

JOHN: God, that made both more and less;
 Heaven and earth at his own will,
 And made man in his own likeness
 As that which would his joy fulfil;
 And to the earth sent his brightness, 5
 Both sun and moon, bound by his skill:
 He save you all from sinfulness
 And keep you clean, by his goodwill.

Among the prophets I am one
 That God has sent to teach all here 10
 His law, to amend all that have gone
 To wrong, by example, and preaching clear.
 My name, in truth, is Baptist John;
 My father, Zachary most dear,
 Ye know, that was dumb and made moan 15
 Before my birth, and stood in fear.

Elizabeth my mother was:
 Aunt unto Mary, maiden mild;
 And, as the sun shines through the glass,
 Just so in her womb came her child. 20
 But many a one enquired now has
 If I be Christ: they are beguiled!
 For Jesus shall amend man's trespass,
 That with frailty of filth is defiled!

I am sent but as messenger 25
 From him that all misdeeds may mend.
 I go before, tidings to bear:
 To go before God did me send,
 His ways and laws to teach with care

To man and wife that did offend. 30
 Great strife and sorrow must he bear
 Before he brings all to an end.

They shall hang him upon the rood -
 Man's soul is to his heart so dear! -
 And on it they will shed his blood, 35
 As if a traitor or thief he were;
 Not for his guilt, but for our good,
 Because we are in great sin here!
 Thus shall he die, that precious food,
 And rise again to mend our cheer. 40

In clear water, then, baptize I
 The people gathered in this host.
 But he shall do more mightily,
 And baptize in the Holy Ghost;
 And with the blood of his body 45
 Wash our sins, both least and most.
 Thus shielded well I think we be
 Against the foul fiend's fearful boast.

I have no worthiness, indeed,
 To loose the least string of his shoe. 50
 But God whose knowledge doth exceed,
 In earth thy will we all must do.
 I thank thee, Lord, that sows thy seed
 Among mankind, so soon to grow,
 And with thy food now dost us feed 55
 As on earth comes each day anew.

We are, Lord, bounden unto thee,
 To love thee here, both day and night;

For thou has sent thy son freely
To save man's soul, struck by death's blight 60
Through Adam's sin and Eve's folly,
Who sinned through the fiend's might;
But, Lord, on man have thou pity,
And bring thy bairns to heaven so bright.

ANGEL 1: Hearken to me, thou, John Baptist! 65
The father of heaven, he greets thee well
For he has found thee true of trust,
Doing thy duties with all zeal.
To thy hand, then he doth entrust -
Since thou art strong as any steel - 70
That thou shalt baptize Jesu Christ,
In Jordan River, man's care to heal.

JOHN: A, dear God, what may this be?
I heard a voice, but saw none here!

ANGEL 1: John, it is I that spoke to thee; 75
To do this deed have thou no fear.

JOHN: Should I wait till he come to me? -
But never would he then appear!
I shall go meet that Lord lovely,
To him my way now shall I steer. 80

ANGEL 2: Nay, John, that is not his command:
His father's will do steadfastly.

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TOWNELEY CYCLE 15: John Baptist

Draft 2

ANGEL 1:	John, remain thou here at hand But when he comes, be not weary.	
JOHN:	By this I may well understand That children brought to church should be To be baptized in every land. This law is still most strange to me.	85
ANGEL 2:	John, this place it is pleasing And it is called the Jordan stream. Here is no church, nor no building But where'er our Lord supreme Ordains, is his will, and bidding.	90
JOHN:	In truth most right this now does seem: That I should work at his pleasing, And each as best they can please him.	95
	Since I must now his wish fulfil He shall be welcome unto me; I yield me wholly to his will, Wheresoever I bide or be: His servant in valley or on hill, Bearing his message joyfully! Whether he choose to save or spill, I shall it grudge in no degree.	100
JESUS:	John - God's prophet here below! - My father, that is unto thee dear, Has sent me to thee, well thou know, To be baptized in water clear,	105

So to redress man's wrong and woe.
The law I will fulfil right here: 110
My father's ordinance is so,
And thus my will is that it were.

I come to thee, baptism to take,
To whom my Father has me sent,
With oil and cream that thou shall make 115
Unto that worthy sacrament.
Therefore, John, do it not forsake,
But come to me in this moment.
No further step now will I take
Till I have done his commandment. 120

JOHN: Ah, Lord, I love thee for thy coming!
I am ready to do his will,
In word, in work, in every thing
Whatever he send with all goodwill.
And yet this beauteous lord to bring 125
To his servant - how may I this fulfil?
For a knight to baptize his Lord king
I have no power, nor no skill.

