

THE WORKS OF HROTSVIT OF GANDERSHEIM

Facsimile of the first edition
(1501) with English translation
edited and introduced
by David H. Price



Women in Print

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H R O T S V I T
OF GANDERSHEIM

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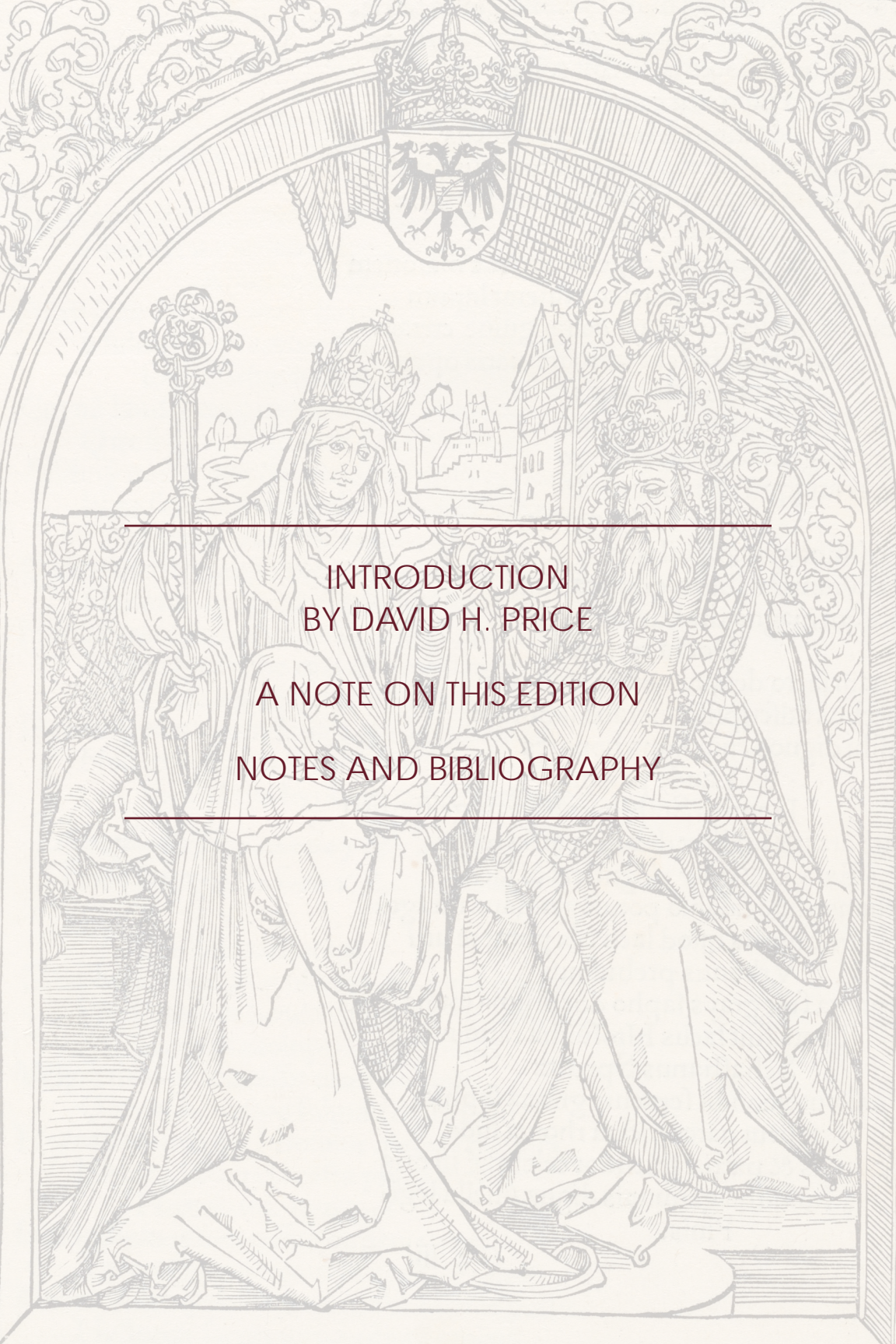
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INTRODUCTION
VERSE LEGENDS
THE PLAYS
THE DEEDS OF OTTO



INTRODUCTION
BY DAVID H. PRICE

A NOTE ON THIS EDITION
NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE RENAISSANCE OF
HROTSVIT OF GANDERSHEIM:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST
EDITION OF HER WORKS

Historical assessments of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim are liberally adorned with the word “first.” After all, she was the first major medieval woman author, the first German woman writer in print, the first post-classical playwright, as well as the first German to write a literary work on the Faust-theme, and she is sometimes said to have been the first woman historian.

These are landmarks to be sure. Yet Hrotsvit’s place in cultural history is even more significant than such an impressive number of firsts might indicate, for she has reemerged to become a living part of European literature, a singular phenomenon for a tenth-century author. She is not only the earliest writer, of either gender, to have a secure place in the German literary canon, but also the only author from her period whose literary works continue to inspire generation after generation of fascinated readers from disparate cultures. Although her writings did not circulate widely in the Middle Ages,¹ they became a sensation from the moment they were discovered in 1493. Her plays and poetic narratives began to attract widespread attention in the twentieth century and are now prominent fixtures in the American college curriculum. Her very name, which

she confidently and aptly translated as “the powerful sound from Gandersheim” (“clamor validus Gandeshemensis”),² portended her literary success.

Disappointingly few aspects of Hrotsvit’s life are known. Apart from comments scattered among the introductions to her poetry, there are no reliable documentary sources for reconstructing her biography. Occasionally, this has provided license for odd, sometimes sexist and even misogynist, suggestions, especially in older scholarship, about her life experiences.³ Most famously, a nineteenth-century scholar argued that Hrotsvit never actually existed but was a literary hoax perpetrated by Conrad Celtis, Johannes Reuchlin, and other early humanists.⁴ Although this dubious charge was taken seriously for many decades, it has been definitively (and repeatedly) debunked. In fact, intensive scholarship over the last two centuries has pieced together a secure, albeit sparse, account of the likely circumstance of her life. Her floruit dates—ca. 935 until ca. 973—have excellent evidence. She identifies herself as a canoness of Abbey of Gandersheim (Saxony, Germany) during the rule of Abbess Gerberga II (940-1001; abbess as of 959), a niece of Emperor Otto I. Hrotsvit also helpfully observes that her abbess is younger than she, thus allowing scholars to place her birth approximately in 935.⁵ Several of her works mention well-documented historical events, such as the papal coronation of Emperor Otto I in 962 and the coronation of Otto II, as co-emperor, in 967. Her final work, a brief epic

on the history of Abbey of Gandersheim, was completed while Otto I was still alive, thereby indicating that her literary activity, at least as far as the surviving works are concerned,⁶ ended before his death in 973.

Her vocation as canoness at Gandersheim makes it all but certain that she was of high birth. The Abbey of Gandersheim, founded in 852 by Duke Liudolf of Saxony (a great-grandfather of Otto I), was an elite establishment for women from the Saxon nobility. Moreover, in 947 Otto I invested the abbess with sovereignty over the territory of the Stift (foundation), subjecting her only to feudal obedience to the emperor. Similarly, by special agreement, the abbey was placed directly under papal jurisdiction and was therefore free from any German episcopal intervention. All of the abbesses had been prominent members of the imperial (originally, ducal) family. Moreover, as a canoness (as opposed to a nun), Hrotsvit would have enjoyed many liberties, such as the right to own property and to travel outside the walls of the convent. In tenth-century Germany, canonesses could also leave their convents to marry without incurring any social or religious impediments.

Her several modest protestations of underachievement notwithstanding, Hrotsvit enjoyed an excellent education.⁷ Her writings express desires for a deeper education and acknowledge particular sensitivity to the judgment of recognized scholars,⁸ but her mastery of Latin and her skillful

command of leonine hexameter⁹ and pentameter leave no room for doubting that she had devoted herself with notable success to academic study. A modern scholar speculated that her use of rhythmic Latin prose in her dramas could have developed under the influence of Rather of Verona, one of the more accomplished writers of the era.¹⁰ Hrotsvit, however, states that she had her earliest instruction from a certain Rikkardis (“my most learned teacher”¹¹) and subsequently from Gerberga, who, she claims, had studied “under the most learned” scholars,¹² presumably at St. Emmeran in Regensburg. It is even possible that Gerberga may have acquired a smattering of Greek.¹³ Hrotsvit was particularly well read in Latin literature—the Latin Bible, saints’ lives, classical authors (Virgil and Terence) as well as Christian writers of late antiquity (Jerome, Prudentius, Sedulius, and Boethius). Two of her dramas evince knowledge specifically of music (*The Conversion of the Harlot Thais*) and mathematics (*The Passion of the Virgin Saints, Faith, Hope and Charity*), although she could easily have acquired this interest through independent reading of works by Boethius. She also shows a scholarly (and religious) concern for the authenticity of her sources.¹⁴

Hrotsvit’s Works

Hrotsvit apparently arranged her own writings in roughly chronologically order and divided them into three books according to genre, as reflected in the principal

surviving manuscript of her works, Bavarian State Library Clm 14485 (a codex of the late tenth-century or early eleventh-century that was formerly housed in the Benedictine Abbey of St. Emmeran in Regensburg, Bavaria). In addition to an important preface and a dedicatory letter to Abbess Gerberga, Book One contains eight short epics, composed in hexameter or pentameter, on the life of Mary, Jesus, and six saints. Book Two, which begins with another dedicatory letter to Gerberga as well as an epistle to learned scholars who passed favorable judgment on her theatrical writings, encompasses Hrotsvit's most famous works, her six Christian dramas written as alternatives to the pagan comedies of Terence.¹⁵ And Book Three comprises two panegyric epics, one on the history of Emperor Otto I (*The Deeds of Otto*) and the other on the Convent of Gandersheim (*The Beginnings of the Convent of Gandersheim*). These two final works were explicitly commissioned, the most meaningful indication we have that Hrotsvit's earlier poetic efforts had not gone unappreciated. Like *The Deeds of Otto*, *The Beginnings of the Convent of Gandersheim* is a record of Ottonian political history, for it portrays the foundation and patronage of the abbey as meritorious acts of faith performed by Otto's ancestors. Unfortunately, nearly half of *The Deeds of Otto* has been lost. Moreover, the St. Emmeran codex, the most important manuscript for Hrotsvit's works and the basis for the 1501 first edition, does not include the text for *The Beginnings of the Convent of Gandersheim*. A medieval manuscript for the work was found in Gandersheim in

the sixteenth century and Johann Georg Leuckfeld used a modern copy of it for the first edition of 1709. The second edition, far superior to the first, was produced by the great German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in 1710, based on a separate modern copy of the medieval source. Leibniz's edition is important because, unfortunately, the medieval manuscript for *The Beginnings of the Convent of Gandersheim* has since disappeared.

Verse Legends

Hrotsvit began her literary career by reworking prose legends, all of which she considered “histories,” from various sources into metrical narratives. Seven of these short epics—*Mary*, *The Ascension*, *The Passion of St. Gongolf*, *The Fall and Conversion of Theophilus*, *St. Basilius*,¹⁶ *The Passion of St. Dionysius*, and *The Passion of St. Agnes*—are derived from written sources, while *The Passion of St. Pelagius* is based, according to Hrotsvit, on an eye-witness account from Spain. It is possible that she intended the finished works to be read after communal meals at the convent.¹⁷

Drawing on the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (which Hrotsvit acknowledges as an apocryphal source, although she originally thought it had been written by James, the brother of Jesus), *Mary* recounts stories about the life of the virgin and the childhood of Jesus.¹⁸ Although a separate

work (based on a Latin rendering of John Episcopus's Greek original), *The Ascension* extends the storyline of *Mary* by narrating Jesus's ascension, including Jesus's own reflections on the crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus also addresses Mary, describing her imminent heavenly ascent (i.e., the Assumption of the Virgin) in considerable detail.

The Passion of St. Gongolf, often prized as one of Hrotsvit's most captivating poems, is the first work in her oeuvre that addresses a subject directly relevant to Ottonian political ideology. The cult of St. Gongolf, who was a loyal and faithful vassal of Pepin, King of the Franks (and father of Charlemagne), was being widely promoted in Germany under Otto I. Hrotsvit fittingly uses the legend to portray a Christian ideal of political leadership as a model for the Ottonian empire,¹⁹ although she also emphasizes the theme of sexual corruption and purity as well.

Based on an oral, eye-witness source, *The Passion of St. Pelagius* represents the martyrdom of a devout Christian who was executed under the Saracens in Cordoba, Spain.²⁰ After twice eluding the sexual advances of Caliph Abdrahemen (Abd ar-Rahman III), the defiant Pelagius suffers a horrifyingly brutal martyrdom. Consistent with Hrotsvit's preoccupation with Christian faith and the ideal of virginity, the poem portrays Pelagius as a contemporary male analogy to the ancient female martyr St. Agnes. Like her, Pelagius wins the palm of martyrdom and the laurel

crown of virginity in heaven. Moreover, *Pelagius* is also intended to inflame anti-Saracen sentiment at a time when Otto I was engaged in tense diplomatic exchanges with Caliph Abd ar-Rahman.

The Fall and Conversion of Theophilus and *St. Basilius* introduce the Faust-theme—the pact with the devil—to German culture. In *Theophilus*, a disappointed *vicedominus* (a “vice-ruler,” now usually called a suffragan bishop) sells his soul to the devil to acquire political power. *St. Basilius*, which closely follows its source,²¹ recounts the same demonic stratagem deployed in a sordid attempt at sexual exploitation.

The Passion of St. Dionysius, the Famous Martyr (*Passio Sancti Dionisii Egregii Martiris*), which is based on the saint’s life by Hilduin of St. Denis, relates the sanctity and martyrdom of the apostolic saint who, after being converted by Paul, brought Christianity to Gaul at the urging of Pope Clement I. As a missionary martyr, Dionysius was highly relevant to the Ottonians, who were supporting the expansion of Christianity in Scandinavia, Pomerania, Poland, and Hungary,²² and there is considerable evidence that the Ottonian court was promoting his cult. King Henry I, Otto I’s father, had even received a precious relic of St. Denis upon entering the city of Paris (the center of St. Dionysius/St. Denis’s cult).

In *The Passion of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr* (*Passio Sanctae Agnetis Virginis et Martiris*), the story of one of the most prominent saints in the Christian tradition, Hrotsvit focuses on the young girl's refusal to marry the son of a Roman prefect and the subsequent unsuccessful attempt to have her raped in a Roman brothel. At first immune to many efforts to harm and humiliate her, Agnes finally suffers martyrdom in a cruel execution, whereupon her soul ascends to heaven to receive the crown of virginity and the palm of martyrdom. Hrotsvit closely followed her prose source, the Pseudo-Ambrose account of Agnes, and also probably relied on Prudentius's *Peristephanon* (*Crowns of Martyrdom*) for several details.²³

The Dramas

Hrotsvit's six dramas are now her best-known works, but also the most mysterious because there is no evidence that plays were being produced anywhere in tenth-century Europe. Although there is much room for debating whether or not Hrotsvit could have intended them for production, a consensus has formed that the plays are highly performable. In modern times, several of them have enjoyed production in schools and colleges, occasionally even in professional theaters and as radio plays. In 1914, *Paphnutius* (now frequently titled *The Conversion of the Harlot Thais*) appeared at the Savoy Theatre in London with the prominent actress Ellen Terry cast in the leading role.²⁴ Hrotsvit's

extensive firsthand knowledge of the Roman playwright Terence probably inspired her to conceptualize hagiographic dramas, for she herself asserted that her works were designed to offer a morally uplifting alternative to Terence:

There are many Catholics, and we cannot entirely acquit ourselves of the charge, who, attracted by the polished elegance, prefer the vanity of pagan books to the usefulness of the holy scriptures. There are others who, although they are deeply attached to the sacred writings and have no liking for most pagan productions, make an exception in favor of the fictions of Terence, and, fascinated by the charm of the manner, are corrupted by the wickedness of the matter. Wherefore I, the strong voice of Gandersheim, have not hesitated to imitate in my writings a poet whose works are so widely read, my object being to glorify, within the limits of my poor talent, the laudable chastity of Christian virgins in that same form of composition that has been used to describe the shameless acts of licentious women.²⁵

Moreover, according to a reliable source, Archbishop Bruno of Cologne, the emperor's brother and a leading patron of the so-called "Ottonian Renaissance" (a revival of learning in the tenth century), had a penchant for ancient dramatic texts, which may have been read aloud at his court.²⁶ It is possible that Hrotsvit as a prominent canoness at Gandersheim had contact with Bruno's court, sometimes described as the most culturally advanced center of the time. Perhaps she was referring to Bruno's court in the introductory letter to her dramas, when she explained that she had sent her plays (apparently the first four) to learned men for evaluation.²⁷

It has also been argued that the dramatic structure of the sources, including, most importantly, liberal use of direct discourse,²⁸ may have induced her to compose plays. On balance, it is probably best to accept Hrotsvit's own account of her motivation as a desire to replace the scurrilous comedies of Terence, which were then held in high academic regard because of their elegant Latinity.

Like the poetic legends, the plays address the themes of virginity and sexual discipline for both men and women. As part of this effort, Hrotsvit vividly portrays sexual desire as a threat to the godly life and often as a violent manifestation of political or religious oppression. The corporeal focus explicit in her exploration of the sins of sexual violence and excess also informs her portrayals of penance, reconciliation, and salvation. It is the intact body that appears as the prevailing symbol of salvation, and the beauty of the body is often an indication of spiritual purity.

Hrotsvit's first play, *The Conversion of Gallicanus*, features one of her least violent plots. Gallicanus, a pagan and a key general of Constantine, wants to marry the emperor's daughter, Constantia, who has, however, vowed to live a chaste Christian life. Through various machinations, including a battlefield intervention by Constantia's chamberlains (two Christians named Paul and John), Gallicanus undergoes a change of heart,

renounces his claim to Constantia's hand, embraces Christianity, and vows to lead a spiritual life of sexual abstinence. Although the threat of coercion and martyrdom does not yet develop, the first part of the drama does exemplify Hrotsvit's tendency to explore sexual oppression in the context of political authority. Nonetheless, in a loosely connected coda to the play, Gallicanus as well as the chamberlains Paul and John suffer martyrdom under Emperor Julian the Apostate.

The Passion of the Virgin Saints, Agape, Chionia, and Irena (formerly titled *Dulcitus*), set during the Diocletian persecutions, represents the sexual defiance and strength of Christian women against the violence of pagan rulers. Three Christian girls, whose names mean love, snowy (suggesting purity), and peace, refuse marriage to aristocratic Romans and scoff at the emperor's command to worship Roman gods. Their torment features a memorable scene (adopted from Hrotsvit's source, the *Life of St. Anastasia*), in which a Roman soldier named Dulcitus is foiled as he attempts to rape the girls. Instead, he has a burlesque encounter with kitchenware: "Now he is pressing the saucepans to his bosom, now he is caressing the pots and pans, giving them soft kisses."²⁹

Like several of Hrotsvit's narrative poems, *The Resurrection of Drusiana and Calimachus* presents ideals for both men and women. In this play (the plot of which

is based on a vignette in the apocryphal *Acts of John*), a certain Andronicus lives in a chaste marriage with his wife Drusiana in order to devote himself to Christian spirituality and purity. This idyll is interrupted by Calimachus's determination to "use all his skill and strength to trap" Drusiana, a threat the woman takes so seriously that she prays for death as her only means of escape. When her prayer is granted, the depravity of Calimachus only worsens as he attempts to violate Drusiana's immaculate corpse, an act so horrifying that, apparently through the agency of God, a serpent kills him on the spot. Nonetheless, the apostle John brings both Drusiana and Calimachus back to life, giving the egregious sinner the chance to embrace Christianity and lead an ascetic life of penance.

The Fall and Conversion of Mary, Niece of the Hermit Abraham is a story of a woman's life of prostitution, followed by her redemptive embrace of abstinence and penance. Hrotsvit vividly and unabashedly portrays Mary, an orphaned recluse under the care of her uncle Abraham, as she succumbs to a man's blandishments and becomes a prostitute. At the core of the play is some of Hrotsvit's most vigorous writing, a set of scenes in which the hermit Abraham, disguised as a lover/client, gains entrance to the brothel and leads Mary back to a life of penance. Similarly, *The Conversion of the Harlot Thais* (sometimes titled *Paphnutius* after the name of the male lead) dramatizes the conversion of a prostitute brought back to a godly life by

a hermit disguised as a lover/client. The most renowned hermit of the Christian tradition, St. Anthony of Egypt, appears in the play. According to the hermit St. Paul's vision, Thais's penance and her redemption appear to be at least as great as the eremitic piety of St. Anthony.

In *The Passion of the Virgin Saints, Faith, Hope and Charity* (often called *Sapientia*, after the name of the girls' mother), Emperor Hadrian tries to force a mother and three daughters to worship the pagan gods on the grounds that uniform religious practice will enhance social stability in the Roman Empire. The Christians' refusal to do so leads to unusually gruesome torments. For example, Faith endures scourging, mutilation of her breasts, burning, and boiling in pitch, before she is beheaded. As in *The Passion of the Virgin Saints, Agape, Chionia, and Irena*, this play depicts the superiority of Christianity over violent, tyrannical imperial authority,³⁰ as well as the moral strength of women and the quasi-supernatural power of virginity.

The Epics

The historical epics, *Deeds of the Emperor Otto* and *Beginnings of the Convent of Gandersheim*, reflect the same conception of history that informs the poetic legends and dramas. Hrotsvit presents the saints' lives, in both narrative and dramatic form, as actual history in which miracles and divine interventions are real events. Similarly, Hrotsvit

narrates the history of the Ottonian dynasty as a series of divine actions. The grand opening of the epic asserts that “the king of kings, who alone rules forever, by his own power, changing the fortunes of all kings, decreed that the distinguished realm of the Franks (i.e., the Carolingian empire) be transferred to the famous race of the Saxons (i.e., the Ottonian empire).”³¹ Consequently, Hrotsvit’s narration mingles actual political events with divine signs and miracles, all of which possess the same certitude of authenticity and reality for her. Moreover, Otto’s career advances through divine intervention, and forces opposed to Otto are decried as satanic threats to Christian salvation. The emperor emerges as the Saxon reincarnation of the biblical King David: “the holy hand of God ... so often honors him with splendid triumphs that one may believe that even now it is the faithful King David, duly resplendent with ancient triumphs, who is seated on the throne.”³² Hrotsvit also unambiguously depicts imperial authority as being superior to papal sovereignty: “Prompted by the sense of righteous zeal, he (Otto) caused the supreme pontiff, who was perpetrating certain irregular acts and disdainful to heed his frequent admonitions, to be deprived of the dignity of the chair of the apostle, adjudging another to be worthy of the name of the ruler.”³³ It is understandable that in the first printed edition Conrad Celtis labeled this work a panegyric.

In *Beginnings of the Convent of Gandersheim*, divine will also works through the agency of the Ottonians. The

progenitors of the dynasty, Duke Liudolf and Duchess Oda, experienced a revelation from St. John the Baptist that the monastery was to be established on the Ganda River: “I am the John who was deemed worthy to baptize Christ with the flowing waters. Since you have frequently revered me, I announce that your famous progeny will establish a cloister for saintly maidens and a triumphant peace for his realm, provided his piety remain steadfast. Hence, your posterity at some time in future ages will come to such a pinnacle of fame that no sovereign among earthly rulers will avail to be a rival thereto in right of power.”³⁴ Liudolf arranged for special papal privileges for the monastery, granting the community independence from episcopal control, and also unusual religious authority, including the distinction of becoming a repository of some relics from St. Peter and St. Paul, a gift bestowed by Pope Sergius on the new sanctuary.³⁵ Hrotsvit stresses the leading roles secular women played in securing and expanding political sovereignty for the women of Gandersheim. In particular, Queen Oda was keen to increase the territorial endowment of the abbey throughout her long life. Because abbesses governed *ex officio*, medieval Gandersheim developed as a sovereign territory ruled by women and, primarily, for women.

The Discovery of Hrotsvit by Conrad Celtis

Conrad Celtis (1459-1508) discovered Hrotsvit’s writings in the Benedictine Abbey of St. Emmeran in 1493,

while scouring monasteries and convents all over Germany in search of manuscripts of lost classical texts in order to “have them published by the printing press, the invention of our people, as a blessing for our age.”³⁶ The professed aim of Celtis’s lifework was to promote introduction of the humanities and Renaissance aesthetics—the artistic orientation of high culture to classical antiquity—at German universities and courts. By the time he discovered Hrotsvit, Celtis had already made a name for himself as a poet of the new style, an achievement that resulted in his 1487 coronation as the first German poet laureate. Eventually, he would have a distinguished career as an activist professor of the humanities at the universities of Ingolstadt and Vienna, and would produce some of the most notable poetry of the early German Renaissance: his four books of erotic elegies titled *Amores* (1502)³⁷ and a posthumous volume of *Odes* (1513). His poetry is still read by students of the Northern Renaissance. His writings aimed, often explicitly, to combine what we might call “cultural patriotism,” a proud reverence for German life and tradition, with imitation of ancient Latin (or Italian Renaissance) styles, even if he often expressed sharp criticism of his native culture.

From the moment he held the St. Emmeran manuscript in his hands, Celtis knew he had scored a major find: “I discovered a most ancient codex written in a quasi-Gothic script and in the hand of a woman under the title and inscription of a virgin, a nun from Germany, of Saxon origin. ... It is

astonishing to report how stunned and overjoyed I was as I read, six hundred years later, the German woman speaking Latin prose and poetry.”³⁸ He immediately set out to put these forgotten writings of an unknown woman in print and to do so in a lavishly designed production worthy of a major classical author. While Celtis’s initial goal was to demonstrate that Germany, like Italy, had a distinguished history of Latin literature, he also embraced the unexpected opportunity to acclaim the cultural achievements of women from Germany. To that end, he portrayed Hrotsvit in the preface to the first edition as part of the distinguished lineage of illustrious women from antiquity and the Bible, proudly asserting as well that women of his own age continue to aspire to greatness in the arts:

It would take a long time, most illustrious prince (i.e., Friedrich the Wise, Duke of Saxony), if I were to recount all the virtues of German women, either those taken away from our presence or those still living. Nor do I think the greatness of Sappho, Cloelia, or St. Jerome’s Eustochium and Paulina, or the Jews’ Ruth, Judith, and Esther superior to the German woman Anna, most learned in every instrument, or the Frisian Agnula, a marvel for her command of Sapphic poetry, or our own Caritas, sister of my host Willibald Pirckheimer, facile and spontaneous in the Roman language and in epistolary composition. No sex and age, throughout the world, is helpless and incapable of attaining virtue and erudition, if ability, industry, education and instruction are ready at hand.³⁹

The last named contemporary, Caritas Pirckheimer (1467-1532), was abbess of St. Clare’s convent in Nuremberg and

an accomplished Latin stylist, some of whose writings still survive. She was also the dedicatee of Albrecht Dürer's *Life of the Virgin* (1511),⁴⁰ another major monument of early Renaissance book design. Unfortunately, nothing is known of the other two early modern women artists—Anna and Agnula—whom Celtis admired so fervently.⁴¹

Although a few additional manuscripts have been found (most importantly, a twelfth-century copy of four of the plays⁴²), the manuscript Celtis uncovered, now known as Bavarian State Library Clm 14495, still remains the most important textual source by far. The poet-professor was permitted to borrow the manuscript (i.e., remove it from the monastery) until he completed the publication project.⁴³ Celtis, in turn, allowed the texts to circulate among a few humanist colleagues (one of whom commissioned a manuscript copy) before publishing them in the sumptuous edition of 1501. The first edition, presented as a celebration of German cultural achievement, was dedicated to Elector Friedrich the Wise of Saxony, one of the most powerful princes in Germany and also a leading patron of the humanist movement.

Despite his reverence for Hrotsvit's works, Celtis handled the manuscript roughly. As was common in the Renaissance, he marked up the medieval manuscript itself (instead of producing a fair copy) to guide the printers. Therefore, he added titles, inserted emendations, even

rubbed out some of the text as he altered it for the typesetters. Moreover, he rearranged the contents of the manuscript by placing the plays (which he labeled “*Comoediae*”) before the poetic legends (which he called “*Hystoriae*”), thereby indicating his judgment that the dramas were Hrotsvit’s signature accomplishment. In fact, Hrotsvit could now be claimed as the initiator of the Renaissance phenomenon of the “Christian Terence,” the imitation of Terentian dramaturgy in a Christian vein. Celtis also adopted new titles for most of the plays, which tend to be short and catchy, but sometimes clearly inappropriate.

Celtis introduced emendations as well, some of which are fine corrections of obvious defects in the manuscript. Others, however, reveal a misunderstanding of Hrotsvit’s prosody (metrical style). For instance, Hrotsvit frequently allows hiatus in her verses (a failure to observe an elision of two syllables at the end and beginning of words), something that the classically oriented Celtis could not abide. The Renaissance poet therefore rewrote several phrases so as to remove the hiatus. An example of this occurs in a dedicatory poem to Abbess Gerberga, where he inserted a “*hic*” to bring the verse into conformity with classical prosody.⁴⁴ While the meaning of the line remains much the same, Celtis’s intervention also ruins the poetic homoioteleuton (“same ending,” or weak rhyme), which is a defining characteristic of Hrotsvit’s hexameters.

The First Edition:
The First Woman in Print from Germany

Some mystery shrouds the production of the first edition of Hrotsvit's works. As indicated both in a lavish prefatory letter and in a full-page woodcut by Albrecht Dürer (fol. a1^v), the book was dedicated to Duke Friedrich the Wise of Saxony. Friedrich, a major supporter of the humanist movement in Germany, apparently subsidized the printing costs and also helped secure a copyright patent of ten years for Hrotsvit's works.⁴⁵ Apparently, Celtis also received patronage from Willibald Pirckheimer, a wealthy and learned Nuremberg patrician, for the dedicatory letter also indicates that Celtis was living in Pirckheimer's house while working on the project. It is not known who the actual printer was. Scholars have suggested several prominent Nuremberg printers as possibilities, including Hieronymus Hölzel, Friedrich Peypus, and even Anton Koberger. Mainly on the basis of a mysterious printer's mark that features the initials "A" and "P," a certain "Anthoni von Wallis, called Peypus" has been proposed, but this attribution is weak because, as far as is known, Anthoni von Wallis was merely a typesetter for Anton Koberger and did not publish works separately.⁴⁶ The AP printer's mark appears in only one other book, and it, too, is important: the 1502 Nuremberg printing of Celtis's landmark *Amores*, the first edition of the most important poetry of the early Renaissance movement in Germany. The colophons for these two imprints

suggest that an entity calling itself the “sodalitas Celtica” (the Celtis literary sodality) was functioning as publisher. The Nuremberg “Celtis sodality” would evolve by 1519 into the “sodalitas Martiniana” (i.e., Martin’s sodality), a group of intellectuals who supported Martin Luther.

In any event, this elite sodality contributed some fifteen laudatory epigrams as a preface to the first edition, expressing the enthusiastic reception Hrotsvit found in sixteenth-century Germany.⁴⁷ Inspired by Celtis’s classicism, Johannes von Dalberg (1455-1503), bishop of Worms and leader of the University of Heidelberg, certainly set the tone for the Renaissance reception of Hrotsvit by celebrating her from the perspective of ancient Roman literature: “While the glory of the stage belongs to Terence, the lyre to Horace and wars (i.e., epic) to Virgil, learned Hrotsvit (“Hrosuita docta”) wears a triple crown!”⁴⁸ The Nuremberg mathematician Johannes Werner (1466-1522) portrayed Hrotsvit’s accomplishment in cultural patriotic terms: “Hrotsvit is now the greatest glory of the German lands, learned in composing Latin meters in songs. She writes prose with equal refinement, imitating the unrestrained comic plots of Terence.”⁴⁹ In another poem, this one composed ostentatiously in Greek, Willibald Pirckheimer (1470-1530) placed Hrotsvit in a similarly classical, but also emphatically matrilineal pedigree: “If Sappho is the tenth of sweet-singing Muses, Hrotsvit must be named eleventh of the Heliconian goddesses.”⁵⁰ Johannes Stabius, professor

of mathematics at the University of Ingolstadt (1448-1503), explicitly celebrated both her gender and ethnicity in comparison to male writers of antiquity: “Although our native land is said to be barbarous without Greek or Latin learning, nevertheless a German heroine (“virago”), Hrotsvit, was able to do with her pen what the men of Rome could but rarely do.”⁵¹

The mystery of the printer’s identity is all the more unfortunate because the *Works of Hrotsvit* is among the first books produced in the North to attempt Renaissance stylistic elements. Although clearly inspired by the medieval manuscript’s use of elaborate initial capitals for each new line of poetry, the typographer created Renaissance-looking pages mainly by adopting an elegant but simple antiqua font, distinguished in particular by the running heads and subtitles set in solid capitals to evoke ancient Roman lettering inscribed in stone monuments. Each page is set with ample wide margins all around and with generous spacing between lines. The kerning (spacing between letters) is also generous but not too loose, except that, as the design’s most distinctive feature, a long space follows the capital initial for every line of verse. This uniform feature, which is clearly derived from the St. Emmeran manuscript, makes the typography somewhat disjointed, self-consciously ostentatious, and even distracts to a degree from the meaning of the words. In any event, the layout was not reused in the 1502 printing of Celtis’s *Amores*.

Each page of the Hrotsvit imprint is designed to have forty-four lines, some of which are left blank in order to set off units of text. Blank spaces are also left for the insertion of calligraphic initials, a common characteristic of early printed books, which were frequently designed to be a hybrid of print and manuscript production. The composers struggled somewhat with the alignment of the type, often setting the letters roughly with bumpy baselines. Variants in the surviving copies also indicate that many textual corrections were undertaken during the print run.⁵² The imprint encompasses eighty-two small folio leaves, giving the volume a modest but substantial heft.

There is general agreement that Albrecht Dürer (1471-1522), the premier artist of the German Renaissance, designed two important, albeit unsigned, woodcuts for the prefaces to the first edition. The remaining six woodcuts, one for the beginning of each of Hrotsvit's plays, have usually been attributed to Dürer's assistant Hans Süß von Kulmbach (ca. 1480-ca.1522).⁵³ It is not surprising that Dürer and his workshop undertook this project since the artist had long-standing associations with Celtis and other people involved in producing the imprint, such as Elector Friedrich of Saxony and, above all, Willibald Pirckheimer (the latter being Dürer's closest friend). In fact, Celtis had composed several poems to honor Dürer, one of which hailed the young artist as the re-embodiment of classical Greek art: "You are the new Phidias in our midst, and the

new Apelles.”⁵⁴ For his part, Dürer designed a woodcut for a broadside printing of Celtis’s Sapphic ode petitioning St. Sebald (ca. 1494), patron saint of Nuremberg, and would soon contribute two further woodcuts (one of them signed) to the imprint of Celtis’s *Amores* (1502). After Celtis’s death on 1 February 1508 (a victim of the earliest known European syphilis epidemic), Dürer depicted the poet-professor next to himself in the center of *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand* (1508), a painting commissioned by Friedrich the Wise.⁵⁵

Moreover, the Hrotsvit volume exemplifies the growing significance of the print industry for visual artists. Dürer was among the first major artists in history to take up printed art as a primary vocation. Prior to the Hrotsvit volume, he contributed many woodcut designs to Sebastian Brant’s *Ship of Fools* (first edition, 1494), an immense publishing success. His own publication of *The Apocalypse* (*The Book of Revelation* in separate Latin and German editions, 1498) with fifteen full-page woodcut illustrations made Dürer famous throughout Europe, arguably the first artist to achieve international renown primarily on the basis of an oeuvre of printed art.⁵⁶

The six woodcuts (from five blocks; one image repeated) assigned to Dürer’s workshop evince remarkable sensitivity to the plays they illustrate, a probable indication that Celtis or another well-informed scholar consulted with the artists. Taken as a whole, these

designs are less detailed and less ambitious than Dürer's and a few of them are technically somewhat deficient. Nonetheless, they are important achievements, especially the illustration for *Gallicanus* (fol. a6^r), which, more than the others, evokes the simplicity and directness of Italian designs from the 1490s (as, for example, in the Aldine masterpiece, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* of 1499). In some of the woodcuts, the artist captured Hrotsvit's poetic contrast of the immaculate body of the female martyr and the monstrosity of tyrannous pagan oppressors, be they Roman or Saracen. These pictures also tell us something important about the initial Renaissance reception of Hrotsvit: the poems devoted to pagan persecution of Christians acquired a new immediacy to European Christians around 1500 as they fearfully faced the Ottoman advance in the Balkans. As in Dürer's *Apocalypse*, the woodcuts represent pagan tyrants in Turkish attire (see the illustrations to *The Passion of the Virgin Saints, Agape, Chionia, and Irena*, fol. a10^r, and *The Passion of the Virgin Saints, Faith, Hope and Charity*, fol. c5^v). The illustration for *The Fall and Conversion of Mary, Niece of the Hermit Abraham* (fol. b5^v), which is repeated at the beginning of *The Conversion of the Harlot Thais* (fol. c1^r), is an arresting representation of the play's subject. The image is structured as a double binary opposition: Mary appears as penitent anchorite and courtesan, while the hermit Abraham is juxtaposed to an elegant male paramour (perhaps, Abraham in

disguise). Like the play, the woodcut expresses the perilous ease of lapsing into sins of the flesh as well as the rigors of penitential asceticism.

The two woodcuts Dürer contributed are complementary images of book presentations. In the first image (fol. a1^v), Celtis presents the newly printed *Works of Hrotsvit* to Elector Friedrich of Saxony, while the second one (fol. a4^v) depicts an imagined scene of Hrotsvit offering her codex to Emperor Otto I. These compositions are also closely related to a woodcut Dürer made for Celtis's *Amores*: a picture of Celtis presenting his freshly printed volume of love poems to Emperor Maximilian I. In all of these works, the book is the icon of culture and also the mediation between art and politics. In this respect, the images appropriately reflect the keen political interest of both Celtis and Hrotsvit. Images of books also appear frequently as icons in Dürer's art, as for example in his recent *Apocalypse (Book of Revelation)*.

The two woodcuts in the *Works of Hrotsvit* exemplify one of Dürer's recent stylistic advances: his combination of the abstract linearity (two-dimensional surface patterns) of the woodcut with an effective representation of space and volume. The image of Celtis is also notable for attempting accurate portraiture in the woodcut medium. Judging from other surviving images of Celtis, this rendering is highly accurate, although the portrait of Friedrich the Wise is much less distinct. The three other participants in the ceremony

have highly individualized features, but, alas, cannot be identified definitively.⁵⁷ As far as the visual glorification of Celtis goes, we should note the significance of the beret in his hand adorned with the laurel crown of the poet laureate. Dürer's visual tribute to Celtis and Hrotsvit, moreover, accords with Celtis's oft-expressed view of humanist art as a medium of political representation and therefore a crucial means for promoting political-cultural reform.⁵⁸

In the second woodcut (fol. a4^v), images of Hrotsvit, Abbess Gerberga, and Emperor Otto I appear as the embodiment of politics and culture.⁵⁹ While Hrotsvit's posture of kneeling evokes the customary modesty of her introductory letters and poems, all else in the image connotes strength and force. Yet, even the kneeling may indicate a certain empowerment, for it connects Hrotsvit to the virgin Mary, especially the iconography of the virgin's presentation of Christ in the temple.⁶⁰ The first woodcut expresses a contrapuntal harmony between the poetic laurel crown (in Celtis's hand) and the regal hat (on Friedrich the Wise), whereas this composition portrays a trinitarian unity of three imperial crowns—on Otto, Gerberga, and suspended over Hrotsvit at the keystone of the arch above the double eagle of the Holy Roman Empire. As far as the portrayal of Hrotsvit is concerned, we should notice that she appears in a dramatic full-profile pose, then fashionable in Italian Renaissance portraiture, and that Dürer rendered her habit in such

a way that we can see the three-dimensional undulation of classical drapery beginning to emerge from the schematic folds typical of late-medieval woodcuts. This may reflect Dürer's experimentation with ways to construct a classical statuesque body for Christian themes, a goal he finally realized in his epochal work of Christian humanism, *The Fall of Humanity* (engraving 1504). But the woodcut of Hrotsvit is a more direct prelude to the Christian humanism of Dürer's masterpiece *The Life of the Virgin*, a book of some twenty full-page woodcuts and humanist elegies that he published in 1511. In any event, the Hrotsvit woodcut is an early attempt to exploit Renaissance Christian humanism for the ideology of imperial authority.

Hrotsvit's rich contributions to Latin literature made her a sensation to German humanists. Quite apart from the literary success of her works, her formulation of a Christian-classical poetics, especially as articulated in her programmatic goal of Christianizing Terence, confirmed the foundational aspirations of Northern humanism. As evident in the responses of Celtis and Dürer, we can observe that Hrotsvit's embrace of an ideology of German empire (a topic overlooked in modern reception) made her writings particularly relevant to German Renaissance writers. Her glorification of Ottonian imperial politics as part of the Christian *Heilsgeschichte* (story of salvation) in expressive Latin verses enabled Celtis and Dürer to

portray her and her works as the ideal result of an intersection of Christianity, empire, and classical culture. Of course, today Hrotsvit remains a literary sensation for a different reason—her centrality to feminist history and criticism. The 1501 *Works of Hrotsvit* also amply demonstrates that feminist issues (including questions of gender, sexuality, and the status of an intellectual woman writer) informed the Renaissance reception, even if, for the most part, the scholars and artists responsible for the first edition represented artistic achievement from the perspective of classical literary culture. However narrow and problematic such an appreciation may be, the first edition nonetheless forms the tentative beginning of the analysis of gender in Hrotsvit's works.

David H. Price

A Note on this Edition and the Translations

This book comprises a digital facsimile of the 1501 printing of Hrotsvit's *Opera*, edited by Conrad Celtis, from the Rare Book & Manuscript Library at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, as well as English translations of Hrotsvit's legends, plays, and the epic history, *The Deeds of Otto*. The translations of the legends are by Gonsalva M. Wiegand (1936), edited and revised by David H. Price. *The Deeds of Otto* was translated by Mary Bernadine Bergman (1943) and edited here with minor changes. The translations of the plays are based on Christabel Marshall's renditions of 1923, but have been extensively revised by David H. Price. The revision attempts to make Marshall's renderings more accurate and complete.

The translations follow the best modern editions rather than the 1501 edition by Celtis, who introduced several errors and unsupportable emendations. The digital facsimile of the 1501 imprint will enable readers to get a sense of this early important effort to put a woman's writings in print as well the initial reception of Hrotsvit in the early modern print culture. The translations are intended as a useful resource for contemporary readers and students of Hrotsvit and not as an exact replication of the original imprint. The translations are also arranged according to the order of the original manuscript of the works (1. Legends, 2. Plays, 3. Epics) and do not follow Celtis's rearrangement (1. Plays, 2. Legends, 3. Epic).

Notes

1. See Tino Licht, "Hrotsvitspuren in ottonischer Dichtung (nebst einem neuen Hrotsvitgedicht)," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 43 (2008), pp. 347-53, on knowledge of Hrotsvit's works in the Middle Ages.
2. Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Walter Berschin (Munich and Leipzig: Saur, 2001), p. 132, l. 8; and *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. a5^r. Berschin's work is now the standard critical edition of the Latin text. This introduction provides references to both Berschin's edition and the 1501 edition by Conrad Celtis, reproduced here in digital facsimile.
3. Sexism has crept into several modern studies of Hrotsvit as well. For example, Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), p. 83 (etc.), repeatedly labels her style "literary coquetry."
4. That was the groundless thesis of Joseph von Aschbach, "Roswitha und Conrad Celtis," *Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-Historischen Klasse der Wissenschaften* 56 (1867), pp. 3-62.
5. See Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 2, ll. 9-10: "Quę aetate minor"; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. d2^r.
6. See Rädle, "Hrotsvit von Gandersheim," pp. 207-8, for the evidence that she may have written poetic lives of two canonized popes, St. Anastasius and St. Innocent.
7. A few scholars have tried unconvincingly to argue that her works evince only a meager education. See, for example, Rädle, "Hrotsvit von Gandersheim," p. 197.
8. See the "Epistola," which serves as a second preface to Book Two, in Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, pp. 134-5. Celtis switched the order of Books One and Two in his edition in order to emphasize the dramas. The letter is printed in *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fols. a5^r-a5^v.

9. Hrotsvit's most common verse form is leonine hexameter, a medieval form of dactylic hexameter. A leonine hexameter is a verse of six feet consisting of spondees and dactyls with the syllable of the caesura rhyming with the final syllable. The rhymes are actually "near rhymes" ("homoioteleuton," i.e., "same ending") and easy to achieve because of Latin inflections.

10. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, pp. 56 ff.

11. Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 2, ll. 7 ff.; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. d2^r.

12. See Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 2, ll. 11 ff.; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. d2^r.

13. Bert Nagel, *Hrotsvit von Gandersheim* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1965), p. 43.

14. See the preface to Book One (Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 1, ll. 10 ff.; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. d2^r) and the title of *Maria* (quoted below).

15. The principal medieval manuscript, Bavarian State Library, Clm 14485, fols. 130^r-130^v, contains twelve leonine "tituli" apparently intended for images illustrating the Book of Revelation. Scholars are divided over the issue of Hrotsvit's authorship for these lines.

16. The full title of this narrative is: *The History of the Conversion of the Desperate Young Servant of Proterius by St. Basilus*.

17. The evidence for this is in the conclusion of Hrotsvit's *Theophilus* (Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 93, ll. 448-55; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. h8^r). Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, p. 293 (note 2), expresses uncertainty about the meaning of Hrotsvit's table blessing. There is a second dedication to Gerberga after this conclusion to *Theophilus*, perhaps an indication that Hrotsvit composed the final three legends at a later date.

18. The full title in the manuscript is: *Historia nativitatis laudabilisque*

conversationis intactae dei geneticis, quam scriptam repperi sub nomine Sancti Iacobi Fratris Domini (The History of the Nativity and the Praiseworthy Conversation of the Virgin Mother of God, Which I Found Written under the Name of James, the Brother of the Lord). See *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. d3^r.

19. See Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP, 2006), p. 66.

20. The full title according to the manuscript is: *Passio Sancti Pelagii preciosissimi martiris, qui nostris temporibus in Corduba martirio est coronatus (The Passion of St. Pelagius, the Most Precious Martyr, Who in Our Times, at Cordova, Was Crowned with Martyrdom)*. See *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. f6^r.

21. See Hrotsvit, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, edited by H. Homeyer (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1970), pp. 171 ff.

22. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, p. 116.

23. See Hrotsvit, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, edited by Homeyer, pp. 204-9.

24. Nagel, *Hrotsvit von Gandersheim*, p. 76.

25. Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 132, ll. 1-13; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. a5^r.

26. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, pp. 57-8.

27. Another plausible guess would be that she sent the plays to the monastery of St. Emmeran in Regensburg for review.

28. See Walter Berschin, "Passio und Theater: Zur dramatischen Struktur einiger Vorlagen Hrotsvits von Gandersheim," *The Theatre in the Middle Ages*, edited by Herman Braet et al. (Leuven: Leuven UP 1985).

29. Hrotsvit, *Opera Omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 168, ll. 19-20; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. b1^r: "Nunc ollas molli fovet gremio.

nunc sartagine et caccabos amplectitur. mitia libans oscula.”

30. According to Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, pp. 190-202, this aspect of Hrotsvit’s plots may have been intended as a cautionary rebuke to Otto’s court with its recent history of confrontations with the papacy.

31. See Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 276, ll. 1-4; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. i6^r: “(Postquam) rex regum, qui solus regnat in ęvum / Per se cunctorum transmutans tempora regum / Iussit Francorum transferri nobile regnum / Ad claram gentem Saxonum nomen habentem.”

32. Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 280, ll. 136-9; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. i7^v: “(Insuper) e tantis ipsum sacra dextra potentis / ... tam magnificis ornat persepe triumphis, / Ut credas regem David regnare fidelem / Iam nunc antiquis fulgentem rite triumphis.”

33. Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 304, ll. 1488-9; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. k8^r: “Qualiter et recti conpunctus acumine zeli / Summum pontificem quedam perversa patrantem / Eius nec monitis dignantem cedere crebris / Sedis apostolicę fraudari fecit honore / Constituens alium rectoris nomine dignum.” Otto deposed both Pope John XII and Pope Benedict V.

34. Mary Bernadine Bergman, trans., *Hrosvithae Liber Tertius. A Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Covington, KY: Sisters of St. Benedict, 1943), p. 89; See Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 308, ll. 56-64: “Nam sum Iohannes, liquidis qui tinguere lymphis / Christum promerui. Quia nos crebro coluisti, / Nuntio, virginibus sacris tua clara propago / Instituet claustrum, pacem regnique triumphum, / Dum sua religio studio steterit bene firmo. / Hinc tua progenies saeculis quandoque futuris / Culmine pollentis tanto clarescet honoris, / Ut terrenorum nullus tunc tempore regum / Iure potentatus illi valeat similari.” The 1501 edition does not include the *Beginnings of the Convent of Gandersheim*.

35. Bergman, *Hrosvithae Liber Tertius*, p. 93; Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, pp. 312-3, ll. 156-80.

36. *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. a2^r: “nostrorum seculorum foelicitate per impressoriam artem a nostris hominibus inuentam in lucem proferrem.”

37. The original title is *Quatuor libri amorum* (*Four Books of Love Poetry*). For a comprehensive study of his most important poetry, see Jörg Robert, *Konrad Celtis und das Projekt der deutschen Dichtung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003).

