

BERNARDO PULCI

The Play of Barlaam and Josaphat

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For further discussion, see:

Nerida Newbigin, *Making a Play for God: The Sacre Rappresentazioni of Renaissance Florence*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2021), 134–136.

Characters

THE ANGEL *who speaks the Prologue and Epilogue*
A SERVANT *of the King*
THE KING, *father of Josaphat*
A HERALD
THREE ASTROLOGERS
SAGE
SECOND SAGE
BARONS AND SERVANTS *of the King*
DOMIZIO, *Josaphat's Teacher*
JOSAPHAT
A TOWN CRIER
KNIGHT *of the King*
Some Paupers
A BLIND MAN
A LEPER
BARLAAM
SERVANT *of Josaphat*
AN OLD BARON *of the King*
SECOND ANGEL
ANACOR, *Barlaam's double*
MAGICIAN
DAMSELS *who tempt Josaphat*
BARACCHIA, *Josaphat's Baron*
ANOTHER BARON *of Josaphat*
HERMIT

Places

The royal palace of Josaphat's father
A place for the Sages, in the City
The palace where Josaphat is locked away as a young man,
both inside and out
A city street
A country road
A deserted place, with a forest and a cave

**Here begins the Play of Barlaam and Josaphat composed
by Bernardo Pulci.**

First THE ANGEL *announces:*

1. Eternal father and almighty wisdom
to whose correction now our banner bows,
because we find that all our needs are met
in you, as the apostle teaches us,

grant to us, in your mercy ever great,
that we may tell a worthy, holy tale
that will be salutary for our minds.
Watch closely with devotion and in silence.

2. St John of Damascene recounts a tale,
one that's holy, worthy and devout,
of Balaam, and of Josaphat so full
of radiant virtue that is worth remembering.
Renouncing all his vile earthly estates,
this Josaphat rose up to supreme glory,
and through him many found the path to heaven,
and he converted in the end his father.

A SERVANT *comes to the King and tells him that his wife has given birth to a son:*

3. Give Heaven thanks for what I have to tell you,
and celebrate at once with holy rites
for Heaven's given you the finest son
who'll bring good fortune to both you and yours.

THE KING *answers the Servant:*

For this event may Heav'n always be praised.
Now have a worthy sacrifice prepared,
and send a message telling all my sages
across the land to come to me at once.

A HERALD *goes to summon the Sages and says as follows:*

4. Upon our Lord's behalf, it is decreed
that you should seek with your astrology
to find what the ascendant says about
the fortune of the son new born to him
in this last night, and what opposes it,
according to the astronomic arts.
All gather and dispute it now before him.

ONE ASTROLOGER *says:*

His wishes will be satisfied at once.

The Sages come before the King and THE KING *says:*

5. I have developed such a trust in you
that I have summoned you before me here
because I want to know the very truth
and what is going to happen to my son.
Look closely at and read his natal chart,
for he's all that I cherish in this world.

THE SAGES *reply to the King, saying:*

It will be done, and anything we find
we will report to you, withholding naught.

AN ASTROLOGER *begins the debate, saying:*

6. Scorpio is ascendant in this boy,
and in the first house Mars is clearly seen
and will provide good counsel and great strength,
unless our learning does deceive us all,
and put his life and limb in direst peril.
Dicatis, pater, your opinion here.

ANOTHER ASTROLOGER *enters the dispute, saying:*

Videtur mihi, learned colleagues all,
that Sol is in conjunction here with Leo.

A THIRD ASTROLOGER *speaks against the first:*

7. *Aliter sentio*, if I'm not mistaken,
and I say virtue hangs on Sol alone:
prudence, clemency and constancy,
spreading his reputation far and wide;
but he will differ greatly from his father
which leads me to conclude, o reverend father,
that multitudes will come under his sway
and he will undermine our rule of law.

ONE OF THE SAGES *says to the King in the name of one group of them, when they have weighed the matter thoroughly among themselves:*

8. We've used all subtlety to search the charts
and this is what we've found about your son:
in your old age he'll be a staff to lean on,
because he will be wise and provident,
and he will have great power and great wealth
so that he will assist your kingdom greatly.
This is the firm belief of some of us:
now hear what all the others have to say.

ANOTHER SAGE *contradicts the first:*

9. I disagree with him who's spoken first
although he is a wiser man than I.
I say that even though he'll be esteemed
he will not be your subject, but another's;
he'll set above all things the Christian creed
that you have persecuted with such force.
Lock him away in great and ornate halls
where thoughts of future and of death can't enter.

