

*Seb.* Hear me, my liege. In that I am a Christian  
You have the best bond of my fidelity!

*Max.* Ingrate!

*Seb.* Listen, most noble Emperor. Where is fidelity?  
'Twas this you asked a moment since.

I'll answer. Go to the prisons, strike the iron off  
The Christian's limbs; he is enchained fidelity.

Go to the courts, unload the groaning rack.

From the arena and the tiger's jaws snatch

The maimed Christian; maimed man but whole

In faith. Believe me, sire, no legion in your pay

Can count as many loyal hearts as languish

In Roman prisons, charged only with their faith.

And further, this: they never can be true

To king or state, who do not, above all,

Fear, honor and obey the King of Kings.

*Max.* Folly and madness! I'd rather have a body guard  
Of wolves than Christians. Your treachery is enough.

*Seb.* No traitor am I, royal Emperor. By night and day,  
Guarded, unguarded, I had access to you.

If I were a traitor, the traitor's opportunity

Offered at every hour—

*Max.* Yet you concealed your creed.  
You feared the bitter death due to your crime.

*Seb.* No, sire! Coward no more than traitor.  
I had a duty to my brethern—for them I lived;  
But hope had almost died within me.

Fulvius, I thank thee!

Thou hast spared me the sad choice