38. *Opera Hrosvite*, edited Celtis, fol. a2^v: “reperi uestustissimum littera ferme gothica et mulieris manu conscriptum codicem sub titulo et inscriptione uirginis et monialis germanae gente saxonica. ... Incredibile dictu quanto stupore et gaudio correptus fuerim dum mulierem germanam post sexcentos annos ... latina oratione et uersu loquentem legissem.”

39. *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. a2^v: “Longum esset princeps illustrissime si germanarum mulierum uirtutes ab humanis sublatarum et adhuc uiuentium recensere uellem: Nec ego tanti sapho cloeliam uel Hieronymi eustochium et paulinam: aut apud hebreos Ruth Iudith et Hester: Quantum ego in musicis instrumentis omnibus doctissimam Annam germanam: aut agnulam phrisiam in carminibus saphicis iure ciuili et diuino et philosophia admirabilem: Aut illam nostram charitatem Vilibaldi pyrkhmers hospitis nostri sororem in romana lingua et scribendis epistolis facilem et extemporaneam: Nullus sexus et aetas in omni terrarum loco ad virtutem et eruditionem imbecillis et indocilis est: si quando ingenium industria educatio et preceptio illi adest.”

40. See David H. Price, *Albrecht Dürer's Renaissance: Humanism, Reformation and the Art of Faith* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp. 151-54.

41. Although Celtis coauthored an epitaph for the musician named Anna, it contains no biographical information about her. See Conrad

Celtis, *Der Briefwechsel des Konrad Celtis*, edited by Hans Rupprich (Munich: Beck, 1934), p. 465.

42. Cologne, Historisches Archiv der Stadt, W* 101, fol. 1^r-16^v. See Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, pp. XXII-XXVII.

43. See Celtis, *Der Briefwechsel des Konrad Celtis*, pp. 118-9.

44. See Hrotsvit, *Opera omnia*, edited by Berschin, p. 3; *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. d2^v. The original manuscript reads “Que tibi purganda offero carminula,” which Celtis changed to “Que tibi purganda hic offero carminula.” This emendation of the hiatus is ironic, for the line translates as “I am presenting to you little poems that need to be emended.”

45. See *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis. fol. a2^v: (addressing Friedrich the Wise) “Tu mox ut imprimeretur iussisti et curasti: data etiam a caesareo senatu (i.e., imperial diet) priuilegio ne quis hanc et alia exemplaria impressa in decem annis post me et sodales meos in liberis et imperialibus urbibus imprimere auderet: sub certa et debita mulcta.” This is one of the first copyrights ever granted for publication of a book in the Holy Roman Empire. The colophon (fol. k8^r) also states that the book is being published with an imperial copyright privilege.

46. See Heinrich Grimm, “Des Conradus Celtis editio princeps der ‘Opera Hrosvite’ von 1501 und Albrecht Dürers Anteil daran,” *Philobiblon* 18 (1974):3-25.

47. *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fols. a3^v-a4^r. For a modern edition of the prefatory epigrams, see Edwin Zeydel, “The Reception of Hrotsvitha by the German Humanists after 1493,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 44 (1945):243-46.

48. *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. a3^v: “Affro laus scenae: Lyra, Flacco: Bella maroni / Multiplicem laurum Hrosuita docta gerit.” The “multiple laurel crown” means a crown for each of the three poetic genres.

49. *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. a4^r: “Hrosuitha germanis nunc

maxima gloria terris. / Carminibus lacios nectere docta modos / Nec minus
et uoces describit culta solutas. / Libera therencii comica facta sequens.”

50. See *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. a3^v, for the original Greek. Pirckheimer’s Latin translation is: “Si sapho decima est musarum dulce canentum / Hrosuitha scribenda est undecima aonidum.” The Greek for this distich is printed with woodblock rather than metal type.

51. *Opera Hrosvite*, edited by Celtis, fol. a4^r: “Barbara nostra licet dicatur patria tellus / Expers et gray dogmatis et lacii / Attamen hoc calamo potuit germana virago / Hrosuitha quod lacii uix potuere viri.”

52. The differences in the surviving copies indicate that corrections (stop-press changes) were undertaken continuously during the printing process. Thus far, bibliographers have identified five variants among the imprints. See Grimm, “Des Conradus Celtis editio princeps der ‘Opera Hrosvite,’” p. 6.

53. In older research, one occasionally encounters an attribution to Wolf Traut (ca. 1490-1520), but he was almost certainly too young to have participated in this project.

54. Albrecht Dürer, *Dürer: Schriftlicher Nachlaß*, edited by Hans Rupprich, 3 volumes (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstgeschichte, 1956) vol. 3, p. 460 (no. 67): “Alter ades nobis Phidias et alter Apelles.”

55. See Price, *Albrecht Dürer’s Renaissance*, pp. 15-16; 78-82.

56. See Price, *Albrecht Dürer’s Renaissance*, pp. 29-65.

57. See Grimm, “Des Conradus Celtis editio princeps der ‘Opera Hrosvite,’” pp. 10-11, for an attempt to identify the man with the crutch as Heinrich von Bünau, an associate of Celtis.

58. For a discussion of Celtis’s views on humanism and cultural reform, see David Price, “Desiring the Barbarian: On Latin, German and Women in the Poetry of Conrad Celtis,” *German Quarterly* 65 (1992):159-67.

59. A rough sketch survives that may be a preliminary plan for this woodcut. See Friedrich Winkler, *Die Zeichnungen Albrecht Dürers* (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1936-39), vol. 1, no. 249.
60. See Price, *Albrecht Dürer's Renaissance*, p. 152 (figure 5.9).

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VERSE LEGENDS

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by David H. Price



PREFACE AND DEDICATION

HISTORY OF THE NATIVITY AND OF THE
PRAISEWORTHY CONVERSATION OF MARY,
THE IMMACULATE MOTHER OF GOD

THE PASSION OF THE MARTYR
ST. GONGOLF

THE PASSION OF PELAGIUS

FALL AND CONVERSION OF THEOPHILUS

BASILIIUS

THE PASSION OF ST. DIONYSIUS

THE PASSION OF ST. AGNES

EPILOGUE

PREFACE TO THE LEGENDS

I offer this little book, which has not much to recommend it in the way of beauty, although it has been compiled with a good deal of care, for the kind criticism of all those learned people who do not take pleasure in exposing to ridicule a writer's faults but rather in correcting them. For I am well aware that I made many mistakes not only in prosody but also in literary composition, and there must be much to criticize in this book. By acknowledging my shortcomings beforehand, I hope I am entitled to ready indulgence as well as to kindly correction of my errors.

To the objection that may be raised that I have borrowed parts of this work from authorities that some consider apocryphal, I would answer that I have erred through ignorance, not through sinful presumption. For when I started to weave the thread of this collection, I was not aware that the authenticity of the material upon which I planned to work was questionable. When I discovered the real state of affairs, I declined to discard my subject matter, because it happens that what is reputed false sometimes turns out to be true.

In these circumstances I shall need much assistance in defending this little work, now that it is finished, just as when I began the work I was far from possessing the necessary qualifications. Being young both in years and learning,

I also did not dare to submit my plan to experts for their advice, for fear that my unrefined style would cause them to discourage me.

So, secretly and unknown to all, I worked on my compositions, often destroying what was ill written, and toiled to assemble a text, even if of slight value, to the best of my ability, from phrases I collected from sacred writings within the confines of our monastery at Gandersheim. I was trained first by our most learned and gentle novice-mistress Rikkarda and, then, by others. Later, I owed much to the kind favor and encouragement of a royal personage, Gerberga, under whose abbatial rule I am now living. Although younger in years than I, she was, as might be expected of the niece of an emperor, far older in learning, and she had the kindness to make me familiar with the works of some of those authors in whose writings she had been instructed by learned teachers.

Although prosody may seem a hard and difficult art for a woman to master, I, without any assistance but that given by the merciful grace of heaven (in which I have trusted, rather than in my own strength), have attempted to sing the poems of this little book in dactylic meter. I was eager that the talent given me by heaven should not grow rusty from neglect and remain silent in my heart from apathy, but under the hammer of assiduous devotion should sound a chord of divine praise. If I have achieved nothing else, this alone should make my work of some value.

Wherefore, gentle reader, whosoever you may be, I beg you, if you think it right before God, to help me by not sparing censure of such pages are poor and lack the skill of a master. If, on the contrary, you find some that stand the test of criticism, give the credit to God, ascribing all defects to my shortcomings.

Do this in an indulgent rather than in a censorious spirit, for the critic forfeits the right to be severe when the writer acknowledges defects with humility.

To Gerberga, Abbess of Gandersheim

Hail, illustrious offspring of a royal race! Gerberga, renowned for your character and learning. Fostering mistress, accept with kindly bearing these little verses that I offer for your correction; and may you graciously direct the crude measures of her whom your excellent teaching instructs. And when you are indeed wearied with your manifold labors, please deign to read these measures to entertain yourself, and attempt to purify the unlovely muse and to uphold her by the prestige of your office.

Thus may the zeal of the pupil enhance the praise of the mistress, and the poems of the devoted disciple, the praise of the teacher.

HISTORY OF THE NATIVITY AND OF THE
PRAISEWORTHY CONVERSATION OF MARY,
THE IMMACULATE MOTHER OF GOD,
THAT I HAVE FOUND IN THE WRITINGS OF
ST. JAMES, BROTHER OF THE LORD

Hail! Sole hope of the world, illustrious queen of the heavens, holy mother of the king, resplendent star of the sea; who, a pious virgin, has by obedience restored to the world that life that the virgin of old forfeited. May you graciously deign to assist the prayers and new little songs of your handmaiden Hrotsvit, who with zeal ministering to my womanly muse, now humbly sings in dactylic measures, desiring to touch, if ever so lightly, upon a tiny portion of the praise that is yours, O virgin, and to celebrate the bright beginnings of your blessed origin and also your royal child. However, I am conscious that any effort of mine to sing your merited praise far exceeds my feeble powers, for the whole world cannot adequately extol you, who shine far beyond the praises of the angels, since you as a virgin have carried in your chaste womb him who rules and sways the universe. But he who once commanded a mute beast to speak in praise of his sacred name, and who at the words of the angel caused you, tender maiden, to conceive of the holy ghost and has made you the mother, most worthy, of his son, without violation of your virginity. If it please him, he is able to loosen the strings of my tongue and to touch my heart with the dew of his grace. And thus assisted by the gift

of his tender kindness, I will render thanks to him, and sing of you also, virgin, lest I be condemned—and rightly so—as a companion to those ungrateful and slothful servants who neglect to send, according to their ability, praise to the one enthroned on high; but rather may I merit to be united to the choirs of virgins and to praise eternally the crimson lamb of God.

When five thousand years of the gliding world had been completed, that happy era began in which God with faithful solicitude ordered all things to be fulfilled that the prophets had long since foretold, predicting that Jesus would soon come into the world. Now in the tribe of Judah there was a certain old man of the ancient law, sprung from the royal house of David, who, they say, was called Joachim. This man had from earliest infancy lived justly, zealously, and in holiness. He took the greatest care to lead his vast herds to rich pasturage, striving thus to be truly a good shepherd and a worthy parent in the flesh of him, indeed, who did not disdain to carry upon his own shoulders his own sheep, leading them to the joys of a happy life; ready to suffer death out of his great love for us, and to redeem our fallen humanity with the precious price of his own life.

This hero, Joachim, whose deeds I shall here relate, the happy ancestor indeed of such a grandchild, adorning himself with supreme effort by worthy deeds, divided his wealth into three parts, giving one portion to widows,

strangers, and orphans; a second portion to those serving often in the temple; and keeping back a third part for his own use. By doing this frequently and with tender kindness Joachim merited to receive such a recompense that his own substance was increased very rapidly, and he excelled all his associates in prosperity; nor was there another on earth who was as enriched with an abundance of all things.

When Joachim had thus lived twenty years care-free and happy amid great prosperity, he betrothed himself to a maid endowed not only with extraordinary beauty but also with singular virtue and holiness as well. The maid was Anna, the daughter of Achas, born of the illustrious family of David, and her he joined to himself in lawful wedlock.

It is said, however, that Anna being barren for many years gave no promise of offspring to her loyal husband. At length, after twice ten years had passed, it chanced one festival day that Joachim was standing in the temple among those ministers who were deemed worthy to offer incense to the lord. When Ruben, the scribe of the sacred temple saw Joachim, he was moved with envy at the fact, and he said in bitter tones: "It is not lawful for you to touch the sacred incense, nor is it right that you bring an offering to God by sacrificing, for he despises you, since he has denied you the blessings of progeny."

The noble man made no response, but in grief and sadness of heart he left the sacred place and sought the forest, where he had in times past been accustomed to pasture his flock. Here he made his way by devious paths into a far-distant place, taking with him his flocks each with its own shepherd, and he hid in those recesses. Neither did he care while pasturing to return to his country which he had left, for in his heart he suffered a great humiliation because of the bitter words of Ruben who had derided him.

His illustrious spouse, after an interval of five months, fearing that he was no longer alive, wept day after day, nor did she know any solace for her grief. In her sad affliction she poured forth this prayer to God: "Sole ruler of Israel and lover of thy people! You always console the grieving and refresh them in your tender kindness. Why has it pleased you to take from me my cherished husband, thus adding sorrow to one ever sad and distressed without hope of offspring? But now I lament the pangs of a greater grief, for I do not know in my innermost heart what misfortune has befallen my lawful spouse, a devoted servant of thy law. O, great indeed would be my happiness, if I were but to know whether bitter death has claimed him, or whether he is still alive and enjoying your healthy air. If I were certain of these things, I would have no right for such excessive grief, even though he were slumbering in the shades of death. But I would like to honor his remains with the greatest ceremony and consign those noble members to a worthy resting place."

When she had finished this prayer she raised her eyes and beheld in the branches of a laurel some birds caroling in sweet melodies and covering their young with downy wings. Seeing this, Anna continued in sad plaint: “Mighty king of heaven, to whom the starry sky is submissive; you who are powerful to dispose of all things rightly! To you be exalted praise from all the faithful, because you have granted as a loving gift to all living creatures, to the fishes, the beasts, the reptiles, and the birds that they might rejoice in the care of their offspring. But me alone, alas, you have ordered according to your just judgment to remain without this consolation. However, in the constancy of my heart, I call upon you as witness. Father of all, I vowed to you in the first days of our marriage that if you, in your clemency, would present me with a child, I would early present it to you in your sacred temple in obedience to the manner of the prescribed law, and dedicate it to your service.”

Such were the words her pure lips uttered, when suddenly from the starry heaven an angel descended, bearing for her in her sadness words of consolation; and standing before her he spoke to her with kindness: “Put aside your grief and place far from your heart this depressing sorrow, and believe that by the decree of the most high God, you shall conceive a child, and the fruit of your womb will in all truth be wonderful among all nations.” This he said, and soaring aloft he cut the ether with his air-roaming wings.

But Anna, exceedingly terrified at the words of the angel, sadly sought her home; and trembling, lay upon her couch, rehearsing the psalms of the lord throughout that day and continuing her prayers throughout the ensuing night.

Thereupon she summoned her maid and asked her when she came into her presence why she despised her mistress, and why she had delayed to come to her when she realized that some great thing was about to happen to her. But the insolent maid answering her mistress hurled at her a word in derision in the low murmur customary among servants: "If God despised you by making you barren, tell me, how does the cause of the divine wrath concern me?" But Anna bore this opprobrium patiently, pouring out her grief in silent tears.

It happened that at the same hour the same angel appeared also to Joachim in great splendor among the hills where he was hiding while pasturing his flock. The heavenly messenger commanded Joachim to return to the spouse he had left. In great distress, he said to his heavenly visitant: "I have lived with my spouse for twice ten years, and God has given me no offspring from her. Then too it was but recently that I departed from the temple after having been bitterly reproached for this very cause. And now after I have been derided and filled with reproaches, do you exhort me to return and subject myself to my former disgrace?"

The celestial messenger then spoke these gentle words: “Believe that I am a heavenly citizen, given to you as a guardian by the grace of the most high king, who granted that through me Anna, your just wife, should be consoled while amid tears she poured out her efficacious prayers. But now also for your sake I have come down from the realms of heaven, bringing you similar gifts of joy surpassing. For this I announce to you: that soon the most noble Anna will conceive a daughter whom all generations shall call blessed. The child will be holy among all the daughters of men, and the holy spirit will find in her a fitting temple. Through her the greatest blessing shall come to the world, nor was there one like her before, nor shall there be one like her coming after. But now, attempt to return to your happy spouse, who will rejoice in giving birth to such a child who is to be a glory for the entire world. And always render sweet gratitude to the creator, who was pleased to grant to you two this offspring like to whom indeed all the chosen prophets have never known, nor after this one will ever know.”

Joachim, overjoyed upon hearing these promises, said to the angel: “If your manifest favor continues toward your servant, agree to rest awhile beneath my roof, and do not disdain to enjoy the repast I have prepared.”

To him the angel made response in words of dignity: “Desist, I pray you, henceforth to call yourself my servant, but consider yourself a companion to the angelic hosts. As

for me, earthly nourishment is not necessary, for I am constantly satisfied with the presence of God on high. Therefore I advise you to bring as a sacred offering to the lord that which you are so kind to place for my table.”

Thereupon Joachim speedily chose a yearling from his flock of lambs, confident that the former criticism of Ruben had been blotted out. With a glad heart, after he had placed the fire, he joyfully prepared, as the law prescribed, to sacrifice to the lord. The angel after having seen all these things done as he had ordered, raising himself above the smoke of the altar, hastened toward the stars.

And thus gradually the glory of the heavenly father began to break forth to the world in resplendent rays, and ancient discord was brought to a definite end as soon as the celestial citizens had promised companionship to those earthborn citizens whom hitherto they had disdained by reason of the guilt of their father, Adam. Neither did the clemency of the father of all lie hidden from the angelic host when, in the fullness of time, he in his mercy decreed to send his own son into the womb of a virgin, in order that this son, born of the father before all ages, might in time assume flesh of a virgin mother, and thus save all humankind by his all-holy blood, and that after this, the wily enemy of man might not rejoice in holding the world in his malicious snare; but that the godhead of the father and of the son and likewise of the fostering spirit, equal in nature, might under this triune

name, reign as is just throughout the peaceful world even unto the end of time.

When the angel had ascended to star-bearing Olympus, Joachim, hardly bearing such great predictions, was seized with an intense fear. Prostrating himself to the earth, he lay there overcome with awe at this great heavenly manifestation; and he lay there unconscious, if I am not mistaken, from the sixth hour of that day until the sun had run its course at evening.

In the meantime his servants came with the wearied herd; and when they saw their master prone upon the ground, standing about they began sadly to inquire the cause of the unusual distress in his distracted mind. And it was indeed with great difficulty that they were able to raise him up. When he had told the message of the heavenly visitor, they persuaded him to obey the divine injunction and to return speedily to the country he had left.

Collecting his flocks, Joachim departed from the forest, joyfully taking with him his servants. And it came to pass that after thirty days an angel appeared to blessed Anna while she was at prayer and addressed her in these consoling words: "Rise quickly, Anna, and hasten with a calm mind and countenance to the gate called in the language of the people the Golden Gate. There you will soon meet your lawful spouse returned to you alive and in great peace."

When these things were said, Anna followed quickly that lovable command and impatient of delay she hastened to the gateway, expecting her lord with joyous heart. And, indeed, when she beheld him with astonished eyes, across those flowery fields she sped to meet him and she threw herself into his cherished embrace, rendering thanks to the most high in these words: "Praise to you, greatest giver of every good, who granted to me, although unworthy, such great bliss! Behold, I see before me my own beloved, safe and well; for so long a time I have lived as a widow; and I, who have been barren, have conceived to my joy!" Then all the Hebrew people, learning these events, with one accord gave thanks to God with joyful hearts.

Nine months after these events came that blessed day on which the illustrious Anna brought forth her child, who was to be revered among all generations. After eight days the high priests, who had been summoned, came, so that according to custom they might confer a name upon the child and purify the mother. Joachim pouring forth prayers to God said: "O king of heaven, who alone names the stars, deign to indicate in a heavenly manner by some brilliant sign the name of this tender babe." When he had said this, a mighty voice sounded suddenly from on high, commanding that the name "Mary" be bestowed upon the chosen child. "Stella Maris," as our Latin tongue has it. Fittingly this name was conferred upon that holy child, because she is the brightest star shining forever in the beautiful diadem of the eternal Christ.

After two years had measured the space of time and the happy mother according to custom had weaned her holy babe, she hastened to present her, who would be the temple of God, with a worthy gift in the temple, where in company with other holy maidens the child would persevere in singing praises to God, whom the celestial choirs laud. Arriving at the threshold of the sacred temple the little one paused unmindful of her tender age, and filled with love of God, mounted the steep ascent of thrice five steps, bravely hurrying upward; nor did she even turn, childlike, to look for her parents who stood watching. Startled at these happenings all who beheld her marveled greatly, as did also the ministers of the temple. The chief priests praised the action of the little one and said that by this deed she had foreshadowed what great things would be accomplished through her, truly and deservedly a great marvel for all.

For what can be believed to be, or what can truly be greater than the maid who bore in her virginal bosom the great creator of the world, her own maker? Nor is it to be wondered at, if the babe with its tender infant limbs began early to direct its steps upward; that child whom you, most loving father, have enriched with your holy spirit while she was yet enclosed in the womb of her saintly mother; you who knew that she alone would be found worthy to bring forth your only begotten son, prayed for throughout the ages. This son, who after he had taken upon himself a human form, opened the way to eternity, by which all reach the father's

land which had been lost; he who is called Christ, to whom be celestial glory. Amen.

Then indeed Anna, the happy mother of that child, praising the eternal king, chanted these words: "Almighty ruler, sole lover of righteousness, in your mercy you have done wonderful things for your people; regarding with compassion the humility of my heart, you have given to me, despairing of offspring, the joy of a daughter. I dare indeed hereafter to bear gifts to you, neither do I fear lest my enemy will prevent my sacrifice and hinder me from frequently joining myself as an ally to the sacred ministers of the temple. For this may the heavenly citizens, in endless melody, praise you zealously by singing eternally a worthy canticle. Amen." When she had finished these prayers, the happy parents of that blessed child returned home, while little Mary remained in the temple.

All human tongues, of whatever words they might be capable, cannot express, nor can any of them throughout the entire fixed earth worthily describe the exquisite beauty of this babe, nor fittingly laud the life and character of her who is worthy to be praised throughout all ages. For this child, as soon as she was taken from the cradle, shone resplendently before the whole world because of her matured character, nor did she in her infant frailty ever do anything except what was most just in the commandments of the law, and she was ever zealous in chanting the Psalms

of David. Thus Mary lived, prudent, humble, inflamed with charity of soul, affable to all, resplendent with every virtue. No human ear ever heard her speak in manner unkindly; no one knew her to offend in any way.

She was ever meek and most gracious to all, and, indeed, whatever speech flowed from her lips was flavored with the nectar of celestial grace. And when anyone praised her with friendly words, she took care immediately to render thanks to God on high, nor did her tongue ever desist from singing divine canticles. And thus she presented herself to all her associates as a noble exemplar of universal righteousness. It is said that Mary's face beamed with a snowy whiteness, and that her beauty excelled the dazzling splendor of the sun and utterly surpassed in its loveliness every human countenance. How can I adequately extol those fingers skilled in work of art? This tiny maid was accomplished with her skillful hand. Furthermore, Mary set for herself a severe rule of life, living more strictly than the other virgins in whose company she dwelt. Her one ambition was to persevere in prayer and to be constant in singing the divine praises, from the time that the darkness of night perished, when Aurora had sprinkled her brilliancy throughout the east, until Phoebus had ascended yet higher toward the serene pole and the third hour of the day in its turn was wont to approach. Then she relaxed her snowy fingers for their accustomed labor and with consummate skill wrought the purple threads. But when at the ninth hour Phoebus made his descent, the

illustrious maiden gave herself again to prayers, persevering in these with a zealous mind until she had received through the ministry of her angel the food sent her each day from heaven; and that which the high priests gave her according to custom, she with eager heart quickly gave to the indigent. Finally, the celestial citizens coming down from their starry heaven were wont oft to entertain her in loving converse, and because of this she learned to despise earthly affection and to preserve a chaste heart for the eternal king. And whoever was infirm with languid limbs, if she but touched him, he straightway departed whole.

When the fame of this had spread abroad over this solid earth, Abiathar, one of the priests, often begged the other priests of the temple, with gifts of no small value, that they might espouse the fair Mary to his own son in legal wedlock. But the chaste maiden frustrated these designs, rejecting even an illustrious marriage with one of the royal race, declaring emphatically that she would give herself to no spouse to the end of her days. To her the pontiff made response: "Is not the mighty God fittingly adored and worshiped by the lawful posterity of the people of Israel? It is not becoming for a maid of your age to remain unmarried."

But Mary made reply in the constancy of her heart: "God delights to make his abode in the pure heart and the chaste mind; he does not find delight in those whom sensual desires stain with foul sin. We know that Abel, who was

the first just man among the children of men, merited to receive a double crown, one, that of martyrdom because of his death at the hands of his brother; the other, and that one more splendid, because of his virginity. So too we believe that Elias, while yet in the flesh, was taken up into heaven, and this forsooth, because he had steadfastly remained a virgin and had never at any time violated his person with disgraceful sin. These things I have learned being instructed in the precepts of the law, and learning them, I have set them firmly in my mind, and I have vowed ever to retain my virginal chastity.”

When Mary had completed twice seven years, the Pharisees objected that it was contrary to their custom that a maid of that age remain in the temple devoted to the service of God. Therefore they decreed to call together all the people so that together they might attempt to deliberate upon the cause. And when all were assembled beneath the roof of the temple, Abiathar, the priest of the law, whom I have already mentioned, ascended the steep stairs and as spokesman addressed the people there assembled:

“You are well aware that from the time that this illustrious temple was built through the zeal of great King Solomon, there have ever dwelt here maidens of rare beauty and of tender age, the glorious progeny of kings, prophets, and likewise of our ancestors, who will remain renowned and rightly so among the people of Israel.

But it has likewise been the custom, that as soon as they attain mature age they be given in marriage to such as are worthy, and very often, in fact always, they have pleased the lord by this step. But the virgin Mary, contrary to the established custom, believes that she can please God by despising men for the sake of the lord. Therefore, because it is not agreed that she may make such a vow, it behooves us to beg the almighty worthily by prayers that he make known to us his commands concerning him to whom this maid is to be joined in lawful wedlock.”

When all the people had consented to this proposal, the chief priests first of all drew lots among the twelve tribes of Israel. This lot presently designated the distinguished tribe of Judah to be worthy. When this tribe had thus been selected before all others, all the men of that tribe who chanced to be still unmarried were commanded by the priests to come together on the second day and to bring with them in their right hand a young twig.

When these men had been selected with every care, there came with them as a companion the worthy old man, Joseph, carrying, as he had been ordered, a straight twig. Then the high priest amid rejoicing gathered the rods of all, and offering a sacrifice to the lord he poured forth prayers, imploring God that he might reveal his will. It was presently made manifest to him by divine indication what should be done after a certain lapse of time. Following the

divine instructions, the priest sent the rods at once to the holy place set aside by law in the celebrated temple and commanded (and why should he not?) that on the following day the descendants of the royal race should return and that each in turn should recover his own rod. For it had been revealed to him as a manifest sign that the noble maiden was to be entrusted to that youth from whose rod a dove would issue forth and seek straightway to fly heavenward.

While the three thousand youths at the appointed time were holding their individual rods which they had recovered, and when none of the rods presented any foretelling sign to the people, the priest again offered sacred incense and gave himself to prayers poured out from a devout heart. Then he heard a heavenly voice admonishing him thus: "The small rod of Joseph, the just old man, which still lies in the temple, has been taken by no one; this alone will deservedly fulfill the promised prediction."

Upon hearing these words the pontiff with a loud voice demanded that Joseph come forward into the crowd. He, since he was humble and without outward charm, found no pleasure in mingling among such handsome associates, but preferred rather to remain in the lowest place. As soon, however, as he had heard the voice of the pontiff calling him, he advanced trembling to seize the rod as he had been ordered. Instantly, it is told, a beautiful dove came forth from the rod and unhesitatingly sought the heavens. At this all present

burst forth into hymns of praise and with joyful hearts rendered thanks to the most high, who had deigned to select the just man by so novel a sign. But Joseph, not unmindful of his advanced years, protesting that he himself had begotten children, begged, it is said, with great modesty, that the priests should not will to give the beautiful Mary to him, but that rather they give her as spouse to one of his sons. When they refused this firmly and told him that it was he who had been designated and that they dared not entrust the maid to any other but to him whom the lord had indicated to be alone worthy, he pleadingly began to entreat that some maidens be sent with Mary, girls who had been brought up with her and who were of her age. These, he argued would know how to comfort her with tender words, lest the delicate maid be subjected to embarrassment because of the advanced age of her spouse. The priests commanded that this be done, for Joseph had spent himself vainly pleading that this virgin was not for him, but that she had been consecrated to Christ. After the pontiffs had yielded to the petitions of the pleading Joseph, the latter undertook the custody of the virgin, with whom also five, if I mistake not, of the other virgins were sent as escorts. These were, it is believed: Scephiphora, Zabel, Susanna, Rebecca, and Abigea. To these maids, it is said, it was assigned to adorn the sacred temple; to embroider purple and cotton, linen and silk from China. But to the holy Mary was entrusted the working of the purple to serve as a veil for the temple of the lord.

Some of the maids of the temple, envious because of this privilege, spoke to Mary taunting words such as these: "Is it perhaps decreed that someday you are to be our queen because to you alone the purple is entrusted to be wrought, even though you are our junior by not a few years?" Yet Mary always bore these things patiently and did not retort with a single word.

Thereupon her angel guardian, ever faithful, who had come down from the starry heavens, promptly spoke these words: "If, O virgin, such speech disturbs you, I tell you that these maidens have spoken verily in the manner of prophets and have already with presaging voice told the future; for you shall be a mighty queen throughout all ages and the illustrious mistress of the heavenly realms."

Sometime after this Mary was seated in quiet seclusion within her home, her blessed fingers spinning the delicate threads. Presently the archangel Gabriel, coming down from the starry vault of the heavens, stood before her and addressed the modest virgin in affectionate words, telling her that according to the predictions of all the prophets, from her chaste womb the son of the most high, far more ancient than the world, would be born. And he likewise related to her the miraculous manner of the virgin birth.

It is not possible to set forth in our tongue this noble colloquy, drawn out in lengthy discourse, between the

perpetual virgin, the blessed mother of Christ, and this messenger narrating the mystery of this exalted birth. Nor is it necessary to sing in dactylic strains the great sorrow and hard grief of St. Joseph: how he was afflicted with anxious tortures within his innermost soul when he had become aware that his maiden spouse was with child. Then, furthermore, how in his grief he was solaced during the night and commanded to take into his care the spotless virgin and the child which was sent from on high. These things are all told in the gospels, and they far exceed our feeble effort of narration. Therefore omitting them because they are known to all, we shall take for you from them only that instruction which we believe to be rarely mentioned in the house of God.

When the edict of Augustus Caesar sped into the established world, compelling all his subjects to come together from all sides to be enrolled and to profess their subjection to him, Joseph set out to Bethlehem with his espoused wife who was with child. And when they were nearing the illustrious city, the tender virgin beheld, not indeed with the eyes of her body, but with those of her soul, two men standing near, the one mirthful, the other in tears. When she told this vision to Joseph she heard from him these words: "Keep your place on that beast of burden, and do not, pray, say such meaningless words."

When he had said this he saw before him a youth from the lord, who explained to him the meaning of the mysterious

men and then spoke to him in defense of the sacred virgin: “Why do you say that Mary has spoken untrue words, being indignant because she alone discerns the secret? For in the weeping citizen she rightly perceived the Jewish nation that will presently with malignant heart depart from God; on the other hand she saw the gentile nation, abounding in joy, because it shall come to the great blessing of the faith.”

When he had finished these words, the messenger turned tenderly toward nourishing Mary and told her that the time was come for her to give birth to Christ. Mary, as she had been commanded, alighted from the beast which had carried her and entered a grotto located beneath the ground, into which scarcely any light penetrated, and where darkness held continuous sway. But as soon as the blessed mother, about to bring forth the eternal light, had entered the cave, a heavenly radiance began to break forth, nor did this celestial light cease to illumine this hallowed spot while the mother of God, supremely happy, remained there.

Here in the calm midnight hour the virgin mother in joy brought forth her divine child, venerated throughout all ages, Jesus, to whom be praise, glory, and power; who coming to fulfill the predictions of the ancient prophets, foretelling that he was to come into the world for our salvation, established peace between the heavenly citizens and the terrestrial. As soon as the blessed virgin, all chaste, had brought forth her child, there appeared a throng of heavenly

citizens praising in subdued tones the maker of the universe, celebrating the child sent for us from the stars. But presently the venerable mother Mary wrapped the tender limbs of Christ, the eternal king, in swaddling clothes and laid him in a narrow manger.

Meanwhile the saintly Joseph had gone out and presently returned with Zelemi and Salome, two women who were to assist the blessed mother. Zelemi entered alone, for Salome feared to touch with her feet a place so replete with heavenly splendor. But Zelemi, fondling the child of the holy virgin, well believing such a great manifestation, cried out and said: "What is the meaning of this strange delivery of a virgin? Behold this boy, but lately sprung from a royal stock, well declares that his mother knows not man. And behold here a virgin, unaided, reverently nourishes her babe at her chaste breasts which by the power of heaven have been made replete with milk. Nor does the mother suffer any pain, nor do I see signs of the recent birth. I believe that such great things could be done only by divine intervention."

Salome, however, despising the voice that was not speaking falsehood, said that she would not believe the words she heard unless she could prove them by touching with her own hand the holy virgin. Then boldly advancing she began to stretch forth her right hand, attempting to touch Mary. But such audacity brought its own just punishment,

for immediately the right hand that was to make trial withered, and well-deserving the woman suffered excruciating pain. Thereupon, crying out in the bitterness of her heart, the saddened Salome bewailed the fault that had so unexpectedly deprived her of her right hand.

Then according to Jewish custom she rehearsed her own merits, and trusting fully in her own feigned justice, she sent up to the heavenly throne these words amid distress: "O you who are the witness and consoler of all our sufferings, you know that I have been zealous in keeping the precepts of your holy law, and for your sake I have ever been generous to the poor brought together from all parts of the globe. He who came to me sad left me with a light heart. And now for such good deeds I must suffer so grievous an affliction!"

Presently there appeared a youth of celestial beauty, who said to her: "Hasten to approach the royal cradle there, and touch only the swathing bands of the sleeping infant. The babe himself will restore you to even more perfect health."

When she had obeyed the encouraging command of the messenger, by touching but the tiniest thread of the linens she suddenly felt herself wholly freed from her malady. Thereupon with words of song she rendered thanks to God, who had deigned to confer upon her this boon.

After a vision of the shepherds had occurred in the order assigned, a sign was also given them as to how they would find the tiny boy lying in a manger; then followed also the circumcision of the babe and the glorious bestowal of his sacred name.

The kings also came, astrologers summoned from the land of the rising sun, magi skilled in the law of the stars, seeking the famous city of Jerusalem, and they with firm faith asked King Herod concerning the birthplace of the newborn king, saying that they had but lately seen the star that told them that the king of the Jews had been born.

When the wicked monarch heard these words he was troubled in his innermost soul, and speedily summoning his scribes, he learned from them that Christ was destined to be born in the confines of Bethlehem according to the predictions of the prophets. He therefore deceitfully commanded them to seek the boy and then to tell him also where to find him, pretending that he wished to adore him though in reality he desired to destroy him. But the magi, when the star had shown them the direct way, hastened at once and entered the royal palace of the tender babe; palace indeed, yet adorned with no ornaments fashioned in many colors, but duly embellished by the homage of that wondrous star. Falling upon their knees, the kings covered the tiny feet of the babe with kisses, at the same time pouring forth from humble hearts profuse prayers and honoring

him with a three-fold gift designating him as king, as God, and as man destined to die. But having been admonished in sleep during the night, they returned joyfully by a devious route to their own country.

Sometime after these events, Herod, the wicked enemy, was summoned to Rome by the command of Augustus, in order that, as the Roman law prescribed, he might vindicate himself from a great crime imputed to him or shortly suffer the bitter penalty of death, for he was to be arraigned on a charge of treason. And justly even then was he laboring under suspicion, for in his crafty mind he was meditating schemes by which he might put to death the divine son of the heavenly king. I believe that it came to pass by divine decree that Herod was at this moment to go to Rome, so that the newborn Christ having escaped from him, all ordinances concerning him might more amply be fulfilled.

For when four times ten days had completed their course after his birth from the virgin, the creator of the universe, as a tender infant, was presented in his own temple with the offerings of the poor. Here it was that he was taken into the trembling arms of the just Simeon, and the creator of the world was blessed by the worthy songs of the just old man, Simeon, and by the prophetic voice of illustrious Anna. Having fulfilled all those things that the law commanded, the holy family returned again to Bethlehem, their native city.

After the expiration of about two years, Herod, the wicked enemy, returned as from bitter exile. He pondered in his stricken heart the words of the magi, who said that they had seen the beauteous star of the newborn king. Nourishing these thoughts, he summoned the vassal princes of the realm and inquired from them whether the magi, true to their promise, had returned or had reported anything concerning the birth of Christ. These all alike readily made unwavering answer that they did not know whether perchance the magi had returned, nor had they themselves learned anything concerning the birth of the king.

Herod was furious on hearing these reports, and he sent his bands ordering them to put to death all the infants in the confines of Bethlehem, hoping thus to be able to destroy the eternal Christ. But the venerable Joseph, after being admonished in sleep, fled at night into Egypt, leading through devious paths of a vast desert the tender Jesus and his mother, under the guidance of Christ, who subdued the blackness of earthly fear. As was his custom, he with heavenly goodness performed many wonders, so that he might enlighten with his own light the ancient darkness of Egypt and utterly dispel it through his own divine power.

It happened one day that Mary wished to rest with her divine child near a cave. When spent and weary she chanced to be seated on the ground and was fondling the babe in her tender bosom, many dread dragons came forth

from the grotto before which she was sitting. When the sons of Joseph saw them, they were stupefied with fear and began to cry aloud in terror. But the baby Jesus raised himself from the loving lap of his mother and meekly stood on sacred feet facing the wildly raging beasts. These suddenly fell subdued to the ground, in silent worship doing homage to the maker of the universe. Then he himself turning aside led the way through devious desert paths and commanded the beasts to follow him.

Joseph and the blessed mother of Christ seeing these things were terror-stricken, and, subject as they were to the frailties of human nature, they trembled and feared that harm might come to the boy.

But he, who “searches the hearts and the reins,” turned toward his frightened parents and said: “Why will you fondle only my infant limbs and not understand the eternal might of my will? For even though I am a weak infant clothed in human form, I am nevertheless mighty because of the eternal power of my divine nature. It therefore behooves all the fierce beasts of the wilderness to become subdued before me and put aside the one-time savageness of their nature.”

After this, from all sides came stout-hearted lions with leopards and every species of beasts flocking together, when they had been made aware that the son of God was in

their midst; in mute silence they paid tribute to him, joyfully surrounding the illustrious virgin.

When Jesus beheld his mother frightened at such an unusual spectacle, he regarded her smilingly and is said to have spoken to this effect: "Do not, I pray you, virgin powerful and mother dear, be terrified, human-like, at the novelty of this touching sight. These beasts have come for the sole purpose of rendering homage and not because they wish to harm, nor are they on the other hand able to do so." These words dispelled the fears from her anguished soul. And behold, the joyful beasts went before and showed them the direct way through the desert, nor did they even depart at nightfall, but with loyal instinct joined themselves to the herd of Saint Joseph; and unmindful of their innate ferocity they peacefully partook of the meager supply of hay. Among them there was such concord that the erstwhile timid lamb joined itself to the fierce wolf, and the meek oxen formed companionship with the savage lion. And rightly so, for the true peace of heaven, with the same harmony with which it rules the unmeasured firmament, changed their nature and confirmed their loyalty.

After a while the virgin Mary, exhausted by the intense heat of the summer, rested in the friendly shade of a palm tree. With her clear eyes upturned she saw that the tree was richly laden with matured fruit; when she had seen this her

tongue formed words like these: "I would be delighted to eat of the fruit of this rich palm, if this were able to be done."

To her the old man Joseph, just in the observance of the law, being somewhat vexed, made response: "I marvel Mary, that you wish to speak thus, since you see that the branches of the great tree touch the clouds and strike even the very stars of the highest heaven. But I am with deep anxiety wondering in my mind whether at least I may not perchance find a clear spring, for we have not even a drop of water in our bags." Thus spoke the venerable man, as though despairing that Christ, who was present, could do all things, even though concealed in human form.

But the boy, reclining on the cherished bosom of his sweet mother, joyfully turned to that palm and fulfilling indeed the will of his father spoke to the palm with gracious expression: "Palm tree, bend low your topmost branches, so that my mother may pluck from you as much fruit as she wishes." When he had said this, the tree made strong by his commands obediently bent low before the august virgin. After it had been despoiled of its burden, it remained low-bent, nor did it rise to seek the heights but duly waited the approved command of Christ. Jesus then said to it: "Now raise yourself quickly, palm tree, that so you may be reckoned a companion to my trees which have been planted in heaven's fair garden. And from hidden roots now send forth the sparkling waters of a bubbling spring."

The words were scarcely spoken when the command was fulfilled, and the companions of the babe rendered sweet thanks with a glad heart at the sight of this fount of refreshing coolness, and they quenched their bitter thirst in the newly formed streamlet. When they were about to continue their journey through that vast desert waste, Jesus again addressed the palm: "Concerning you, dear little palm, by my command, an angel coming down from the high heaven shall bear away one of your branches from the topmost bough. This he shall plant in the celestial paradise, and I now confer upon you this great distinction, that hereafter you shall be called the palm of victory, and whoever, having fought the good fight, shall come out victorious from the battle of life shall be told that you have merited the palm of a great triumph."

When Jesus had spoken these words an angel came down from heaven, and taking a branch bore it back with him. Those present, beholding these deeds, were struck with wonder and in trembling awe fell upon the ground. But Jesus immediately dispelled their fear and spoke to them in these words: "There is indeed no cause for anxiety, for I myself have commanded the angel to bear aloft the palm branch, so that it may be planted among the delights of the great garden; for as here in the desert the palm obeyed my behests and satisfied our hunger with great zeal, so too will it be a source of unending delight to the elect."

Joseph, who had with great eagerness observed all these marvels, considering the great power of the babe, humbly addressed him in low pleading tones: "Behold how this intense heat is cruelly scorching our limbs; now if it please you, to whom there is eternal power, command that through these vast desert paths we may proceed so that certain rest may be given us in cities near at hand, and that this rest may enable us to travel more speedily through this vast space."

Then Jesus in the glory of his godhead said to his foster father: "I will immediately of my own will shorten the long journey, and a passage that heretofore consumed the space of thrice ten days, I will make to be covered in the space of one day."

He had hardly spoken these words when they saw before them the great Sotines, the Egyptian city famed for its lofty walls. Entering the city they sought the temple in which the ignorant pagans had set up false gods, which they were wont to worship amid perverse rites. But scarcely had Mary with her blessed babe crossed the threshold of that temple, when all the images at one and the same instant fell to the ground and lay prostrate, acknowledging the coming with great power of the eternal king and the true God of gods. Thus was fulfilled what had been foretold by the prophets: "Behold the lord shall come suddenly on a swift cloud, before whose face it is fitting that all the idols of Egypt shall crumble and lie prostrate."

When these happenings were related to the mighty Aphrodisius, the ruler of that city, he hastened thither accompanied by a vast concourse. And when the priests of the pagan temple had heard this, they hoped that the ruler would inflict punishment upon those who had brought about the destruction of their witless gods.

But the ruler, gazing upon the shattered fragments of the once fair statues now lying face down in the dust, was suddenly touched by a divine ray of love and truth, and with a heart converted to God he turned joyfully to his companions, saying: "Behold, indeed the one true God, powerful above all other gods, has made himself manifest to us; for indeed our own gods in silent murmurings profess that this is the only true God. It remains therefore that we prostrate ourselves before him in the manner of our gods and worship the eternal king with devout hearts, remembering what he did to Pharaoh, our erstwhile sovereign, who unjustly despised the commands of the lord, lest he cast us also into the dark pit of death."

When he had said this, he prostrated his entire body upon the earth and cowered low before the feet of holy Mary, pleading with loyal heart for grace from the boy whom the mother was happily pressing to her loving heart.

How praiseworthy is the grandeur of your power, Christ! How wonderful are the changes of your sacred right

hand! You are able to dispose of all things by a mere silent act of your will! Who will worthily admire and sufficiently praise the gifts of your great bounty, you the only son begotten in likeness to the father, who for our sake performed such great marvels? You, born from the father before all ages, did in obedience to his will take up your abode in the womb of your mother and did take from her a human form in the fullness of time; you are able to enclose the world in the palm of your hand, but did not despise to be wrapped in swaddling clothes of little worth; you, whose throne is above the starry skies, became small enough to lie cradled in a tiny manger; you who did name the myriad constellations and are able rightly to count the drops of rain and the grains of sand on the seashore, did as a helpless babe abide in patient silence while you dutifully took nourishment from your virgin mother's breast. You did not fear impious Herod, yet in obedience alone did you seek flight, that thus you might show yourself dutiful in the form of flesh. And now without delay you subdued the flinty hearts of these pagans, unused to subjection, and made them experience your unshaken power throughout all times, in order that thus they might know you by your divine manifestations. Who did make all things by your word alone, and whom all the seers have sung in their sacred prophecies. Therefore to your eternal father may glory be throughout all ages from all your creatures, who knew not how to spare his beloved son; and likewise to you, Christ, be eternal honor, victory, and power. To you, who did shed your blood to redeem the

world on its way to perdition; together with the holy spirit, be glory throughout all ages, through whom all heavenly gifts are granted to us!

What gifts shall I render now to the creator, worthy of all the good he has bestowed upon me, who graciously in his wonted goodness has permitted me, an unworthy servant, to render thanks, however feeble? For this, may the angelic hosts, I pray, unceasingly praise the lord.

The History of the Ascension of the Lord.
John the Bishop translated this
narrative from Greek into Latin

After Christ, veiled in human form, had fulfilled the venerable time of his sacred sojourn, during which he graciously abode among poor mortals, he who alone was able to live without all sins, in order that he himself, for the redemption of the world, might make known the joys of eternal life which had been aforesaid unhappily lost, after a triumphant, sacred, and holy death, which he patiently endured for our salvation, as victor in a fierce conflict, bravely broke the dire weapons of the enemy of humankind. Freely giving his blood as all-sufficient ransom and laying down his precious life upon the cross, he duly passed through the glory of his resurrection, and spent four times ten days, during which he appeared with great care to his dear disciples. He proved that by his death our death was destroyed and

that he could not be held by the tight fetters of death. He who alone was without the stain of Adam's sin. Finally, he showed himself to his beloved friends and standing before them on the high summit of the olive-bearing mount, when he was about to ascend into the starry heaven. He spoke to his disciples these words: "As the father has sent me forth, his dearly beloved son, into the world, so do I also send you, my cherished friends. But you, going speedily to all nations, teach them the commandments of eternal life, purifying forthwith with the sacred water those who believe in the name of the father, and likewise of the son, and also of the holy spirit, that thus they may put off the stains of ancient guilt; and by my power drive away various diseases and also compel, by your authority, the savage fiends to leave the cavern of the breast that they have invaded; preserve ever the sweetest charity toward such as would ever injure you in bitter hatred. By this all people may know that you are my very dear disciples, if you love your enemies with a sincere heart. Unendingly, bear ever in your memories, all that I, though innocent, have suffered for your sakes.

"Are not the cherubim unable to gaze upon the splendor of my countenance in the kingdom of my father? Yet this same countenance did the Jews assail with foul spittle; and my cheeks they buffeted with wicked blows; my hands they fastened with cruel nails to the cross — those hands that fashioned the first man in all his beauty from the slime of the earth, and with which I spread out the high heavens.

When I look upon the earth, it trembles in awe, nor is it able to bear the force of my great wrath; yet they, passing before my cross, disdainfully wagged their heads, and in their wickedness they reviled me utterly.

“After patiently enduring all these insults from these reprobates, I yet was unwilling to destroy them according to just vengeance, but while suffering innocently upon the wood of the cross, I begged the omnipotent father in his clemency forthwith to pardon them this great crime, urging by example what must be done so that my heavenly doctrine might be trustworthy, and that no one might dare say in dissembling words: ‘Behold, what he himself refuses to suffer, that he urges us to endure; and that which he himself has not done, he says that we must do.’ Freely was I the first to submit myself to the judgments of a cruel death, like to the true shepherd, in the goodness of a loyal heart, lovingly laying down my precious life for my own sheep; thus have I fulfilled completely and with loving fidelity all those things the prophets of old foretold concerning me. But now I ascend clothed in the might of my father, and as conqueror I rise to him enthroned above the high heaven. But I beseech you, that you do not let your loyal hearts be disturbed within you, because I will not leave you behind in this world like desolate orphans. But I shall speedily send the fostering grace of the holy spirit, which will teach you the truth in your hearts. Furthermore, I myself remain with you all days, through every age of time, even to the end of the world.”