THE KING *is enraged and says to his Barons and Servants:*

10. I am half driven mad by the great pain
of hearing what these sages had to say.
Prepare a palace, grand and beautiful,
and there in pleasure's clasp let him be raised;

find him some company for his delight,
all young, and all of noble, fair complexion;
and should one of that company fall ill,
send him away, lest his thoughts turn to death.

THE KING *summons a tutor for Josaphat, after he has had him locked in the palace, and he says:*

11. Domizio, prudent and most faithful servant,
out of them all I've chosen you alone,
as the most learned and most excellent,
to teach my little boy and read to him;
to teach him wisdom and to be respectful,
so that he soars above all those around him;
make sure he spends his life in fun and games,
devised most chastely for each time and place.

When JOSAPHAT has been locked in the palace, he says to his Servants:

12. What does it mean, my servants, tell me now,
that father keeps me locked away like this?
What trouble could I ever have caused him
to make him banish and exclude me so.
Explain to him at least in part my state,
and tell him how confused my life is here,
and ask if just one day he'd let me out
to go and roam a little round about.

THE KING *turns to his Barons and says:*

13. Get on your horses then, and sound the banns
to hold a tourney here of some rich kind,
or else a celebration or a dance,
whatever you believe will make him happier.
And send orders at once to all the old
and infirm of my subjects that they must
depart at once, in order that my son
should not, on meeting them, become dismayed.

A SERVANT *goes to the King and says on behalf of Josaphat:*

14. Your dear young son commends himself to you
in all benignity, Your Majesty,
and reverently he asks you and beseeches
that you should show your mercy now to him,
for being confined to him seems such harsh fare:
he thinks that cruelty drives your treatment of him.
He wishes just that you would grant him leave
for just one day to go out of the palace.

A TOWN-CRIER *goes forth and says:*

15. Our most serene and noble majesty
orders all those who are old and infirm

and dwell in these environs to prepare
to leave the town, each one of them, at once;
because his son is seized by some great woe
he's ordered a great feast to be prepared,
and since he wants to take him there tomorrow
there must be nothing seen to him sorrow.

THE KNIGHT *chases away the sick and the poor saying:*
16. Clear out, because His Majesty's at hand;
Haven't you heard the edict that's gone out
that anyone along this route who's old
or invalid should take his leave at once.

ONE OF THE PAUPERS *says:*
You must have found good wine to drink today
there at the inn, to make you speak so bold.

THE KNIGHT *says:*
You answer back, you drunken sot? I'd better
teach you to dance by beating you the rhythm.

ANOTHER PAUPER *says:*
17. What do you want with us? What devil's got you?
What have these poor folk ever done to you?

THE KNIGHT *says:*
You question me? God's wrath upon you here!
If you hang round you'll feel it now from me.

THE PAUPER *replies:*
Why do you want vex us in this way?
Don't you yet know the purpose of your life?
Your lord the King can do just what he likes,
but he who spites the poor spites God himself.

ANOTHER PAUPER *says:*
18. Just wait, I want to find a morsel here
so that your lord can just how it tastes.

THE KNIGHT *says:*
If I get near you with this stick of mine,
you'll get your fill of lunch and dinner too.

THE PAUPER *says:*
Keep that repast and serve it to the others,
I've lost my appetite for eating now.
Just let me have a drink; what's all the rush?
May God in Heaven now avenge us all.

When Josaphat reaches the King, there is celebration, and after music and dancing THE KING bids him farewell, and Josaphat leaves:

19. It's almost evening and will soon be time
for each of you to go back to you homes.
Some other time, when time and place a right,
we'll finish what remains still to be done.
I may yet free you sooner than you think,
because all that I hope for rests on you,
and on the fairest deeds that will be yours;
and what you father's done you must accept.

As JOSAPHAT returns home, he first meets a Blind Man and a Leper and he says to his tutor:

20. Who are these men who bear such signs of pain
that just to look on them causes me woe?

THE TUTOR replies to Josaphat:

These are old men, of eighty years and more.
Few men on earth arrive at such an age.

JOSAPHAT says:

What will become of them? Tell me he truth,
can every human being become like that?

THE TUTOR says:

Each one of us can come to such a pass,
and death will bring an end to all our woes.

JOSAPHAT says to his Tutor:

21. Then what's the use of such great pomp and wealth
if everyone who's born on earth must die,
and if we can become like these men here,
and live with such great unremitting pain?
It seems to me, the happy ones are those
who shun the world and all of its desires.
Perhaps most blessèd is the man not born,
because he never knows this wretched state.

THE TUTOR says to Josaphat:

22. My son, it is a natural thing for man
to feel old age, unhappiness and death;
no force of mind or body can defy it,
for everybody shares a common fate.
But cleanse your mind forever of such thoughts,
as it befits a man both wise and strong,
and don't say you be better not being born,
for everything created has a reason.

