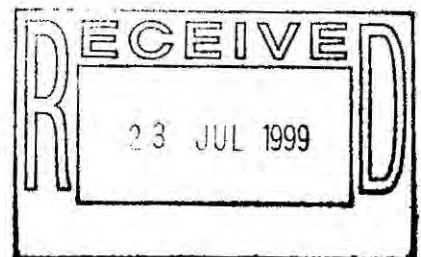


**THE SACRED ACTION OF
SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST'S
BEHEADING**

AN ENGLISH VERSION OF THE FLORENTINE *SACRA RAPPRESENTAZIONE*
DI SAN GIOVANNI BATTISTA QUANDO FU DECOLLATO

TRANSLATED BY ADRIAN MAROYA



THE SACRED ACTION OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BEHEADING

Persons of the Play:

An ANGEL, *who announces*
SAINT JOHN the BAPTIST
The SCRIBES of KING HEROD
JESUS CHRIST
GOD THE FATHER
FOUR ANGELS
THE HOLY SPIRIT *in the guise of a Dove*
KING HEROD
The QUEEN
The KING'S VASSAL
The KING'S HERALD
LORDS and BARONS
The MAIDEN
The SENESCHAL
The EXECUTIONER
ADAM and the HOLY FATHERS in LIMBO

TO THE EQUAL GLORY OF GOD THE ALMIGHTY FATHER AND OF MARY, VIRGIN
MOTHER, THIS REPRESENTATION OF THE BEHEADING OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

Enter AN ANGEL, who announces the underwritten verses:

To you, wise citizens,
Who impelled by charity, come
With humble and devoted souls
Illumined by sense, with wisdom enliven'd
To see the Beginning and End
Of this feast, know you all
That I will tell without let or
Omission that which shall be done. 8
First the Baptist in the desert will be seen,
Preparing the way of the Creator
By God's Will baptizing,—
And his sermon you shall hear.
Upon this will follow the King, by rights
To whom, John, moved by love, will speak,
Of the King's history —
And of his various errors, and the Queen's. 16
Then shall there be royal disdain,
And the King's quitting the desert sands,
Then follows a plaint from his wife,
That he, Herod, deprive the Baptist of life
(For this to be done, he's first put in a cell).
Then will the players enact
The High and Pure Natal Feast of our Lord.
(Of the maiden's advent you too shall learn). 24
It shall follow that the Queen hears all,
And the dance her daughter performed.
They'll tell how the King goaded her to twirl
(Furthermore to claim the royal thanks)
And what recompense he gave the girl,
And the King's parley with his lords.
Then something heinous shall be said:
Of how the Baptist comes to lose his head. 32
You will hear rehearsed, as demands,
How that blessèd, holy head was placed
Before the King, on his board, and how he,
At that instant without fear, thought no more.
To his daughter he gave it, with misgivings,
To bring to her mother. She received it
In haste, and brought it to the Queen,
Who responded, as you will see. 40
Upon this will follow, without fright,
The blast from the Baptist's mouth:
A harsh, strong, ineffable wind,
Which presaged the gaping of the Earth,
Swallowing instantly the evil Queen.
It shall be told of the disciples who came
Thereto, assuaging their grief and plaint,
And of the Saint's burial in a shroud.¹ 48
May this be the end of the Feast,
By whose virtue you will be restored
To Heaven, as the Gospels attest

¹ Though described by St. Matthew (14: 12) and St. Mark (6: 29), this scene does not occur in the *Rappresentazione di San Giovanni quando fu decollato*.

With the Baptist great and the holy blest
 To demonstrate that from all travail
 This reward will you liberate,
 With every doubt and danger conquered
 In the End, Paradise shall be your Home. 56

Enter SAINT JOHN, who says these words:

O human race, fount of excellence,
 Raise your eyes to the Creator Highest
 To acquire virtue, and knowledge
 Of the eternal good which never dies.
 Reflect upon your seed,
 Verily created not for error's sake,
 But as the divine means to ensure
 Sempiternal joy on Heaven's shore. 64