When he had spoken these words, he turned to his own mother Mary and said to her tenderly: "Do not grieve, I pray you, chaste virgin, when you shall see me ascend into the high heaven, for I am not forsaking you, illustrious light of the world; and though departing, I am not deserting my sacred temple, nor am I relinquishing an incorruptible crown of life; for you alone I have found chaste among all mortals and worthy to bring forth my sacred body. When I shall summon you to depart from this life, I will send not only a celestial host to you, but I myself will come and will receive your blessed soul, much more resplendent than the glowing sun, and I will have it sweetly escorted amid the song of angels and will speedily place it reverently in the court of the high heavens. But now I command the faithful John to remain with you, he who shines forth with the beauty of virginity, so that your noble life may shine yet more illustriously, surrounded by the frequent homage of chaste virginity."

Immediately a throng of angels surrounded the savior as he spoke these words, praising him amid sweetly sounding hymns, and suddenly the mount was covered with a bright cloud. There came also in troops the ancient prophets, in whose midst was King David, skilled in song, amid the joyful strains of the lyre chanting these words, as he exhorted the son of the most high to seek his heavenly throne: "Lift yourself, powerful God, above the high heavens, and let your glory be lifted above the whole expanse

of the earth.” Encouraging the angelic hosts the prophet continued: “Exalt our God with a sweet song, glorifying him with frequent prayer on his sacred mountain; for he is the lord, our God, most holy.”

Then Christ Jesus, turning again with smiling countenance to his disciples, addressed them in these words: “Peace be to you, my brethren, who have ever duly done my will with loyal hearts, and may ever do so. Behold, I now give to you my lasting peace, and that peace I vouchsafe you, that endures forever.” When he had said this, he suddenly rose by his own power, and as victor over dread death he ascended above the heavens enwrapped in the homage of a brilliant cloud. While with eyes fixed on high the faithful throng had seen him ascend through the open portals of heaven, in the midst of all the subservient stars, there suddenly stood near them two men, come down from the starry heavens and clad in white robes; these spoke to them in words truly angelic: “Tell us, we pray you, men of Galilee, why do you stand here gazing in astonishment with your faces and eyes fixed upwards? This same Jesus, who alone before your wondering gaze has raised himself up and has ascended into heaven, will assuredly come as judge again in the form in which he now rises above the skies.”

Then David, beholding Christ raising himself above the clouds, struck his harp, making it resound with divine praise, and in a fitting manner he burst forth into a canticle

of joy: “The great God and lord is ascended in jubilee above the stars, amid the sound of the sacred trumpet.”

After this had happened, there thundered from the most high throne the voice of the father speaking to his son with divine utterance: “You are indeed my only beloved son in whom I have ever rightly been well pleased; you are from all eternity the true word of the father and are alone my true wisdom from on high. But now, repose as victor at the right hand of your father and rejoice until I shall make all your enemies, as they deserve, the footstool of your blessed feet forever.”

When Christ had taken on high to the throne of his father his human body again restored from the grave, all the angelic hosts, in submissive tones, gave praise to him, who, destined to reign throughout eternal ages, by his death conquered death and redeemed the world, to bring it to pass that his servants might reign for all eternity.

May whoever reads these lines, say with a pitying heart: “Gentle king, have mercy on poor Hrotsvit and spare her, and grant that she may with grace from heaven continue to sing your divine praises; she, who in verse has set forth your marvels.”

THE PASSION OF THE MARTYR ST. GONGOLF

Loving creator of light, maker of the world and of all things; you who stud the heavens with varied constellations and as ruler alone control the starry realm, holding all things by your will and governing them by your authority; you who through your own son made the world, and from nothing created the triple universe, and when you had formed the first man from the slime of the earth, did by the sweetness of your divine mouth breathe into him the breath of life and make him a living soul, that there might be a fixed work of your own hand: deign to overflow the heart of your servant Hrotsvit with the dew of your sacred grace, so that I may succeed in celebrating in song duly made, the goodly deeds of the illustrious martyr Gongolf; and may I ever praise your blessed name, who after the combat will give to your servants a gladsome reward of eternal life for the slight wounds of this life, assigning to them to dwell in the kingdom of light.

At the time when Pippin of the eastern empire held the royal scepter for the people of France, with excellent justice ruling the Burgundian nation, restraining by his laws those whom he had as subjects, there lived in those regions Gongolf, a renowned youth, valiant in arms, handsome in person, and charming in the rectitude of his morals. Dear he was to all, and amiable. They say that he was sprung from

a royal race and that he was kingly in his noble manners. Even from his mother's womb the hope of Gongolf rested in him who made all things out of nothing by his word, and Gongolf did not put his trust in the splendor of his descent, but he exceeded his nobility of birth by good deeds.

The renowned mother who was happy in so glorious a son, as soon as she had brought this child into the world, speedily had him baptized and thus cleansed from the ancient stain that our first parents had contracted. And when the sign of the cross had been made with holy chrism upon his brow, he was received among the illustrious sons of the church; and presently, while crooning in his cradle, he was richly nourished with the doctrine of the most holy trinity. As often as he took milk, so often did he drink in the sacred faith as he lay there at his mother's breasts. Such was the bosom on which he reclined while he thrived on the nourishment of his mother's milk. After he was weaned from it, he was animated with a serious disposition; and while in tender years he meditated the thoughts of old age, he was continuously devoted to holy studies.

Presently, while yet a youth, advancing in all righteousness, he was through the favor of the beneficent prince Pippin, who cherished an ardent affection for him because of his excellence, brought to the royal court as he well deserved. Yet even though the due kindness of the king lavished upon him such glory, that already in his

early years he was royal proconsul, he was not puffed up with haughty arrogance, but in his humble heart he loathed honors, seeking only the benefits that are from above. For to him especially there had fallen the bulk of his father's possessions, but this he divided with great eagerness among the poor, as if he saw Christ, in the midst of the wretched and the indigent, smiling upon him because of his goodly gift. Considering, moreover, the example of blessed Job, he became very often a hand to the maimed and a foot to the lame; to those bereft of sight he served as a cautious eye, thus giving all people a noble example. No less eagerly did he labor in human affairs, making himself equal to the first of the lords. For if false history of the past has not deluded our ears with vain and doubtful things, this holy man, whom our hand has already begun to depict, was accustomed to follow the track of four-footed beasts and by eager hunting to weary his handsome limbs, submitting to the command of his cherished master. His sword never knew how to yield vanquished when warlike troops were opposed, but he always brought a glorious triumph home from the fray, safely protected by divine aid.

Our muses cannot adequately set forth, in these verses fashioned in dactylic measures, with how many marks of distinction the king of kings, in proportion to his goodness, had bedecked his beloved. Yet in untutored words I shall loudly proclaim but one of the many glorious distinctions.

As history proves, he went forth to lead the army and to subdue a people exceedingly haughty in the arts of Mars. Soon he conquered as usual in battle, not shedding his own crimson blood, and signing an agreement with the hostile tribes whom he had subjected under his own sway; having made peace, he returned. It chanced that while he was on his march, the road led along the fenced estate of a certain poor man. In this a picturesque spot lay hidden amidst a wealth of vernal flowers, shaded with the leafage of various plants. A clear crystal fount with noisy stream gushed forth, watering the spot. When the leader laid his renowned eyes on this, allowing them to range over the clear-gushing stream, he was fascinated by the charm of that cool spring, and, halting, he stopped his march, well pleased to tarry there. Then he sent a servant to summon the owner of that flower-covered spot.

He who had been summoned came quickly, complying at once with the will of the leader. When the general beheld him advancing, he approached him and in persuasive tones begged him in the affability of his humble mind with some such words: "Sweet friend, attend generously to my pleadings, I beseech you, and sell me this clear streamlet, which with its crystal and sweetly murmuring waves washes and waters your land, and presently, I will in return heap upon you an ample amount of genuine silver."

When the joyful promise with its delectable sound reached the ears of the poor man, his happy face beamed,

and all the emotions hidden in the secret recesses of his heart rushed tingling through his veins. Then the poor man, more athirst than you could imagine for a doubtful hope, began to break forth in some such words: "O you, our country's glory, second to none in holiness, whom the nations of the East venerate with loyal hearts, what is my tongue able to say worthy of you? Is not our safety placed in your hands? Whatever you by your word shall ordain that I do, be this ever so difficult and arduous, it is but just, fortunate one, that I obey you as the humble servant of a high lord. If it please you that I, an old farmer, leave this place, I will not resist, but will follow your command."

When he had said this he restrained his lips from further speech, nor did he say any more with loquacious tongue. But on his part the princely Gongolf hearkened to the dutiful speech in his own goodness, and speedily kept his promise to the poor peasant and gave him a full hundred coins. This transaction concluded, he immediately set out on his return, hastening to continue his journey toward his native land, now less esteemed. Thereupon, those who were ignorant of the august miracle that the most high would soon perform, began to revile their chief with subdued murmurings and to condemn his deed of piety as if it were a crime.

But, believe it, their pretense of devotion did not escape the man, for soon their secret words were laid bare

to him, and he gave utterance in a clear response to his companions, saying: "Why, dear associates, does it please you in reprehensible speech to censure me more than is just, saying that I have stupidly given a large sum to an alien and a stranger? Why do you say that I have reason to grieve over the loss both of a large amount of money and also of that spring I just purchased at a high price, as if I had given by my own right hand, which is duly prodigal of wealth, gold in exchange for an insignificant return? It is not becoming to disclose to you by our speech the reason why this hand has parted with such a sum. But now it behooves you to calm your agitated minds. I pray that, forbearing such conversation, you now choose from among you a trustworthy man experienced in the blowing winds and wandering breezes, who may quickly return to seek this isolated spot and examine whether there is a spring of clear water flowing with monotonous murmur over smooth pebbles among gaily-colored flowers; and then it will be evident, if that rustic boasts of both gains, that I have utterly robbed myself."

When he had said this, straightway one of them returned, and after passing over the long space of road he arrived very much wearied at that designated farm, where the spring had been purchased by the saintly master. Not immediately, however, eager though he was, did he set foot upon the boundaries of that flowery courtyard, but became entangled in twining thorns and prickly brambles and thistles, with which the untilled country round about was wont

to be covered. He did not shrink from approaching the thickets, desirous as he was to set his eyes upon the surrounding hedges, so that he might discover the crystal waters of that little spring. Yet he looked in vain with searching eyes, for the spring had dried up and had straightway vanished. And he thought that perhaps the density of the intertwined thicket made it impossible to see clearly.

Then slowly advancing, with his haughty neck still unbent, he turned his steps into the courtyard, hoping that perchance the fount lay hidden beneath the charming foliage of the flowers amid the various grasses. But when he had reached the place and had found that land dry which heretofore had abounded in a sturdy spring, not yet thoroughly deluded by vain hope, he even prostrated himself upon the ground and began indeed to lick the sandy places, trying if in any way he could lap even the smallest drop, but he did not even moisten his parched tongue. Finally he realized the import of the kindly deed of the holy Gongolf, and he grieved that he had been reluctant to believe in his pious deeds.

From here he returned and rejoined his companions, whereupon he noticed in the air an extraordinary cloud, resembling a snowy white hood, floating about the comely head of the servant of Christ. Catching sight of this, he began to enlarge upon the sudden disappearance of the spring, about which he had just learned; and he urged his

companions to put from their minds all doubt and now at length to be believing regarding the merits of the saintly man. While they were conversing thus in friendly intercourse, they came upon the property of their master, where walls had been constructed about a place profuse with flowers and surrounded with many and various trees.

To this place the beloved friend of Christ directed his steps, well pleased in heart to course about the beautiful field. Then with sinews contracted he fixed the rod which he had carried about with him into the earth and presently returned to his dwelling. Here unnumbered servants vied with each other, stoutly attentive to their various duties; and these setting out a sumptuous meal now demanded that he satisfy his long-endured hunger. But he ordered that the crowd of poor and feeble, whom he had been accustomed often to feed at his own table, come forward. Then when he had given them their fill with his own hand, he at length sat down at table. The Franks likewise feasted, reclining about the halls and relishing a feast of Bacchanalian cheer.

Meanwhile the eastern star invited slumber; approaching night threatened black darkness, and presently friendly rest suddenly followed upon the banquet creeping over limbs which had been given to feasting. The pious general began to pass a sleepless night, in fervent voice imploring his lord.

When vanquished night departed with its veil of shadows torn and the rising sun circled the firmament, there came the boys who held the rank of pages with the boots of their cherished master, knocking at the door which had been barred for the night and begging that they might now have access. The general, however, was silent for a while and feigned sleep. And then, as though waking from deep slumber, he commanded the guard to unfasten the inner bars and to open the room to the soldiers. When these were admitted, he begged water to wash his hands; but at the will of the almighty, water failed them. Then this blessed man, firm in his devotion to Christ, speedily sent one of his worthy pages to fetch the rod already mentioned, which he had in late evening fixed in his estate.

The boy, leaping in rapid pace through the grassy field, cast his swift and wandering eyes about, searching for the staff but lately buried in the ground. And when he had come upon it, he seized it with clutching fingers and drew it from the earth, leaving there a small cavity, to serve in later times as a distinguishing mark. This was hardly done when the cloudlet, which before had been floating about in empty air, broke at that very spot and poured forth the swelling waters of the spring already described and established permanent channels for the bubbling fount in the spot where the tiny rod had been fixed.

Astounded, the boy sent out a cry, summoning the soldiers to hasten thither, and to them he narrated the joy of the wondrous sign, which the king of the angelic host had granted. Then all with one accord, terrified at such a miracle, in wonder raised their faces heavenward and extended their hands to the skies, amid a canticle of praise giving thanks to God. And behold, one of the palace guards brought in his hand a basin, which he quickly filled with the miraculous water. Then he hastened joyously to the gentle Gongolf, so that he might make him aware of the singular favor.

Then standing with calm countenance before the mighty consul, he uttered these words with joyous lips: “Receive joyfully this rare gift which you did merit, and which the insignificant earth did not bring forth for you, but rather the king of the heavens has sent it from the lofty sky through the wondrous service of a cloud. It is clear that from this we should now draw great joy, because you received so glorious a distinction.”

Straightway the general spoke with calm demeanor and made response in edifying words: “It is not becoming that you should at all attribute these events to our merits, since I have never deserved even the least favor. But it remains that we render manifold thanks to Christ, who himself is ever ready to assist his own servants.”

When he had said this, as was his wont, he washed in the wondrous water, and having cleansed himself, he sang thus in praise to God: “O eternal kindness, the sole hope of our life! Supreme power of divine grace! Who is able in worthy accents to extol the works of God almighty, creator of the universe, who renders new favors, not unlike the miracles of past ages, through his son? These are the wonders of your own power, Christ, who at one time for the Jewish people commanded the rock to pour forth sweet waters and ordered the bitter waters to become very sweet. Therefore, not unmindful of the power, lamb of the thunderer, with whom you in justice rule the triple universe, have you willed now to entrust this noble sign unto our land also for your greater glory, in order that those who dwell throughout the well-formed earth may learn that you are and have ever been the only God. This favor also grant us now, Jesus, because of our supplication, that this spring may wash away various diseases, in order that each one may praise you in sweet-sounding strains, whoever feels himself made whole and strong.”

This he said, and the kindly healing forthwith followed his request, for the water became salubrious. For this may reverent praise be given to the lord!

After this the betraying fame of the delightful miracle sped rapidly throughout the regions of the entire globe. It exhorted not only the citizens of that land, who were

privileged by the gift borne thither by the breezes, but also weary pilgrims from far distant lands, who speedily collected from everywhere and freely received the boon of medicine by tasting even moderately of the fountain. Frequently one might see untutored crowds lying there, tossing their languishing limbs about on the brink.

Thus one might believe that there were present those of the Jewish people who were laden with various diseases, and who formerly, in the five porches of Solomon, lay about the wall of the pool of Bethsaida, contending, after the water had been stirred by a celestial healer, which of them it should be that might first be cleansed of his infirmity (for according to the law they of old obtained so great a favor, subject to choice, that he who was the first to slip in should be cured of his disease); while many others were in their grief postponed to the coming day, and in proportion to their hope of life were greedily praying that the healing angel might descend from the portals of heaven and stir the water even slightly with his foot. So, too, did these in Gongolf's day, in their longing for health, yearn to touch even the tiniest drop of this spring. Then, restored to health at the first taste, they made the heavens resound with melodious hymns, as they rendered thanks to Christ for the great boon. Because of the merits of his holy one, he gave such blessings to the wretched. In like manner did they exalt this worthy man in their praises to the skies, because it was through him that they possessed such a gift.

If there were leisure to extend praise equal to the deeds and excellent character of a general so eminent, day would sooner be covered with a pall of night from Olympus before our account would have reached its termination. But leaving such things for the discussion of learned poets, let us describe what we have begun with feeble pen.

At all events, with the approval of the eastern race of Franks, made illustrious by the deeds and goodness of their leader, this beloved of Christ and unsullied glory of his people, was coaxed by many petitions of the nobles to join himself in lawful wedlock to a worthy spouse, lest the renowned line of that royal race come to an end for lack of issue.

The venerable general Gongolf, finally influenced by these entreaties and touched by the persuasions of the fathers, joined to his own love a distinguished spouse of royal stock and one of singular beauty. He admonished his bride to lead a blameless life, made up of purity of morals and aspirations. But alas! the ravenous serpent, wily and hateful, beguiled the intractable heart of the wife. It chanced that a bold and wretched scribe of Gongolf was inflamed by a more than lawful affection for his mistress. And woe! This woman, overcome by the bitter wiles of the evil one, was swiftly aflame with sinful passion, and clinging to the scribe she, in the secret infatuation of her heart, rejected her lawful lord for the servant. The fierce enemy now itched to expose the crime he knew had been formed by his own cunning, and,

therefore, impatient of delay, he kept proclaiming it from the house tops, making many sharers in his malicious joy.

While this state of affairs was, to the distress of all, being rumored abroad throughout all the inhabitants of the Frankish nation, it was wafted by gossip to the sensitive ears of the blessed Gongolf, the gracious general. When he heard the rumors gliding about through secret channels and bearing an import of no slight distress and affliction, the worthy man bemoaned the great wickedness and was wounded with the arrow of bitter anguish. In his poignant grief, he reflected within his innermost soul upon two opposite courses: first to prepare a punishment according to law for the act of terrible injustice, secondly to grant affectionate pardon in accord with his usual goodness. For a long time he suffered from excessive uncertainty as to what he should do. At length indeed he devotedly refrained from fitting punishment and did not choose to divulge further the affair, solicitous only to prevent further guilt on the part of the hapless woman, so that hereafter she might not presume to lead an impious life. And when he was resting his pious mind from these distressing cares, he chanced, while wandering about his courtyard, to come upon the head of that spring that had been divinely sent him through the wondrous office of a cloud.

Here the saintly Gongolf halted, for his faithless spouse had suddenly come upon him. He addressed her

in kindly tones but with serious demeanor: "I have often heard sinister rumors touching you, to the effect that you have been corrupted by a couch thus wickedly made your own, but I defer to drag the matter into the light of day, out of pity for you, until perhaps I may learn whether or not you are guilty. Nor do I order that a mob be swiftly summoned from everywhere to a doleful assembly, so that the learned senate, of high rank, may try the case and determine the punishment for so heinous a crime. I will but urge you merely to moisten your right hand with the cool waters of this fountain here, and unless immediately some punishment results, there will be no need of further trial."

And the woman, with rash confidence, in the pride of her heart, her own obstinacy yet more confirmed by the evil one, at length entrusted her bare hand to the depths of the water, expecting nothing to happen. Yet she learned, as she burned in the midst of the cooling water, what thing the right hand of God is able to do. For indeed the haughty woman was scorched amid the sodden sand and was severely burnt by the watery flames. She, who disdained to be subdued by peaceful words, was forced to submit to eternal justice.

O ever ready dispensation of our Christ! Equitable power of the just judgment of God! She, who boastingly moistened her hand with the liquid, much to her grief was deprived of the skin of her moistened hand without delay, as soon as she withdrew her hand, and she now bore the

painful indictment of the infamy she had denied. Now after these events, her heart, conscious of guilt, trembled, nor did the convicted woman entertain any hope of pardon; ready only to die and to expiate her crime by the punishment of death speedily imposed. But restraining the just wrath of his sad heart, Gongolf, the general, that excellent peacemaker, demanded that the profligate scribe be at once expelled and go from his own country, in order that the criminal might to the end of his days bewail his evil life, shut out from his fatherland and driven into exile; and pitying the wretched woman, he bestowed upon her the distinction of pardon, but suffered her to dwell no more in his abode.

From now on, as good repute, the panegyrist of a beneficent life, had increased in behalf of Gongolf, the wily deceiver of men and the captor of the wicked, pouring out the ancient venom of envy, with every possible deceit of his ancient cunning, attempted to destroy the good reputation of Gongolf, lest the nation, influenced by his great and worthy example, might give its formerly haughty neck to the yoke of the lord. Then for a long time he strove with malicious guile to injure the famous general. But in vain, because from day to day the power of affection for him increased more and more in the hearts of that great people.

At length Satan encompassed with deceitful wiles that wretched man who because of his crime had been driven from the country, making this rogue burn with a thirst for

noble blood; and he knew not how to spare his own lord. To such a degree was the profligate suddenly imbued with hatred that he desired the death of the just and holy Gongolf. And when he had sought again the hateful adulteress, his equal in savage fierceness, he disclosed to her all that he had planned. She, readily submitting, alas, to his requests, desired that the crime be accomplished without delay. And secretly she prepared accursed snares for the just man, thus utterly unmindful of the past pardon, by means of which Gongolf had freed her from a just punishment ready to be inflicted, and had not allowed the guilty woman to be destroyed. Ungrateful for these benefits, the adulteress yielded to her sinful accomplice, and was inflamed with passion for the servile scribe. And when night, the witness of deeds of darkness, had covered the heavens with shadows, the despicable adulteress felt the hour to have come in which they might treacherously destroy the saintly Gongolf. This fact she made known to the armed scoundrel. With drawn sword, he severed, sacrilegiously, the hip-bone of the sainted Gongolf, that illustrious martyr, and leaving his fatherland, he fled with the wife of Gongolf. Thus was he captivated by passion for his ungoverned mistress. But just as he knew not the bounds of lawful love, so punishment suffered not itself to be delayed. By heaven's decree, he suddenly poured out his bowels and heart, so lately puffed up with pride and sin, and thus, the wretched man, laid low by the avenging hand of God, lost the adulteress he had purchased with a life.

In the meantime, while the holy martyr, injured by that stealthy wound, was draining the cup of imminent death and was in that supreme moment drawing his latest breath, there stood about him a celestial throng. They summoned with their voices this firm confessor to cast off the body fashioned with feeble sinews from the earth, and sweetly soothed with their angelic strains, straightway to tread the starry pathway to the heavenly abode. Then the martyr presently breathing forth the soul well bathed in the radiant blood of the crimson lamb, was borne aloft and carried through the serene starry sky, and at the gate of heaven placed before his lord. Thereupon from the hands of Christ there were brought to him the distinguished laurel and the palm of perpetual victory, and through his mortal wound, he, clad in glittering garments, was joined to the white host of the court of heaven.

Meanwhile a great funeral procession was arranged, and the lifeless body was honored with solemn obsequies. All wept at the death of such a patron, but his own servants were especially disconsolate. A charming spot, which, it is said, the ancients called Tul, was selected for that venerable tomb. Here the body of holy Gongolf was laid to rest while the sacred remains were besprinkled with tears. From then on, those seeking unfailing help often visited those hallowed bones, and even the nobles bent low over that sacred tomb because of the various vicissitudes of this uncertain life. Even he who bore the scepter, lying prostrate, pressed his lips to

the marble and printed kisses upon the holy grave, imploring with hope, promises, and vows, that through the loving merits of the martyr, Christ might be propitious to him.

Why should I describe the crowd lying before the threshold of that sacred place, or why recount their numberless petitions? These things no mind is able to comprehend and no feeble writing able to describe. Yet the martyr, propitious to them, bestows gifts of wondrous sweetness, and every man realizes that all favors will be vouchsafed, in behalf of which they supplicate the goodly champion.

Here in truth, the blind, joyous at the restoration of his sight, presently drinks in with his eyes the clear light of day. And the ears long shut to sound are unbarred, while movement is restored to lame feet. Here also various diseases are driven from the sick, and enfeebled limbs are cleansed. I am not capable with words in a becoming manner of enumerating all the wondrous gifts this great nation gleans. Not only do those burn with affection for their cherished patron who chance to be townsmen of the great man, but citizens even of distant lands experience the ready assistance of the martyr. Thus the land of Tul boasts itself fortunate throughout the universe, cherishing in its tender bosom those sacred bones.

Finally, because I have begun summarily to discuss the sacred deeds of the illustrious Gongolf, it remains that I now seek to speak in simple words about that wretched

profligate, the unworthy wife of Gongolf, and the sign agreeing to her own misdeeds, which she, worthy as she was of condemnation to eternal perdition, unwittingly manifested. Certain it is, that when gladsome fame, the witness of the victor, had reached even to the stars of the most high heavens and had sped to every quarter of the stable world, publishing the grandeur of Gongolf's glory, a certain devout man was hastening joyfully from the tomb celebrated for its miracles. Then encountering the adulteress previously mentioned, he paused; and looking at her with astonished gaze, he addressed her in bitter words she deserved, fashioning with his lips speech to this effect: "O wretched profligate, well deserving of eternal flames, does not now your treachery shame you, or that crime grieve you which you with evil mind have wrought against the holy one of God by the secret instigation of a wanton accomplice? But now I make clear in pity of you the excellent remedy of sane advice you ought to take immediately: that amid weeping you seek the holy tomb and wash away your stains with abundant tears, because the remains of this witness, now dead, here sacredly entombed, are resplendent with extraordinary manifestations. And I trust that it will be permitted you, you wretch, however unworthy, to be able to obtain pardon if you bewail your guilt."

But that mind, that had wickedly given itself up to all baneful vices, refused to move along the upright way of life. And now embracing only the unstable pleasures of a wanton

life, she cared naught for the joys of the eternal fatherland. Thus the unfortunate woman, bold deviser of crime that she was, refused to pay heed to these peaceable admonitions because she committed herself totally to transitory things and strove not to have any hope in imperishable goods.

So, though hearing these words of him who spoke the truth, the crafty woman, darting about her bloodthirsty eyes, tossed her unsubdued head angrily and barked at him from her pestilence breathing lips these words: "Why do you speak to no purpose, pretending that miracles happen repeatedly through the merits of Gongolf? Those things that are reported are certainly not proven true; nor do miracles occur at his grave any more than do wondrous manifestations take place about my person."

This she said, and lo! a marvelous happening followed her words, according with the taunt she had uttered. For from her came forth sounds so disgusting that our tongue abhors to mention them; and after this, as often as she spoke, so often would that uncanny noise recur; so that she, who had refused to maintain due chastity, was a source of uncontrolled ridicule to all and carried indeed for the rest of her days the mark of her own iniquity.

THE PASSION OF PELAGIUS,
THE MOST PRECIOUS MARTYR,
WHO IN OUR TIMES, AT CORDOVA,
WAS CROWNED WITH MARTYRDOM

Illustrious Pelagius, brave martyr of Christ and loyal soldier of the king reigning throughout all ages, regard with kindly solicitude me, poor Hrotsvit, your servant, who, subject to you with devoted soul, cherishes you in mind, and regard too with gracious heart my song. You kindly grant that the dark recesses of my slight intelligence are watered with dew from above, in order that I may be able worthily to celebrate with pen your wondrous praises and your renowned victory, and to tell how with death you nobly conquered this cruel world, purchasing the glorious palm with your blood.

In the western parts of the globe, there shone forth a fair ornament, a venerable city, haughty because of its uncommon might in war; a city well cultured, held by the Spaniards, rich and known by the famous name Cordova. Illustrious because of its charms, it was also renowned for all resources, especially abounding in the seven streams of knowledge, and ever famous for continual victories. There was a time when it had been well submissive to holy Christ and had brought forth to the lord sons made white-robed by holy baptism. But suddenly that martial power changed the well established principles of the

sacred faith by the spreading of the error of iniquitous doctrine and did harm to the faithful people.

For the treacherous tribe of the savage Saracens harassed by war the stout inhabitants of this city, seized for itself the destiny of the glorious realm by force, and murdered the virtuous king, who had been cleansed in baptism, and who had deservedly held the royal scepter and had subdued the citizens so many times by the reins of salutary legislation. He was now laid low by the hostile sword. After terrible carnage, a conquered folk remained there; and then the leader of that barbaric people and author of that warfare, a man very wicked and of an accursed way of life, finally appropriated the destiny of the entire empire, and settled in the plundered countryside his wicked allies, thus filling the lamenting city with many enemies and corrupting with barbarous rites (a thing pitiful to relate) that ancient mother of faith undefiled. And he intermingled his pagans with the rightful inhabitants, in order that the pagans might induce them to corrupt the customs of their fathers and to defile them by profaning their worship through association with the pagans.

But the tender flock ruled by Christ, the good shepherd, presently despised the cruel command of the inexorable tyrant, saying that it preferred to die and to observe the law even at the cost of death rather than live stupidly in servile subjection to such new rites. When the king had learned this,

he realized that it would not be without his own loss if he were to inflict bitter punishment of death at one and the same time upon all within that prosperous city, which he had taken after many a contention in valiant strife. Therefore, by changing his former decree, he immediately passed and proclaimed a law to the effect that, whoever preferred to serve the eternal king and to preserve the former Christian customs of their forefathers, might do so lawfully without any fear of punishment. But this one condition was to be faithfully observed, that no citizen of the aforesaid city should presume also to blaspheme the idols made of gold, which that prince or whoever was holding the power worshiped; otherwise he must at once submit his head to the drawn sword and must suffer the supreme punishment of death.

After these things were done, the faithful city was lulled indeed into a feigned peace, overwhelmed as it was so often by a thousand evils. But those whom the fire of the love of Christ consumed, and whom a thirst for martyrdom urged to defame vocally the marble images that the prince, bedecked with jewels and with body prostrate, worshiped with Sabeian incense, these the prince speedily condemned to capital punishment. But their souls, purified in blood, won heaven.

Thus amid vicissitudes many years rolled by in Cordova, subject so long to the sway of pagan rulers, until in our own times a certain prince of the family of kings received

by rightful succession the throne of his fathers. He was inferior indeed to his forebears and tainted with the luxury of the flesh, but arrogant in the glory of his power. This man was Abdrahemen. He feigned to deal with the worshipers of Christ according to the custom of his father, weighing well the agreement of the faith mentioned above, nor did he, in his loyalty to his father, dissolve the unjust decree that the author of crime, that treacherous ravager of the city, had enacted when he had vanquished in war the Christian king. But revolving it in his mind and keeping it with deep devotion, he often bedewed the land with innocent blood, destroying the sacred lives of those just men who yearned to sing sweet praises to Christ and to denounce in speech his own foolish idols. Moreover, this sacrilegious man, conducting himself so arrogantly in his palace and heaping up for himself well-merited punishment, presumed that he was to be the very king of kings, and that all nations would become subject to his command, and that there was not a tribe so replete with reckless valor as would venture to encounter his army in war.

While he was thus swelling more disdainfully than was right, he heard that a nation lived in a remote place in the region of Galicia, a country victorious in war, worshipping Christ and despising idols. These people dared to spurn his laws, asserting that they would never be subject to such perverted masters. When the king learned this, he burned with hellish fury, bearing in his heart the envy of

the ancient serpent, and with fiery cunning he meditated long upon the disgrace, planning in his mind what he should do with such a foe.

At length forsooth, revealing his scheme to all, he addressed the lordly vassals of that wealthy town, barking out baneful words from his villainous throat to this effect: "It is not hidden that kings have submitted to our empire, and that all nations that the deep ocean embraces live according to the dictates of our laws. But I do not know what overweening confidence possesses the subject Galicians to make them despise our gracious covenant and be ungrateful for past kindness. It remains, therefore, that we seek out with armed sinews these Galicians, harassing those rebellious enemies, until, laid low by our weapons and even against their wills, they may subject their necks for all times to our bondage."

After he had boastfully spoken these words and had recounted the reason for his scheme, he commanded his folk to assemble in military array beneath the various standards of the divisions, so that they might proceed with him to destroy that faithful nation. And he displayed his countenance beneath a jeweled helmet, his accursed form attired in metal armor. And when with such a procession he had reached the aforesaid city and tried the nation in a first encounter, he chanced to win such a triumph that he ensnared as captives twelve nobles together with the lord of the city; and he bound these men with strong chains.

When this loss of their nobles had been inflicted amid savage fighting, the Christian nation, vanquished, surrendered to its enemies and was subjected to the unjust yoke of the vicious king. Then the first treaty was again restored, and the twelve nobles bound with thongs advanced together with their fellow captive, the chief of the vanquished nation. These were speedily loosened of their bonds, for they were ransomed at the great price of their own wealth. But the ransom price of the chief was at the command of the king doubled and was more than he was able to pay from his own treasures. And when for his own ransom he brought to the avaricious king whatever of value he had in his possession at home, it lacked, as chance had it, a small portion of the appointed sum. The king, becoming aware of this and meditating also a scheme in his mind, said that he was unwilling to send their cherished chief back to his people unless he first paid in full his designated ransom; for he longed thus not so much for the amount of gold that was lacking, but he desired eagerly to give over to death the ruler of that people.

This ruler had an only son, noble, endowed with every charm that bodily comeliness could afford, Pelagius by name, resplendent in person, prudent in counsel, glorious in all virtue; and he, having hardly completed the years of his boyhood, had now reached the first flower of manhood. And when he understood that the king was quite inflexible toward his father, he coaxed his grieving parent in words to this effect: "O my cherished father, hearken to my words

favorably, and kindly accept my suggestion with ready will. For I know full well that your life is declining with advancing years and that your sinews are utterly devoid of their former strength; nor are you able to bear labors, however light. But I shall still prevail by reason of my strength of limb and be able to submit to the harsh masters for a season. Therefore I admonish and entreat you with persuasive pleadings to pledge me, your cherished son, to the king, until you shall be able to pay the entire ransom; nor permit your old age to perish in close binding fetters.”

But the old man opposed him with stern voice: “Desist from speaking such words, beloved son, desist! And do not through grief lead my white hairs into the region of death. Indeed upon your well being alone my life depends, and without you, dear son, I would be able to live not even one day. You are my whole pride, the great glory of your ancestors, and you are, moreover, the sole hope of our vanquished nation. Therefore it behooves me to leave my dear native land and as captive enter haughty Spain, rather than that I deliver up to chains you, who are the hope of my advanced years.”

But Pelagius would not allow his father to speak further in this way, and by endearing words he soothed the mind of his cherished parent and forced him in caressing tones to yield to his persuasions. At length the venerable old man agreed to these pleadings and delivered up his poor son as his own ransom. The king then ordered Pelagius to

be led away with him and exultingly returned to his own country and entered it victoriously.

Let no one believe that it was because of any merits of the king that he had triumphed amid such great splendor, but rather that it happened through the just decree of the secret judge, either that the nation duly chastised with so heavy a scourge might weep over the sins for which all were to blame, or that Pelagius, about to suffer death for the law of Christ, might perchance reach a place where he would be able to give himself to death and to shed the stream of his blood for Christ, commending to the lord his soul made holy by death.

After the cruel king had entered his wealthy city, celebrating a brilliant triumph over a righteous nation, he forthwith commanded the illustrious friend of Christ to be bound and thrown into the black darkness of a prison, and there, nourished though he had been upon delicacies, to be supplied with but little food.

Alas, Cordova has a horrible place beneath a vault, forgetful of light and made over to darkness, a place that they say causes intense suffering for poor captives. Here Pelagius, the distinguished child of peace, was confined upon the urgent and wicked command of the king. To this place came the principal men in zealous haste, moved by kindness to soothe the heart of the imprisoned youth. And

when they had seen the comely countenance of the captive and had relished the words from his sweet lips, words tinged with the honey of studied utterance, they longed to free such a handsome youth from chains, and to this they urged the king, holding the scepter at that time. For well they knew that the supreme lord of that prosperous city was tainted with vice, and that he ardently loved youths of handsome appearance, and desired to join them to friendship with himself. Therefore mindful of this fact and commiserating in their hearts the lot of Pelagius, they pleaded with the king in this manner: "It is not becoming to your rule, most brave king, that harshly you command a handsome youth to be punished and the tender limbs of a guiltless hostage to be fettered. If you would but see his singular comeliness and but relish his honeyed words, how you would desire to associate such a youth in your service and enlist him in the first military rank, so that, comely as he is, he might wait upon you in the palace!"

The king, appeased by these words and roused by this plea, ordered Pelagius to be freed of his cruel bonds, and after he had bathed well in cleansing waters, thus refreshed, to be clad in rich garments and to have his throat adorned with a jeweled necklace, that thus he might be able to serve as a page in that stately court. And when the haughty command of Caesar had spoken to this effect, the martyr was at once led forth from his black dungeon and, clad in a toga, was given a place in the royal court.

Now when he stood in the midst of the courtiers, his appearance surpassed in splendor that of all his toga-clad companions. All directed their gaze toward him, at one time admiring his countenance, at another, the charming utterance of his lips. The king also, attracted to him at first sight, was passionately inflamed by the amiable beauty of that royal youth. At length he ordered that Pelagius, for whom he entertained such an excessive infatuation, be now placed on the throne of the realm with him, so that he might give expression to his affection. And then he sought in his frenzy to bend his head and to kiss the youth he loved, embracing him the while.

But the soldier of Christ would not endure such advances from a pagan king tainted with the lust of the flesh, but he playfully turned his ear to the royal mouth, withdrawing amid great mirth his lips. Meanwhile his fair mouth fashioned words to this effect: "It is not proper that a man cleansed in the baptism of Christ submit his chaste neck to a barbarous embrace, nor should a worshiper of Christ who has been anointed with sacred chrism court the kiss of a lewd slave of the demon. Therefore, embrace with heart unrestrained, those ignorant men who with you attempt to appease stupid gods of clay; let those be your companions, who are servants of an idol."

But the king on the other hand was not moved to anger, and with gentle words he attempted to calm the beloved

youth: “O you frivolous boy! You boast that you can rightly despise the tender affection of our authority and frequently and boldly ridicule our gods. Does not immediate loss of your young life move you, and the fact that perchance you will bereave your grieving parents? It is imperative that we torture blasphemers of our cult and then subject them to death, piercing their throats with the sword, unless they yield and reject their blasphemous attitude. Therefore do I advise you with paternal admonition to be cautious of such words in a spirit unsubdued and to share with me a constant affection of heart. And hereafter, do not dare to break our command, but with great readiness observe my utterances that must needs be obeyed. For you I cherish in my heart, and you do I prefer to honor with such distinction before all the attendants of the court, that, myself predominating, you may be second to me in this proud kingdom.”

This he said, and with his right hand he held firmly the face of the martyr, embracing with his left that hallowed neck, that thus he might imprint at least one kiss. But the martyr confounded the crafty pleasantry of the king and speedily directed against the royal countenance a swinging fist, dealing such a blow to that downturned face that the blood, flowing forthwith from the resultant wound, polluted his beard and bedewed even his garments.

Then the monarch, grimly moved to no little wrath, commanded that Pelagius, the child of the heavenly king, be

hurled bodily over the walls from an engine that frequently showered stones on embattled enemies, in order that the noble champion being dashed upon the sands of the stream that flowed about the city with its mighty waters, might be shattered in every member and thus broken, straightway perish. And his henchmen obeyed the king as he shouted these commands, and presently fashioned a penalty previously unheard of, hurling Pelagius from a sling to martyrdom, far across the towering walls of that accursed city. But even though everywhere immense rocks hedged in the cherished body of that champion as he fell, nevertheless the friend of Christ remained unharmed.

It came quickly, of course, to the royal ears that the body of the martyr, which he had ordered impaled upon the sharp rocks of the river bank, could not be shattered though dashed against them. More enraged at this because he had been utterly foiled, the king at once ordered the head to be cut off with drawn sword, that thus the supreme sentence might be carried out. Finally the executioners, trembling at the king's orders, dispatched the faithful champion of Christ with the sword and consigned the dead body to the keeping of the waters.

Yet Pelagius, the soldier of the king who is forever victorious over death, soared aloft through the constellations of the starry heaven, being delightfully borne aloft amid sweet angelic hymns. And from the right hand of the true

judge, whose throne is above the stars of heaven, he duly received the resplendent palm in return for death by martyrdom achieved through a praiseworthy ending of life. Nor did he fail to merit the crown of that ardent love by reason of which he languished in chains for the life of his father, forsaking his native land and his conquered folk. Indeed, no tongue is able to describe in pious words that laurel gleaming with celestial radiance with which he is resplendent for his chastity so well preserved, united as he is to the throng received into the heavenly home to sing perpetually melodies to the lamb. Amen.

After the executioners following the orders of the king had duly confided the noble remains of the dead to the bosom of the stream and had lodged them among the rocks there so that the precious relics might be without a worthy sepulcher, Christ, who does not allow his own holy ones to lose perchance the smallest hair from their distinguished heads, did not suffer his faithful witness to remain in the stream, but duly provided for him a spot worthy to preserve the sacred limbs of the saint in a tomb.

For it chanced that fishermen, cutting the waves with their oars and catching in varied nets the wave wandering herds, saw on a distant spot of the river's bank the body of the martyr tossing to and fro amid the crashing waves. Discerning this from a distance with cautious eyes, they speedily set sail thither and raised the body. Nor did they

recognize the beauty of the revered personage because the limbs were covered with crimson blood, and the noble head was lying at a distance tossed by the stream. But this they understood and believed with ready heart, that he, whoever he was, had perished for the law of Christ, because in this region those alone received capital punishment who, washed in the sacred font of baptism, did not fear steadfastly to condemn the rites of the monarch.

And when, recovering the head and replacing it on the shoulders, they recognized the comely countenance of Pelagius, they with pitying hearts broke forth in plaints like these: "Alas, the sole hope of his own nation lies here lifeless, and the glory of his country wastes without the distinction of a tomb. Do we not know well always to sell for sufficiently many shekels the lifeless remains of holy men, the loss of whose head shows them to be Christians? And who would doubt that this body is that of a praiseworthy champion, since the trunk lies wretchedly bereft of the glory of the head?"

While they were saying these words, they placed those holy remains in the skiff, and swiftly turning sail, they made their way to the dock of that city well known to all nations. Here, hauling their skiff upon land, they presently made their way and sought secretly the venerable monastery dedicated to Christ within the towering walls of that city, bearing the remains of that champion, now honored in all

lands, in order that they might sell them at a great price. These the Christian congregation amid rejoicing received while singing sweet hymns, celebrating the sacred funeral rites according to custom and bestowing upon the sailors bountifully a price much augmented, so eager were they to purchase the body of the beloved saint. And after they had bought it at no slight price, a charming spot was chosen for the keeping of those bones, in which spot, after the funeral rites had been performed with ample ceremony, the sacred relics were buried beneath a mound of earth. And the great ruler of the starry vault ordered these remains to become renowned through wondrous signs at the grave, in order that, as the blessed soul was now duly reigning in heaven, the mortal limbs might reign with equal glory.

Finally the people of the city gathered, perceiving that those afflicted for a long time with various diseases were here freely cured and their loathsome members cleansed of their foulness, with no payment for their healing. And they were in wonder that the unknown saint was of such sanctity that such marvels happened on his account.

Then at length the head of the monastery and pastor of the people, pondering over the excellent remedy of sane counsel, realized that the most high must be invoked with a devout mind, in order that, with his customary goodness, he might deign to reveal publicly the secret cause and thus remove all doubt. This immediately persons of

both sexes desired, and, partaking but meagerly of food on their own accord for three days, they were prompt with sweet hymns and devout supplication. These prayers were truly performed with a devout mind, and they realized that the meek king of heaven had been mitigated by their prayers poured out in fervent pleadings, and that he was inclined to a decision of the doubtful cause. And at once they caused a menacing furnace to be heated, heaping up the fire with united efforts.

While the fire was raging in the huge bosom of that furnace, they took the severed head of the servant of Christ, caressingly speaking such words in persuasive strains: "O gentle king, noble ruler of the starry court, you who know how to decide all things in equable judgment, cause the merits of this saint to be tested by fire. And if he be supported by the honor of such goodness that these gifts of cures take place because of his merits, grant that the flame touch not the skin of his face, and grant also that all the hairs of his head be unharmed. But if it chance that he be of lesser merit, command that as a sign he be injured at least upon the outer skin of his face, according to the nature of frail flesh that must perish." Saying these words they entrusted that distinguished head for approval by fire to the surging, flame-spewing sea. And at length after the space of one full hour, they drew it finally from the consuming flames, examining with the eyes whether it had any injury from the heat. But the head gleamed forth

now more resplendently than pure gold, utterly unmarred as it was by the heat and the mighty flames.

Then the congregation with faces turned heavenward, praised in sweet melody Christ reigning on high, who so often made to be resplendent with mighty signs the mortal relics of the steadfast champion of his cause.

These relics they now worthily consigned to a venerated sepulcher, and they humbly honored them with truly worthy respect And ever after all firmly believed in his renowned merit and rejoiced ceaselessly in the patron given them by heaven.

FALL AND CONVERSION OF THEOPHILUS, VICAR OF HIS BISHOP

When the light of faith increasing throughout the regions of the world had freed Sicily from its black darkness of error, there lived in those regions quite a renowned man, influential because of his rank and distinguished for the luster of his virtues. He was called Theophilus by name when washed in the sacred waters of purifying baptism. The devoted care of his parents marked him out even in early years for divine service and, with pious solicitude for their dear offspring, they entrusted him to a certain bishop, a man of great wisdom, that he might foster him with instruction in goodly knowledge, and water the fresh field of his mind with the streams of wisdom issuing from the sevenfold font.

And when he had drunk sufficiently of this spring, the saintly youth, forthwith advancing step by step in due honor, reached an office well suited for him, the office known in popular language as “vicariate.” Although such an office enhanced him with a great show of splendor, he always conducted himself humbly toward his bishop and unassumingly toward his people, and gentle to all, he guarded with vigilant care the flock entrusted to him. But above all to the poor of Christ and the afflicted orphans and to chaste widows and to all strangers he distributed food and clothing with a prodigal hand; and never did he close his hospice to the wandering indigent. Therefore in all the

people there prevailed for him a united devotion in the tender affection of their hearts, and in love they cherished him as a dear father.

Meanwhile the bishop, a man of highest virtue, had taken his flight to heaven and yielded his soul to its maker. When his lifeless body had been placed in the bosom of the earth, all the folk cried aloud in accents concordant, chiming in with the clergy that felt the same wish, that this vicar was most fitting because of his outstanding achievements to occupy the high episcopal seat and to assume the charge of the bishop's flock. They hastened therefore, by sending a speedy petition, to urge this upon the metropolitan, by whose wise judgment it was proper that a shepherd should be appointed to such a dignity in the church.

When the metropolitan learned of the goodness and kindness of the man, he promised to fulfill the desire of those making the request, and he ordered Theophilus, who, he recognized, was loved with such great affection by the people, to come to him without delay. But Theophilus, constantly deprecating such a dignity, refused to obey the command of the metropolitan and come. At length he was dragged there unwillingly by a crowd that had assembled. When he came into the presence of the archbishop, he prostrated himself upon the ground, and poured out a volley of protests, saying that he was infected with many vices and was not fit to rule the holy people of Christ.

When he had thus with incessant pleading poured forth these protestations, the archbishop finally yielded, persuaded by his prayer, and he who had rejected the honor of such an office was allowed to go off without the duties that had been imposed upon him. The archbishop then appointed another worthy of the name of pastor. This new bishop after an interval of a few days was secretly misled by the suave talk of certain people, and he appointed another as vicar over the flock, removing Theophilus, who had been esteemed for his high virtues, from the office he had held for many years.

But Theophilus, patiently bearing the loss of that precarious dignity, expelled from his heart all sadness and even rejoiced that, just as he had been relieved of manifold duties, so he could now be proportionately more free to labor in the service of Christ.

But the savage enemy of all humankind soon came to loathe this patient soul, and with that same cunning with which he had once deceived our first parents, he assailed the inmost heart of this just man, bringing before his frail mind very often the quiet delights of his former position of influence and the heavy lot of the loss of prestige he had lately sustained. Neither did he take away these traps of treachery until finally he had made the servant of Christ his captive. And without delay that excellent man, renowned for a life of virtue, in mad folly had rejected all virtue and made

no effort to resist abominable temptation. Vanquished, he withdrew from the conflict and languished in grief of soul. And he, who had formerly spurned to rule the people as a prince, now affected the parade of a lesser power. At length the perverted wretch, in the blindness of his heart, sought out speedily a certain wicked Jew who had deceived many of the faithful by his magic fraud, and, falling before him and groveling at his feet, Theophilus pleaded amid tears for his wicked help. This seducer, maliciously rejoicing at the fall of the unfaithful ecclesiastic, ordered him to come without fail on the following night, holding out the prospect of a ready remedy for his humiliation, if only in obedience to his persuasions, he was willing thereafter to live under the sway of the magician's master.

The unhappy man, captivated, alas, by these flattering suggestions, was eager to be bound to the service of the fierce demon, in order that he might merit a position of shadowy distinction. The accursed magician then led Theophilus, not now signed with the beneficent sign of the cross, but trusting rather in hellish persuasions, at dark of night secretly through the city and brought him to a place filled with many specters, in which were the inhabitants of hell, clad in white garments and many of them holding candles in their hands. In their midst sat enthroned the iniquitous prince, who is the king of death and the son of perdition, persuading his damnable agents with cunning deceit to cast over all unremittingly their well known nets of cleverness, nets ready to capture all.