BARLAAM *comes to the gate dressed as a merchant and asks to speak to Josaphat, saying that he wants to show him a certain jewel, and he says to One of the Servants as follows:*

23. May God preserve and keep you in good health:

I come to visit your most worthy Lord
and bring a pearl to show him of such worth
that all his kingdom is not worth so much,
because, by virtue infinite, it can
make wise a man of humble intellect,
and liberate, the blind and dumb and deaf;
so let me enter now and see your Lord.

THE SERVANT *replies to Barlaam:*

24. Are you some other God come down to earth?

Where did you find so marvelous a thing?

You've sown in my heart a great desire
to see a stone that's so miraculous;

Let me see first, and I'll take you at once
to where my Lord is resting in his chamber,
and truly I believe, indeed I'm sure,
that you will have your due reward from him.

BARLAAM *replies to the Servant:*

25. So that you understand this jewel's power,
if it were seen by any unclean eye
then all its powers henceforth would be lost:
and that is why I've come from far away
to see your Lord, whose chaste virginity
endows him more completely than all others.

THE SERVANT *says:*

If that is so, I confess I have erred,
for I know well that I'm not without sin.

THE SERVANT *goes to Josaphat and says:*

26. A certain merchant's waiting here outside
who says he's brought with him a jewel that can
make even the most ignorant man wise,
and liberate the mute, the deaf, the blind;
and since he's heard of your most excellent virtue,
he wants to meet with you most privately,
because if shown to one who's mired in vice
its virtue would be lost.

JOSAPHAT *says:*

Show him right in.

In exchange for the promised jewel, BARLAAM begins to preach the Christian faith to Josaphat:

27. May he who rules the heaven and all the world,

and in three persons is a single essence,
draw all that's good and kind in you
under his laws, so holy, just and good;
and in the task for which he's chose me
may he grant grace to follow my intention:
I'm sent to you by God to preach to you
and tell you all about his holy faith.

28. It's possible that you are not aware
that for the sin of our first ancestor
Jesus, the son of God, came down from heaven
because of his first disobedience;
and finally he took on human flesh,
and dwelt among us frail humans here;
in Bethlehem his mother Mary bore him,
Virgin forever after and before.

29. He died upon the cross, in his true flesh,
and, persecuted by the cruel tyrant,
he and his blessed virgin mother chose
exile, and the seventh year returned,
and lived with great privation in the desert
for forty days of hardship great and cruel
and living there, he suffered for his zeal
hunger and thirst and pain, and heat and frost.

30. Betrayed by a disciple, he was captured –
because his holy Father so ordained –
and taken by the Jews before the Pharisees,
to Annas, and to Caiaphas and Pilate,
and by these wicked men he then was scourged
and had a crown of thorns placed on his head;
and finally, most cruelly and unjustly,
he died between two thieves upon the cross.

31. He rose upon the third day from the dead,
descending into Limbo to bring forth
the blessed band of holy fathers who
had already waited there for so much time;
and after staying here a short time more
he went to dwell in Heaven with his father.
This is our father and our highest good
who's saved us from eternal suffering.

32. These idols you have here are heresies,
false and deceitful, spells worked by the devil,
that show you fantasies of such a kind
that oft they lead you further from the truth.
So shun their ways for they are sinister
and lead you to eternal pain and woe;

and ask, on the example of my God,
to be baptized, my holy, righteous son.

JOSAPHAT *replies*:

33. I feel as though I'm taking off in flight
and seeing here before me what you've shown
and only one regret combines with this,
as I think of the brief time that we live
to serve the one who is my one desire,
who lives and rules in the eternal cloister.
Do with me what you will, for you can do
far more than I can do upon my own.

*Now Barlaam baptizes Josaphat, and when he has been
baptized, JOSAPHAT says:*

34. These words of yours and your appearance now
have made me just so glad I'm lost for words.
I cannot show you what I have inside
but this effect alone I will reveal:
I feel such torment staying here alone
that now I wish to live and die with you;
therefore I beg you that you will agree
to let me serve you in your company.

BARLAAM *replies*:

35. If you wanted to come away with me,
I'll tell you what would happen to you next:
if you, or someone with you, were arrested
all secrets that we hold would be revealed;
and therefore, go and live now with your father
for something good may even come of that.
And take the prudent path, wait for the time,
for haste just gives us longer to repent.

JOSAPHAT *says*:

36. Tell me your name at least, so that I know,
and what they call the country where you live,
for I will travel there across the desert
to find you, and stay with you for all time.

BARLAAM *says*:

The country's called Senar, so that you know,
and ask for Barlaam when you ask for me.
Now go with God, and always trust in him.

JOSAPHAT *says*:

Farewell, may Jesus always be your guide.