This day I reveal unto you Isaiah's
 Word, which was: 'Lo I send my lamb,
 My messenger, to pave the path of the
 Gentlest Lamb, the Lamb of God'.²
 This my voice protests to you,
 In the zeal of charity, filled by the desire
 To apprise each of God's high design,
 Like the voice's clamour 'midst empty desert. 72

'Prepare the Way of the Lord'
 Spoke our first father Adam,
 As one into error fallen
 Redemption from Heaven is ours to ask –
 And ours to earn, like bread by toil bought –
 For what we have done displeases God
 So much, that the world has been convulsed
 By dark, and Heaven's way slammed shut. 80

He then baptizes all the disciples, upon which he declaims the following verses. And when all are baptized, the SCRIBES of the KING come to SAINT JOHN, and ask him who he is:

By the new law in water I baptize
 The head of each man before me.
 The Father, Son and Holy Spirit here reign
 Uninterruptedly over Sky and Earth,
 Ascending the empty thrones
 From which there issued a furious rain of nine
 Days and nights, and over all shall fly the one
 Mantle of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. 88

The SCRIBES, two magnificent emissaries both, come upon Saint John, and speak thus to him:

What be the reason of your coming,
 John, to preach, which fills all men
 With marvel. We would like to hear
 What behoves you to the task.
 If you are Christ, confess, dissimulate not.
 If you are Elijah, which it is believed
 You are (your ascetic life befits it),
 Tell. Be you a prophet? 96

² Cf. MALACHI 3, 1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me".

In responding the Scribes, SAINT JOHN says:

Christ I am not, who was born after me,³
Of the most excellent Virgin Mary.
I would not conceal the truth from you,
I tell you I am not Elijah,
Or a prophet, as the world reposes.

Enraged, the SCRIBES question Saint John:

Then why do you baptize, and by what authority?

SAINT JOHN *responds:*

In water I baptize, in Christ I trust
And with loud voice this to the desert I proclaim.

104

JESUS and GOD THE FATHER *have now to appear on the mountain; JESUS with four angels in train, two before him, and two behind. They must move very slowly, so as to permit SAINT JOHN to speak these verses before he comes upon JESUS:*

Turn your intellects, human race,
To this pure, immaculate Lamb
Of whom Abraham the Prophet already has told.
Suscepit Isdrael, the sweet issue
Of God the Father's own breast,
Who came to save the Universe entire,
As the Holy Scriptures attest,
Truly the Creator of human nature.

112

SAINT JOHN *continues to speak, and turns to the SCRIBES, showing them JESUS:*

Behold the Immaculate Lamb of God,
Behold the Subtractor of Sin,
Who to save the Human Race was born –
The Eternal Father likes it and wills it.
This is Him of whom I foretold,
Who unties our knotted, entwined sins,
It is He whose sandal-thongs
I am not worthy to untie.

120

This is truly the One God in life
Sung by the Holy Scriptures *ab eterno*.
See, my finger indicates Him.
This is He, who shall be revered
By all while the Eternal
Heaven holds sway. In nature,
Three with the Father and the Spirit,
Paradise is His Promise to the Righteous.

128

JESUS *arrives amongst them. All fall prostrate upon the ground. JESUS says:*

My Peace, which can never be diminished,

³ Cf. LUKE 1, 16-18; 24-27. Yet l. 97 could equally be rendered thus: "Christ I am not, who was born *before* me". Cf. JOHN 1, 15: "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This is he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me". The original Italian runs "Cristo non son, che innanzi a me è nato".

And which is without limit, immeasurable,
 I give to you, in the rainbow's sign,
 So that its divine works, its operations all,
 Might afford a rein to the errors of the world.
 May you the roses without thorns gather,
 With scorn of hunger, thirst, hot and cold,
 So that in the End Heaven's Way be open to you. 136

O good John, nigh is the moment
 In which your words will flower and fruit,
 A Holy Fruit, burgeoning with Wisdom
 Enough to make light of the world's sorrow.
 Let us to the Jordan's waters go,
 Where I will shed my robes, and receive,
 In contempt of icy water's reprisal,
 From your hands the seal baptismal. 144

SAINT JOHN *responds*:

Alas, alas, my good Lord,
 Who makes you with so humbly bow,
 Being the true Divine Essence,
 To baptism at the hands of a sinner ?