Presently the magician led the erring man desirous of his own destruction into this infernal assembly, and, straightway prostrating himself before the feet of his master, he made known in words the reason why he had come there. The hateful demon at length replied to him: "Tell me, what help can I bear to one of the faithful, who has been cleansed in the baptism of Christ? If he indeed desires to be mine, and will even in writing deny Christ and also the virgin mother, through whose bringing forth I sustained such a grievous loss, then will I at once help him by my power and bestow upon him publicly a display of such honor that even the archbishop will not contradict his orders, seeing that all his servants, who now despise Theophilus, will be venerating him."

The wretched man responded not a single word to these flatteries of the serpent's cunning, but he itched to see everything done that the accursed deceiver encouraged. And self betrayer that he was, he gave himself of his own accord to utter perdition, signing the contract of his own destruction. In this contract he attested that he wished to be the associate of the black spirits in eternal punishment throughout endless ages. When this contract was completed, the vision straightway vanished in every direction, and Theophilus in great joy returned with his wicked friend.

Now when day was come, the archbishop commanded the first of the clergy and also the leaders of the people to come together. And when Theophilus was brought into

the presence of all, the archbishop praised him in exceedingly kind terms, submitting to the will of Theophilus, now beaming with a joyous countenance, and he wept amid holy lamentations for having sinned against him and for having presumed to cast away such a saintly man. But Theophilus, overjoyed at the sudden gift of such unwonted distinction, extolled himself with unjust haughtiness of spirit, boastfully compelling the flock of the people entrusted to him to submit to his harsh orders. And rejecting utterly the dignity of his celestial origin, he clung only to the love of earthly display. And when for a long time he had eagerly sought such empty gain at the advice of that wicked magician and had not ceased to give manifold thanks to cruel Satan, to whose copious gifts alone he attributed the flourishing wealth that had come to him, at length the inexhaustible goodness of the heavenly father, who never desires the destruction and death of the wicked but rather to grant a happy life to them upon their conversion, was grieved that the merit of so charitable a life had been lost wherewith that man had once shone so brightly in the stable earth, being so mercifully solicitous for all the wretched. And so, in manner divine, that adorable goodness touched this erring soul with a just fear.

Nor did the wretched man pause; but he was pricked with intense remorse, and amid trembling he frequently placed before the eyes of his soul what intense torments throughout all eternity he had merited, and how he ought to share the punishments of the infernal regions for his denial of God.

Contemplating amid great grief these things within himself, he is said continually to have broken forth into lamentations such as these: “Woe is me, wretched soul, tainted with all vices! Alas, for me to be damned for my crime in the pact I made whereby I have through written contract denied the son of the most high father and likewise the sweet mother of that divine child! Woe is me! Unto what bitter punishment am I to be delivered for all times! In what lasting darkness am I to be shut up forever! Wretched me, who have chosen to submit to the will of Satan and to be united to those dwellers of darkness within the regions of Erebus, seduced as I was by a vain passion for earthly glory! What shall I, a great sinner, say in that great day of judgment, which even the saints must fear, when each according to his own deserts will receive the reward weighed in the just balance, in proportion to the quality of each one’s merits? Or who will then any longer have compassion on me, when the just man is barely saved even through his abundant works? For only the mother of Christ and powerful queen of heaven and radiant, spotless temple of the holy spirit, remaining virgin after the chaste joys of childbirth, she who was ever most benign to those who are converted to the lord, and who would never delay her sweet kindness; she alone is able to bring to me the remedy of pardon if she but deign to intercede for me with her son. But if I should attempt to beseech her with lips polluted, whom I have but lately denied with frenzied heart, I am afraid of being consumed by fire hurled down from on high because the earth would not suffer to

bear my heinous crime. However, compelled by the cause of pressing sorrow, I humbly seek her compassion quick to heed, in order that she may graciously save my perishing soul by her intercession.”

Such were the exceedingly bitter reproaches he uttered within himself. And then, hastily casting from his heart all cares for the world, he eagerly hurried to the temple dedicated to the honor of the immaculate virgin, the mother of God. Eight times in the space of five days he tarried there weeping with contrite heart over his sins, satiating himself with bitter tears, denying himself every refreshment of delicate food, and very often the sweet rest of sleep, in supreme effort keeping watchful in his holy purpose. And by subduing his body with such labors, with tears he purged the stains from his sinful soul.

After duly performing these deeds, when exceedingly exhausted in the hours of the night he had given his body to soft slumber, there stood before him in sleep the most chaste mother of the eternal king, the mistress of the world, the help, the hope, and the ready consolation of those imploring her protection with a devout mind. She spoke words like these that frightened his trembling heart: “O man, why do you keep vigil at the threshold of our temple, or why do you presume to hope that my ready goodness can aid you, who have but lately with wicked heart denied my son and me, his mother? Tell me, I pray, how could I look with my eyes

into the countenance of my divine son, refulgent with celestial light, and in what manner would I presume to stand before his dreadful throne to seek pardon for you? But all the faults that you have possibly perpetrated against me, I, in kindness of heart, now freely forgive you because I love intensely all the people who worship Christ. But those do I especially cherish with tender affection of heart, and those do I console and embrace in my own arms, whom I often see watching in my temple, in prayer and in the frequent chanting of hymns. But the strong force of my motherly affection obliges me to be inflamed with great indignation toward you because you have dared, surrendering yourself to perdition, blasphemously to despise my sacred son, who, begotten as eternal God from God the father before the ancient beginnings of creation's first bright noon, deigned to take from me in time a body, which he gave in death for the love of humankind."

To the chaste mother of Christ speaking in this strain the repentant man responded: "O my mistress, I know, and I grieve exceedingly because of this knowledge, that I have transgressed, captivated inordinately by a vain hope, and have committed a sin more heinous than all other sins by despising God who was born of you without stain.

"Therefore I am not worthy to seek the gift of pardon. But nevertheless, many have given us an example of hope for salvation, who, having fallen, have merited pardon for

their various crimes. Did not the Ninevites, by punishing themselves amid appropriate wailings, find the sweet pardon of Christ after the space of three days? Is it not true that David, prophet of God, chief of the kingdom of Judah, and ruler of the chosen people of the lord, suddenly seized with an unlawful passion for a wedded woman, did not hesitate to encompass with treacherous snares and to deprive of life an innocent man, in order that he might be able to enjoy in wedlock the embraces of his beloved? But, terrified by the admonitions of the prophet who came to him, did he not learn to bewail his twofold crime, and did he not wash out with his tears the stains of such villainess and receive again the gift of prophecy? Why should I speak of Peter, when Christ testified to his blessedness? After he had received the power to bind and to loose and also the keys of the starry vault, because he had in a fitting manner expressed his true faith, thereafter despising God, he denied that he knew Christ, and in fear of the speech of a wicked maidservant, not once, nor even twice, but really thrice, did he deny his beloved master as if he had never seen him. But because he bemoaned in a fitting manner the sin that had fallen from his lips, he merited the remedy of fruitful pardon. Moreover, he was commanded to preside over the faithful flock as its leader and was rightfully made the shepherd of the holy church. Encouraged therefore by these mighty examples and by many others, I hoped that I might speedily win a like favor from Christ through you.”

Holy Mary answered him in kindly manner, refreshing the stricken man with the sweetness of her honeyed tongue: “If the sinful commission of this accursed crime indeed distresses you, it behooves you to confess sincerely that which you have so madly denied in lying words, that he whom I have brought forth is truly the son of the most high father, who will come as judge to renew the world by fire. Only after you have done this, will I venture to intercede for you.”

Then the vicar again responded tearfully: “O you beloved of God, most holy mother of Christ, you who refresh all the faithful with tender kindness, in what manner and with what right indeed, may I, wretched being that I am, with foul lips presume to touch the name of the most high, so sacred, so venerable, so great; I who have wickedly blasphemed, even in writing wickedly signed, Christ, baptism, the cross, and even you, chaste mother of Christ, as also all the holy sacraments, those founts of heavenly salvation?”

Moved by these lamentations, the source of all virginity, in words yet more mercifully gracious, spoke again: “Although you are stained with exceedingly grievous sins, nevertheless, as I have admonished, do not spurn to confess the lord, because he was made man solely for our sakes, that he might afford a hope of winning pardon to such as were converted.”

Then obeying her admonition, he sent up to heaven amid tears these cries: "Now humbly do I venerate, praise, embrace, adore Christ, son of the heavenly father from all eternity, sent in our time from the throne of his father, that from you, chaste one, and from the holy spirit, he might clothe himself with the garments of our frail flesh. I do not doubt that he is true God and man in the fullest sense, who suffered for our sakes, to be afflicted with reviling and to be struck with buffetings and blows; and he suffered his sacred back to be beaten with many scourgings and his beautiful face to be polluted with vile spittle; and after being crowned with thorns and given gall to drink, fulfilling through these things all that had been foretold in the sacred scripture, then finally with his sacred hands extended upon the cross like a true shepherd adorned with the honor of his goodness, dying. He laid down his dear life for us and deigned to accept the honor of a sepulcher. And after this, seeking the lower regions and loosing the bars of Erebus, he destroyed death and fettered the father of death, delivering from the prison of Tartarus his own, the just, and accompanied by an immense throng. He returned as victor to the upper world taking again his own body, which had been enclosed in a sepulcher beneath a huge stone. The third day saw him entering eternal glory. His blessed disciples also saw him frequently, now eating with them, again speaking with them in sweet conversation concerning the kingdom he was to establish. After this, while his disciples looked on with astonished eyes, he lifted his body, taken up for us, above

the stars; that same body in which he will come to hold the solemn judgment that is to be, when he will render according to each one's merits reward or punishment. Because I believe these things and retain them in a faithful heart and beg of you your accustomed kindness, do commend me, most holy virgin, to your son, and implore pardon for your wicked servant."

When he had sobbed out these words amid continuous lamentations, the blessed mother of God and likewise powerful mistress of the heavens, answered him in kindly tones: "Because of the benign mystery of sacred baptism, which you have received according to the manner of the faithful people, and because of my tender love for my dear son, by the ample price of whose sacred blood I know that you have been purchased, that blood that was shed for the redemption of a world destined to perish, I will approach and cast myself earnestly at the sacred feet of him whom I have brought forth, the just judge of all. Nor will I stint the prayers but pour them forth with profuse zeal, until I shall constrain his tender kindness to blot out, by granting pardon to you for such great offense." When the sacred virgin had said this, she quickly departed, leaving the wretched man the consolation of her salutary promise.

After three days she came again to him, revealing in a vision the gift of forgiveness won, and in joyful manner she uttered words to this effect: "Man of God, behold, the

compunction of your sorrowing heart has been acceptable to God the father, and to his eternal son, and your tears have merited pardon of your offenses, nor will you ever be entrapped by the tortures of Tartarus, if henceforth you will desire to persevere faithfully without guile.”

He responded immediately and spoke in persuasive prayer: “Certainly I will observe the teachings of our sacred faith, nor ever again after this time will I wickedly transgress through negligence any of your commands, my tender mistress, because after the lord, I trust that you alone bring that healing, so that I shall not be delivered as food to Tartarus for punishment. But it is not to be wondered at, that it is through you I have been saved, through whom, God granting, the entire world was freed from the deadly crime of the ancient mother. And who, imploring you and seeking you without a doubtful hope, has ever been forsaken or has gone away confounded? Therefore I, wholly tainted with the greatest vices, now with devout mind suppliantly entreat the perennial spring of your clemency, that you, loving mother of God, will grant forthwith that to me, wretched sinner, from the hands of the destroyer, the writ of the nefarious contract be restored, by the terms of which I have placed myself under his dominion. For I fear that my wretched soul will be distracted with great peril on the day of judgment, if now the paper be not snatched from the hands of the ravishing plunderer.”

When he had said this, he kept vigil again with his eyes open and prostrated himself amid weeping and many prayers, and he spent the passage of three days in fasting. Very early the following morning, when he awoke from sleep, he found the parchment placed upon his breast. The sight made him tremble forthwith, and his limbs relaxed, while from his innermost soul he rendered thanks to Christ and likewise to the virgin mother of Christ.

Thereafter, when that sacred day that takes its venerable name from the most high God had dawned, Theophilus entered the church, which was filled, as it was wont to be, with people. Here then during the solemn celebration of the holy mass, when the bishop normally addressed the folk standing by with words of the gospel, Theophilus cast himself in presence of all before the sacred altar and also bestowed kisses upon the feet of the bishop. Then publicly and in distinct voice he related all in proper order, telling them what he had done when conquered by deadly wiles, and what boon he had obtained through the intercession of her who is ever virgin. When he had fully related this story in due order, the bishop, moved with awe at the marvelous event, spoke aloud in these words, uttered in tones of wonderment: "Come, hasten hither in joy all you faithful ones, and, praising the kindly deeds of God with loyal hearts, believe that God, merciful in his goodness, never rejoices in the destruction of the wicked, but rather wills to give life everlasting to those returning to him. Yes, beloved

brethren, attend, how the good God proceeds lovingly with all sinners, whom he knows are converted after the sorrow-bringing deeds of wickedness. Who would not marvel at, who would not humbly adore, the glorious, meek, and sweet goodness of Christ, by which he ever raises up all who seek him? He, in compassion, pardoned now the sins of this man because of his own prayers and also those of his illustrious blessed mother, through whom perished the curse of our nature, and through whom benediction has come to the whole world. Therefore, be mindful of us, most blessed mother of God, who praise you with heart and faith and tongue and prayer, so that he who himself is the good shepherd, may deign to preserve his faithful flock, confounding the treachery of the ancient serpent. But we, banished ones, strengthened by no virtue, ever extol you, immaculate mother of the eternal king, and we praise the king, born of you, the lord of heaven, raising our voices in frequent hymns, because our brother, dead through sin, had perished, but, after he had perished, through you, holy virgin, he has been restored to life.”

When he had finished speaking, he burned the accursed contract and at once continued the holy mass with great fervor. When he had finished, the features of the vicar shone with a wondrous splendor as of the rising sun, so that the radiant beauty of his soul and the purity of his heart were made manifest through his beaming countenance. On seeing this, the assembled people were moved

with great fear, and they began to sound in thundering tones thanksgiving to the most high, who had been pleased to show the merits of that venerable man. Theophilus, making his way again to the sacred spot where he had merited the gift of heavenly goodness, was presently enfeebled by the failing health of his frail body. And the malady, increasing within the space of three days, released his triumphant spirit from the prison of the corruptible flesh. He ascended to the celestial realms, supported by the assistance of Mary, our blessed lady. By the endeavor of the people the lifeless body was duly entombed amid the last rites in the very spot where he had obtained that pardon he had solicited amid weeping.

This therefore was the end of that despairing and sinful man, who yet learned to bewail his own transgressions and had striven to chastise himself amid worthy lamentations. Wherefore may praise and power be given throughout all ages to Christ, who laid low the ancient enemy of humankind, snatching the work of his own right hand from the jaws of the serpent. And may goodly praise also be rendered to his sweet mother, who has in such kindly wise brought solace to the afflicted. Amen.

May the only son of the most high, begotten before all time, who, pitying humankind, descended from the throne of his father and took a true human body from a virgin, in order that he might destroy the bitter taste of

that first virgin, bless devotedly for us the food of this spread table, making this sustenance wholesome to those who taste them. Whatever we are and whatever we taste or whatever we may do, let the hand of the creator, our king, bless all.

THE HISTORY OF THE CONVERSION OF
THE DESPERATE YOUNG SERVANT
OF PROTERIUS BY ST. BASILIUS

Behold, I bring to you, Gerberga, my lady, new verses, thus adding songs to the songs I have been commissioned to write, singing joyfully in dactylic strains of how a sinner won loving mercy. Do not choose to spurn these, even though they be exceedingly crude, but praise with gentle heart the works of God.

He who wishes to hear an unfailing example of pardon and of the bounteous gifts of the great goodness of God, let him peruse with humble heart these lines. Nor let him despise the frail sex of a weak woman, who with frail pen has composed these measures. But rather let him praise the heavenly goodness of Christ, who does not wish to destroy sinners by the punishment they deserve, but rather to convert them and bring them back to eternal life. With joy will every person rejoice, whoever, upon examining the present account, acknowledges the truth of what I say.

At the time when Basilius, a man of kindly disposition, ruled his holy flock with righteous sway, having obtained the bishopric of Caesarea, there lived in those parts a widely celebrated man named Proterius, respected by all the people and influential because of his nobility, and equally so because of his wealth. He had an only

daughter, whom he loved with most tender affection, and there was no other heir to his vast fortune. With loving solicitude and paternal devotion he desired rather that the immortal soul of his daughter should be adorned with the chain of perfect virginity, than that her mortal body should be endowed with the perishable vanities of the world. He therefore planned to associate her with the holy maidens who were consecrated to Christ by the sacred veil of virginity and were protected in the narrow enclosure of the monastery.

But the father of evil who deceived our first father, detesting the laudable desire of the just man, inflamed the servant of that man with a mad desire for the maiden. So sharply was the unhappy wretch pricked by the arrows of passion, that, the more his infatuation increased, the more he languished, because he was aware that he was not worthy of such a marriage, nor had he the audacity to make known the strange anguish of his heart.

At length, however, he sought out and found a magician, to whom he revealed his bitter, secret sorrow, promising to give him a gift of no small value, if he would unite the tender heart of his master's daughter to his own servile affection. This perverse friend of deceit responded: "I do admit that I am not so powerful as to join in wedlock a lady to her own servant; but if you are satisfied duly to obey my master, who is the prince of eternal darkness, he

will indeed be able to fulfill your behest quickly, if after this you will forego the veneration of the name of Christ.”

The wretched man, blinded because of his frenzied heart, promised to agree to all these terms. Thereupon the magician commanded him to write thus to his master: “Prince of the infernal regions, great ruler of the deep, it ever behooves your servants to try whether they are able to assign to your service anyone, washed in baptismal waters, who has been snatched from the fold of Christ, in order that the number that follows you may ever be increased. Therefore with exceeding joy I have sent to you this man, in order that, by presently fulfilling his secret proposal, you may make him one of your faithful followers.” He then gave to the unhappy wretch the paper he had inscribed and told him that he should take his place upon a pagan tomb at night and, calling suppliantly upon the lord of the world of darkness, should present the document to him.

When he had yielded to this ill-advised command, poor wretch, he hastened joyfully to the place to which the magician had commanded him to go, humbly seeking the assistance of that ancient serpent, who always attempts to bring about the ruin of his followers. Nor had he long to wait. There came a crew of ministers from Tartarus, and with a malignant joy they led the erring man at once to the savage assembly where the inhabitants of darkness dwell. There the author of all vice and deceit, the damned leader

of the damned legions, sat enthroned in the midst, surrounded by black soldiery and secretly extending his snares of cunning for the unwary, he inquired what crimes each of his followers had accomplished.

And when indeed he had scrutinized the letter sent to him, he spoke words like these, raging like an angry lion, and terrifying by his fierce manner the unhappy man: "Never do you, worshipers of Christ, remain faithful to me, but as soon as I have fulfilled your pleasant will, straightway do you flee again to your Christ, loathing me after the great gifts I have conferred, and believing that Christ is of such goodness, that he will not withhold pardon from any man who seeks it, or render unto me any man who has been converted, notwithstanding any previous crime. For this reason, if you desire to enjoy the affection of your master's daughter lawfully, first renounce Christ with your lips and also that sacred baptism of Christ that is given to Christ-worshipers, and confess that you are willing throughout eternity to endure with me the torments of hell. Extend now this writing of yours into my hands, and I will show you speedily how much my power is able to prevail."

The wretched servant, so foully ensnared by this admonition, signed his own condemnation with a glad heart and returned to his hateful host the document of his own perdition. The evil one, rejoicing exceedingly at his victim's destruction, with gloating mind sent out his hellish

ministers to cause the heart of that hapless maiden to be at once inflamed with a wicked love for her own servant.

And when her frail heart had been smitten with the flatteries of passion, suddenly the maiden, daughter of noble stock though she was, cried out, desiring to bestow herself as spouse upon a servant. And in the presence of her father, she poured forth her heart in these words: “Sweetest of fathers, have compassion on your daughter and give me without delay to this youth whom I love, lest I die, languishing through the weariness of a grieving heart.”

The father, hearing this, replied with bitter tears: “Woe is me, what are you experiencing, sole hope of your aged father? Tell me, I pray, who is it that has deceived you so wickedly with flattering speech, or has encompassed you with lying compliments? Was it not with a desire that I might restore you to the heavenly home, that I have dedicated you to Christ, the celestial bridegroom, in order that you might chastely cherish him alone in your heart for all eternity, and sing with the denizens of heaven the praises of your spouse, when joined after the bonds of death to the choir of virgins? And now you are aglow with passion for a wanton slave! But now, my child, I entreat you with humble voice, that you may hasten to put an end to such folly, lest you disgrace so perniciously your noble heritage. If, however, you seek to persist in your vicious undertaking, you will, my most sweet child, perish without delay.”

But she, despising utterly this paternal counsel, said with surly manner to her father: "If then you will hesitate to grant my wish, you will soon find that your cherished child has perished even sooner." Then indeed the old man, not willingly, but vanquished by those bitter threats, bestowed his beloved child as wife upon the servant, granting them at the same time an abundance of wealth. Then he addressed the girl in the sadness of his heart: "Unhappy daughter of an unhappy father, the disgrace and sorrow of the mother who bore you, the utter confusion of our whole lineage! Rejoice now in your loved slave, wretched one; but hereafter you will with lamentation be overtaken by eternal punishment!"

After this union had been brought about through the treachery of the devil, Christ, the lovable savior of the world, grieved that those whom he had graciously redeemed with the flowing stream of his blood, were now held in the bonds of the dreadful enemy, and so it pleased him to offer his kindly assistance to the fallen. For it was soon carried to the erring woman that her hapless consort was not a Catholic and did not care to step upon the threshold of the sacred temple, because he had surrendered himself into the power of the greedy serpent, thus denying the sacred rites of the true faith and even the name of Christ. The wretched woman, realizing that she had been deceived, when she heard with close attention the story of her informant, fell tremblingly upon the ground with limbs slack and she tore the hair from the crown of her head and readily struck her

breast with blows, sending amid tears such cries to heaven: “He who does not choose to listen to his well-beloved parents will never be saved. This has been proved in the present sad affair. Alas, woe is me, why did I at birth receive the light of day, or why was I not immediately assigned to my grave, that I might not fall into the dark abyss of death and therefore be wretched forever?”

While she thus spoke with unremitting grief, her wicked consort came suddenly upon her and swore that the charges spoken concerning him were false. But she responded in a firm voice in the face of his denial: “If you are not guilty of this sin so heinous, then come with me joyfully tomorrow to the sacred temple, and attend there the solemnities of the holy mass.” Conquered by this just demand, the unhappy man told her why he had committed this crime.

And she, putting aside her womanish weakness and assuming manly courage with prudent heart, hastened at once to blessed Basilius, and prostrating herself before his holy feet, she employed these words, pouring them forth from her troubled breast: “Holy man of God, hasten mercifully to aid us in our distress, and draw us from the foul jaws of the savage enemy who boasts that he can destroy our frail souls.”

And after she had disclosed to him the nature of that great crime, the bishop turned to the wicked servant and began to ask him in kindly words, whether after his fall

he willed to convert his affection to Christ. But the man, despairing of salvation, responded: "If such a thing were possible, I would have willed it with a glad heart. But there stands against my willingness the fact of the sin, since I gave myself to the fiend by means of a contract foully signed and, with heart blinded, denied the name of Christ."

Hereupon the man of God made answer: "Do not feign distress for yourself as if all hope of seeking pardon for you were utterly lost. The only son of the father, the most meek judge of the world, who has never despised anyone converted to him, if you will bewail your fault, rejoices to grant assistance. Therefore, forsake this fatal depth of sin, and take refuge in the port of goodness, who receives and saves all who hasten to him." With these counsels he set aright the unhappy man, and shut him up with his consent in his dark cave, so that there, unmolested, he might bewail his lawless deed.

After three days the saint came to him, inquiring whether he was able to bear this hardship, and the man, exceedingly wearied responded: "It is with difficulty that I endure the torments of the dark spirits, who smite me with uninterrupted lashings and attack me very often by pelting me with hard stones. Besides, they heap upon me bitter reproaches, because formerly, without reluctance but freely, I approached them, giving myself without compulsion into their service." Then that learned physician of languishing

souls commanded the wearied man to be of good cheer and thereupon straightway left him.

After a brief space of time he came again, inquiring what he was now undergoing in that hidden grotto. The man replied: "I am, fostering father, faring better indeed, for now it is only at a distance that I hear their dread threats." The bishop upon this was very happy in his secret heart and left, going about his normal duties.

Finally after a space of forty days, during which the penitent had bewailed his heinous crime, the bishop came and found him joyful, though he had expected to find him disconsolate. When he had expressed his wonder at this blessed happiness, the sinner, who was now well purified by abundant tears and certain of desirable forgiveness, said to the saint: "I trust indeed, tender father, that through you I shall be saved, for in my sleep I saw you enter into combat for me even with that cruel and envious serpent, whom you did suddenly vanquish by supernatural power."

As he listened to these words with ears attentive, the bishop sang the praises of the tender Christ. And then, leading forth the captive from the black cave, he placed him at night in his own cell, which was annexed to the sacred church, and there he commanded the faithful flock to assemble, so that likewise they might spend the night in sedulous prayers, to the end that the good shepherd according to his

customary tenderness might join the wandering sheep to his own sheepfold. When the rising sun had dispelled the black shades of night, the bishop, taking the hand of the sinner, entered the church, leading him with him.

When he had touched the venerated threshold with his sacred feet, the demon, who was in hiding there in hateful ambush, dragged the man back with great force, having seized his left hand in sly cunning. Basilius accosted him with great vehemence: "Wicked thief, restore the handiwork of the eternal king, and, vanquished, speedily surrender the prey you have furtively seized!" But the universal enemy of humankind made response while he filled the quiet air with accursed bellowing: "Why are you intent upon taking from me by force my own servant, who of his own accord has submitted his neck to my fetters? The very document that he himself has given me I will show to Christ at the time of the judgment that is to come." The saint made ready response: "By the command of that very Christ, the equitable judge, I trust that forthwith you will restore those writings." After he had said this, the faithful assembly begged the most high, with prayers poured from devoted hearts, that he might strengthen the loyal shepherd against the foe. Nor was there any delay: from on high fell the fatal document before the feet of the beloved shepherd.

Then the people, rejoicing affectionately with their worthy bishop, sent voices in hymns of praise to the

heavens, extolling the loving Christ, who with his accustomed goodness had snatched the captive from the jaws of that ancient lion.

Let us therefore send our loud voices to the skies, praising with joyful hearts Christ, the lord God, who in his mercy has given to us such a happy hope of pardon. Therefore to him alone be glory, victory, power, and songs of praise, world without end. Amen.

THE HISTORY OF THE PASSION OF
ST. DIONYSIUS, THE ILLUSTRIOUS MARTYR

While the creator of the highest, the middle, and the lowest worlds was suffering upon the cross the bitter penalty of death, nocturnal darkness surrounded the earth; and the sun, having shed the splendor of its brilliant rays, was commemorating in mournful service the death of its lord. When this was noticed by Dionysius, the benevolent astronomer, who was at that time learning in the region of Memphis the art that teaches the motion of the stars and the sun's course, he was dumbfounded and he set about searching diligently in his books to ascertain whether it were possible that at such a season an eclipse of the sun could come to pass. But when this wise man realized that this darkness was unusual, he thought it proper to note this day and year, not doubting that perchance some stupendous prodigy was being pointed out, which the mysterious darkness had declared, and he conjectured that by these propitious omens, some God as yet unknown was presently to be manifested to the world. But as he had drunk deep from the streams of that art I mentioned, he set out towards Athens and revisited his native home. He commanded that an altar, beautifully built, be erected in the midst of the pagan images of the witless gods, deciding that it should be ornamented with an inscription duly incised, and that it be dedicated to the honor of the "unknown God." When the noble Paul, teacher of the gentiles saw this altar, he asked in kindly words who

this “unknown God” was. Then the blessed Dionysius was the first to explain to him the reason why he had erected this altar; and finally by controversial discussion, he who had hitherto been unbelieving yielded, was happily won over to the faith.

St. Paul, going out after this event, gave sight to a blind man, and bade him forthwith to hasten at once into the city. Dionysius, the nobleman already mentioned, when he saw this man enjoying the use of his sight, believed indeed that the miracle had been wrought by a power divine, and he hastened to go with his wife, the beloved Damaris, to the place where he knew the blessed Paul to be. He took with him also a large retinue of dependents. These all were washed in sacred baptism and were forthwith cleansed from the stain of the ancient transgression; and he, who had been a leader of people that had worshiped idols, was subsequently chosen bishop of a Christian flock.

And now, having been raised to the dignity of a bishop, illustrious in his admirable virtue, he zealously fulfilled well the office enjoined upon him, leading the absent through letters and those present through his words to follow the worship of the true faith.

Once, while he was traveling about and sowing the seed of the word, he is said to have sought as a stranger at the decline of day the hospitality of a certain holy priest,

a Cretan, named Carpus, who was greatly distressed by bitter grief and burning with an unjust wrath, because a certain heathen had by perverse blandishments induced a certain Christian to renounce his sacred faith. The bishop, on noticing the sadness of this priest, inquired in kindly terms after the cause of his grief. Then with loving admonition he gently consoled him in his sadness and persuaded him to put from his heart this excessive wrath and pray for the wicked fallen, that they might thus obtain the grace of conversion and be reconciled to Christ and thus behold the gift of Christ's gentle goodness. And he frequently admonished the priest that hope of pardon must be denied no one who willed to bewail his sins. But Carpus rejected mercy and persevered in his affliction, raging and languishing in the fury of his heart. Furthermore, he reviled with harsh words wretched sinners, denying that they are worthy of any life who had presumed to live without the true God.

When he had finally completed this doleful discourse, he composed himself to rest with a very sad heart. Nor was it long until a vision appeared to him with the heavens opened, a vision that curbed the surges of his heart. He saw the most high, resplendent in wondrous glory, enthroned and surrounded by celestial ministers, and saw a huge pyre straightway descend from above as though it had been sent as a judgment upon certain sins. Then turning his eyes and beholding again the earth, he

saw, yawning beneath, a terrifying abyss, filled with serpents and abounding in tortures of various kinds. Above this pit wretched creatures with slipping footsteps were clinging to the outermost edge, weeping. Then the serpents coming forth and tormenting them forced them to make their way together with themselves into that deep abyss. When Carpus had seen this, he was filled with more intense fury and lamented that the wretches were not precipitated headlong. And taking up again in a loud voice his imprecations, he begged that divine vengeance might soon destroy the evildoers.

When he had said this it came to pass that Jesus, the gentle one, with his customary goodness, prompt to commiserate, from his most high throne, descended, and confuting the ungentle anger of Carpus said: "Strike against me, if you are able, rebellious Carpus, you who desire so avidly the destruction of these sinners to take place. Lo, I am the ruler of the heavens and the destroyer of death, again ready to suffer for the human race if the wicked are not able to be saved in any other way, who after committing sin learn to bewail their guilt. Nor do I think it a light thing when a creature of my right hand perishes, for I made these creatures beautiful and restored them from corruption. Choose now, either by pursuing sweet charity to reign with me throughout eternity in heaven, or because of the stubborn fierceness of your cruel mind to be delivered into endless tortures of the deep abyss."

Thereafter this unduly rigid man, greatly softened by this admonition, became for all an edifying example of kindness.

After this, the bishop Dionysius, renowned because of his reputation for most abounding holiness, arranged to travel to mighty Rome, desiring with St. Peter and also with his teacher, great St. Paul, to offer himself at once to death for the name of Christ. But they had already received the crown of martyrdom before his arrival at Rome. And Clement, the venerable disciple of Peter, was duly enthroned for the world in the supreme power of the apostolic see. This pope graciously received the bishop on his arrival and cherished him with due consideration and deep affection. Finally, after a considerable space of time had elapsed during which the saintly servants of God had remained together, inasmuch as the most meek goodness of the celestial king had willed by a goodly ray of eternal light to pierce the black shadows of error unhappily surrounding the west at that time, the saintly pope, already admonished by the divine spirit, persuaded the worthy bishop with kindly words to scatter the seed of the divine word throughout the gentile nations.

“Behold,” said he, “O soldier of Christ, brother Dionysius, the great harvest of the lord growing throughout the regions of the world, offering innumerable sheaves of matured grain, but laborers ready to harvest are exceedingly few. Therefore you, who have drunk deep from the

fount of sacred books and are especially a scholar of divine worship, following the example of your teacher Paul, go forth confidently to subject many nations to the empire of Christ. And to you do I entrust the same power of authority that we know Christ entrusted to Peter, our head, and that I as his successor received by right of headship, the power namely of absolving the converted and retaining the sins of the unrepentant. Receive now the Gauls, whom I am giving you to be instructed, and let Gaul be marked out as your sphere of teaching, where as an apostolic man, you may become illustrious by reason of your worthy foster child. Do not be afraid to visit rebellious tribes that resist the truth, gnashing their teeth in beastly fashion. But assure yourself that as great an eternal reward is preserved for you in the starry heavens of the eternal father as will be proportioned to what you endure in suffering.”

The bishop, encouraged by the comforting persuasions of the pope, hastened quickly to the boundaries of the west and soon directed his footsteps within the walls of the city of Paris, in which, because of the great wealth of the goodly place, all the leaders of the Gauls come together frequently. And here when he had begun to scatter the sacred seed of the divine word, Christ presently deigned to perform through him many miraculous manifestations, in order that the hearts of that rebellious people might the more readily be softened unto forgiveness, in proportion as they frequently beheld such wonders.

But when the number of the faithful had been greatly augmented and had at the inspiration of Christ increased day by day, the fierce deceit of the ancient serpent raged thereupon in indignation that he should now lose so many souls that he had previously been holding captive in the bitter snares of error. This father of deceit and teacher of vicious crime therefore presently incited the unjust Emperor Domitian to proclaim an edict of fierce death against the adorers of Christ. And the emperor, sending hateful orders throughout his entire dominion, condemned to death all worshipers of Christ. And unto this accursed decree, Sisinnius, the governor, yielded forthwith a wicked acquiescence and ordered the bishop to be brought bound into his presence; for he knew that the saint was truly a teacher of the Gallic people. He ordered him at first to be punished with severe scourging and afflicted with many cruel sufferings and then to be shut up in the black darkness of a prison, together with two of his disciples, whom fortune ever caused to be in constant association with their beloved master.

But not even in the dark prison did the illustrious bishop cease to perform the worthy service of the lord, but he zealously instructed the assembled people and duly celebrated the holy mysteries of the mass. But when he was about to break the sacred bread, suddenly a strange light gleamed in the dismal cavern; in this light the glorious ruler of the starry court, accompanied verily by an angelic

host, appearing to him. Consoling his beloved son and giving to the bishop the sacred sacrament, he comforted him, saying: "Receive, my beloved, now my sacred body, of which I shall presently complete for you the sacred mystery; for your greatest reward remains with me forever. So too will salvation be bestowed upon these in the court of my father on high, who make effort to give obedience to your commands. Contend perseveringly and patiently keep the faith, in order that the heralding of your widespread glory may presently increase for you. And whatsoever you shall ask of me in holy prayer, you shall be able to obtain through the grace of my goodness." Rejoicing at such consolation, the brave champion was now not afraid to suffer any tortures for the name of Christ.

After this the three witnesses were taken from their prison by command of the aforesaid haughty governor, and they were asked whether they were willing to yield in the face of intense sufferings. But they, confessing with hearts well united, in a loud voice, that the father with the son and with the holy spirit is eternally the one and only true God, testified that they would prefer to die for the name of Christ and to be rent asunder limb by limb, with ever renewed tortures, rather than at any time to submit their necks to false gods. The godless prefect, greatly incensed on this account, raging in unbridled fury like a lion, commanded that the necks of these athletes of Christ be at once severed, and that all those washed in baptism be destroyed with the

sword. Innumerable of the faithful were cut down as he had commanded, and then the venerable bishop together with his companions was dragged to the place where martyrdom was to be achieved by decapitation. But these martyrs, rejoicing and singing praises to the lord, hastened to give themselves at once to immediate death.

Then the bishop, raising his eyes and hands heavenward, fittingly poured forth to the most high such words of gratitude: "My God, my Creator, my most benign ruler, who, graciously granting me to enjoy the breath of life, have given also to me the light of a profound intellect so that I might penetrate your hidden mysteries. You alone do I praise. I bless you from my heart, and to you I give devout thanks with all my faculties for all your kindly gifts bestowed upon me. And I beseech you, great king of eternal majesty, that you deign to give to me the eternal crown, as also to my associates, now about to die for you. And by your fatherly kindness preserve your people, whom I have fed, nourishing them for you with the words of faith."

When these prayers of the suppliant bishop had been duly spoken, the two disciples, together with the saintly bishop, fell upon their knees and bent their necks and received the blow of the executioner. To such an extent did the wondrous confession of their faith endure that, while their headless bodies were lying silent, their tongues were moving in song to the praises of God. Then the

headless trunk of the dead pontiff raised itself, resplendent in calm beauty, and lifting its own head in its strong arms it descended directly from the steep hill upon which the precious martyrdom had been accomplished; and passing over the tedious distance of two miles it came unto a spot fit for the preservation of that body. A radiant host of angelic spirits accompanied it as it descended in haste, singing “Alleluias” with exultant voice.

After these marvels had come to pass, the crowd of the faithful came together, and in that very spot that he had for himself designated when he stopped after his march, they placed the venerable body of the martyr, paying at his tomb final honor and celebrating in tears the funeral rites of their great patron.

There, in proportion to the august merits of that champion, Jesus Christ made illustrious his virtues through miracles; for sight to the blind, the use of the tongue to the mute, hearing to the deaf, and firm movement to the lame were frequently bestowed through the intercession of that blessed witness. And the sick who were disabled by disease also came to that place and happily returned with their bodies restored. Here also not infrequently grateful consolation came to the sad, and the gift of pardon for sin was granted from on high to those who poured out the holy vows of their petitions upon the tomb of the martyr, while they lamented their transgressions.

May his holy intercession constantly commend us to Christ and thus obtain through supplication pardon of our sins, that Christ may graciously forgive our faults and bestow upon us a share in eternal life, in order that we may merit happily throughout eternity to praise him, who after their severe trials will ever upon his holy martyrs bestow a crown of double glory, so that, while their blessed souls are rejoicing in the regions above, no less may their mortal remains in the grave be gladdened, so often made glorious by the radiant testimony of miracles. May to him be given salvation on high, victory perpetual, might, praise, honor, dominion, and glory forever throughout all ages!

THE PASSION OF ST. AGNES, VIRGIN AND MARTYR

A virgin, who, desiring to despise the empty vanities of a perishable world and the luxury of the frail flesh, has merited to be called the spouse of the eternal king, if because of the charm of angelic purity she wants to shine in the starry court of the celestial bridegroom, in resplendent crown, joined to the heavenly denizens and following the lamb chanting a resounding hymn—let her preserve with utterly sincere love of heart, the token of praiseworthy virginity. And if she marks her brow for Christ with the sacred veil, let her cling firmly and with tender affection to him and place him above all other friends, who resplendent in his wondrous beauty shines forth in exceeding loveliness and worthily excels the sons of all women.

Indeed, in times past, many sacred maidens, glowing with worthy affection for him, have with constant heart chosen to die and to be slaughtered amid bitter torments rather than violate the signal beauty of holy virginity. Among these virgins, Agnes, a maid illustrious throughout all the world, by duly proclaiming in meet praise the beauty of Christ, her comely spouse, a beauty unlike all others, recommends to consecrated virgins the pledge of his love, who born of a holy virgin is alone the spouse and adornment of chaste souls.

This Agnes, therefore, virgin renowned for her good deeds, whom our muse sings in strains uncultured, a noble inhabitant of the famous city of Rome, came forth from an illustrious family of kindly parents, whom distinguished nobility and benign power ever raised to distinction. Befitting the nobility of her birth, she was comely of form and charming in the splendor of her faith and celebrated throughout the world because of her outstanding virtues. For this maiden, after being washed in the pure stream of holy baptism and cleansed from the stain of ancient guilt, dedicated herself with devoted heart to Christ endeavoring by the faithful preservation of holy virginity to spurn resolutely all carnal affections and to enter upon the severe struggles of a celibate life, so that, victorious over the blandishments of the persuasive enemy, she might merit to be joined to the blessed inhabitants of heaven above the stars.

But when two lustra had passed in swift course and she had completed three years more, the son of Simphronius, one of the ministers, in fact, prefect of the city, a youth sprung from a noble race, once he beheld the charm of her beauty, stunned with an ardent affection of heart for this maiden, selected her for his own beloved in preference to all others, believing himself fortunate and well destined for distinction, if he succeeded in obtaining that beautiful girl as his sweet spouse for all the days of his life. Therefore, accompanied by many friends, he approached her, desiring to espouse the virtuous bride of Christ, and he brought with

him many presents from the treasury of his father, hoping (the fool!) to achieve what he was in fact unable to effect, namely to corrupt the constant mind of the maiden by these gifts and thus be able to join her to his unholy affection.

But the virgin of Christ, rejecting outright the gifts as though they were utterly worthless, and despising the weight of the gold he had brought and the bright luster of the diverse gems, is said to have rejected the infatuated youth with these words: “O son of death eternal, deserving of damnation, fuel of crime and despiser of the almighty, departing from me speedily, leave me and flee. Nor trust that you will be able to pervert my chaste heart that the sweet love of a far nobler spouse has anticipated, the beautiful token of whose faith I bear upon my brow and in my whole body. With that token he has marked me and has bound me closely to himself, lest my mind should presume to seek any other lover, but rather that it should learn to embrace him, alone, who is mighty in every virtue and resplendent in beauty and far above all in heaven and on earth. Equal in divine nature and not inferior in majesty, him the almighty begot without a mother before the earliest ages of the world, this son, through whom he has made the world for himself. And this same son a mother brought forth without a father and nourished her own maker, born in time. His outstanding comeliness the splendor of the sun and the gleaming glory of the moon do marvel at, glorifying with their brilliant rays the lord of the earth, and

at his command all the subservient stars fulfill through the years the courses assigned unto them. To him all the angelic choirs, making acclamations in fitting praises, do not cease to render homage. To him belong wondrous goodness and exalted power, glory sublime, perpetual concord of peace, glorious kindness and will exceedingly benign. For such is the lover whom I cherish, and he, I confess, is alone to be worshiped above all others.”

“He indeed has espoused me with a token of such love as though he has enriched his spouse with a brilliant diadem, and he has encircled my neck with precious gems, and has suspended from my ears costly earrings, and has presented to me splendid adornments of various beauty. From his lips has flowed forth a sweetness that has nourished me with milk and fed me with a sweet food like nectar of sweet honey and an abundance of milk. Moreover, he has constructed for me an eternal bridal chamber, resplendent with varied jewels and metal of gold. In this abode instruments resounding in harmonious melodies sing for me a sweet hymn throughout all the ages, and likewise sounding forth the praises of my celestial spouse, they persuade me ever to his affection. When I love him in the inmost affection of my heart, no loss do I suffer of maidenhood. But when I merit the joy of his embrace and like a bride am led to his glorious bridal chamber, I remain a virgin without violation of chastity. For him alone I must preserve my perpetual vow and to him I entrust myself with all the endeavor of my heart.”

When the wretched man heard these words, he was pierced by the arrows of passion, and he groaned, bringing forth frequent and deep sighs because he had not obtained what he had sought for with a blinded heart. And grieving over this he languished in bitter sorrow, and most foolish of men that he was, he now betook himself prostrate to his couch. There, wickedly feigning illness, he concealed the passion that was for him the great cause of his grievous affliction. Nor was it long before it became known through the spreading of evil report that the son of the prefect was afflicted with a grievous disease. Immediately the physicians came together as it were in solid battle line, and they applied remedies appropriate for various diseases. But none of them was of any avail to the distracted youth. At length, however, they discovered what presently they also made known to the father, that there was no sign of an illness, but of a strong passion that his disconsolate son suffered.

When the father had heard this and had learned the cause of the disease, raging like a lion, he was moved to violent anger and in his furious wrath he demanded who it was of power so imperious, to whom the haughty maid, resting upon delusive hope, believed herself to be united, so that she thus despised his son who was justly famed among all people and had worthily been advanced to the highest dignity. When he had said this and had barked out his exceeding fury, he discovered that this Agnes had been washed in sacred baptism and that she was a worshiper of

Christ from her earliest youth, and that through her love of preserving virginity she had the habit of saying that Christ was her spouse.

Upon learning this, he rejoiced with an evil heart, expecting that he must compel the tender maid by severe tortures to the worship of idols and thus be able at length to satiate that intense wrath that consumed him because of her rejection of his ailing son. Therefore, he ordered her to be brought immediately into his presence, and as she stood there in no wise terrified, he at first sought to coax her with kindly persuasions. But afterwards he employed harsh compulsion by means of bitter reproaches, so that she might, of her own accord, unite herself to the love of his son, and that she might worship the images of the gods and deny Christ. But the virgin of Christ could not be overcome by suffering nor persuaded by any wheedling so as not to preserve unsullied the firm vow, strengthened with the seal of faith, that she had pledged her first lover. Then the prefect, renewing once again his base persuasions, said: "If indeed you desire to remain a virgin inviolate, attach yourself at once to the great goddess Vesta, and join her consecrated daughters, that you may ever be worthy to serve her."

Thus spoke the prefect, but to him Agnes made response: "If it rightfully pleased me to reject your son who, endowed with reason and having the use of all his bodily senses, is ruled by a soul destined never to die (although he

would deserve to be shut up in the lowest pit because of the commission of so many grievous faults, unless he should come back to his senses and be duly wise again and thus have himself touched by the pure waters of holy baptism), how then do you think by any threats or persuasions to force me to worship idols formed from metal by the labor of artisans and bear only a false form of limbs, fulfilling no functions of a nimble body, and having nothing in common with living beings? Furthermore, what consolation can I expect in the conduct of my life from these senseless and profane monsters, themselves deprived of all sensation, and able neither to benefit themselves nor to assist me?"

When she had finished speaking, Simphronius, the prefect, made answer: "I know that you are still in the bloom of your first years, a child in wit and tender in age. Therefore, pardoning your childish simplicity, I will wisely convey you, thoughtless child, to a place where, in order to spare you, I will make you bend your head before the sacred feet of venerated Vesta, and where with incense you will placate the majesty of our gods. But if, despising such mild goodness of mine, you struggle and will not follow my commands, I no longer will spare you, but will use just violence and order that you be enclosed within the recesses of a house of ill-repute, in which lewd women indulge in sinfulness, and I will make you a companion of corrupt harlots, in order that you, sprung from noble stock, may be an utter disgrace and a shameful confusion to your own house."

But the holy virgin, trembling exceedingly at these threats, yet immediately gave this brave response to the prefect: "If you knew the true God whom I worship and who exercises his power without end, through which in gracious manner for the consolation of his servants he confounds all the snares of the ancient enemy, you would not then be willing to pour from your mouth such words, nor would you so often place before me frightful terrors. Therefore I, who follow the better faith, that of Christ, know him and am known by him; and I hope that under the protection of the right hand of God, I will never be defiled by sin but will conquer all the allurements of the frail flesh."

These words inflamed the savage rage of the prefect still more, and he commanded the esteemed spouse of the celestial king to be deprived of her garments and with body entirely exposed to be dragged in the midst of a great concourse of people that had gathered, and to be shut up in the dark den of a brothel in which wanton youths, maddened with passion, delighted in association with evil women. But Christ, bringing consolation to his own spouse, did not suffer her to be touched by any of these revilers. For when she was thus exposed, deprived of her garments, immediately the luxuriant hair, which hung in long tresses from her head, grew longer, and in its descent reached the tender soles of her feet so that her entire body was covered with the tresses as with a protecting garment. And as soon as she had crossed the threshold of that dismal den of sin, she

immediately perceived a delicious odor, and she beheld, gleaming with a wondrous luster, that shameful place that was, until then, a dark and dingy hole. And when she was compelled to enter that filthy haunt, an angel of the most high reassuringly stood before her, who was the resolute custodian of her body, and he brought her a gleaming garment of snowy splendor, perfectly fashioned for her. Thus clad, she directed her voice to the heavens, fittingly uttering sweet thanks to Christ, whose help she had experienced under the burden of such great peril, and protected by whose paternal aid she could not be overcome by the wiles of the ancient enemy.

Meanwhile the youths, maddened in the blindness of their hearts, collecting into a mob from all parts came speedily, vying in the sinful lust of their perverted hearts as to who would be the first to enter, or who would be able to discover whether this virgin, supported by the protection of her Christ, she who had ever disdained carnal affection, would now be able to persevere in the vow she had made.

Nor was it long before they learned, and were not able to contradict, that she who believes in God and reposes in him with a firm trust can never be confounded. For whosoever, impelled by his haughty mind, recklessly entered the recesses of that foul place, when he beheld the rays of light scintillating in a wonderful manner and saw the splendor of the angelic garb, each was so seized with extreme terror

at such an extraordinary manifestation, that he forthwith prostrated himself at the feet of the holy virgin, imploring to be freed from the shackles of his errors and testifying that the true God, who consoles all his followers, was rightly to be worshiped. And thus was this place of sin transformed into a house of prayer.