A SERVANT *tells the King that Josaphat has been converted:*

37. I don't know how to tell news like this,

my Lord, and that your son has been converted
by someone who's called Barlaam, and who looks
just like a merchant, but really is a hermit.
He used his honeyed words to tell us that
he'd heard about his Lordship's reputation,
and wanted him to see a gorgeous jewel,
and by this ruse he has converted him.

THE KING *is enraged and says:*

38. Barlaam, a curse on you, you cheating rogue;
for you're the only person that I feared;
and now you've turned my son, and fixed him fast,
and baptized him according to your will.
If could get my hands on you right now,
the pain that you would feel would be your last.

A BARON *comforts the King and says:*

My Lord, you are a wise man; but you must
give proof of it: complaining doesn't help.

THE KING *says to this Old Baron:*

39. What can I do, if it's to be that fate
must always turn against me in this way?
Of all my thoughts, I'll act on only one:
and that is that I'll have my son beheaded.

THE BARON *says:*

My Lord, don't do it, no, on no account:
do any other thing but this, I pray.
As far as I have heard, you have no other,
and therefore we will choose another course.

40. There is a man close by of our religion
who in appearance could be Barlaam's double.
Have him arrested and pretend it's him,
and send an invitation through your realm
allowing men of each and all religions
to come to court to hear a disputation.
He'll offer a defense of his religion
and then, defeated, he'll submit to ours.

41. Perhaps then, when your son sees that his master
acknowledges defeat, he'll change his mind.

THE KING *says to the Baron:*

Whatever you may hope for I will grant,
as men do, when they have their life on hold.
I'll find my son and try to change his mind,
although I think that he will do the opposite.
And Sergeant, you prepare yourself to go

and bring that man to me.

THE KNIGHT *says*:

I know the one.

THE KING *goes to Josaphat and says*:

42. Alas, my son, whatever have you done?
Is this the way you give your father thanks?
You've ruined both my kingdom and yourself,
believing things you can't savor or fathom.
How can you, on the say-so of a madman,
surrender without hearing other sides.
But if you don't agree to do my bidding,
you'll be my enemy and not my son.

JOSAPHAT *replies to his father and says*:

43. This zeal's not worthy of the best of fathers:
you mustn't overload yourself too much;
you'd sooner touch the sky with outstretched hand
than part me from my God, or drain the sea.
I've shed the veil of darkness from my eyes
completely so that now I see things clearly.
A man is not a father if he's sad
to see the victories that his son has had.

THE KING *says to his son*:

44. It's my excessive mercy that's to blame,
for I have always honored you as far
more than a son. When you were born, my sages,
with good cause, gave me this prognostication:
that you would be the ruin and destruction
of all my principality; but if you
continue in this state of ignorance
you'll make me be unusually cruel.

JOSAPHAT *says to his father*:

45. There is a time to love, a time to hate,
there is a time for peace, a time for way;
it's not right always to obey,
or to be merciful against God's will.
If I see that you wish to persecute me,
I'll seek no peace and harmony between us,
but rather, lest you seize me, I will flee
from you, just as a serpent flees the talons.

THE KING *leaves, and then turns back with kind words*:

46. My son, you ought to honor my old age,
for it's too right that sons obey their fathers,
and don't allow this hardness of your heart
to overturn our kingdom into ruin.

JOSAPHAT *says*:

There is no need for you to waste your effort
on all these threats or on cajoling words.

THE KING *says*:

Since neither force nor prayers will work on you,
I ask that you deny me not this grace.

THE KING *continues, saying*:

47. I've ordered the arrest of that great merchant
who visits bearing jewels of such great value:
I ask that you come with him to the court,
at which your sages will dispute with mine,
and if they show me that my faith is wrong,
then this matter will be resolved at once,
and in your presence I will be baptized,
and you must do the same too, if you lose.

*When JOSAPHAT hears that Barlaam has been arrested, he says
to himself:*

48. See how my joy is transformed into sorrow,
for with one blow I lose all that is good.
If he whom I so love has been arrested
I know that he'll be sentenced now to death.

AN ANGEL *comes to comfort him and says*:

Listen: you'll hear the sound of angels singing
who come to bring you comfort from on high;
and this: it isn't Barlaam who's arrested.

JOSAPHAT *replies*:

I give you thanks, my only Lord and God.

*Josaphat comes to the debate with the man who has been taken
instead of Barlaam, and the KING says to Anacor:*

49. If you are prudent, this is what you'll do:
for if all my instructions come to naught,
then I'll reward your words with ignominy
and send your tongue and heart to feed the dogs;
make sure no Christian dares to come before
the king's own son with such a lie as this:
but if your teaching proves to be the truth,
then I will follow it until the end.