JESUS *responds to SAINT JOHN*:

Be silent, for it pleases my Divine Father
 The Creator of the Seen and the Unseen.

SAINT JOHN *replies to Jesus*:

If it pleases Him, let us go to the waters.
 I will do what he pleases. 152

There must come a Dove, that is, the HOLY SPIRIT. An hidden voice must speak for that dove, and it must say the stanzas that follow:

Behold, this is my well-belovèd Son,
 In Whom I am pleased and fulfilled,
 Upon Whom my Eternal Blessing flows.
 He is the Son of God sent by Me,
 To absolve the sin of the First Father,
 To restore him to Heaven, whence he was
 Banished as sower of discord,
 My mercy will be done. 160

JESUS *ascends the Mount, and SAINT JOHN resumes his sermon and says seven stanzas which read thus:*

—Prepare the Way of the Lord,
 Is the dictum that Isaiah wrote.⁴
 The flower which sprang of a virginal maid,
 Will save the world: that's its purpose.
 Glean the tenor of Jacob's words:
 The Lamb that will purge the World of Sin
 Will arrive in actions pious and humble
 The True Son of God, our Redeemer. 168
 —Prepare the Way of the Lord,
 Said Israel's Great Chief,

⁴ Cf. ISAIAH 7, 14.

Did not twelve tribes pass
 Across the Red Sea
 Rich still in gold, silver, and arms?
 The Spotless Lamb is grazing
 Whole, integral, without Fault
 Thus it shall remain, with not a bone broken.⁵ 176
 —Prepare the Way of the Lord,
 Wrote David in his *opus* divine.
 Here is the Saviour of the World,
 Crowned with biting thorns,
 To draw doubt from His people
 And to restore to empty thrones
 The fallen, by an action most pious,
 The Son of God is amongst you. 184
 —Prepare the Way of the Lord,
 Said Wisdom's own essence,
 Solomon the Wise, the flower of wisdom.
 Here is the living light, the sustenance
 To draw evil from out all nations,
 As the Son of God, th' Armistice-giver
 Of eternal peace, to all wars
 Creator of the Abyss, Sky, and Earth. 192
 —Prepare the Way of the Lord,
 Spake Jonah, who reaped good from it.
 Behold me, whose plaint God heeded,⁶
 Who spent three days in the monster's belly,
 (As did Christ in the sepulchre)⁷
 Thereafter living in perfect peace.
 Resurrected on the Third Day, tells Luke
 The Lord shall walk from dark of the tomb. 200
 —Prepare the Way of the Lord,
 Wrote Jeremiah the Prophet.
 Behold, I send an angel with love
 Before Him to light the Way.⁸
 I, John, without error, am that angel,
 John, son of Zachariah,
 Who protests the certain Coming of God,
 Whose voice resounds through the desert. 208
 Lend your intellects, you who listen, and learn:
 This is the pure, divine Lamb,
 Who was before me, and no different
 To the One to come after me: this is the truth,
 And to untie the leather of His sandals,
 I am not worthy. O good, beloved Jesus,
 Whom all the prophets have foretold:
 Here, my finger indicates Him. 216

KING HEROD *now arrives in the desert, to coincide with the end of the above stanza.* SAINT JOHN *now addresses to him the three stanzas that appear below:*

Sempiternal, infinite, and Holy God,

⁵ Cf. EXODUS 12, 46: "In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof".

⁶ Cf. JONAH 2, 2.

⁷ There seems to be a persistence of the number '3' in the Book of Jonah, which, in numerology, betokens the numinous. Jonah spent three days in the belly of the sea-monster, the walk to Nineveh was "of three days journey", and he spent three days in it, from the time of his arrival to the destruction of the gourd.

⁸ Again, an echo of MALACHI 3, 1, though JEREMIAH 31, 22, alludes as much.