At length, bereft of reason, came the son of the perfect, because of whom the blessed maid had endured such cruel treatment. This wretched man, entering presently with a gladsome heart, neither spoke praise to God, nor rendered him honor whose grace was illumining the doleful cavern, but joyfully hastened into that hateful abode, hoping that he might now licitly enjoy the embraces of the holy virgin, for whose affection he was languishing. But the goodness of Christ and his most high power mightily resisting this man who was wanting to sin, shielded his own child from disgrace and delivered the unhappy man to an evil death. For as soon as he had with quick steps hastened to this place where Agnes beseechingly sang praises to God, the unhappy wretch, his limbs unexpectedly relaxed in death, fell prone, laid low by the power of Christ.

When the unhappy father had heard this, he came amid lamentations, followed by a great concourse of people, and calling himself the most wretched, he sent cries on high, accusing the saintly maiden in these words: "O woman, maliciously cruel, in whom there is an unwomanly wildness

of heart and a will exceedingly savage raging in your tender body in the fashion of a wild beast, tell me, what purpose urges you to destroy my son, who has been the honor of his people and the hope of his father, once happy in such an offspring, but now bitterly bereft by the death of this son? It is therefore evident that your mind is exceedingly vicious and is thoroughly imbued with deceits from the stream of wicked magic, because you have been minded to snatch from joyful life a youth still blooming in the first years of his young manhood.”

But the holy virgin was not daunted by such accusations, nor did she make a bitter retort to the prefect, but pouring forth from her lips words resounding with sweetness she spoke eloquently, in a reply full of good sense: “I was not the cause of the death that destroyed this youth. Rather, he himself was the author of his own death because stupidly he spurned to glorify the true God, whose glory radiates in this sullen dungeon. But now, in order that throughout the entire world his majesty and exalted power may be made manifest, I suppliantly implore his sweet goodness to command this rigid body to grow warm again and to restore a new man with limbs revived.” When she had said this, she commanded all those who stood about to depart, and prostrate upon the earth amid tears she poured forth prayers, begging that pardon be granted from the lord to the sinful youth.

Presently an angel stood near her as she implored and begged life for the wretched man, and the angel raised up the prostrate form, offering her consolation in loving words, and in the name of God commanded that the dead man, destroyed by the power of the most high, should resume his breathing immediately and live. He who had thus been commanded rose quickly from the ground with strength restored to all his members, and sending up sweet praise to the most high heavens, he at once paid his debt of thanks with a joyful heart to Christ, the conqueror of death and the giver of life. Then indeed, again restored to his first comeliness, he who had been bound in death, advanced alive, and, presenting himself to his grief stricken father, he became to him a cause of rejoicing, to whom he had been a cause of grief.

Thereupon repeatedly assailing the most high heavens with his cries, zealously persuasive, he made use of these words: "Believe, O Roman citizens, I beg you, believe all of you that Christ is the true and only God, eternally enthroned on high with the father and with the holy spirit ever reigning and holding the power of heaven and embracing in his dominion the universe. He rules all things by the governance of his unbounded goodness. He alone is to be implored, worshiped, and loved, who when at first I was erring and desiring evil, forestalled me by a sudden death and deigned to put an end to such madness, and then, ever ready to help the erring, appeased by the prayers of the holy virgin Agnes, has restored me afresh to life."

And his father, when he saw his son restored and approaching him, perfect in form and full of comeliness, after he had bewailed his death amid bitter tears, forthwith trembled with wonder at the unexpected marvel of the stupendous miracle, but he rejoiced also with a glad heart. Then embracing his son with paternal devotion, he lavished loving kisses upon his dear child. After this he declared in a loud voice that Christ was the true God, whose ready goodness he had felt, and by whose command was laid low death, which had just yielded up alive the youth whom it had lately engulfed. And then indeed, all those standing about with wondering minds happily sped messages of praise to heaven, extolling the sacred name of the blessed God.

But the pagan pontiffs, unable in their cruel hearts to endure this, caused a great agitation, accusing Agnes of wicked sacrilege, and saying that she must speedily perish by cruel death because on her account the images of their gods and their pagan rites were suffering contemptuous neglect. Wherefore the prefect was made sad, and he grieved with a distressed mind for the holy maiden. However, he was in doubt and did not know what course to pursue concerning her or what remained to be done. He did not wish to destroy her, yet he was unable to defend her.

At length he departed sadly and left in his place another, who exercised his judicial office with the fierceness of a wolf. This man was called Aspasius, skilled in profane

rites. He commanded Agnes to be cast into fire in response to the wicked petitions of the pontiffs. But the body of the chaste virgin required no punishment because of any defilement since the passion of carnal love had not enkindled it and the fire did not molest, nor were the flames able to touch it. Finally by power divine the flames were separated and yielded to the virgin's prayers a more ample fulfillment than she had asked. For the flames raging with excessive heat, broke forth and destroyed at once the executioners first of all. Then they licked at the unbelieving bystanders and speedily laid low many ranks of them. But alone, proof against the flames, the saintly virgin stood at ease amid the crackling tongues of fire.

Then she prayed, raising her hands heavenward, ushering in her prayer with this melodious praise: "Father of all, father of the word, and creator of the world, who, reigning before all ages with your beloved son and with the holy spirit coeternally with both, are worthily extolled, worshiped, venerated, loved, you alone do I praise. You I bless in praise, and to you I give devotedly eternal thanks, because supported by the protection of your son, I have never succumbed by reason of the deceits of the ancient serpent, but with chaste body and my heart's shrine unsullied I have passed safe through all the allurements of the flesh, likewise overcoming the torments of the sacrilegious tyrant. Therefore, rejoicing in you exceedingly because of this goodness, I now hasten to come to you with joyful mind, desiring

to suffer the sentence of death and speedily to be dissolved, in order that I may merit indeed to behold, without end, you, whom I have sought, whom alone I have ever loved. In your clemency, deign to receive this soul, expelled from the body for your sake, within the portals of your kingdom, where you, powerful in your justice under the triune name, as the one king of the three-fold universe throughout all ages, rule all things with the scepter of the august godhead.”

And when forsooth these pleading prayers had been completed, the flames were extinguished and the whole pyre died out and the very cinders grew cold in their own ashes, so utterly deprived of all heat that not even a spark survived.

When this stupendous miracle had now become evident, the more the power of Christ revealed itself upon the earth, so much more did the unjust judge breathe forth the madness of a mightier rage, tormented in his bitter heart. Nor did he allow the sacred maid to survive after this, through whom such great prodigies had been wrought, but he plunged his sword into the tender throat of the illustrious martyr and pierced it through ravenously. And on the other hand, unwittingly indeed, he succeeded in conferring upon her, whom he desired, though unprovoked, to harm, a great boon, as he sent to heaven the soul he thus wickedly snatched from the world.

But when she, who for Christ was stricken with a mortal wound, had rendered in death her last sigh to the lord, and with the saving faith had fallen asleep in him, suddenly an angelic host, coming down from heaven, standing about that soul resplendent in radiant beauty and clothed in the light of celestial splendor, received it tenderly and bore it happily through the skies amid hymns of resounding praise, as was appropriate. And when she had been borne above the swift fires of the heavens, they led her into the starry court of the heavenly bridegroom. From him she received without delay the bright golden crown for the honor of her chaste virginity, and then too, worthy as she was to be presented with the symbol of her triumph, she received the palm of martyrdom to carry without end, so that the happy martyr, victor in a double battle, that of the body and that of the mind that ever strives against the flesh, might enjoy eternal glory for the twofold victory and might shine refulgent among the virgin choir, just as the lily, when combined beautifully with roseate crimson, is resplendent amid the loveliness of the varied flowers.

Meanwhile the holy solicitude of her noble parents, amid great solemnities, consigned her venerable remains with all possible honors to the bosom of the earth. Nor was that same tomb of the holy virgin, deserving of reverence, disdained by the attentiveness of parental affection, but was guarded thereby even more vigilantly during the night. And while according to their custom the ever watchful

parents were with loyal hearts keeping guard over their child, there appeared to them a vision from heaven. They saw suddenly descending, swiftly gliding down from the gates of heaven, a virgin throng beautifully adorned and decked in full splendor. Among these they beheld radiant in like beauty, their own Agnes, martyred for Christ. At her right stood a lamb more white than snow. And as she knew that her parents were worthy of veneration by reason of their faith, she tenderly addressed them in kindly tones: "Rejoice with me, giving thanks for all ages, because I am in the resplendent court of the celestial king, associated eternally with these sacred virgins. And now in heaven I am joined in the sweet embrace of love to him whom I have ever worshiped upon earth with a faithful heart, desiring to behold him for all eternity."

When she had said this she suddenly departed from them. And they, made exceedingly happy by such a consolation, dried the tears they had been pouring forth because of her death. And with voices melodious they chanted praise to God, who in his great mercy gives to his sacred champions, after the severe combat, the reward of eternal life.

EPILOGUE

I took all the material I have used in this little book and the previous one from ancient books written by authors whose names are certain, except in the case of the passion, written above, of St. Pelagius. The details of his martyrdom were told to me by an inhabitant of the city where he suffered it. He gave truthful assurance that he had not only seen Pelagius, whom he described as the most beautiful of men, face to face, but had been a witness of his end. If anything I have said is false, I have not done the falsifying, but have imprudently followed false sources.

THE PLAYS

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THE PREFACES OF HROTSVIT

THE CONVERSION OF GALLICANUS
THE MILITARY COMMANDER
[GALLICANUS IN 1501 EDITION]

THE PASSION OF THE VIRGIN SAINTS,
AGAPE, CHIONIA, AND IRENA
[DULCITIUS IN 1501 EDITION]

THE RESURRECTION OF
DRUSIANA AND CALIMACHUS
[CALIMACHUS IN 1501 EDITION]

THE FALL AND CONVERSION OF MARY,
NIECE OF THE HERMIT ABRAHAM
[ABRAHAM IN 1501 EDITION]

THE CONVERSION OF THE HARLOT THAIS
[PAPHNUTIUS IN 1501 EDITION]

THE PASSION OF THE VIRGIN SAINTS,
FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY
[SAPIENTIA IN 1501 EDITION]

PREFACE

There are many Catholics, and we cannot entirely acquit ourselves of the charge, who, attracted by the polished elegance, prefer the vanity of pagan books to the usefulness of the holy scriptures. There are others who, although they are deeply attached to the sacred writings and have no liking for most pagan productions, make an exception in favor of the fictions of Terence, and, fascinated by their charm, are corrupted by the wickedness of the matter. Wherefore I, the strong voice of Gandersheim, have not hesitated to imitate in my writings a poet whose works are so widely read, my objective being to glorify, within the limits of my poor talent, the laudable chastity of Christian virgins in that same form of composition that has been used to describe the shameless acts of licentious women. Nonetheless, one thing has embarrassed me and often brought a blush to my cheek. It is that I have been compelled through the nature of this work to apply my mind and my pen to depicting the dreadful frenzy of those possessed by illicit love, and the insidious sweetness of their speech—things that should not even be named among us. Yet if from modesty I had refrained from treating these subjects, I should not have been able to attain my object—to glorify the innocent to the best of my ability. For the more seductive the blandishments of deranged lovers, the more wonderful the divine succor and the greater the victory of those who resist, especially when it is fragile woman who is victorious and strong man who is routed with confusion.

I have no doubt that many will object that my poor writing is much inferior to that of the author whom I have taken as my model, that it is on a much humbler scale, and indeed altogether different.

Well, I do not deny this. No one can justly accuse me of wishing to place myself on a level with those who by the sublimity of their genius have so far surpassed me. No, I am not so arrogant as to presume to compare myself even with the least among these writers' students. I strive only, although my power is not equal to my desire, to use what talent I have for the glory of him who gave it to me. Nor is my self-love so great that I would, to avoid criticism, abstain from proclaiming wherever possible the virtue of Christ working in his saints. If my pious devotion gives satisfaction, I shall rejoice; if it does not, either on account of my own worthlessness or of the faults of my unpolished style, I shall still be glad that I made the effort. For, in the humbler works of my naiveté, I gathered up my poor researches in heroic strophes, but here I have sifted them into a series of dramatic scenes and avoided through omission the pernicious voluptuousness of pagan writers.

Epistle of the Same to
Certain Learned Patrons of this Book

To the learned and virtuous, who do not envy the success of others, but on the contrary rejoice in it as becomes the truly wise, Hrotsvit, of little learning and merit, sends wishes for your health in this life and your joy in eternity.

I cannot praise you enough for your humility, or pay an adequate tribute to your kindness and affection, for I am too lowly. To think that you, who have been nurtured in the most profound philosophical studies and have attained knowledge in perfection, should have deigned to approve the humble work of an obscure woman! You have, however, not praised me but the giver of the grace that works in me, by sending me your fraternal congratulations and admitting that I possess some little knowledge of those arts, the subtleties of which exceed the grasp of my woman's mind. For until now I hardly dared to show my rough little writings even to a few and then only to my intimate companions. I came near abandoning this form of writing altogether, for if there were few to whom I could submit my compositions at all, there were fewer still who could point out what needed correction and encourage me to go on. But now, reassured by your verdict (is it not said that the testimony of three witnesses is "equivalent to the truth"?), I feel that I have enough confidence to apply myself to writing, if God grants me the power, and to submit it to the criticism of the learned

whoever they may be. Still, I am torn by conflicting feelings. I rejoice from the depths of my soul that God, through whose grace alone I am what I am, should be praised in me, but I am afraid of being thought greater than I am. I know that it is as wrong to deny a divine gift as to pretend falsely that we have received it. So I will not deny that through the grace of the creator I have acquired some knowledge of the arts. He has given me the ability to learn because I am a teachable creature. Yet by my own power I should know nothing. He has given me a perspicacious mind, but one that lies fallow and idle since my mistresses have finished teaching me. That my divine gift might not be made void by negligence I have been at pains, whenever I have been able to pick up some threads and scraps torn from the old mantle of philosophy, to weave them into my own little book, in the hope that my lowly ignorant effort may become more distinguished through the introduction of something of a nobler strain, and that the creator of genius may be the more honored through me since it is generally believed that a woman's intelligence is slower. Such has been my motive in writing, the sole reason for the sweat of my labors. I do not pretend to have knowledge where I am ignorant. As for myself, I know only that I know nothing.

Impelled by your kindly interest and your express wish I come, bending low like a reed, to submit this little work to your judgment. I wrote it indeed with that idea in my mind, although doubt as to its merits has made me

withhold it until now. I hope you will revise it with the same careful attention that you would give to a work of your own, and that when you have succeeded in bringing it up to the proper standard you will return it to me, that I, instructed by your expertise, may learn what are its worst faults.

THE CONVERSION OF GALLICANUS,
THE MILITARY COMMANDER

ARGUMENT:

The conversion of Gallicanus, the military commander. On the eve of his departure for a campaign against the Scythians, Gallicanus is betrothed to Emperor Constantine's daughter, Constance, a consecrated virgin.

When threatened with defeat in battle, Gallicanus is converted by John and Paul, chief chamberlains to Constance. He is immediately baptized and takes a vow of celibacy.

But later he is exiled by order of Julian the Apostate and receives the crown of martyrdom. John and Paul are put to death by order of the same prince and buried secretly in their own house. Not long after, the son of their executioner becomes possessed by a devil. He is cured after confessing the crime committed by his father. He bears witness to the merits of the martyrs and is baptized, together with his father, next to their tombs.

CHARACTERS IN PART I:

Emperor Constantine

Gallicanus

Constance, Daughter of Constantine

Artemia and Attica, Daughters of Gallicanus

John and Paul, Chamberlains to Constance

Lords of the Court

Bradán, King of the Scythians

Tribunes

Roman Soldiers

Scythian Soldiers

Helena, Mother of Constantine

CHARACTERS IN PART II:

Julian the Apostate

Terentianus

Consuls

Christians

SCENE I

CONSTANTINE. Gallicanus, your delay irks me since you are postponing the strike against the Scythians, the only nation, as you well know, that resists the Roman peace and foolishly rejects our laws. You know well enough that you were chosen for this military campaign because of your strength in defense of your country.

GALLICANUS. Most noble Constantine, I have served you hand and foot, ungrudgingly, devotedly, and have always striven to repay your trust in me with deeds. I have never shirked any task.

CONSTANTINE. There is no need to remind me. This is fixed in my mind. It is for that reason that I admonished you with encouragement, rather than with censure, that you obey.

GALLICANUS. I will pursue that at once.

CONSTANTINE. I am rejoiced to hear it.

GALLICANUS. I am ready to obey your orders if it costs me my life.

CONSTANTINE. Your zeal pleases me. I appreciate your devotion.

GALLICANUS. Yet the ultimate task of service should receive the ultimate reward.

CONSTANTINE. That is only fair.

GALLICANUS. It is easier for a man to undertake a difficult enterprise when he is sustained by the knowledge of receiving a sure reward.

CONSTANTINE. Of course.

GALLICANUS. I beg you then to promise me now a reward for this dangerous undertaking, so that the exertion of battle does not break me in my fierce fight, since the hope of this reward will fill me with courage.

CONSTANTINE. The reward deemed by the Senate the most glorious a man can desire has never been withheld from you, and never shall be. You enjoy the freedom of my court, and the highest honor among those at court.

GALLICANUS. I know, but I am not thinking of that.

CONSTANTINE. If you have other ambitions, you must tell me.

GALLICANUS. I have.

CONSTANTINE. What are they?

GALLICANUS. Dare I tell you?

CONSTANTINE. Of course!

GALLICANUS. You will be angry.

CONSTANTINE. Not at all.

GALLICANUS. You are sure?

CONSTANTINE. Quite sure.

GALLICANUS. You will be indignant.

CONSTANTINE. Your fears are groundless.

GALLICANUS. Since you command me, I will tell you. I love Constance, your daughter.

CONSTANTINE. That is well. You do right to love the daughter of your sovereign. Your love honors her.

GALLICANUS. You say this to cut me short.

CONSTANTINE. Not so.

GALLICANUS. I wish to marry her, if your grace consents.

CONSTANTINE. He asks no small thing, my lords. This is an honor of which none of you ever dreamed.

GALLICANUS. Alas, he scorns me. I foresaw this. Intercede for me, I implore you.

THE LORDS. Most illustrious emperor, it behooves your dignity, in view of his devoted services, not to deny him this.

CONSTANTINE. I have not done so, as far as I am concerned. But it is my duty first to make sure that my daughter consents.

THE LORDS. That is only reasonable.

CONSTANTINE. I will go, and, if such is your wish, Gallicanus, I will put the matter before her.

GALLICANUS. It is my wish.

SCENE II

CONSTANCE. Our lord the emperor approaches. He looks much graver than usual. I wonder what he wishes.

CONSTANTINE. Constance, my child, come nearer. I wish to speak to you.

CONSTANCE. I am here, my lord. Command me.

CONSTANTINE. I am in great distress of mind. A heavy sadness afflicts me.

CONSTANCE. As you came, I saw that you were sad, and without knowing the reason I was troubled.

CONSTANTINE. On your account, I am worn with care.

CONSTANCE. On my account?

CONSTANTINE. Yes.

CONSTANCE. I am frightened. What is it, my lord?

CONSTANTINE. The fear of causing you grief ties my tongue.

CONSTANCE. You will cause me more grief by keeping silence.

CONSTANTINE. Gallicanus, the general, whose rapid series of triumphs has won him the first place among the princes of my realm—whose support is always necessary for the defense of the country.

CONSTANCE. What of him?

CONSTANTINE. He wants to make you his wife.

CONSTANCE. Me?

CONSTANTINE. Yes.

CONSTANCE. I would rather die.

CONSTANTINE. I knew that would be your answer.

CONSTANCE. It cannot surprise you, as it was with your consent and approval that I took a vow of chastity to serve God.

CONSTANTINE. I have not forgotten.

CONSTANCE. No entreaties will ever be able to force me to break the inviolate vow of chastity.

CONSTANTINE. That is right. But I am in a narrow strait. For if, as is my duty as your father, I permit you to remain faithful to your vow, as a sovereign I shall suffer a heavy loss. Yet, if I oppose your resolution—which God forbid!—I shall deserve eternal punishment.

CONSTANCE. If I despaired of divine help, I would be more wretched than you.

CONSTANTINE. That is true.

CONSTANCE. But a person who counts on God's goodness has a weapon against sorrow.

CONSTANTINE. How well you speak, my Constance.

CONSTANCE. If you will deign to listen to my advice, I will show you how to escape both dangers.

CONSTANTINE. If only you could!

CONSTANCE. You must pretend that you are willing to grant Gallicanus what he asks when the war has been won. Make him believe that I agree. Persuade him to leave with me during his absence at the war his two daughters, Attica and Artemia, as pledges of the bond of love that is to unite us. And he should allow my chamberlains, John and Paul, to go with him on the expedition.

CONSTANTINE. And if he should return victorious, what am I to do?

CONSTANCE. I think, we must pray to the father of us to turn Gallicanus's mind from this desire.

CONSTANTINE. My daughter, my daughter! Your sweet words have softened the bitterness of your father's grief! Henceforth I will not give way to anxiety.

CONSTANCE. There is no need.

CONSTANTINE. I will go and deceive Gallicanus with this joyful promise.

CONSTANCE. Go in peace, my lord.

SCENE III

GALLICANUS. O princes, I am dying of curiosity to learn what has come of this long conference between our august sovereign and his daughter.

THE LORDS. He is convincing her to accept what you desire.

GALLICANUS. If only his arguments may prevail!

THE LORDS. Maybe they will.

GALLICANUS. Peace! Silence all of you! The emperor comes. His face is not anxious as when he left us, but serene.

THE LORDS. A good omen!

GALLICANUS. It is said that the face is the mirror of the soul. If this be true, perhaps the calm joy in his reflects a kindly mood.

THE LORDS. We trust so.

SCENE IV

CONSTANTINE. Gallicanus!

GALLICANUS. What did he say?

THE LORDS. Forward, forward. He is asking for you.

GALLICANUS. Now may the propitious gods grant me their favor!

CONSTANTINE. Gallicanus, set out for the war with an easy mind. On your return you shall receive the reward you covet.

GALLICANUS. This is not a jest?

CONSTANTINE. I do not jest.

GALLICANUS. I should be happy indeed if I could know one thing.

CONSTANTINE. What might that be?

GALLICANUS. Her answer.

CONSTANTINE. My daughter's answer?

GALLICANUS. Yes.

CONSTANTINE. It is unreasonable to expect a modest girl to answer in so many words. Events will prove that she consents.

GALLICANUS. If I could be assured of that, I should trouble little about the manner of her answer.

CONSTANTINE. You want proof?

GALLICANUS. I hunger for it.

CONSTANTINE. She has given orders that her chamberlains, John and Paul, shall stay with you until the day of your nuptials.

GALLICANUS. And her reason?

CONSTANTINE. That by constant conversation with them you may learn to know how she lives—her character and habits.

GALLICANUS. An excellent plan, and one that pleases me beyond measure.

CONSTANTINE. She would like you in return to allow your two young daughters to live with her for the same period so that she can learn from them how to please you.

GALLICANUS. Joy, joy! Everything is falling out as I wished.

CONSTANTINE. Send for your daughters without delay.

GALLICANUS. Soldiers, are you still here? Be gone! Fetch my daughters that they may serve their mistress.

SCENE V

SOLDIERS. Most noble Constance, the illustrious daughters of Gallicanus are here. They are beautiful, wise, and virtuous, and in every way worthy of your friendship.

CONSTANCE. They are welcome. Let them be introduced with ceremony. O Christ, lover of virginity and fount of chastity! Through the intercession of your holy martyr Agnes, you have preserved me from pagan errors and my body from leprosy! You have shown me as an example your mother's virgin bed where you manifested yourself as true God! Before time began, you were born of God the father, and in the fullness of time you were also born true man, of a mother—I implore you, true wisdom,

co-eternal with the father, the creator, upholder and governor of the universe, to grant my prayer that, by drawing him to you, you turn Gallicanus away from his unlawful purpose of seeking to gain the love that I can give only to you. Take his daughters to yourself, and pour the sweetness of your love into their minds, that they may despise all carnal bonds, and be admitted to the blessed company of virgins who are consecrated to you!

ARTEMIA. Hail, Constance, imperial highness!

CONSTANCE. Greeting, my sisters, Artemia and Attica. Stand up, stand up! No, do not kneel. Greet me rather with a loving kiss.

ARTEMIA. We come eagerly to offer you our homage, lady. We are ready to serve you whole-heartedly so that your grace may abound in us.

CONSTANCE. We have one lord who is in heaven. He alone should be served like that. We owe him a love and fidelity that must be shown not only with our entire heart but also with our entire body, so that we may be worthy of entering the court of his celestial kingdom with the virgin's palm.

ARTEMIA. We have no reluctance in this. You will find us eager to obey you in all things, especially in our understanding of the truth and the preservation of our vow of purity.

CONSTANCE. That is a good answer, and one worthy of your noble mind. I see that through divine grace you already have the faith.

ARTEMIA. How could we idolaters have any good thought if light had not been given us from grace above?

CONSTANCE. The strength of your faith makes me hope that Gallicanus too will believe some day.

ARTEMIA. He has only to be taught. Then he must believe.

CONSTANCE. Send for John and Paul.

SCENE VI

JOHN. You sent for us, highness. We are here.

CONSTANCE. Go at once to Gallicanus and attach yourselves to his person. Instruct him little by little in the mysteries of our faith. Perhaps God deems him worthy of being saved by us.

PAUL. God give us success! We shall urge him unceasingly.

SCENE VII

GALLICANUS. You are welcome, John and Paul. I have awaited your coming with impatience.

JOHN. As soon as we received our lady's commands we hastened at once to put ourselves at your service.

GALLICANUS. Your offer to serve me gives me a pleasure that nothing else could give.

PAUL. That is natural, for, as the saying goes, "the friend of

our friend is our friend.”

GALLICANUS. A true saying.

JOHN. The love our lady bears you assures us of your friendship.

GALLICANUS. You can rely on it. Come, tribunes and centurions, assemble the troops. Soldiers in my command, I present to you John and Paul, for whose arrival our departure has been delayed.

TRIBUNES. Lead us on. We are gathered together.

GALLICANUS. We must first go to the Capitol, and visit the temples to propitiate the gods with the customary sacrifices, so that they will bless the outcome of our battle.

TRIBUNES. That is necessary.

JOHN. Let us withdraw for a time.

PAUL. We cannot do otherwise.

SCENE VIII

JOHN. The general is leaving the temple. Let us mount our horses and ride to meet him.

PAUL. This moment.

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

JOHN. We were saddling our horses. We have sent our baggage on ahead that we may ride with you unencumbered.

GALLICANUS. Well planned!

SCENE IX

GALLICANUS. By Jupiter, tribunes, I see the legions of an immense army advancing, terrifying with their vast array of weapons.

TRIBUNES. By Hercules, the enemy!

GALLICANUS. Let us resist with courage, and show them we are men!

TRIBUNES. It is useless to attempt resistance against such a host.

GALLICANUS. What, then, do you propose?

TRIBUNES. Surrender.

GALLICANUS. Apollo forbid!

TRIBUNES. By Pollux, we must surrender! See, we are surrounded on every side—we are being mown down—we perish!

GALLICANUS. Woe, gods! What will happen if the tribunes refuse to obey me, and surrender?

JOHN. Make a vow to God in heaven that you will become a Christian, and you will prevail.

GALLICANUS. I swear! And I will keep my vow.

THE ENEMY. Woe to us, King Bradan! Fortune, who but now promised us victory, is mocking us. Our men are weakening, their arms are exhausted—they have lost heart and are giving up the struggle.

BRADAN. I am uncertain what to do. The same ill you suffer has also seized me. There is but one course—we must surrender.

THE ENEMY. There is nothing else to do.

BRADAN. Duke Gallicanus do not destroy us! Be merciful! Spare our lives and do with us, in our servitude, what you will.

GALLICANUS. Have no fear. There is no need to tremble. Give me hostages, acknowledge yourselves tributaries of the emperor, and you shall live happy under the Roman peace.

ENEMY. You have only to name the number and rank of the hostages, and the tribute to be exacted.

GALLICANUS. Soldiers, lay down arms. Slay no one, wound no one, but embrace as allies these men whom you had to fight as enemies of the empire.

JOHN. How much more powerful is one fervent prayer than all the pride of man!

GALLICANUS. That is true indeed.

PAUL. What mighty succor God in his mercy sends to those
who humbly trust in him!

GALLICANUS. Evidently.

JOHN. But the promise made when the storm was raging
must be kept now that it is calm.

GALLICANUS. I agree. It is my wish to be baptized as soon
as possible, and to devote the rest of my life to the ser-
vice of God.

PAUL. You are right.

SCENE X

GALLICANUS. Look! The Roman citizens are rushing forth
to see our entry, as we carry the symbols of victory in
customary fashion.

JOHN. It is only natural.

GALLICANUS. Yet the glorious victory was not won by my
valor nor by the help of their gods.

JOHN. No, assuredly; the glory belongs to the one true God.

GALLICANUS. That being so, we must pass the temples
without going in.

JOHN. A wise decision.

GALLICANUS. And instead make a humble confession of
faith in the Church of the Apostles.

PAUL. O blessed man! And most blessed thought! In this you show yourself a true Christian.

SCENE XI

CONSTANTINE. I am greatly astonished, soldiers, that Gallicanus should be so long in presenting himself before his sovereign.

SOLDIERS. The moment he arrived in Rome he went to the Church of Saint Peter, and, prostrating himself on the ground, gave thanks to the almighty for giving him the victory.

CONSTANTINE. Gallicanus?

SOLDIERS. It is true.

CONSTANTINE. Unbelievable!

SOLDIERS. Here he comes. You can ask him yourself.

SCENE XII

CONSTANTINE. Gallicanus, I have awaited your arrival with impatience. I long to hear how the battle went and how it ended.

GALLICANUS. I will tell you the whole story.

CONSTANTINE. Wait a moment, for even the battle is of small importance compared with the one thing that I want most to hear.

GALLICANUS. What might that be?

CONSTANTINE. On your departure for the war you visited the temple of the gods; on your return you went to the Church of the Apostles. Why?

GALLICANUS. You ask that?

CONSTANTINE. I am curious.

GALLICANUS. I will explain.

CONSTANTINE. Proceed, I beg you.

GALLICANUS. Most sacred emperor, I confess I visited the temples on my departure, as you have said, and humbly sought the help of gods and demons.

CONSTANTINE. According to the old Roman custom.

GALLICANUS. A bad custom.

CONSTANTINE. Horrible.

GALLICANUS. Then the tribunes arrived with their legions and we began our march.

CONSTANTINE. You set out with great pomp.

GALLICANUS. We pushed on, met the enemy, engaged them, and were defeated.

CONSTANTINE. Romans defeated!

GALLICANUS. Routed.

CONSTANTINE. When was such a disaster ever known in our history!

GALLICANUS. Once again I offered those abominable sacrifices, but what god came to my help? The fury of the enemy redoubled, and great numbers of my men were slain.

CONSTANTINE. I am amazed.

GALLICANUS. It was then that the tribunes, disregarding my orders, began to surrender.

CONSTANTINE. To the enemy?

GALLICANUS. To the enemy.

CONSTANTINE. And what did you do?

GALLICANUS. What could I do but take to flight?

CONSTANTINE. Impossible!

GALLICANUS. It is true.

CONSTANTINE. What anguish for a man of your courage!

GALLICANUS. The sharpest.

CONSTANTINE. And how did you escape?

GALLICANUS. My faithful companions, John and Paul, advised me to make a vow to the creator.

CONSTANTINE. Good advice.

GALLICANUS. I found it so. Hardly had I opened my lips to make the vow than I received help from heaven.

CONSTANTINE. How?

GALLICANUS. A young man of tall stature appeared before me carrying a cross on his shoulder. He bade me follow him sword in hand.

CONSTANTINE. This young man, whoever he was, was sent from heaven.

GALLICANUS. So it proved. At the same moment I saw on the right and on the left some soldiers whose faces were strange to me. They promised me their help.

CONSTANTINE. The host of heaven!

GALLICANUS. I am sure of it. And following in the steps of my guide, I advanced unharmed into the midst of the enemy until I came face to face with their king, by name Bradan. Suddenly overcome by the strangest terror he threw himself at my feet, surrendered with his whole army, and promised to pay tribute in perpetuity to the ruler of the Roman world.

CONSTANTINE. Now praise be to him who gave us this victory. Those who put their trust in him will never be confounded.

GALLICANUS. My experience bears witness to it.

CONSTANTINE. And now I should like to know what became of the treacherous tribunes?

GALLICANUS. They hastened to be reconciled.

CONSTANTINE. And you showed them mercy?

GALLICANUS. I showed mercy to men who had abandoned me in the hour of peril and surrendered to the enemy against my orders! No, assuredly!

CONSTANTINE. What did you do?

GALLICANUS. I offered to pardon them on one condition.

CONSTANTINE. What condition?

GALLICANUS. I told them that those who consented to become Christians would be allowed to retain their rank, and might even receive fresh honors, but that those who refused would not be pardoned, and would be degraded.

CONSTANTINE. A fair proposition, and honorable to the leader who made it.

GALLICANUS. For my own part, purified in the waters of baptism, I have surrendered myself completely to the will of God. I am ready to renounce even your daughter, whom I love more than anything in the world. I wish to abstain from marriage that I may please the virgin's son.

CONSTANTINE. Come near, nearer yet, and let me fold you in my arms! Now, Gallicanus, the time has come for me to tell you what up to now I have been obliged to keep secret.

GALLICANUS. What is it?

CONSTANTINE. My daughter, and your own two also,
have chosen the same holy path that you yourself wish
to follow.

GALLICANUS. I rejoice.

CONSTANTINE. Their desire to keep their vow of virginity
is so ardent that neither entreaties nor threats can alter
their resolution.

GALLICANUS. May they persevere, I pray!

CONSTANTINE. Come, let us go to the palace, where they
are staying.

GALLICANUS. Lead on. I will follow.

CONSTANTINE. Look, they are coming to greet us, and my
glorious mother, noble Helena, is with them. They all
weep for joy.

SCENE XIII

GALLICANUS. May your lives be blessed, most holy virgins.
Persevere in the fear of God, and preserve untouched
the treasure of your virginity. Then you will be worthy of
the embraces of the eternal king.

CONSTANCE. We shall keep our vows with more joy now
we know that you do not oppose us.

GALLICANUS. I do not oppose, resist, or prohibit this! Far
from it! I gladly consent that you should fulfill your vow,

my Constance, even though I risked my life for you.

CONSTANCE. I see the hand of the most high in this change in you.

GALLICANUS. If I had not changed, and for the better, I could never have consented to renounce you.

CONSTANCE. The lover of virginal purity and the author of all good resolutions recalled you from your unjust intention because he had already claimed me for his own. May he who has separated us in the body on earth unite us in the joys of eternity.

GALLICANUS. So be it! So be it!

CONSTANTINE. And now, since the bond of Christ's love unites us in the same faith, you shall live with us in our palace, and be treated with as much honor as if you were the emperor's son-in-law.

GALLICANUS. No temptation is to be feared more than the lust of the eyes.

CONSTANTINE. I cannot disagree.

GALLICANUS. Therefore it is not right that I should see her often. As you know, I love her more than my own kin, more than my life, more than my soul!

CONSTANTINE. You must do what you think best.

GALLICANUS. Thanks to our lord Christ and to my labors, your army is four times as strong as before. Give me

leave, then, to transfer my service to that emperor through whose power I have returned victorious, and to whom I owe any success I have won in life.

CONSTANTINE. To him be praise and glory. All creatures should serve him.

GALLICANUS. Above all those whom he has generously helped in time of need.

CONSTANTINE. That is true.

GALLICANUS. I am giving to my daughters the portion of my property that is theirs by right. Another I am designating for support of pilgrims. With the remainder I propose to enrich my slaves—whom I have freed—and to relieve the poor.

CONSTANTINE. You are disposing of your wealth wisely, and you will be rewarded.

GALLICANUS. As for me, I long to go to Ostia and become the disciple of the holy man Hilarion. In his brotherhood I hope to spend the rest of my life praising God and helping the poor.

CONSTANTINE. May the divine being to whom all things are possible bring your plans to a happy issue and may he, who reigns and is glorified in the unity of the trinity, lead you to eternal felicity.

GALLICANUS. Amen.

PART II, SCENE I

JULIAN. It harms our empire that these Christians enjoy too much liberty and they boast that they obey laws they received in the time of Constantine.

CONSULS. It would be a disgrace to tolerate it.

JULIAN. I do not intend to tolerate it.

CONSULS. Those words are worthy of you.

JULIAN. Soldiers, arm yourselves and strip the Christians of all they possess. Remind them of these words of their Christ:—"He who does not renounce all that he possesses for my sake cannot be my disciple."

SOLDIERS. We will not delay.

SCENE II

CONSULS. The soldiers have returned.

JULIAN. Is all well?

SOLDIERS. Well indeed.

JULIAN. Why have you returned so soon?

SOLDIERS. We will tell you. We had planned to seize Gallicanus's castle and occupy it in your name. But no sooner did one of us set foot on the threshold than he was straightway stricken with leprosy or madness.

JULIAN. Return and force Gallicanus to quit the realm or sacrifice to the gods.

SCENE III

GALLICANUS. Do not waste your breath, soldiers, with useless persuasion. I hold all that exists beneath the sun as nothing compared with eternal life. Banished for Christ's sake, I shall retire to Alexandria, where I hope to win the martyr's crown.

SCENE IV

SOLDIERS. Gallicanus, exiled by your orders, fled to Alexandria. He was arrested in that city by Count Rautianus and has perished by the sword.

JULIAN. That is well.

SOLDIERS. But John and Paul still defy you.

JULIAN. What are they doing?

SOLDIERS. Traveling up and down the country giving away Constance's fortune.

JULIAN. Bring them before me.

SCENE V

SOLDIERS. They are here.

JULIAN. John and Paul, I realize that you have been in imperial service since the cradle.

JOHN. That is so.

JULIAN. Then what could be more fitting than that you, clinging to my side, should serve me in this palace where you were brought up?

PAUL. We will not serve you.

JULIAN. You will not serve me?

JOHN. We have said it.

JULIAN. Do you deny that I am emperor?

PAUL. No, but we say you are different from your predecessors.

JULIAN. How?

JOHN. In your religion and your virtue.

JULIAN. What do you mean?

PAUL. We mean that those most famous and glorious emperors, Constantine, Constantius and Constance, whom we served, were very Christian rulers who were zealous in the service of God.

JULIAN. I know, but in this I do not choose to follow their example.

PAUL. You are following worse examples. They frequented the churches and, laying their diadems on the ground, adored Jesus Christ on their knees.

JULIAN. You are not compelling me to do that.

JOHN. You are not made of the same stuff.

PAUL. By doing homage to the creator they elevated the imperial dignity—yes, they transfigured it with the splendor of their virtue and their holy lives. So they deserved the success that crowned their enterprises.

JULIAN. As I do.

JOHN. In a very different way, for the divine grace was with them.

JULIAN. Absurd! Once I too was fool enough to believe in these meaningless practices. I was a priest of your church.

JOHN. Do you hear, Paul? How do you like this priest?

PAUL. The devil's chaplain.

JULIAN. But when I found that there was nothing to be gained from it, I turned to the worship of the gods, thanks to whom I have been raised to the highest pinnacle of the empire.

JOHN. You cut short our speech in order to avoid hearing the righteous praised.

JULIAN. What is it to me?

PAUL. Nothing. But we would add something which does concern you. When the world was no longer worthy

of those princes, they were summoned to the choir of angels, and this unhappy realm fell under your power.

JULIAN. Why unhappy now?

JOHN. Because of the character of its ruler.

PAUL. You renounced the true religion and adopted the superstitions of idolatry. Because of this iniquity we have shunned you and your court.

JULIAN. Although you have insulted me, I am nevertheless ready to pardon your presumption and raise you to the highest office in my palace.

JOHN. You waste your breath! We shall yield neither to blandishments nor threats.

JULIAN. I will give you ten days' grace, in the hope that you will come to your senses and hasten to regain our imperial favor. If not, I shall do what I have to do. You shall not make a mockery of me.

PAUL. What you have to do, do now, for you can never make us return either to your court, your service, or your gods.

JULIAN. You are dismissed. Leave me, but heed my warning.

JOHN. We willingly accept the respite you have granted us, but only that we may spend the time consecrating all our possessions to heaven, and commending ourselves to God in prayer and fasting.

PAUL. This is what we must do.

SCENE VI

JULIAN. Go, Terentianus. Take with you a few trusted soldiers and compel John and Paul to sacrifice to Jupiter. If with their obstinate hearts they persist in their refusal, let them be put to death, not publicly, but with the greatest possible secrecy, since they once held office in this palace.

SCENE VII

TERENTIANUS. Paul and John, Emperor Julian, my master, of his clemency sends you this gold statue of Jupiter, and commands you to burn incense before it. Refuse, and you will be put to death.

JOHN. Since Julian is your master, live at peace with him, and enjoy his favor. But we have no master except our lord Jesus Christ, for whose love we ardently desire to die that we may taste the joys of eternity.

TERENTIANUS. Soldiers, why do you delay? Draw your swords and kill these rebels against the gods and the emperor. When they have breathed their last bury them secretly in this house and remove every trace of blood.

SOLDIERS. And if questions are asked, what are we to say?

TERENTIANUS. Pretend they have been banished.

JOHN AND PAUL. To you, O Christ, who reigns with the

father and the holy spirit, one God, we raise our voices in this dreadful hour! In death we praise you. Receive our souls, which for your sake are being driven from this dwelling of clay!

SCENE VIII

TERENTIANUS. Woe! Christians, what ails my only son?

CHRISTIANS. He grinds his teeth, foams at the mouth, and rolls his eyes like a madman, for he is possessed by a devil.

TERENTIANUS. Woe to his father! Where was he stricken?

CHRISTIANS. He is writhing on the ground before the tomb of the martyrs John and Paul, and he cries out that their prayers are the cause of his torments.

TERENTIANUS. Mine the fault! Mine the crime! It was at my command, at my order that that wretched boy laid his impious hands on those holy martyrs.

CHRISTIANS. Since he sinned at your behest, it is right that you should share his atonements.

TERENTIANUS. I, but a wretch, obeyed the wicked commands of my master, Emperor Julian.

CHRISTIANS. He himself has been struck down by the divine wrath.

TERENTIANUS. I know, and am the more terrified. I see

that no enemy of those servants of God can escape punishment.

CHRISTIANS. You are right.

TERENTIANUS. What if in expiation of my crime I should run and throw myself on my knees before the holy tombs?

CHRISTIANS. You would win pardon if you were first cleansed by baptism.

SCENE IX

TERENTIANUS. Glorious witnesses of Christ, John and Paul, follow the example and commandment of your master, and pray for your persecutors. Have compassion on the anguish of a bereft father and have pity on the sufferings of a madman son, so that we both, purified in the waters of baptism, may persevere in the faith of the holy trinity.

CHRISTIANS. Dry your tears, Terentianus. Here is balm for your anguish. Look! Your son has recovered his health and his reason through the intercession of the martyrs.

TERENTIANUS. Praise to the eternal king who covers his soldiers with such glory! Not only do their souls rejoice in heaven, but also in the depths of the sepulcher their lifeless bones work astounding miracles, testifying to their sanctity and to the grace of our lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns!

THE PASSION OF THE VIRGIN SAINTS,
AGAPE, CHIONIA, AND IRENA

ARGUMENT:

The martyrdom of the holy virgins Agape, Chionia, and Irena. Governor Dulcitus went to them secretly in the still of the night, but as soon as he entered their dwelling he fell victim to a delusion, under which he embraced and kissed saucepans and frying pans instead of the maidens, until his face and clothes were black with soot. Later, he handed the maidens over to Count Sisinnius, who was charged with their punishment. Sisinnius in his turn became the sport of the strangest delusions, but at length he ordered Agape and Chionia to be burned, and Irena to be shot through with arrows.

CHARACTERS:

Emperor Diocletian

Agape

Chionia

Irena

Dulcitus, Governor of Thessalonica

Soldiers

Sisinnius

Wife of Dulcitus

Guards of the Imperial Palace

Ladies-in-Waiting on the Wife of Dulcitus

SCENE I

DIOCLETIAN. The renown of your noble ancestry and the brilliance of your own rare beauty make it fitting that you should be wedded to the highest in our court. Thus we decree, making the condition that you first promise to renounce Christ and sacrifice to our gods.

AGAPE. We beg you not to concern yourself about us, don't trouble yourself to make preparations for our marriage. Nothing can make us renounce that name that all should confess, or let our purity be stained.

DIOCLETIAN. What does this madness mean?

AGAPE. What sign of madness do you see in us?

DIOCLETIAN. It is clear enough.

AGAPE. In what way are we mad?

DIOCLETIAN. Is it not madness that you give up practicing an ancient religion and run after this silly new Christian superstition?

AGAPE. You are bold to slander the majesty of almighty God. It is dangerous.

DIOCLETIAN. Dangerous? To whom?

AGAPE. To you, and to the state you rule.

DIOCLETIAN. The girl is raving mad. Take her away.

CHIONIA. My sister is not raving mad. She is right to rebuke your folly.

DIOCLETIAN. This one is raving even more insanely than the other! Remove her also from our presence, and we will question the third.

IRENA. You will find her as rebellious and as determined to resist.

DIOCLETIAN. Irena, you are the youngest in years. Show yourself the oldest in dignity.

IRENA. Pray tell me how.

DIOCLETIAN. Bow your head to the gods, and set an example to your sisters. It may rebuke and save them.

IRENA. Let those who wish to provoke the wrath of the most high prostrate themselves before idols! I will not dishonor this head that has been anointed with heavenly oil by abasing it at the feet of images.

DIOCLETIAN. The worship of the gods does not bring dishonor to those who practice it, but, on the contrary, the greatest honor.

IRENA. What could be more shameful baseness, what baser shame, than to venerate slaves as if they were lords?

DIOCLETIAN. I do not ask you to worship slaves, but the masters and gods of princes.

IRENA. A god who can be bought cheap in the marketplace,

what is he but a slave?

DIOCLETIAN. Enough of this presumptuous chatter.
Punishment shall put an end to it!

IRENA. That is what we desire. We ask nothing better than
to suffer the most cruel tortures for the love of Christ.

DIOCLETIAN. Let these obstinate women who dare to
defy our authority be cast in chains and thrown into
the squalid dungeon until Governor Dulcitus can
interrogate them.

SCENE II

DULCITIUS. Bring them out, soldiers, bring out the women
you have in the dungeon.

SOLDIERS. Look, those are the ones you wanted to see.

DULCITIUS. Ye gods, but these little girls are beautiful!
What grace, what charm!

SOLDIERS. Perfect!

DULCITIUS. I am enraptured with their beauty!

SOLDIERS. No wonder!

DULCITIUS. I'm on fire to lure them to make love with me.

SOLDIERS. We doubt you will succeed.

DULCITIUS. Why?

SOLDIERS. Their faith is strong.

DULCITIUS. A few sweet words will work wonders!

SOLDIERS. They despise flattery.

DULCITIUS. Then I shall woo in another fashion—with
torture!

SOLDIERS. They would not care.

DULCITIUS. What's to be done, then?

SOLDIERS. That is for you to find out.

DULCITIUS. Lock them in the inner room—the one leading
out of the passage where the cooks keep their pots.

SOLDIERS. Why there?

DULCITIUS. I can visit them oftener.

SOLDIERS. As you command.

SCENE III

DULCITIUS. What can the prisoners be doing at this hour
of night?

SOLDIERS. They pass the time singing hymns.

DULCITIUS. Let us approach.

SOLDIERS. You will hear the sound of their silver-sweet
voices in the distance.

DULCITIUS. Take your torches and guard the doors. I will go in and enjoy myself in those lovely arms!

SOLDIERS. Enter. We will wait for you here.

SCENE IV

AGAPE. What noise is that outside the door?

IRENA. It is that wretch Dulcitus. He is coming in.

CHIONIA. Now may God protect us!

AGAPE. Amen.

CHIONIA. What does this mean, this clashing of pots and pans and fire-irons?

IRENA. I will go and look. Come quick and peep through the crack of the door!

AGAPE. What is it?

IRENA. Oh, look, that fool! He must be out of his senses! I believe he thinks that he is embracing us.

AGAPE. What is he doing?

IRENA. Now he presses the saucepans tenderly to his breast, now embracing the kettles and frying pans! He is kissing them delicately!

CHIONIA. How absurd!

IRENA. His face, his hands, his clothes! They are all filthy and stained with black soot so that he almost looks like an Ethiopian.

AGAPE. It is fitting. His body should look like the devil since the devil possesses his soul.

IRENA. Look! He is going now. Let us watch the soldiers standing guard before the doors and see what they do when he goes out.

SCENE V

SOLDIERS. Who is this? Either one possessed by the devil, or the devil himself. Let's be off!

DULCITIUS. Soldiers, why do you hurry away? Stay, wait! Light me to my house with your torches.

SOLDIERS. The voice is our master's voice, but the face is a devil's. Don't stand here; let's take to our heels! This devil means us no good.

DULCITIUS. I will hasten to the palace. I will tell the whole court how I have been insulted.

SCENE VI

DULCITIUS. Guards, admit me to the palace at once. I have confidential business with the emperor.

GUARDS. Who is this fearsome, horrid monster? Coming here in these filthy, tattered rags! Come, let us beat

him and throw him down the steps. Stop him from coming further.