THE KING *tells him to be confident*:

50. Be not afraid of direst punishment,
be bold in the defense of your religion.

ANACOR *says to himself*:

I've dug myself the pit I'm falling into
and laid the snare where I have caught myself.
I'd better find another way to flee
the peril that is looming here before me;
A change of course is sometimes sensible,
and I'll do well to take the prince's side.

ONE OF THE SAGES *who has come to the debate says:*

51. Are you the man who is so arrogant
that now you want to prove that we're all wrong?
Are you the man who had such brazen cheek
that you baptized his Lordship's son?

ANACOR *relies:*

I am that man, and I have so much faith,
as I debate with you, in my creator,
that you will all confess that you are wrong
and you'll renounce you faith and follow ours.

52. Do you not see how foolish you all are
to worship shadows and dead images,
diabolic arts and ancient malice,
that lead you far from God on crooked ways,
heading not him who in the name of justice
gave up his Son to such a wretched fate:
for since there was no other remedy,
he paid the price for us with his own blood.

A SAGE *replies to Anacor and says:*

53. Just look and see what nonsense all this is,
that God should be obliged to make his son
come down to earth in such calamity,
to suffer at the end a painful death!
Could he not simply use his might power
to grant forgiveness for this single sin?
Or pay the price for such a sin by means
of man or angel, though this was not written?

ANACOR *replies:*

54. It would have been an undeservèd pardon
for every sin deserves its punishment
And man could not: by tasting of the tree
his first perfection he had forfeited;
nor was the angel good enough to suffer
passion, since the angel never erred;
it needed one who had to be conjoined
with God, and for this reason he was able.

THE SAGE *says to the King:*

55. This man has twisted all our words around

and has perhaps some God providing answers.
There's none of us who can come close to him
because he just confounds us with his talk.
Send everyone away, if you think best,
for such profundity was never heard.

THE KING *sends everyone away and says:*
Because it's late, let everyone depart;
return tomorrow to our presence here.

JOSAPHAT *says to his father:*
56. Because the matter's left suspended here,
allow my master to come with me now
so that we can confer about our task.
Tonight let each of us be with his sages,
so that your majesty avoids the charge
that you've achieved your victory just by force.

THE KING *to Josaphat:*
I'm happy to comply with your suggestion
provided that the outcome is as good.

JOSAPHAT *leaves with Anacor. And when they get home he says to Anacor:*

57. Although you're here to take the place of Barlaam,
I'll tell you that your name not hidden from me;
but I can see that God's granted you aid
and wants to give you a far greater answer;
since he has furnished you with such great grace,
come, don't refuse a marriage with such a spouse,
by chose to be baptized now for his love,
for every other faith is false and sinful.

ANACOR *replies to Josaphat:*
58. There is no need for any further words
because I'm so impassioned with his fire,
and now I'm deeply sorry for the past
spent in vain adoration of our idols;
and therefore, if he wills it so to be,
I'm standing ready here to do his will:
and you will give me now your benediction
because I'm ready to fulfill my promise.

A SERVANT *tells the King how Josaphat has converted Anacor:*

59. That hermit that you sent, your Majesty,
to spend the night last night at your son's house,
was not the man that you had seized before
but rather he's a hermit from our group;
and therefore you have made a bad decision
because your son, with his beguiling ways,

has worked things so that he has been converted,
and secretly this morning he has left.

THE KING *says to himself*:

60. Now Fortune has been satisfied, my foe
who comes behind me everywhere I go!
I see that all my efforts are in vain,
and that the cards will speak of nothing else.
If there's more news of him, then let me know,
for I've no further counsel, wit, or art;
my senses are exhausted, and my mind
is so far gone that death would look like life.

A MAGICIAN *comforts the King and say*:

61. Fear not, for we will find a remedy.
I have thought up the very best device;
for all towns can be taken by a siege.
If you decide to follow my advice
I'll save you from this sorry and this woe,
unless my learning proves to be quite useless.

THE KING *says*:

If you do this, I'll make a golden image
of you to always worship as my God.

THE MAGICIAN *says*:

62. Get all the barons now to leave the court
and fill it up instead with damsels fair:
because we all can feel the lure of flesh,
and all the more when it is beautiful;
and I'll send one of my enchanted spirits
and he will fornicate there with the damsels,
and we will force him to come home again.

THE KING *says*:

Go now, and get the damsels to prepare.

THE KING *says to the damsels*:

63. So that each one of you will know the plan,
you'll all be taken to a certain place
in which you'll be required to do as follows:
to entertain my son with fun and games;
if there's one among you that ignites
the flame of secret passion in his breast,
I promise her, and I will keep my vow,
that I will give him to her as her spouse.