Whose hands shape and direct, with
 Motions humble, angelic, and pure
 The benign, humane, earthly power of kings:
 Who lives in fear of God's wrath,
 Yet robes with such exalted, regal, luxury,
 In purple, silks, gold, and pearls
 So that my eyes tire with the sight? 224
 God's Son from Heaven to Earth came,
 In the chaste, Holy Virgin's womb,
 In one garb, if I do not err against
 The volumes of Holy Writ.
 Royal fool, if your robes march on you,
 Your battle is surely darker and fiercer
 To keep the diadem on your head.
 Why keep you a sister – your brother's wife? 232
 Ah, cruel king, your brother's enemy,
 How will *you* claim grace before God
 For such sin and cruel outrage?
 You shall die, and die as a traitor!
 Withhold yourself, King, from this verge,
 And know that divine justice never *dies*.
 A fitting courtesy would be yours:
 Restore her to the husband that's hers. 240

THE KING *responds*:

 God's own enlightened Prophet,
 What moves you to blacken me so?
 For I know well I've never so sinned –
 For I would be covered with shame.

SAINT JOHN *responds thus*:

Ah, foolish King, conceal it not!
 Return to your pavilions, think no more,
 Return the woman and do as I say,
 If you would be restored to God's grace. 248

The King returns home, and presently goes to the WOMAN [the QUEEN] and speaks to her thus:

 Alas, my poor, misadventured self!
 Alas, dear companion, it is with sorrow
 That I return to you from the sands of desert!
 I have seen the worthy, holy man, and
 He spoke of us in a manner by me unthought,
 Such that I am well disposed to go out,
 And turn to God with a contrite heart,
 And return you to your husband, on my part. 256

The WOMAN responds, much disturbed and on the verge of tears, in this manner:

 Alas, miserable, wretched soul I am,
 How this has forced all else from my care!
 Unfortunate being am I, who have become
 On the account of good, inimical to you.
 Oh! This blow from a blade so sharp
 Was not expected, and my heart nurses
 Such grief in its chambers as to be ever silent.
 O King, you truly have your mind disowned! 264

The KING replies, and says this:

Be silent, woman, speak not those words,
For I am disposed, truly, by my heart
To live in contrition – all else is folly –
And remain in the grace of the eternal God.

The WOMAN responds:

Honest King, know you what's to be done?
In their children, every hope, all desires
Of a king must reside, as is just. 272
You revile yours; the opposite you must.
Don't you know that I have a damsel
By you, and that you made her
So honest, beauteous, humble and rare, as
To seem a daughter of Paradise?
May she be, my King, a medicine good
To cure the infamy heaped upon you.
Believe me, King, should you follow my plan,
She will bring death unto that man. 280

The KING speaks thus:

Be silent, woman, do not speak, restrain
Those words, and act as I direct.
If to offend John you design
The realm entire will not brook it,
And we both shall face an evil fate,
Leaving my issue sad and doleful.
For such a saint is John, in word and deed,
That my domains foundations would shake. 288

The WOMAN responds thus:

Think, discern the reason there,
Alive, and palpable. You cannot err.
By the holy crown, your birth-feast is nigh:
I shall command your daughter to dance.
Advise her a rich reward most quickly
To select, when the applause
Of monarchs and lords is heaped on her: 296
For she will claim the head of the Baptist.
And make seen, King, your great concern,
Seem ill-disposed to concede her wish,
Contrive it quickly, and the outrage
Will come upon you so that you rise.
Nothing will be said of it or of John's fate,
But send for him with let or delay.

The KING responds immediately:

Be it done, woman, as you relate
If it please you, then I am content. 304

When these words are said, the KING mounts his throne, and calls for his vassal. The VASSAL genuflects, and the KING bids him thus:

Vassal, rise, to the desert go, and

Find John the Baptist, and having so done,
 Make certain that my will becomes deed.
 Tell him that he does well to obey,
 And cause him to come before me (alone
 Rather than with many, though I'll be done
 With him for good in a moment).
 Cause to be happy in his coming.

312

The VASSAL departs, and goes to SAINT JOHN, and speaks thus to him:

Worthy John, devoted servitor of God,
 Forerunner of the Son's sacred way,
 Sweeter than all manna or honey,
 Our King and magnanimous lord
 Prays gracefully that you should come
 In tranquillity and without noise,
 In company of one or two of your elect,
 Before him, as presently you can.