DULCITIUS. Woe, woe! What has happened to me? Am I not dressed in my best? Am I not clean and fine in my person? And yet everyone who meets me expresses disgust at the sight of me and treats me as if I were some foul monster! I will go to my wife. She will tell me what has happened. But here she comes. Her looks are wild, her hair unbound, and all her household follows her weeping.

SCENE VII

WIFE OF DULCITIUS. My lord, my lord, what has happened? Have you lost your reason, Dulcitus? Have the Christ-worshippers made a fool of you?

DULCITIUS. Now at last I know! Those women have deluded me with their spells.

WIFE OF DULCITIUS. What troubled me most, and made my heart ache, was that you did not know there was anything amiss with you.

DULCITIUS. Those impudent girls shall be stripped and exposed naked in public. They shall have a taste of the outrage to which I have been subjected!

SCENE VIII

SOLDIERS. Here we are sweating in fruitless toil! Look,

their clothes are clinging to the virgins' bodies like their own skin. What's more, our chief, who ordered us to strip them, sits there snoring, and there's no way of waking him. We will go to the emperor and tell him all that has passed.

SCENE IX

DIOCLETIAN. I grieve to hear of the outrageous way in which Governor Dulcitus has been mocked, insulted, and hoaxed! But these girls shall not boast of having blasphemed our gods with impunity, or of having made a mockery of those who worship them. I will entrust the execution of my vengeance to Count Sisinnius.

SCENE X

SISINNIUS. Soldiers, where are these impudent girls who are to be put to the torture?

SOLDIERS. They are being tortured in the dungeon.

SISINNIUS. Keep Irena back, and bring the others here.

SOLDIERS. Why is one to be treated differently?

SISINNIUS. I will have mercy on her youth. Perhaps she may be more easily influenced when not intimidated by her sisters.

SOLDIERS. That may be so.

SCENE XI

SOLDIERS. We have brought the girls you asked for.

SISINNIUS. Agape, and you, Chionia, take my advice.

AGAPE. We will not take your advice.

SISINNIUS. Offer sacrifices to the gods!

AGAPE. We offer a perpetual sacrifice of praise to the true God, the eternal father, to his son, co-eternal, and to the holy spirit of both.

SISINNIUS. I do not speak of that sacrifice. That is prohibited on pain of severe punishment.

AGAPE. You will not stop us; we will never offer sacrifices to demons.

SISINNIUS. Do not be obstinate. Sacrifice to the gods, or by order of Emperor Diocletian I will put you to death.

CHIONIA. It is your duty. Your emperor has ordered you to put us to death, and you must obey, as we scorn his decree. If you were to spare us, you would also deserve execution.

SISINNIUS. Don't hesitate, soldiers; come! Seize these blasphemers and hurl them alive into the flames.

SOLDIERS. Let us build a pyre quickly. The fierceness of the fire will soon put an end to their insolence.

AGAPE. O lord, we know your power! It would not be anything strange or new if the fire forgot its nature and obeyed you. But we are weary of delay, and we implore you to break the bonds that chain our souls, and to let our bodies be consumed that our souls may rejoice with you in Heaven.

SOLDIERS. O strange and astonishing miracle! Look, their souls have left their bodies, but there is no sign of any hurt. Neither their hair, nor their garments, much less their bodies, have been touched by the flames!

SISINNIUS. Bring Irena here.

SCENE XII

SOLDIERS. There she is.

SISINNIUS. Irena, take warning from the death of your sisters, and tremble, for if you follow their example you will perish.

IRENA. I long to follow their example, and to die, that I may share their eternal joy.

SISINNIUS. Yield, yield, I urge you!

IRENA. I will yield to no man who urges me to sin.

SISINNIUS. If you persist in your refusal, I shall not grant you a swift death. I shall eke it out, and every day I shall increase and renew your torments.

IRENA. The greater my pain, the greater my glory!

SISINNIUS. You are not afraid of being tortured? I can use a means that will fill you with horror.

IRENA. With Christ's help I shall escape from all you can devise against me.

SISINNIUS. I can send you to a brothel, where your body will be abominably defiled.

IRENA. Better by far that my body should suffer outrage than my soul be polluted.

SISINNIUS. When you are dishonored and forced to live among harlots, you can no longer be numbered among the virgins.

IRENA. The wage of lust is death; the wage of suffering a crown. If the soul does not consent, there is no guilt.

SISINNIUS. In vain I have tried to spare her and show pity to her youth!

SOLDIERS. We could have told you as much. She is not to be frightened, and nothing can make her worship gods.

SISINNIUS. I will show her no more mercy.

SOLDIERS. That is the right way.

SISINNIUS. Have no pity. Be rough with her, and drag her to a brothel in disgrace.

IRENA. They will never take me there.

SISINNIUS. Indeed! Who can prevent them?

IRENA. He who rules the world with his providence.

SISINNIUS. We shall see.

IRENA. Yes! Sooner than you will like!

SISINNIUS. Soldiers, do not let the absurd prophecies of this woman frighten you.

SOLDIERS. We are not likely to be frightened! We will carry out your orders at once.

SCENE XIII

SISINNIUS. Who are these men hurrying towards us? They look like the soldiers to whom I entrusted Irena. Yes, these are the men! Why have you returned so suddenly? Why are you panting for breath?

SOLDIERS. We ran back to find you.

SISINNIUS. Where is the girl you carried off?

SOLDIERS. On the crest of the mountain.

SISINNIUS. What mountain?

SOLDIERS. The mountain yonder, nearest this place.

SISINNIUS. O fools, madmen! Have you lost your senses?

SOLDIERS. What's the matter? Why do you look at us so threateningly, and speak with such anger?

SISINNIUS. May the gods crush you!

SOLDIERS. What have we done? How have we offended you? How have we disobeyed your orders?

SISINNIUS. Fools! Did I not tell you to take this godless girl to a brothel?

SOLDIERS. That is so, but, while we were on the way to carry out your orders, two young strangers came and told us you had sent them to take Irena to the summit of the mountain.

SISINNIUS. I know nothing about this.

SOLDIERS. So we see.

SISINNIUS. What were these strangers like?

SOLDIERS. They were dressed splendidly and looked like people of rank.

SISINNIUS. Did you not follow them?

SOLDIERS. Yes, we followed them.

SISINNIUS. What did they do?

SOLDIERS. They placed themselves one on each side of Irena, and told us to hasten and tell you what we had seen.

SISINNIUS. Then there is nothing to do but for me to mount my horse and ride to the mountain to discover who has

dared to play us this trick.

SOLDIERS. We will come too.

SCENE XIV

SISINNIUS. Alas, I know not what I am doing! These Christians have bewitched me. I wander blindly round this hill, and when I stumble on a path I can neither follow it nor return upon my steps.

SOLDIERS. We are all the sport of some strange enchantment. We are exhausted. If you let this madwoman live an hour longer it will be the death of us all.

SISINNIUS. Take a bow one of you, bend it as far as you can, and loose a shaft that shall pierce this devilish witch.

SOLDIERS. That's the way!

IRENA. You wretched Sisinnius! Do you not blush for your shameful defeat? Are you not ashamed that you could not overcome the resolution of a little child without resorting to force of arms?

SISINNIUS. I accept the shame gladly, since now I am sure of your death.

IRENA. To me my death means joy, but to you calamity. For your cruelty you will be damned in Tartarus. But I shall receive the martyr's palm, and, adorned with the crown of virginity, I shall enter the ethereal palace of the eternal king, to whom be glory and honor forever and ever!

THE RESURRECTION OF
DRUSIANA AND CALIMACHUS

ARGUMENT:

The Resurrection of Drusiana and Calimachus. In his despair and illicit passion, Calimachus loved Drusiana beyond measure, not only while she was alive but also after she died in the lord. Whereupon he perished wretchedly from the bite of a serpent. But thanks to the prayers of Saint John the Apostle, he was restored to life, together with Drusiana, and born again in Christ.

CHARACTERS:

Calimachus

Friends of Calimachus

Drusiana

Andronicus

Fortunatus

The Apostle John

SCENE I

CALIMACHUS. My friends, a few words with you.

FRIENDS. We are at your service as long as you please.

CALIMACHUS. If you have no objection, I would rather speak with you apart from the crowd.

FRIENDS. At your pleasure.

CALIMACHUS. Then let us go to some quieter place where no one will interrupt us.

FRIENDS. As you wish.

SCENE II

CALIMACHUS. For a long time now I have been in great distress. I hope that I shall find relief in your advice.

FRIENDS. It is only just that we feel sympathy for each other, no matter what fate has in store for one or the other of us.

CALIMACHUS. I would to heaven that you could lighten this load upon my heart with your compassion!

FRIENDS. Well, tell us precisely what is wrong. We will offer you sympathy, if we should. If not, we can do our best to distract your mind from your vile intent.

CALIMACHUS. I am in love.

FRIENDS. What do you love?

CALIMACHUS. A thing of beauty, a thing of grace!

FRIENDS. This doesn't define anything either specifically or in general. We have no idea what you love.

CALIMACHUS. Woman.

FRIENDS. Ah, when you say "woman," do you mean all women?

CALIMACHUS. Not all equally, but one in particular.

FRIENDS. It is impossible to give an opinion on a subject until the subject is defined. So if you want us to understand the nature of this, tell us its primal essence.

CALIMACHUS. Drusiana.

FRIENDS. What? The wife of Prince Andronicus?

CALIMACHUS. Yes.

FRIENDS. Friend, you are lost. She has been baptized.

CALIMACHUS. What do I care, if I can win her love?

FRIENDS. You cannot.

CALIMACHUS. Why do you doubt me?

FRIENDS. Because you are chasing the impossible.

CALIMACHUS. Am I the first to do so? Have I not the example of many others to encourage me?

FRIENDS. Now listen, brother. This woman you long for is a follower of the holy Apostle John, and has devoted herself entirely to God. They say she will not even go to the bed of Andronicus, although he is a devout Christian. Is it likely that she will listen to your vain desires?

CALIMACHUS. I came to you for consolation, and instead you drive me to despair!

FRIENDS. He who dissembles, deceives, and he who flatters, sells the truth cheap.

CALIMACHUS. Since you refuse to help me, I will go to her and win her heart with my charms!

FRIENDS. It is hopeless!

CALIMACHUS. I defy the stars!

FRIENDS. We shall see.

SCENE III

CALIMACHUS. Drusiana, listen to me! Drusiana, my deepest heart's love!

DRUSIANA. Your words amaze me, Calimachus. What can you want of me?

CALIMACHUS. You are amazed?

DRUSIANA. I am astounded.

CALIMACHUS. First I want to speak of love!

DRUSIANA. Love! What love?

CALIMACHUS. That love with which I love you above all things.

DRUSIANA. Why should you love me? You are not of my kin. There is no legal bond between us.

CALIMACHUS. It is your beauty.

DRUSIANA. My beauty?

CALIMACHUS. Yes.

DRUSIANA. What is my beauty to you?

CALIMACHUS. Sadly, but little before now, yet I hope that it may be much before long.

DRUSIANA. Not a word more. Leave me at once, you sordid pimp, for it is a sin to listen to you now that I understand your devilish meaning.

CALIMACHUS. My Drusiana, do not reject the man who loves you. Do not drive away one who worships you, but give back love for love.

DRUSIANA. Wicked, insidious words! They fall on deaf ears. Your love disgusts me. Understand I despise you!

CALIMACHUS. You cannot make me angry, because I know

that you blush to confess what my passion stirs in you.

DRUSIANA. It stirs me to indignation, nothing else.

CALIMACHUS. I believe you will change your mind.

DRUSIANA. I shall not change, be sure of that.

CALIMACHUS. I would not be too sure.

DRUSIANA. You a raging madman! Do not deceive yourself!
Why delude yourself with vain hopes? What madness
leads you to think that I shall yield to your debauchery? I
have renounced even what is lawful—my husband's bed!

CALIMACHUS. I call heaven and the faith of men to wit-
ness that if you do not yield I will never rest or desist
until I ensnare you with my cunning.

SCENE IV

DRUSIANA. O lord Jesus, what use is my vow of chastity?
My beauty has all the same made this madman love me.
Pity my fears, O lord. Pity the grief that has seized me.
I know not what to do. If I denounce him, there will be
chaos in the city on my account; if I conceal it, only you
can protect me from falling into this diabolical net. O
Christ, take me to yourself. Let me die swiftly so that I
not become the ruin of that tender young man!

ANDRONICUS. Woe, woe, wretched me! Drusiana has died
without warning. I will run and fetch the holy man John.

SCENE V

JOHN. Why do you grieve so, Andronicus, why do you weep?

ANDRONICUS. Oh, horrible! O lord, that my own life
should suddenly become so hateful!

JOHN. What troubles you?

ANDRONICUS. Drusiana, your disciple—

JOHN. She has passed from the sight of men?

ANDRONICUS. Yes.

JOHN. It is not right to mourn so bitterly for those whose
souls we know rejoice in peace.

ANDRONICUS. God knows I do not doubt that her soul is in
eternal joy, as you say, and that her incorrupt body will rise
again. What grieves me so sorely is that in my presence
just now she prayed for death. She begged she might die.

JOHN. You know her reason?

ANDRONICUS. I know it, and will tell you when I am less
sick with grief.

JOHN. Come. We must celebrate the funeral rites with
proper ceremony.

ANDRONICUS. There is a marble tomb near here in which
the body shall be laid, and our steward Fortunatus shall
guard her grave.

JOHN. It is right that she should be interred with honor.
God make her soul rejoice in peace.

SCENE VI

CALIMACHUS. Fortunatus, what is to become of me? For death itself cannot quench my love for Drusiana!

FORTUNATUS. Poor wretch!

CALIMACHUS. I shall die if you do not help me.

FORTUNATUS. How can I help you?

CALIMACHUS. In this. You can let me look on her, dead.

FORTUNATUS. Up to now the body is sound and whole, I reckon because it was not wasted with disease. As you know she was taken in a moment by a light fever.

CALIMACHUS. Oh, how happy I should be if I might see for myself.

FORTUNATUS. If you are willing to pay me well, I will give you her body to use, as you like.

CALIMACHUS. Here, take all I have with me, and be sure that I will give you more, much more, later.

FORTUNATUS. Quick, then! Let's go!

CALIMACHUS. I shall not delay.

SCENE VII

FORTUNATUS. There lies the body. The face is not like the face of a corpse. The limbs show no sign of decay. Abuse her as you please.

CALIMACHUS. O Drusiana, Drusiana, I worshiped you with my whole soul. I was bound to you in true love from the depths of my heart and you always repulsed me, and thwarted my vows. It is now in my power to violate you in any way I desire.

FORTUNATUS. Watch out! A monstrous serpent! It is coming towards us!

CALIMACHUS. Woe to me, Fortunatus. Why did you deceive me and urge me on to this infamy? Wretch, may you die from the serpent's bite! And, consumed by fear, I am dying, too.

SCENE VIII

JOHN. Come, Andronicus, let us go to Drusiana's tomb, and commend her soul to Christ in prayer.

ANDRONICUS. It is like your holiness not to forget one who trusted in you.

JOHN. Behold! The invisible God appears to us, made visible in the form of a beautiful youth.

GOD. Tremble!

JOHN. Lord Jesus, why have you deigned to manifest yourself to your servants in this place?

GOD. To raise Drusiana from the dead, and with her him who lies outside her tomb, have I come, that in them my name may be glorified.

ANDRONICUS. How swiftly he was caught up again into heaven!

JOHN. I cannot altogether understand what this means.

ANDRONICUS. Let us quicken our pace. It may be that upon arrival you will perceive what, in your words, you little understand.

SCENE IX

JOHN. In Christ's name, what miracle do I behold? The sepulcher is open, and Drusiana's body has been cast forth. And near it lie two other corpses enlaced in a serpent's coils.

ANDRONICUS. I am conjecturing what it signifies. This is Calimachus, who while he lived was consumed with an illicit passion for Drusiana. It troubled her greatly and her distress brought on a fever. She prayed that she might die.

JOHN. Such was her love of chastity.

ANDRONICUS. After her death the raving madman, crazed with unhappy love, and stung by the defeat of his crime, was still more inflamed by desire.

JOHN. How wretched!

ANDRONICUS. I have no doubt that he bribed this worthless servant to give him the opportunity for committing a detestable crime.

JOHN. A horror like no other!

ANDRONICUS. Therefore death struck both of them down, as I see, before the deed was accomplished.

JOHN. They met their deserts.

ANDRONICUS. What astonishes me most is that the divine voice should have promised the resurrection of him who planned the crime, and not of him who was only an accomplice. Maybe it is because the one, blinded by the passion of the flesh, knew not what he did, while the other sinned of deliberate malice.

JOHN. With what wonderful exactness the supreme judge examines the deeds of all men! How even are the scales in which he weighs the merits of each individual! None can understand, none explain. Human wisdom cannot grasp at all the subtlety of the divine judgment.

ANDRONICUS. Therefore we sin by marveling at it, as it is not in our power to attain a precise knowledge of the causes of things.

JOHN. Often the sequel teaches us to understand better.

ANDRONICUS. Then, blessed John, do now what you must do. Raise Calimachus to life, and the knot of our

perplexity may be untied.

JOHN. I think, first I must invoke the name of Christ to drive away the serpent. Then Calimachus shall be raised.

ANDRONICUS. You are right; else the venom of the creature might do him fresh injury.

JOHN. Hence, savage monster! Away from this man, for now he is to serve Christ.

ANDRONICUS. Although the beast has no reason, it heard and obeyed your command.

JOHN. Not through my power, but through Christ's, it obeyed me.

ANDRONICUS. Look! It has vanished sooner than you spoke.

JOHN. O God, unlimited and incomprehensible, simple and unfathomable, you alone are what you are! O you, who by mingling two different elements can create man, and by separating those elements again can dissolve him, grant that the spirit and the body of this Calimachus may be joined once more, and that he may rise again wholly a man as he was, and that all may praise you, who alone can work miracles!

ANDRONICUS. Amen! Look, the breath of life stirs in him again, but because of this stupor he still does not move.

JOHN. Calimachus! In the name of Christ, arise, and confess the entire matter! Tell us the crimes you committed without concealing the smallest grain of truth.

CALIMACHUS. I cannot deny that I came here to commit a horrid crime because the pangs of love consumed me and I was unable to control the passion of my illicit love.

JOHN. What madness, what folly possessed you? That you should dare think of such a shameful outrage to these chaste relics!

CALIMACHUS. My own madness and the fraudulent knavery of this Fortunatus.

JOHN. Most wretched of all men, were you so unfortunate that you actually committed the sacrilege you intended?

CALIMACHUS. No! Although my will was not lacking, I could not do it.

JOHN. What prevented you?

CALIMACHUS. As soon as I drew back the shroud and attempted to violate her corpse, that fellow there, Fortunatus, the spark and kindling of my sin, perished from the serpent's poison.

ANDRONICUS. A good riddance!

CALIMACHUS. Moreover, a young man appeared to me, terrifying to see, who reverently covered the corpse again. Burning sparks flew out from his flaming face and one of them, falling on me, struck my face. At that moment, I heard a voice say, "Calimachus, die that you may live!" At those words, I breathed my last.

JOHN. A work of heavenly grace that takes no delight in the

damnation of the wicked.

CALIMACHUS. You have heard the dreadful tale of my temptation. I beg you not to withhold the remedy of your compassion.

JOHN. I will not withhold it.

CALIMACHUS. I am overwhelmed by the thought of my abominable crime. I repent with my whole heart, and bewail my sin.

JOHN. That is but right, for a great fault must be atoned for by great penance.

CALIMACHUS. Oh, if I could lay bare the recesses of my heart, and you could see the bitter anguish I suffer, and you could pity me in my grief!

JOHN. Your suffering fills me with joy, for I know that your sorrow will be your salvation.

CALIMACHUS. I loathe my former life. I loathe the evil delight.

JOHN. That is well.

CALIMACHUS. I truly repent my foul deed.

JOHN. As is right.

CALIMACHUS. Everything I did fills me with such remorse that I have no desire, no passion to live unless I can be born again in Christ and changed for the better.

JOHN. I do not doubt that heavenly grace is at work in you.

CALIMACHUS. Therefore do not delay; hasten to raise up a fallen man and to lift up a sorrowful man so that with your warning and your teaching I may be transformed from a pagan into a Christian, from a fornicator into a chaste man, and that with your guidance I can set out on the way of truth and live mindful of the proclaimed divine promises!

JOHN. Now blessed be the only offspring of God, who made himself partaker of our frailty, and showed you mercy, my son Calimachus, by striking you down with the death that has brought you to the true life. Thus he has saved the creature he made in his own image from the death of the soul.

ANDRONICUS. Most strange, most wonderful miracle!

JOHN. O Christ, redemption of the world, and sinners' atonement, I have no words to praise you! The sweetness of your compassion makes me tremble, as does your patient forgiveness. Sometimes, you win the sinner with fatherly gentleness, at other times, you chastise him with just severity, and call on him to do penance.

ANDRONICUS. Glory to his divine goodness! Who would have dared to believe, who would have presumed to hope that a man like this, intent on a wicked deed when death overtook him, would be raised to life again, and given the chance of making reparation? Blessed be your name forever and ever, O you who alone can do these wondrous things!

ANDRONICUS. Holy John, give me some comfort too. The love I bear my wife, Drusiana, will not let my mind rest until I have seen her also called back from the dead.

JOHN. Drusiana, may our lord Jesus Christ call you back to life!

DRUSIANA. Glory and praise to you, O Christ, who have made me live again!

CALIMACHUS. Thanks be to the author of our salvation, my Drusiana, through whom you, who left this life in such sorrow, rise again in joy!

DRUSIANA. Venerable father John, you have restored to life Calimachus, who loved me sinfully. Does it not behoove your saintliness to raise from the dead the man who betrayed my tomb?

CALIMACHUS. Apostle of Christ, do not consider this evil creature, this traitor worthy of being released from the fetters of death. He deceived me, seduced me, and provoked me to venture on that horrible deed.

JOHN. You should not wish to deprive him of the grace of divine mercy.

CALIMACHUS. He is not worthy of resurrection, who tried to ruin another!

JOHN. We are taught by the law of our faith that man must forgive his fellow man if he would be forgiven by God.

ANDRONICUS. That is just.

JOHN. Remember that when the only begotten of God, the virgin's first-born, the one man innocent, the one man born without stain, the one man without the sordidness of original sin, when he came into this world, he found us all bowed under the heavy weight of sin.

ANDRONICUS. Indeed.

JOHN. And though he found not one of us guiltless, not one of us worthy of his mercy, he rejected no one, he deprived no one of the grace of his mercy, but offered himself for all, and for all laid down his life in love.

ANDRONICUS. Had the innocent one not been slain, none of us would have been saved.

JOHN. Therefore, he cannot rejoice in the damnation of those whom he bought with his precious blood.

ANDRONICUS. Thanks be to him!

JOHN. This is why we must not begrudge anyone the grace of God. We rejoice that it abounds in us through no merit of ours.

CALIMACHUS. I shudder at your rebuke.

JOHN. Yet that I not seem to oppose your wishes, let him be raised not by me, but by Drusiana, because she has received grace from God for doing this.

DRUSIANA. Divine essence, who alone are truly without material form, who made man in your own image and breathed into your creation the spirit of life, bring back

the vital heat to the body of Fortunatus, that our triple resurrection may glorify your venerable trinity.

JOHN. Amen.

DRUSIANA. Fortunatus, awake, and in the name of Christ shatter the bonds of death.

FORTUNATUS. Who wakes me? Who takes my hand? Who calls me back to life?

JOHN. Drusiana.

FORTUNATUS. Drusiana revived me?

JOHN. Yes.

FORTUNATUS. How can that be? She died suddenly only a few days ago.

JOHN. But now she lives in Christ.

FORTUNATUS. And why is Calimachus standing there, with his sober yet grave look? Why is he no longer raging with love for Drusiana, as was his wont!

JOHN. Because he has been transformed from that worthless design and is truly a disciple of Christ!

FORTUNATUS. No!

JOHN. It is true.

FORTUNATUS. If it is as you say, if Drusiana has restored me to life and Calimachus believes in Christ, I reject life

and freely choose death. I would rather not exist than see the grace of virtue working in them so abundantly!

JOHN. O, the incredible envy of the devil! O, the malice of the old serpent, who brought death to our first parents, always groans at the glory of the righteous! This most wretched Fortunatus, brimful of Satan's bitter gall, is like a rotten tree bearing bitter fruit. He must be cut down from the community of the just, cast out from the society of those who fear God, sent to be tormented in the fire of eternal damnation without respite of any refreshment.

ANDRONICUS. Look! His wounds from the serpent's bites are swelling and he is dying again. He will die sooner than his words.

JOHN. Let him die and be an inhabitant of hell. Because of his envy of another, he rejected the gift of life.

ANDRONICUS. Terrible!

JOHN. Nothing is more terrible than envy, nothing more evil than pride.

ANDRONICUS. Both are vile.

JOHN. The man who is the victim of the one sin is the victim of the other, for neither can exist without the other.

ANDRONICUS. Explain that more clearly.

JOHN. The proud are envious, and the envious are proud. An envious mind cannot endure to hear others praised, and seeks to belittle those who in comparison are more

perfect. He disdains to take a lower place, and arrogantly seeks to be put above his equals.

ANDRONICUS. That is clear.

JOHN. That wretched man's pride was wounded because he could not endure the humiliation of recognizing his inferiority to these two in whom he could not deny God had made more grace to shine.

ANDRONICUS. I understand now at last that he was not counted among the resurrected because he would immediately die again.

JOHN. He deserved to die twice, because he profaned the corpse entrusted to him and he attacked the resurrected with impious hatred.

ANDRONICUS. The wretched creature is dead.

JOHN. Come, let us go—Satan must have his own. Let us celebrate this day for the wonderful conversion of Calimachus and for the resurrection of both. Let us give thanks to God, that just and penetrating judge, who, examining all things minutely and assessing all things justly, will reward or punish each one according to the worth he foreknows. To him alone be honor, strength, fortitude, victory, praise, and jubilation, forever and ever. Amen.

THE FALL AND CONVERSION OF MARY,
NIECE OF THE HERMIT ABRAHAM

ARGUMENT:

The fall and repentance of Mary, the niece of the hermit Abraham, who, after spending twenty years in the religious life of the anchorite, and after losing her virginity, returned to the world and did not shrink from becoming a harlot. But two years later, the aforementioned Abraham, in the disguise of a lover, sought her out and reclaimed her. For twenty years she did penance for her ruinous sins with many tears, continuous fasting, vigils, and prayers.

CHARACTERS:

Abraham

Ephrem

Mary

A Friend of Abraham

Innkeeper

SCENE I

ABRAHAM. Brother Ephrem, my dear comrade in the hermit life, may I speak to you now, or shall I wait until you have finished your offices in praise of God?

EPHREM. Our conversation should be praise of him who promised that he would be among those who gathered together in his name.

ABRAHAM. I have not come to speak of anything other than what I know accords with his will.

EPHREM. Then I will not turn away from you for another moment but will give you all my attention.

ABRAHAM. Something I must do is consuming my mind. I long for your approval.

EPHREM. Since we ought to have one heart and one soul, we should approve and disapprove the same things.

ABRAHAM. I have a small niece of tender years. She has lost both her parents, and my affection for her has been deepened by compassion for her lonely state. I am in constant anxiety on her account.

EPHREM. What are the cares of the world to you? You have triumphed over the world.

ABRAHAM. My only care is her immense radiant beauty! What if it should one day be dimmed by the stain of defilement?

EPHREM. No one can blame you for being anxious.

ABRAHAM. I hope not.

EPHREM. How old is she?

ABRAHAM. At the end of this year she will be two Olympiads,
that is, eight years old.

EPHREM. She is a young girl.

ABRAHAM. That does not lessen my anxiety.

EPHREM. Where does she live?

ABRAHAM. At my little hermitage. For at the request of her
other kinsfolk I have undertaken to bring her up. Her
fortune, I decided, should be given to the poor.

EPHREM. Scorn for temporal vanities is worthy of a mind
intent on heaven.

ABRAHAM. I desire with all my heart to see her become the
spouse of Christ, devoted entirely to his service.

EPHREM. A praiseworthy wish.

ABRAHAM. I was inspired by her name.

EPHREM. What is she called?

ABRAHAM. Mary.

EPHREM. Mary! The glory of this name ought to be adorned
with the crown of virginity.

ABRAHAM. I have no fear that she will be unwilling, but we must encourage her gently.

EPHREM. Come, let us go, and instill in her mind the security of the celibate life.

SCENE II

ABRAHAM. Mary, my child by adoption, whom I love as my own soul! Listen to my fatherly advice and to the saving teachings of my fellow brother Ephrem. Strive to imitate the chastity of the holy virgin whose name you bear.

EPHREM. Daughter, would it not be a shame if you, who through the mystery of your name are called to mount to the eternal stars where Mary, the mother of God, reigns, chose instead the low pleasures of the earth?

MARY. I know nothing about the mystery of my name, so I cannot comprehend your circular talk.

EPHREM. Mary, my child, means “star of the sea”—that star around which the world goes and the pole rotates.

MARY. Why is it called the star of the sea?

EPHREM. Because it never sets, but directs the mariners on the right course.

MARY. And how can such a poor thing as I am, made out of slime, succeed through my own merits to shine like my name?

EPHREM. By keeping your body uncorrupted, and your mind pure and holy.

MARY. It would be a great honor for any human being to become like the stars.

EPHREM. If you remain pure and virgin, you can be as the angels of God, and when at last you cast off the burden of this mortal body they will be near you. With them you will pass through the air, and walk on the sky. With them you will sweep round the zodiac, and never slacken your steps until the virgin's son takes you in his arms in his mother's dazzling bridal room!

MARY. Who but an ass would think little of such happiness! Therefore I choose to despise the things of earth, and deny myself now so that I may deserve to receive the joys of such blessedness.

EPHREM. Behold, from this childish heart we receive the wisdom of maturity!

ABRAHAM. That is the grace of God.

EPHREM. Undoubtedly.

ABRAHAM. Yet, although by God's grace she has been given the light, at her tender age she must be taught how to use it.

EPHREM. You are right.

ABRAHAM. Therefore, I will build her a little cell with a narrow entrance near my hermitage. I can visit her there

often, and through the window instruct her in the Psalter and other pages of the divine law.

EPHREM. That is a good plan.

MARY. I put myself under your direction, Father Ephrem.

EPHREM. My daughter! May the heavenly bridegroom to whom you have given yourself in the tender bud of your youth shield you from the wiles of the devil!

SCENE III

ABRAHAM. Brother Ephrem! When anything happens, good or bad, it is to you I turn. It is your counsel I seek. Therefore, do not turn away from the laments I recount, but help me overcome the pain I suffer.

EPHREM. Abraham, Abraham, what is wrong? What is the cause of this immoderate grief? Should a hermit weep and groan after the manner of the world?

ABRAHAM. Was any hermit ever so stricken? I cannot bear my sorrow.

EPHREM. No more of this circuitous talk. Explain what has happened.

ABRAHAM. Mary! My adopted child! Mary, whom I cared for so lovingly and taught with all my skill for ten years!

EPHREM. Well, what is it?

ABRAHAM. Woe to me! She is lost!

EPHREM. How so?

ABRAHAM. Most miserably. Afterwards she stole away secretly.

EPHREM. But by what wiles did the ancient serpent bring about her undoing?

ABRAHAM. By the wiles of false love. Dressed in a monk's habit, the hypocrite went to see her often. He succeeded in making the poor ignorant child love him. She leapt from the window of her cell to do the evil deed.

EPHREM. I shudder as I listen to you.

ABRAHAM. When the unhappy girl knew that she was ruined, she beat her breast and dug her nails into her face. She tore her garments, pulled out her hair, and raised terrible cries to heaven.

EPHREM. With good reason. For such a fall a whole fountain of tears should rise.

ABRAHAM. She grieved that she could not again become what she had been.

EPHREM. Poor, miserable girl!

ABRAHAM. And reproached herself for having disregarded our warning.

EPHREM. She might well do so.

ABRAHAM. She cried that all her vigils, prayers, and fasts had been thrown away.

EPHREM. If she perseveres in this penitence, she will be saved.

ABRAHAM. She has not persevered. She has added worse to her evil deed.

EPHREM. O, this moves me to the depths of my heart! My limbs are trembling!

ABRAHAM. For after she punished herself with these laments, she was overcome by remorse, and fell headlong into the abyss of despair.

EPHREM. O, how deep she has fallen!

ABRAHAM. She despaired of being able to win pardon, and chose to go back to the world and its vanities.

EPHREM. Never before have the devil's spirits had such a triumph over the hermits.

ABRAHAM. Now we are at the mercy of demons.

EPHREM. I marvel that this could have happened without your knowledge.

ABRAHAM. My mind was confused by a terrible dream. If my mind had not been so disturbed, I could have understood the dream's warning.

EPHREM. I would like to hear about your vision.

ABRAHAM. I dreamed I was standing at the door of my cell, and that a huge dragon with a loathsome stench rushed

violently towards me. The creature noticed a little white dove at my side. It pounced on the dove, devoured it, and vanished.

EPHREM. There is no doubt what this vision meant.

ABRAHAM. When I woke I turned over in my mind what I had seen, and took it as a sign of some persecution threatening the church, through which many of the faithful would be drawn into error.

EPHREM. That was certainly cause for fear.

ABRAHAM. I prostrated myself in prayer, and implored him who knows the future to enlighten me.

EPHREM. You did right.

ABRAHAM. On the third night after the vision, when for weariness I had fallen asleep, I thought I saw the beast again, but now it was lying dead at my feet, and the same dove was flying away unhurt.

EPHREM. I am rejoiced to hear this, for I do not doubt that some day Mary will return to you.

ABRAHAM. Upon awakening, I was trying to get rid of the uneasiness with which the first vision had filled me by thinking of the second, when my little pupil in her cell came to my mind. I remembered with great concern that for two days I had not heard her chanting the divine praises.

EPHREM. You were too late in noticing this.

ABRAHAM. I admit it. I went at once to her cell, and, knocking at the window, I called on her again and again by name.

EPHREM. You called in vain.

ABRAHAM. I didn't yet feel that, but I asked her why she was not saying the office. But I got not the faintest murmur in response.

EPHREM. What did you do then?

ABRAHAM. When I could no longer doubt that she had gone, I was struck with fear to my very bowels. I trembled in every limb with terror.

EPHREM. I do not wonder, since I, hearing of it, find myself trembling all over.

ABRAHAM. Then I wept and cried out to the air, asking, what wolf has seized my lamb? What thief has stolen my little daughter?"

EPHREM. You had good cause to weep! To lose her whom you had nurtured!

ABRAHAM. At last some people came up who knew what had happened. From them I learned that what I told you was true—that she had gone back to the world.

EPHREM. Where is she now?

ABRAHAM. No one knows.

EPHREM. What is to be done?

ABRAHAM. I have a faithful friend, who is searching all the cities and towns in the country. He says he will never give up until he finds out where she is.

EPHREM. And if he finds her—what then?

ABRAHAM. Then I shall change these clothes, and in the guise of a lover seek her out. It may be that she will heed what I say, and even after this shipwreck turn again to the harbor of her innocence and peace.

EPHREM. And suppose that in the world they offer you meat and draughts of wine?

ABRAHAM. I shall not refuse; otherwise I might be recognized.

EPHREM. It will be but praiseworthy discretion on your part to loosen the bridle of strict observance for the sake of bringing a soul back to Christ.

ABRAHAM. I am the more eager to try now I know you approve.

EPHREM. He who knows the secret places of the heart can tell with what motive every action is done. That scrupulous and fair judge will not condemn a man for relaxing our strict rule for a time and descending to the level of weaker mortals if by so doing he can rescue an errant soul more easily.

ABRAHAM. Help me with your prayers. Pray that I may not be caught in the snares of the devil.

EPHREM. May he who is supreme good itself, without whom no good thing can be done, bring your enterprise to a happy end!

SCENE IV

ABRAHAM. Can that be my friend who two years ago went to search for Mary? Yes, it is he!

FRIEND. Good day, venerable father.

ABRAHAM. Good day, dear friend. I have waited so long for you. Of late I had begun to despair of your return.

FRIEND. I delayed my return because I did not wish to upset you with doubtful and unreliable news. As soon as I had discovered the truth I lost no time.

ABRAHAM. You have seen Mary?

FRIEND. Yes.

ABRAHAM. Where?

FRIEND. It goes to my heart to tell you.

ABRAHAM. Speak—I implore you.

FRIEND. She lives in the house of a procurer who plies her with tender love. A profitable business, for every day he makes a large sum of money out of the lovers who enjoy her favor.

ABRAHAM. Mary's lovers?

FRIEND. Yes.

ABRAHAM. Who are they?

FRIEND. There are plenty of them.

ABRAHAM. Dear Jesus, what is this monstrous thing I hear? Do they say that she, whom I brought up to be your bride, gives herself to strange lovers?

FRIEND. Harlots have given love to strangers since time immemorial.

ABRAHAM. Get me a saddle horse somewhere and a soldier's dress. I am going to remove my monk's habit in order to visit her disguised as a lover.

FRIEND. Here is everything.

ABRAHAM. And I must borrow a hat to cover my tonsure.

FRIEND. That is most necessary, if you do not want to be recognized.

ABRAHAM. I have one gold piece. Should I take it to give to the innkeeper?

FRIEND. Otherwise he will never let you see Mary.

SCENE V

ABRAHAM. Good day, innkeeper.

INNKEEPER. Who is this guest that's speaking? Good day!

ABRAHAM. Have you a bed for a traveler who wants to spend a night here?

INNKEEPER. Why certainly! I never turn anyone away from our hostel.

ABRAHAM. I am glad of it.

INNKEEPER. Come in then, and I will order supper for you.

ABRAHAM. I owe you thanks for this kind welcome, but I have a greater favor to ask.

INNKEEPER. Ask what you like. I will do my best for you.

ABRAHAM. Accept this small present and arrange for the beautiful girl who, I am told, lives here, to have supper with us.

INNKEEPER. Why should you wish to see her?

ABRAHAM. It would give me much pleasure to meet her. I have heard so much praise of her beauty.

INNKEEPER. Whoever has spoken to you of her beauty has told only the truth. She surpasses all other women with her charming looks.

ABRAHAM. I am in love with her already.

INNKEEPER. I am amazed that an old man like you should dangle after a young girl.

ABRAHAM. I came here for no reason other than to feast my eyes on her.

SCENE VI

INNKEEPER. Mary, come here! Come along now and show off your charms to this young innocent!

MARY. I am coming.

ABRAHAM. O mind, be constant and firm! I must look on her whom I brought up in the desert, decked out with a harlot's frippery. This is not the right time to reveal what is in my heart. Like a man, I must suppress my welling tears and look cheerful and thereby hide the bitterness of my sorrow.

INNKEEPER. Luck comes your way, Mary, rejoice! Not only do young gallants of your own age flock to your arms, but even the wise and venerable!

MARY. Whoever gives me love, receives an equal portion of love in return.

ABRAHAM. Come nearer, Mary, and give me a kiss.

MARY. I will give you more than a kiss. I will take your old neck in my arms and stroke it.

ABRAHAM. I desire that.

MARY. What does this mean? What is this unusual fragrance? It reminds me of the time when I lived a chaste life.

ABRAHAM. On with the mask! Chatter, make lewd jests like an idle boy! She must not recognize me, or for

very shame she may fly from me.

MARY. Wretch that I am! To what have I fallen? In what pit am I sunk?

ABRAHAM. This is not the place for weeping. This is where men come for joy.

INNKEEPER. What's the matter, Mistress Mary? Why are you sighing and weeping? You have lived here two years, and never before shed tears or uttered a sad word.

MARY. If only I had died three years ago before I came to this wickedness!

ABRAHAM. I came here to make love to you, not to weep with you over your sins.

MARY. A little thing moved me, and I spoke foolishly. It is nothing. Come, let us eat and drink and be merry, for, as you say, this is not the time to think of one's sins.

ABRAHAM. I have eaten and drunk enough, thanks to your hospitality, sir. Now by your leave I will go to bed. My tired limbs need a rest.

INNKEEPER. As you please.

MARY. Get up my lord. I will take you to the bedroom.

ABRAHAM. I hope so. I would not go at all unless you came with me.

SCENE VII

MARY. Look! This bedroom has been made for our use. Here is the bed, with luxurious trappings. Sit down and I will take off your shoes. You don't need to trouble yourself about it.

ABRAHAM. First bolt the door. Someone may come in.

MARY. Have no fear. I have seen to that. No one can get in here easily.

ABRAHAM. The time has come for me to show my shaven head, and make myself known! O, my daughter! O, Mary, you who are part of my soul! Look at me. Do you not know me? Do you not know the old man who cherished you with a father's love, and wedded you to the only born son of the king of heaven?

MARY. Alas, it is my father and master, Abraham, who is speaking!

ABRAHAM. What has befallen you, daughter?

MARY. Harsh misery!

ABRAHAM. Who deceived you? Who led you astray?

MARY. The one who deceived our first parents.

ABRAHAM. Where is that angelic life you once led on earth?

MARY. All that is over.

ABRAHAM. What has become of your virginal modesty?
Your beautiful purity?

MARY. Lost. Gone!

ABRAHAM. Think what you have thrown away! Think what
a reward you had earned by your fasting, prayers, and
vigils. What can they avail you now? You have hurled
yourself from heavenly heights into the depths of hell!

MARY. Woe!

ABRAHAM. Why didn't you trust me? Why did you desert me?
Why did you not tell me of your fall? Then dear brother
Ephrem and I could have done a worthy penance for you.

MARY. Once I had fallen so deep into sin, and was defiled,
how could I dare come near your holiness?

ABRAHAM. Has anyone ever lived on earth without sin
except the virgin's son?

MARY. No one.

ABRAHAM. It is human to sin, but it is devilish to remain
in sin. Who can be justly condemned? Not those who fall
suddenly, but those who refuse to rise quickly.

MARY. Wretched, miserable creature that I am!

ABRAHAM. Why have you thrown yourself down there?
Why do you lie on the ground without moving? Get up,
and listen to me!

MARY. I have fallen, overcome with fear. I cannot bear the force of your fatherly reproaches.

ABRAHAM. Remember how I love you, and put aside your fear.

MARY. It is useless. I cannot.

ABRAHAM. What but love for you could have made me leave the desert and relax the strict observance of our rule? What but love could have made me, a true hermit, come into the city and mix with the lascivious crowd? It is for your sake that these lips, though accustomed to silence, have learned to utter light, foolish words, so that I might not be known! Why do you turn away your face from me and gaze upon the ground? Why do you not deign to answer and speak with me?

MARY. It is the thought of my sins that crushes me. I dare not lift my eyes to heaven or reply to you.

ABRAHAM. Daughter, have no fear. Do not despair! Rise from this abyss of desperation and grapple God to your soul!

MARY. The enormity of my sins has cast me into the abyss of desperation.

ABRAHAM. Your sins are great, I concede. Yet the mercy of heaven is greater than all creation. Let your sadness be dispersed. Mary, do not let apathy prevent your seizing the moment given for repentance. It matters not how wickedness has flourished. Divine grace can

flourish still more abundantly!

MARY. If there were the smallest hope of forgiveness, surely I should not shrink from doing penance.

ABRAHAM. Take pity on the hardship I endured for you. Shake off this despair, which, we are taught, is the most terrible of all sins. Despair of God's mercy on sinners—for that alone there is no forgiveness. Sin can no more embitter his sweet mercy than a spark from a flint can set the ocean on fire.

MARY. I know that God's mercy is great, but the enormity of my sin makes me fear that no penance can make amends.

ABRAHAM. I will take your sins on me. Only come back to the place you left and take up your life again as if you had never left it.

MARY. I do not want to oppose you. What you tell me to do I will do with all my heart.

ABRAHAM. Now, I say, you are my daughter again, whom I raised! You are the dearest to me!

MARY. I have a few possessions here—a little gold and some clothes. What should be done with them?

ABRAHAM. What came to you through sin, with sin must be left behind.

MARY. Could it not be given to the poor, or given as an offering at the holy altar?

ABRAHAM. The reward of sin is not an acceptable offering to God.

MARY. Then I will not trouble any more about my possessions.

ABRAHAM. Look! The dawn! It is growing light. Let us go.

MARY. You go first, dearest father, like the good shepherd leading the lost lamb that has been found. I will follow in your steps.

ABRAHAM. Not so! I am going on foot, but you—you shall have a horse so that the stony road does not hurt your delicate feet.

MARY. May I never forget this tenderness! Let me try all my life to thank you! I was not worth pity, yet you have shown me no harshness; you have led me to repent by gentleness.

ABRAHAM. I ask only one thing, Mary. Be obedient to God for the rest of your life.

MARY. With all my strength I will persevere, and though my flesh may fail, my spirit never will.

ABRAHAM. It is fitting that you serve God with as much energy as you have served the world.

MARY. I pray that God's will may be fulfilled in me on the strength of your merits.

ABRAHAM. Come, let us hasten our return.

MARY. Let us set out at once. I would not stay here another moment.

SCENE VIII

ABRAHAM. How swiftly we have made the difficult and toilsome journey.

MARY. Everything is easy when we do it with devotion.

ABRAHAM. There is your deserted little cell.

MARY. God help me! It was the witness of my sin. I dare not go there.

ABRAHAM. It is natural you should dread the place where the enemy triumphed.

MARY. Where, then, do you want me to do penance?

ABRAHAM. Go into the inner cell, so that the old serpent will not discover another opportunity to deceive you.

MARY. I do not object, but gladly do as you bid.

ABRAHAM. Now I must go to my good Ephrem. He alone mourned with me when you were lost, and he must rejoice with me now that you have been found.

MARY. Of course.

SCENE IX

EPHREM. Are you bringing good news?

ABRAHAM. The best.

EPHREM. Welcome. I am sure you have found Mary again.

ABRAHAM. I have, and, rejoicing, have brought her back to the fold.

EPHREM. Truly this is the work of divine grace.

ABRAHAM. That is certain.

EPHREM. I would like to know how she is to live, how her life is to be ordered.

ABRAHAM. According to my wishes.

EPHREM. That will benefit her greatly.

ABRAHAM. She is ready to do whatever I say she must do, however difficult and severe.

EPHREM. That is praiseworthy.

ABRAHAM. She wears a hair shirt, and subdues her flesh with continual vigils and fasts. She is making the frail body obey the spirit by the most rigorous discipline.

EPHREM. Only through such a severe penance can she expunge the stains left by the pleasures of the flesh.

ABRAHAM. Those who hear her sobs are cut to the heart, and the tale of her repentance has turned many from their sins.

EPHREM. It is often so.

ABRAHAM. She works with all of her might to become an example of conversion for all those she led to perdition.

EPHREM. It is right that she should do this.

ABRAHAM. She strives to make her life as beautiful as for a time it was hideous.

EPHREM. I rejoice at what you tell me, to the depths of my heart.

ABRAHAM. And rightly so. The phalanxes of angels rejoice with us, praising the lord for the conversion of a sinner.

EPHREM. No wonder, for the perseverance of the righteous man gives no more joy than does the conversion of the sinner.

ABRAHAM. The more glory to him, because there seemed no hope on earth that she could be saved.

EPHREM. Let us sing a song of thanksgiving—let us glorify the only begotten son of God, who of his love and mercy will not let them perish whom he redeemed with his holy blood.

ABRAHAM. To him be honor, glory, and praise forever and ever. Amen.

THE CONVERSION OF THE HARLOT THAIS

ARGUMENT:

The conversion of the harlot Thais. Disguised as a lover, just like Abraham, the hermit Paphnutius sought her out and converted her. He immured her in a narrow cell where she did penance for five years, until she was reconciled with God after doing appropriate acts of satisfaction. On the fifteenth day after completion of her penance, she fell asleep in Christ.

CHARACTERS:

Paphnutius

Disciples of Paphnutius

Thais

Lovers of Thais

The Abbess

Antony

Paul

SCENE I

DISCIPLES. Why do you look so gloomy, father, and not peaceful, as is your wont?

PAPHNUTIUS. When the heart is sad, the face clouds over.

DISCIPLES. But why are you sad?

PAPHNUTIUS. I grieve over an injury to the creator.

DISCIPLES. What injury?

PAPHNUTIUS. The injury his own creatures made in his very image inflict on him.

DISCIPLES. Oh, father, your words fill us with fear!

PAPHNUTIUS. It is true that the impassible majesty cannot be hurt by injuries. Nevertheless, speaking in metaphor, and as if God were weak with our weakness, what greater injury can we conceive than this—that while the greater world is obedient, and subject to his rule, the lesser world resists his guidance?

DISCIPLES. What do you mean by the lesser world?

PAPHNUTIUS. Man.

DISCIPLES. Man?

PAPHNUTIUS. Yes.

DISCIPLES. What man?

PAPHNUTIUS. Every man.

DISCIPLES. How can this be?

PAPHNUTIUS. It has pleased our creator.

DISCIPLES. We do not understand.

PAPHNUTIUS. It is not plain to many.

DISCIPLES. Explain.

PAPHNUTIUS. Be attentive.

DISCIPLES. We are eager to learn.

PAPHNUTIUS. You know that the greater world is composed of four elements that are contraries, yet by the will of the creator these contraries are adjusted in harmonious arrangement. Now, man is composed of the same elements and with even more contrary parts.

DISCIPLES. What can be more contrary than the elements?

PAPHNUTIUS. The body and the soul. For, while those elements are contrary, they are nonetheless corporeal. Yet the soul is not mortal like the body, nor the body spiritual as is the soul.

