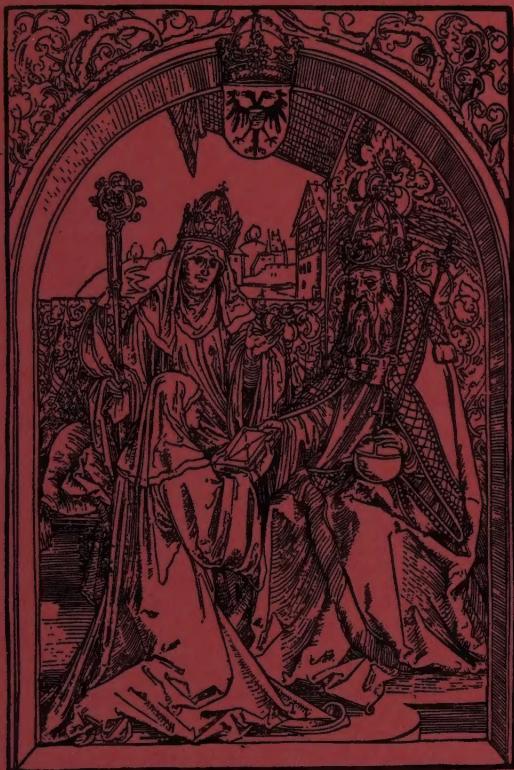


*The Plays of*  
**Hrotswitha  
*of*  
Gandersheim**



*Translated by*  
**LARISSA BONFANTE**  
*with the collaboration of*  
**ALEXANDRA BONFANTE-WARREN**



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Hrotswitha offers her book  
to the Emperor Otto I.  
Woodcut attribute to Albrecht Dürer,  
sixteenth century.

### **The Plays of Hrotswitha of Gandersheim**

Translated by Larissa Bonfante  
with the collaboration of  
Alexandra Bonfante-Warren

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## PREFACE

This book is for students, historians and lovers of drama, to some of whom Hrotswitha's plays will be a new experience. The translations are adaptations for the stage, though the sense is close to the original. Although the plays are frequently studied and occasionally performed in their original Latin, English translations of all six plays have been hard to find; those texts that do exist are better suited to study than to the stage. I hope this new edition in modern English will fill the need for a readable and stageworthy text.

The translations are all my own, with the exception of one play, Gallicanus, translated in collaboration with Alexandra Bonfante-Warren. Stage directions, which are lacking in the original text, are always put in parentheses, so that the reader should not be misled into thinking they are anything but a guide to an interpretation of the text.

Although the plays are in chronological order, they may be read in a different order. The reader new to the plays of Hrotswitha would probably enjoy beginning with her most romantic play, Callimachus; continuing with her farce, Dulcitius; and Abraham and Paphnutius, the two plays dealing with monastic life, with their moving portrayals of love and conversion. These plays are perhaps easier to appreciate at first reading than the more formal Gallicanus and Sapientia.

I am grateful to many for help and encouragement: to Marianne Nichols, Irene Zajac, Joel Bromberg, to my anonymous reader, and to the students in my classes on ancient comedy. My greatest debt is to Helene Homeyer, whose 1970 edition of Hrotswitha's works (see Bibliography) has made my work so much easier. The translation is based on this edition.

Larissa Bonfante



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Conrad Celtes offers his edition of  
Hrotswitha's plays to Frederick III,  
Elector of Saxony. Woodcut attributed  
to Albrecht Dürer, sixteenth century.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

In 1501, the German poet laureate and Renaissance humanist Conrad Celtes published the works of Hrotswitha of Gandersheim (ca. 935-1000) which he had found in a forgotten manuscript. Since that time, her readers have reacted with a passion going perhaps beyond her literary merits, but acknowledging her unique place in the history of literature. Conrad Celtes extolled her as the "German Sappho." In 1867 Joseph von Aschbach declared -- on the ground that no mediaeval woman could have had such knowledge of the world and of classical literature -- that her writings were forgeries, written by Conrad Celtes and his learned friends in order to glorify German culture. Hrotswitha's works include eight legends in verse, two historical epics (a panegyric on the deeds of Otto I and Otto II, and an account of the founding of her convent), and the six plays in rhymed prose which are here translated. These plays of "the strong voice of Gandersheim," as she interpreted her name, are extraordinary works for her time. They have, not surprisingly, attracted a great deal of attention from historians of the theater, because they represent a remarkable continuity of the classical tradition: Hrotswitha claims to be imitating the plays of Terence. On another level, as drama, they are strangely poignant, and testify to her power to portray real experience. In spite of the scholarly controversy as to whether they were ever originally actually performed, rather than declaimed, they have in fact been staged successfully: a sophisticated group of marionettes performed two of her plays in late nineteenth-century Paris, at the suggestion of Anatole France; and at the Savoy Theatre in London, in 1923, the great actress Ellen Terry played the part of the abbess in a performance of Paphnutius.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Celtes' printed edition of Hrotswitha's works had eight illustrations. Of these woodcuts, one, by Albrecht Dürer, represented Celtes kneeling and offering the book to Duke Frederick III, with three men standing in the background. The second, also by Dürer, portrayed Hrotswitha on her knees, offering the book to Otto the Great, with a nun, probably the Abbess Gerberga, standing in the center background. The remaining five woodcuts are usually attributed to Wolf Traut. There is one illustration for each play, but the same illustration is used for both Paphnutius and Abraham.



#### TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Hrotswitha's deceptively simple, straightforward Latin brings with it problems of translation.

The translator is initially tempted to render into the spoken language of our day, perhaps even slang, the free, casual style many fast-moving speeches call for -- those of the impetuous Callimachus, for example, or of lower-class characters, like the slave Fortunatus or the inn-keeper in Paphnutius, or of the lustful, ridiculous Dulcitus. But one soon finds that such language diminishes the serious import of the speeches and jars with the scenes of prayer or conversation. Hrotswitha's Latin, in contrast, moves gracefully from low characters to high, from sensual to spiritual subjects. She has learned this lesson from a master of elegant Latin style, Terence himself. Unable to find a modern, colloquial English flexible enough to move with equal ease between these two worlds, so different now for us, I found myself going back to Tillyard's translation with renewed respect. His heavier, somewhat archaic, classical rendering serves better to unify the various parts of the play, as passages of prayer or exhortation ring out in the solemn English rhythms of the King James' Bible.

Often the need for clarity has dictated the choice of language, or the expansion of passages which would have been easily understandable to Hrotswitha's audience but need some kind of explanation for readers today. I felt it was better to explain within the text itself rather than resort to notes; and the existence of other translations freed me from the responsibility of providing a strictly literal rendering. In Sapientia (Scene VII), for example, a concise Latin phrase has been expanded to several lines to explain the implications of the word patrona, a term of Roman law. Sapientia is saying that her daughter's martyrdom will reverse the mother's role as advocate by interceding for her in Heaven: the mother will become her own daughter's client, dependent upon her for her spiritual salvation. In another passage (Abraham, Scene II), the hermit's explanation of Stella Maris, the mystical name of Mary, leads into a mediaeval disquisition, here rendered as an evocative rather than a strictly scientific passage. A good example of the ease of Hrotswitha's Latin style is her use of the Terentian word leno, literally a "pimp." A translation kept in Callimachus, where it seemed appropriate, was out of place, however, in the context of the Abraham.

This expansion has led to the inclusion of stage directions. These are often derived from the text itself, and are thus really part of the translation. At other times they are more interpretative. They are in any case always included within parentheses, so that the reader will have no trouble distinguishing them from the original text. The controversy over the "theatricality" of Hrotswitha's plays finds me, as far as the translation is concerned, frankly on the side of seeing the plays acted, with scenery and stage. But whether the production takes place in the reader's mind, as a dramatic reading, or a more formal stage presentation, there is clearly a need to visualize the scene as well as to hear the characters speak.

So too the readability of the plays in English frequently calls for loosening up the extreme compression of the Latin, just to give a character more of a line to speak than a sharp, monosyllabic "yes" or "no" when the context calls for a certain range of expression. It is hard, if not impossible, for us today to be historically true to the original staging of classical Greek plays to the extent of using masks, which give a different effect from the one intended. So too I felt the need to respect certain dramatic conventions which have developed since Hrotswitha's days. Expansions for the sake of expression of the character's emotions are in fact true to the spirit of Hrotswitha's style, for it is remarkable how well she uses the Latin to express the difference between her various characters' psychology. In Gallicanus, to take only one example, the characters' motivation is quite intentionally made clear in their style of speaking. The emperor Constantine, loath to sacrifice his daughter's principles and her chastity for the sake of his army's victory, diplomatic by necessity, with his early speeches full of hesitations and alternatives, of "whereas," and "on the other hand," provides a good contrast to Gallicanus, the rough-hewn, romantic soldier, eager to find out about his beloved's true feelings (responsum) as well as her actual answer, harsh to his men yet sensitive, reduced to astounding, wordless shyness by the force of his passion for Constantia. When Constantine calls to give him his answer, he is in such a state that he does not hear his own name. "What did he say?" he asks his friends, who push him bodily towards the emperor. The lack of comprehension between the two men is typical. Constantine at first completely fails to understand Gallicanus' avowal, mistaking his talk of "love for your daughter" for the flowery compliment of a courtier instead of a plain-spoken man's declaration of love.

The emperor's speeches also contrast with those of his daughter Constantia, whose practical sense is quite up to her religious fervor. She solves his problems by means of a clever plan, which includes but does not simply depend on God's miracles of persuasion. Her eloquent, crisp arguments persuade first her father, then -- to her own surprise, almost too easily -- Gallicanus' two daughters.

Hrotswitha's decision to express themes of hagiography in dramatic form is motivated by a moral imperative to rewrite Terence, to use the effectiveness of his form and the excitement of events as presented in dialogue on the side of the Christian ethic. The preface to the plays reveals her strategy: she will combat the seductive appeal of Terence with his own weapons. There are those persons, she says,

"who, although they are deeply attached to the sacred writings and scorn most pagan works, made an exception in favor of those of Terence, and charmed by the sweetness of the words, are corrupted by the wickedness of the subject. Therefore, I, the strong voice of Gandersheim, have not hesitated to imitate in my writings a poet whose works are so widely read, in order to glorify, within the limits of my poor talent, the admirable chastity of Christian virgins in that same form which has been used to describe the shameless charms of sinful women."<sup>1</sup>

The extent of her debt to Terence is very great. Yet so is her originality. The Roman poet wrote six urbane comedies about the blasé Greek aristocracy; Hrotswitha writes six comedies about a fervent Christian society.

The rhythmic prose used for this translation will, it is hoped, help make the plays more readable, and emphasize the flow of the action. It attempts to reproduce some of the rhythm of Hrotswitha's poetic rhymed "prose," and remind us she was not writing in plain prose. No mean sign of her scholarship is the fact that she apparently realized the plays of Terence were written in meter, and tried to render this poetry in her own "imitations."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Homeyer, Hrotsvithae Opera (Paderborn 1970) 233.

<sup>2</sup> Homeyer, op.cit. 20. Conrad Celtes, who called her the "German Sappho," was right to take pride in her accomplishments. Mediaeval copyists and Renaissance humanists who went back to Terence as model for their own classical comedies were convinced that Terence's plays were in prose, and it is to her credit that she anticipated later scholars in her understanding of Terence's poetry.



## GALLICANUS, PARTS I AND II

### I. In which Gallicanus, a general of the army, is converted.

He becomes betrothed to the most holy Christian virgin Constantia,  
Daughter of the emperor Constantine,  
Just before setting off to war against the Scythians;  
At a moment of crisis, hard pressed by the heat of battle,  
He is converted by Constantia's confessors, John and Paul.  
Asking to be baptized on the spot, he gladly takes the vow of chastity.  
Some time after this he is exiled  
By order of Julian the Apostate,  
And wins the crown of martyrdom at last.

### II. John and Paul,

Killed surreptitiously at Julian's command,  
Are buried in secret within a house.  
Not long after, a demon possesses  
The son of the man who struck them down.  
When they have exorcised the devil,  
The man's son then confesses  
His father's crime and the martyrs' great worth;  
He and his father are then baptized together,  
Near the tombs of the martyrs where they were saved.

## GALLICANUS, PART I

SCENE I. (The throne room to the emperor's palace in Rome. Constantine sits on his throne, surrounded by his counselors, the generals who make up his court. General Gallicanus is ushered into audience with the emperor.)

Constantine. I weary of these delays, Gallicanus. The Scythian people alone, as you know, Resist the Roman peace, And rashly dare to oppose our rule. Yet you still put off starting on this campaign, Though you surely realize That your constancy and courage Have caused us to reserve for you alone The honor of defending your country.

Gallicanus. (bows his head, accepting the reproof; then answers, accepting the implied compliment.)

That, my lord Constantine, is because I have always striven, with all the power at my command, To fulfill your orders in every way, And have ever tried to fulfill Your imperial demands with effective action. Never have I drawn away when duty called.

Constantine. (softens at the reminder of his general's loyalty.)

You need not remind me. I hold it fixed in my mind. And that is why always I have urged you on Not so much by criticizing as by encouraging you, So that you will continue to be true to your loyalty.

Gallicanus. Even now, my lord, I hope and strive for your support.

Constantine. I rejoice to hear it.

Gallicanus. Nor will greater love of life distract me From carrying out your orders.

Constantine. I am well pleased. I praise the good will you display towards me.

Gallicanus. If I may say so, however, my lord,  
This great devotion and will to please you  
Deserve a great reward.

Constantine. A fair enough statement, and a just exchange.

Gallicanus. For the great difficulty of any task  
Is borne much more easily  
When lightened by the certainty of reward.

Constantine. That is clearly true.

Gallicanus. And that is why, my lord, I ask you now --  
As I prepare to walk into great danger --  
To set before my eyes a goal;  
So that, as I fight tirelessly, I will  
not break down  
In the sweat and blood of the fray;  
For I will ever be spurred on to fight  
And to live in the hope of that reward.

Constantine. I have already granted you the greatest  
possible reward:  
A reward most richly deserved,  
And one most highly approved by the whole  
Senate --  
Never have I denied you, Gallicanus,  
Nor will I ever deny you in the future,  
The gift of our imperial friendship  
And a privileged rank at court.

Gallicanus. (bows in recognition of his privilege.)

My lord, I thank you for this honor.  
But this is not what I seek at present.

Constantine. If it is something else you seek,  
You should tell me clearly what it is you wish.

Gallicanus. I seek from you something totally different.

Constantine. And what is that, Gallicanus?

Gallicanus. I dare not allow myself to say it.

Constantine. I assure you, you can permit yourself to speak  
Whatever you wish before me.

Gallicanus. (normally a brave man, he is now embarrassed  
and vulnerable.)

You are sure to be angry, my lord.

Constantine. (tries to reassure him.)

I will in no way be angry  
With you, my loyal Gallicanus.

Gallicanus. Sire, I am quite sure you will.

Constantine. I quite assure you I will not.

Gallicanus. You will be moved to indignation.

Constantine. Do not be afraid of that.  
Speak.

Gallicanus. (with an effort, he draws himself up.)

Since you have commanded it, I will say it.  
I love Constantia, your daughter.

Constantine. (does not understand; he does not realize that  
the soldier's plain language expresses a  
genuine emotion, not the stylized praise of  
a courtier.)

And it is only right that you should.  
It is fitting that you should love  
Your lord's daughter with honor,  
And honor her lovingly.

Gallicanus. (impatient at being misunderstood. Having  
embarked upon it at last, he wants to get on  
with his request.)

My lord, you are interrupting me.

Constantine. (graciously.)

I shall not interrupt you again, I promise.  
Say on.

Gallicanus. She is the very reward I seek.  
If your fatherly love allows it,  
I wish to marry her.

Constantine. (finally understands, and is, in fact, shocked.  
He turns to his counselors for support and  
advice.)

My lords, this is no small reward he asks for!  
It is the greatest prize I have ever heard of,  
One quite unusual for any of you up to this  
time.

Gallicanus. Alas! He scorns me, and refuses my request. I knew he would.

(He too turns to the princes of the court who stand by Constantine.)

Please help me, my lords, to persuade him, And add your urgent requests to mine.

(One of the courtiers steps out of the group and stands before the emperor. Respectfully.)

Courtier. My most illustrious lord, I do believe it will add luster, Rather than diminish your glory, To grant him his request in return For his devotion to you.

Constantine. (considers the question awhile, then gives his reply.)

As far as it lies within me, I shall not deny his request. But I think it proper, first of all, To find out by means of careful questioning Whether or not my daughter will give her consent.

First Courtier. Of course.

Second Courtier. Your majesty, you are quite right. It is clearly the thing to do.

Constantine. (rises from his throne, thereby dismissing the audience. To Gallicanus.)

If you wish it, Gallicanus, I shall go to her myself To speak to her of your request.

Gallicanus. (moved by contrasting feelings, afraid yet full of hope, now that his fate will be in Constantia's hands.)

I will be overjoyed  
If you will do so, my lord.

SCENE II. (The private quarters of Constantia, within the palace. A cloister, quiet and peaceful. The emperor's daughter has been reading religious works. She looks up, happy to see her father, and rises to greet him as he approaches.)

Constantia. (aside, as she sees his worried expression.)

My lord the emperor comes to see us  
With a sadder look than usual.  
I wonder what my father's wishes are.

Constantine. There you are, Constantia, my daughter.  
I have some things to speak with you about.

Constantia. Here I am, my lord.  
Command me to do what you wish.

Constantine. (softens upon looking at his daughter,  
of whom he is very fond.)

I am deeply anxious in my inmost heart,  
Troubled and sad.

Constantia. As soon as I saw you approaching,  
I could see that you were sad,  
And though I did not know the reason,  
I was troubled, like you, and afraid.

Constantine. (looking at her affectionately.)

It is because of you I am saddened.

Constantia. (startled.)

Because of me?

Constantine. Yes, my dear, because of you.

Constantia. I am terrified.  
What can it be, my lord?

Constantine. I do not like to tell you  
For fear you will be anxious too.

Constantia. I will be so much more anxious  
If you do not tell me!

Constantine. Commander Gallicanus, whose steady succession  
of triumphs in the field  
Has won him the highest position and rank  
among all my generals,  
Whose valor we so frequently need for the  
defense of our country...

Constantia. (impatiently, fearing the male love of  
political discussions will lead her father  
into a digression.)

Yes, yes. I know all that.  
What about Commander Gallicanus, then?

Constantine. (coming to the point.)

He wants you to marry him.

Constantia. (startled. She did not expect this.)

He wants me to marry him?

Constantine. Yes, you.

Constantia. I would rather die.

Constantine. (resigned.)

I knew you would feel that way.

Constantia. (shocked out of her gentleness, now that  
her chastity is threatened.)

I should surely think so, indeed,  
Since it was with your consent and your  
full approval  
I vowed to preserve my virginity  
For the love of my God.

Constantine. (troubled, torn between his desire to keep  
the promise he made her and his fears for  
the national security.)

I have not forgotten, my dear.

Constantia. (forcefully now.)

Because no amount of torture  
Will ever be able to force me to give up  
The sacred vow of chastity I have so solemnly  
sworn.

Constantine. I agree that you must do so,  
But at this very moment I am sorely pressed  
on two sides:  
If I do my fatherly duty,  
Allowing you to persevere to the end in your  
avowed intent,  
I will suffer great harm in politics and  
foreign affairs.  
Yet again, if I insist, God forbid,  
And go back on my word to you,  
I will surely undergo eternal torments in Hell.

Constantia. (has listened attentively, and now understands  
what must be done. Her father's words have  
given her an idea. She starts out by encouraging  
him.)

But if I were to give up hope  
That the help of God is at hand,  
Then I would really be troubled,  
Then truly I would be afraid.

Constantine. That is true.

Constantia. (pursuing her logic.)

On the other hand, you agree,  
Despair will find no lodging  
In the heart of one who trusts in the Lord.

Constantine. (begins to have some hope that matters can be  
worked out.)

How very persuasively you speak,  
My dear Constantia!

Constantia. (concluding.)

If you will not disdain my advice,  
I will show you how you can avoid  
Both of these dangers.

Constantine. O, if only it were possible!

Constantia. Act as if you are willing to grant him his wish,  
Once the campaign is over.  
And in order to make him believe  
That I agree fully for my part as well,  
Persuade him to have his daughters, Attica  
and Artemia,  
In the meanwhile, stay here with me,  
As if to confirm, and serve as a pledge of  
our love.

And have him take with him, too,  
My spiritual advisors, John and Paul,  
As companions on the journey and the  
campaign to follow.

Constantine: (puzzled.)

But what am I to do if he returns victorious?

Constantia. I think that, first of all,  
We must pray to the Father of Creation,  
That He may recall the soul of Gallicanus  
From following his intention to the end.

Constantine. (relieved by this plan, which he has every  
reason to believe will work.)

O my dearest daughter, how the sweet conviction  
of your words  
Has softened the bitterness of your father's  
sadness!  
I will no longer after this be anxious or  
perturbed  
About this problem.

Constantia. No, this should trouble you no more.

Constantine. I shall go to Gallicanus now,  
And promise to grant him his wish.  
I shall deceive him into believing  
He can have what his heart desires.

SCENE III. (Outside the throne room, Gallicanus is  
anxiously awaiting the return of the emperor. With him  
are the lords of the court, who rally round him  
sympathetically.)

Gallicanus. I shall burst from curiosity, my lords,  
Before I ever come to know  
What in the world my lord emperor  
Is discussing at such length  
With his imperial daughter.

First Courtier. I am certain he is convincing her  
To have her wishes agree with yours.

Gallicanus: O how I hope and pray his arguments prevail!

Second Courtier: (somewhat doubtfully.)  
Perhaps he will be successful.

Gallicanus. (nervously, looking offstage.)  
Wait, be silent;  
The emperor is returning.  
(He anxiously scans his face as he approaches.)  
And yes, his face is wholly peaceful now,  
No longer dark and scowling  
As when he left us, before.

Third Courtier. We wish you good fortune, Gallicanus.

Gallicanus. (encouraging himself.)  
If, as they say, the face is the soul's mirror  
Then it may be his look indicates  
His intentions toward me are kind.

First Courtier. You are quite right; it may well be so.

SCENE IV. (Inside the throne room, as in Scene I. Gallicanus guards stand at attendance. The lords of the court stand around the door with Gallicanus, who in his confusion hesitates to go up to the emperor.)

Constantine. (calling him.) Gallicanus.

Gallicanus. (to the lords around him, in a panic.)  
What did he say?

First Courtier. (urging him on.)  
Go on, go up to him! He is calling you!

Gallicanus. (to himself, praying to his own, pagan gods.)  
Kind gods, be favorable!

Constantine. Carry on your campaign, Gallicanus,  
And set your mind at rest.  
Upon your return you will get  
The prize you desire.

Gallicanus. Are you making fun of me, my lord?

Constantine. No, I am not.

Gallicanus. I would be completely happy,  
If I only know one thing!

Constantine. And what is that?

Gallicanus. Her own answer.

Constantine. My daughter's?

Gallicanus. Your daughter's, my lord.

Constantine. (becomes more formal.)

It is quite unfit to ask about a bashful  
maiden's answer  
To your proposal.  
Events will, in due time, make her consent  
quite clear.

Gallicanus. (absorbed, yet still stubbornly anxious to know  
Constantia's feelings.)

If I knew this for certain, and could see the  
proof,  
I would not care about her actual answer.

Constantine. You may have proof of her consent.

Gallicanus. I wish it above all things.

Constantine. She has decided that her own confessors,  
John and Paul,  
Are to live with you until your wedding day.

Gallicanus. (somewhat puzzled.)

And for what reason?

Constantine. So that from their conversation  
You may come to know better  
Her life, her habits and her character.

Gallicanus. That is a thoughtful idea,  
And one which pleases me fully.

Constantine. Of course, she wishes in turn  
That your daughters live with her,  
So that through their friendship  
She may become closer to you.

Gallicanus. Wonderful! Wonderful!  
All these arrangements quite fully agree  
With my fondest hopes.

Constantine. Come now, have your daughters  
Brought here as quickly as possible.

Gallicanus. (becomes the general again, giving orders.)

Why are you standing there like that, men?  
Run off at once; go bring my daughters here  
To pay their respects to their mistress.

SCENE V. (Same as in Scene II: the private apartments  
of Constantia, in the cloister. The emperor's daughter  
looks up from her reading to see soldiers approaching.)

First Soldier. Here are the noble daughters of my lord  
Gallicanus;  
They are well worthy of your friendship, my  
lady Constantia,  
Because of their beauty, wisdom and honor.

Constantia. (graciously, delighted her plan is beginning  
to work.)

I am well pleased.  
Let them be brought in with all the honor due them

(Soldiers leave. Constantia uses this moment  
alone to pray for guidance.)

You who love the virgin state,  
And inspire the virtue of chastity,  
O my Christ, who through the prayers  
Of your martyr Agnes have snatched me  
From the leprosy of the body and the error  
of pagan ways,

Who called me to the virginal halls of your  
mother,  
Where you were manifested to be  
The true God, born of God the Father from  
the beginning,  
Yet truly man, born from a mother in time:  
I pray Thee, who art true Wisdom coeternal  
with the Father  
By Whom all things were made  
And by Whose hand the world is fixed and ruled,  
I humbly pray you,  
Deter Gallicanus from his unholy intention  
To steal my love for you and quench it with  
his own.  
Cause him to follow you,  
And deign to take his daughters as your brides.  
Instill into their thoughts the sweetness of  
your love,  
So that, despising carnal lust,  
They will be worthy of joining  
The community of holy virgins.

(The guards now usher in Gallicanus' daughters.)

Artemia.

Greetings, Constantia, Imperial Highness.

Constantia.

Welcome, my dear sisters, Attica and Artemia.  
No, no, do not fall on your knees before me  
at my feet --  
Stand up beside me, rather, and give me  
The kiss of sisterly love.

Artemia.

We come to render you homage, my lady, quickly  
and most joyfully --  
We submit to your command with the greatest  
devotion,  
That your kindness toward us may abound.

Constantia.

(reproving them gently.)

We have but one Lord, in Heaven:  
To Him we owe all our devotion and loving service.  
Preserving our bodies pure  
We should remain, single-minded,  
In His faith and love alone;  
So may we deserve the high privilege  
Of entering the court of our heavenly home  
Holding before us virginity's palm.

Artemia.

(has listened with growing fervor to Constantia's speech. Consulting briefly with her sister, with whom she exchanges glances, she answers for both of them, in simpler language now.)

Oh, yes, you are right!  
We will try to obey you and follow your advice,  
For we yearn above all to know the Truth,  
And to take the vow of chastity.

Constantia.

(happily surprised at their ready acquiescence, which she understands to have occurred as God's answer to her prayer.)

That is indeed proper answer, worthy of your noble rank;  
And I have no doubt that your faith Was inspired by the grace of God.

Artemia.

How else could we, once slaves to idols, Have ever been enlightened, Had we not seen clearly a sign of God's holy mercy

Constantia.

(overjoyed at the miracle.)

The strength of your faith raises my hopes For the conversion of Gallicanus as well.

Artemia.

If someone will instruct him There is no doubt he will believe as well.

Constantia.

(Realizing it is time to put the second part of her plan into action. To the guards.)

Summon John and Paul, and have them come to me.

SCENE VI.

(The same as above. John and Paul enter.)

John.

We are here, my lady.  
Did you wish to speak with us?

Constantia.

Go quickly to Gallicanus, and stay close by his side. You must teach him, gradually The mysteries of our holy faith. Through your efforts, it may be, God will deign to receive him.

Paul.

May God but grant us his assistance! For our part, we will urge him on with frequent exhortations.

SCENE VII. (The army's place of assembly, outside the city. Gallicanus is busying himself with last-minute details. He sees John and Paul approaching and goes up to greet them.)

Gallicanus. John and Paul! My friends you, arrive just in time, You were long in coming, and I was getting anxious.

John. (protests.)

Just as soon as we heard our lady's command, We flew here, as fast as we could, To pay our respects.

Gallicanus. (cordially.)

Your respects mean much more to me than anyone else's.

