

“Freue dich, erlöste Schar” BWV 30.2

Erster Teil

Part 1

1. Freue dich, erlöste Schar,
Freue dich in Sions Hütten!
Dein Gedeihen hat itzund
Einen rechten festen Grund,
Dich mit Wohl zu überschütten.

1. Rejoice, redeemed flock [of God’s people];
Rejoice over Zion’s [eternal] habitations.¹
Your flourishing now has
A properly secure foundation [Christ],²
To lavish you with wellbeing.

2. Wir haben Rast,
Und des Gesetzes Last
Ist abgetan.
Nichts soll uns diese Ruhe stören,
Die unsre liebe³ Väter oft
Gewünscht, verlangt und gehofft.
Wohlan,
Es freue sich, wer immer kann,
Und stimme seinem Gott zu Ehren
Ein Loblied an,
Und das im höhern Chor,
Ja, singt einander vor!

2. [In Christ] we have rest,
And the burden of the law [of Moses]
Is taken away.⁴
Nothing shall disturb us from this peace
That our dear fathers⁵ often
Wished, desired, and hoped for.
Well then,
Let him rejoice, whoever can,
And strike up a song of praise
In honor to his God;
And, yes, sing that [hymn]
Antiphonally in the superior choir.⁶

¹“Zion” was understood to be the church, the “redeemed flock” spoken of in line 1 of this movement (and likewise understood to be the “redeemed souls” spoken of in line 8 of movement 11, below). The “habitations” of the church were considered next-worldly and eternal, on the basis of Luke 16:9, “Machet euch Freunde ... auf dass ... sie euch aufnehmen in die ewigen Hütten” (“Make yourselves friends [in Christ] ... so that ... they [the friends—in heaven] may receive you into the eternal habitations”).

²This sentiment is partly derived from 1 Corinthians 3:11, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Einen anderen Grund kann zwar niemand legen ausser dem, der gelegt ist, welcher ist Jesus Christus” (“No one can indeed lay any other foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”).

³A needlessly clipped version of “lieben,” the nominative plural form of the adjective “liebe” (“dear/beloved”); it is changed to “lieben” in some modern editions.

⁴This sentiment—that the law of Moses is a burden lifted for Christians—is derived from Acts 15:10, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Was versucht ihr denn nun GOTT mit auflegen des Jochs auf der Jünger Hälse, welches weder unsere Väter noch wir haben mügen tragen?” (“Now why then do you [apostles] tempt God with laying of the yoke [of the law of Moses] upon the neck of the [gentile] disciples [of Jesus], which neither our fathers [old Israel] nor we have been able to bear?”); note that “mügen” is employed as a synonym for the more elevated word “vermögen” (“to be able to”).

⁵“Fathers” here would have been understood as referring to Christians’ “spiritual fathers”—the patriarchs of old Israel. “Unsere Väter” (“our fathers [of Israel]”) is a stock biblical phrase, found notably in Acts 15:10 (see fn. 4, above), Luke 1:72, and Psalm 22.

⁶What the phrase “im höhern Chor” means is elusive. The Luther Bibles of Bach’s day labeled each of the Psalms 120–134 “Ein Lied *im höhern Chor*” (“A song in the superior choir”). In the original Hebrew, the superscription is, literally, “A song of ascents.” The Calov Bible, which Bach owned, offers an explanation for Luther’s rendering of the Hebrew label: “[Das Lied] wird vom Aufsteigen also genennet, entweder wegen Aufsteigung und Erhebung der Herzen, in diesen XV. Liedern, ... oder wegen der Höhe und Fürtrefflichkeit

3. Gelobet sei Gott, gelobet sein Name,
Der treulich gehalten Versprechen und Eid!
Sein treuer Diener ist geboren,
Der längstens darzu auserkoren,
Dass er den Weg dem Herrn bereit.

3. Let God be praised, let his name be praised,
Who has faithfully kept [his] promise and oath [to Abraham].⁷
His faithful servant [John the Baptist] is born,
Who was chosen long ago⁸ for this,
That he [John] would prepare the way for the Lord [Jesus].