DISCIPLES. That is true.

PAPHNUTIUS. Yet if we accept the teachings of dialectics, then we have to concede the elements are not contrary.

DISCIPLES. Who could deny that?

PAPHNUTIUS. Whoever knows how to reason in accord with dialectics. Substance does not have contraries but represents the sublation of contraries.

DISCIPLES. But what did you mean, when you spoke of “harmonious arrangement”?

PAPHNUTIUS. I meant that as low and high sounds harmoniously united produce a certain music, so discordant elements, brought into accord, form one world.

DISCIPLES. It seems strange that concords can be called discords, and vice versa.

PAPHNUTIUS. Because no thing is composed of “likes”—neither can it be made up of elements that have no proportion among themselves, or that are entirely different in substance and nature.

DISCIPLES. What is music?

PAPHNUTIUS. One of the branches of the quadrivium.

DISCIPLES. What is the quadrivium?

PAPHNUTIUS. Arithmetic, geometry, music, and philosophy form the quadrivium.

DISCIPLES. I should like to know why they are given that name.

PAPHNUTIUS. Because just as paths branch out from the quadrivium, the place where four roads meet, so do these subjects lead like roads from one principle of philosophy.

DISCIPLES. We had best not question you about the other three, for our slow wits can scarcely follow what you have told us about the first.

PAPHNUTIUS. It is difficult to grasp.

DISCIPLES. Still you might give us a general idea of the nature of music.

PAPHNUTIUS. I know very little about it, for it is an unknown science among hermits.

DISCIPLES. What does it pertain to?

PAPHNUTIUS. Music?

DISCIPLES. Yes.

PAPHNUTIUS. It pertains to tones.

DISCIPLES. Is there more than one kind of music?

PAPHNUTIUS. There are three kinds. The first is celestial, the second human, the third is produced by instruments.

DISCIPLES. In what does the celestial consist?

PAPHNUTIUS. In the seven planets and the celestial globe.

DISCIPLES. But how?

PAPHNUTIUS. Exactly as in instruments. You find the same number of intervals of the same tone levels, and the same chords as are found in strings.

DISCIPLES. What are intervals?

PAPHNUTIUS. The dimensions that are reckoned between planets or between strings.

DISCIPLES. And what are tone levels?

PAPHNUTIUS. The same as tones.

DISCIPLES. We are none the wiser.

PAPHNUTIUS. A tone is composed of two sounds, and bears the ratio of nine to eight.

DISCIPLES. As soon as we get over one difficulty, you place a greater one in our path!

PAPHNUTIUS. That is inevitable in a discussion of this kind.

DISCIPLES. Yet tell us something about harmony, so that at least we may know the meaning of the word.

PAPHNUTIUS. Harmony means the combination of sound.

DISCIPLES. How so?

PAPHNUTIUS. It is composed sometimes of three, sometimes of four, sometimes of five sounds.

DISCIPLES. As you have given us these three distinctions, we should like to learn the name of each.

PAPHNUTIUS. The first is called "diatesseron." It consists of four tones and it has the proportion of four to three. The second is called "diapente." It consists of five tones

and bears the ratio of three to two. The third is known as the “diapason.” Its ratio is two to one and it consists of eight tones.

DISCIPLES. And do the spheres and planets produce sounds, since they are compared to chords?

PAPHNUTIUS. Undoubtedly they do.

DISCIPLES. Why is the music not heard?

PAPHNUTIUS. Many reasons are given. Some think it is not heard because it is continuous. Others say it is because of the density of the air. Some assert that so enormous a sound could not pass into the mortal ear. Others that the music of the spheres is so pleasant and sweet that if it were heard all men would come together, and, forgetting themselves and all their pursuits, would follow the sounds from east to west.

DISCIPLES. It is well that it is not heard.

PAPHNUTIUS. As our creator foreknew.

DISCIPLES. We have heard enough of this kind of music. Explain “human” music.

PAPHNUTIUS. What do you want to know about that?

DISCIPLES. How can it be perceived?

PAPHNUTIUS. Not only, as I have already told you, in the combination of body and soul, and in the utterance of the voice, now high, now low, but even in the pulsation

of the veins, and in the proportion of our members. Take the finger-joints. In them, if we measure, we find the same proportions as we have already found in harmony; for music is said to be a fitting disposition not only of sounds, but also of other dissimilar things.

DISCIPLES. Had we known the difficulty that such a hard point presents to the ignorant, we would have preferred staying ignorant of the “lesser world” rather than undergoing such a difficult lesson.

PAPHNUTIUS. Don’t regret your efforts since you have learned many things that you did not know before.

DISCIPLES. That may be true, but we are weary of this disputation because we cannot follow the fine points of your reasoning!

PAPHNUTIUS. Why do you mock me? I am no philosopher, but an ignorant man.

DISCIPLES. Where did you get all this learning with which you have exhausted us?

PAPHNUTIUS. It is but a little drop from the full deep wells of learning—wells at which I, a chance passerby, have lapped, but never sat down to drain. I have been eager to share this knowledge with you.

DISCIPLES. We are grateful for your kindness. But the warning of the Apostle frightens us: “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.”

PAPHNUTIUS. Whether a fool or a wise man does wrong,
he deserves to be confounded by God.

DISCIPLES. Yes.

PAPHNUTIUS. Nor is God offended by knowledge of the
knowable, only by injustice on the part of the knower.

DISCIPLES. True.

PAPHNUTIUS. And I would ask you—unto whose praise
can the knowledge of the arts be more worthily or more
justly turned than to the praise of him who made things
capable of being known, and gave us the capacity to
know them?

DISCIPLES. To none other.

PAPHNUTIUS. The more a man realizes the wonderful way
in which God has set all things in number, measure, and
weight, the more ardent his love.

DISCIPLES. That is as it should be.

PAPHNUTIUS. But I am wrong to dwell on matters that
give you so little pleasure.

DISCIPLES. Tell us the cause of your sadness. Relieve us of
the burden of our curiosity.

PAPHNUTIUS. When you hear the cause, you will not
be pleased.

DISCIPLES. A man is often sadder for having his curiosity

satisfied, yet he cannot overcome this tendency to be curious. It is part of our weakness.

PAPHNUTIUS. There is a woman, a shameless woman, living in our neighborhood.

DISCIPLES. A perilous thing for the people.

PAPHNUTIUS. Her beauty is wonderful: her impurity is—horrible.

DISCIPLES. How awful. What is her name?

PAPHNUTIUS. Thais.

DISCIPLES. The harlot?

PAPHNUTIUS. Yes, she.

DISCIPLES. Everyone has heard of her and her wickedness.

PAPHNUTIUS. It is no wonder, for she is not satisfied to ruin herself with a small band of lovers. She seeks to allure all men through her marvelous beauty, and drag them down with her to their ruin.

DISCIPLES. What a woeful thing!

PAPHNUTIUS. And it is not only fools and wastrels who squander their substance with her. Citizens of high standing waste their valuable possessions as gifts for her to their own undoing.

DISCIPLES. It is terrible to hear of such things.

PAPHNUTIUS. Flocks of lovers crowd to her doors.

DISCIPLES. And go to their ruin!

PAPHNUTIUS. They are so crazed with desire that in their blindness they fight for admission to her house.

DISCIPLES. One vice brings another in its train.

PAPHNUTIUS. They come to blows. Heads are broken, faces bruised, noses smashed; at times they drive each other out with weapons, and the threshold of the brothel is washed over with blood!

DISCIPLES. Most horrible desecration!

PAPHNUTIUS. This is the injury to the creator for which I weep. This is the cause of my sorrow.

DISCIPLES. We doubt not that you have good reason to be distressed and that the citizens of heaven share your grief.

PAPHNUTIUS. What if I were to go to her in the disguise of a lover? Perhaps I could call her back from her worthless life?

DISCIPLES. Whoever instilled that desire in you, may he give the means to accomplish it.

PAPHNUTIUS. In the meantime, support me with your constant prayers that I may not be overcome by the wiles of the serpent.

DISCIPLES. May he who laid low the prince of darkness
give you the victory over the enemy.

SCENE II

PAPHNUTIUS. I see some young men in the marketplace. I
will go up to them and ask where she is to be found.

YOUNG MEN. That stranger is approaching us. Let's see
what he wants.

PAPHNUTIUS. Your pardon, young men. Who are you?

YOUNG MEN. Citizens of the town.

PAPHNUTIUS. My salutations!

YOUNG MEN. And ours, whether you are a native or a
foreigner.

PAPHNUTIUS. I am a stranger, just arrived.

YOUNG MEN. From where? What is your desire?

PAPHNUTIUS. I cannot say.

YOUNG MEN. Why?

PAPHNUTIUS. That is my secret.

YOUNG MEN. It would be wiser to tell us your secret. It will
be difficult for you, a stranger, to do your business here
without the advice of citizens.

PAPHNUTIUS. But if I tell you, it may be that I hinder my own plans.

YOUNG MEN. Not by us!

PAPHNUTIUS. I will yield to your pleasant assurances. I will trust in your faithfulness and reveal my secret.

YOUNG MEN. We will not break our word. Nothing will hinder you.

PAPHNUTIUS. I am told that there lives in this town a woman who is beloved and charming to all.

YOUNG MEN. Do you know her name?

PAPHNUTIUS. Yes, I know it.

YOUNG MEN. Who is she?

PAPHNUTIUS. Thais.

YOUNG MEN. She sets all hearts on fire.

PAPHNUTIUS. They say she is the most beautiful, most exquisite woman in the world!

YOUNG MEN. They have not deceived you.

PAPHNUTIUS. For her sake I have made a long and difficult journey. I have come here to see her.

YOUNG MEN. Well, what should prevent you?

PAPHNUTIUS. Where does she live?

YOUNG MEN. Look. Her house is quite near.

PAPHNUTIUS. There, where you are pointing?

YOUNG MEN. Yes.

PAPHNUTIUS. I will go there.

YOUNG MEN. If you like, we will come with you.

PAPHNUTIUS. I would rather go alone.

YOUNG MEN. As you wish.

SCENE III

PAPHNUTIUS. Thais, are you there? I am looking for you.

THAIS. Who is there? A stranger?

PAPHNUTIUS. Someone who loves you.

THAIS. Whoever courts me with love, receives as much as he gives.

PAPHNUTIUS. Oh, Thais, Thais! What a long and troublesome journey I have set out on in order to speak to you and see your face!

THAIS. Well? Have I refused to speak to you, or to show you my face?

PAPHNUTIUS. The secrecy of our conversation needs a room that is more secluded.

THAIS. Look, this bedchamber is well-adorned and delightful to use.

PAPHNUTIUS. Is there no room still more secluded, where we can speak in greater secrecy?

THAIS. Yes, there is a room like that in this house. No one even knows that it exists except myself and God.

PAPHNUTIUS. God! What God?

THAIS. The true God.

PAPHNUTIUS. And you believe that he knows what we do?

THAIS. I believe nothing is hidden from him.

PAPHNUTIUS. What do you think, then? That he is indifferent to the actions of the sinner, or that he reserves judgment?

THAIS. I suppose that the merits of each man are weighed in the balance, and that we shall be punished or rewarded according to our deeds.

PAPHNUTIUS. O Christ! How wondrous is your patience! How wondrous is your kindness! Even when those who believe in you sin deliberately, you delay their destruction!

THAIS. Why do you tremble? Why do you weep?

PAPHNUTIUS. I shudder at your presumption. I weep for your damnation. How, knowing what you know, can you ruin so many souls?

THAIS. Pity me!

PAPHNUTIUS. You deserve to be condemned because you offended the divine majesty willfully and knowingly.

THAIS. What do you mean? Why do you threaten me like this?

PAPHNUTIUS. The punishment of hell-fire awaits you if you remain in sin.

THAIS. The severity of your chastisement has shaken me to the depths of my terrified heart!

PAPHNUTIUS. I would that you could be shaken with fear to your very bowels! That you would never again give in to those dangerous delights.

THAIS. How would there be any room left for that pestiferous desire in my heart, when it is overwhelmed with bitter pangs of grief and sudden awareness of my guilt?

PAPHNUTIUS. I long to see the thorns of vice cut away, and the vine of penance sprout forth.

THAIS. If you could believe, if you could hope that I, so vile, soiled by thousands and thousands of impurities, could be cleansed of my sin and could ever obtain pardon by doing penance.

PAPHNUTIUS. No sin is so great, no crime so monstrous, that it cannot be expiated by penitential tears, provided they are followed up by deeds.

THAIS. Show me, I beg you, my father, what I can do to earn the gift of reconciliation.

PAPHNUTIUS. Despise the world. Leave your dissolute lovers.

THAIS. What might I do then?

PAPHNUTIUS. You must retire to some solitary place, where you may learn to know yourself and lament the enormity of your sins.

THAIS. If you think this will save me, I will not delay a moment.

PAPHNUTIUS. I have no doubt it will.

THAIS. Yet give me a little time. I must collect the wealth that I have gained through sin.

PAPHNUTIUS. Do not give it a moment's thought. There will be no lack of people to find and make use of your wealth.

THAIS. I did not think of keeping this wealth or of giving it to my friends. Nor would I distribute it among the poor. The wages of sin are no material for good works.

PAPHNUTIUS. You are right. What then do you propose to do with your possessions?

THAIS. Give them to the flames! Burn them to ashes!

PAPHNUTIUS. For what reason?

THAIS. That they may no longer exist in the world. Each one was acquired at the cost of an injury to the creator of the world.

PAPHNUTIUS. How you are changed! You were formerly on fire for forbidden passions and you were burning with greed.

THAIS. Perhaps I will change for the better, if God wills it.

PAPHNUTIUS. It is not difficult for the unchangeable substance to transform us, if he wishes.

THAIS. Now I will go to carry out my plan.

PAPHNUTIUS. Go in peace, and return to me quickly.

SCENE IV

THAIS. Come, hasten, my evil lovers! Your Thais calls you!

LOVERS. That is the voice of Thais. She calls us. Let us make haste, for by delay we may offend her.

THAIS. Hasten, come nearer, so I can speak with you.

LOVERS. O Thais, Thais, what is the meaning of this funeral pyre you have made? Why are you throwing all those beautiful and precious treasures on the pyre?

THAIS. Why do you ask?

LOVERS. We are amazed.

THAIS. I will explain at once.

LOVERS. We long to hear.

THAIS. Look, then!

LOVERS. Stop, Thais, stop! What are you doing? Are you mad?

THAIS. I am not mad. I am sane and I understand.

LOVERS. Why are four hundred pounds of gold and all the other treasure going to ruin?

THAIS. All these things I have extorted from you as the price of shameful deeds. I burn them to destroy all hope in you that I shall ever again turn to your love.

LOVERS. Wait, Thais. Wait a little, and tell us what has upset you!

THAIS. I will not stay, nor will I talk with you.

LOVERS. Why do you disdain us with such scorn? Can you accuse us of being unfaithful? We have always sought to satisfy your desires. And now you reward us with bitter hatred for no reason.

THAIS. Let me leave you. Do not tear my garments. It is enough that I have lived in sin with you until now. This is the beginning of the end of my sin. This is the moment for us to part ways.

LOVERS. Where is she going?

THAIS. Where none of you will ever see me again!

LOVERS. What monstrous thing is this? Thais, our delight, always worked to acquire wealth and refrained from no debauchery and devoted herself entirely to pleasure. She has destroyed past recovery gold and gems of such value and she insults her lovers and suddenly deserts us.

SCENE V

THAIS. Paphnutius, my father, I am ready now to obey you.

PAPHNUTIUS. Thais, your absence has tormented me with fear that you had been caught in the world's snare.

THAIS. You need not be afraid, for I have far different interests. I have disposed of my possessions according to my will and the world does not tempt me now. I have publicly renounced my lovers.

PAPHNUTIUS. Since you have renounced your earthly lovers, you can now be joined to your heavenly lover.

THAIS. It is for you to show me the way. Be a lantern to me, for all is obscure night.

PAPHNUTIUS. Follow me.

THAIS. I can follow you with my feet. Would that I could follow you with my deeds!

SCENE VI

PAPHNUTIUS. Look, here is the monastery where a noble community of holy virgins lives. I am anxious for you to pass the time of penance in this place.

THAIS. I have no objection.

PAPHNUTIUS. I will go in, and persuade the abbess who is the head of the community to receive you.

THAIS. And what shall I do meanwhile?

PAPHNUTIUS. You shall come with me.

THAIS. As you command.

PAPHNUTIUS. But look! The abbess is approaching. I wonder who can have told her so promptly of our arrival.

THAIS. Rumor, Father Paphnutius. Rumor never delays.

SCENE VII

PAPHNUTIUS. You come opportunely, illustrious abbess. I was just seeking you.

ABBESS. You are most welcome, venerable Father Paphnutius. Blessed is your visit, beloved of God.

PAPHNUTIUS. May the grace of him who is father of all pour into your heart the beatitude of everlasting blessing!

ABBESS. And what has brought your holiness to my humble

dwelling?

PAPHNUTIUS. I need your help in a pressing matter.

ABBESS. Say but the word, what I can do, and I will do all in my power to carry out your wishes.

PAPHNUTIUS. I have brought you a kid who has been snatched half dead from the jaws of wolves. Show it compassion, nurse it with all your tenderness, until it has shed its rough goatskin and put on the soft fleece of a lamb.

ABBESS. Explain yourself further.

PAPHNUTIUS. You see this woman. She has led the life of a harlot.

ABBESS. What misery!

PAPHNUTIUS. She has given herself up entirely to base pleasures.

ABBESS. She has brought herself to ruin.

PAPHNUTIUS. Yet with my encouragement and with Christ's power, she has set aside lust and ease with disgust. She is resolved to live chastely.

ABBESS. Thanks be to the author of this change!

PAPHNUTIUS. But since the maladies of the soul, like those of the body, need physic for their cure, she must be removed from the foulness of the world and immured in a narrow cell so that she can learn to know her sins better.

ABBESS. That will be of the greatest benefit.

PAPHNUTIUS. Will you give orders for a little cell to be made ready as soon as possible?

ABBESS. It shall be done quickly.

PAPHNUTIUS. There must be no entrance, no opening, except a small window through which she can receive the meager food that will be brought her on certain days at certain fixed hours.

ABBESS. I fear that she, so tender and delicate, will not be able to endure such a rigorous penance.

PAPHNUTIUS. Have no fear. A grave sin demands a grave remedy.

ABBESS. That is true.

PAPHNUTIUS. I am already weary of delay. I fear that she could once again be brought to ruin if men call on her.

ABBESS. Why are you weary? Why not immure her now? Look, the cell that you told us to prepare is ready.

PAPHNUTIUS. Good. Thais, go in. This is a refuge suitable for you to weep over your sins.

THAIS. How small it is! How dark! How can a delicate woman live in such a place?

PAPHNUTIUS. Why do you curse this refuge? Why do you shudder at the thought of entering? You have wandered

long enough without restraint. It is right that you should now be confined in this solitary cell.

THAIS. A mind so long accustomed to pleasure and diversion cannot easily endure such an austere life.

PAPHNUTIUS. The more need to rein it in, until it ceases to rebel.

THAIS. In my humility, I do not rebel against your fatherly dictates. But my weakness rebels against one hardship in this cell.

PAPHNUTIUS. What hardship?

THAIS. I am ashamed to say.

PAPHNUTIUS. Don't be ashamed; explain it openly.

THAIS. What could be more repugnant than to have to attend to all the needs of the body in this one little room? Without doubt, it will soon be uninhabitable because of the powerful stench.

PAPHNUTIUS. Fear the cruel punishments of hell and cease to dread transitory evils.

THAIS. My weakness makes me shudder.

PAPHNUTIUS. It is fitting to atone for the sweetness of your guilty pleasures in such foul stench.

THAIS. I have no objection. I accept that I must live in this sordid, reeking cell. Yet, it grieves me very much that

there is no place where I can invoke the name of our terrifying God with dignity and purity.

PAPHNUTIUS. Where did you get such arrogance that you presume to utter the name of our unpolluted godhead with your polluted lips?

THAIS. How can I hope for pardon? Who will pity me—who save me? What shall I do if I am forbidden to invoke him against whom only I have sinned, to whom should I pray?

PAPHNUTIUS. You must pray to him not with words but with tears. Not a sonorous voice, but the mighty roar of a contrite heart.

THAIS. If I am forbidden to pray to God with words, how can I ever hope for pardon?

PAPHNUTIUS. The more perfectly you humble yourself, the more swiftly he will forgive you. Say only this: “O God who made me, pity me!”

THAIS. I need his mercy in order not to suffer defeat in this hard struggle!

PAPHNUTIUS. Fight manfully, and you will gain a glorious victory.

THAIS. It is your part to pray for me! Pray I may earn the victor’s palm.

PAPHNUTIUS. You need not remind me.

THAIS. I have hope.

PAPHNUTIUS. It is time for me to return to the remote desert I love and to visit my dear disciples. Venerable abbess, I entrust this captive to your care and your piety. I beg you to sustain her delicate body with necessities. Refresh her soul with chastisements that bring salvation.

ABBESS. Have no anxiety about her, for I will cherish her with a mother's affection.

PAPHNUTIUS. I go then.

ABBESS. In peace.

SCENE VIII

DISCIPLES. Who is knocking on the door?

PAPHNUTIUS. Hello!

DISCIPLES. It is the voice of our father Paphnutius!

PAPHNUTIUS. Unbolt the door.

DISCIPLES. Father, greetings!

PAPHNUTIUS. Greetings!

DISCIPLES. Your long absence has caused us great uneasiness.

PAPHNUTIUS. It has been fruitful.

DISCIPLES. Come, tell us what has happened to Thais.

PAPHNUTIUS. All that I wished.

DISCIPLES. Where is she living now?

PAPHNUTIUS. She weeps over her sins in a little cell.

DISCIPLES. Praise be to the supreme trinity!

PAPHNUTIUS. Blessed be his terrible name now and forever.

DISCIPLES. Amen.

SCENE IX

PAPHNUTIUS. Three years have passed since Thais began her penance, and I cannot tell whether her sorrow has found favor with God. I will go to brother Antony so that the truth might be revealed to me through his intercession.

SCENE X

ANTONY. This is an unexpected joy indeed! What a pleasant surprise for me! I did not think to see my brother Paphnutius again in this world. Is it not my brother and fellow hermit Paphnutius?

PAPHNUTIUS. Yes, it is I.

ANTONY. You are welcome, very welcome. Your coming gives me great joy.

PAPHNUTIUS. I am no less rejoiced to see you.

ANTONY. But what is the joyful and happy occasion that has brought you from your solitary retreat?

PAPHNUTIUS. I will explain.

ANTONY. I would like to hear it.

PAPHNUTIUS. Three years ago, a harlot named Thais lived among us here. She not only brought ruin to herself but also led many others to perdition with her.

ANTONY. Woe, a lamentable way of life!

PAPHNUTIUS. I went to her in the disguise of a lover, and won her favor by flattering her with sweet words. Then I brought terror to her soul with bitter reproaches and threats of God's punishment.

ANTONY. A prudent course for her debauchery!

PAPHNUTIUS. Finally, she was converted. She shunned her sinful life and chose to live in chastity. She consented to be enclosed in a narrow cell.

ANTONY. I am overjoyed by what you have told me! All the blood in my old veins exults and rejoices!

PAPHNUTIUS. That is because you are a saint. I rejoice immeasurably in her conversion. Yet I am uneasy. I fear that the penance may have been too long and severe for a woman of such delicate frame.

ANTONY. Where there is true love, loving compassion is not wanting.

PAPHNUTIUS. I came to beg for your love, that you and your disciples would persevere in constant prayer until heaven gives us a sign whether or not the penitent's tears have moved the divine mercy to reconciliation.

ANTONY. We grant your request gladly.

PAPHNUTIUS. I know that God will listen to you with favor.

SCENE XI

ANTONY. Look, the gospel's promise is fulfilled in us!

PAPHNUTIUS. What promise?

ANTONY. Those who unite in prayer can obtain whatever they desire.

PAPHNUTIUS. What is it?

ANTONY. My disciple Paul has had a vision.

PAPHNUTIUS. Call him!

ANTONY. Paul, come here and tell Paphnutius what you have seen.

PAUL. I saw in my vision a bed in heaven, adorned with splendid white linens, and four radiant virgins stood around it as guards. Seeing this wonderful and joyful sight, I cried out, "This glory must be for my master and father Antony!"

ANTONY. I am not worthy of such glory.

PAUL. But a divine voice answered me, saying, "This glory is prepared, not, as you think, for Antony, but for the harlot Thais!"

PAPHNUTIUS. O Christ! How shall I praise the sweetness of your mercy for you have deigned to comfort my sadness.

ANTONY. He is worthy to be praised.

PAPHNUTIUS. I shall go at once to my captive.

ANTONY. It is time to promise her hope for forgiveness and the solace of eternal glory.

SCENE XII

PAPHNUTIUS. Thais, my adopted daughter, open the window and let me see you.

THAIS. Who speaks?

PAPHNUTIUS. Paphnutius, your father.

THAIS. Why should you visit a poor sinner? Why should I be given this great joy and happiness?

PAPHNUTIUS. Although for three years I have been absent from you in body, I have nonetheless been deeply concerned for your salvation.

THAIS. I never doubted that.

PAPHNUTIUS. Tell me how you have lived and done your penance.

THAIS. I can tell you—I have done nothing that is worthy of God.

PAPHNUTIUS. If God only pays attention to iniquities, no one will be saved.

THAIS. If you wish to know what I have done—I gathered up my many sins into a mighty bundle to keep them always in mind, so that, just as this horrid stench has tormented my nose, so, too, has the fear of hell been ever present in the visions of my heart.

PAPHNUTIUS. Your punishing penitence has won forgiveness.

THAIS. If only it had!

PAPHNUTIUS. Give me your hand. Let me bring you out.

THAIS. No, venerable father, do not take me in my sinful squalor out of this filth. Let me stay in this place that befits my deeds.

PAPHNUTIUS. The time has come for you to cast away your fear, and hope for life! God has accepted your penance.

THAIS. May all the angels praise his grace! He has not despised the lowliness of a penitent heart.

PAPHNUTIUS. Be steadfast in your fear of God and be constant in your love for him. In fifteen days, you will leave behind your bodily shell and at last, after completion of this blessed course, you will go to the stars with godly favor.

THAIS. O that I might deserve to be spared hell's torments or be mercifully cleansed in a gentle fire. My merits are not sufficient to win eternal glory.

PAPHNUTIUS. Grace is the gift of God and does not depend on human merits. If it did, it could not be called grace.

THAIS. For this let the choirs of heaven praise him, and all the little twigs on earth, all animals, and the resounding waterfalls, because he patiently suffers all sinners and even rewards the penitent.

PAPHNUTIUS. For all eternity, he has preferred to be merciful rather than to punish.

SCENE XIII

THAIS. Holy father, do not leave. Be near to comfort me in this hour of my death.

PAPHNUTIUS. I will not leave. I will stay until your soul has taken flight to the stars, and I have buried your body.

THAIS. I am beginning to die.

PAPHNUTIUS. Now is the time to pray.

THAIS. O God who made me, have mercy on me! Grant that the soul into which you breathed life may now happily return to you.

PAPHNUTIUS. O uncreated one, existing in truth without material form, you of one substance, who created

humankind not of one substance, grant that the different parts of this human now to be dissolved may return to their original elements. Grant that the soul, given from on high, may soar to heavenly joys, and that the body may be cherished peacefully in the soft lap of the earth until that day when, the ashes being brought together again, and the life-giving sap restored to the veins, this same Thais may rise again, a human being as before, and take her place among the glorious white flock who shall be led into the joy of eternity. You, who alone are what you are, rule in the unity of trinity and are praised forever and ever.

THE PASSION OF THE VIRGIN SAINTS,
FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY

ARGUMENT:

The martyrdom of the holy virgins Faith, Hope, and Charity, whom, with many torments, Emperor Hadrian executed in the presence of their venerable mother Sapientia, she encouraging them by her admonitions to bear their sufferings. After their death, the holy mother Sapientia recovered their bodies, embalmed them with spices, and buried them with honor at the fifth milestone outside the city of Rome. Forty days later the spirit of Sapientia took its flight to heaven while she was praying at their graves.

CHARACTERS:

Antiochus

Hadrian

Sapientia

Faith

Hope

Charity

Matrons

SCENE I

ANTIOCHUS. Emperor Hadrian, in the hope that your imperial majesty, in accord with your wishes, may be prosperous and that your empire, free of every disturbance, always be strong, whenever I discover anything that threatens the commonwealth or your peace of mind, I have always tried to crush and destroy it swiftly.

HADRIAN. Rightly so, for our prosperity means your advantage, for we never tire of increasing your honors and distinctions every day.

ANTIOCHUS. I am grateful to your majesty. Therefore when I discover anything that seems hostile to your interests, I do not conceal it but bring it to your attention without delay.

HADRIAN. With good reason. If you withheld such information you would be guilty of treason to the imperial majesty.

ANTIOCHUS. I have never been guilty of such a transgression.

HADRIAN. I know. Come, if you have discovered some new danger, make it known to us.

ANTIOCHUS. A certain foreign woman has recently come to Rome with her three small children.

HADRIAN. Of what sex are the children?

ANTIOCHUS. They are all girls.

HADRIAN. And you think that a handful of women threaten the state?

ANTIOCHUS. I do, and very grave danger.

HADRIAN. Of what kind?

ANTIOCHUS. A disturbance of the peace.

HADRIAN. How?

ANTIOCHUS. What disturbs the peace and harmony of states more than religious differences?

HADRIAN. Nothing is more serious or more dangerous. The whole Roman Empire is evidence of this. It is infected on all sides by the filth of Christian-killing.

ANTIOCHUS. This woman of whom I speak is urging our people to abandon the religion of their fathers and embrace the Christian faith.

HADRIAN. But have her words any effect?

ANTIOCHUS. Indeed they have. Our wives hate and scorn us to such an extent that they will not deign to eat with us, still less share our beds.

HADRIAN. This is a real danger, I admit.

ANTIOCHUS. It behooves your majesty to prevent this.

HADRIAN. That stands to reason. Summon the woman. Perhaps, face to face, I will be able to compel her to yield.

ANTIOCHUS. You wish me to summon her?

HADRIAN. Indeed.

SCENE II

ANTIOCHUS. Foreign woman, what is your name?

SAPIENTIA. Sapientia.

ANTIOCHUS. Emperor Hadrian orders you to present yourself at the palace.

SAPIENTIA. I am not afraid to go to the palace with my noble daughters. Nor do I tremble at the thought of meeting your scowling emperor face to face.

ANTIOCHUS. It is the way of you Christian rabble to defy authority.

SAPIENTIA. No one can prevail over the lord of the universe. He will not allow his followers to be vanquished.

ANTIOCHUS. Not so much talk. Make haste for the palace.

SAPIENTIA. Go before us and show the way. We will follow you.

SCENE III

ANTIOCHUS. That is the emperor you see there, seated on his throne in the palace. Be careful what you say to him.

SAPIENTIA. The word of Christ forbids this; he promised

us the gift of perfect wisdom.

HADRIAN. Approach, Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS. At your service, my lord.

HADRIAN. Are these the women whom you have arrested on account of their Christian religion?

ANTIOCHUS. Yes, lord.

HADRIAN. I am amazed at their beauty. I cannot help admiring their noble and dignified manner.

ANTIOCHUS. Waste no time in admiring them, my lord. Make them worship the gods.

HADRIAN. What if I first approached them with sweet flattery? Then they may yield.

ANTIOCHUS. That may be best. This frail sex is easily moved by flattery.

HADRIAN. Noble matron, if you desire to enjoy my friendship, I ask you in all gentleness to join me in an act of worship of the gods.

SAPIENTIA. I will not worship your gods, as you wish, nor do I have any desire for your friendship.

HADRIAN. I will still check my anger and not lose my dignity with you. I have a fatherly care for your welfare and that of your daughters.

SAPIENTIA. Daughters, do not open your hearts to the wiles of this devilish serpent. Scorn them, as I do.

FAITH. We scorn and abhor his prattle in our hearts.

ANTIOCHUS. What are you muttering there?

SAPIENTIA. I was speaking to my daughters.

HADRIAN. You appear to be of noble birth, but I would like to know more about your country, family, and name.

SAPIENTIA. Although we take no pride in it, I do not deny that I come of noble stock.

HADRIAN. That is easy to believe.

SAPIENTIA. My parents were princes of Italy, and I am called Sapientia.

HADRIAN. The splendor of your ancestry is blazoned in your face, and the wisdom of your name flashes on your lips.

SAPIENTIA. You need not waste your breath flattering us. We are not to be conquered by your fair speeches.

HADRIAN. Why have you come here? Why are you among our people?

SAPIENTIA. For no other reason than that we wished to know the truth. I came to learn more of the faith that you persecute, and to consecrate my daughters.

HADRIAN. Tell me their names.

SAPIENTIA. The eldest is called Faith, the second Hope, the third Charity.

HADRIAN. And how old are they?

SAPIENTIA. What do you say, children? Shall I confound this fool with an arithmetic discourse?

FAITH. Do, mother. It will give us joy to hear you.

SAPIENTIA. As you wish to know the ages of my children, emperor, Charity has lived a diminished evenly even number of years; Hope a number also diminished, but evenly uneven; and Faith an augmented number, unevenly even.

HADRIAN. Your answer leaves me in ignorance.

SAPIENTIA. That is not surprising, since not one number, but many, come under this definition.

HADRIAN. Explain more clearly, otherwise I cannot grasp it.

SAPIENTIA. Charity has now completed two olympiads, Hope two lustra, and Faith three olympiads.

HADRIAN. I am curious to know why the number "8," which is two olympiads, and the number "10," which is two lustra, are called "diminished"; also why the number "12," which is made up of three olympiads, is said to be "augmented."

SAPIENTIA. Every number is said to be “diminished” the parts of which when added together give a sum that is less than the number of which they are parts. Such a number is 8. For half of 8 is 4, a quarter of 8 is 2, and an eighth of 8 is 1; and these added together give 7. It is the same with 10. Its half is 5, its fifth part 2, its tenth part 1, and these added together give 8. On the other hand, a number is said to be “augmented,” when its parts added together exceed it. Such, for instance, is 12. Its half is 6, its third 4, its fourth 3, its sixth 2, its twelfth 1, and the sum of these figures is 16. And in accordance with the principle that decrees that between all excesses shall rule the exquisite proportion of the mean, that number is called “perfect” the sum of the parts of which is equal to its whole. Such a number is 6, whose parts—a third, a half, and a sixth—added together, come to 6. For the same reason 28,496, and 8,128 are called “perfect.”

HADRIAN. And what of the other numbers?

SAPIENTIA. They are all either augmented or diminished.

HADRIAN. And that “evenly even” number of which you spoke?

SAPIENTIA. That is one that can be divided into two equal parts, and these parts again into two equal parts, and so on in succession until we come to indivisible unity: 8 and 16 and all numbers obtained by doubling them are examples.

HADRIAN. Continue. And what is an “evenly uneven” number.

SAPIENTIA. One that can be divided by two, but the parts of which after that are indivisible: 10 is such a number, and all others obtained by doubling odd numbers. They differ from the “evenly even” numbers because in them only the minor term can be divided, whereas in the “evenly even” the major term is also capable of division. In the first type, too, all the parts are evenly even in name and in quantity, whereas in the second type, when the denominator is even, the quotient is uneven, and vice versa.

HADRIAN. I am not familiar with these terms, and denominator and quotient mean nothing to me.

SAPIENTIA. When numbers of any magnitude are set down in order, the first set down is called the “minor term” and the last the “major.” When, in making a division, we say by how many the number is to be divided, we give the “divisor,” but when we enumerate how many there are in each of the parts we set forth the “quotient.”

HADRIAN. And the “unevenly even” numbers?

SAPIENTIA. They, like the “evenly even,” can be halved, not only once, but sometimes twice, thrice, and even four times, but not down to indivisible unity.

HADRIAN. Little did I think that a simple question as to the age of these children could give rise to such an intricate and convoluted dissertation.

SAPIENTIA. It leads us to honor the towering wisdom of our creator, and the wondrous knowledge of the author of the world, who in the beginning created the world

out of nothing, and set everything in measure, number, and weight, and then, in seasons and the age of man; it allows us to perceive the wonders of science.

HADRIAN. I have endured your lecture with patience in the hope I might persuade you to submit.

SAPIENTIA. To what?

HADRIAN. To worshiping the gods.

SAPIENTIA. That we can never do.

HADRIAN. If you are obstinate, you will be put to the torture.

SAPIENTIA. It is in your power to lacerate the body with torture, but you will not succeed in compelling the soul to submit.

ANTIOCHUS. The day has passed and the night is falling. This is no time to argue. Supper is ready.

HADRIAN. Let these women be taken to the prison near our palace. I grant them three days to reflect.

ANTIOCHUS. Soldiers, see that these women are well guarded and given no chance of escape.

SCENE IV

SAPIENTIA. My dearest daughters! My beloved children! Do not let this narrow prison sadden you. Do not be frightened by the threat of punishments to come.

FAITH. Our weak bodies may dread the torture, but our souls look forward with joy to the reward.

SAPIENTIA. May your mature and steadfast understanding triumph over the tenderness of your years.

HOPE. You must help us with your prayers. Then we shall prevail.

SAPIENTIA. This I pray without ceasing, this I implore—that you may stand firm in the faith that I instilled in you while you were infants.

CHARITY. We can never forget what we learned while nursing in the crib.

SAPIENTIA. I nursed you abundantly with milk; I nourished you, that I might wed you to the heavenly bridegroom, not to an earthly one, that I might be called the mother-in-law of the eternal king on your account.

FAITH. For the love of this spouse we are all ready to die.

SAPIENTIA. Your words are sweeter to me than nectar!

HOPE. Lead us to the tribunal. Then you will see what courage our love for him will give us.

SAPIENTIA. My only wish is that I will be crowned by your virginity and glorified by your martyrdom.

CHARITY. Let us go hand in hand and bring shame on the tyrant.

SAPIENTIA. We must wait till the hour comes when we are summoned.

FAITH. We chafe at the delay, but we must be patient.

SCENE V

HADRIAN. Antiochus, bring the Italian prisoners before us.

ANTIOCHUS. Sapientia, you and your daughters must appear before the emperor.

SAPIENTIA. Hasten with me bravely, children, and persevere with one mind in the faith in order to win the martyr's palm.

HOPE. We are hastening. And he is with us for whose love we are to be led to death.

HADRIAN. The three days' respite which of our clemency we granted you is over. If you have profited by it, obey our commands.

SAPIENTIA. We have profited by it. It has strengthened our determination not to yield.

ANTIOCHUS. Why do you deign to bandy words with this obstinate woman, who insults you with her insolent presumption.

HADRIAN. Am I to send her away unpunished?

ANTIOCHUS. By no means.

HADRIAN. What then?

ANTIOCHUS. Admonish the little girls. If they defy you, do not spare them because of their tender years, but have them put to death so that their deaths may bitterly torment their obstinate mother.

HADRIAN. I will do as you advise.

ANTIOCHUS. This way you will succeed in the end.

HADRIAN. Faith, behold the venerable statue of the great Diana. Offer a libation to the holy goddess, and you will win her favor.

FAITH. How foolish is the emperor's command, how contemptible!

HADRIAN. What are you muttering there? What are you mocking with your furrowed brow?

FAITH. I am mocking your foolishness. I am laughing at your stupidity.

HADRIAN. Mine?

FAITH. Yours!

ANTIOCHUS. The emperor's?

FAITH. His!

ANTIOCHUS. Blasphemy!

FAITH. What is more foolish or more stupid than to urge

us to insult the creator of the world and worship a bit of metal?

ANTIOCHUS. Faith, you have lost your mind.

FAITH. You are lying!

ANTIOCHUS. Is it not the height of insanity and lunacy that you call the emperor a fool?

FAITH. I said it, I am saying it, and I shall say it, as long as I live.

ANTIOCHUS. That will not be long. You deserve to die at once.

FAITH. I wish for nothing other than death in Christ.

HADRIAN. Let twelve centurions take turns in flaying her with scourges.

ANTIOCHUS. She deserves it.

HADRIAN. Most valiant centurions, approach, and wipe out the insults to me.

ANTIOCHUS. That is just.

HADRIAN. Ask her now, Antiochus, if she will yield.

ANTIOCHUS. Faith, do you still wish to dishonor the imperial majesty with your insults?

FAITH. Why less now than before?

ANTIOCHUS. Because the flogging has stopped you.

FAITH. These whips cannot silence me, as they do not hurt at all.

ANTIOCHUS. Cursed obstinacy! Was there ever such insolence?

HADRIAN. Although her body weakens under the chastisement, her mind is still swollen with pride.

FAITH. Hadrian, you are wrong, if you think the flogging is weakening me. Not I, but your executioners are sweating and fainting with fatigue.

HADRIAN. Antiochus, tell them to cut off both her breasts so that shame will force her to yield.

ANTIOCHUS. If only something could force her to yield!

HADRIAN. Perhaps she can be forced.

FAITH. You have wounded my pure breast, but you have not hurt me. And look! Instead of blood a stream of milk gushes from my wounds.

HADRIAN. Put her on a gridiron, with a fire set beneath, so that she may die from the smoke.

ANTIOCHUS. She deserves a terrible death for her boldness in defying you.

FAITH. All you do to cause me suffering is a source of peace to me. I am as happy on this gridiron as if it were a tranquil, little boat!

HADRIAN. Bring a brazier full of pitch and wax, and place it on the fire. Then hurl this rebellious girl into the boiling liquid.

FAITH. I will leap into it of my own accord.

HADRIAN. So be it.

FAITH. Where are your threats? Look! Unharmed, I am swimming merrily in the boiling pitch. Its fierce heat seems as cool to me as the morning dew.

HADRIAN. Antiochus, what can we do with her?

ANTIOCHUS. She must not escape.

HADRIAN. She shall be beheaded.

ANTIOCHUS. There is no other way of conquering her.

FAITH. Now let my soul rejoice and exult in the lord.

SAPIENTIA. O Christ, invincible conqueror of Satan, give my child, Faith, endurance to the end!

FAITH. Venerable mother, say a last farewell to your daughter. Kiss your firstborn, but do not mourn for me, for my hands are outstretched to the reward of eternity.

SAPIENTIA. My daughter, my darling dear, I am not dismayed—I am not distressed! I bid you farewell rejoicing. I kiss your mouth and eyes, weeping for joy. My only prayer is that beneath the executioner's sword you may keep the mystery of your name inviolate.

FAITH. My sisters, born of the same womb, give me the kiss of peace, and prepare yourselves for the coming struggle!

HOPE. Help us with your constant prayers, that we may be found worthy to follow in your footsteps.

FAITH. Listen to the warnings of our holy mother. She has always taught us to despise the things of earth that we may gain those that are eternal.

CHARITY. We shall gladly obey her motherly warnings in order to win the eternal reward.

FAITH. Come, executioner, do your duty, and put an end to my life.

SAPIENTIA. I embrace the severed head of my dead child, and I press my lips on hers and I kiss her again. I praise you, O Christ, who gave the victory to a little maid.

HADRIAN. Hope, heed my warning. I advise you with fatherly affection.

HOPE. What is your warning? What is your advice?

HADRIAN. I beg you not to imitate your misguided sister. I would not have you undergo the same torture.

HOPE. Would that I were worthy to imitate her sufferings, and so win a reward like hers!

HADRIAN. Do not harden your heart, but give way and burn incense before great Diana. Then I will adopt you as my own child, and love you most tenderly.

HOPE. I should not care to have you for a father, and I want no favors from you. You deceive yourself with vain hopes if you suppose that I shall submit.

HADRIAN. Be more careful in your speech or you will make me angry.

HOPE. Be angry. What is it to me?

ANTIOCHUS. I am amazed, emperor, that you should tolerate for a moment such insolence from a vile little girl! I boil with indignation as I listen to her attacking you so insolently.

HADRIAN. I wished to be merciful to her youth, but I can no longer be indulgent. She shall be punished as she deserves.

ANTIOCHUS. I wish that were possible.

HADRIAN. Come, lictors, and scourge this little rebel to death with your heaviest rods.

ANTIOCHUS. She deserves to feel the full weight of your anger, as she has mocked your gracious clemency.

HOPE. Here is the only clemency for which I long—here the only mercy I crave.

ANTIOCHUS. Sapientia, what are you murmuring there, standing with uplifted eyes by the body of your dead child?

SAPIENTIA. I am imploring the parent of all to give Hope the same firm courage that he gave Faith.

HOPE. Oh, mother, I feel how powerful your prayers are, how they have been heard. Even as you prayed the uplifted hands of the panting executioners struck their blows, but I have not felt a twinge of pain.

HADRIAN. So if you do not mind being flogged, we will try some sharper torture.

HOPE. The most savage and deadly you can invent! The more cruelty you show the greater will be your humiliation.

HADRIAN. Let her be suspended in the air, and lacerated with nails until her bowels gush forth, and the skin is stripped from her bones. Break her to pieces limb by limb.

ANTIOCHUS. That order is worthy of an emperor. The punishment fits the crime.

HOPE. Antiochus, you are as crafty as a fox, but you flatter with the cunning of a wolf.

ANTIOCHUS. Be quiet, you wretch! Your prattle must come to an end.

HOPE. It will not be as you hope. Both you and your master will be confounded.

HADRIAN. What is this unusual sweetness that I sense? What is this marvelous perfume that I breathe?

HOPE. The torn shreds of my flesh are giving forth a heavenly fragrance to make you admit that you have no power to hurt me by torture!

HADRIAN. Antiochus, what am I to do?

ANTIOCHUS. We must think of some other punishment.

HADRIAN. Put in the brazier a vessel full of oil and wax and pitch. Bind her and throw her in.

ANTIOCHUS. Yes, she will not find it so easy to escape from Vulcan.

HOPE. Christ has before now made fire grow mild and change its nature.

HADRIAN. Antiochus, what is that sound? I seem to hear a noise like that of rushing waters.

ANTIOCHUS. Alas, my lord!

HADRIAN. What has happened to us?

ANTIOCHUS. The boiling fire has burst the cauldron! It has overflowed and burned our servants. Only the witch who caused the disaster has escaped unhurt.

HADRIAN. I admit, we are worsted.

ANTIOCHUS. Completely.

HADRIAN. She must be beheaded.

ANTIOCHUS. Otherwise, she cannot be destroyed.

HOPE. Charity, my dear, my only sister, have no fear of the tyrant's threats, and do not wince at the thought of suffering. Be strong in faith, and strive to follow the

example of your sisters who are going before you to the palace of heaven.

CHARITY. I am weary of this life. I am weary of living on earth. I am to be separated from you, though only for a short time.

HOPE. Put aside your weariness. Strive for the reward. We shall be separated only for a moment. Soon, very soon, we shall be together in heaven.

CHARITY. So be it.

HOPE. Be joyful, noble mother! Do not grieve with motherly affection for me. You should feel hope instead of sorrow since you see me die for Christ.

SAPIENTIA. Indeed I do rejoice, but my joy will be full only when your little sister has followed you, slain in the same way—and when my turn comes, mine last of all.

HOPE. The eternal trinity will give you back the full number of your daughters without diminution.

SAPIENTIA. Courage, my child! The executioner comes towards us with drawn sword.

HOPE. Willingly, I await the sword! O Christ, receive my soul driven from its bodily mansion for the confession of your name.

SAPIENTIA. Charity, noble offspring, the one hope of my womb, do not disappoint your mother who expects you to win this last fight! Despise earthly gain and you will

attain the eternal glory that shines on your sisters, and, like them, wear the crown of unspotted virginity.

CHARITY. Support me with your holy prayers, mother. Pray that I may be worthy to share their joy.

SAPIENTIA. I pray, stand fast in the faith. I know that everlasting bliss will be your reward.

HADRIAN. Now, Charity. Your sisters' insolence has exhausted my patience and exasperated me. I want no more long speeches. I shall not waste much time on you. Obey my commands, and you shall enjoy all the good things this life has to offer. Disobey, and evil will fall on you.

CHARITY. I long in my heart for the good things. I will not have the evil.

HADRIAN. That pleases me, and you shall profit by it. Therefore, I will be indulgent and set you an easy task.

CHARITY. What is it?

HADRIAN. You shall say just once "Great is Diana" and I will not compel you to sacrifice any more.

CHARITY. I will not say it.

HADRIAN. Why?

CHARITY. Because I will not tell a lie. My sisters and I were born of the same parents, consecrated in the same sacraments, and confirmed in the same faith.

We have the same wish, the same understanding, the same resolution. Therefore, I will never differ from them in anything.

ANTIOCHUS. Oh, what an insult—to be defied by a mere child!

CHARITY. Although I am young in years, I am experienced enough to put you to shame.

HADRIAN. Take her away, Antiochus, and have her stretched on the rack and flogged violently.

ANTIOCHUS. I fear that flogging will be of no use.

HADRIAN. If that will not work, order a furnace to be heated for three days and three nights, and let her be cast into the wild flames.

CHARITY. A powerless judge! He cannot conquer a child of eight without calling in fire to help him!

HADRIAN. Go, Antiochus, and see that my orders are carried out.

CHARITY. He will pretend to obey to satisfy your cruelty, but he will not be able to hurt me. Flogging will not wound my frail body, and the flames will not singe my hair or my garments.

HADRIAN. We shall see.

CHARITY. Let us see.

SCENE VI

HADRIAN. What is wrong, Antiochus? Why have you returned, and more dejected than usual?