The Damsels come before Josaphat and ONE OF THEM says:

64. We've come before you here, your Reverence,
in order that you'll find some sweet delight,

for we have heard that your Magnificence
is gripped by woe and weighed by heavy thoughts;
so do not give us such a surly welcome
for each of us just yearns to be with you.

JOSAPHAT *says to the Damsels:*

Do what you like, by God, among yourselves,
and make sure that you don't disturb my peace.

JOSAPHAT *prays to God:*

65. Benign creator, omnipresent Father,
who suffered death and passion for us all,
extend your help now to your pain-racked servant
whose eyes you opened in your gentleness;
let not my senses overcome my reason
and rescue me from this outrageous plight.

THE ANGEL *comforts him:*

Josaphat, hear my voice from highest heaven:
you'll be triumphant in this undertaking.

ANOTHER DAMSEL *says:*

66. How can your heart be so bereft of pity
that it won't yield to anything we say?
You're young and fair, so don't be cruel with us
and don't reject our overtures of love:
don't cover up, nothing can shield you here;
flee if you can, because I have to bind you;
your color and complexion clearly show
that you weren't born to spurn the force of love.

JOSAPHAT *says:*

67. You waste your breath to ask this think of me;
I pity you, for you don't understand
the words you say, nor him to you say them;
how, with this prattle, you offend the Lord;
and how chaste hearts are so acceptable
to Him whom, in you blindness, you don't see.
If you could come to know him, and believe
the words I say, you would find blessedness.

THE DAMSEL *replies:*

68. If you want me to consent and agree,
with none to witness or to guarantee,
then you must grant me just one other grace;
that I should join with you in matrimony.
For such a union, it is widely held,
was always practiced the Christian faith:
the patriarchs and Peter took had brides;
it's honorable then if we do too.

JOSAPHAT *says*:

69. You're right to say marriage has always been
pleasing to God, but for those who've promised
to live in chastity, and remain steadfast,
this bond would be a serious transgression.

THE DAMSEL *says*:

If you don't want to marry me, at least
let me lie just one night in bed with you,
for I can promise you, if you agree,
that you'll reap great rewards for your religion.

*The King comes to find out what the Damsels have achieved.
Josaphat falls asleep. THE KING says to one of the Damsels:*

70. I have decided, since it's heaven's wish
that it should be, to give my only son
half of my realm, to have as his dominion,
hoping to win him with this noble gift.
Since you've been told of all that's gone before,
give me now your opinion of this gift.

A BARON *says to the King*:

You've chosen, good my Lord, a way that's wise.
Let us go back, and put it into action.

THE KING *goes back to Josaphat and tells him he wants to
divide the kingdom:*

71. Although it happens sometimes that the father
is angry in the presence of his son,
it doesn't mean his mercy's any less,
because the flame that's hidden burns more brightly.
And so that you may see the proof of this,
I've allocated to you half my realm.

JOSAPHAT *replies*:

Although I hope to find my realm elsewhere
I thank you, and I take it in good part.

*When JOSAPHAT has been made the ruler, he says to his
Barons:*

72. Since here on earth we find ourselves possessing
this transitory wealth in such abundance,
send people through my realm who can provide
relief wherever greatest need is felt;
all that we have is common, even though
there's always some who take more than they should.
Have beautiful and holy temples built,
and cast the ancient simulacra down.

A SERVANT *tells the King that Josaphat has converted many peoples:*

73. Your Majesty, the whole world's coming running
to listen to the teachings of your son;
and nobody can mount an opposition
because his knowledge seems to be divine;
he makes the towers of the earth bow down,
and many people bend before his law;
in Persia, Greece and India he's baptized them,
built temples, and destroyed our ancient ones.

THE KING *says to his Barons angrily:*

74. It seem that all the fates and heaven agree
that he must overthrow my rule of law;
I want to hear these fine sermons of his
and soon perhaps I'll make him change his mind.

A BARON *says:*

Beware, lest God with his holy reminders
open our eyes and shine light in our minds.
There nowhere else to go, if he does that,
for truth is hard to hide when it shines bright.

The King goes and finds Josaphat, and when he hears him he is converted, and JOSAPHAT says to the people:

75. O you who live in wretchedness on earth
chasing a thousand frail, uncertain dreams!
Preferring to set aside things that are certain
and move towards the perilous abyss!
If you just knew the joyous state of bliss
you can approach along these open roads
you'd keep your eyes turned up always to heaven,
and cast aside at once the veil of darkness.

76. Look here and read the writings of the prophets,
and all the sibyls, who are never wrong:
they say that God will take flesh in a virgin
most pure, and come from heaven down to earth;
and so he did, he came to save us all,
and just to save us from the war of hell,
Christ Jesus son of God came to the world,
and suffered death and passion on the cross.