320

SAINT JOHN responds in the four verses below. The KING, meanwhile, rises from the throne and joins the QUEEN, and awaits SAINT JOHN:

Glory be to the Eternal, Highest God,
 The Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 Whose celestial way I forerun,
 To deliver the world of all grief.

SAINT JOHN reaches the KING and speaks thus:

Here, King, am I, to hear your will.
 What desires the serene and royal Presence?

The KING responds in haste:

Ah, John, my John, your temerity
 Will presently answer you that.
 You fill the realm with the calumny
 Of my brother's wife. It is wrong!
 Who may give proof of such evil,
 Verify such insatiable curses?

328

SAINT JOHN responds:

My King, if you are to flee the stain
 Of your sins, and live in a manner just,
 To please Jesus, which you must,
 Is the course to maintain.

336

The QUEEN, who is present, responds in this manner:

O wise monarch and mighty lord,
 Deliver me of these injustices!
 Will you be content, in the shame
 Of honour unvindicated, to brook
 A hermit's arrant charges?
 Come, have him thrown into a cell
 From which he cannot flee, and for his
 Words plead your clemency.

344

The KING responds with great pomp:

Forward, valiant guards, take this
Fell charlatan with little ceremony
And place him in a dungeon fast
So that he might contemplate his ruin.
No, I prayed him with courtesy and regard
To cease, and be quiet. No, the elixir
Of gentle courtesy and of honest words avails
Not: he spoke ill, as now legions will.

352

He is taken and put in prison, and the KING, content in his actions, resumes his throne and speaks thus to his barons. First he must despatch his HERALD to summon the baronage:

Make haste, and come, Sir Herald,
My right worthy chancellor, and
Listen with whole and sane intellect
Understand the subtle tenor of my speech,
To which, with true zeal and ready effect
You will give able execution.
Search my realm, without regard to respite,
And invite every magnate to my feast.

360

In departing, the HERALD says:

Magnificent peer, I am truly
Sent to your Lordship
By the authority of his Holy Majesty.
And upon his part I am bade to invite
You to the royal festivity.
The King will show much honour,
Go forth with your retinue.
My embassy is now over.

368

The Herald gone, the LORD goes forth with his retainers and says:

Because it pleases him, I am well content
In going to the King, and so giving honour.
Come, barony, make haste
Let all be dressed for court.

They arrive at the royal court, and say:

Here, king, may it please you,
Wishing to honour you in sincerity,
At this truly sumptuous feast,
I have brought my own retinue.

376

A procession of divers LORD and BARONS arrives, and the KING addresses them thus:

My venerable peers and lords,
Dukes, counts, and the chief barony,
To explain myself to you,
I would make known the reason
For this great feast, and these state
Honours today bestowed. The cause
Of today's pleasure, and mine
Is, my brothers, my natal feast.
Yet, I keenly pray each of you

384

In princely mien at this feast to show,
 Not to hide, which talents you may bestow.
 Such is my will, my inflexible resolution
 To exceed myself for your delectation,
 My mind is resolved; all must reveal
 Their desires, so that I might give satiety
 To your *every* wish, to all possible nicety. 392

One thing more, by God, you minstrels,
 Make this banquet with joy resound.
 For it is the day when all will be content
 In my generosity great and largesse immense.
 May the board unite guards and sergeants,
 The pages and lackeys in friendly bond;
 Silver chalices and virginal damasks
 Shall abound. Today exist no other cares. 400

All go to the board and eat. When the repast is half over, the Queen sends the MAIDEN to dance, and when she has completed it she curtsies before the King her father, upon which rises one of the LORDS, who speaks thus to the King:

O glorious, most Regal Majesty,
 How laudable are your deeds, made
 Greater by your imperial daughter
 Who seems angelic, a vision of Heaven.
 How beauteous and lithe her dance!
 It fills the high barony with grace.
 Right King, how just and fine it seems
 On this day to give her some reward. 408

The KING Responds thus:

By my life, my Lords, from whom
 I derive my sceptre and crown, she may
 Ask what she will, – half the realm, even,
 Shall be hers if that be her claim.
 And do not, fond daughter, have regard
 To your father's admonitions past:
 Request what reward you think just;
 If it be half my lands, they are yours! 416