ANTIOCHUS. When you know the reason, you will be dejected too.

HADRIAN. Tell me. Don't conceal it.

ANTIOCHUS. That little vixen whom you handed over to me to be tortured was first flogged in my presence, but the blows did not graze her delicate skin. Then I had her cast into the fiery furnace that glowed scarlet with the tremendous heat.

HADRIAN. What are you concealing? Describe how it ended.

ANTIOCHUS. The flames belched forth, and five thousand men were burned to death.

HADRIAN. And what happened to her?

ANTIOCHUS. Charity?

HADRIAN. Yes.

ANTIOCHUS. She ran to and fro, playing in the fierce whirlwind of smoke and flame, and unharmed she sang praises to her God. Those who watched closely said that three men dressed in white walked by her side.

HADRIAN. I am ashamed to see her again, as I have not been able to harm her.

ANTIOCHUS. She must perish by the sword.

HADRIAN. So be it, and without delay.

SCENE VII

ANTIOCHUS. Uncover that obstinate neck, Charity, and prepare for the sword of the executioner.

CHARITY. I do not resist your orders. I am glad to obey.

SAPIENTIA. Now, little one, now we must give thanks; now we must exult in Christ. Now I am free from biting anxiety, for I am certain of your triumph.

CHARITY. Kiss me, mother, and commend my soul to Christ.

SAPIENTIA. May he who quickened you in my womb receive the spirit he breathed into you from heaven!

CHARITY. Glory be to you, O Christ, who have called me to yourself, and honored me with the martyr's palm!

SAPIENTIA. Farewell, beloved child. And when you are united to Christ in heaven give a thought to the mother who gave you life; you shall become her patron saint.

SCENE VIII

SAPIENTIA. Noble matrons, gather round me, and help me bury the bodies of my children.

MATRONS. We will strew herbs and spices on their little bodies, and solemnize their funeral rites with ceremony.

SAPIENTIA. Great is the generosity and wonderful the kindness you show to me and my dead.

MATRONS. We will do anything in our devotion to relieve your pain.

SAPIENTIA. I know it.

MATRONS. What place have you chosen for their burial?

SAPIENTIA. It is three miles outside the city. I hope that is not too far for you?

MATRONS. By no means. We are happy to be in the funeral procession.

SCENE IX

SAPIENTIA. This is the place.

MATRONS. It is well chosen. The very spot to keep these relics!

SAPIENTIA. Earth, I commit the precious little flowers of my womb to your keeping! Cherish them in your earthly bosom until they spring forth again at the resurrection more glorious and fair! O Christ, fill their souls with light, and give rest and peace to their bones!

MATRONS. Amen.

SAPIENTIA. I thank you all from my heart for the comfort you have brought me since my loss.

MATRONS. Would you like us to remain here with you?

SAPIENTIA. No.

MATRONS. Why not?

SAPIENTIA. Trouble yourselves no more on my behalf. You have done enough in watching with me three nights. Depart in peace. Return home safely.

MATRONS. Will you not come with us?

SAPIENTIA. I cannot.

MATRONS. What, then, is your plan?

SAPIENTIA. I shall stay here in the hope that my petition will be granted, and that what I most desire will come to pass.

MATRONS. What is that petition? What do you desire?

SAPIENTIA. This only—that when my prayer is ended I may die in Christ.

MATRONS. Will you not let us stay to the end, then, and give you burial?

SAPIENTIA. As you please. Adonai Emmanuel, begotten by the divine creator of all things before time began, and born in time of a virgin mother—you who in your

dual nature remain most wonderfully one Christ, the unity of person not being divided by the diversity of natures, nor yet the diversity of natures confounded in the unity of person—to you let the serene angelic choir, singing in sweet harmony with the spheres, raise an exultant song! Let all knowledge praise you and every substance made from the four elements, because you who alone with the holy spirit and the father are form without matter, created by the will of the father and the cooperation of the spirit. You deigned to become man, passible like men, yet impassible like God. You who did not shrink from tasting death and destroyed it by your resurrection that none who believe in you should perish, but know eternal life, on you I call! I know that you, perfect God yet true man, promised that those who for your sake renounced their earthly possessions and carnal love would be rewarded a hundredfold and receive the gift of eternal life. Inspired by that hope, I have done what I could; of my own free will, and for your sake, I have sacrificed the children I bore. Therefore, in your goodness do not delay the fulfillment of your promise, but free me swiftly from the bonds of this flesh that I may see my children and rejoice with them. Grant me the joy of hearing them sing the new song as they follow you, lamb of the virgin! Let me be gladdened by their glory, and although I may not like them chant the mystical song of virginity, let me praise you, who are not yourself the father, yet are of the same substance as the father, with whom and with the holy spirit, one lord of the whole world, one king of all things upon the earth and

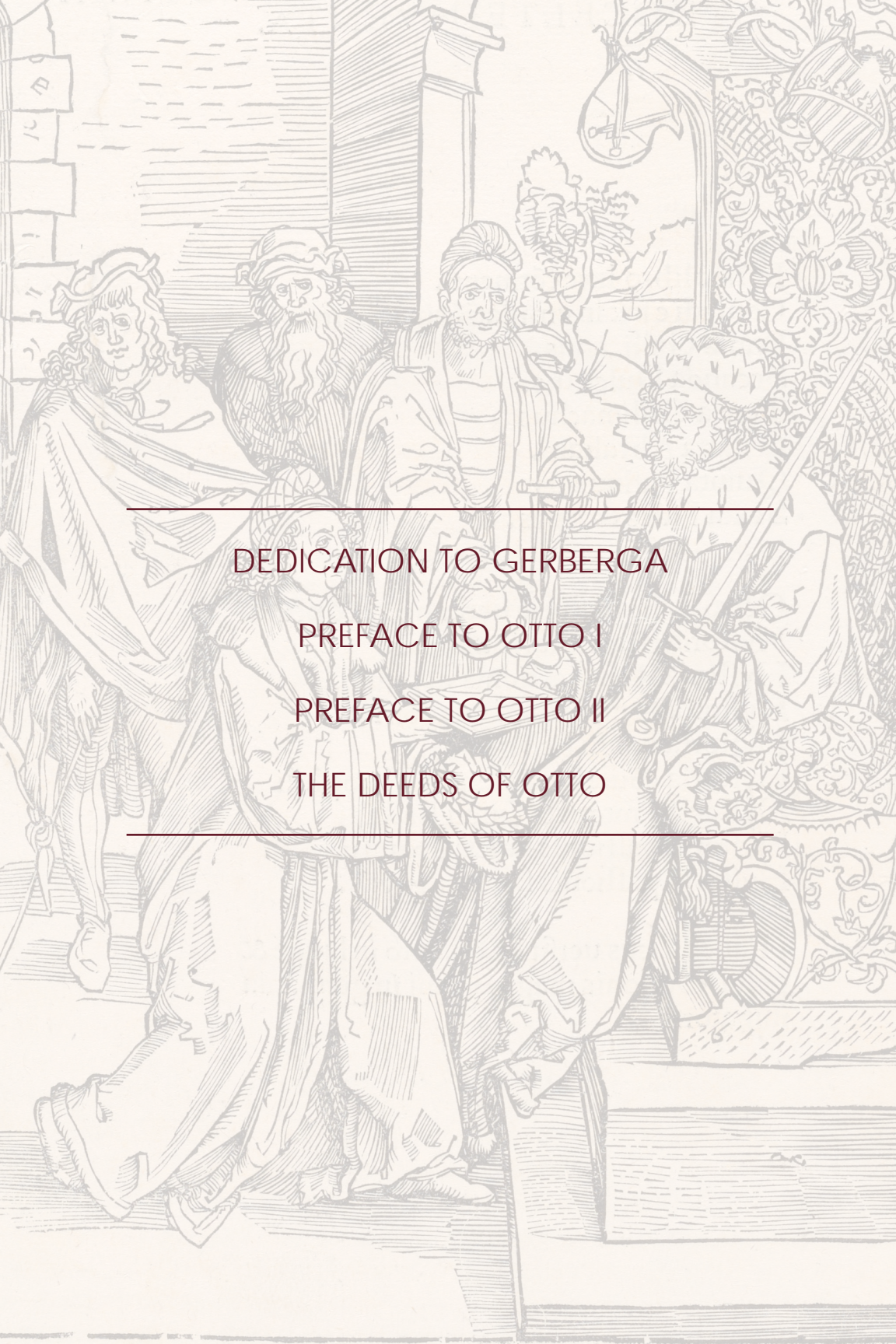
**in the heights above and the deeps below, you reign
and rule forever and ever!**

MATRONS. Lord, receive her! Amen.

THE DEEDS OF OTTO

Translated by Mary Bernadine Bergman
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DEDICATION TO GERBERGA

PREFACE TO OTTO I

PREFACE TO OTTO II

THE DEEDS OF OTTO

DEDICATION TO GERBERGA

To Gerberga, renowned abbess, esteemed no less for her integrity than for the high distinction of a royal and noble lineage, I, Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, the lowest of the lowly of those serving under your ladyship's rule, wish to offer all that a servant owes to her mistress.

O my mistress, who enlightens by the radiant diversity of your spiritual wisdom, may it not irk your kindness to examine carefully what you know has been written at your bidding!

O my lady, bright with the varied jewels of spiritual wisdom, your maternal kindness will not let you hesitate to read what, as you know, was written at your command! It was you who gave me the task of chronicling in verse the deeds of the emperor, and you know that it was impossible to collect them together from hearsay. You can imagine the difficulties that my ignorance put in my way while I was toiling over this work. There were things for which I could find no written record, nor could I elicit information by word of mouth that seemed sufficiently reliable. I was like a person in a strange land wandering without a guide through a forest where the path is concealed by dense snow. Without a guide, he tries in vain to follow the directions of those who have shown the way. He wanders from the path, now by chance strikes it again, until at last, penetrating the

thickness of the wood, he reaches a place where he may take a long-desired rest, and sitting down there, he does not proceed further until someone overtakes him, or he discovers the footprints of one who has gone before. Even so have I, obeying the command to undertake a complete chronicle of great deeds, gone on my way, stumbling, hesitating, and vacillating, so great was the difficulty of finding a path in the forest of these royal achievements.

And now, worn out by the journey, I am holding my peace and resting in a suitable place. I do not propose to continue the account of the emperor's greatness without better guidance. If I could be inspired by the eloquent words of learned folk (either already set down or to be set down in the future), I might perhaps find a means of glossing over my uncouth workmanship.

At present I am defenseless at every point, because I am not supported by any authority. I also fear I shall be accused of temerity in presuming to describe in my humble uncultured way matters that ought to be set forth with all the ceremony of great learning. Yet if my work is examined by those who know how to weigh things fairly, I shall be more easily pardoned on account of my sex and my inferior knowledge, especially since I undertook to order the thread of this little work not on my own presumption, but at your command.

Why should I fear the judgment of others, since if there are mistakes I should fall only under your censure, and why should I not escape reproof seeing that I was anxious to keep silence? If, because of its feebleness, I should wish the work to be shown to no one, should I not deserve the blame of all? In any case I leave the decision to you and your friend, Archbishop Wilhelm, to whom you have thought fit to show these unpolished lines.

PREFACE TO OTTO I

Otto, mighty sovereign of the empire of the Caesars, who, renowned because you wield a scepter of Augustus-like honor by the indulgent kindness of the eternal king, surpass in integrity all foregoing emperors, many nations dwelling far and wide revere you; the Roman Empire, too, bestows upon you manifold honors! Do not reject the small offering of this poem, but may this proffered tribute of praises that the least of the Gandersheim flock accords you be pleasing. The kind solicitude of your forbears assembled it (i.e., Gandersheim flock), and it owes you constant zeal to render service. Many, perchance, have written and many hereafter will produce masterful memorials of your achievements. But none of these has provided a model for me, nor have monographs hitherto written taught me what I should set down. But devotedness of heart alone is the reason for this undertaking, and this urged me to dare the formidable task. Yet I am fearful that by verse I may be heedlessly tracing spurious deeds of yours and not disclosing authentic ones. But no baneful presumption of mind has urged me in this matter, nor have I voluntarily played falsely by a disdain of the truth as a whole. But, that the account, as I have written it, is true, those who furnished the material for me themselves declared. Let not, therefore, the benignity of august majesty despise that which a lowly suppliant, devoted of heart, has achieved. And although hereafter many books may be written praising you duly,

and may be esteemed fittingly acceptable to you, yet let this little book, which has clearly been written from no earlier copy, be not the last in order of regard. And although you embolden the honor of Augustus Octavian's emperorship, disdain not to be called by the name of king, until, the fame of a royal life having been written, the imperial splendor of the second realm may be declared in an orderly fashion and in becoming language.

PREFACE TO OTTO II

Otto, resplendent ornament of the Roman Empire, bright scion of the august and revered Otto, for whom the mighty king enthroned on high and his eternal son destined an empire strong in the zenith of its power, spurn not the poor composition of a poor nun! You, yourself, if you deign to remember, have lately ordered it to be presented to your keen gaze; and when you perceive that it is marred with many blemishes, be then the more inclined to favor a speedy pardon, the more I am but obeying your behest in presenting it to you. If I were not urged by your dread command, under no circumstance, should I have such self-assurance as to presume to offer to your scrutiny this little book with its obvious lack of polish.

You, who by the decree of God are associated with your father in his court and are ready to obey his paternal admonitions, embolden harmoniously a like distinction of imperial rule, bearing the kingly scepter in your youthful hands. But since I know that you are loftily considered like to Solomon, son of the celebrated King David, who, in his father's presence and at his revered command, received the paternal kingdom amid desired peace, I hope that in accord with his example you will be content. Though Solomon, as king resided in a proud citadel, wisely establishing the decrees of sacred laws and penetrating with profound mind into the secrets of nature, yet occasionally he was disposed

to relax his mind with trivial investigations. But he did not loathe duly to settle, with the determination of a just and speedy decision, the quarrel of the two women, ordering the child to be restored to its true mother.

Therefore, as a suppliant indeed, I request that you, our Solomon, though the burdens of the empire occupy you, deign to read now, for amusement, the recent account by your own poor nun: that thus all crudeness of utterance, in this treatise on your imperial name, may presently disappear from the badly arranged words, and that enhanced by your revered title, they may be guarded from the breath of well-merited contempt.

THE DEEDS OF OTTO

After the king of kings, who alone rules forever, by his own power changing the fortunes of all kings, decreed that the distinguished realm of the Franks be transferred to the famous race of the Saxons, a race that because of its steadfast rigor of spirit fittingly derived its name from rock, the son of the great and revered Duke Otto, namely Henry, was the first to receive the kingly authority to be administered with moderation on behalf of a righteous nation. Just as he was preeminent for distinguished excellence, just as he ruled his subject nations with great kindness, and just as he excelled all the rulers of his time through his extraordinary achievements, so does he in like degree exceed the power of expression of this homely little poem with its many defects. For he was inexorable to the wicked and gentle to the just, guarding legal rights with the utmost zeal and measuring out to all deserving followers just compensation. To him as long as he lived, Christ, the peace-loving king, granted from on high civil peace; and he very happily retained the supreme power of the domain, if I mistake not, for a decade and twice six years of blessed memory. With him ruled his illustrious wife, Matilda, who now in the realm none will be found to surpass in exalted holiness.

Their union the triune God blessed with three sons, thereby bestowing even then a grace upon the kindly race, so that after the death of the revered King Henry no evil

men might wickedly seize control of the kingdom, but that these sons, descended from royal lineage, might rule their paternal realm in harmonious peace. Yet unlike distinctions were reserved for these princes, so that one was to rule and two were to be subject to him.

Otto, the first born among them, shone as the morning star, beaming with a radiance of goodness famed far and wide. Him the eternal king with his wonted kindness destined as the ruler of a duly faithful people. He, as superior in age and likewise greater in achievements, was suited to wielding the scepter when his father died. There is no need to express in words the full tale of his integrity, or the praiseworthy virtue of so distinguished a youth, for whom even now Christ is so increasing his renown that he with weighty right is taking possession of haughty Rome—Rome, which has ever been the great capital of the established world. And with Christ favoring him he is subduing the barbarian races that heretofore often disrupted holy church.

Henry, born after him, was illustrious because he had received the name of his father, the king. In an equal degree the provident wisdom of Christ the lord deigned to preserve him as a brave leader for his people, so that as a courageous fighter, well skilled in the arts of war, he might bravely protect the holy church, stoutly warding off the weapons of the foe like a strong rampart.

After this was born Bruno, a priest of the mother church. The sublime grace of the eternal high priest deemed him worthy to exercise care over a Catholic people. Thus, at the bidding of God, the kindly solicitude of his father has dedicated him to the service of Christ, so that, withdrawn from the cherished bosom of his dear mother and withdrawn from the splendors of the realm, he might be able to stand as a soldier in the star-swept court of the ever-reigning lord. But Christ, the true wisdom of the eternal father, cherishing indulgently this his recruit, bestowed upon him such remarkable gifts of wisdom that there is none more utterly wise than he among the mortal sages of this perishable world.

When, therefore, the princes had been reared according to royal custom, Henry, their illustrious father and king, decided in mind and carried out in deed that, while he was himself still breathing the warm breath of life, he would at once betroth to Otto, his first born son and the future king, a suitable maiden, that she could worthily be joined in wedlock to his own son. He desired to seek her not in his own dominion, but he sent duly experienced representatives to the charming land of the nation of the Angles, instructing them forthwith to go, with accompanying gifts, in quest of Edith, daughter of King Edward. Since her father was dead, she, even at this time, resided in court while her brother, whom an ignoble consort had borne to the king, managed the administration of the paternal domain. The mother of

this excellent maiden was most illustrious, but the other woman was of greatly inferior descent.

For this daughter of a king about whom I compose verses was, I say, by reputation well known to all. Influential because of her nobility and equally so because of her esteemed excellences, Edith was a descendant of an eminent family of great monarchs. Her calm countenance was one of remarkable sincerity, and she was resplendent with a wondrous charm of queenly bearing. Adorned with a radiance of such exceeding goodness, she merited such a reward of praise in her native land that public opinion by a unanimous decision rated her the best of all women who existed at that time. Little wonder that she was conspicuous for eminent virtues, since she was descended from a family of sainted ancestors. For they say, furthermore, that she was descended from the blessed stock of King Oswald, with whose praise the universe resounds because he submitted himself to death for the name of Christ.

But the representatives of our king, who had been commissioned with the embassy, came to the brother of the princess, who then was residing in the castle, and disclosed to him whatever official messages they bore. What he learned, officially pleased him exceedingly, and presently in a kind voice he related it to his sister, urging her to obey the exemplary king who wished her to be allied to his own son. And when, by friendly admonition

he had poured into her heart a sweet love for Otto, the royal prince, then the brother with exceeding diligence, gathered countless treasures. But when he deemed that enough had been amassed, he dispatched the princess carefully with suitable attendants across the sea, heap-
ing high honors upon her and bestowing upon her riches exceedingly precious. With her he sent her sister, Adiva, who was younger in years and likewise inferior in merit. Thus he bestowed greater honor upon Otto, the loving son of the illustrious king, by sending two girls of eminent birth, that he might lawfully espouse whichever one of them he wished. But at first sight the revered Edith, truly pleasing at once to all because of the endowments of her great goodness, was deemed duly worthy to be the consort of a royal prince. And this illustrious lady bore him a dear son, Liudolf by name, a son worthy of such parents. The people, praying that life for him be duly prolonged, rightly cherished him with a tender love.

Thus these matters occurred, and finally the end approached for King Henry. At his death, the whole nation subject to his just rule mourned. And after his demise, Otto, the venerable firstborn son of the king, fell heir to the kingdom, and with the responsive prayer of a unanimous people, he, with the approval of Christ, was anointed into the mighty kingship. Upon him the king of heaven bestowed gifts of such sweet grace that he, worthily distinguished in all respects, eclipsed by the renown

of his achievements all the kings whom the ocean with its reciprocal waves enfolds. Moreover, the holy hand of God protects him from great and mighty snares devised by secret treachery, and so often honors him with splendid triumphs that one may believe that even now it is the faithful King David, duly resplendent with ancient triumphs, who is seated on the throne. Not only did he maintain his power by the bonds of kindness over the tribes who had previously surrendered to the sway of his father, but on his own part he reduced many more to his authority, subduing the pagan nations into the service of Christ, so that a firm peace might be established for the holy church.

As often as he set out for war, there was not a people, though haughty because of its strength, that could harm or conquer him, supported as he was by the consolation of the heavenly king. Nor did his army give way to any assault unless, perchance, in scorning his kingly commands it fought where the king had forbidden it to fight.

But Duke Henry, the esteemed brother of the king, respected by the people because of his goodness, was then second to the king in the peaceful realm. He in lawful wedlock duly allied himself to Judith, the noble daughter of the distinguished Duke Arnulf. Her countenance, resplendent in beauty, was the more charming by reason of the luster of every virtue.

After these events, while the din of war remained stilled, there was peace far and wide for our people, which was not in perfect harmony with the warlike tendencies of the other tribes.

O what a serene age the pleasant and truly fortunate nation of our people would have enjoyed, ruled as it was by the sway of a truly wise king, had not the wicked cunning of the ancient foe disturbed our placid existence by his secret wiles!

Finally, when we had happily escaped the blows of the barbarians, a powerful dissension suddenly arose among our people, and civil war harassed the faithful folk more than the oft-repeated preparations of diverse wars without. The cause of this doleful evil was no trifling one, and the struggle of certain individuals was not kept within bounds. Of these, some were kindly disposed towards Henry and promised to the brother of the king feudal loyalty, while others promised like zeal to Duke Eberhard. But when each sought the solace of his own master, then the strife on the part of the leaders themselves became the more serious. At last with the conflict actually progressing, the aforesaid Eberhard presently sent without warning, under cover of dark night, soldiers levied with evil intent, to seize the fortress of Badulicus, and he led Henry, the noble brother of the king, captive, binding with cruel chains his white hands better suited for adornment. And plundering his boundless

wealth, he brought with him to his own lands the noble offspring of his feudal lord, so that he was using the son of his own lord as a hostage.

When the king learned this, he grieved in his inmost soul and wept with deep sadness over the heinous deed. Moreover, he brooked not the painful loss of his dear brother but presently followed in his own action the well-known deed of Abraham, which that patriarch in compassion performed in ransoming Lot from the enemy. With the greatest pains he chose his soldiers and a huge crowd from the whole people, and then proceeded in solemn procession to bring consolation to his princely brother in the great weariness of his grieving heart. Without delay he ransomed the brother whom he came to comfort, and he condemned the instigators of the dastardly crime, hanging some of the criminals on a scaffold, and commanding others to depart from their dear native land.

When by the order of the wise king these matters had been properly taken care of, a wicked plot of the ancient enemy again constructed a crime worse by far than the first one and truly for all ages a thing to be shuddered at in dread. For then the aforesaid leader Eberhard returned from exile to his cherished fatherland, the kindly favor of the king making his return possible. To Gilbert, his companion, to whom he was joined by firm ties, he had given advice (which to you, Christ, was displeasing), urging him to seize the Christian

king, the blessed of the lord. And he said that by making injustice prevail over justice they would soon deprive him of his own kingdom. Further, they urged this plan, product of a depraved heart, upon Henry, brother of the faithful king, wickedly coaxing him with flattering speeches not to be minded to repay the wrong he had previously suffered, but rather, by obeying their infamous desires, to depose his brother and receive the kingdom to rule.

Conquered at last by viciously delusive persuasions, Henry, alas, promised that he would be ready for their demands and this he confirmed by strong oaths. But I hope that he did not feel thus in his heart, but that he had been constrained by force to agree with them. For they, captivated with the wicked solace of an idle hope, expected to subdue to their frail power the king ruling our various peoples. But the king of heaven, the most just judge of the world, who alone knows the thoughts of all and is able to destroy the delusions of the human heart, brought to naught the fabrication of his heinous crime by the strength of his mighty hand, which created the whole universe. He duly turned the intrigues prepared against the anointed of the lord against the promoters of this heinousness, and they who wove malignant snares for their master were themselves the first to be entrapped by their own devices.

I do not boast that I am of such great wisdom—more than is seemly—as to hope to be able to express fully in

words with what great strength of heavenly grace Christ, again and again, arranged it that this very king, deservedly blessed, passed unharmed through manifold snares and plots prepared by a hostile faction. But I do not think it fitting for a frail woman abiding in the enclosure of a peaceful monastery to speak of war, with which she ought not even to be acquainted. These matters should be reserved for the toil of qualified men, to whom wisdom of mind has granted the ability to express all things wisely in eloquent terms. I relate this only which I can rightly recount: he, who is of all things the beginning and likewise the end, who alone has ever performed wondrous deeds powerfully, and who many times snatched faithful King David from the intrigues of Saul and gave the power of the throne to David; he in an equal degree, amid a thousand perils, over and over again protected Otto, the imitator of David in goodness. And finally, when alone and supported by very few soldiers, Otto had been surrounded on all sides by hostile forces, and in addition was enduring with a sorrowing heart and excessive grief a wicked desertion on the part of his own adherents and dared not entrust himself even to his own few supporters who did not desert him, though the others had fled, he thought many a time that he was soon to die grievously. Then quickly supported by the strength of aid from on high, he had to marvel that he was now overcoming the treachery of the bloodthirsty mob without hazard to his own life. If haply, with the fight progressing unfavorably, he heard that his companions were suffering from mortal

wounds, he wept and presently made use of the words of David, words that the ancient king had spoken when he saw with sadness of heart that the people were to perish from the blows of an angel's sword: "Lo," he said, "it is I who have sinned and I have committed the crime; I therefore am worthy of such vengeance! What have these done, who have suffered so great a loss? Even now commiserate them, O Christ, sparing those whom you have redeemed, lest a hostile force overwhelm the just too much!"

Having compassion, then, by reason of these prayers, the divine power with its wonted benignity spared the servants of the king, and in its mercy granted the desired triumph from the enemy, destroying by a just test the aforesaid companions. For on that very day on which, deceived by a vain trust, they hoped that the king, who rightly held the royal power, would be enfettered with their chains, Duke Udo, unexpectedly bringing with him a large force, hastened forward and with vigorous effort entered into the mighty war. Speedily then was Eberhard smitten by swords and destroyed, and Gilbert, fleeing, drowned in a raging stream. But the king, meanwhile, tarrying on the opposite bank of the Rhine, did not know of so fierce a struggle, nor did he then know that the solace of such powerful assistance had already, through the mercy of God, been suddenly sent to him. Finally, when he realized the intensity of the fight, he rejoiced not at the death of his enemies, but rather mourned at the slaughter of so many men, lamenting unrestrainedly

in the manner of David, who had grieved piously because of the slaying of King Saul. But when the victors came joyfully and saw his countenance moistened with flowing tears, they declared that grief was unsuited for so signal a triumph, but that thanks ought rather to be given to the eternal king, who by his constant kindness had then brought about the fulfillment of what is clearly written in the book of King Solomon, who says that the just shall be freed from distress and the unjust soon be given over to justice. Soothing the mind of the king with these persuasive words, they urged him to lay aside his deep sadness and to rejoice duly with his victorious troops and to display a happy countenance before his subjects after the wars. The king, then, exhibiting a moderate joy on his face but secretly nursing a sad grief in his soul, returned thanks to Christ from his inmost heart because he had not given him over as booty to his enemies, but had, by his divine power, duly protected him; and the distinguished title of the victory he had won he attributed, not to himself, but to the benignity of Christ.

After these events, the nation rested for a brief period, exhausted by the struggle of civil war. But even then the guile of the ancient foe, which always seeks to pervert feeble hearts, did not cease, but after the deed of ill urged the addition of a worse crime. The enemy is said to have entered the breasts of certain men with such frenzy of destructive poison that they desired to inflict death upon the faithful king and to appoint his brother as ruler over the nation; nor did they

fear to desecrate the holy day of Easter with the shedding of the blood of the just king, if only they could. But the paschal lamb, who gave himself in death as a chosen sacrifice to his father for our redemption, permitted not the commission of that hideous crime. But presently he exposed their plan to all men, and thus happily the blood of the innocent king was saved, and those who were found guilty of the accursed crime were condemned to bitter punishment in proportion to the measure of their guilt. Some were sentenced to execution, and others were exiled far from their dear native land.

After these events, Henry, the noble brother of the king, touched in his inmost heart with the grace of Christ, pondered within himself and reflected with great sorrow upon what wrong he had ever committed in the face of justice. And he wept frequently with excessive tears over this fact also, that he had wickedly yielded to the alluring persuasions of those who by their hypocritical speeches had seduced him. But, although he bore this grief deep in his heart, nevertheless for a long period of time he dared not approach the royal presence; but keeping aloof, in the burning zeal of his sorrowing heart he longed for the granting of the sweet gift of pardon. At last, conquered by strong love, he forthwith thrust from his bosom fear of punishment; and, arriving very stealthily under cover of nocturnal darkness, he entered the royal city, in which the holy ruler, solemnly and with fitting ceremonies, had begun to celebrate the birthday of the eternal king. There, laying aside his costly

jewels, he donned a garment of simple and thin texture, and amid the venerable hymns of the holy night he entered the sacred threshold of the church with bare feet, shuddering not at the bitter cold of the raging winter, but with down-cast countenance prostrating himself at the sacred altar and throwing his princely form upon the icy earth. Thus, with the whole strength of his grieving heart he longed to have the sweet gift of a full pardon granted to him. When the king became aware of his desire, he was overcome by a benign kindness; and mindful of the approach of the feast of universal veneration on which the heavenly hosts sang peace to the world in their joy at the birth of their king, from a tender virgin, that he might generously save the world which deserved to perish. Otto, in deference to the greatness of that peace-bringing day, pitied his repentant brother and sympathized with him in his admission of his offenses. And in his kindness he granted him the enjoyment of his favor along with the loving gift of a full pardon.

And after some small interval of time he subordinated all the chiefs of the renowned tribe of the Bavarians to Henry's jurisdiction and duly appointed him their mighty leader. And now that their hearts were united in brotherly concord, there was thereafter no further disharmony between them. The fierce Avars frequently conquered by Henry, subsequently no longer harassed the extensive realm of King Otto in their usual manner with bloody arms, nor did the neighboring tribes, in their dread of the brave duke,

dare molest the kingdom. Because he acted with the vigor of an understanding mind, preventing these continuous destructive wars of men, he had barred all the avenues of approach to us. Besides and foremost, safe with the strength of Christ, he courageously sought out with a troop of conquered people the native land of this same wicked race, fighting against the nation that was rebellious against all other men. For, taking possession of the various spoils that the common enemy had gathered as it laid waste very many sections of the world, he carried off also the wives and dear children of the leaders; and when he had thus vanquished his foes, he returned in joy.

When these affairs had thus occurred, the mournful day for intensifying our deep sorrow speedily came for us, the day on which Queen Judith, resplendent with eminent virtues, left the confines of this present life, causing by her death sadness and excessive grief of heart to the nation serving under her jurisdiction. With intense grief, and fittingly so, the whole race mourned her, a race that she had cherished with a love of motherly kindness rather than had dominated with the severe ordinances of a tyrannical queen. No one who knew the preeminent merit of her chaste life and the kindly disposition that she perseveringly manifested will doubt that Christ will bestow upon her eternal rest without end and that the joy prepared for the just will speedily be granted her. But, nevertheless, in accordance with the way of the human heart, there can be little wonder

that the nation spent itself in bitter bewailing, when such a solace had suddenly been withdrawn from them and the queenly countenance of their dearly beloved mistress, the resplendent glory of a conquered kingdom, was entrusted to the earth to be preserved in earth's spacious bosom until she should rise again and reinhabit the body, rendered incorruptible, which the tomb new imprisons.

She, therefore, left her son Liudolf, mentioned a few lines above, bitterly bereft, as well as her sweet and only child of the female sex, Liutgarda by name, resplendent with the utmost excellence and like to her revered mother in appearance and character. Toward these children of lovable lineage the entire people was presently drawn with great affection of heart because of the preeminent merits of both parents. But more so, and even justly so, the nation cherished the princely boy, Prince Liudolf, with a sweet love. And he, charming as he was, gentle, indulgent, humble, and exceedingly faithful, practicing well all the traits natural to himself, predominated over all hearts by his affability. Hence, too, with the beneficent Christ bestowing his grace, he worthily merited and received such favor, that whosoever, among all the tribes subjected under the sway of his father, received, with ear ever ready, even the slightest report of his fame, was wholly engulfed with a sweet love for his absent lord, cherishing him with a zealous heart. Him did his renowned father, king and esteemed sire, grieving intensely over the death of his beloved mother, exalt with

paternal affection and benign kindness and with worthy distinction making him rightful master of a subject race.

With equal favor he cherished, protected, and loved Liutgarda, likewise respected for her noble lineage, his only daughter. Her he allied in marriage to Duke Conrad, illustrious, active, and exceedingly brave, who was clearly worthy of the tribute of this distinction. And in order to cause the friendly rulers of the noble race of Franks and all the chieftains of the Swabians to be subjected to his son Liudolf in the perfect love of devoted hearts, he ordered Ida, the lovely daughter of Herman, a kindly ruler and a renowned chief in those regions, to be united to his son in lawful wedlock. This princess was worthy to be allied to the son of a king because of her own excellence, and she was revered with queenly honor, in accord with the accustomed piety of the king's command. This king, duly affectionate toward his son, did not wish her to dwell in places far removed, but wished her to cross the extensive realm as a queen, that thus his beloved son, sharing along with his father and his spouse the privileges of the royal court, might always realize the kindly gifts of his father's favor.

Meanwhile, the Italian king Lothar, stricken with a fatal illness, departed from this world, rightly leaving the kingdom of Italy to be ruled by the will of the eminent queen whom he had made his wife. She was the daughter of the mighty Rudolf and had descended from a long

line of renowned monarchs. The distinctive nobility of her parents required an illustrious name for her, and she was appropriately called Adelaide. She was a woman illustrious in the comeliness of her queenly beauty and solicitous in affairs worthy of her character, and by her actions she corresponded to her regal lineage. She possessed such preeminent natural abilities that she could have ruled worthily the state bequeathed to her, if the nation itself had not presently given evidence of vile treachery. Now when Lothar, whom I mentioned before, died, a certain faction of the populace with perverted and hostile spirit offered resistance to their own sovereigns and restored the kingdom to the sway of Berengar, on the grounds that at the death of his father it had once been violently snatched from him by King Hugo. Now Berengar, exalted by the attainment of this long desired distinction, disclosed all the hatred he had nursed in his baleful breast, while he had long deplored the loss of his father's kingdom. And enraged with an inordinately bitter animosity of heart, he extended his pent up fury against the innocent, perpetrating unjust violence against Queen Adelaide, who as queen had done him no harm. Not only did he seize the throne of the illustrious court, but at the same time he unbarred the doors of the treasury and carried off with grasping hand everything he found: gold, jewels of various kinds, treasures, and the lordly crown to grace a king's brow. No single detail of adornment did he overlook. He feared not to deprive her of her own attendants and those suited for

waiting upon royal personages, and—dreadful to mention—her queenly sovereignty. Lastly, too, he maliciously denied her all freedom of going or likewise of abiding where she wished, commanding her to go forth with but one lady-in-waiting and to be guarded by a servant subject to himself. This man, prisoner of a king whose injunctions were far from just, dreaded not to guard his own mistress, guileless though she was, and to keep her enclosed by the barriers of a prison-like cell with guards spread about the place in a manner customary for patrolling criminals. But he who freed Peter from the chains of Herod released her, when he willed, with tender kindness.

While she was undoubtedly distressed in soul by diverse apprehensions and had no hope of certain consolation, Bishop Adelhard, deploring the obnoxious deed and not brooking the painful loss of his dear queen, presently sent a secret message and urged her with zealous exhortations to attempt flight and to direct her course to the city, well built with strong ramparts, that he had established as his episcopal see. He directed that quarters offering the safest possible protection be provided for her and that a worthy servant be given her. When these admonitions came to her royal knowledge, the illustrious queen, now the more joyful by reason of these kindly provisional bequests, longed to be liberated from the chains that bound her fast. Yet she knew not what to do, since no door stood open to allow her to escape during the nightly hours while the sentries were overwhelmed with

deep sleep. In this prison dungeon she had no one subject to her as a servant, to be solicitous in discharging her demands, except only the maid mentioned above and one priest of exemplary life. Now when, with constant weeping, she had told them with bitterness of soul all that she meditated in her grief-stricken heart, it seemed to them, under the guidance of common prayer, that their fortunes would be changed for the better, if with stealthy zeal they dug and so made a secret tunnel under the earth through which they might be able to escape from the heavy chains of bondage.

Thus it is evident that these happenings were accomplished the more speedily by the present support of the benevolent Christ. For when a tunnel had been made ready according to agreement, there came a night appropriate for immediate freedom, a night during which, while sleep stole over the limbs of mankind, the virtuous queen fled with only two companions and eluded all the snares of the guards. And under cover of night she traversed as much ground as she could upon her tender feet. But presently, as soon as dusky night scattering its shadows had withdrawn, and the heavens began to redden with the rays of the sun, she concealed herself in secluded caverns. And now she would wander in the wilderness and now lurk in furrows amid the ripened ears of cultivating Ceres, until night returning enrobed in its wonted darkness enshrouded the earth again with its sable cloud. Then a second time she took pains diligently to pursue the path begun.

At last the guards, not finding her, apprehensively related the fact to a count upon whom the duty of safeguarding her majesty had been imposed, and he, grievously frightened in heart, proceeded with many comrades to seek her out. And when he grew weary and was as yet unable to learn where the distinguished queen had directed her course, he with great fear of heart, reported the matter to King Berengar. The king, too, immediately flew into a passion of anger and began instantly sending his subordinates in every direction, instructing them not to pass by a single spot, but to examine minutely every hiding place on the chance that the queen might lie concealed in some such ambuscade. And he himself followed with the full force of a brave legion, as if he were a man out to conquer a fierce enemy. In his speedy course he passed through the very grainfield in whose winding furrows the lady whom he was tracking down was hidden under the protecting curtain of blades of growing grain. But although he ran hither and thither through the very section, in which she, a victim of numbing fear, was screened from sight, and though with all his strength he tried to part the surrounding stalks with his extended spear, yet he did not find her whom the grace of Christ had shielded. But when he had retraced his steps in bafflement and weariness, the holy Bishop Adelhard presently arrived and with joy in his heart conducted his queen within the goodly strong walls of the city we have already described. Here with all respect he duly attended her, until from compassionate Christ she received the recompense of

a kingdom greater than the one she had previously relinquished in distress.

Finally, some of our countrymen, perceiving then that the queen had been bereaved of her dear lord, and remembering that they had been the recipients of her beneficent kindness when they had begun their advance through Italy toward Rome, frequently repeated to Otto, then a great king, but now also Augustus of the Roman Empire, her manifold benevolences. They declared that none other was so worthy as she to be conducted to his royal marriage couch, after the demise of the queenly Edith, who was mourned by all. The monarch was overjoyed with the sweetness of so wondrous a reputation, and he pondered for a long time in his inmost heart as to how he might unite this queen to himself in marriage, surrounded as she was by the craft of a wicked king. At length the monarch remembered that at one time when he had been expelled from his own native lands, he quickly had been restored by the sympathizing support of this same queen. Thus, he was now acting ungratefully in return for her beneficences. Therefore he presently saw a fitting means of joining the Italian kingdom to his own. Now when Liudolf, the true love of his father and the hope of his people, had learned of this plan from conversation with his father, he rose to action, not under the impulse of his own ambition, but with a view to benefit his father. Taking with him in secret a very few companions, he made for Italy and entered it with a small band, urging the inhabitants to submit to the

sway of his father. Presently he returned, bringing with him a famous triumph without bloodshed.

King Otto became aware of this achievement from popular rumor, and with a gladsome heart he commended his loving son, who for his sake had undertaken such a great task in assailing a savage nation. And in order that such a labor of love might not be in vain, he himself moved hastily to that same nation with a goodly retinue of his own folk escorting him. Adorned with all the stateliness of royal splendor, he entered the regions girded by the lofty Alps.

Berengar was astounded upon hearing of these events. But he neither set in motion the machinery of war, nor went to meet the king, instead taking himself straightway for safety to an appropriate citadel situated in a secure and strongly fortified place. But our renowned king, disdainful in his valor, very courageously crossed the unfamiliar regions and seized Pavia, the capital city of the Italian kingdom. When it was certain that the town was taken, all the chieftains, as if in military formation, trooped in, seeking the new king and vying with one another to submit to his great power. For he received them in his accustomed way with a kindly disposition, promising them the remuneration of his benevolence, if thereafter they would serve him with loyal hearts.

Such was the turn of events. With frequent ponderings of heart Otto remembered the distinguished Queen Adelaide and longed to behold the queenly countenance of her whose excellence of character he already knew. Therefore he dispatched somewhat confidentially messages that included both tidings of peace and words of fond love, and under the pledge of assured protection urged her (making use at the same time of friendly persuasions) to set out speedily for Pavia, a populous city that she had forsaken previously in bitter dejection. This he did so that, under the benign kindness of the eternal king, she might experience the most distinguished honor in the very city where she had once endured the deepest sorrow. The queen yielded to these kindly injunctions and proceeded to the place she was bidden with a very great multitude of her subjects likewise accompanying her. When the king, by whose order she was coming, realized this, he instructed his loving brother, Henry, to cross the banks of the Po River to meet her, in order that a due attendance from a great leader might pay homage to her who was to be exalted to the splendor of alliance with Otto. And Henry, obeying zealously the injunctions of his elder brother, set out with a king's guard and joyfully directed his course to seek the encampment of the revered queen and her many companions. Until he could convey her to the king's presence, he duly attended her with the utmost deference.

Thereafter she immediately—and rightly so—found favor with Otto and was chosen to be the worthy helpmate of his empire.

Then the king, perceiving that he would be detained by reason of the strange complexity of affairs and for a time could not return to his native land, decided to send his dear son Liudolf in advance so that the brave Saxons might rally to his side, and that under so stalwart a protector the kingdom might stand firm. And Liudolf, who obeyed the orders of his father, returned to his native land and assumed the administration of government. He fulfilled prudently and sagaciously all the duties of his office that needed to be accomplished at that time. Meanwhile, in Italy, Duke Henry, the esteemed brother of the king, with the utmost endeavor of his heart performed the tasks required of his obedience to the king, of fulfilling in his kindly zeal not only his office as a well loved brother, but also the duty of a vassal to his lord. Hence, he greatly pleased Otto and, bound in bonds of brotherly love to the queen, was also duly cherished by her. Then the king traversed the whole of the Italian kingdom subjecting the chiefs of the realm to his own sway. When he had completed these deeds and subdued the lands according to his own desire, in order that Berengar might not again seize the kingdom for himself, he bade the wise Duke Conrad to dwell in Pavia with a number of picked troops from his army and he bade his distinguished daughter to be united in marriage with Conrad. He himself, with his illustrious wife,

forthwith returned home, moving with haste to the heart of his native land. With deep joy did the populace welcome his arrival, extending its ardent gratitude to God enthroned on high, who with his wonted beneficence had compassion on his people and had brought back in peace the king whom in his goodness he had chosen for them.

Now after these events had been joyfully celebrated, Duke Conrad arrived bringing terms of peace and conveying with him Berengar mentioned above, who had been so captivated by the depth of his profound wisdom that he had come voluntarily to submit himself to King Otto. Otto, then, who always acted wisely, received this monarch with due respect, restoring to him the dominion of the realm of which he had been bereft—but only on this very exacting condition, that in the future he would on no grounds offer resistance to Otto's authority, which was feared far and wide by many, but would as a vassal king be zealous to execute his commands. This, too, he prescribed most impressively, that thereafter Berengar should rule more mercifully his own subjects, over whom he had previously tyrannized with harsh despotism. Berengar, feigning that he would be quick to comply with these terms, speedily departed and directed his course in joy to his native land.

But when, corrupted by the adverse persuasions of certain of his retainers, he had regained possession of the lofty citadel of his own domain, Berengar presently imposed

a heavier yoke on his unfortunate nation, in return for the treatment they had given him. He maintained that he had gained his authority at a great price, and that not he should be blamed if he had infringed upon the law of his ancestors, but rather that the merit of the blame should redound to Otto himself, who had corrupted with bribes all the chieftains of the people. As soon as these matters came to the ears of the king, he was aroused to a righteous anger against Berengar, and, in his grief of heart over the affliction of his distressed subjects, he yearned to ameliorate the state of the kingdom.

Supported as he was by the strength of Christ, he could have done so quickly had not an event of adverse circumstances hindered him. For in the universal splendor of his realm, while he was rejoicing at being blessed with widespread favorable fortune, the recurrent plague of the ancient foe reappeared, fabricating a crafty plan to be regretted throughout the ages and striving even at that time to disrupt the peaceful domain. In order that he might achieve his end the sooner, the envious enemy first made restless all the rulers of the realm, hoping that presently the destruction of the populace would follow. Then, as Liudolf, the son of the renowned king, perceived through signs of friendship the intense love amid perfect faithfulness the loyal queen entertained for Henry, brother of the king, and the fact that she governed herself by all the laws that faithfulness would expect of her, he was pierced secretly by the shafts of inward

grief. He neither raged with anger, nor languished in the bitterness of hatred, but he heaved sighs from the depths of his sorrow-laden heart over the loss of his dear mother's love. Deluded by the wicked persuasions of many, as might be expected from his frail nature, he was afraid that thereafter he would not be destined to enjoy the return of the honors due him but would perhaps have to submit to second place. (Christ in his justice would never have allowed this to happen, if the kingdom had remained tranquil under a just peace.) But when he had repeatedly displayed to his father his sadness through a mournful countenance with nothing of its usual serenity, there were some who were beguiled by the machinations of the wily serpent and who... [Many verses of Hrotsvit's work have been lost at this point.]

... but in order that he might increase the royal prestige of his father. When the king became aware of this state of affairs, he rejoiced because of the good fortune of his devoted son, and with all the fond affection of his heart he forthwith dispatched tidings to him, with the following message: "May praise endure forever and ever to the almighty, who has granted you to rejoice amid great blessings; and let thanks be offered to you, most beloved son, who, indeed, I learn has remained absolutely loyal, since you have given clear indications of your loyalty, when by your own efforts to extend our sovereignty, you have confirmed for us the whole glory of your own exertions. Therefore, accepting gratefully what you have done wisely, I in turn requite you

with a worthy exchange, and to you I entrust the rule of this very dominion, which you have established to be brought under our sway. And I admonish you, beloved one, with fatherly counsels, to cause without delay the nation you have conquered by your victorious hand to strike with you a treaty sanctioned by dreadful oath.”

The esteemed Duke Liudolf upon reading this message was quite happy because of such kind injunctions and, in accordance with the command given him, he bound to himself with a strong oath the nation that was to be duly governed in obedience to his father.

When these matters had been well disposed of and an excellent treaty arranged, Liudolf yearned to gain sight of his absent father; and, overcome by tender love for his dear spouse and the two children left far behind, he decided to turn back to the borders of the neglected native land he had left, in order that there, after the excessively heavy burden of a cruel exile, he might enjoy at last the tranquility of his own land. And that he might accomplish this end speedily without any delays, he suffered no baggage to retard his intended journey. His treasures he ordered to be gathered and sent in advance of him, and the entire force which he had brought to Italy with him for the sake of war, to precede him, promising that he himself, if he but lived, would in a brief space of time be at the border of his homeland. He also indicated,

with honeyed words, the castles and abodes in which he wished preparations worthy of his entertainment to be made ready. Our countrymen, roused by this welcome report, rejoiced with deep affection of heart. Dispelling from their souls the whole weight of sorrow and of grief they had endured because of the absence of their honored prince, they all unanimously agreed that the occasion was one for the most hearty rejoicing, if after the course of a few days they were to gain, according to the message of gladsome promise ... [Many verses of Hrotsvit's text have been lost at this point.]

... in like manner bearing the sceptre and wearing a beautiful diadem upon her head and clad in all the magnificence of her royal apparel. But she, who, together with the sovereign king, was soon blessed, received distinction of even greater honor.

Although but a poor muse, I have, up to now, chanted in verse the achievements of the far-famed Otto. Now there remain to be recorded further deeds of this same Augustus, who retains his throne in the zenith of his power. But this I fear to treat because I am held back by my womanly nature, nor ought these matters be rehearsed in homely discourse. How, namely, in the cruel struggle of an unremitting war he gained the fortresses built at the seashore which Berengar and his wife had possessed, and how, under the compulsion of oath, he sent him with his wretched spouse, Willa,

into exile. How, prompted by the sense of righteous zeal, he caused the supreme pontiff, who was perpetrating certain irregular acts and disdainful to heed his frequent admonitions, to be deprived of the dignity of the chair of the apostle, adjudging another worthy of the name of ruler. And how, passing in undisturbed peace with his kingship intact between our country and Italy, retaining the glory of both kingdoms, he raised his son who came after him, namely Otto, a king from infancy, to the highest offices of hallowed nobility, and by his own example caused him to be duly blessed.

These matters, then, cannot be recounted in our verses, since they require for themselves a far more eloquent account. Hence I, hindered by the weightiness of these great themes, proceed no further, but prudently make an end, lest hereafter I be shamefully overcome and fail in my attempt. Now that my recital has been completed and its story cursorily recounted, I must invoke the great goodness of the eternal king that he in his kindness may grant our sovereigns to prolong happily the whole span of life still remaining, and that he may protect the custodians of the holy church for many years, supported always in all matters favorable to their prayers, thereby granting to us merciful consolation. Amen.



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