Paul. You are right to feel so, For they say that a loved one's friend Should be beloved as well.

Gallicanus. It is true.

John. Love for the lady who sent us Brings us together in friendship.

Gallicanus. (pleased, smiles.)

I do not for a moment deny it.

(Turns from them to his adjutants, who have been waiting respectfully in the background.)

Come, gather round, tribunes and centurions And all you soldiers under my command! Here are John and Paul at last, Whose absence held me back from proceeding into battle.

(The tribunes pass the command back efficiently, then one of them steps up to Gallicanus and salutes.

Tribune. All is in order, sir. You can go on ahead; The army will follow you in a body.

Gallicanus. (gives the next orders, which have to do with the traditional sacrifices carried out before the army left on a campaign.)

We must first go to the Capitol Hill, Go into the temples to propitiate the gods With the ritual sacrifices prescribed by tradition,

So that we may be assured in battle  
A successful outcome.

Tribune. (salutes.)

Yes, sir, that is what is required  
By army procedure.

John. (aside to Paul.)

Let us, while this goes on,  
Quietly depart for a while.

Paul. (aside to John.)

That is the proper thing to do  
Under the circumstances.

SCENE VIII. (Along the road the army must take to march  
out of the city. John and Paul are waiting.)

John. (looking off, to Paul.)

Here comes the general  
Leading his troops out of the city now.  
Let us mount our horses and meet him on the way.

Paul. And quickly too.

Gallicanus. Where are you coming from? Where have you been?

John. We were saddling our horses and packing  
a few things  
In order to be ready to join you on your campaign.

Gallicanus. Well, then, I'm glad of that.

(Turns to his officers, motions them to be on  
their way, and the expedition sets off, John  
and Paul joining in. Exeunt.)

SCENE IX. (Near the city in Thrace where Gallicanus has been fighting off enemy forces. Gallicanus looks offstage in one direction, while a number of his officers, who also are keeping watch, are looking off the other way.)

Gallicanus. (suddenly, in great excitement.)

By Jupiter, men, look over there!  
I see the host of an army without end,  
Terrifying to behold  
In the awful variety of their weapons.

(They turn to look, and are left aghast at the sight.)

First Tribune. By Heracles!

Second Tribune. The enemy is upon us!

Gallicanus. (attempts to rally the officers, who are all struck with panic.)

Courage! Let us stand our ground  
And join battle against them like men.

First Tribune. (speaking for all of them.)

It is useless, sir, for us to attempt  
To join battle against so many.

Gallicanus. (surprised.)

What then would you suggest?

Second Tribune. (saluting.)

Let us offer our necks  
And give ourselves up as prisoners of war.

Gallicanus. (shocked.)

Apollo will surely never permit such a thing to take place.

First Tribune. (urging Gallicanus, now that the danger is coming closer.)

By Pollux, sir! We'd better do it, and quickly! Look! We are surrounded on all sides, Our men are wounded, we are being slaughtered everywhere.

Gallicanus.

(desperate, not knowing where to turn since his officers refuse to obey his commands.)

Alas! What can I do, and what will happen now  
When my own officers refuse to follow my  
orders,  
And want to give themselves up?

John.

(who has up to now stood in the background, observing, now steps forward and addresses Gallicanus quietly and confidently.)

Make a vow to the God of Heaven that you will  
become a Christian,  
And you will be victorious.

Gallicanus.

(is surprised at first; then looks around and, realizing the hopelessness of the situation, decides to follow the suggestion of John -- the voice of Constantia, as it were -- which sounds compelling.)

Yes, I do vow it -- and I intend to keep my vow.

Enemy Soldier.

(One of a number which had come into view, fighting almost unopposed, pushing steadily back the Roman soldiers, who up to now have been holding them off only to cover their retreat. He turns to speak to the Scythian king, Bradan, who has appeared washed in on the victorious tide. The soldier speaks, bewildered at the change he observes.)

Alas, alas, King Bradan, what can this be?  
All of a sudden the hope of victory,  
So close and so much wished for, now mocks us.  
Our right hands are growing weak,  
Our strength is waning, and faintness of heart  
Is forcing us to abandon our weapons.

Bradan.

(at a loss to understand this unexpected turning of the tide.)

I don't know what to say.  
I myself feel this same weakness, and cannot  
fight against it.  
We have no choice, but to surrender  
To the Roman general.

Soldier.

(as he falls.)

There is no other way to survive.

Bradan.

(walks up to Gallicanus, weakly, but with great dignity, and hands him his sword.)

Noble General Gallicanus, do not, we beseech you,  
Insist upon our total destruction, but spare us,  
have mercy,  
And use our fealty as you will.

Gallicanus.

(also formally.)

You need no longer be afraid,  
Nor need you fear us.  
After you have handed over hostages,  
You will pay tribute to the emperor.  
Become his tributaries, and live happily  
under the Roman peace.

Bradan's Second-in-Command.

We wait upon your decision, sir.  
How many hostages and of what rank will you accept?  
What sum of money will you impose on us  
To pay as tribute?

Gallicanus.

Cast off your armor, all of you, my men!  
No one is to be hurt, no one is to be destroyed.  
Let us embrace as allies those we once pursued  
as enemies.

John.

(to Gallicanus, in the midst of the general rejoicing.)

How wonderful to see  
How much more powerful is fervent prayer  
Than any human foresight or ambition!

Gallicanus.

Events have shown that to be true.

Paul.

And how effective God's pity has been for the  
enemy,  
When they had humbly committed themselves!

Gallicanus.

That has been clearly shown.

John.

(to Gallicanus.)

But you know, too, that which was vowed in  
troubled times  
Must be carried out in times of peace.

Gallicanus. I know that very well, and I agree.  
I am anxious to be baptized as soon as possible  
And to spend the rest of my life in the service  
of God.

Paul. That is a right and just decision.

SCENE X. (Some time later. The army enters Rome in triumph. The people flock about them. Tradition requires that the triumphant general go up to the Capitoline temple to sacrifice to Jupiter, in gratitude for the victory he has granted the army. This should accordingly be the next stop for Gallicanus.)

Gallicanus. See, how all the inhabitants rush forth from Rome  
At our triumphant entry --  
Bearing forth, as is the custom, symbols  
Of glorious victory.

John. That is the custom we all expect.

Gallicanus. (troubled.)

But the honor of this triumph was due neither  
to our strength  
Nor that of the Roman gods.

Paul. No, we owe it to the one true God alone.

Gallicanus. (still thoughtful.)

And so I think we must pass by the temples  
Without crossing their thresholds.

John. You have decided rightly.

Gallicanus. We must cross the thresholds of the apostles  
instead,  
With suppliant prayer and confession of our faith.

Paul. How blessed you show yourself to be in your faith  
and your belief!  
Now indeed you prove yourself a true Christian.

SCENE XI. (The emperor's throne room, as in Scene I. Constantine speaks to some of the officers who have reported to him on the battle.)

Constantine.

I wonder, oh soldiers,  
Why Gallicanus himself has been so long  
away from our presence.

First Tribune.

My lord, as soon as he entered Rome,  
He hurried to the blessed Peter's house,  
Prostrated himself on the ground,  
And gave thanks for the victory received.

Constantine.

(surprised.)

Gallicanus did?

Second Tribune.

He did, sir.

Constantine.

I find that impossible to believe.

First Tribune.

Here he comes now, my lord.  
You can find it out from him in person.

(Gallicanus enters.)

Constantine.

I have long been waiting for you, Gallicanus,  
Hoping to hear from you  
How the battle was fought and won.

Gallicanus.

I am ready to make a full report,  
My lord, and tell you everything in good order.

Constantine.

But for the moment, let it wait;  
Please explain to me instead  
About some other things.

Gallicanus.

And what is that, Sire?

Constantine.

When you left Rome, you went  
Into the temples of the gods;  
Yet on your return, instead,  
You visited the houses of the apostles.

Gallicanus.

Why do you ask, my lord?

Constantine.

I am curious to know why.

Gallicanus.

I shall explain to you, my lord.

Constantine.

I shall be glad if you do so.

- Gallicanus. I admit, oh most holy emperor,  
That when I went abroad, as you had ordered,  
I went into the sanctuaries  
And humbly committed myself to demons and to gods
- Constantine. This was the Roman custom  
In the old days.
- Gallicanus. An evil tradition.
- Constantine. The worst possible.
- Gallicanus. After this was done  
The Tribunes and their legions  
Accompanied my departure on all sides.
- Constantine. You left indeed in great pomp.
- Gallicanus. We advanced, we confronted the enemy,  
We engaged in combat, we were defeated.
- Constantine. The Romans were defeated?
- Gallicanus. Thoroughly.
- Constantine. O dreadful day of shame,  
Unheard of in the course of centuries!
- Gallicanus. So I renewed my criminal sacrifices  
To gods who should have helped:  
They did not come.  
And in the battle, as it increased in strength,  
Many of our men fell.
- Constantine. I am bewildered by what I hear.
- Gallicanus. At last my officers no longer obeyed me,  
and surrendered.
- Constantine. They surrendered?! To the enemy?!
- Gallicanus. To the enemy.
- Constantine. Ah! What did you do?
- Gallicanus. What could I do,  
Except take flight?
- Constantine. No!
- Gallicanus. Indeed, my lord.

Constantine. What anguish must have then tormented  
The constancy of your heart!

Gallicanus. A terrible anguish, my lord.

Constantine. And how did you escape at last?

Gallicanus. The friends of my household, John and Paul,  
Persuaded me to make a vow to the Creator.

Constantine. A wise decision.

Gallicanus. I decided to try this, and, as I opened  
my mouth to take this vow,  
I saw heavenly aid approaching.

Constantine. In what form?

Gallicanus. There appeared to me then a young man of  
great height,  
Bearing a cross on his shoulders;  
He ordered me to follow, with drawn sword,  
Wherever he would lead.

Constantine. Whoever he was, he was sent  
As a messenger from Heaven.

Gallicanus. I realized that is who he was.  
And immediately thereafter there stood by me,  
To the right and to the left of me,  
Many soldiers, all in arms,  
None of whose faces I knew.  
And they all assured me of their aid.

Constantine. It was the heavenly host you saw!

Gallicanus. I have no doubt that it was.  
Then, following where he led me,  
I entered, without any fear,  
The front line of the enemy's army,  
Till I came upon their king, named Bradan.  
And he, seized by an incredible fear,  
Threw himself down at my feet.  
Surrendering himself with all his men,  
He offered to pay tribute  
To the ruler of the Roman world.

Constantine. Oh, thanks be to the one who grants success,  
Who does not suffer  
Those who hope in Him to be defeated!

Gallicanus. I have learned this from experience.

Constantine. But I should like to hear what the Tribunes did  
After they had run away.

Gallicanus. They hurried back to make their peace  
And be forgiven.

Constantine. Did you receive them freely,  
Without any penalty at all?

Gallicanus. Should I have received them freely, without  
any penalty,  
When they had abandoned me, leaving me  
In danger, surrounded by the enemy?  
I did not, Sire.

Constantine. What did you do then to them?

Gallicanus. I set a price for them to pay  
For my forgiveness.

Constantine. What was the price?

Gallicanus. The Christian faith, of course.  
Whoever chose this faith  
Would sooner receive forgiveness and grace,  
And greater honor and rank.  
But whoever among them rejected this truth  
Would lose both grace and forgiveness  
And his military rank.

Constantine. A just proposal, and one well suited  
To your position of authority.

Gallicanus. And for my part,  
When I had been immersed in baptism  
I gave myself up entirely to God.  
So much so that I even  
Renounced your daughter,  
Whom I loved above all things;  
In order that, abstaining from marriage,  
I might be more pleasing to the Virgin's Son.

Consantine. (moved, comes down from his throne to embrace him)

Come closer, that I may throw myself  
Into your embrace!  
Now at last, now I must reveal to you  
What I was earlier forced to keep secret.

Gallicanus. (surprised.)

What is that, my lord?

Constantine. That my daughter, and both yours too,  
Already practice with fervor  
The new religion you have chosen.

Gallicanus. How happy it makes me to know that!

Constantine. And they burn with such passion  
To preserve their virginity untouched,  
That neither threats nor punishments  
Can ever recall them from their firm purpose.

Gallicanus. I hope with all my heart  
They will carry out their purpose  
To the end.

Constantine. Come, let us go into the palace  
Where they are living together.  
They await us.

Gallicanus. Go before me, lord, and I will follow after.

Constantine. (as they go from the throne room into the  
women's part of the palace, he sees the women  
hurrying forth to meet them.)

Look, here they come running out to meet us,  
With the great Helen, my noble mother who  
bore me.  
They are all of them crying tears of joy.

SCENE XII. (The women's quarters within the palace.  
The cloister, as in Scene II.)

Gallicanus. (deeply moved, to Constantia and his daughters.)

O holy virgins, may you live  
Happy forever! And may you go on  
Forever loving Christ,  
Keeping for Him alone  
Your virginity's honor untouched.  
So will you be found worthy at last  
Of the Eternal King's embrace.

Constantia. (speaks for herself and his daughters. Gently.)

We will save for Him our virginity  
All the more gladly, now that we feel  
You are not opposed to our wishes.

Gallicanus. No, no, I do not oppose them!  
I do not resist, I do not forbid,  
I give in to your wishes most gladly and freely.  
O my Constantia, for whom I eagerly risked  
my life,  
I will not force you to any decision  
Other than what you have chosen.

Constantia. The right hand of Almighty God  
Has made you change your mind.

Gallicanus. (looking at her with great love.)

If He had not changed me for the better,  
I would not consent to your keeping  
Your vow of chastity.

Constantia. (moved, she speaks for herself this time.)

The One who loves the modesty of virgins,  
Supporter of all good will;  
He who has recalled you  
From your unlawful intention,  
And who has marked out my chastity  
To be given to Him alone;  
He has divided us in this world,  
And separated our bodies here below  
Only that we may be judged worthy  
Of going hand in hand, one day, into eternal joy.

Gallicanus. (answering her confession of love with joy.)

Oh yes, let that day come soon!

Constantine. Well then, since the tie of our love for Christ  
Already unites us  
In the common bond of our faith,  
You may quite properly live here in the  
palace with us,  
Receiving the honor due you, since you are now,  
as it were,  
A son-in-law of the imperial house.

Gallicanus. (hesitates, looks at Constantia, and realizes  
his weakness; then answers, in his straight-  
forward way, in a voice rough with restrained  
passion.)

No -- no, we cannot do that.  
The most dangerous temptation is that of the eyes  
Of seeing each other daily.  
We must avoid that, or risk being untrue to our  
vows.

Constantine. I suppose you are right. I cannot argue with you.

Gallicanus. (continues, in a burst of passion.)

It is not wise for me to gaze too often  
On the unmarried girl I love --  
As you very well know  
More than my family, more than my life --  
More than my very soul.

Constantine. Of course you must do what you think best.

Gallicanus. (briskly, now, turning his attention away from Constantia, and becoming the general once more.)

My lord, when you inspect the troops you will see  
Your army is now four-fold  
Thanks to Christ's good will  
And to my own hard work.  
Permit me now to fight for that other Emperor  
Whose help gained me my triumph,  
To Whom I owe whatever happy good fortune  
I have had in my life.

Constantine. (answers formally now, as Christian emperor.)

To Him is due all praise and jubilation;  
Each one of His creatures must serve Him.

Gallicanus. And especially those  
To whom He has brought abundant help  
When they needed it most.

(Makes arrangements as if leaving for another campaign.)

I reserve for my daughters  
That part of my estate which is due them,  
And part of it I will keep for myself  
To give assistance to pilgrims.  
The rest I wish to distribute  
Among my slaves, whom I hereby set free,  
And the poor, in order to help them  
For their needs.

Constantine. (in his role as a witness, as well as Gallicanus' superior.)

I approve of your testament.  
You are disposing of your estate  
With great prudence and foresight, Gallicanus,  
And will surely never have to suffer  
Eternal punishment.

Gallicanus. (reporting to the emperor, and handing him his resignation.)

As for me, Sire, I am eager  
To join Hilarianus, the holy man  
At Ostia, and to be his inseparable companion  
there  
For the rest of my life,  
Spending my life in the praise of God  
And the help and support of the poor.

Constantine. (gives Gallicanus his blessing.)

May the One to Whom all things are possible  
always  
Allow you to live in holy and happy circumstances  
And to grow ever nearer to Him, and thrive.  
May you be led to eternal joy  
By the God who reigns and is glorified forever  
In the oneness of the Trinity.

Gallicanus. (has bowed his head to receive the emperor's blessing.)

Amen.

## GALLICANUS, PART II

SCENE I. (Sometime during the reign of Julian the Apostate, some twenty-five years later. Again, the throne room of the palace. Some changes are apparent: the statues of the gods and the altar announce the return of a pagan emperor to the throne. Julian sits, surrounded by the two consuls. He has been studying some papers.)

Julian. We judge it to be a harmful thing for our rule  
For Christians to have the option  
To exercise a free choice.  
They boast that they should be allowed  
To follow the laws they were given  
At the time of Emperor Constantine.

Consul. It would be wrong for you to allow this to go on.

Julian. I have no intention  
Of allowing them to have this privilege.

Consul. That is the proper decision.

Julian. (calls the guards.)

Soldiers, I want you to make ready,  
Go out and strip the Christians  
Of all their personal property.  
If anyone dares to complain,  
Quote Christ's words to him and say,  
"The man who will not renounce  
All his possessions,  
He shall not be able to be my disciple."

Guards. (saluting.)

We shall not delay, Sire.

SCENE II. (Same as Scene I, some days later.)

Consuls. Look, my lord, the guards are coming back.

Julian. (to the guards, as they come to stand before him, looking dejected.)

Well, have you been successful?

First Guard. No, my lord, we have not.

Julian. (frowning.)

Then why have you come back so soon?

Second Guard. We have come to report to you, Sire. We had come to those estates Which Gallicanus had designated As his own property. We decided to occupy them For the use and comfort of your household. But whoever went inside them, Putting as much as a foot within, Was at once affected by leprosy, Or possessed by the devil himself.

Julian. (angry now.)

Go back at once  
And see to it that he either leaves the country  
And goes off into exile,  
Or else sacrifices to these idols.

(Points to the statues of the gods along the wall.)

SCENE III. (Ostia. A room in the simple house where Gallicanus has been living. Gallicanus is calmly speaking to the guards who have come to deliver the emperor's message. The old general has lost none of his former authority. He is calm at the thought of his impending exile and martyrdom, as though he had long been waiting for such a thing to happen.)

Gallicanus. Do not exhaust yourselves, men,  
Urging me on to no avail.  
Engrossed in the contemplation of eternal life,  
I care very little for whatever  
Comes to be beneath the sun.  
Therefore I shall leave the country,  
And, as an exile in the name of Christ,  
Set out for Alexandria, hoping to receive there  
The crown of martyrdom at last.

SCENE IV. (The throne room once more.)

First Guard. (comes up before the throne and salutes Julian.)

We are reporting back, sir.  
Gallicanus was sent into exile,  
According to your orders.  
He went to Alexandria, and there  
Was arrested by Count Rautianus,  
Who had him killed by the sword.

Julian. That is good news!  
I am glad to hear it!

Second Guard. But meanwhile, John and Paul have been causing trouble  
For you, my lord.

Julian. (turns, surprised.)

What are they doing?

Second Guard. They wander freely about,  
Giving away to the poor  
The treasures of Constantia.

Julian. Let them at once be summoned  
To appear before me here.

SCENE V. (The same, some hours later. The soldiers bring in John and Paul, who have grown more confident with age.)

Guards. (saluting.)

Here they are, sir.

Julian. I realize, John and Paul,  
That you have been, since childhood,  
In the service of the emperors.

John. That is true. We have been.

Julian. So it is fitting, then, that you should be  
at my side,  
Serving in the palace where you were raised  
Since you were children.

Paul. We will not serve you, Sire.

Julian. (surprised).

You will not serve me, you say?

John. We have already told you, Sire.

Julian. Why ever not?  
Do I not seem worthy to be served,  
And your true emperor?

Paul. You seem imperial, Sire,  
And yet quite different  
From your predecessors,  
The other emperors we have known.

Julian. In what way do I seem different?

John. In both your religion  
And your worth, Sire.

Julian. I would like to hear you  
Explain this to me more at length.

Paul. We would be happy to tell you  
And explain it to you at length.  
Now the most glorious and illustrious emperors,  
Constantine, Constans and Constantius,  
Under whose rule we served,  
Were all most true Christians  
Who were proud of calling themselves  
Servants of Christ.

Julian. I know this very well,  
And I remember,  
But I do not choose to follow them in this.

Paul. Then you imitate  
Inferior models.  
Those emperors used to frequent the churches,  
And having thrown aside their crown,  
Kneeling on the ground  
They adored Jesus Christ.

Julian. You are not going to convince me  
To do these things.

John. And that, Sire, is just why  
You are so different from them.

Paul. For, because they sacrificed to the Creator,  
They adorned, blessed and beautified  
The summit of the imperial power  
With signs of their integrity and holiness,  
And succeeded abundantly  
In the fortunate outcome of their enterprises.

Julian. And so do I, too, to be sure.

John. Not in the same way, Sire.  
For Divine grace ever accompanied them.

Julian. What foolishness!  
I too once studied such silly things  
And obtained the degree of clerk in the church.

John. What do you think of this clerk, Paul?

Paul. He seems more like a minister of the Devil.

Julian. But when I understood  
That there was nothing useful in it,  
I turned to the worship of the gods.  
It was their cult that brought me  
To the highest place in the empire,  
The summit of imperial rule.

John. You have cut short our speech,  
In order not to hear  
The praise of just men.

Julian. What has that to do with me?

Paul. Nothing, that is true enough.  
Yet I must tell you something  
Which does concern you:  
For after this world of ours  
Was no longer worthy to have them  
They were taken up among the angels,  
Leaving you a wretched state to rule over.

Julian. (surprised.)

Why do you call the period of my reign  
Particularly wretched?

John. Because of the kind of ruler.

Paul. You left all real religion  
And imitated a superstitious idolatry.  
Because of your iniquity  
We have decided to avoid

Both the sight of you  
And your very presence.

Julian. (patiently, choosing to ignore the insult,  
hoping to gain their support.)

Even now, though you have been doing your  
best to insult me,  
Yet I still choose to overlook your insolence;  
I wish to raise you to the highest rank,  
And have you with me in my court.

John. Do not trouble yourself,  
For neither threats nor flattery  
Would cause us to accept.

Julian. I shall give you ten days' time  
In which to come to your senses  
And decide of your own accord  
To be reconciled with the grace of our power.  
If you do not, however, I will do  
What must be done. I will allow you no longer  
To make a laughingstock of me.

Paul. Do what you intend to today,  
Since in any case you will under no  
circumstances  
Be able to recall us --  
Neither to the palace, to your service,  
Nor to the temples, and the cult of the gods.

Julian. (angry.)

Go away now, leave me.  
And be sure to think it over,  
As I have warned you to.

John. The delay you have granted  
Makes no difference at all to us.

(to Paul.)

Let us use this time  
To turn our minds toward heaven  
And commend ourselves to God  
By means of fasts and prayers.

Paul. That is the thing for us to do.

CENE VI. (The throne room, ten days later.)

Julian. (to the officer of the guards.)

Please go, Terrentianus,  
Take some soldiers with you,  
And force John and Paul  
To sacrifice to Jupiter.  
If their minds should still be obstinate,  
They should be put to death --  
Not openly, however, but quite secretly,  
Since they were members of the court,  
And noblemen.

CENE VII. (The house of John and Paul. Terrentianus enters, and addresses them formally, pointing to a statue brought in by two soldiers.)

Terrentianus. The Emperor Julian, in his great mercy,  
Has sent you, John and Paul,  
This golden image of Jupiter,  
To whom you must willingly burn incense.  
If you refuse to do so,  
You must suffer the death sentence.

John. If Julian is your lord,  
Remain at peace with him  
And enjoy his good graces.  
We have no lord but Jesus Christ,  
For whose love we eagerly wish to die,  
In order to be worthy of receiving  
Everlasting joy, throughout eternity.

Terrentianus. (to his soldiers. Coldly, performing his duty, without personal anger.)

Why are you holding back, men?  
Grasp your swords and kill these men  
Who rebel against the emperor  
And all the gods of our country.  
When they are dead  
Bury them secretly within the house  
And leave no trace of blood!

Soldier. What shall we answer  
If someone asks us where they are?

Terrentianus. Just say that they have been sent into exile.

John and Paul.

(alternately.)

In this our present danger  
We call upon you, Christ,  
Along with the Father and the Holy Spirit  
Who reign as One God.  
Even as we are about to die  
We praise you, Lord.  
Take up our souls  
Which have for your sake been cleansed  
and purged  
From their homes of clay and dirt.

SCENE VIII. (Some time later, after Terrentianus has accomplished his mission, executing John and Paul, and hiding their bodies, he returns to his home. A crowd is standing before his house, speaking and gesturing in consternation. Terrentianus addresses them.)

Terrentianus. Oh Christian people,  
What is the matter with my only son?

First Christian. Your son is gnashing his teeth,  
He spits out, he rolls his eyes about  
In an insane manner.  
He is obviously possessed by a devil.

Terrentianus. Alas for me, his wretched father!  
Where is he suffering  
These terrible convulsions?

First Christian. He is rolling about on the ground  
Before the tomb of the holy martyrs, John  
and Paul;  
And he says his torments  
Are due to their prayers.

Terrentianus. It is my fault! I am the one who is guilty:  
For it was by my order, and at my command  
That this luckless boy  
Put his impious hands upon the holy martyrs.

Second Christian. Well, if you urged him to commit the crime,  
Now that he pays the penalty,  
You are sharing his sufferings.

Terrentianus. But I myself, poor wretch, was following  
The orders of that most impious emperor,  
The pagan Julian.

First Christian. That explains why your son was struck down  
By Divine vengeance.

Terrentianus. I know that, and that is why  
I am all the more terrified,  
Since I remember that no enemy of  
You Christians, who are servants of God,  
Has ever escaped unpunished.

Second Christian. And you are right to fear  
The wrath of God.

Terrentianus. Suppose I were to run to their holy tomb,  
Repent of my crime,  
And fall before their grave,  
Begging for their forgiveness?

Second Christian. You would be sure to earn  
Their forgiveness.  
But you must not fail to cleanse yourself  
By the sacrament of baptism as well.

SCENE IX. (The house of John and Paul, where they have  
recently been buried secretly. The house has already become  
a shrine for Christians, because of the relics of the two  
holy martyrs and the miracles they are performing as further  
proof of their sainthood. As the scene opens, Terrentianus  
is shown on his knees in fervent prayer before the simple  
altar which has been set up, turning the house into an early  
Christian church.)

Terrentianus. Oh you who have become  
Glorious Witnesses to Christ: John and Paul,  
I beg you, follow the example of your Master,  
Who ordered you to pray for the sins  
Of those who persecuted you.  
Pray for my sins, I beseech you!  
Show compassion for the anguish  
Of a wretched father  
Who has lost his only son,  
And have pity on the raging misery of  
my child;  
Then we may both, bathed in the waters  
Of the baptismal font,  
Long continue in the faith of your most  
holy Trinity!

First Christian. (running in from the outside.)

Terrentianus, you can stop the flow of  
your tears  
And spare the wretched anguish of your heart  
Look, look, your son is regaining his wits!  
He has returned to his senses --  
Through the intercession of these martyrs  
He is back in good health once again.

Terrentianus.

(rises from his knees, and turns, to see  
his son coming toward him. He embraces him,  
then both kneel as he prays.)

Oh, how I give thanks to the ruler of  
eternity itself,  
Who grants so great an honor to the soldiers  
Of His holy army!  
Not only do their souls rejoice in Heaven,  
But even their dead bones shine forth within  
their tombs,  
Glowing with the many signs of miracles  
performed,  
A proof of their sainthood,  
At the orders of our common Lord, Jesus Christ  
Who lives and reigns as God,  
United with the Holy Spirit forever,  
Through all the ages of time everlasting!