And if I were worthy
So to fulfil this sacrament, 130
I have no knowledge, certainly,
To do it after thine intent.
And therefore, Lord, I ask mercy:
Hold me excused - well have I meant!
I dare not touch thy blessed body: 135
My heart will never to that assent!

JESUS: Of thy knowledge, John, fear thou not:
My father himself, he will thee teach.
He that all this world has wrought
Sent thee here plainly for to preach; 140
He knows man's heart, his deed, his thought;
He knows how far man's power may reach.
And therefore here have I thee sought,
For his will none may over-reach.

Behold, he sends his angels two, 145
In token I am both God and man.
Give me now baptism ere I go,
And dip me in the stream Jordan.
Since he wills thus, now tell me who
Dares stand against him? John, come then, 150
And baptize me for friend or foe,
Do this as true, John, as thou can.

ANGEL 1: Obedience, John, in thyself find,
And hold not back in any thing.
Methinks thou should be much inclined 155
Here to fulfil my Lord's bidding
Early and late, in body and mind,
Therefore to thee this word I bring:
My lord to thee hath power assigned;
Then fear not for thy un-knowing. 160

ANGEL 2: He sends thee here his own dear child:
Welcome him, then: make him good cheer!
Born of a maiden, meek and mild,
That blessed babe is made thy peer.

With sin his mother was not defiled; 165
 There was never man came nigh her near.
 In word nor work she was never wild;
 Therefore, her son baptize thou here!

ANGEL 1: And sure, I would that by my skill
 Thou knew why he comes unto thee: 170
 He comes the law here to fulfil,
 As peerless prince, most mightily.
 And therefore, John, with all goodwill
 Do this, in every degree,
 And baptize him thou seest here still, 175
 For know thou well, this same is he!

JOHN: I am not worthy to do this deed,
 But yet God's servant here I stand;
 And so, dear Lord, since I must need,
 I will do as thou dost command. 180
 I tremble and I quake for dread!
 I dare not touch thee with my hand,
 But yet I know thou will me heed:
 Abide, my Lord, and by me stand!

 Jesu, in hast I baptize thee 185
 In thy Father's name, truly:
 In nomine patris et filii,
 Since he wills that so it be.
 Et spiritus altissimi:
 And of the Holy Ghost, surely. 190
 I ask thee, Lord, of thy mercy,
 That thou hereafter shall bless me.

 Here I thee anoint also

With oil and cream, with this intent:
 That men shall, wheresoe'er they go, 195
 Know this a worthy sacrament.
 There are six others, all must know,
 The which thysel to earth has sent.
 In token true that this be so,
 The first on thee now is it spent. 200

Pardon me, Lord, if I do wrong -
 My will it is for to do well!
 I am assailed by doubts so strong -
 If I did right I should here kneel!
 Bless me, that I may, e'er thou art gone 205
 Feel thy friendship, true as steel;
 I have desired this sight so long
 My death now scarcely would I feel.

JESUS: This beast John, bear with thee:
 It is a beast most blessed 210

Here let him hand on the Lamb of God to him

John, it is my Lamb you see,
 None other doth exist.
 It may shield thee from adversity,
 So in it place thy trust.
 By this beast known shall it be 215
 That thou art John Baptist.

JOHN: The Lamb of God I have seen indeed,
 Which washes away all this world's sin,
 And touched him, just as he decreed.

Unwilling was I to begin, 220
Till angels bade me pay good heed,
And stilled my unbelief within.
But he that rules our every deed,
His blessing now beg I of him.

JESUS: I grant thee, John, for thy travail 225
Joy everlasting in bliss to bide -
And to all that believe this tale
Yet saw me not thus glorified.
For I shall cause their foes to fail,
And send them succour on every side; 230
My father and I may them avail:
Men and women who vanquish pride.

But, John, go thou forth and preach
Against the folk that do amiss;
And to the people the truth now teach: 235
Show them the way to righteousness.
And, as far as thy wit may reach,
Bid them prepare, and pray for bliss;
For at the doom I shall charge each
That hears not thee, nor trusts in this. 240

Bid them leave sin, which I hate so:
For it must I die on a tree,
By prophecy this well I know.
My mother surely that sight must see,
And that sight fill her with sorrowful woe, 245
For I was born of her body.
Farewell, John, for now I go;
I bless thee with the Trinity!

Beware when death comes with distress,
So that ye die not suddenly. 280

Death spares not one that life has borne,
Therefore think well on what I say.
Beseech your God both even and morn,
To save you from all sin that day.
Think how in baptism ye are sworn 285
To be God's servants in every way;
Lose never his love or ye shall mourn.
God bring you to his bliss for ay!

Here ends John the Baptist.