77. There was no other way to free us from
the bonds of our great, ancient father's sin,
except through the redemption of his blood
and making us make peace with all our foes;
and so he came into the world to save us,
in Mary's everlasting virgin womb;

and it is he who rules in heaven above
and every other creed is blind and foolish.

Having heard his son, THE KING is amazed. He confesses and submits to the Christian faith, and says:

78. Bless'd be the hour, the day, the point, when I¹
got you from Heaven, to make you my heir,
to be with you, enveloped in such bliss,
and then enlightened with the holy faith!
You've filled my very heart with sweetest fire
so that I feel what true believers know.
Baptize me in the name of Jesus Christ,
and all my kingdom now is yours to rule.

The King takes off his robes and kneels, and JOSAPHAT baptizes him saying:

79. O righteousness divine, now we can see
how strongly burns the flame that comes from you.
I give you thanks with all my heart and soul
that you so clearly show yourself through me.
And now I humbly ask you to accept
my worthy parent who forsakes all sin,
and come to him in holy baptism,
which is the fruit that comes to Christian faith.

JOSAPHAT takes the crown and then says to himself:

80. Already many times you've touched my heart
and many times already I have promised,
o Jesus, my redeemer and my friend,
to follow you, and now I want to do it.
I want to leave my kingdom and the honors
that go with it, and come to be with you
and I beseech you to accept me now
as worthy, and to show me the true way.

81. And even though I'll find it hard to leave,
forsaking my royal throne and all its fame,
and never coming back before I die,
and leaving all my worldly goods behind,
yet I leave happily, because the call
invites me to a country far more fair.
Farewell to this world's great and mortal pomp,
and you, dear Lord, stay with me all the way.

JOSAPHAT, waits a moment then tells Barachia his Baron that he wants to leave him in his place:

82. Because I've always loved you, Barachia,
and known the many virtues that you have,

¹ Echoes of Petrarch, "Benedetto sia 'l giorno, et 'l mese, et l'anno," *Canzoniere* 61.

I want to place my kingdom in your hands
so that you merit will be seen by all:
because I have to seek for my salvation
along another path and straighter ways;
and so I hope you'll happily accept it
and base your rule on justice evermore.

BARACHIA *replies*:

83. I don't deserve a kingdom such as this,
I think perhaps you're doing this to test me:
I have not earned such credit in your service
that you should raise me to such high estate.

JOSAPHAT *replies*:

This disposition comes from God above,
and therefore must not oppose me now.
The fisherman St Peter was not raised
because of grandeur, but for being humble.

JOSAPHAT *hands Barachia the mantle and the scepter and the crown and says*:

84. Accept from me this scepter and this crown,
and under the protection of this mantle
may every upright man who lives his life
pursuing virtue find safe shelter there.
Now I can feel the goad and spur of Him
who wants me now to seek virtue on high.

BARACHIA *replies*:

Since that is what is pleasing to our Lord,
then let His will be done, and yours as well.

JOSAPHAT *says*:

85. Make sure that you remember that you're mortal,
and at the end you'll be called to account
for everything. Be fair with every man,
gracious and kind in everything you say,
and may your deeds and their effects be such
that you cause other men to do good deeds;
the taller a man stands, the more he's seen,
but God will give assistance in these things.

After Josaphat has handed the kingdom to Barachia, he undresses in secret. Josaphat leaves, and THE BARONS go after him and when they find him they say:

86. Alas, our hope and strength! What are you doing?
You taught us all so very well and showed us
the pathway up to heaven: do you want
to leave us here abandoned and forsaken?
Show filial respect for your great lineage

under whose guidance we have lived so long!
And if some other love constrains and binds you,
then let us come along with you as well.

JOSAPHAT *departs in secret, and along the way he says:*

87. No bird was ever gladder to escape
its cage than I am, fleeing you, o blind delights,
in which I never found a moment's peace,
as I chased after every frail excess.
Unknown now, and in secret, I can travel,
without a care for any of its malice.
Now I can clearly see all worldly vice
and know I'm on the path that takes me home.

When JOSAPHAT arrives in the desert, he finds a hermit and says:

88. May God preserve you; would you tell me where
I'll find the hermit Barlaam in this forest?

THE HERMIT *replies:*

You're just some shadow, come to tempt me here:
I recognize you now, so go in peace.

JOSAPHAT *says:*

I serve Christ Jesus: you can even touch me;
In God's name, help me find him.

THE HERMIT *says:*

I don't know him.

JOSAPHAT *says:*

I haven't eaten; brother, could you give me
a morsel of your food?

THE HERMIT *says:*

In God's name, go!