## DULCITIUS

THE STORY. The martyrdom of the Holy Virgins Agape, Chione, and Irena. Governor Dulcitus went to them secretly, in the silence of the night, eager to enjoy their embraces. As soon as he entered, however, he suffered hallucinations. His mind became so confused that he began to kiss the pots and pans, thinking he was embracing the girls, so that his face and clothes were all horribly blackened. Then he turned the girls over to Count Sisinnius to be punished. He too, was miraculously deceived in several different ways; finally he ordered Agape and Chione to be burned at the stake and Irena to be pierced through with arrows.

SCENE I. (An imaginative reconstruction of the Palace of Diocletian, at the time of the Christian persecutions of the early fourth century A.D. Two guards stand at attention at the door. The emperor, dressed in splendid purple robes, is seated on a high throne. Before him stand three very young girls dressed in white. Agape, Chione and Irena are sisters. They belong to one of the best families in Rome, and should, by rights, take their place in society. Their Family's conversion to Christianity, however, has kept them from taking part in any of the social functions of the court.)

Diocletian. (moved to indulgence by their youth and apparent helplessness.)

Because of your high rank, good family and great beauty,  
You are to be married to the noblest of our court.  
I myself will order  
Your marriages to take place --  
If you will deny Christ  
And offer sacrifices to our gods.

Agape. (proudly.) Do not concern yourself, do not burden yourself  
With preparations for our marriage.  
Nothing can make us deny His Name,  
Nor can anything force us to soil the purity  
Of our maidenly estate.

- Diocletian. (taken aback.)  
What is this outburst of madness?
- Agape. What sign of madness do you see in us?
- Diocletian. Is is not clear enough? A serious sign!
- Agape. What do you mean?
- Diocletian. Why, this above all,  
That you abandon the religion of your ancestors,  
Leave its sacred rites, and follow in its stead  
This vain new Christian superstition.
- Agape. Beware! For you do slander  
The power of omnipotent God.  
It is a dangerous path you follow!
- Diocletian. (amazed at her insolence.) Dangerous? For whom?
- Agape. Dangerous for you,  
And dangerous for the state you rule.
- Diocletian. This girl is surely insane. Soldiers, take  
her away!
- (The guards take Agape, hand her to guards  
outside, and return to their posts.)
- Chione. My sister is not insane.  
It is your folly she sees,  
And most justly does she reprove it.
- Diocletian. (to the guards.) This girl's ravings exceed  
by far those of her sisters.  
Remove her from my sight as well,  
And let the third one be questioned.
- (Guards move up, stand on either side of Irena,  
who looks even smaller between these towering  
figures.)
- Irena. You will find her just as stubborn  
And as rebellious to your unjust commands.
- Diocletian. (gently.) Irena, though you are the youngest  
in years,  
Show me you are the oldest in dignity.
- Irena. Please tell me, Sire, how I can do this.

Diocletian. Bow your head to the gods.  
Be an example of obedience for your sisters.  
If you do this, you will set them free.

Irena. Let those who wish to incur the wrath of God  
Almighty  
Bow down to idols. I will not dishonor my head,  
Anointed with the regal ointment of my faith,  
by placing  
Myself at the feet of idols.

Diocletian. (reasoning with her.)

The worship of gods carries  
No disgrace, but rather brings  
The greatest honor.

Irena. And what disgrace is more infamous,  
And what is a greater dishonor,  
Than to worship a slave  
As if he were master?

Diocletian. I am not asking you to worship slaves,  
But masters and gods of emperors.

Irena. Something that is bought with money from a dealer  
Is a slave. Such are the idols of the gods!

Diocletian. Your insolent words cry out for punishment!

Irena. ~~X~~ Punishment is the reward we seek!  
We yearn for the day we can embrace it,  
We long to be torn asunder for the love of Christ!

Diocletian. (to the guards.)

Then let these stubborn girls,  
Who have opposed our decrees,  
Be put in chains, and wait in a foul prison  
For Governor Dulcitus' questioning.

SCENE II. (A courtyard of the great palace. A door, stage left, leads to the prison; stage right, the entrance to the kitchen and pantry building. This connects with the building in back, which has only a high window with grating. Dulcitus and a half dozen soldiers are standing center stage. Dulcitus, the governor, is a hearty figure, lecherous in a conventional manner. His lack of dignity makes him take his soldiers into his confidence, and treat them with a familiarity quite out of keeping with his position as governor. The contrast with the quiet dignity of the girls is striking. At the moment, Dulcitus is very excited at the thought of the pleasure he will enjoy with all three girls. It is possible that rumors he has heard about exotic Christian practices and orgies leads him to believe they will be cooperative. He is rubbing his hands in anticipation.)

Dulcitus. All right, men, quickly now, let's see these girls  
You have been guarding in this prison.

(Soldiers bring out the three girls, stage left.  
Having saluted, they stand at attention,  
impassive, during the whole scene.)

Dulcitus. Good, very good!

(Looks at them each in turn.)

Oh, how beautiful, how delectable!  
What perfectly exciting girls!

Soldier. They are lovely, sir.

Dulcitus. I am overcome by the sight of them!

Soldier. We do not wonder, sir.

Dulcitus. I must make them want me!

Soldier. We do not believe you'll succeed, sir.

Dulcitus. Why not?

Soldier. Because, sir, their faith is too strong.

Dulcitus. Suppose I were to coax them, lure them on  
with promises?

Soldier. They don't care for things like that, sir.

Dulcitus. Well, suppose I were to scare them  
With threats of dreadful punishment?

Soldier. It would not make much difference to them, sir.

Dulcitus. What can I do, then?

Soldier. I suggest you think of some plan, sir.

Dulcitus. (thinks a while. Then, as if struck by a sudden idea.)

I know. Lock them up in the pantry -  
There beside the kitchen,  
Where the cooking utensils are kept.

Soldier. Why in there, sir?

Dulcitus. So I can visit them alone as often as I want.

Soldier. Just as you say, sir!

(Take girls into door at stage right.  
Dulcitus exit stage left.)

SCENE III. (The courtyard at night. Dulcitus enters stage left. He wears a handsomely decorated robe. The soldiers are seated in a circle, playing cards. They get up when he enters.)

Dulcitus. (whispers.) What are our pretty little prisoners doing at this hour of the night?

Soldier. They're keeping themselves busy singing hymns, sir.

Dulcitus. (moving closer to stage right, door).

Let's get a little closer so we can hear them.

(Sound of singing.)

Soldier. The sound of their high-pitched voices carries Even from afar.

Dulcitus. Keep a light by the door. You wait for me here. As for me, I'm going in there to claim those kisses And feel about me those arms I've been craving for.

Soldier. Go on in, sir. We'll wait for you out here.

SCENE IV. (The pantry in which the girls are kept. Irena, from the window, sees Dulcitus going in the kitchen door.)

Agape. (interrupting her singing.)

What was that noise outside the door?

Irena. That wretched man Dulcitus is coming.

Chione. May the Lord help us and keep us safe!

Agape. Amen!

(A pause, as they wait for him tensely. Then, as a loud sound of rattling and clattering is heard, Irena runs to the wall separating the two rooms, and looks through a crack at Dulcitus on the other side.)

Chione. Why is he clattering so  
Around the pots and pans?

Irena. Let me see. Oh, hurry, come,  
Look through this crack.

(Steps aside to let Chione look; she in turn gasps in amazement.)

Agape. (feeling left out.)

What is going on? What is he doing?

Irena. (back at her crack.)

Look at him, the fool.  
He's completely out of his mind!  
He thinks he is embracing us!

Agape. What is he doing now?

Irena. Now he is fondling the pots  
And hugging the frying pans to his eager breast,  
Giving them all long, sweet kisses!

Chione. It's the funniest thing I have ever seen!

Irena. His face and hands and clothes are filthy,  
All covered with soot from the pots he's hugging  
He looks just like an Ethiopian,  
All black from head to toe!

Agape.

It's only fitting that his body  
Should be as black as his soul.  
It's clear he's possessed by the devil,  
Who has deranged his mind.

Irena.

(at the crack.) Oh, he's going out now.  
Let's see what his soldiers will do  
When they see him looking like that.

(Goes to window, from which she sees:)

SCENE V. (The soldiers, sitting on the ground playing cards, since they expected to wait for Dulcitus a long time, are surprised at the commotion and panicked at the sight of the big black man, whom they do not recognize as Dulcitus, coming out of the house toward them. Each in turn cries out in confusion. Some run off.)

Soldier I. Who is that coming out of the palace?

Soldier II: It must be someone possessed by a demon...

Soldier III: No, no, can't you see?  
It's the Devil himself!

Soldier IV: Let's get away from here!

Dulcitus. Men, where are you all rushing?  
Wait! All of you! Stop running!  
How will I get home now?  
I need you to light the way.

Soldier I. (stopping momentarily in his headlong flight.)

He sounds like our Captain... but from the looks  
of him,  
It can only be the Devil!

Soldier II. Let's get away as fast as we can!  
That malevolent thing  
Wants to destroy us all!

Dulcitus. (left alone in the darkness -- only the light from the window shines on him. He stands perplexed for a minute; then he decides to complain to his superior officers.)

This is absolutely unpardonable behavior!  
I shall go straight to the palace  
And tell the rulers how I have been insulted!

SCENE VI. (The entrance to the emperor's quarters. A grand staircase, guarded by two splendidly uniformed guards, leads up to the door.)

Dulcitus. (unaware of his appearance.)

Guards, escort me into the palace at once.  
I must have a private interview with the Emperor.

Guard I. Who is this vile and filthy creature,  
Standing there in tattered, dirty clothes?

Guard II. Let's give him a beating and throw him down  
the stairs.

That will teach him  
He has no right to come to the Palace like that!

(They throw him down.)

Dulcitus. (beaten and bedraggled, picks himself up from  
the ground.)

Help, help!

(No one appears to help him.)

What has happened to me?  
Don't my elegant clothes and noble bearing  
Tell them who I am?  
Why does everyone who sees me act as if I were  
an awful sight?  
I'll go back to my wife.

(Wife appears on stage, moaning and tearing  
her hair, but he does not see her at first.)

Maybe she can tell me what is going on.

(Seeing his wife )

Oh, here comes my wife now!  
Why is her hair loosened?  
Why is she in mourning?  
Look, all our household follows her in tears!

SCENE VII. (A handsome, authoritative woman, the wife is extremely upset, and afraid of these inexplicable occurrences.)

Wife. Alas, alas, my poor Dulcitus!  
What is happening to you?  
You are not well, you have been acting like a  
madman.  
The Christians have made a laughing stock of you

Dulcitus. (shakes his head as if awaking from a dream.  
He looks down at his clothes and blackened hands.)

Now I see -- it was their magic that bewitched me.

Wife. (hands to her head.)

Oh, that is the shame of it!  
That is the worst part of my sorrow!  
How could you be so blind,  
So that you could not see your plight?

Dulcitus. (angry now.)

I demand that those insolent girls  
Be brought out here at once.  
Let them be stripped of their clothes  
and publicly exposed,  
So that they too will see  
How it feels to be openly humiliated!  
They'll be the laughing stocks now!

SCENE VIII. (A public place. The scene has been going on for some time now. Dulcitus has fallen mysteriously asleep in his seat of office, stage left. At right, the guards are standing beside Agape, Chione, and Irena, whose hands are tied behind their backs. Over their white robes they wear heavy, colored woolen mantles, which the soldiers are vainly trying to rip off their backs. The soldiers stop, wipe the sweat from their foreheads.)

Soldier I. (to his companion.)

It's no use! We've been at this for hours now.  
Just look! Their clothes cling to their young bodies.  
It's as though it was their own skin!

Soldier II. And all this time our fine governor  
The one who told us to strip the girls,  
Just sits there, snoring away!

(Goes over and shakes Dulcitus.)

There is no way to wake him from this sleep.  
There is some powerful magic at work here!  
The Emperor must be told  
Of all these strange events.  
Let us report to him at once.

SCENE IX. (Same as Scene I. The Imperial Court of the Palace.)

Diocletian. This is dreadful news I hear.  
Governor Dulcitius has indeed  
Been sorely deluded, shamed, and tricked.  
These shameless young girls must no longer  
Unscathed go about boasting that they have  
    humiliated our gods  
And those devoted to their cult.  
I shall order Count Sisinnius  
To carry out fit punishment against them.

SCENE X. (A public place. The seat of office is empty, stage left. Two guards stand watch. Count Sisinnius enters, written orders in hand, a noble, authoritative, rather cold figure. He sits down.)

Sisinnius. Soldiers, where are those insolent girls  
Who must be tortured on the rack?

Soldier I. They have been thrown in prison, sir.

Sisinnius. Keep Irena there. Bring the others here  
    before me.

Soldier II. Why do you make an exception of her, sir?

Sisinnius. She is young and helpless.  
I want to spare her youth.  
She might more easily be converted if she is  
    not afraid  
And influenced by her sisters' presence.

Soldiers. (saluting.) Right, sir.

SCENE XI. (Same as Scene X. Guards enter, bring in the two older girls.)

Soldier I. Here are the girls you wanted us to bring you, s

Sisinnius. Agape and Chione, I suggest you agree to do what  
    you should.

- Agape. If we agree, we shall do it.  
What is it we should do?
- Sisinnius. You must sacrifice to our gods.
- Chione. (innocently.)
- But we constantly do worship the true, Eternal  
Father,  
His Coeternal Son, and their Holy Paraclete,  
With the sacrifice of praise.
- Sisinnius. No, that is certainly not the sacrifice I mean.  
In fact, if you persist in this,  
You will be punished.
- Agape. We do persist and ever shall,  
Nor will we ever sacrifice to demons.
- Sisinnius. Leave this hardness of heart.  
Do not be obstinate, both of you.  
Sacrifice to our gods! If you do not,  
I have no choice but to have you killed,  
By order of the Emperor Diocletian.
- Chione. (self-righteously.)
- It is your duty: you must follow the orders  
of your Emperor:  
Put us to death, since you know that we disobey  
his decess.  
If you delay and spare us,  
Then in all justice, you should yourself be killed.
- Sisinnius. (with authority, to the guards.)
- Don't just stand around.  
Guards, waste no time.  
Seize these blasphemous girls at once  
And throw them alive into the fire.
- Soldier I. (saluting.) Yes, sir.
- (to the other soldier.)
- Let's arrange the pyre at once  
And drag them into the raging flames.  
That should put an end to their insults.
- (They tie the girls to a stake on the pyre.  
The girls look up in prayer.)

Agape.

Oh Lord, we know Thy awful power.  
It would not be so strange, if the fire  
forgot its natural force  
And obeyed Thee, instead submitting to Thy  
divine commands.  
But we are tired of waiting, Lord, and pray  
to be released  
From the bonds which tie our souls to this life  
When our bodies have perished,  
Then may our souls rejoice with Thee in heaven!

(The fire leaps up, there is a dazzling light;  
when we next see them, the girls' heads droop  
on their chests in death.)

Soldiers.

(fall on their knees before the pyre,  
marvelling at the miracle.)

How astonishing! What an incredible miracle!  
Look! Their souls have left their bodies,  
Yet there are no traces of burning, or any  
wounds at all!  
Neither their hair nor their clothes have been  
burnt by the fire,  
Even their bodies have been left untouched!

SCENE XII. (Before the seat of Sisinnius. Enter Irena,  
between two guards.)

Soldier.

(threateningly.)

Irena, you should tremble at your sisters' death  
Beware lest you, too, follow their example and  
so perish.

Irena.

I want to follow their example, to die as they do  
Oh, may I thus be found worthy to share in their  
eternal joy!

Sisinnius.

My child, listen to my advice.

Irena.

I will never listen to anyone who counsels evil.

Sisinnius.

If you do not listen to me, your death will be  
a slow one.  
I will prolong your end,  
Adding new tortures day by day.

- rena. | The more brutally I am tortured,  
The more gloriously will I be praised.
- isinnius. You have no fear of punishment? (sinister)  
What I will do to torture you will make  
you shudder.
- rena. Whatever the punishment you plan to inflict,  
I shall escape it with the help of Christ.
- isinnius. How would you like to be taken to a brothel,  
Where your body will be shamefully disgraced?
- rena. | Better to defile the body with whatever tortures,  
Than to dishonor the soul by sacrificing to idols.
- isinnius. Living among harlots will dishonor you. No longer  
Will you be numbered in the company of the pure.
- Irena. | Earthly pleasures and lust bring punishment,  
But trials bring the crown of Heaven.  
| There is no sin, unless the soul consents.
- Sisinnius. (to himself.) I have spared her in vain;  
It was foolish to be touched by her youth.
- Soldier I. We knew it long ago.  
There is no way she could ever be forced to  
worship gods.  
Her soul could not be broken by threats.
- Sisinnius. I shall spare her no longer.
- Soldier I. You are right not to, sir.
- Sisinnius. Go and seize her, have no pity,  
And be sure to treat her roughly.  
Take her to the brothel; do not be held back  
By thought of her honor.
- Irena. They will never succeed in taking me there.
- Sisinnius. Who can possibly prevent them?
- Irena. | He Who rules the world by His Providence.
- Sisinnius. I shall see about this.
- Irena. Yes, you will -- and soon.

Sisinnius. (to the soldiers.)

Soldiers, do not fear this blasphemous girl's  
Deceitful and foreboding words.

Soldier I. No, sir, we are not afraid.  
We eagerly obey your orders.

(Exeunt, with Irena between them.)

SCENE XIII. (Same as preceding scene. Some hours have passed.)

Sisinnius. (looking off stage.)

Who are these men coming toward us?  
They look much like the soldiers to whom  
we entrusted Irena.

(Soldiers enter, tired out, breathing heavily.)

In fact, they are those very ones.

(To the guards.)

Why have you returned so soon?  
And why are you so out of breath?

Soldier I. We have come back to report, sir.

Sisinnius. Where is the girl you took away?

Soldier I. (proud of what he thinks is a job well done.)

On top of the mountain, sir.

Sisinnius. On top of what mountain?

Soldier: (pointing off stage.) That one nearby.

Sisinnius. (furious.) Idiots! Fools! Have you all  
lost your senses?

Soldier. (confused.) Why are you angry with us, sir?  
Why are you threatening us  
With insults and angry looks?

Sisinnius. May the gods destroy you!

Soldier.

(hurt.) What have we done to displease you?  
How have we done you any harm?  
What orders of yours have we disobeyed?

Sisinnius.

Didn't I order you to drag that girl to  
that shameful place  
Because she refused to worship our gods?

Soldier.

Yes, sir, those were your orders, which we  
were carrying out.  
Then two young men we had never seen before  
Overtook us on the way. They swore that you  
had sent them  
To take Irena to the top of the mountain.

Sisinnius.

I never heard of such a thing.  
I don't believe it.

Soldier.

We realize that now, sir.

Sisinnius.

What did these men look like?

Soldier.

They were splendidly dressed, sir,  
And their countenance was radiant and serene.

Sisinnius.

Did you follow them?

Soldier.

Yes, we did, sir.

Sisinnius.

What did they do?

Soldiers.

They placed themselves to the left and  
to the right of Irena  
And ordered us to return here  
So you would know what happened.

Sisinnius.

There is only one thing I can do.  
I shall go on horseback to discover  
Who those men are who deceived us.

Soldiers.

We will go with you, sir.

SCENE XIV. (The foot of the mountain. On a ledge, above, left, stands Irena. A much changed Sisinnius appears, tired and disheveled, now leading the horse he has been forced to dismount. He has been brought low. The soldiers follow him on stage.)

Sisinnius.

It's clear I have been bewitched  
By the magic of these Christians.

Alas, I have been around the mountain  
I don't know how many times,  
But always I come back to the same path again.  
I can neither find the way up the mountain  
Nor the way down again.

Soldier I.

We have been tricked by these miracles.  
We are utterly worn out from this exhausting tas

(Pointing at Irena.)

If you allow that mad creature to live on any longer  
You will destroy yourself and us!

Sisinnius.

Men, one of you bend your bow, shoot an arrow  
And strike down this witch.

Soldier II.

Yes, sir.

Irena.

(from above, in a laughing, joyous voice.)

For shame, Sisinnius; for shame!  
You have been sadly made a fool of. For, imagine  
You can't even overcome a poor, defenseless girl  
Without resorting to armed force!

Sisinnius.

(vengeful.)

I can bear whatever shame I must more easily now  
Since I know without a doubt  
That you are going to die.

Irena.

Death will be a great joy to me, a heavy grief for  
you.  
You will be damned in Tartarus  
Because of your evil cruelty;  
But I will receive the palm of martyrdom  
And wear the crown of purity.  
And I will enter the heavenly bridal chamber  
of the Eternal King,  
To Whom are honor and glory everlasting!

(Soldier shoots, and Irena falls, holding up  
her arms to Heaven.)

## CALLIMACHUS

The resurrection of Drusiana and of Callimachus,  
Who loved her, not only while she was alive;  
For disappointed in desire,  
On account of the curse of unlawful love,  
Even after she was dead  
He loved her still beyond.  
Because of this he died an evil death,  
Bitten by the Snake.  
In the end he was resurrected, together with Drusiana,  
By the holy prayers of St. John the Apostle,  
And was reborn in Christ at last.

SCENE I. (A public place in Ephesus. Two or three young men stand talking together in the street. Callimachus enters, sees them, and goes to join them.)

Callimachus. My friends, I need to speak with you.

Friend I. We are happy to see you, and will talk  
As long as you like.

Callimachus. Ah, good! But not here-- If you don't mind,  
I'd like to be with you alone.

Friend II. Whatever you prefer is fine with us.

Callimachus. Then can we find a private place  
Away from passersby and interruptions?

Friend III. Of course. Let us do that, dear friend.  
We're quite at your disposal.

SCENE II. (A tavern or an inn, with long tables. The young men sit down, and urge Callimachus to talk.)

Callimachus. (shakes his head, as though to clear his thoughts.)

My friends, I'm in a terrible state.  
I wish that you could help me  
In the anguish I feel.

Friend I. That's what your friends are for,  
To know your pain and sympathize  
And share whatever fortune, good or bad,  
Any one of us suffers alone.

Callimachus. Oh, if only you could lessen my sickness,  
And cut away at least some of my pain!

Friend II. Do tell us what troubles you so.  
If there is nothing else to do,  
We'll share your trouble and sadness,  
Otherwise we'll do our best  
To keep you from involvement  
In a base or worthless plan.

Callimachus. I am in love.

Friend I. What is the object of your affection?

Callimachus. Something so wholly beautiful,  
So graceful and full of charm...

Friend II. (drily) Admirable gifts indeed,  
But neither unique nor universal.  
They do not quite describe  
Whom or what you love.

Callimachus. It's... a woman.

Friend III. When you say "woman," my friend,  
It still doesn't tell us which one.

Callimachus. (waxing poetic.)

I mean the most precious...  
I mean the most wonderful woman in this  
world.

Friend II. (with a touch of philosophical pedantry.)

When you define a subject, my friend,  
Unless your definition modifies the  
particular,  
It doesn't mean a thing,  
Philosophically speaking.  
So if you want us to understand,  
You'd better give us the necessary  
qualifications.

Callimachus. Her name is Drusiana.

Friend III. You don't mean Lord Andronicus' wife?

Callimachus. Yes, yes, I do.

Friend II. You're making a bad mistake --  
You must be quite out of your senses.  
She has been baptized a Christian!

Callimachus. I don't care what she is,  
As long as she will love me.

Friend III. She will never do that, you know.

Callimachus. Why are you so sure?

Friend I. It's an impossible thing you hope for.

Callimachus. I'm surely not the first man  
To try to court a woman.  
And are there not examples,  
Of great men and greater gods,  
Urging me on by their daring?

Friend II. Listen to us, my friend.  
Quite different are the examples  
Urging this woman whom you yearn to embrace.  
She follows the teachings of St. John the  
Apostle,  
Wholly devoted to God and chastity.  
Even her husband Andronicus,  
A most Christian man himself,  
Has long missed her from his bed.  
So why would she even listen to your vain  
pleas?

Callimachus. (pushing aside his chair angrily.)

I looked to you for sympathy and help,  
Since you call yourselves my friends....  
You only fill me with despair.

Friend II. If we were to pretend that things were  
otherwise,  
We would deceive you.  
If we were to humor you we would betray  
the truth.

Callimachus. Since you all refuse to help me,  
I'll go to her myself.  
I will soften her heart  
And persuade her to love me.

Friend III. She will not listen.

Callimachus. I shall succeed  
Even if Destiny herself tries to stop me!

(Exit.)

Friend I. (to the others, as they sigh and shake  
their heads.)

We'll have to wait to see how this turns out.

SCENE III. (Drusiana's house. Callimachus comes in, looks at her for a while, then speaks impulsively, overwhelmed by her beauty.)

Callimachus. Drusiana, I must speak to you of a passion  
That grips my very breast.

Drusiana. (turns, surprised, but smiling.)

I can't imagine, Callimachus,  
That you could want to speak to me.  
I am surprised.

Callimachus. You really can't imagine why?

Drusiana. (smiling.) No, I can't.

Callimachus. I yearn to pour out the love I feel for you.  
For I do love you  
More than anything else in the world.

Drusiana. What bond of kinship or legal right  
Tells you to love me?

Callimachus. It is your beauty.

Drusiana. (startled, moves back.)

My beauty does this to you?

Callimachus. Yes, it does.

Drusiana. What has my beauty to do with you?

Callimachus. Alas, little enough up to now.  
But I hope it might some day  
Be closer to me.

- Drusiana. (recoils.) Closer to you! Never!  
Move away, move away from me!  
Unspeakable man, you are no better than  
a flesh peddler!  
I am ashamed to exchange words with you  
any longer,  
For I realize you are full of the Devil's  
temptations.
- Callimachus. Drusiana, my love, do not push me away.  
I love you, and cling to your sweet presence  
from my inmost heart.  
Only return my love...
- Drusiana. Spare me your sweet speeches.  
I hate your lustful love,  
And I despise you  
With all my heart.
- Callimachus. I have not been angry so far,  
Because I see you are touched by my love,  
But are too ashamed and afraid to admit it.
- Drusiana. (scornfully.)  
I am touched by nothing but shock, anger,  
and disgust.
- Callimachus. I think you will change your mind.
- Drusiana. Never! I will never change my mind.
- Callimachus. Perhaps you will...
- Drusiana. (angry, and afraid, too.)  
You are insane, you're crazed!  
Why do you insist in believing  
Something that can never be true?  
What reason have you to think  
That I will succumb to this madness,  
That I will yield to your frivolous,  
vain love,  
When you know it is long since I have  
shared the bed  
Of the husband to whom I owe my love by law.
- Callimachus. (angry and frustrated.)  
By God, I swear it, I shall have you,  
you'll see!

) If you won't give in to me, I'll trap you.  
I'll never rest, I'll never stop,  
I'll do anything to get you!

(Runs out the door.)

SCENE IV.

Drusiana. (alone, falls on her knees praying.)

Alas, dear God, what is the good of my oath,  
What is the good of this chastity I swore?  
My beauty has crazed this man!  
Hear me, Oh Lord, for I am afraid!  
Hear me, Oh Lord, for I am in pain.  
What is there left for me to do?  
If I accuse him outright, there will be  
A public scandal on my account.  
If I keep his action secret,  
Only Thy help can keep me from falling  
into sin.  
I am afraid for my chastity.  
Lord, grant me, as the reward for my piety,  
swift death!  
Call me to Thee, and save me  
From becoming the cause of destruction  
Of that voluptuous young man, Callimachus!

(She falls over, dead.)

Andronicus.

(who has been standing at the door during  
the last part of Drusiana's prayer, now  
cries out in dismay.)

Alas! What has happened to me!  
My Drusiana, so suddenly to die!

(Makes the sign of the cross over her, then  
falls on his knees beside her, bows his head  
in brief prayer, then rises.)

I must run quickly to call St. John.

SCENE V. (A deserted place outside Ephesus.  
St. John's hermitage. St. John is praying. Andronicus enters. St. John looks up and speaks to him.)

St. John. Why art thou so full of sorrow, Andronicus?  
Why do thy tears flow?

Andronicus. (weeping.)