The MAIDEN departs the table and goes to the QUEEN. She addresses her thus:

My own beloved mother, I have been
 Before the King, my father's crown,
 And lately gazed upon by all the court
 In my dancing, and each man avers
 That I should request a royal reward.
 The King assents, and you, mother, assist
 My thoughts, for which I am much obliged,
 I will ask whatever you decide. 424

The QUEEN responds to the MAIDEN thus:

Go, sweet child to the King your father.
 To receive what he has promised to bestow,
 You must speak with words both gentle
 And fleeting, and use your guile with art.
 Then ask, child, in a manner piteous
 What I will tell you (worry not,
 For it will not cause any travail).

Demand John the Baptist's head. 432

The MAIDEN quits the Queen, and goes before the King, and says:

O esteemed, worthy and eminent nobles,
Whose presence pleases the King
My father, be generous, and shun avarice.
Hear out the reward I respectfully request:
It is a thing which entails no coin,
Cities or lands, or gems as appanage.
Give me, holiest of crowns, give me
The Head of the Baptist. 440

The KING responds thus:

Alas, alas, damnable daughter
From the day of your conception
To this moment, by all the people called
A base, conniving strumpet,
May the God in Heaven, with one bolt
Reduce you to a mound of smoking ash!
My grace (my heart is sick with the thought)
Will not let blood be asked of it. 448
So resolved am I, with will inflexible
That could I command every tongue conceivable
They would not suffice to tell you
That it seems a most ugly thing
To condemn to death such a holy man
As reward for an evil girl's gymnastics.
Ah, it causes my heart to distill into pure pain
Nor will I concede what you hoped to gain. 456

At these words, the MAIDEN makes as if to cry, and a BARON rises and addresses the King:

Wise and legitimate Monarch,
Magnanimous wearer of the Crown,
By my rights, your daughter is correct:
You have promised a reward to bestow,
So do not shirk giving it, now.
You are beholden the request to grant.
Do not let a mere pittance ruin the feast:
Send now for the Baptist's head. 464

The KING continues to listen whilst another BARON rises and speaks thus:

Come now, my Lord, this day, which is
Full of every pleasure, must not be marred.
Render her the tribute and reflect upon it,
Your barony is agreed to the same effect:
It should be done, all dishonour will be effaced
If you see that what is desired is effected.
Send forth the seneschal and his myrmidons:
End it presently, o King, cut off his hands. 472

The KING responds:

I would fain that my demesnes became
A ruined and uninhabited pavilion
Than endure the blows of Fate:

That my life end this day,
 I well prefer to these dark, disturbèd doings.
 Yet, nonetheless, your pleasure distills
 From it, and your honour I must appease.
 See, I do it, though most unwillingly. 480
 Come here, Seneschal, come quickly
 And to the great Baptist's cell proceed
 With the companions my will decrees.
 When you are upon him, seal the affair.
 Act so that you deprive him of his head,
 And when the task is accomplished
 Return, as befits one's duty to perform,
 And cause the head to be sent to my table. 488

The SENESCHAL comes forth, who summons his staff, and says:

 Make haste, rise, men, tarry not
 For acts of great portent now unfold:
 Assume your arms; bearing them, file forth
 With arrows, culverins, lances and blades.
 See that the axe-man is found, and
 Conduct him directly without delay
 To the cells of the prison, and mark out
 John, the son of Zachariah. 496

They have now to go to the prison, but they must wait for JESUS to take his leave of SAINT JOHN before running there. Says JESUS to SAINT JOHN:

 O, good John, the end of this life
 Is, for my elect, the beginning of Paradise.
 As presently you will take leave
 Of this world, one thing I'll instruct you:
 To Paradise invite, when Limbo you reach,
 The Holy Fathers for the mirthful, joyous feast.
 Promise them long awaited beatitude
 And make clear that I am come to the World. 504
 Touch for me the palm of Adam the father
 And on my account offer a salutation
 Such that he know his long and hard plaint
 To jubilation and joy has reverted.
 Find Abraham, and find Isaac,
 Who will come accompanied by Jacob.
 Tell them I come to heal their afflictions;
 As Jonah and David will learn. 512
 And every other father interned
 In the holy Limbo you shall tell
 I have today forded the Jordan;
 My allotted time here is but short.
 Tell them I am baptized of your hands,
 And you shall see me, into their company
 Descend, in strength and glory righteous
 To force the gates of Limbo. 520
 Satan, there below imprisoned
 I will keep subdued, and all there
 Will see him, as I move from person
 To person. When I have delivered all,
 Joyous and relieved, of body transcended,
 I will conduct them to Heaven, in the desire
 Of presenting their souls to my Father. 528