JOSAPHAT *in the desert prays to God and says:*

89. O loving Jesus, our almighty father
who in your grace has brought me to this place,
do not abandon me in this last test
where I hear nothing but my trembling heart:
without your help, I fear that in this wood,
these animals, alas, will overwhelm me.

AN ANGEL *comforts him saying:*

Keep going, and pursue the greater glory:
a feather bed is not the road to victory.²

² Echoes of Dante, *Inferno* "segghendo in piuma / in fama non si vien," *Inferno* 24:47-47.

When JOSAPHAT reaches a cave he says to himself:

90. Now is it possible that in this cave
I'll find the man that I have sought so long?
If I could only see him one more time,
no man in the whole world would be more bless'd.

BARLAAM comes out, and when he sees Josaphat he says:

Whose voice is this that I can hear our here?
Could it be him whom I have long expected?
O sweetest Josaphat, it's really you!

JOSAPHAT says:

Barlaam, my holy father, it is you!

JOSAPHAT continues:

91. For two whole years I've wandered, searching for you
through this forest. After your departure
I suffered, I can tell you, many woes,
such that I can't recall how I survived;
but then I overcame the snares and plots,
converting all my kingdom, and my father
who's been received into the Christian faith;
your journey, you can see, was not in vain.

BARLAAM replies:

92. May God give you his blessing, noble Lord!
And may our Lord be thanked for everything;
I know that you must surely be exhausted
so come inside my cave and take some rest.
There's water here, or I should say, white wine,
and I will go and rustle up some herbs;
don't be afraid of anything, and think
of living here and dying here with me.

While he is in the desert, AN ANGEL comes to Barlaam to announce his death:

93. Barlaam, listen to what I have to offer,
and turn all your immense desires to God;
soon you'll have confirmation of your hopes,
because God's waiting for you at his table;
and far away from this frail vale of tears
the soul is granted endless joy and bliss;
don't be afraid of anything brought by
the woman whom the vulgar throng calls Death.

BARLAAM returns to Josaphat and tells him that the Angel has announced his death:

94. O Josaphat, my dear most holy son,
it time, and good awaits me now in heaven.
I feel my soul preparing for the flight

back to the blessed world from which it came.
My one regret is leaving you alone:
my soul is closely bonded with your own;
don't weep for one who now has been called home
to where he came from, that would be ungrateful.

Weeping, JOSAPHAT says to Barlaam:

95. O poor and wretched me, where am I now?
Where are you leaving me, lost in this wood?
Why was I not devoured by those wild beasts,
so that I'd never have to face your death.
All of my hopes now vanish in one moment:
sweet Lord, now make me constant in your will,
in order that, in your unending mercy,
I'll find the strength to bear your going away.

BARLAAM says:

96. But you, beloved father, can't you ask,
if you so love me in the sight of god:
why can't you grant me just this single grace,
that I, your faithful subject, die with you.

BARLAAM says:

O sweet my son, confess now and believe
that you are being reserved for some great too.
Listen with care now to what Barlaam says:
you will yet be with me in heaven's bliss.

97. You can see just how brief our life here is,
for just like flowers all our hopes soon fade
and never last, borne off on the breeze.
Death puts an end to dark imprisonment
for those who've lived well; others find her grim
if they've given their lives to worldly things.
Come now and stay to pray with me a while
and then give me you final benediction.

98. And when my soul gains freedom from my body,
I ask that you collect my wretched spoils
and have them buried with your very hands
and then be sure to keep some memory of
my life; and then when yours is taken from you
you'll see me once again in Heaven's bliss.

JOSAPHAT says:

With all my heart I give you now my blessing;
so may you have the blessing of the Lord.

When Barlaam has died, JOSAPHAT buries him saying:

99. Since you, almighty God, have deemed it right

to keep me here for something I don't know,
receive the soul of this my dearest father;
his flesh, once dust, I give back to the earth.
His heart and soul and all that I desire
Sweet Lord, into your hands I place them now;
let him be with me always as my guide
so that I can continue on your path.

*Josaphat goes back into the cell after he has buried Barlaam,
and THE ANGEL bids farewell saying:*

100. O you who are left here in this dark vale,
wretches entangled in worldly delights,
look up and in the pureness of your hearts
think of these two, and all that they achieved;
because, by leaving all base, worldly care
they concentrated all their thoughts on God,
and blessed is the man who can perceive
and choose the right one from so many paths.

101. By persevering, man finds happiness
like Josaphat, who turned his face to heaven
abandoning the sad and wretched world;
through flight, he freed himself from earthly snares,
and made his soul, which turned to God in bliss,
triumph in every contest that it faced.
Pray now to him who sings in Heaven's choir,
to give you grace that you may follow them.