Alas, my holy Father, I am weary of my life.

St. John. What hath brought you this pain, my son?

Andronicus. Drusiana, your faithful disciple...

St. John. What hath befallen her?  
Hath she cast off her poor mortality?

Andronicus. Alas, alas! She has!

St. John. (calmly reproving him.)

It is wrong for us the living  
To shed tears for those departed  
Whose souls we, with full faith,  
Believe to be rejoicing in their eternal  
rest.

Andronicus. I cannot doubt that, as you tell us,  
The soul eternally rejoices,  
And the body will some day  
Be resurrected, whole and incorruptible,  
But it is hard to bear the pain of  
remembering  
That I myself saw how she begged for  
death to come.

St. John. Didst thou know the reason?

Andronicus. I knew -- and I shall tell you, at a later  
time,  
If ever I recover from this grief.

St. John. Let us go, my son. The dead must have  
proper honors.

Andronicus. I have a marble tomb nearby;  
There let her body rest, after the rites  
of burial.  
It shall be guarded by Fortunatus,  
my slave.

St. John. (nods in approval.)

It is right that we remember her body with  
The ceremony of burial.  
May God give joy and rest to her soul!

(Rises, makes the sign of the cross;  
exit, with Andronicus.)

SCENE VI. (After the funeral, Callimachus comes to the house of Andronicus. Fortunatus, a sly and tricky slave, self-confident and not overly moved at the recent death in the family, ushers him in; Andronicus has not yet returned.)

Callimachus. Fortunatus, what will become of me?  
Not even Drusiana's death can cure me  
of my love.

Fortunatus. A sad thing!

Callimachus. I shall die, if you don't find some way  
to help me.

Fortunatus. How can I help you?

Callimachus. Do this for me: just let me see her  
Though she is dead.

Fortunatus. (begins to see possibilities of trickery and gain. Suggestively.)

Her body, even now, lies fresh and lovely  
still.  
It was not wasted by disease, for she  
died suddenly --  
A mild fever, as you saw, and she was dead.

Callimachus. I wish indeed that sight had never met  
my eyes.

Fortunatus. Now if you make it worth my while  
I will give her body to you --  
To do with as you please.

Callimachus. (taking coins from his pockets, gives them to Fortunatus.)

Here - take what I have now.  
I promise you'll get much more later.

Fortunatus. Come quickly with me, then.

Callimachus. You know that I will not delay.

SCENE VII. (The family vault. Drusiana lies on a stone tomb, her hair loose and flowing.)

Fortunatus. There's the body - she looks asleep.  
Her face is not that of a corpse,  
Nor are her limbs corrupt -  
Use her as you will.

(Moves back into a dark corner.)

Callimachus. (on his knees beside the body, his face in the folds of her dress.)

Oh Drusiana, Drusiana, how I worshipped you!  
What tight bonds of love entwined me,  
    deep in my inmost heart!  
Yet you always ran from me.  
You always opposed my desires -  
Now it lies within my power to force you,  
To bruise you and injure you as much  
    as I want.

(He picks her up.)

Fortunatus. (watches in horror as a giant snake rears its head between them.)

Watch out, Callimachus! A dreadful snake!  
It's coming after us...

(The snake bites him. He falls over dead, as Callimachus watches, in fascinated horror.)

Callimachus. (realizes it is the Devil. He takes a few steps towards the door of the tomb, then, still carrying the body of Drusiana, falls on the ground.)

Damned Fortunatus, why  
Did you lead me into this temptation?  
Why did you urge me on to this detestable  
deed?  
See, now you die from the wound of this  
serpent,  
And I die with you from holy fear.

(Crumples to the floor, at the foot of Drusiana's tomb.)

SCENE VIII. (St. John the Apostle and Andronicus are on the road leading to Drusiana's tomb. They are unaware of recent events.)

St. John. Let us now go, Andronicus, to the grave of Drusiana,  
And pray to Christ our Lord  
For her soul's peace.

Andronicus. Such is your holy charity, oh John,  
That you do not forget those who placed  
their trust in you.

(A light blazes before them -- in the center appears the radiant figure of Jesus Christ.)

St. John. (overwhelmed, falls on his knees.)

Behold, behold, it is the invisible God,  
Making Himself known to us  
As a splendidly beautiful youth!

God. Tremble ye all before God!

St. John. (to Jesus.)

O Jesus Christ, our Lord, why hast Thou  
blessed Thy servants  
Here in this place, with Thy Divine Presence?

od.  
I have come because of Drusiana,  
And of the youth lying beside her tomb,  
For their Resurrection have I appeared  
So that My Name may be glorified in them.

(Disappears.)

ndronicus. (looking up at the place where the image  
disappeared into the sky.)

How suddenly He has gone away again,  
Received back into the sky!

t. John. (thoughtful.)

I do not fully understand this miraculous  
visitation.

ndronicus. (rising from his knees.)

Let us hurry on our way --  
Once at the tomb, you may understand  
What you say is now hidden from you.

(Exeunt, leaning heavily on their staffs.)

CENE IX. (Drusiana's tomb, inside. Enter St. John  
and Andronicus, who draw back at what they see.)

t. John. In the name of our Lord, what is this  
miracle I see?  
Behold, the tomb is open, the body of  
Drusiana was thrown outside;  
Beside it lie two corpses bound up in a  
serpent's coils.

ndronicus. (looking at the bodies more closely.)

I think I see what this means.  
This is that youth Callimachus  
Who so loved Drusiana while she lived,  
Outside all bonds of law and righteousness.  
She fought his love, then, ill with sorrow  
and grief,  
Prayed for release in death.

St. John. (wisely, nods.)

It was her love of chastity led her to  
this desire.

Andronicus. (thinking back, guessing now what happened.)

After her death, so maddened did this youth  
become  
With fever of his wretched love,  
And sinful crime prevented,  
He sickened in his soul and further burned  
with lust.

St. John. Wretched youth!

Andronicus. I have no doubt he bribed this wicked slave  
To bring him to the tomb so he could carry out  
Abominable acts.

St. John. Oh awful sacrilege!

Andronicus. That is why both have been consumed by death,  
I see,  
Lest they should carry out this deed.

St. John. And justly was this done.

Andronicus. (thoughtfully.)

Yet in all of this the most surprising thing  
Is why the divine voice foretold the  
Resurrection  
Of this man who planned the evil deed,  
Rather than the one who only went along --  
Unless perhaps this man sinned out of  
ignorance  
Deceived by love of flesh,  
The other only out of wickedness.

St. John. (looks up and raises arms to Heaven.)

It is not clear to man, nor easily explained  
With what fine discernment the great Judge  
examines  
All the deeds of men.  
How equally he balances the worth of every  
one --  
The wisdom of Divine Justice far surpasses  
Human intellect or understanding.

ndronicus.

And that is why we sinfully wonder,  
And fail to understand the reasons for  
the things that happen.

t. John.

Only after the result can we often  
understand  
What the fact signified.

ndronicus.

(shyly) Holy St. John, do what you were  
going to do:  
Resurrect Callimachus, that he may solve  
this mystery for us.

t. John.

I think I must first call upon Christ by name  
To drive away the snake --  
Then I shall raise Callimachus.

ndronicus.

True, for then he will not bite Callimachus  
again.

t. John.

(thundering, exorcising the Devil.)

Leave, Thou Cursed Serpent, begone from this  
youth,  
For he is to be a servant of Christ.

ndronicus.

(wondering.)

Though it is indeed an animal and has no  
sense,  
Yet it listens to your command  
And obeys.

t. John.

(quietly now.)

It was not my power he obeyed, but that of  
Christ.

ndronicus.

And faster than words it disappeared.

t. John.

O Inscrutable and Wondrous God,  
Thou alone art what Thou art.  
Thou canst mix the elements, and create man,  
And, separating the elements, dissolve him.  
Grant this Callimachus breath, and make  
him whole again!  
Let him rise as he was, that all who look  
upon him  
Might praise and glorify Thee,  
O Omnipotent One, who alone can work such  
miracles!

Andronicus. Amen!

(As Callimachus begins to breathe . )

He inhales the breath of life,  
But does not yet move from his torpor.

St. John. Callimachus, arise, in the name of  
Jesus Christ!  
No matter how horrible,  
No matter how deep in crimes you have  
wallowed,  
Let nothing, not the least thing  
Be hidden from us.

Callimachus. (rousing himself, looks around, and finally  
remembers where he is.)

I cannot deny that I came here to carry out  
a detestable crime,  
Because a dread ~~disease~~ had gripped my very  
entrails  
And I could not control the lawless storm  
of my passion.

St. John. What madness was it, what insanity  
possessed thee  
Such, that thou couldst conceive of  
defiling the chaste body  
Of this dead woman?

Callimachus. I did not know what I was doing...  
And Fortunatus led me on.

St. John. Thou wert not, I trust, in this three-fold  
disaster,  
So unhappy as to gain thy evil goal?

Callimachus. Not at all. Though I wanted to,  
I had no opportunity to carry out my plan.

St. John. What was it held you back?

Callimachus. When I had just ripped the shroud off  
her body  
And with reproaches I intended  
To attack her lifeless flesh,  
This Fortunatus here before you,  
Spark of my fire and fuel of my crime,  
Was bitten by the snake and died.

adronicus. (relieved.) Thank God!

callimachus. Then a young man appeared, splendid and  
terrifying to look at,  
Who covered the body once more with the  
shroud.  
The radiance from his face  
Lit up the whole tomb!  
He looked as though he was burning, and  
A flame hit me full in the face.  
The last thing I heard was,  
"Die, Callimachus, that you might live!"  
And I died.

t. John. It was the work of heavenly grace.  
God takes no pleasure in the damnation  
of sinners.

callimachus. Now that you've heard how I destroyed  
myself,  
Take pity on me!

t. John. I do.

callimachus. (on his knees.)

For I am sick at heart at what I tried to do.  
I mourn, I weep, I suffer for my own great  
sin.

t. John. That is only just --  
A great sin demands great repentance.

callimachus. If only I could unburden my heart,  
If only you could see the torment  
inside me --  
You would pity me more.

t. John. Rather do I rejoice in this grief,  
For it will lead to Thy salvation!

callimachus. I abhor lust, and all my past sins.  
I am weary of my former life,  
I am weary of false delights.

t. John. And justly so!

callimachus. I repent, for I have been a sinner.

t. John. Quite right, my son.

Callimachus. So much do I now hate what I have done  
before  
That life holds no meaning, nor hope,  
nor pleasure  
Unless I can be reborn in Christ,  
Unless I can deserve to change to a far  
better life.

St. John. I well believe the grace of Heaven  
Shall come to Thee.

Callimachus. Then do not wait, my Lord,  
Do not delay to raise the fallen,  
To bring me comfort as I grieve.  
Then, by your words and teachings  
May I be changed from pagan to Christian,  
From worthless to virtuous and chaste --  
Lead me to walk in the true path.  
Teach me to live in the light of God's  
promises.

St. John. (raises hands to Heaven.)

Blessed by Christ, God's only Son  
Who shared the frailty of our flesh,  
Who in sparing Thee, Callimachus,  
Did kill Thee,  
And in killing Thee had made Thee truly live.  
Thou art His creature, whose soul He saved  
By death's appearance, from everlasting death.

Andronicus. (falls on his knees, crosses himself.)

Truly a miraculous occurrence,  
For all of us to wonder at!

St. John. (raises hands to Heaven.)

O Christ, O Savior of the World,  
Who suffered for our sins,  
I know not with what songs of praise  
Thou canst be glorified!  
Thy mercy and patience overwhelm me,  
For now Thou winnest a sinner with a  
father's indulgence,  
And now dost punish him justly,  
Ordering his repentance.

Andronicus.

(on his knees, holding hands up to Heaven.)

Praise be to the Lord and His Divine  
Compassion!

St. John.

Who could have dared to believe  
Or presumed to hope that this man  
Whom Death hath found and carried off  
Engaged in awful crime,  
Could be brought back to life by Thy Mercy  
And be deemed worthy of obtaining Grace?  
Blessed be Thy Holy Name in all Eternity,  
Who alone can perform such wondrous  
miracles!

Andronicus.

(to St. John.)

Come, Holy John, delay no longer,  
Bring consolation to me also.  
Love for my wife, Drusiana, will not let me  
rest  
Until I see her resurrected, too.

St. John.

(holds hands out towards Drusiana.)

Drusiana, Christ Jesus calls you back to life!

Drusiana.

(raises herself from the ground where she has  
been lying, looks around, and when she under-  
stands what has happened, falls on her knees  
again before St. John, holding her arms out  
in prayer.)

All praise and honor to Thee, Christ,  
Who hast made me live again!

Callimachus.

(looks at Drusiana with a mixture of fear,  
love, and admiration. He speaks warmly,  
with relief.)

I thank the source of our Salvation,  
Drusiana, my true love,  
For He has granted that you should rise  
in joy,  
Though you died in pain and misery.

Drusiana.

(paying no attention for the moment, she  
looks at Callimachus, at the body of  
Fortunatus; then, speaking to St. John.)

Reverend Father, Holy St. John,  
According to your holy powers it is right

That as you raised Callimachus, my  
unlawful lover in life,  
So should you raise him too,

(pointing to Fortunatus)

who sold my body after death.

Callimachus. (roused to anger by the memory of those  
last moments in the tomb.)

No, never! O Holy Apostle of Christ,  
Do not ever think it right to free from  
the bonds of death  
This traitor, this criminal who so  
deceived me, seduced me,  
And urged me to dare this atrocious deed.

St. John. (reproving him gently.)

Thou shouldst not try to keep from him  
The compassion of divine grace.

Callimachus. (arguing.) But he is not worthy of  
Resurrection,  
For he is responsible  
For the destruction  
Of another man's soul.

St. John. (implying Callimachus is still pagan.)

The law of our religion teaches  
To forgive the sins of others  
If we want God's forgiveness for our own.

Andronicus. (nodding.) Quite right.

St. John. For when God's only Son  
The Virgin's First-born Child,  
Did come into this world,  
He who alone was pure, He who alone  
was without stain,  
He who alone had no trace of that original  
sin of old,  
Then He found us all weighed down  
With a heavy burden of sin.

Andronicus. (nodding.) True.

St. John. Yet even though He found not one righteous  
man,  
Not one who was worthy of mercy,

Yet he despised no man  
Held back His Divine Grace from no man.  
Yea, even did He give Himself for the sake  
    of all  
And laid down the living substance of His  
    love  
On behalf of all men.

Andronicus. (to Callimachus.)

You see; if He who is innocent had not been  
    killed,  
Then no one could justly be absolved.

St. John. (resuming.)

Therefore does he take no delight  
In the damnation of mankind,  
Mindful that He Himself hath ransomed them  
    back,  
With His own precious blood.

Andronicus. (raising hands to Heaven.)

Thanks be to the Lord!

St. John. Therefore must we never  
Try to keep God's Grace from others.  
Not one of us deserves that Grace  
Which we rejoice to have in such abundance.

Callimachus. (contrite; looks at Drusiana.)

Your dreadful warnings have made me fear  
God's wrath.

St. John. Yet so far will I gratify your wishes,  
That I will have him rise by means of  
    Drusiana.  
Inspired to this by God's holy Grace  
Drusiana will resurrect him.

(motions to Drusiana.)

Drusiana. (is silent a moment; then she prays.)

O Divine Substance, who truly and alone  
Art pure Form without base Matter,  
Who hast created man in Thine own Image;  
As, when Thou hadst created him,

Into Thy creature Thou didst breathe  
the breath of life,  
So now, by your power bring back to  
Fortunatus' body, made of base matter,  
The warmth of life, so he may live once more.  
Then let this triple Resurrection bring  
Thee praise,  
And Glory to Thy Holy Trinity!

St. John.

Amen.

Drusiana.

(stretching her arms towards Fortunatus  
who is still lying on the floor, and taking  
his hand in hers.)

Awake, Fortunatus, awake,  
And in the name of Jesus Christ,  
Break the chains of Death!

Fortunatus.

(painfully raises himself up, unwillingly  
awakened from sleep.)

Who has lifted me up by my hand?  
What voice has called on me to rise again?

St. John.

It is Drusiana.

Fortunatus.

(looks unbelieving.)

| Don't tell me it's Drusiana who has  
awakened me?

St. John.

It is herself.

Fortunatus.

| Did she not, just a few days ago,  
Die a sudden death?

St. John.

But now, she lives in Christ!

Fortunatus.

(looking around, sees Callimachus, kneeling  
in prayer.)

And look at him! Why is Callimachus  
standing there  
With mild and sober face, why is he not,  
as always,  
Frenzied with love for Drusiana?

St. John.

He hath been changed, turned away from evil  
thoughts,  
And is a true follower of Christ.

Fortunatus. (angrily) No; I don't believe it!

St. John. It is the truth.

Fortunatus. (stands silent for a moment, thinking; then he speaks.)

I have made up my mind. -- If, as you maintain,  
Drusiana brought me back to life  
And Callimachus believes in Christ,  
I, of my own free will, choose death over life --

I prefer not to exist at all  
Than to see them so overfull with the Power of Grace.

St. John. (moves back, recognizing the Devil's work.)

Behold the unbelievable jealousy of the Devil himself,  
See the evil power of that Serpent of old,  
Who even then gave death as food for our first parents,  
Who ever since has hated the just man's joy!  
So this most wretched Fortunatus  
Bloated with the poison of the Devils' bitter gall  
Is most like unto an evil tree  
Bearing the sour fruits of destruction.  
Therefore he must be cut off from the company of the just,  
And cast off from the fellowship of men who fear God.  
Let him be sent off to the punishment of everlasting fire,  
Let him be tormented nor ever refreshed, were it for an instant,  
With Divine Grace.

Andronicus. (pointing to Fortunatus.)

Look, he is indeed bloated by the deadly Serpent's bites  
He falls once more and dies again, Swifter than words.

St. John. (scornful.)

Let him die, let him inhabit Hell forever,  
This man who gave up life from jealousy of his fellow man.

Andronicus. (crossing himself, as Fortunatus falls in agony.)

An awful death, and a dreadful sight!

St. John. There is nothing more terrible than a jealous man,  
Nothing more sinful, than one who is too proud.

Andronicus. Both are wretched.

St. John. Both sins are inseparable in one and the same man always,  
For neither can exist without the other.

Andronicus. (puzzled.)

Please explain more clearly. I do not understand.

St. John. For it is so, that the proud man is full of envy,  
And the envious man is ever proud.  
The envious spirit cannot stand hearing another's praise.  
He will vilify better men, scorns to recognize the worthier,  
And most full of haughty pride, will ever try to rise above his equals.

Andronicus. It is clear now.

St. John. That is why that wretched man  
Could not bear to be accounted of less worth than these --  
He could not bear it, for he saw that they shone  
With a greater Grace Divine.

Andronicus. Now at last I understand,  
Why he was not mentioned by the Voice  
As one who would rise again --  
Seeing that he was destined to die again more quickly still.

St. John. He is worthy indeed of both the deaths he suffered,  
For having once brought dishonor and harm To the body entrusted to him,  
He pursued with unjust hatred Those who had risen again.

Andronicus.

The wretched man is truly dead now.

St. John.

Let us go back, leaving the Devil his own  
begotten son.  
Let us instead now celebrate this very day  
our double joy,  
Callimachus' marvelous conversion,  
And the resurrection of these two!  
Let us give thanks to God, the righteous  
Judge.  
He alone knows all things most closely,  
though they be hidden,  
He alone tests all things exactly  
And brings about their outcome  
Assigning to each man rewards or torments  
rightly,  
Omniscient and prescient of each man's  
worth.  
He alone has Honor, Virtue, Courage and  
Victory,  
Praise and Jubilation throughout all time,  
Unto Eternity and evermore.  
Amen.



COM QVAR TA ABRAHAM ET MARIA



The hermit Abraham (also shown disguised as a knight) with his niece, Mary.  
Woodcut attributed to Wolf Traut,  
sixteenth century.

## ABRAHAM

Tells of the fall and repentance of Mary,  
Niece of the hermit Abraham,  
Who lived for twenty years a monastic life.  
Then she lost her virginity,  
Returned to a worldly existence,  
And did not even fear  
To live with prostitutes and to be one among them.  
Two years later, Abraham,  
Disguised as a young man seeking her favors  
Went out to look for her.  
He preached to her, and his admonitions brought her back.  
For twenty years more she purified herself  
With the shedding of many tears,  
And constant fasts, vigils and prayers  
From the stains of her sinful crime.

SCENE I. (Effrem's hermitage, a cave in the desert.  
The hermit Effrem is on his knees, praying. Abraham,  
his fellow-hermit, neighbor and friend, comes in. Seeing  
Effrem in prayer, he waits a few seconds, then apologet-  
ically addresses him.)

Abraham. Do you, oh my dear brother, and fellow-  
hermit Effrem,  
Feel you can take time to speak with me,  
Or should I wait for you to finish  
Your praises of the Lord?

Effrem. (turning to him, graciously, but also  
reminding him gently.)

All our conversation should be in praise  
of Him,  
Who promised to be present among those  
Gathered in His name.

Abraham. In fact I come to speak of nothing else,  
Save what, I know, agrees with God's own  
will.

Effrem. (sits on the ground, and motions to Abraham to do the same.)

Then I shall not keep you waiting  
For even a moment of time.  
You have all my attention.

Abraham. A task that lies before me has put  
my mind in turmoil.  
In this I want your judgment and my  
wishes to agree.

Effrem. Since it has been ordered that we have  
one heart and one soul,  
We must perforce have the same judgment  
Of what must, and of what must not be done.

Abraham. I have a young and pretty niece,  
Left all alone, deprived of comfort of  
father or mother.  
Pity for her orphaned state makes me care  
for her deeply,  
And on her account I exhaust myself with  
constant worry.

Effrem. And what have you, who triumphed over  
worldly anxiety  
To do with the cares of this world?

Abraham. This is my constant care:  
I am afraid lest the light and serenity  
Of her great beauty be dimmed by some  
taint of pollution.

Effrem. No one can blame you for such anxiety.

Abraham. So I believe.

Effrem. How old is she?

Abraham. (lyrically, at the thought of her.)

She lacks the rolling length of one year  
To have breathed life for two Olympiads --  
She will be just eight years old.

Effrem. She is too young a ward for you.

Abraham. That is just why I am in deep anxiety.

Effrem. Where does she stay?

Abraham. Within my small dwelling;  
For at her relatives' request I undertook  
to raise her --  
But I decided to give her property away  
To help the poor.

Effrem. (approving.)

Disregard of temporal goods indeed  
Befits a spirit which aims at heaven.

Abraham. And I am anxious, don't you see, to betroth  
her to Christ,  
And send her as apprentice in His service.

Effrem. A worthy aim.

Abraham. It is her name urging me on.

Effrem. What is she called?

Abraham. Maria.

Effrem. Ah, such a high name indeed  
Deserves the calling of virginity!

Abraham. I hope that, gently urged along by our  
encouragement,  
She will prove easy to persuade.

Effrem. (gets up, takes up his staff and satchel.)

Let us go to her, then, and put it in her  
thoughts,  
To take up the security of a celibate life.

SCENE II. (At Abraham's hermitage: the scene is not very different from Effrem's cave. Maria is standing as the two hermits enter.)

Abraham. Oh my adopted daughter,  
You who are part of my soul,  
Maria, heed the advice of a father  
And the plan of salvation which  
Effrem, my brother hermit and I together  
bring you.

For you should strive to imitate  
In your chastity too  
That fount of virginity  
Whose same-sounding name you bear.

ffrem. It would be most unfitting, my daughter,  
If you who, with Mary the Mother of God,  
By the mystery of your name,  
Have been raised to the topmost axis of  
the over-arching sky  
Among stars which never fall --  
If inferior through your actions, you were  
to circle  
In the lowest depths of earth.

aria. (puzzled; does not understand.)

I have never heard of  
This mystery of my name --  
And therefore I don't understand the meaning  
Of such a roundabout way of speaking.

ffrem. (patiently.)

"Maria" means stella maris, "star of the sea",  
Around which the very world is borne  
And the axis of the world turns.

aria. Why does it mean "star of the sea"?

ffrem. Because it never falls,  
But sets for sailors the path of their right  
course.

aria. And how can it ever be that I, such a small  
thing,  
Made of dirt and clay,  
Should deserve that heavenly place by my  
merits,  
Where the symbol of my name resplends?

ffrem. By the untouched wholeness of your body  
And your pure spirit's holiness.

aria. (bowing her head in humility.)

It is great glory for a mortal  
To equal the rays of the heavenly bodies.

Effrem.

For, if you will remain a virgin uncorrupt,  
You will become equal to an angel of the  
Lord;  
With these, when at last you are released,  
Having cast off the heavy weight of your  
body,  
You will traverse the thick cloudy air,  
Rise up into the ether, rushing across the  
circle of the zodiac,  
Never slowing down your course or delaying,  
Until you are circled in the embraces of  
the Virgin's Son  
In the luminous chamber of His own great  
Mother.

Maria.

(exalted, holding up her hands in  
admiration.)

Whoever does not think this glorious  
Lives like an animal, with a donkey's soul!  
Wherefore I do now despise the present world,  
Myself I do deny, that I may deserve to be  
granted  
The joy of such great happiness.

Effrem.

(to Abraham.)

You see, we find in this child's breast  
The wisdom of maturity.

Abraham.

(raising his hands in prayer.)

This thing that is happening we owe to God's  
good grace.

Effrem.

That cannot be denied.

Abraham.

But even though God's grace has shown itself,  
Yet it is not prudent to expect too much,  
To leave a young, weak will all to itself.

Effrem.

That is true.

Abraham.

(practical now, makes plans.)

So I will make her a little cell, narrow  
of entrance,  
Next to my own small hermit residence.  
Through the window I will instruct her,  
going to her often,  
In the Psalter, and other pages of God's own  
law.

ffrem. (nodding approval.)

That is the proper way to do it.

ria. O father Effrem,  
I commit myself to your spiritual  
assistance.

ffrem. (puts his hand on her head as he prays.)

May your Holy Spouse in heaven, oh my  
daughter,  
To whose care you have fixed your hopes  
at such a young age,  
Keep you safe from all treasons of the Devil.

CENE III. (Twenty years have passed. Once more  
raham--somewhat older, more bent and stooped with age--  
mes to consult his fellow-hermit and neighbor, Effrem.)

raham. Effrem, my brother, whenever anything  
happens to me  
From either side of fortune, good or bad,  
It is to you first I come,  
From you alone I seek advice.  
So do not turn away from the laments  
I carry.  
Oh, help me in the suffering I bear!

ffrem. Abraham, Abraham, what makes you suffer so?  
Why does your wretchedness go beyond those  
limits set for us?  
For a hermit should never be  
Perturbed as men are in the world.

raham. (rocking with pain.)

I have suffered an evil beyond any other,  
I have been struck a blow I cannot bear.

ffrem. Do not keep me in suspense with your long  
drawn-out laments --  
Tell me quickly, what has happened to you?

raham. Maria, my chosen daughter, whose spirit  
For twice ten years I nourished with the  
tenderest care,  
Whom I instructed with watchful affection...

- Effrem. What has she done?
- Abraham. Alas for me! She is completely lost.
- Effrem. In what way?
- Abraham. In the most wretched way of all!  
Then, afterwards, she left, secretly.
- Effrem. With what tricks  
Did the treachery of the Ancient Serpent  
seduce her?
- Abraham. Through the illicit passion  
Of a certain deceitful lover  
Who appeared in the disguise of a monk.  
He came to her often with feigned visits  
until at last he swayed  
The undisciplined instincts of her  
youthful spirit  
To love for him.  
So much beside herself she was, she jumped  
down from her window  
To carry out the ritual of her sinful crime.
- Effrem. (throwing up his hands in horror.)
- Ah! I shudder to hear it!
- Abraham. But when she, poor woman, realized she was  
defiled,  
She beat upon her breast,  
She ripped her face with her hands,  
She tore at her clothes,  
Pulled out her hair,  
Screaming out her cries howling to the sky.
- Effrem. And she was right to do it,  
For such total destruction can only be  
mourned for  
With the very source of tears!
- Abraham. She lamented that she was no longer  
What she had been.
- Effrem. Alas, poor creature!
- Abraham. She mourned that she had acted against our  
warnings.
- Effrem. And well she might.

raham. She cried bitterly that she had rendered  
vain  
The merit of her vigils, her fasts, and  
all her pains.

frem. (thoughtful, nods approvingly.)

