

King John abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 1

Plea

Situation: Playing hardball with King Philip, Pandulph tells the French king “on perils of a curse” to renounce his pledge to King John, unless King John will “submit himself to Rome.” This aggressive challenge by Pandulph puts King Philip in a difficult position. He takes his pledge to King John seriously.

CONSTANCE: O Louis, stand fast! The devil tempts thee here in likeness of a new unadorned bride.

BLANCHE: The Lady Constance speaks not from her faith, but from her need.

CONSTANCE TO KING PHILIP: O, if thou grant my need, which only lives but by the death of faith, that faith would live again by death of need.

KING PHILIP: I am perplexed and know not what to say.

PANDULPH: What canst thou say but will perplex thee more, if thou stand excommunicated and cursed?

King Philip to Cardinal Pandulph

Good reverend father, put yourself in
My place. See yourself in my position.
This royal hand and mine, being newly knit,
Joined in faith through our inward souls, and with
The strength of sacred vows solemnly writ,
Sought peace ‘tween our kingdoms, beyond the myth
Of wishes. Shall these hands, lately purged of
Blood, each so strong and newly joined in love,
Now unyoke this grasp, break this new found tie
Of true sincerity by stooping low,
Unswearing faith sworn? O holy sir, my
Reverend father, let it not be so.
Out of your grace, impose some gentle end,
Letting us go on as each other’s friend.