SAINT JOHN *responds*:

O blessed Jesus, word eternal,
 One thousand years only, it seems to me
 Can suffice to make clear your high design,
 Which I am charged to effect.
 I pray that the pure, unstained vessel
 That is your mother, the Virgin Mary,
 Will pray for me at my moment of departure
 As she will, for presently I will be a martyr.

536

JESUS *responds to SAINT JOHN*:

Have strength, John, for fine fruit
 Will spring of your travail.
 My Mother, and I, and Paradise entire
 Are with you: fear it not.

SAINT JOHN *responds*:

Regard my visage, composed and dry:
 Neither tears nor pain offer me torment.
 Leave, Lord, my time approaches.
 Son of God, I go to the Father.

544

The EXECUTIONER arrives and speaks thus to SAINT JOHN:

Come, hear, John, and remain attent.
 The King, and his barons, send us here
 To behead you,
 It is decided, all is concluded.

SAINT JOHN *responds*:

May God be sung in His every essence.
 Here, without dispute, my own head
 Which I from out this prison send
 That God may eternally be praised.

552

The EXECUTIONER responds:

I pray God's forgiveness, good John,
 From sinew to sinew my flesh and marrow
 Trembles; note the words I speak:
 I am obliged to do what I must.

SAINT JOHN *responds*:

Do your office, strike well. Lightning,
 Thunder, or water's rush that quells the fire,
 Were never as quick in their effects
 As I shall be in obtaining your divine pardon

560

SAINT JOHN *now presents his head to the block and it is cut off. The SENESCHAL awaits with a salver, into which is put the head, upon which the soul departs and goes to Limbo and says the following to the HOLY FATHERS in Limbo*:

Heavenly rejoicing and infinite happiness
 I make known to you, Adam, father of all.
 Today I have attained the life eternal,
 To which Jesus bids me call you,
 And all the holy fathers, for ended
 Is your every travail and vain hope,
 And on His part, clearly I tell,
 That your entry into Paradise will be swift.

568

ADAM responds, and says this:

May the true God, and His Son,
 Who to save us was born,
 Be eternally praised.
 For He out of Limbo will us draw
 And you, who baptized Him with your hands
 I tell, and clearly I respond
 That each of us wrote of His coming,
 Thus it is appointed that He comes.

576

The SENESCHAL brings the head to the table and says:

Here, dread Lord, the head you demand
 Of the pure son of Zachariah.
 Do of it what you will, our part is done.

The KING responds immediately, and says:

Evil, criminal, painful child,
 Take it away. May tempests and sorrow
 Rain on you such that they be an eternal
 Keepsake of your depraved prize,
 And the deserts of your monstrous sin.

584

The MAIDEN takes the head and brings it to her MOTHER, and says:

Here, my fond mother, is the Baptist's
 Head, which uttered many words
 Against your name, and what came of it.
 Look, look, it speaks no more.

The MOTHER responds, and says this:

Show it, sweet child. Ah, I see it !
 Ah, why speak you not, for one speaks
 When there is cause for it, as is wise,
 Not merely idle chatter to foment?

592

When these words are said, the QUEEN'S ruin is to be contrived, by producing two loud blasts in unison, upon which the Earth must open, and swallow the QUEEN. Upon which the ANGEL must deliver this stanza, and give manumission to all:

O you people, spectators at the feast
 Of the Venerable, sainted John
 Who from Heaven succours all,
 May God preserve from trial and anxiety,
 Whatever your lives have been,
 May God kept from eternal harm
 And grant us grace, without disgrace
 So that the next year may bring us peace.

600

Here ends the sacred action of Saint John