If she had held to such regrets  
She could still have been saved...

raham. She did not hold strong --  
She added worse sins to these first.

frem. (his hands over his face.)

I am troubled to the bottom of my soul,  
My stomach turns with fear,  
My limbs melt with horror.

raham. For after she had thrashed herself with  
these laments,  
Struck by the immensity of her grief  
She let herself fall headlong into the pit of  
desperation.

frem. Alas, alas, what a ruinous loss!

raham. And having lost all hope of ever gaining  
forgiveness  
She chose to regain the world  
And to serve its sinful vanities.

frem. Well, indeed, seldom before today  
Have the spirits of evil gained such a  
great victory  
Over the world of hermits!

raham. But now we are at the mercy of the Devil.

frem. (thinks a while; a thought comes to him.)

How strange she could escape  
Without your knowing it...

raham. Some days before, I had been troubled  
By the fear of a vision which appeared  
to my eyes,  
A vision that -- had I not been so  
thoughtless --  
Would have foretold to me her fall.

Effrem. I would like to hear about this dream of yours.

Abraham. I thought I stood outside, at the door of my cell, And behold, a huge dragon, foul of smell, came rushing up Toward a little white dove he saw near me -- Quickly he snatched her up, devoured her, And disappeared.

Effrem. The meaning of this vision is very clear.

Abraham. But when I, my mind clear, Thought over what I'd seen, I feared that there hung over the Church The danger of a persecution Which would lead some of the faithful into heresy or error.

Effrem. It was indeed something to be feared.

Abraham. And so I fell on my knees and with prayers Beseeched Him who has foreknowledge of the future, That He might reveal to me the dream's significance.

Effrem. And you did right.

Abraham. Finally on the third night, I relaxed my uneasy limbs and slept, And thought I saw that same dragon Fluttering, crushed beneath my feet, And that same dove, unhurt, Blazing forth in a white light.

Effrem. I rejoice to hear this, and have no doubt, That your Maria will someday come back to you.

Abraham. Afterwards I awoke. Relieved of my previous sadness by this consolation I came back to my right mind and I remembered my pupil; For then I realized, sadly, that never before Had two whole days gone by without my hearing the sound of her voice Lifted in the praise of God.

Effrem.

Too late you remembered!

Abraham.

I confess it. It is true.  
I went up to her cell, and knocked upon  
the window  
Calling my daughter by name  
Again and again.

Effrem.

Alas! You called in vain!

Abraham.

I did not realize this yet.  
But asked her, why was she neglecting  
her hymns and prayers.  
And there was not the slightest clink  
of a reply.

Effrem.

And what did you do then?

Abraham.

When I finally understood that she whom  
I sought was gone,  
My entrails shook with fear, my limbs  
quaked with panic --

Effrem.

I don't wonder --  
For even now I feel as you did then,  
As I listen to your story.

Abraham.

Then my moans clouded the air all around  
And I asked, over and over,  
"What wolf has snatched my lamb away?"  
"What thief has stolen my child?"

Effrem.

You were right to mourn the loss  
Of the girl you had raised.

Abraham.

At last those who knew what had happened  
Came to me and told me the story I have just  
told you;  
And they said that she had then given herself  
over to this sin.

Effrem.

Where is she staying now?

Abraham.

Who knows?

Effrem.

What will you do now?

Abraham.

I have a loyal friend, who will travel through  
cities and towns,  
Never resting, until he has learned  
What part of the world holds her.

Effrem.

What then, if she is found?

Abraham.

I will take off my habit,  
And go to her, disguised as a lover.  
Perhaps I can persuade her, and warn her,  
                  after her awful shipwreck,  
To return to her earlier tranquil harbor.

Effrem.

(doubtful.)

But what will you do if meat is put before  
you to eat,  
And wine to drink?

Abraham.

(with decision.) I shall not refuse,  
Lest they recognize me for what I am.

Effrem.

(convinced.)

You will surely be right not to take any  
risks --  
And to relax somewhat the strict practice  
of our monastic rule,  
If only you can bring this girl who has  
strayed  
Back to Christ.

Abraham.

I am urged on to dare this deed all the more  
Now that I know that you and I agree  
As to what must be done.

Effrem.

God who knows the inmost secrets of our  
hearts,  
Understands with what intent each and  
everything is done.  
The close scrutiny of His strict judgment  
Will never hold one guilty of transgression  
If for a while he oversteps the strict rule  
of our order,  
Not even disdaining to step down to be like  
our weaker brethren,  
In order to call back more surely  
A soul who has strayed into sin.

Abraham.

(rises, picks up his stick and satchel and  
begins to leave. Suddenly, as though struck  
by a sudden fear, he turns back to Effrem.)

But you must help me, meanwhile, with your  
prayers,  
Lest I too, be stopped by the Devil's wiles.

Effrem.

(on his knees, prays for the safety of Abraham.)

May that greatest good of all,  
Without which no other good is possible,  
Bring your present purpose to a good end.

SCENE IV. (Abraham's cell. Abraham, on his knees at prayer, looks up as he sees the figure of a man in traveling clothes framed in the doorway. Happily surprised, he squints up at the bright light.)

Abraham.

Why, isn't that my good friend, whom I sent out to find Maria Two years ago? It is, it is...

Friend.

Greetings, venerable Father.

Abraham.

Greetings, my helpful friend.  
So long I waited for you,  
I had lost hope of your return.

Friend.

That is just why I took so long --  
I did not want at my return to trouble you with doubtful news.  
But when I had tracked down the truth of it at last  
I hurried back to tell you.

Abraham.

Did you see Maria?

Friend.

Oh yes, I saw her!

Abraham.

Where?

Friend.

In the city nearest here.

Abraham.

With whom is she living,  
What is she like?

Friend.

It hurts me to say it.

Abraham.

Why is that?

Friend.

It is a wretched story to tell you.

Abraham.

Tell me, I beg you!

Friend. She has chosen as her home the house of a certain pimp, Who "protects" her with tender care. And well he might: For every day that passes she brings him a good profit From the men who frequent her as lovers.

Abraham. (stunned, repeats the last word, as a blasphemy.)

From Mary's...lovers??

Friend. From her lovers.

Abraham. (confused, dismayed, gropes for questions.)

Who... Who are her lovers?

Friend. (drily.) A great many.

Abraham. (in despair.) Alas! Ah, no! Oh, my good Jesus, what is this monstrous thing I hear -- The woman I raised to be your bride, Follows strange lovers instead!

Friend. (harshly.) This has always been the way of whores -- From earliest times they have always liked Strange lovers and out-of-town customers.

Abraham. (gets up, determined to carry out his program.)

Bring me a pure-bred, high-stepping horse And soldier's clothes -- I shall lay down my monk's hood, the cover of my religious state. I shall go to her myself, disguised as one of her lovers!

Friend. (takes off his own traveling clothes, his hat, his mantle and his boots, and shows him the reins of the horse, tied up outside the cell.)

Here you have everything you need.

Abraham.

(puts on the mantle and boots -- then, uncomfortable at having his head uncovered, asks for the traveling hat which the friend is holding.)

Please, hand me the hat, as well, to cover my bare head.

Friend.

(hands it to Abraham, but does not understand the reason Abraham wants it.)

Here -- you need this, it's true,  
Lest someone recognize you.

Abraham.

(goes to a corner of the cell, takes out a little bag.)

I suppose I should take with me  
This little bit of money, all I own,  
With which to pay the innkeeper's bill?

Friend.

You would not be allowed to meet with Mary otherwise.

SCENE V. (The Inn. Abraham arrives; he has tied up his horse outside. Pauses before entering. Puts on the air of a devil-may-care traveler.)

Abraham.

Hail, my good man, keeper of this inn!

Innkeeper.

(turns, sees Abraham, pleased to see a good customer.)

Who is this guest I hear? --  
Oh you, Sir! Hail, to you too, Sir!

Abraham.

And have you any pleasant place  
A traveler could spend the night?

Innkeeper.

I have indeed -- our comforts are open to all.

Abraham.

(cringes at the implication; pretends to have a cheerful face.)

Congratulations! I am well pleased to hear it.

Innkeeper. Come in, Sir, we will give you supper.

Abraham. I am most grateful to you --  
Now since your warm and gracious welcome,  
Promises me a good time --  
There is something more important  
I would like from you.

Innkeeper. Tell me what it is you wish,  
And you shall have it.

Abraham. (giving him the money as tip.)

Here, take this little something as a gift --  
Arrange to have that great beauty --  
That girl who stays here with you,  
as I've been told --  
Keep me company at table.

Innkeeper. (surprised that this stranger should seem  
to know of Maria.)

Why do you wish to see her?

Abraham. It will be happiness for me to know  
Someone whose loveliness I have been hearing  
So often praised, by many men.

Innkeeper. (well pleased.)

Yes, well, of course, whoever praised her  
beauty made no mistake;  
For she shines forth, in loveliness of face,  
above all other women.

Abraham. (double entendre.)

That is why I yearn for her love.

Innkeeper. (looks at him dubiously -- the disguise does  
not hide Abraham's grey beard, or the  
creakiness of his legs.)

To tell the truth, I'll be surprised  
If your decrepitude and years inspire  
The love of a sweet young thing.

Abraham. (brushes aside the Innkeeper's thoughts.)

You can be sure that I came here  
With only one purpose -- to see her.

SCENE VI. (Inside the inn. Abraham sits at a table, waiting. The innkeeper enters, leading Maria by the hand. She is a lovely, slender, vulnerable young woman.)

Innkeeper. Come along, Maria, come along,  
And show your loveliness to this our new  
recruit.

Maria. Yes, I'm coming.

Abraham. (overcome at the shock of seeing Maria dressed in the bright clothes of a prostitute. Aside.)

What trust, what strength of mind  
Can ever be mine hereafter --  
When this girl, whom I cared for and  
nourished  
In my hidden, hermit's haunts --  
When I see her before me like this,  
wearing the clothes  
Of a common prostitute?

(Straightens his back.)

But this is not the time  
To show straight out on my face  
What is in my heart; my tears break forth  
But I shall hold them back, bravely, like  
a man.  
And with a feigned cheerfulness of face  
Disguise the deep bitterness of my grief.

Innkeeper. (ironically, in the role of the jolly innkeeper.)

Lucky Maria, you should be pleased --  
Up to now, only young people your age  
Have rushed in droves to love you;  
Now even old men, feeble with age,  
Come to see you, all of them seeking  
your love.

Maria. (eyes cast down, charmingly modest,  
exhibiting the sweet obedience that has  
made her such a successful courtesan.)

Whoever cares for me always receives  
My own equal affection in return.

Abraham. (plays the part.)  
Well, come to me, Maria -- give me a kiss.

Maria. (warmly; comes up and puts her arms around his neck.)  
I will cover you with sweet kisses,  
And caress your old man's neck  
With many embraces --

Abraham. (in confusion, still plays the part.)  
That's what I want.

Maria. (draws back in surprise -- she has smelled upon the old man the perfumed odor of sanctity. Softly, to herself...Listeners are reminded of the fetid smell of the dragon.)  
What is this feeling that comes over me?  
What is the sweet sudden power  
Of this perfumed taste I breathe?  
Oh, the force of this fragrance takes me back  
To the fragrance of that chastity I once had...

Abraham. (moved, pretends not to have heard. Aside.)  
Now more than ever must I pretend,  
Now I must persist in the games of lustful youth  
With jokes and tricks,  
Lest she recognize me from my serious mood  
And go back into hiding for shame.

Maria. (now all her composure broken, cries aloud.)  
Alas, wretch that I am! How did I ever  
come to fall,  
Into what pit of destruction have I rushed!

Abraham. (in a warning tone, out loud to Maria.)  
This is not a fit place for complaints,  
Where gangs of jolly guests come to be  
together.

nnkeeper.

(concerned, gently to Maria. He is genuinely fond of her. A confrontation between him and Abraham for Maria.)

Maria, my lady, why do you sigh so deep?  
Why shed these tears?  
In the two years you have been here,  
Never did such sobs come tearing from your  
breast,  
Never did such grief-struck words break forth!

aria.

(hides her face in her hands.)

Oh, if only I had been dead and gone  
three years ago.  
Then I would not have come down to such  
a state of sin!

braham.

(to get her away, speaks roughly.)

I did not come here to join you in lamenting  
your sins.  
I came to join you in making love.

aria.

(called back to her duty, raises her face,  
smiles apologetically.)

I was moved momentarily by a passing regret,  
That is why I was saying those things --  
Let us instead eat and be merry, for you are  
right --  
This is not the time for crying for my sins.

They sit down at the table in the main room of the inn.  
braham eats and drinks. Then, when they are finished,  
e calls the innkeeper over.)

braham.

We have eaten well and hearty,  
We are tipsy from the wine you gave us  
In generous portions,  
Good Sir innkeeper --  
Give us now leave to rise from supper,  
That I may lay my weary body down in bed  
And let the quiet night restore me.

nnkeeper.

As you like.

aria.

Get up, my lord, get up --  
I shall go up to your bedroom with you.

Abraham. I am delighted -- (smiling.)  
In fact, no one could have forced me to go  
If you did not come with me.

SCENE VII. (A private room upstairs at the inn, simply  
but neatly furnished.)

Maria. Here is a comfortable bedroom  
For us to be together in;  
And here is a bed, handsomely made up  
with soft covers.  
Sit down, and I will take your shoes off  
for you  
So you will not tire yourself removing them.

Abraham. (still standing.)

First, fasten the door and bolt it,  
So no one will be able to come in.

Maria. (gets up, to lock the door.)

Do not trouble yourself about that --  
I will make sure  
No one will find it easy to come disturb us.

Abraham. (removing his wide-brimmed traveler's hat.  
Aside.)

The time has come to remove the covering  
From my head and show who I am.

(holding his arms out before her.)

O my own adopted daughter,  
You who are a part of my soul, Maria!  
Do you recognize me, this old man?  
I, who raised you like a father,  
I, who gave you in marriage to the only Son  
of the King of Heaven?

Maria. (drawing back.) Oh, me! It is my father  
and teacher,  
It is Abraham who speaks!

Abraham. What has happened to you, my daughter?

Maria. Deep wretchedness.

braham. Who led you astray? Who seduced you?

maria. That one who once laid low our first parents.

braham. Where is that way of life you led, Like that of angels on earth?

maria. Gone, quite gone -- utterly destroyed.

braham. Where is your maidenly shame? Where is your marvelous chastity?

maria. Lost forever.

braham. What reward do you hope to gain now -- Unless you recover your senses -- For the hard-won effort of All your fasts, your prayers, and your vigils -- What can you hope for, when As if fallen from the height of Heaven You have been plunged to the depths of Hell?

maria. (crying, hands over her face.)

braham. Alas! Alas!

braham. (waxing angry.)

Why did you despise me?  
Why did you desert me?  
Why did you not tell me of your wretched sin,  
So that I, with my beloved Effrem,  
Could offer proper penitence for you?

maria. (head lowered.) After I had fallen the first time I rushed on into sin,  
For I did not dare, polluted as I was,  
To approach your holy state.

braham. (somewhat softened.)

Who was ever wholly free from committing sins  
Save only one, the Virgin's Son?

maria. (remembering her old lessons; shaking her head.)

No one.

Abraham. It is human to sin;  
It is giving in to the Devil to persist  
in sin.  
It is not right to blame someone who fell  
once, by surprise.  
But we do blame the one who fails to rise  
quickly up again.

Maria. (at this she falls on the ground before him.)

Oh! Oh! Alas! Oh wretched me!

Abraham. (raises her to her knees.)

Why do you fall down so?  
Why do you lie on the ground, so motionless?  
Rise up, and listen to what I have to say.

Maria. I fell from the fear that struck me --  
I could not bear the blow of hearing my  
father's blame.

Abraham. (gently.) Remember my affection for you  
And lay aside your fear.

Maria. (hands to her face, shakes her head.)

I can't.

Abraham. Didn't I, on your account,  
Desert the comfort of my hermit's dwelling  
Leaving aside completely  
Every observance of orderly rules,  
With the result that you see me here, an  
old hermit,  
Become a pleasure-seeking party-goer.  
You heard me, I who so long practiced  
silence,  
Making gay, joking, small talk  
Lest I be recognized.  
Why do you keep looking at the ground  
with face cast down?  
Why don't you answer me?  
Do you not think it worth your while  
to speak with me?

Maria. (shakes her head, her eyes full of tears.  
Looks up at him.)

I am overwhelmed  
By the awareness of my guilt.

That is why I do not have the courage  
to raise my eyes to heaven  
Or to speak with you.

Do not lose faith, my daughter,  
Do not lose hope, or despair.  
Lift yourself out of the abyss of your  
hopelessness  
And fix the hope of your spirit in God.

The enormity of my sins  
Has cast me down into deepest hopelessness.

Your sins are great indeed, I do admit it --  
But heavenly pity is greater  
Than anything created.  
Therefore break the chains of your sadness.  
Do not, from apathy and laziness,  
Fail to make use of this brief time given  
you for repentance.  
Do not forget that God's grace abounds  
As far as the abomination of our crimes  
abounds.

Oh, if I had the slightest hope of  
forgiveness,  
I would throw myself  
Into a fervor of repentance!

Then have pity on my weariness,  
Which I have suffered on your account,  
And put aside this stubborn, sinful despair  
Which we know to be more dangerous  
Than any crime committed.  
For whoever has no faith  
That God will have pity on sinners  
Sins without remedy or hope.  
For just as the spark of a flintstone  
Can never set the ocean on fire,  
So the bitterness of our sins  
Cannot turn sour the sweetness  
Of God's good will.

(defends herself.)

It's not that I deny the magnificence of  
God's pity --  
But when I think of the enormity of my own  
crime  
I fear I will never be strong enough  
to do proper penance.

Abraham.

I will take your evil deeds upon myself;  
I shall atone for them --  
Only come back to that place you left,  
And take up once more that way of life  
you forsook.

Maria.

(released from guilt, she is calmer.)

From now on I shall never, in any way,  
deny your wishes.  
Whatever you order me to do, I embrace it  
with glad obedience.

Abraham.

(satisfied at last.)

Now I believe you are truly the dear  
daughter I raised --  
Now I believe you are worthy to be loved  
beyond all others.

Maria.

I have a bit of money and a few good clothes --  
I wait for you to tell me what I must do  
with them.

Abraham.

Whatever possessions you acquired by your sins  
These you must cast away, along with your sins

Maria.

(shyly.) I thought perhaps they should be  
given for the poor,  
Or offered on the holy altar of the church.

Abraham.

No, something acquired by means of crime  
Cannot be accepted as a fitting gift to God.

Maria.

Well, then, no care beyond this holds me  
back.

Abraham.

Rosy dawn breaks, it is morning --  
Let us go.

Maria.

This time it is you, well-beloved father,  
Who must lead the way --  
Like a good shepherd, you go before the  
lost sheep  
And I, following in each of your footsteps,  
Will follow after, where you lead me.

Abraham.

Not at all; I shall go on foot,  
And put you up on horseback,  
So that the rugged road will not cut your  
pretty feet.

ria.  
Oh, how shall I answer you?  
How can I repay your kindness"  
For you do not force me with fear, when  
I am so unworthy,  
But urge me to repentance with tender  
understanding.

raham.  
I ask nothing from you: only that,  
remaining true to your purpose,  
You persist for the rest of your life  
in God's service.

ria.  
May I with all my heart remain true to my  
purpose,  
May I persist for as long as my strength  
lasts.  
And if I ever lose the power,  
Yet I shall never lose the will.

raham.  
You must serve God's will with as much energy  
As you once served the Devil's world.

ria.  
I pray that it be so,  
Since you deserve to have your prayers  
answered:  
Let God's holy will be carried out in me.

raham.  
And now let us hurry back home.

ria.  
Let us hurry home; I cannot bear any more  
delay.

CENE VIII. The scene is reminiscent of the Flight into  
gypt, with Mary on horseback, the old hermit Abraham, like  
Joseph, leading the way. As soon as they reach the hermit's  
ell, Maria dismounts.)

ria.  
How quickly we have flown  
Over this difficult, rugged road!

raham.  
Whatever is done with devotion,  
Is easily done.  
Here: behold the empty cell you left behind.

ria.  
(draws back.)

Alas! This place is witness to my crime --  
I am afraid to go in.

Abraham.

Your fear is justified;  
We must flee the very place  
Where the Devil, our great enemy, won his  
victory.

Maria.

Then where is the place you order me  
To spend my time in contrition?

Abraham.

Go into the small windowless cell inside,  
So that the Ancient Serpent will have no  
opportunity  
To lead you astray once more.

Maria.

I will not argue with you.  
I eagerly embrace whatever you order.

Abraham.

As for me, I shall go to my friend Effrem,  
That he may rejoice with me in your being  
found,  
Just as he alone mourned with me your loss.

Maria.

That is only right.

SCENE IX. (Effrem's cell. Effrem looks up, sees  
Abraham's radiant face.)

Effrem.

You don't by chance  
Bring me some happy news, do you?

Abraham.

Most happy!

Effrem.

I am glad of it -- I am sure that you have  
found Maria.

Abraham.

I have found her indeed,  
And joyfully I have led her back to the fold.

Effrem.

I am certain all this happened  
By the grace of God's direction.

Abraham.

I have no doubt of it.

Effrem.

I would like to know, in what way, from now  
on,  
Does she intend to order her life and habits?

Abraham.

According to my orders.

ffrem.

That will be the surest way for her to  
reach her goal.

braham.

Whatever penances I have suggested she  
should suffer,  
No matter how painful, no matter how hard,  
She has not yet refused to undergo a single  
one of them.

ffrem.

In this she is worthy of praise.

braham.

For she put on a hairshirt,  
And though worn down by relentless exercise  
of vigils and fasting,  
She still compels her sweet young body to  
follow the dictates of her soul  
In observing the strictest rule.

ffrem.

(reminding Abraham gently.)

It is only just that the dirt of her sinful  
delights  
Be purged by the bitterness of her penance.

braham.

(pained at the thought of her excessive  
suffering.)

Yes, but whoever hears her laments now,  
His heart is sure to bleed with her;  
Whoever feels with her her pain and  
her repentance,  
Must needs be pained too.

ffrem.

(gently.) It is often so, you know.

braham.

She tries with all her strength to become  
an example of repentance  
For those for whom she was once the cause  
of damnation.

ffrem.

That is reasonable enough, and easy to  
understand.

braham.

She strives with all her might for people  
to see  
How she, once foul, has now become  
More brightly radiant.

ffrem.

I rejoice to hear you tell it,  
And am happy with heartfelt gladness!

Abraham.

There is good reason to rejoice.  
For the angelic host  
Most joyfully praise the Lord on high  
At every sinner's repentance.

Effrem.

Nor should this surprise us -- for the  
steadfast virtue of a just man  
Pleases Him less than a sinner's regret.

Abraham.

So that all the more in her case should He  
justly be praised,  
Since we had no longer any hope of her  
repentance.

Effrem.

(hands up to God.)

Let us praise Him,  
All of us rejoicing together:  
The Only Born, greatly to be adored  
Beloved, mild, the Son of God.  
He does not want those  
Whom His blood has redeemed,  
To be delivered over to damnation.

Abraham.

To Him let there be given Honor, Glory,  
Praise and Jubilation throughout everlasting  
time.  
Amen.

## PAPHNUTIUS

The conversion of Thais the courtesan.  
The hermit Paphnutius converted her  
Just as Abraham converted Maria,  
By coming to her disguised as a lover.  
He then gave her a penance, which she fulfilled,  
Locked up in a narrow cell for five long years.  
After she had thus paid her debt in worthy manner,  
She was reconciled with God at last,  
And fifteen days after her penance was done  
She died in Christ's good grace.

CENE I. (In the desert outside Alexandria.  
Paphnutius, a handsome man in his forties, is in his cell.  
A half dozen or so disciples, or students, enter, one by  
one, and take their places on the ground. There is a moment  
of silence; then one of them, seeing Paphnutius' frowning,  
silent countenance, questions him gently.)

First Disciple. Our dear Father, Paphnutius, what is wrong?  
Why is your face so dark and full of frowns?  
Your countenance is usually serene.

Paphnutius. (in a hoarse, angry voice.)  
Because my heart is full of torment --  
That is the storm you see darkening my face.

Second Disciple. (timidly.) What brings such torment  
To your heart, Father Paphnutius?

Paphnutius. *Thais's not in me* The harm done to One who created us all.

First Disciple. *Give* (surprised.) And what is this harm  
He suffers?

Paphnutius. The harm done to Him by His own creature,  
Whom He made in His very image.

First Disciple. What you are saying is very frightening.

Paphnutius. (bursts forth with the thoughts he has  
been brooding on in silence.)

For even though His majesty is free  
from pain  
And can not, of course, suffer any harm,  
Still, if we speak in metaphor --  
Attributing to Him our human weakness --  
Then, can you think of any greater harm

Than that only the microcosm or "Smaller World" should resist His power,  
The power to Whose Rule the macrocosm or "Great World" submits with grace?

Third Disciple. What is this microcosm you speak of?

Paphnutius. The microcosm is man.

Second Disciple. (surprised.) It's man?

Paphnutius. Of course it is.

Second Disciple. But one man in particular?

Paphnutius. All men.

First Disciple. But how is it man can do this?

Paphnutius. It is as the Creator wishes.

Second Disciple. (shaking his head.)

We do not understand --

Paphnutius. For many people it is not an easy thing to understand.

Third Disciple. (eagerly, yet shyly.)

Please explain this to us, Father.

Paphnutius. (settles down to begin the lesson.)

Listen carefully, then.

First Disciple. We are anxious to hear  
And understand you.

Paphnutius. (lectures, emphasizing his points,  
counting them off on his fingers.  
The students are obviously making  
mental notes.)

The macrocosm is made up of four elements. These, though contrary, at the Creator's nod combine in an harmonious order. Yet man is put together, you see, Not only from these same four elements, But with even more contrary parts.

First Disciple. (puzzled.)

But what can be more contrary than  
the elements themselves?

aphnutius.

The body and the soul.  
For, though the elements are contrary,  
Yet they are all made of mortal matter;  
Whereas the soul is not mortal, as is  
the body.  
Nor is the body spiritual, as is the soul.

Several Disciples. (nodding in agreement.) Yes, that's true.

aphnutius.

(raises his finger in warning, making a  
further point.)

Though, mind you, if we follow what the  
philosophers say,  
We will not call these contrary either.

First Disciple.

But who could ever deny it?

aphnutius.

Those who know how to argue like  
philosophers;  
Since nothing is contrary to Being,  
But Being itself contains within it  
what is contrary.

Second Disciple.

What did you mean when you said.  
"In an harmonious order"?

aphnutius.

I meant to say that just as tones, deep  
and high,  
Make up a certain piece of music  
If they are harmoniously combined,  
So too dissonant elements, in proper  
combination,  
Make up one single world.

First Disciple.

It seems strange that dissonant things  
can be said to agree,  
Or that things that agree can be called  
dissonant.

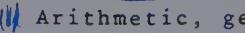
aphnutius.

Because we see that nothing in fact  
Is made up of things which are quite like,  
Nor yet of things unrelated by some rule  
of proportion  
And therefore quite separate and  
discrete,  
Each in its own substance and property.

Third Disciple. What is music?

Paphnutius. It is one of the subjects of the Four areas of philosophy, the Quadrivium.

Second Disciple. And what is that, which you call the Quadrivium?

Paphnutius.  Arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy.

First Disciple. And why is it called the Quadrivium?

Paphnutius. Because, just as four paths leave from the crossroads, Or quadrivium, where four roads meet, So too from a single origin in philosophy, The straight roads of these subjects Go forth, each one following its own direction straight ahead.

Disciples. (who have been furiously taking mental notes, and have just about reached the saturation point. In a tired, timid voice. From now on, disciples speak in turn.

Oh Father, we are afraid to go into this more deeply,  
And ask about three things,  
Since we can barely follow with the surface of our minds  
The details of this lecture you have just begun.

Paphnutius. (nods wisely.)

It is a difficult subject to follow.

Disciples. But tell us -- just briefly, if you please -- About these things we asked of you just now.

Paphnutius. (modestly.)

There is little enough I can tell you about all this,  
Since it is knowledge which monks don't have.

Disciples.

Just tell us, in the first place,  
What does it do? What function does  
it have?

aphnutius.

What, music?

Disciples.

Yes, music.

aphnutius.

It deals with sounds, and distinguishes  
various notes.

Disciples.

Is it a single subject, or divided  
into several?

aphnutius.

They say there are three kinds,  
Though so closely related the one to  
the other,  
That someone who learns one,  
Is not without the other.

Disciples.

And what is the difference between the  
three?

aphnutius.

The first is called "mundane" or rather  
"celestial",  
The second, "human",  
And the third is the music made with  
instruments.

Disciples.

What does celestial music consist of?

aphnutius.

Of the seven planets and the celestial  
sphere.

Disciples.

How do you mean that?

aphnutius.

Because, you see, they produce the same  
harmonious music  
As the cords of stringed instruments;  
For just as in the case of instruments,  
we find the same concordances  
And intervals of like number and length.

Disciples.

And what are these "intervals" you speak  
of?

aphnutius.

They are the distances which exist  
Between the planets, as between the  
notes of strings.

isciples.

And what are their lengths, then?

- Paphnutius. The same as tones.
- Disciples. But we have never heard of tones, either.
- Paphnutius. (patiently.)
- A tone is formed of two sounds,  
Of which the proportion is that of an  
    epothos number, a sesquioctave:  
That is of nine to eight.
- Disciples. (discouraged.)
- The faster we try to keep up with you  
And follow the basic notions you give us,  
And technical terms of this discussion,  
The more you go on adding more difficult  
    concepts for us to take in.
- Paphnutius. (not unkindly.)
- But that is how this kind of discussion  
    is carried on.
- Disciples. Well at least tell us something -- but  
    only the simplest account --  
About what they mean by concordances,  
Just so we will know what the word means.
- Paphnutius. A concordance or "symphonia" is a proper  
    combination of sounds.
- Disciples. But why?
- Paphnutius. Because a concordance implies a blending  
    of sounds  
At fourths, or fifths, or eights.
- Disciples. We know that there are three intervals;  
We would like to know their names,  
And the difference between each of them.
- Paphnutius. The first, called the diateseron, is the  
    "fourth" --  
Formed of four sounds, as it were  
(For that is what the word means in  
    Greek) --  
And it has a proportion of four to three;  
The second interval is called the  
    diapente, or "fifth"  
(For pente means five in Greek,  
And those are the sounds it consists of),

And its ratio is three to two;  
And the third, the diapason, is the  
"eighth":  
It has a proportion of two to one,  
And is made up of eight sounds.

isciples. So the sphere and the planets then give  
forth sounds,  
And each is like the string of an  
instrument?

aphnutius. Absolutely.

isciples. Well, why can't we hear them, then?

aphnutius. Many different reasons are given to  
explain why we can't hear  
The music of the heavenly spheres.  
Some assert it can't be heard because  
the music never stops,  
And we become accustomed to its sound;  
Others say it is the density of the air,  
While there are some who claim that a  
sound of such grand volume  
Cannot physically be taken in by the  
narrow passages of our human ears;  
And there are some who say that the  
spheres  
Give forth a sound so sweet, of such  
great joy,  
That if men ever heard it,  
They would all join together, of one  
common accord,  
Forget about themselves and any other  
interest,  
And be intent only on following this  
sound as it led them  
From the East to the Western regions. \*

sciples. (impressed.)

It is better, then, not to hear it.

aphnutius. As He Who created all things always knew.

sciples. Well, we have spoken enough of this  
music of the spheres --  
Go on and tell us about human music.

\* Boethius, Inst. Mus. I, 1. Homeyer 323.

Paphnutius.

What do you want to know?

Disciples.

How it can be perceived.

Paphnutius.

Not only, as I said before,  
In the harmonious connection between  
body and soul,  
And in the deep bass or high-pitched  
soprano of voices,  
But even in the rhythmic throbbing of  
our veins,  
And in the measure and proportion of each  
of our limbs,  
As for example in the joints of our  
fingers,  
For which we find the same proportions  
when we measure off their sections.  
These are the same proportions, if you  
remember,  
Which we talked of in our discussion  
Of the meaning of "symphonias",  
Because music is in fact an agreeable  
combination  
Not only of voices,  
But of other unlike elements as well.

Disciples.

(have been looking at the joints of  
their fingers. They are quite frankly  
lost.)

If we had only known before we asked,  
How knotty all these problems were for  
laymen like us,  
And how difficult to follow or resolve,  
We would have preferred never to have  
known about the "lesser world"  
Than try to learn such difficult lessons.

Paphnutius.

It did you no harm to try, for now you  
have learned  
Things you did not know before.

Disciples.

That's true. But we are exhausted  
From this philosophical lecture,  
Since we are not able to understand the  
details of your explanation.

Paphnutius.

Why do you make fun of me and say  
I know so much?  
I am quite ignorant, and not a wise man,  
scholar, or philosopher.

disciples.

(disbelieving.)

Well then, how do you know all those  
things  
You just expounded to us at such length?

aphnutius.

(deprecatingly.)

| That was only a small drop of knowledge  
From the philosophers' overflowing cups.  
I did not stop to drink deeply,  
But sipped some along the way,  
And this I wanted you to taste.

disciples.

We are grateful to you for your kindness,  
But we remember with fear  
What the apostle said:  
"For God has chosen the foolish things  
of this world,  
That He may confound sophisticated  
arguments."

aphnutius.

Whether foolish man or philosopher,  
Whoever deals in perverse things  
Deserves to be confounded by God.

disciples.

That is true.  
The knowledge of that which may be known  
does not offend God,  
But injustice, and harm done consciously,  
by one who knows the wrong he does.

disciples.

Yes, of course, you are right.  
For to whose praise does knowledge of all  
the arts  
Resound more worthily and justly,  
If not to His, since He is the One who  
created all things knowable  
And gave us knowledge of them?

aphnutius.

(somewhat ashamed now of having doubted.)

There is no one else.

aphnutius.

For the more anyone understands  
How miraculous is the divine law  
God placed in all things, when He gave  
them  
Number and measure and weight --

The more anyone who realizes this  
will burn with greater love for God.

Disciples.

And he will be right to do so.

Paphnutius.

But why do I go on talking about these  
things,  
Since you are not pleased to hear them?

Disciples.

Tell us instead, Oh Father, the cause  
of your sadness,  
For we are wearied from the suspense  
and strain of not knowing.

Paphnutius.

I am afraid that when you find it out  
You will not be so pleased.

Disciples.

It's true enough that one who indulges  
his curiosity  
Is often saddened when he finds out the  
truth at last;  
But it's the way we are made, we can do  
nothing about it.  
It's a human frailty we must live with.

Paphnutius.

(sighs deeply, and speaks out at last.)

A certain shameless woman  
Lives in this land of ours.

Disciples.

That is a true and certain danger  
For all its inhabitants!

Paphnutius.

This woman shines out above all others  
in beauty,  
But she is filthy in the foulness of her  
sordid life.

Disciples.

A wretched situation;  
What is her name?

Paphnutius.

Thais.

Disciples.

(surprised.) The courtesan?

Paphnutius.

That's the very one I mean.

Disciples.

But that is nothing new.  
She is notorious, and her shameless life  
Is no secret to anyone here.

aphnutius.

(deeply angry.) I am not surprised  
to hear it,  
For she is not satisfied to be leading  
a few men to eternal damnation --  
She is quick to win every man over with  
the temptations of her beauty  
And drag him to damnation with her.

isciples.

(shaking their heads lugubriously.)

It's a terrible thing.

aphnutius.

And it is not just frivolous youths  
Who waste their family's meager  
property and substance  
In order to court her and be with her,  
But even powerful, important men scorn  
their  
Family's precious furnishings and cart  
them away,  
Enriching her with gifts, much to their  
harm and loss.

isciples.

We are really horrified to hear this.

aphnutius.

Crowds of lovers flock to her like  
lambs to slaughter.

isciples.

They are damning themselves to Hell.

aphnutius.

Lovers who have lost their senses,  
Who throng helplessly, blindly about her,  
Vying with each other as to who shall  
win her favors,  
Heaping up insults on each other.

isciples.

One vicious, stupid sin bears forth  
the other.

aphnutius.

Then they compete and start to fight  
among themselves.  
They break each other's faces and noses  
with their fists,  
Or throw weapons at each other,  
And make the threshold of the brothel  
To flow with the rain of their blood.

isciples.

(wide-eyed, to each other.)

How horrible!  
What a terrible state of affairs!

Paphnutius.

So you see, this is that harm to the  
Creator which I bemoaned;  
This is the cause of my grief.

Disciples.

No wonder this grieved you.  
Surely all citizens of heaven above  
join with you in this sorrow.

Paphnutius.

Now what do you think of this plan:  
I could go to her, disguised as one of  
her lovers,  
To see whether by chance there might  
not be some way  
To recall her from persisting in this  
vanity and sin?

Disciples.

May God, Who put this wish in your mind,  
also give you the power  
To put it into action and succeed in  
your intent.

Paphnutius.

Please support me all the while with  
your unending prayers,  
Lest I too be overcome by the temptations  
Of the Serpent of Vice.

Disciples.

May God Who laid low the King of Darkness  
Grant that you triumph against the enemy.

SCENE II. (The Forum in Alexandria. Paphnutius enters, disguised as a traveller, with boots, broad hat and handsome coat. He sees from afar a group of young men-about-town, and decides to test his disguise.)

Paphnutius.

(aside.) There are the youths in the  
forum.  
I will go to them first  
And ask about the girl I'm looking for.  
I'll try to find out where she is.

First Youth.

(seeing Paphnutius coming toward them.)

Look, someone new is coming up now.  
Let's find out what it is he wants here.

phnutius.

(comes up to them.)

Hello there, young men. May I ask  
who you are?

Second Youth.

Why, we live here in this city.

phnutius.

Well, hello to you, then.

First Youth.

Greetings to you too. Welcome,  
Whether you live near by  
Or be a stranger.

phnutius.

I come from far away.  
In fact, I've only just arrived.

Second Youth.

Why have you come here, then?  
What is it you are looking for?

phnutius.

I can not tell you that.

Second Youth.

Why not?

phnutius.

Why, it's my secret.

Second Youth.

I think it would be better for you  
if you told us.  
If you're not known here,  
It will be very hard for you to do  
any business among us  
Or go about your own business  
Without help from someone who lives here.

phnutius.

(pretends to hesitate.)

But suppose I were to tell you,  
And by telling you, arouse  
Some opposition to my plans?

First Youth.

(in a friendly manner.)

I can assure you on that point;  
We will not hinder you in any way.

phnutius.

Well, then, I'll give in to your kind  
urging  
And tell you all about my secret,  
trusting in your good will.

First Youth.

You can be sure we will not betray you.  
We will do nothing to make things harder  
for you.

Paphnutius.

(motions to them to move closer.  
They form a circle around him.)

Some people have told me  
About a woman who lives here in these  
parts.  
They say she is the most lovely,  
The most gracious of all women.

First Youth.

Did you find out her name?

Paphnutius.

I did.

Second Youth.

What is the name she is known by?

Paphnutius.

Thais.

First Youth.

(exclaims in surprise.)

Why, that's the name  
Burning in all our hearts!

Paphnutius.

They say she is the most beautiful of  
women,  
The most delightful of them all.

Second Youth.

What they report is true.  
They have not lied to you in this.

Paphnutius.

And that, you see, is why I undertook  
This long and difficult journey.  
I have come here to see her.

First Youth.

There will be nothing to prevent your  
seeing her.

Paphnutius.

Where does she stay?

Second Youth.

(pointing.) Right over there -- that  
house next door.

Paphnutius.

That house where you are pointing?

Second Youth.

That's the one.

Paphnutius.

I will go there.

Several Youths.

We will go with you, if you like.

Paphnutius.

No, I'd rather go alone. But thank you.

First Youth.

Just as you like.

ENE III. (Thais' house, down the street from  
the Forum. Paphnutius knocks; a servant lets him in.)

Paphnutius. Is that you inside, Thais, whom I am  
seeking?

Thais. (turns around.)

Who is this who speaks? I do not know  
you, sir.

Paphnutius. I seek to be your lover.

Thais. (professionally gracious.)

Whoever courts me from love,  
Will receive my love in return.

Paphnutius. (comes up to her.)

Oh Thais, my Thais,  
If you only knew how many long miles  
I travelled  
On this hard journey,  
How anxiously I rushed to get here  
In order to be able to converse with you  
And look upon your face.

Thais. Here I am. You can look upon my face  
And converse with me freely.

Paphnutius. (looking around, seeing people in the  
courtyard.)

I would like to be with you in a more  
quiet place,  
So we can converse more privately.

Thais. (shows him the room off the courtyard.)

Look, here is a pleasant bedroom  
With a comfortable bed we can use.

Paphnutius. (looks around.)

Isn't there someplace within  
Where we can be quite alone  
Still more privately?

Thais.

(looks at him for a moment to see whether she can trust him.)

Yes -- yes, there is. There is another room within,  
So out of the way, so hidden,  
That its secret is known only to me  
And to God.

Paphnutius.

(startled, not daring to hope that Thais has already been touched by the Christian god.)

What god do you mean?

Thais.

(serene.) The one true God.

Paphnutius.

"Do you believe that He knows anything?"

Thais.

I certainly know that nothing is hidden from Him.

Paphnutius.

Do you think that He does not care about the deeds of evil men?  
Or does He take care to preserve His own justice?

Thais.

(intellectually; not really emotionally touched.)

I do believe that He weighs each man's merits  
In the scale of His divine justice  
And gives to each one, according to  
what he has done, either punishment or prize.

Paphnutius.

(aside, returns to his former righteous indignation. Thais' calm exposition has angered him.)

O Christ, our Lord, how I wonder  
At your patience and good will toward us!  
How can you bear to see sinners persist,  
even when they know the truth?  
How is it you have not yet damned them  
to everlasting perdition?

Thais.

(sympathetically bending toward him.)

What is the matter? You are trembling all over;

You are terribly pale; your face has  
lost all its color.  
Why, you are crying! The tears are  
flowing down your face!

aphnutius.

(points at her accusingly.)

It is your pride that makes me shudder;  
I am crying because you are damned,  
For you know well God's nature  
Yet you have sent so many men's souls  
To everlasting damnation.

ais.

(until now so calm, suddenly crumples at  
the accusing finger, which points to her  
directly.)

Alas! Alas! Oh, what a wretched  
creature I am!

aphnutius.

(implacable.)

And you are all the more justly damned,  
Because in your haughty pride you knew  
what was right --  
And so consciously offended God's great  
majesty.

ais.

(turns as if in pain. She is crying.)

Oh, what are you doing? Why are you  
tormenting me?  
Why do you keep threatening a poor  
wretched creature like me?

aphnutius.

(points at her again)

The torments of Hell are threatening  
you, not I,  
If you persist in continuing to live  
your life of sin.

ais.

(falls on her knees, covers her face.)

Your harsh words have cut into my breast  
like a sharp knife,  
And I am full of fear in my innermost  
heart.

aphnutius.

I only wish that fear  
Would strike you at the very depths of  
your entrails,

So that you would no longer dare to  
offer the agreement of your body  
For a pleasure that brings with it  
the dangers of damnation.

Thais.

But after this there is no room left  
in my breast  
For a pleasure that is full of Hell,  
Now that I am wholly possessed by the  
bitter taste of grief  
And the fear that has just gripped me of  
my conscious crime!

Paphnutius.

(triumphant; standing over her, exults.)

That is what I came for! This is what  
I hoped would happen.  
Now that the thorns of sin  
Have been cut back, at last,  
The vine of repentance can grow.

Thais.

(shakes her head with passion; yet there  
is a hint of hope in her voice.)

Oh, if you could only believe,  
If you could ever hope  
That I, a wretched creature  
So thoroughly befouled with sin,  
Smeared with a thousand times a thousand  
Filthy acts that cover me like mud --  
That I could ever pay such penance,  
That I could ever deserve forgiveness  
by any kind of repentance?

Paphnutius.

(now milder at last.)

No sin is so dreadful,  
No crime so monstrous  
That it cannot be paid for in full  
With the shedding of tears of true  
repentance,  
(u) If an act of good work follows.

Thais.

(timidly, she turns her tear-stained face  
up to him, not daring to believe the  
hope he holds forth.)

Please, I beg you, tell me, father,  
by what penance and what act  
Can I deserve this promised gift of  
forgiveness?

phnutius.

Give up your worldly life,  
Flee from the company and the embraces  
Of your lascivious, lustful lovers.

ais.

And after that, what must I do?

phnutius.

You must take yourself to a far-off,  
secret place,  
Where you can meditate upon your sins  
in solitude  
And lament the enormity of your crimes.

ais.

(her face clears, with new serenity.)

phnutius.

If you hope that it will do some good,  
I do not want to wait even a moment more.

ais.

I have no doubt that it will profit you.

(getting up, now sure of herself.)

phnutius.

Then give me just a little time.  
I want to bring out all my wealth --  
All of it ill-gotten, all of it earned  
through sin.  
I have long been saving it.

ais.

Don't worry yourself about your money.  
There will be plenty of people happy to  
spend it when they find it.

I am not concerned whether  
To give it away to my friends  
Or to save it for myself.  
I do not even want to try to give it to  
the needy,  
Since I do not think it proper to use  
the price of repentance  
As fit for good works.

phnutius.

(approving.)

ais.

You are right.  
What then to you intend to do with your  
belongings  
When you have gathered all your wealth  
and treasure together?

(with simplicity.) I will set fire to it  
And watch it go up in flames.

Paphnutius.

Why would you do that?

Thais.

So that the riches I earned through evil,  
Causing harm to the Creator of the world,  
Will no longer remain in the world.

Paphnutius.

(proudly.)

Oh, how different you are now  
From the way you were before,  
When you burned with lust  
And were hot with the passion of greed!

Thais.

(her face glowing, full of hope.)

Perhaps I will be yet more different and  
changed for the better,  
If God will permit it.

Paphnutius.

(reassuring her.)

It is not a difficult thing for God,  
who is Himself unchangeable,  
To change the nature of His own creations  
at will.

Thais.

I shall go now,  
And do what I have decided.

Paphnutius.

(blesses her.) Go in peace. And when  
you have done,  
Come back to me quickly here.

SCENE IV. (In the Forum, before Thais' house. The young men are standing about at the other end. Thais appears at her door and calls out to them.)

Thais.

Come here to me, hurry,  
All you worthless young men who say  
you love me.

First Lover.

(turning to his companions.)

It's the voice of Thais.  
She's calling us.  
Let's hurry and go to her;  
She'll be angry with us if we're slow.

ais.

(impatiently.) Be quick, come here,  
I have some things I want to say to you.

cond Lover.

(as he approaches, he sees that a bonfire  
has been lit in the courtyard. Thais'  
servants are busily bringing out brightly  
colored draperies, blankets, clothes,  
and jewels, and piling them up.)

Oh, Thais, Thais, what does this mean?  
What is this bonfire you are building?  
And why are you making this pile  
Of all your many treasures,  
Your furniture, your clothes, your  
jewels --  
The many precious gifts we gave you?

ais.

You are curious to know, aren't you?

rst Lover.

We're very surprised to see this.

ais.

I will explain to you briefly.

cond Lover.

Yes, we would be grateful if you would.

ais.

Then watch this.

(Picks up a splendid purple and gold robe  
from the pile and throws it into the fire.  
It blazes up brightly, then begins to  
burn more slowly. Thais and her lovers  
move back.)

rst Lover.

Stop it, stop it, Thais!  
What are you doing?  
Have you gone mad?

ais.

No, no, I haven't gone mad.  
I am sane at last; I have come to my  
senses.

cond Lover.

(who knows the value of these precious  
objects, since he has given her many of  
them himself, thus driving his family  
into poverty.)

But why are you destroying four hundred  
pounds of gold,  
And so many other kinds of treasure?

Thais.

(stands over the fire like an avenging angel.)

I want to burn all the gifts I extorted  
from you unjustly,  
So that you will know it's over and  
nurse no hope  
That I will go on giving in to you, or  
ever make love to you again.

(She turns to go.)

First Lover.

(catches hold of her dress.)

Wait a minute, Thais! Please wait!  
Don't go away like this!  
Won't you tell us why you are so  
disturbed?

Thais.

No, I will not stay any longer  
To talk to you.

Second Lover.

(as others also grab her dress.)

Why do you avoid us, and scorn to talk  
to us?

Third Lover.

You don't think we've been unfaithful  
to you?

Fourth Lover.

Haven't we always satisfied your every  
wish?  
And now for no reason at all you set  
against us  
With a hatred we have done nothing to  
deserve.

Thais.

(haughtily.) Let me go. If you go on  
pulling my dress you will tear it.  
Too long now I have contented you by  
sinning with you.  
Now the end of sinning is at hand;  
The time has come for me to leave you.

First Lover.

(to second lover.)

Where is she going?

Thais.

To a place where none of you will  
ever see me again.

(Exit. Her lovers groan and complain;  
they have obviously become very  
dependent upon her.)

First Lover.

It can't be true! No, she can't leave  
us!

Second Lover.

(shaking his head.)

Who would ever have believed that our  
beloved Thais would do this!  
She, who always loved to have money;  
She, who never thought of anything but  
love-making,  
And gave herself over to pleasure so  
completely!  
And now, look at what she's done!  
How much gold and how many jewels and  
precious stones she has destroyed,  
Past all hope of saving them from the  
flames.  
And how she has scorned us, her lovers  
and partners in pleasure --  
Leaving us quite suddenly, without a  
backward glance.

CENE V.

(Same as SCENE III. Thais comes joyfully  
into the house, and sees Paphnutius waiting for her.)

Thais.

Here I am, father Paphnutius! I've come  
back, and now I am quite ready  
To follow you where you will lead me.

Paphnutius.

(a note of worry in his voice.)

You took so long to come back that my  
heart shrank,  
And I feared you had become involved  
once more  
In the worldly concerns of your  
profession and your wealth.

Thais.

(laughs happily.)

No, no, do not fear that!  
I have very different things in mind,  
For I have disposed of all my household  
goods as I wished,  
And publicly renounced all the men who  
had been my lovers.

Paphnutius.

Because you have given them up,  
You will now be able to enjoy the  
embraces

Of the lover who waits for you on high.

Thais.

Now it is you who must direct me,  
Charting out my course for me,  
So that I will know exactly what I must do.

Paphnutius.

Follow me.

Thais.

I gladly follow behind you in your path.  
Oh that I might follow you in your holy  
life as well!

SCENE VI. (The imposing, gray stone walls of a convent, which looks much like fortress. A large door or gate. Paphnutius and Thais enter, stage left. They stop.)

Paphnutius.

Here is the convent  
In which a noble college of holy virgins  
lives.  
I wish to have you spend in this place  
The whole length of time of your penance.

Thais.

I will not contradict you in anything.

Paphnutius.

I will go inside;  
I want to see the abbess who is  
responsible for these holy virgins  
And ask her to take you in.

Thais.

What do you want me to do in the  
meantime?

Paphnutius.

Walk along with me.

Thais.

Just as you wish.

paphnutius.

Look, the abbess herself is coming out  
to meet us.

Strange, how she was told so quickly  
That we are here.

ais.

Rumor and a thirst for news  
Know no delay.

CENE VII. (The abbess -- a handsome, strong-minded  
woman in her fifties -- comes up to Paphnutius and Thais.  
She and Paphnutius talk, while Thais remains modestly a few  
steps behind.)

paphnutius.

You have come to us providentially,  
Noble abbess. It is you I came to see.

obess.

You are most welcome here, venerable  
father,  
And I am happy to see you.  
Your coming is a blessing for us,  
for you are beloved by God.

paphnutius.

(gives her his blessing.)

May the grace of God, Who has created  
all things,  
Pour down upon you the greatest blessing,  
that of eternal life.

obess.

To what do I owe your visit,  
And the joy of having your holy presence  
honor my small, unworthy home?

paphnutius.

I need your help with an urgent problem  
Which gives me much anxious care.

obess.

Only give me a slight word  
To tell me what you want me to do --  
And I will do my best to fulfill your  
commands,  
According to your wishes and my  
abilities.

Paphnutius.

(draws her aside, away from Thais' hearing. They sit on a bench.)

I have brought away with me a poor  
little, half-dead goat,  
Only just now torn from the very teeth  
of the wolves.  
I would like to give her over to your  
pity's sheltering warmth,  
To your care so she may be healed,  
Until such a time as she shall have  
cast aside  
The rough skin of a goat  
To put on the lamb's soft woolen mantle.

Abbess.

(Has been listening closely.)

Please explain to me more clearly  
And give me all the details of the case.

Paphnutius.

(pointing to Thais, who stands modestly aside.)

This girl you see there decided  
To live a courtesan's life.

Abbess.

(surprised, looks at Thais, who at the moment -- modestly dressed in dark colors, her head covered with the shawl she has worn on her travels with Paphnutius -- does not look at all like a courtesan.)

What a terrible thing!

Paphnutius.

She gave herself over entirely  
To lust, and love-making, and pleasure.

Abbess.

(looks at Thais again.)

She was destroying herself,  
And damning herself willfully to  
everlasting Hell.

Paphnutius.

(with a quiet note of pride in his voice.)

But now, you see, all that has changed.  
I admonished her and urged her,  
With the help of Christ,  
And so she has fled with horror and  
hatred

From the vain and superficial life  
she led.  
She knows better; she is wise enough  
now  
To seek a pure and chaste life.

Abbess.

This change of heart is surely the  
Creator's work,  
And something to be grateful for.

Paphnutius.

(with a frown now, like a doctor giving  
a diagnosis and prescribing a cure.)

But since the sickness of men's souls  
Must be cured, just as their bodies are,  
With drugs which will fight the illness,  
The best treatment for her would be  
To shut her away from the tumult and  
temptations

Of the worldly life she knew.

She should be fitted into a narrow,  
solitary cell,

In order to allow her to meditate, alone,  
upon her crimes,  
And fight against them with greater ease.

Abbess.

(nodding her approval.)

Yes, this would surely be the best  
treatment,  
And do her much good.

Paphnutius.

(more briskly now, giving specific  
instructions.)

Then order your people to build a small  
cell  
As quickly as they can, please.

Abbess.

I'll have them build it; it will be  
ready soon.

Tell them to leave neither entrance nor  
exit, but only a narrow window  
Through which she will be fed a small  
quantity of food.  
You will decide when they will bring it  
to her,  
On given days, at set hours --  
She should only get a little.

Abbess.

(looks at Thais. Her face softens.)

I am afraid that that poor child is so used to such a different kind of life

That she will sicken  
And be unable to stand the test of such harsh treatment.

Paphnutius.

Do not be afraid of that, for a serious fault  
Calls for a powerful treatment.

Abbess.

Yes, you are right, of course.

(Exits. There is a short delay.  
Paphnutius and Thais stand alone on stage, each meditating quietly. The Abbess soon returns with two men, who bring in partitions for a small cell which they proceed to set up.)

Paphnutius.

(to the abbess. He wants to test the mettle of Thais' conversion by leaving her alone to her task.)

I am not anxious to remain here any longer, for I fear  
The visits of men will remind her of her former life,  
And prove too great a temptation.

Abbess.

(has been supervising the men's work; she is used to having her orders obeyed efficiently and getting things done. Briskly, turning to Paphnutius.)

Well, then. There is no need for you to delay.  
You can shut her in right now.  
Look, here is the cell. Just as you ordered, in every detail.

Paphnutius.

Good. I am very pleased.

(Turning to Thais.)

Go in, Thais. Here is your cell.  
It is a fit and proper place for you  
To cry over your past misdeeds.

Thais.

(was not expecting anything so bleak. She utters a small cry of dismay, and takes a step backwards when she sees the small cell. There is no door: the dark, wooden interior will be boarded up by a wall, held now by the two workmen who stand nearby, ready to perform this last task as soon as Thais is inside.)

Oh, no! How very cramped, how dark it is!  
How will I, poor woman, live here so  
dreadfully, in such discomfort?

Paphnutius.

(severely.) Why do you complain about  
the place where you are going to  
live?

Why do you hate it, and fear to go  
inside?

It is the kind of place you deserve.  
It is only proper for you;  
You have until now been wandering from  
man to man,  
Without restraint of any kind at all.  
You must be tamed at last, shut up in  
a place by yourself;  
From here you will not wander any more.

Thais.

(near tears; tries to explain,  
apologetically.)

I have so long been used to comfort and  
luxury,  
Will I be able to bear a life of such  
physical hardship?

(more gently.)

But that's exactly it, you see.  
You need to have the reins of discipline  
drawn tight,  
Whenever you try to run away or fight  
against your penance.

(takes a deep breath and draws herself up,  
looking very small and frail in her dark  
clothes. She looks at the narrow cell  
with horror, blushes and turns to  
Paphnutius again; something is clearly  
on her mind.)

You have cared for me like a father.

Whatever you order for me, I, who am  
humbly grateful and unworthy,  
Will not refuse to do.  
But you see, there is a great  
difficulty for me  
In living in such a place --  
Something I am not sure I can stand.

Paphnutius.

What is this difficulty?

Thais.

I am embarrassed to tell you.

Paphnutius.

Don't be embarrassed;  
Tell me simply and openly.

Thais.

Can there be anything more difficult,  
Or of a greater discomfor,  
Than to have to take care of all my  
bodily functions  
In the same place, without ever  
leaving it?  
I am sure that very soon it will be  
impossible to live here,  
Because of the terrible smell.

Paphnutius.

You should fear the sufferings and  
hardships  
Of everlasting Hell, and stop being  
afraid  
Of the transitory discomforts of this  
world.

Thais.

It is my body's frailty  
That makes me afraid.

Paphnutius.

It is only just that you should purify  
your body  
Of the sinful perfumes of pleasure  
Which falsely led you into evil,  
By enduring this humiliation.

Thais.

(shakes her head; Paphnutius still does  
not understand her scruples.)

It's not that I refuse to do it;  
I know it's right for me to live in a  
filthy shack,  
Since I am filthy from my sins.  
It is not that at all:  
It is that there will be no place for me  
to pray --

No calm, and beautiful, and pure place  
Where I can fitly call upon God's name,  
So great and full of majesty.

Paphnutius. (roughly.) And how can you be so sure  
that you are fit to call upon Him  
Or dare with your soiled lips pronounce  
the name  
Of the God of purity?

Thais. (confused and desperate.)

But then, how can I ever hope for  
forgiveness?  
Whose pity will save me, if I am  
forbidden to call upon Him?  
He is the only one I have sinned against,  
And He is the only one to Whom I can  
offer  
The devotion of my prayers!

Paphnutius. (instructing her.)

You must pray, not with words,  
But only with your tears;  
Not with the clear soprano of your voice,  
But with the deep roar of your repentant  
heart.

Thais. But if I am not to pray to God with  
words,  
How can I hope to gain forgiveness?

Paphnutius. The more completely you humble yourself,  
The more quickly you will deserve to  
gain forgiveness.  
You need only say: "Oh Thou Who hast  
created me,  
Have pity upon me!"

Thais. (depressed.)

I shall need His pity, if I am not to  
be broken in this unequal struggle.

Paphnutius. (encourages her now.)

| Fight bravely, like a man,  
In order to obtain the glorious triumph!

Thais.

(clings to Paphnutius.)

But you must always pray for me, too,  
So that I may win the palm of victory.

Paphnutius.

(gently. Looks at her warmly.)

There is no need for you to remind me.

Thais.

(Their eyes meet.)

I hope not.

Paphnutius.

(briskly.) Well, I must go now.  
It's time for me to return to the  
solitude I long for,  
The hermit's hidden cell.  
I must see my beloved disciples again.

(To the abbess.)

I depend on you, venerable abbess.  
I entrust this woman, shut away in  
her prison cell,  
To your care and to your religious  
concern.  
Please nourish her tender young body  
with the bare necessities,  
And restore her soul, feeding her richly  
With your life-giving advice and  
encouragement.

Abbess.

(kindly; she understands Paphnutius'  
feelings.)

Do not be concerned about her.  
You can be sure I will watch after her  
With a mother's fond care.

Paphnutius.

I am on my way, then.

Abbess.

Go in peace.

SCENE VIII. (Some time later, in Paphnutius' part of the desert. The scene opens in the house where his disciples are at prayers, kneeling. One of them looks up, as a knock is heard at the door.)

First Disciple. Who can that be, knocking at the door?

Paphnutius. (from outside.) Hello, inside there!  
Open up!

Second Disciple. It's the voice of our father Paphnutius.

Paphnutius. (as before.) Unlock the door, and let me in.

First Disciple. (gets up and opens the door.)

Oh, welcome back, father!

Paphnutius. (entering.) Greetings to all of you.

First Disciple. We were all sick at heart --  
Your long absence was worrying us so.

Paphnutius. It was very good that I went.

Third Disciple. What happened with Thais?

Paphnutius. (not without some pride.)

Exactly what I wanted to happen.

Second Disciple. Where is she staying now?

Paphnutius. She is locked into a narrow cell,  
And there she cries over her past deeds.

Disciples. (look at each other, registering surprise,  
then respect at God's miraculous powers.  
The cross themselves, and resume their  
kneeling positions.)

Praise the Most Holy Trinity.

Paphnutius. May His Awful Name be blessed  
Now and through time everlasting.

Disciples. Amen.

SCENE IX. (Three years later. Outside, in front of Paphnutius' cell. Paphnutius looks at the trees before his cell, and sees it is Spring once more.)

There, I see three years of Thais'  
penance have gone by --  
And I do not know  
Whether her repentance has been accepted  
by God.  
I must rise and go to my brother hermit  
Antony,  
He will help me to learn of her fate.

(Exits.)

SCENE X. (Some time later. The cell of the hermit Antony.)

Antony. (sitting in front of the door, he smiles with delight when he sees Paphnutius approaching.)

What a wonderful surprise!  
What an unexpected joy for me!  
Is it my brother, and fellow hermit  
Paphnutius  
I see coming? It is! It is!

Paphnutius. (laughing.) It is, indeed!

Antony. (rises to embrace him.)

You have done well to come, brother;  
You have done well to make me happy  
with your visit!

Paphnutius. I am as full of gladness as you are,  
And of joy, to see you again!

Antony. What welcome cause brings us both this  
pleasure?  
What makes you leave your wild and  
solitary home?

Paphnutius. I will tell you all.

Antony. Oh, yes, I wish you would!

(They sit down.)

Paphnutius.

Three years ago there lived near us  
a certain courtesan  
By the name of Thais,  
Who not only gave herself over to  
damnation  
But also used to drag down many men,  
Along with herself, to everlasting  
destruction.

Antony.

Oh, this was surely a custom to be  
lamented and mourned!

Paphnutius.

To this woman I went, disguised as one  
of her lovers;  
I flattered her sensuous, pleasure-loving  
soul by urging her gently,  
And terrified her by threatening with  
harsh warnings.

Antony.

Yes, of course, that was what was needed  
To impress her soft, frivolous character.

Paphnutius.

She gave in at last.  
She scorned her shameful profession,  
And chose to lead a life of chastity,  
Which is why she agreed to be shut up  
Within a cruelly small, cramped cell.

Antony.

I am most happy to hear this;  
My very heart is thrilled to hear such  
pleasing news.

Paphnutius.

(moved by the thought of the cruel  
punishment Thais must even now be  
suffering; and with, perhaps, a tinge  
of irony in his reaction to Antony's  
unalloyed delight.)

This joy is just what one expects  
Of your holy character, of course.  
As for me, I too rejoice exceedingly,  
As you can well imagine, at her conversion.  
And if I am, in spite of this,  
Disturbed by something that causes me some  
worry,  
It is only because I am afraid  
Her delicate constitution will not stand  
well  
This task prolonged so long now.

Antony.

(sympathetically.)

Of course, wherever you find true  
affection  
You find devoted sympathy and sharing of  
the other's sufferings.

Paphnutius.

And so I turn to your friendship to ask  
a favor of you.  
I wish you and your disciples would  
join me in urgent, constant prayer;  
So all of us would pray together,  
Until God would give us a sign.  
Then we would know whether His good will  
and His divine pity  
Has been mollified yet to forgiveness  
By her repentant tears.

Antony.

We are happy to agree to your request.

Paphnutius.

(as he kneels to pray, smiling at the  
good, kind Antony.)

And I have no doubt at all that your  
prayers will find favor  
And be fulfilled by God.

SCENE XI. (Same scene as the preceding. Some time  
has passed; it is morning. Paphnutius is still praying,  
alone before Antony's cell. Antony enters.)

Antony.

(radiant.) Paphnutius, I have good news.  
The promise made in the Gospels has been  
fulfilled among us.

Paphnutius.

What promise do you mean?

Antony.

Why, the promise that said those joined  
together in prayer  
Would be granted what they asked for.

Paphnutius.

(excited now. Rises.)

What is it? What has happened?

Antony.

Paul, my disciple, has received  
A certain special vision.

Paphnutius.

Please call him out!

Antony.

(calling out.) Paul, come here!

(Paul enters.)

Tell Paphnutius what you saw.

Paul.

(looks up, as if still seeing the vision.)

In the vision I could see, in heaven,  
a couch richly arranged,  
All made up with splendid, dazzling  
white covers.  
Around it stood four virgin maidens,  
all resplendent;  
They took their stations around it as  
though they were guarding it.  
I looked at the beauty of this miraculous  
brightness  
And all the time I was saying to myself,  
"This glory befits no one as much as my  
father and master, Antony."

Antony.

No, no, I am surely not worthy of such  
heavenly beatitude!

Paul.

But when I said this, there rang out  
a heavenly voice, saying,  
"No, it is not Antony, as you hope,  
But Thais the courtesan whom this glory  
awaits."

Paphnutius.

(an expression of great joy has come  
over his face.)

Praise be to the sweetness of your pity,  
Oh Christ, you who are the only God,  
For you have deigned to console my  
sadness  
So generously!

Antony.

(there is no tinge of envy in his voice.)

He is indeed worthy that we praise Him.

Paphnutius.

(gets up.)

I will go now  
And visit my prisoner.

Antony.

Yes, you must do that right away,  
To promise her hope of forgiveness  
And the consolation of everlasting  
Heavenly beatitude.

SCENE XII. (Thais' cell. It is very small and very forlorn; the contrast between this small, dingy box and the vision of heavenly bliss described just before cannot fail to strike the spectator. Paphnutius enters.)

Paphnutius.

(goes up to the cell, looks at it. The window is closed. He knocks.)

Thais, my own adopted daughter,  
Open the window, and let me see you.

Thais.

(at the tiny, open window. Her voice is weak and somewhat hoarse, but sweet.)

Who is speaking to me?

Paphnutius.

It is Paphnutius, your father, my child.

Thais.

Oh, what has brought me the joy of such  
a happy occasion,  
That you do not consider it to be  
beneath your dignity  
To visit me, who am such a sinner?

Paphnutius.

(answering an implied reproach.)

Even though I have been away from you  
in body  
For three years now, I have thought much  
about you  
And worried about your salvation.

Thais.

(with a warmth to her voice.)

Yes, father, I know that.

Paphnutius.

Tell me exactly what you think about,  
And how you meditate upon your sins  
In carrying out your penance.

Thais.

(The simplicity of her words, and her tone, show she has become a saint.)

I can say this:  
I know full well  
I have done nothing worthy of God.

Paphnutius.

If God looked too closely into  
everyone's evil deeds,  
There is no one He would help or  
support.

Thais.

But if you still want to know what I have done,  
I will tell you. Collecting in my mind  
All of my many sins, I bound them all  
together in a bundle.  
I focused my thoughts on these, and  
went over them constantly,  
One by one. The nauseating smell of  
excrement  
Never left my nostrils; neither did the  
fearful vision of Hell  
Ever leave the sight of my heart.

(impressed and moved.)

Because you punished yourself with such  
remorse,  
You have won forgiveness.

Thais.

Oh, if that were only ture!

Paphnutius.

Give me your hand, Thais, and I will  
lead you out.

Thais.

No, no, venerable father, don't!  
Don't take me away from this dirt,  
For I am a poor, wretched, dirty thing,  
too.  
Let me stay in the place where I deserve  
to be.

Paphnutius.

The time has come for you to lighten  
your fear of Hell,  
And to begin to hope in life,  
For your repentance has found favor  
in the eyes of God.

Thais.

(does not dare to believe. In a  
trembling voice.)

Let all the angels on high  
Bear forth the praise of His Goodness!  
He has not scorned the lowliness  
Of a bruised and contrite heart.

Paphnutius.

Remain steadfast in your fear of God  
And keep your place forever in His  
affection,  
For in two weeks you will leave the  
world of men.  
Your crossing over and your journey  
will be a happy one,  
Favored by Divine Grace, and you will  
reach at last  
The starry Kingdom of Heaven.

Thais.

I only hope I have deserved to escape  
Hell's punishment,  
Or, at least, only just to burn less  
cruelly, with milder flames!  
For I have certainly not deserved for  
my pains,  
To be granted heavenly beatitude without  
end.

Paphnutius.

God's gifts are granted freely.  
He does not weigh out men's merits,  
For if He distributed His grace to those  
who deserve it alone,  
It would not truly be called "grace".

Thais.

And so  
Let the harmonious choral song of  
Heaven praise Him,  
And all the tender sprigs of the earth,  
And all the various species of living  
creatures,  
And the whirlpools of the waters, with  
a joyful crash;  
For not only does He suffer those who sin,  
But to those who repent He generously and  
freely grants  
The rewards of His heavenly grace!

Paphnutius.

This has been his custom since ancient  
times.  
He has always preferred to pity and  
forgive  
Than to strike down in anger.

SCENE XIII. (Two weeks later. Thais is dying. The scene is the convent garden, with the cell in the background. Thais, her face pale, lies on a bed, whose white sheets foreshadow the splendid heavenly couch promised her in Paul's vision. Beside her sits Paphnutius.)

Thais. (reaches out with her hand to touch Paphnutius' robe.)

Do not leave me, venerable father.  
Please stay by my side  
To comfort me in the hour of my  
dissolution.

Paphnutius. (comforting her.)

No, no, I will not leave you.  
I will not go away until your soul is  
applauding in Heaven,  
Having joined the heavenly chorus of  
praise.  
Then I shall take your body to burial.

Thais. (smiles at the thought. Her hand grips Paphnutius' robe.)

There, now I am beginning to die.

Paphnutius. Now is the moment when we must pray.

(lifts herself up slightly. She repeats the words of the prayer Paphnutius taught her.)

O Thou Who has created me, have pity on me.  
Allow this soul into which You once  
breathed life  
To return to You with an easy journey.

(She falls back on the pillow.)

Paphnutius. (makes the sign of the cross over her, then crosses himself.)

Oh Thou Who art Thyself uncreated,  
Thou art true Form without Matter;  
Thou whose uncompounded Essence created  
Man -- not of like substance --  
Out of several elements:

Grant, I pray, to the various parts  
of this human being --  
This woman whose body must dissolve --  
A happy journey home,  
That she may happily seek once more  
The source of her beginnings.  
May her soul, taken up into Heaven,  
Mingle with the joys of the heavenly  
host.  
May her body be nursed in peace  
Within the soft lap of the earth,  
its own matter,

(Gets up, and looks down at Thais.)

Until that time when the ashes come  
together  
And the breath of life, entering into  
these limbs,  
Will make them live once more.  
Then this very Thais, in her own human  
body,  
Will rise again, perfect at last,  
To take her place among the lovely,  
shining white sheep,  
And be led into the joy of eternal life.  
For Thou alone art what Thou art,  
Who reign in the Unity of the Trinity,  
And rise in Glory throughout all the  
infinite  
Ages of eternity.

(He falls on his knees, and continues to  
pray in silence.)

## SAPIENTIA

### THE MARTYRDOM OF THE HOLY VIRGINS FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY

In the presence of their mother, the most reverend  
Sapientia  
-- Who urged them on to bear their martyrdom bravely --  
The Emperor Hadrian <sup>1</sup> killed them  
With a variety of tortures.

Their bodies, then, consumed in their martyrdom  
Were taken up by their holy mother Sapientia  
Who preserved them with spices  
And buried them, with solemn funeral rites,  
At the third <sup>2</sup> milestone out of Rome.  
She herself, forty days after their burial,  
Her holy prayers ended, sent her soul to Heaven.

<sup>1</sup>1 Changed in the text to "Diocletian," an emperor infamous  
for his persecutions.

<sup>2</sup>2 The text says "fifth".

SCENE I. (The throne room in the palace. Hadrian is enthroned. Antiochus enters, and bows respectfully before the Emperor.)

Antiochus. I earnestly desire, O Emperor Hadrian, For your authority to grow ever stronger, Fulfilling our wishes for future prosperity And for the establishment of your empire To flourish undisturbed in its happiness.

(Frowning, as he grows foreboding, he goes on.)

And that is why I want  
Whatever might disturb the state,  
Whatever I believe might harm its peace of  
mind,  
To be uprooted and disappear completely  
From our land.

Hadrian. You are right to want this;  
For our prosperity has been your fortune,  
And we have never ceased raising you up  
Along the ranks of honors, day after day.

Antiochus. (bows again.)

I thank Your Honored Highness,  
Who makes my power grow.

(continuing with his former speech.)

If I see anything which seems to threaten  
your rule  
I do not hide it from your sight,  
But let you know of it at once!

Hadrian. (somewhat cynically.)

And you are right to do so,  
For you would be convicted of treason,  
If you withheld important information.

Antiochus. (protesting.)

Never have I been accused of committing  
such a crime!

Hadrian. (more kindly.)

I realize that. -- But do proceed.  
Have you heard anything new?

Antiochus. A certain woman has recently come to Rome  
From out of town.  
She is accompanied by her brood,  
Of three young children.

Hadrian. What sex are these young children?

Antiochus. They are all three girls.

Hadrian. Now you're not going to tell me, are you,  
That the arrival of this little group of  
poor, weak women  
Can possibly bring any harm to the state?

Antiochus. || They can bring great harm, my lord. So TRUE

Hadrian. And what is that?

Antiochus. The end of peace.

Hadrian. In what way, pray?

Antiochus. What can break up more completely  
The peace of civil concord,  
Than the weakening of religious observance?

Hadrian. (now serious. He bangs on the arm of the  
throne.)

You are right!  
Nothing is more serious, nothing more harmful.  
The Roman Empire testifies to this,  
Since it is everywhere infected  
With the disease of Christian death.

Antiochus. This woman I am speaking of  
Encourages our people  
To abandon their ancestral rites  
And give themselves over  
To the Christian religion.

Hadrian. Is she successful? Do people listen to her?

Antiochus. Only too much so,  
For our wives are full of hatred for us  
And despise us to such an extent  
They even scorn to eat together with us,  
Let alone sleep with us.

Hadrian. I must admit that is a dangerous situation.

Antiochus. It is urgent that your Highness  
Take measures against this danger.

Hadrian. What you report makes me agree.

(Thinks awhile, then gives an order.)

Let this woman be brought before us for  
questioning,  
And let us see whether she will stop.

Antiochus. Do you wish me to summon her  
And have her appear before you?

Hadrian. I do indeed.

SCENE II. (The house of Sapientia. Antiochus enters.)

Antiochus. What is your name,  
Oh woman who have come from out of town?

Sapientia. Sapientia.

Antiochus. The Emperor Hadrian  
Orders you to be brought to the palace  
Into his presence.

Sapientia. I am not afraid to enter the palace  
In the noble company of my daughters,  
And I do not fear to meet  
Your scowling Emperor face to face.

Antiochus. The hateful race of Christ-followers  
Is always ready to defy the authority of  
rulers.

Sapientia. The Ruler of the Universe, who can never be  
conquered  
Will not allow his subjects  
To be defeated by the enemy.

Antiochus. (with some impatience.)

Enough of all this flow of words!  
It is time to go to the palace.

Sapientia. You go ahead, show us the way,  
And we will follow quickly behind.

SCENE III. (Same as Scene I. Antiochus leads Sapientia and her daughters in.)

Antiochus. You are now in the presence of the emperor, Whom you see enthroned on his high seat of office. Think carefully what you will say.

Sapientia. Christ's command keeps this necessity from us, Since He has promised us His gift of wisdom will never fail.

Hadrian. Come forward, Antiochus.

Antiochus. (obeys.)

I am at your orders, my lord.

Hadrian. (bending down to talk to him privately.) Are these those little women you were accusing Because of their Christian religion?

Antiochus. They are those very ones.

Hadrian. (still whispering.)

I am very amazed at the beauty Of each and every one, And I cannot stop marvelling At the nobility of their bearing.

Antiochus. (disapproving.)

It would be better if you were to stop admiring them, my lord, And make them worship the gods.

Hadrian. Perhaps I should start off Speaking to them in a kindly way. To see whether by chance They will be more likely to yield.

Antiochus. That will be best: for the weak and Delicate nature of the feminine sex Can be easily softened by flattery.

- Hadrian. (turning to Sapientia and her daughters.)
- Honored Lady, I do urge you  
With all good will and softly  
To give worship to the gods,  
That you may enjoy my friendship.
- Sapientia. (proudly.) I am not so anxious to please you  
By honoring the gods,  
Nor do I yearn to have  
Such friendly relations with you, Sire.
- Hadrian. (still gently.)
- You are wrong to think I am hostile,  
For I feel no anger against you.  
In fact I have a father's concern  
For your safety and that of your daughters.
- Sapientia. (aside to the girls, in a whisper.)
- Daughters, don't believe him,  
Have no faith in the seductive words  
Of this devil, this snake in the grass --  
Scorn him, just as I do.
- Fides. (whispering to Sapientia.)
- We scorn him, and within our souls  
We despise his cheap flattery.
- Hadrian. (to Sapientia.)
- What are you talking about in whispers?
- Sapientia. I was only saying a few words to my daughters.
- Hadrian. I can see as I look at you that you come  
from a most noble ancestry --  
I would like for you to tell me yourself  
About your country, rank and family.
- Sapientia. (with the modesty of true nobility.)
- Although we do not care much for pride of  
birth,  
Yet it is true that my family traces its  
origin  
To an illustrious line.
- Hadrian. I can well believe it.

- Sapientia. My ancestors were indeed the greatest  
princes of Italy.  
But my own name means "Wisdom," for I am  
called Sapientia.
- Hadrian. (in genuine admiration.)
- The splendor of your noble birth,  
Shines in your countenance,  
And wisdom's name, Sapientia,  
Resplends in the words of your mouth.
- Sapientia. (pulls back, suspicious of praise.)
- Your flattery will be in vain.  
Never will your soft words persuade us.
- Hadrian. Tell me why you have come here,  
And why you go about among our people.
- Sapientia. Only to learn the Truth, in order to know  
more  
About this faith you are attacking  
And to betroth my daughters to Christ.
- Hadrian. Present them to me by name, please,  
One at a time.
- Sapientia. This one is called Faith, or Fides,  
The next one is Hope, or Spes,  
The third is Charity -- Karitas.
- Hadrian. And what ages have they reached?
- Sapientia. (turning to her daughters)
- Tell me, daughters,  
Would you like me to wear out this fool  
With a lesson in arithmetic?
- Fides. (proud of her brilliant mother.)
- Oh yes, mother, we would like that!  
And we will gladly hear it.
- Sapientia. (turning to the emperor.)
- Oh Emperor, if you are asking  
The ages of these young girls,  
I will tell you that Karitas has celebrated  
A diminished, equally equal number of years;

While Spes' age, likewise a diminished  
number  
Is an equally unequal number;  
And Fides' age, again, is a number  
superabundant,  
And unequally equal.

Hadrian.

(puzzled.)

With this answer you have managed to keep me  
from knowing  
Any of the things I asked.

Sapientia.

No wonder, for this kind of definition  
Includes several numbers, not just one  
number alone.

Hadrian.

Please explain in detail,  
Or I will not understand a word of it.

Sapientia.

Karitas is eight years old,  
Or the span of two Olympiads;  
Spes is ten, the length of two five-year  
lustra;  
And Fides twelve, or three Olympiads.

Hadrian.

And why is the number eight, which includes  
two Olympiads,  
As well as the number "ten"  
-- the length of two five-year lustra --  
Said to be "diminished"?  
Or why is the number twelve  
-- that is, three Olympiads --  
Called "superabundant"?

Sapientia.

Because, you see, any number  
Is said to be "diminished"  
If its parts, joined together,  
Add up to a smaller total  
Than the sum of that number  
Whose parts they represent,  
The number "eight", for instance:  
For half of eight is four, and a fourth of  
eight is two,  
And an eighth is one,  
And if you add them together,  
You get seven.  
In the same way half of ten is five,  
A fifth of ten is two, a tenth of ten is one:  
If you put them all together,  
They only add up to eight.

On the other hand, a number is said to be  
"superabundant"  
If its parts, when added together, grow  
larger:  
Like twelve, for instance; for half of  
twelve is six,  
And a third of twelve is four, and a fourth  
is three,  
And a sixth is two, and a twelfth is one,  
And the total of all these  
Adds up to sixteen.

But I should also explain what a "primary"  
number is:

Such a number, among unequal incommensurate  
numbers,

Holds a middle ground.

It is called a "perfect" number,

If the sum of its parts, or the total of  
its factors,

Is equal to it,

Neither larger than that number nor smaller  
than itself.

Like six, whose parts -- three, two and one --  
Add up to six once more.

In the same way 28, 496 and 8128 / *in PLATO*  
Are all called "perfect" numbers.

adrian. (who has been listening with great interest.)

And what about the other numbers?

sapientia. They are all either "superabundant", that is,  
"increased",  
Or, otherwise, "diminished."

adrian. What number did you say was "equally equal"?

sapientia. The one which can be divided into two equal  
parts,  
And each of its parts, again, into two equal  
numbers,  
And each part of that part into two equal  
numbers,  
And so on again until you reach  
An indivisible unit.  
Eight and sixteen are such numbers,  
And all numbers formed by doubling these.

adrian. And what is a number "equally unequal"?

Sapientia.

That number which can be divided,  
But whose parts are prime numbers,  
indivisible.  
Like ten, and all those sums  
Formed by doubling unequal numbers.  
For such a number is the opposite  
Of the one described above,  
Because there only the smaller term  
Is dissolved by being divided:  
While in this one only the larger  
Is capable of any division.  
In the former, too, all of the parts  
are equally equal,  
Both denominator and quotient,  
While in the latter, if the denominator  
was equal,  
The quotient was unequal;  
If the quotient was equal,  
The denominator was unequal.

Hadrian.

(more puzzled than ever.)

I really do not understand the meaning  
Of this "term" you are talking about,  
Nor do I know what either a "denominator"  
Or a "quotient" might be.

Sapientia.

When as many numbers as you wish  
Are arranged in order,  
The first is called the "smaller term,"  
And the last, the "larger,"  
But when, in division,  
We say by how many a number is to be  
divided,  
We call that the "denominator," or "divisor,"  
And when we count how many numbers are in  
any one part,  
Then we are setting forth the "quantity,"  
or "quotient."

Hadrian.

And what is a number unequally equal?

Sapientia.

One which is not only divided once,  
Like an evenly even number,  
But again a second time,  
And sometimes even thrice or more;  
And yet it does not reach  
An indivisible unit.

adrian.

(throwing up his hands and marvelling.)

Oh, what a detailed and complex problem  
Has arisen from these girls' ages! //

sapientia.

For the wonder of such calculations praise //  
must be given  
To our supreme Creator's wisdom,  
And the marvellous knowledge  
Of the Maker of the world.  
For in the beginning He created all things  
out of nothing,  
And He so distributed all things with number  
and measure and weight,  
That, in the fullness of time that followed  
The age of man was allowed to discover  
The marvel of scientific thought.

adrian.

(gets back to the point of issue, patiently  
but firmly.)

I have for quite a while now been following  
These mathematical calculations of yours  
Hoping to find you more reasonable,  
Ready to comply with my request.

sapientia.

With what request?

adrian.

That you pay homage to our gods.

sapientia.

Never will I compromise on that.

adrian.

If you refuse, we will have to put you to  
the torture.

sapientia.

(drawing herself up, happy at the thought  
of martyrdom.)

You can strike my body with punishments,  
But still you will not have the power  
To force my soul to yield.

antiochus.

(to the emperor, reminding him respectfully.)

Day is going, and night is upon us.  
This is not the time to argue, Sir,  
For supper time is near.

Hadrian. (gets up to leave. Speaks to the guards on duty at the doors.)

Have these women put under guard  
Close by, near the palace.  
Let them be granted three days' delay  
To think this out, and reconsider.

Antiochus. (to the soldiers.)

See that these women are closely guarded,  
men,  
Give them no chance to escape.

SCENE IV. (In the prison-like room to which the soldiers have taken Sapientia and her daughters. It is dark. The girls huddle up against their mother. They are afraid. She puts her arms about them.)

Sapientia. Sweet little daughters of mine.  
Oh, my darling little girls,  
Do not be anxious or distressed  
At the narrowness of this place, or at the  
hardness  
Of our imprisoned state.  
Do not be frightened by these threats  
Which loom before us.

Fides. (afraid, but wanting to comfort her mother in turn.)

Though our poor bodies  
Tremble at the thought of torture,  
Yet our mind looks ahead, to the glorious  
prize we shall win.

Sapientia. (embracing Fides.)

You must overcome the weakness  
Of your tender young age  
With the bravery of adult understanding.

Spes. But you must help us with your prayers  
So that we may win.

Sapientia. Oh, yes, I pray for this incessantly,  
This I desperately implore,

That you may be strong in that faith  
I gave you with your toys and rattles,  
With which I never ceased to nurse your  
thoughts and senses.

Karitas.

(reassuring her mother in tears.)

Oh Mother, there is no way we can ever  
forget  
That nourishment of faith we drank from  
your breasts  
When we were still in our cribs.

Sapientia.

Yes, it was for this you were nursed  
With so much of your mother's milk,  
For this I spoiled, and fed you all your  
favorite foods,  
So that I might marry you to someone better  
than a man --  
A divine bridegroom!

(with a smile.)

On your account I might be worthy to be known,  
not as the bride,  
But as mother-in-law of the Eternal King!

Fides.

For the love of that very bridegroom  
We are ready to die.

Sapientia.

(embracing them happily.)

I am delighted by your decision  
More than by the taste of sweet nectar.

Spes.

Send us before the judge's court and you  
will see for yourself  
What great courage His love inspires in us.

Sapientia.

Oh, this is what I desire more than  
anything else,  
To be crowned by your virginity,  
And glorified by your martyrdom.

Spes.

Let us march forth hand in hand  
And confound the grim tyrant.

Sapientia.

No, wait -- the hour of our calling  
Will be upon us soon enough.

Fides.

Oh, the delay is hateful!  
But we must be patient, and wait.

SCENE V. (The palace.)

Hadrian. Antiochus, order those women from Italy  
we imprisoned  
To be brought here before us.

Antiochus. Come in, Sapientia, enter, with your  
daughters,  
Into the presence of the emperor.

Sapientia. (aside to her daughters. She is tense,  
but determined.)

Come with me and stand fast, my daughters,  
And continue in your faith with single-  
minded purpose,  
So that you may, in happiness and joy,  
Obtain the palm of martyrdom.

Spes. We are coming -- and may He himself go with us,  
For whose love we are being led to death.

Hadrian. (gravely.)

The serenity of our imperial judgment  
Has granted you a three-day delay:  
If in that space of time  
You have given the matter due thought  
And have worked out a decision  
Which will profit you,  
Yield now to our orders.

Sapientia. We have indeed given the matter thought  
And have come to a decision  
which will be of greatest profit to us --  
And that is that we will not yield.

Antiochus. (seeing that the situation has become  
touchy once more, he approaches the emperor's  
throne and speaks in the emperor's ear.)

Why do you condescend to exchange words  
With this obstinate person,  
Who wears out your patience  
With her presumptuous insolence?

Hadrian. (aside to Antiochus.)

Then must I dismiss her without any  
punishment?

- Antiochus. Certainly not.
- Hadrian. What then?
- Antiochus. Urge the girls to yield, and if they refuse  
Do not spare them because they are children,  
But have them killed.  
The deaths of her daughters will hurt this  
defiant mother  
Worse than any torture could.
- Hadrian. (nods in agreement.)
- I shall do as you advise.
- Antiochus. You will see, this will be the way to win.
- Hadrian. (to the oldest girl.)
- Fides, look upon the holy, ancient statue  
of the great Diana --  
Offer libations to the revered goddess  
So that you may enjoy her favors.
- Fides. (does not move. Aside, to her mother.)
- That is certainly a stupid order the  
emperor is giving --  
Does he think I'll have anything but  
contempt for it?
- Hadrian. What are you whispering? What are you  
laughing at?  
Why are you looking so disdainful?
- Fides. (boldly.) I am making fun of your stupidity,  
I am laughing at your lack of sense.
- Hadrian. (shocked.) At my stupidity?
- Fides. Yes, yours.
- Antiochus. (who has been trying in vain to preserve the  
dignity of his sovereign.)
- You dare say this of the emperor's orders?
- Fides. I do.
- Antiochus. Oh, this is unspeakable!

Fides.

(explaining.)

For what can be more stupid, or more  
senseless,  
Than to urge us to look down on the  
Creator of the universe  
And worship instead these base metals?

Antiochus.

Fides, you are out of your mind.

Fides.

(confronting him.) Antiochus, you lie.

Antiochus.

Isn't this the height of insanity,  
And the greatest proof of madness,  
That you have called the ruler of the  
world a fool?

Fides.

I said that, and I still do,  
And I shall do so as long as I live.

Antiochus.

That will be only a brief time.  
You deserve to die at once.

Fides.

(with joy.) But that is my dearest wish,  
To die in Christ!

Hadrian.

(to the guards.)

The twelve of you centurions, take it in  
turns,  
And lash her limbs off with those whips.

Antiochus.

(aside, regaining some of his composure.)

Justice at last!

Hadrian.

(to the approaching centurions.)

O brave centurions, take her,  
And avenge the insults she has done me.

Antiochus.

(aside.)

This is a proper judgment.

Hadrian.

(now coldly, as a judge following the legal  
formula.)

Will you ask her, Antiochus,  
Whether she will yield or not.

Antiochus.

(formally.)

Will you, Fides, even now, go on  
Injuring the majesty of the emperor  
By hurling insults as you have been doing?

Fides.

Why should I not go on now?

Antiochus.

Because now we will beat you into stopping.

Fides.

Blows will not force me to be quiet,  
Since I shall not feel the pain.

Antiochus.

Oh, what wretched obstinacy, what  
bare-faced audacity!

(The centurions tie up Fides, and begin to  
scourge her with whips, in alternate rhythm.  
Fides still holds her head high. The emperor  
begins to marvel at the girl's endurance.)

Hadrian.

Look, her body is cut open by the whips --  
And her spirit is still swollen with pride!

Fides.

You are mistaken, Hadrian, if you think  
That this torture is wearing me down --  
It is not I, but the weak men who torture me  
Who are slowing down from exhaustion,  
And sweat and faint from fatigue.

Hadrian.

(to Antiochus.)

Go, Antiochus, have them cut off  
The nipples from each of her breasts,  
Then the red blush of shame will at last  
restrain her.

Antiochus.

Oh, if only there were some way to restrain  
her!

Hadrian.

(grimly.) Perhaps this will be the way at last.

(The soldiers carry out their unpleasant duty.)

Fides.

(triumphant.)

You have wounded my untouched breast  
But you have not harmed me.  
Look, instead of a stream of blood  
A stream of milk is flowing!

Hadrian. (looks astounded. Thinks a while, then calls for the next torture.)

Tell them to put fiery glowing coals  
Under a large grill  
To kill her with the torrid heat.

Antiochus. (approvingly -- now personally involved.)

She deserves to die in the most wretched way,  
Since she did not fear to disobey your orders.

(The soldiers bring in the equipment, and place Fides on the large grill. The emperor and Antiochus look on expectantly; then step back in disappointment as Fides calls out to them in her fresh, young voice.)

Fides. (laughing.)

Everything you plan as a torture  
Becomes a place of restful joy to me,  
For see, I lie upon this fiery grill  
As if it were a tranquil boat  
Floating out to sea.

Hadrian. (to the soldiers.)

Set up above the fire a cauldron  
Full of pitch and boiling wax  
And throw this rebel into the boiling  
liquid.

Fides. (eager for martyrdom.)

I will jump into it myself.

Hadrian. (ironically.)

You have my permission this time.

Fides. (from the cauldron.)

Where are all your dire threats now?  
Look at how I swim about happily  
Unharmed in the boiling pitch.  
And instead of its fierce heat  
I feel the freshness of the morning dew.

Hadrian. (to Antiochus, in desperation.)

Antiochus, what must we do to her?

Antiochus. We must do something to see she does not get off.

Hadrian. (to the soldiers.)

Have them cut off her head.

(Soldiers go off to get the executioner.)

Antiochus. (approvingly.)

There is no other way  
For us to subdue her at last.

Fides. (goes to her mother.)

Now is the time for joy!  
Now will I rejoice in the Lord!

Sapientia. (embracing Fides, she prays.)

O Christ, Thou who hast celebrated a triumph  
over Satan,  
Thou Most Unconquered,  
Do Thou give strength to Fides, my daughter.

Fides. Oh dear and holy Mother,  
Say a last goodbye to your daughter,  
Give your first-born a kiss, and do not be  
heart-sick,  
For I am on my way to receive, as the palm  
of my victory,  
The prize of eternal life.

Sapientia. No, my dearest daughter,  
I am not disturbed, I am not distressed!  
See, I bid you goodbye with great joy --  
I am crying as I kiss your dear face and  
your eyes,  
But they are tears of happiness.  
I pray that even under your torturers' blows  
You will preserve as holy the solemn mystery  
of your name.

Fides. Oh my sisters, our own mother's sweet  
daughters,  
Give me the kiss of peace  
And have all your courage ready  
To brave your coming proof of faith.

Spes.

Help us with your constant prayers  
So that we too may deserve  
To follow in your footsteps.

Fides.

Now mind you, pay attention to our holy  
mother's words,  
When she urges us to scorn the happiness  
of this world,  
In order to deserve to receive everlasting  
joy.

Karitas.

Oh, yes, we shall gladly listen  
To our mother's words of warning  
And try to deserve eternal joys.

(The soldiers have brought in the executioner.)

Fides.

Then, executioner, come here to me,  
Obey your orders and do your proper work --  
Kill me.

(The executioner leads Fides off stage.  
There is a pause. Then the sharp noise of  
a blow is heard. The executioner enters,  
holding the head of Fides, and places it on  
a table before Sapientia.)

Sapientia.

(bends down before the head.)

I embrace the severed head of my daughter.  
As she dies here before me --  
Again and yet again I kiss her lips,  
And I thank you, Christ, who hast given  
so great a triumph  
To such a small and tender little girl.

Hadrian.

(somewhat shaken.)

Now, Spes, yield to the advice I urge upon  
you  
With all of a father's affections.

Spes.

What do you urge me to do,  
And what do you advise?

Hadrian.

Do not follow the example of your sister's  
obstinacy,  
Or you will have to suffer the same  
punishment.

Spes.

Oh, but I am anxious to imitate her in  
her suffering,

In order to gain the same prize she has won.

Hadrian.

Lay aside your callous-hard heart  
And yield, by bringing incense to the  
Great Diana:  
And I, the emperor, shall adopt you as  
my own child,  
And honor you with every mark of favor,  
And love you dearly.

Spes.

I do not want you as a father,  
Nor any of your favors.  
And you are only deceiving yourself  
If you think I shall ever yield.

Hadrian.

Be careful what you say, or you will make  
me angry.

Spes.

Be angry, then. I do not care.

Antiochus.

(goes up to the emperor's throne, and  
speaks in his ear.)

I am amazed, Augustus, my lord,  
To see you let yourself be insulted so long  
By a common little girl:  
I myself am bursting with fury  
To hear her bark at you so shamelessly.

Hadrian.

I was trying to spare her  
Because, as you see, she is only a child.  
But now, I can no longer spare her --  
She must be punished as she deserves.

Antiochus.

Oh, I hope so, my Lord!

Hadrian.

(to the guards.)

Lictors, take this rebel,  
And beat her to death with your heaviest  
whips.

Antiochus.

(to Hadrian.)

It is proper that she should feel  
The full weight of your anger  
Since she cared so little for your mild  
kindness.

Spes.

(overhearing from her torture-rack.)

Oh, this is the kindness I yearn for!  
This, the mild lightness I desire!

- Antiochus. (to Sapientia.)  
Oh Sapientia, what are you speaking in  
whispers,  
With your eyes raised,  
Standing by the corpse of your dead child?
- Sapientia. I am calling on the One who bore us all  
To give Spes the strength and courage  
Fides had.
- Spes. Oh Mother, Mother, I already feel the power  
of your prayers!  
Even now they are being fulfilled.  
See, even as you pray, the panting  
torturers  
Raise their right hands high to deliver  
their blows,  
And yet I feel no touch of pain.
- Hadrian. If you are not hurt by the lashes,  
Harsher tortures will force you to give way.
- Spes. Oh bring them, bring them all in --  
Whatever cruel threat,  
Whatever deadly instrument you have  
invented!  
The crueler the punishment  
The more you will be confounded  
When you are beaten.
- Hadrian. Have her strung up high above the ground,  
And torn to pieces by instruments of  
torture.  
When her very bowels have been plucked out  
And her bones are all laid bare  
She will weaken at last  
And die, breaking limb by limb.
- Antiochus. That is an order worthy of our emperor  
And a proper enough revenge.
- Spes. You speak with the deceit of a fox,  
Antiochus,  
And a chameleon's cunning.
- Antiochus. Be quiet, wretched girl --  
At last your chattering is about to end.

Spes. No -- it will not happen the way you hope.  
Once more you and your prince will be  
humiliated.

Hadrian. (sniffing, in surprise.)

What is this strange perfume I suddenly  
perceive?  
What is this marvellous sweetness that  
I smell?

Spes. The pieces of my tortured flesh  
Are giving off this scent of Heaven  
As they fall off my battered body --  
Unwilling, you will be forced to admit  
That you cannot harm me by torture.

Hadrian. (embarrassed at the hardiness of the girl.)

Antiochus. Antiochus, what can I do now?

Antiochus. We must keep after her  
With new, more cruel tortures.

Hadrian. (to the soldiers, still on duty.)

Take a brazen cauldron --  
Fill it with oil, fat, wax and pitch,  
And place it on the fire.  
Have her tied up and throw her in.

Antiochus. If she is given over to Vulcan's force  
of fire,  
It may be she will not be able  
To get away again.

Spes. (overhearing their conversation.)

Yet Christ has this power and others too --  
He can change the nature of fire,  
So that it flows mild.

(She is taken offstage by the guard and  
Antiochus. After a while a sound is heard.)

Hadrian. (To Antiochus, as he rushes in.)

What is that sound, Antiochus,  
Like the crashing of flooding waters?

Antiochus. Help, help, my lord!

- Hadrian. What is happening to us?
- Antiochus. The fire boiled fiercely and, overflowing,  
Burst the cauldron open!  
The servants have all been destroyed --  
Yet that witch was clearly to be seen,  
    unhurt,  
In the middle of the wreckage.
- Hadrian. I admit defeat.
- Antiochus. Complete collapse.
- Hadrian. (to the soldiers.) Have them cut off her head.
- Antiochus. There is no other way  
To get the better of her.
- Spes. (brought on stage. Speaks to her little  
sister.)
- Oh Karitas, my dearest, my only sister now!  
    Don't be afraid of the tyrant's threats,  
    Don't tremble at torture's pain,  
    Try with all your might and strength of faith  
    To be like your sisters who have gone before  
        you  
    And who wait for you in the palace of Heaven.
- Karitas. (holds her hands out towards her sister.)
- Oh, I don't want to live in this life,  
    I don't want to stay on this earth any more,  
    Because in a little while I will be without  
        you!
- Spes. (comfortingly.)
- Don't be afraid, and try to reach the  
        prize ahead,  
    For we will not be long apart.  
    Quite soon we will be together in Heaven.
- Karitas. (with tears in her eyes.)
- Oh, I hope we will!
- Spes. (to her mother.)
- Be glad, my lovely, noble mother,  
    Be happy for me!

Don't let your love for your daughter  
Make you grieve at my pain.  
Think of the joy rather than the sorrow  
Of seeing me die for Christ.

Sapientia.

(crying and smiling to give her daughter courage.)

Yes, I am happy now.  
But later I will indeed rejoice,  
When I have seen your little sister  
Off to Heaven, ending her earthly life  
like you.  
After I have sent her on ahead  
I shall follow her, last of us all.

Spes.

The everlasting Trinity will surely  
Give back to you, dear mother, with  
undiminished love,  
The full number of your daughters.

Sapientia.

Be strong, my child.  
The executioner comes towards us --  
He is ready to strike.

Spes.

I look forward to the sword with joy!  
Only do Thou, O Christ, take up my soul,  
Cast off from the home of its body  
Because I proclaimed the Holy Name of  
Thy confession.

(She is taken offstage to be decapitated.)

Sapientia.

(to Karitas, who now looks very small and  
all alone, gently...)

Oh my dear Karitas, my favored child,  
Only remaining hope of those I bore from  
my womb,  
Do not disappoint your mother,  
Who expects you to win this last race.  
Do not think of your safety now,  
But try to reach that never-ending glory  
Which makes your sisters shine forth  
brightly,  
As they wear the crowns of their untouched  
virginity.

Karitas.

Help me, Mother, with your holy prayers --  
Pray that I may deserve to be happy with  
them.

- Sapientia. Just remember to be true to your faith  
to the end,  
And I am sure you will be rewarded  
With a place in Heaven's everlasting chorus.
- Hadrian. (angry now.)
- Karitas, I have had more than enough  
Of your sisters' insults  
And am thoroughly exasperated  
With the stream of their wordy arguments.  
I have no intention  
Of struggling with you any longer.  
You have a choice to make:  
If you comply with my wishes,  
I shall leave you all my earthly goods.  
But if you fight against my will,  
I shall hurt you, with bad things.
- Karitas. (very small, in a high voice.)
- I do love good things with all my heart,  
And I hate the bad.
- Hadrian. (smiling, surprised, becomes gentler and warmer.)
- Well, I am satisfied with that,  
And I will make things very easy for you.  
I only ask you to do one little thing  
In order to please me.
- Karitas. What is that?
- Hadrian. (making a concession, in view of her youth.)
- If you will say, "Great Diana," I shall not  
insist  
That you make any sacrifice beyond that.
- Karitas. I certainly will not say that.
- Hadrian. (surprised.)
- And why not?
- Karitas. Because I do not want to lie.  
My sisters and I had the same father and  
mother.  
We were brought up in the same religion,

And strengthened each other in the same  
firm faith,  
You must know that we have the same  
intentions,  
The same feelings, the same knowledge of  
what is right  
And that I will do nothing they did not do  
Or be in any way different.

Hadrian.

(beating his hand on the arm of the throne  
in helpless anger.)

Oh, what an insult and an injury  
That I should be so scorned by a mere  
little girl!

Karitas.

(proudly.)

Though I am very young, yet I know how to  
win  
In an argument with you.

Hadrian.

(to Antiochus, wearily and in disgust.)

Take her away, Antiochus,  
Have her hung on a rack and whipped.

Antiochus.

(wearily also.)

I fear lashings will be no use.

Hadrian.

If lashings should be useless,  
Then order a furnace to be heated  
For three days and three nights  
And have her thrown inside,  
Among its raging flames.

Karitas.

(scornfully.)

Oh what an impotent judge this is,  
Who does not believe he can control  
a child of eight  
Without the violence of a raging fire!

Hadrian.

(ignoring her.)

Go, Antiochus,  
And carry out my orders.

Karitas.

Even though he sets out to make ready  
your cruel tortures  
And fulfill your savage wishes

Yet he will not hurt me at all,  
Because lashes will not tear my small  
body apart,  
Nor will the flames be able  
To darken my hair or my clothes.

Hadrian. (grimly.) That remains to be seen.

Karitas. (sure of herself.)

Yes, that remains to be seen.

(Exeunt. Antiochus leads out Karitas;  
the guards follow.)

SCENE VI. (The same. The throne room, three days later. Antiochus enters, looking dejected.)

Hadrian. Antiochus, what is the matter with you?  
Why are you back looking so gloomy?

Antiochus. When you know the reason for my gloom,  
You will be gloomy too.

Hadrian. Tell me, Antiochus,  
Do not hide anything.

Antiochus. That little vixen you handed over to me  
for torture,  
That tiny child was lashed in my presence,  
And yet the lashes never so much as grazed  
The surface of that soft skin of hers.  
Then I had her thrown into the furnace,  
First forcing up the fierce flames to an  
angry red...  
(he stops, heaves a deep sigh, and shakes  
his head in disbelief.)

Hadrian. Why are you stopping? Tell me how it ended.

Antiochus. ...The flames burst forth --  
Five thousand of your men were utterly  
destroyed.

Hadrian. (white-faced and tense.)

And what happened to her?

Antiochus. (stalling for time, not wishing to tell the emperor.)

To Karitas?

Hadrian. (grim-faced.) Exactly!

Antiochus. Oh, she was running around  
Playing in the smoke as it glistened  
with tongues of fire --  
Quite untouched by it all,  
She was singing hymns in praise of her God.  
And those who looked very closely  
Said they saw three young men, all dressed  
in white,  
Walking about with her.

Hadrian. (dejected.)

I am ashamed to see her again  
Since I am so powerless to hurt her.

Antiochus. We can still destroy her with the sword.

Hadrian. Let that be done without delay.

SCENE VII. (Karitas is brought in, with Sapientia.  
Antiochus enters after them with the executioner.)

Antiochus. Uncover that stubborn, stiff little neck  
of yours, Karitas,  
And get ready for the executioner's blow.

Karitas. (cheerfully.)

This time I will not contradict your wishes--  
I will be glad to obey these orders.

Sapientia. Now, at last, the time has come to be  
thankful, my darling daughter.  
Now at last we can rejoice in Christ.  
I am no longer worried about you,  
For now I am sure of your victory.

Karitas. Give me a kiss, dear Mother,  
And entrust my soul to Christ  
As I go out of this world to meet Him.

- Sapientia. (praying the prayer for the dying.)
- May He who quickened your body within my womb,  
Receive your soul, divinely breathed into life.
- Karitas. Glory to you, Oh Christ, who call me to you  
Bearing the martyr's palm!
- (The executioner takes her off.)
- Sapientia. (crying, as the sound of a blow is heard offstage.)
- Farewell, goodbye, my sweetest child!  
When you have joined Christ in Heaven,  
Remember your mother.  
|| For you will soon be able to intercede  
for me,  
And plead for my eternal life as the  
protector  
Of the mother who bore you.
- SCENE VIII. (The place where the three girls were beheaded, some time later. Sapientia and other Christian women -- some, at least, are the very ones she converted when she came to Rome -- pay the last rites to the dead bodies of Fides, Spes and Karitas.)
- Sapientia. Come, noble ladies,  
Help me bury the bodies of my beloved daughters.
- First Woman. We shall anoint their poor little bodies  
With sweet-smelling unguents,  
And prepare them for solemn burial.
- Sapientia. You are wonderfully kind to take pity on me,  
And care so deeply for me and my dead daughters.
- Second Woman. We are happy to give you any comfort we can,  
For the love of God we all share.
- Sapientia. (moved.)
- I know that, dear friends, and I thank you.

First Women. Where do you want their burial-place to be?

Sapientia. At the third milestone from the city,  
If that is not too distant  
A place for you to come.

Second Woman. That is not too far.  
We are glad to follow the funeral  
As it bears the dead to their grave.

SCENE IX. (At the third milestone from Rome.  
A desolate, lonely place. Not a person, or a stone  
in sight.)

Sapientia. This is the place I meant.

First Woman. (looking around.)

Yes, this is a good place to bury their  
bodies  
And to preserve their sacred relics.

Sapientia. (on her knees, reciting the prayer for  
burial.)

I do entrust to you once more, hard earth,  
These little flowers, born of my own body.  
Take them up and cherish them in your  
earthly, bodily bosom,  
Until they bloom again in the glory of  
the Final Resurrection.  
And you, Oh Christ, meanwhile, fill their  
souls with splendors,  
And give rest and peace at last to their  
bones.

Women. Amen.

Sapientia. (raising herself up.)

I give you thanks for all your goodness,  
Because you have borne with me the loss  
of my own flesh.

First Woman. Do you want us to stay here with you?

Sapientia. No.

First Woman. Why not?

Sapientia. I do not want you to exhaust yourselves  
In order to help me.  
It is enough that you have stayed with me  
three nights.  
Go in peace, return to your homes  
Safely and in good health.

Second Woman. Will you come back with us?

Sapientia. No, not at all.

Second Woman. Then what do you intend to do?

Sapientia. I shall stay here, hoping my wishes will be  
fulfilled,  
And that I shall be granted what I most  
yearn for.

First Woman. What is it you yearn for?

Sapientia. One thing I want now --  
That when my prayer is ended,  
I shall be allowed to die in Christ.

First Woman. Then we must be ready  
To give your body burial too.

Sapientia. As you wish.

(Goes on her knees to pray -- the women  
standing around and behind her, as a chorus.)

Oh Adonay Emanuel,  
You whom the Divine Creator, the One who  
bore us all  
Brought forth before the beginning of Time,  
Whom a virgin mother bore within Time --  
You, who out of two natures miraculously  
make up one Christ,

Neither dividing by diversity the unity of  
a single Person,  
Nor mingling by Thy unity the diversity of  
Thy natures --

Let the happy serenity of the angels  
And the sweet harmony of the stars  
All rejoice and make music for love of you!  
Let all that is knowable in nature praise  
you in unison,  
And everything formed out of the matter of  
the elements,

Since you, who alone with the Father and  
the Holy Spirit are  
Form without Matter,  
According to the Father's Will, uniting with  
the Holy Spirit,  
Did not scorn to become a man, suffering  
the evils of humanity,  
Yet with your divinity untouched --  
And you were not above tasting even our  
death itself,  
And destroying it by Thy resurrection,  
So that in you not one of the faithful shall  
die,  
But each true believer should live forever  
after.  
I do not forget that you, true God and real  
man,  
Have made us all a promise --  
Whoever for your Holy Name left his earthly  
possessions,  
And the love of those most dear to him,  
Would receive from you a hundred-fold reward,  
And the prize of eternal life.  
Spurred on by the hope of this promise,  
I obeyed your command, freely giving up  
The children whom I bore.  
Now you must not delay to keep your promise.  
Free me quickly from the bonds of my body  
So that I may be happy, received by my  
daughters in Heaven --  
The daughters whose sacrifice I did not  
delay --  
I shall rejoice to hear them as they follow  
you,  
The Lamb of the Virgin,  
Singing a new and glorious song,  
And shall rejoice in their glory --  
Even though I cannot join them in their  
Virgins' song,  
Still I have deserved to join them in singing  
your praises forever!  
You who are not the Father,  
But who are the same substance as the Father,  
You who with the Father and with the Holy  
Spirit,  
Sole Lord of all the universe,  
Sole King of the heavens and of the earth  
and depths below,  
You rule through all the never-ending,  
ever-lasting  
Ages of eternity.

Women.

(bowing their heads.)

Take her up with you, Lord.  
Amen.

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