4. Der Herold kömmt und meldt den König an,
Er ruft; drum säumet nicht
Und macht euch auf
Mit einem schnellen Lauf,
Eilt dieser Stimme nach!
Sie zeigt den Weg, sie zeigt das Licht,
Wodurch wir jene selge Auen
Dereinst gewisslich können schauen.

4. The herald [John] comes and announces the king [Jesus].
He [John] calls; therefore do not tarry,
And sally forth
With a quick pace;
Make haste in pursuing this voice.
It shows the way, it shows the light
By which we can surely see someday
Those blessed meadows [in heaven].⁹

5. Kommt, ihr angefochten Sündner,
Eilt und lauft, ihr Adamskinder,
Euer Heiland ruft und schreit!
Kommet, ihr verirrtten Schafe,
Stehet auf vom Sündenschlafe,
Denn itzt ist die Gnadenzeit!

5. Come, you besieged sinners;
Make haste and run, you children of Adam;¹⁰
Your savior calls and cries out.
Come, you erring¹¹ sheep;
Arise from your complacency of sin,¹²
For now is the time of mercy/grace.

desselbigen” (“[The song] is so named from the ascent, either on account of the ascending and lifting up of the hearts in these fifteen songs, ... or on account of the height and excellence of these songs”).

⁷The “oath” is that of Luke 1:73, “den Eid, den er geschworen hat unserm Vater Abraham” (“the oath that he [God] had sworn to our [ancestral] father Abraham”). In Genesis 22:16–18, God swore that he would bless Abraham and his posterity. This promise was believed to be entirely fulfilled by the coming of God’s messiah, Jesus.

⁸The archaic adverb “längstens” was often used in poetry as a synonym for “längst” (“long ago”), especially in situations where an extra syllable was needed. It was also widely used in this way in everyday speech. In what sticklers held to be right usage, however, “längstens” properly meant “no longer than” or “no later than.”

⁹“Himmelsauen” (“heaven’s meadows”) and “himmlische Auen” (“heavenly meadows”) were stock phrases in the Lutheranism of Bach’s day and earlier.

¹⁰The expression “children of Adam” assumes not only that all human beings are descended from the Adam and Eve of the creation story in the biblical book of Genesis, but also that all humans have inherited from them a sin-stained essence in need of the redemption that was brought by the sacrificial death of God’s son and messiah, Jesus, a deliverance appropriated in faith through “Gnade” (“mercy/grace”).

¹¹In the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, Psalm 119:176 reads “Ich bin ein verirrttes und verlorenes Schaf” (“I [the psalmist] am an erring and lost sheep”). Lutheran commentary understood the first adjective to refer to being mislead or having gone astray in the sense of sinning, and the second to being near ruin in the sense of being likely to be punished eternally for sin and unbelief.

¹²“Sündenschlafe” (literally, “sleep of sin”) is a semi-technical early Lutheran theological term that refers to the complacency of the person who is corrupted in essence by sin but is obliviously “asleep” to this problem and needs to “wake up.”

**6. Eine Stimme lässt sich hören
In der Wüste weit und breit,
Alle Menschen zu bekehren:
Macht dem Herrn den Weg bereit,
Machet Gott ein ebne Bahn,
Alle Welt soll heben an,
Alle Täler zu erhöhen,
Dass die Berge niedrig stehen.¹³**

Zweiter Teil

7. So bist du denn, mein Heil, bedacht,
Den Bund, den du gemacht
Mit unsern Vätern, treu zu halten,
Und in Genaden über uns zu walten;
Drum will ich mich mit allem Fleiss
Dahin bestreben,
Dir, treuer Gott, auf dein Geheiss
In Heiligkeit und Gottesfurcht zu leben.

8. Ich will nun hassen
Und alles lassen,
Was dir, mein Gott, zuwider ist.
 Ich will dich nicht betrüben,
 Hingegen herzlich lieben,
 Weil du mir so genädig bist.

9. Und obwohl sonst der Unbestand
Den¹⁶ schwachen Menschen ist verwandt,
So sei hiermit doch zugesagt:
Sooft die Morgenröte tagt,
Solang ein Tag den andern folgen lässt,
So lange will ich steif und fest,
Mein Gott, durch deinen Geist

**6. A voice [John the Baptist's] is heard
In the wilderness, far and wide,
To convert all humankind.
Make ready the way for the Lord;
Make God a level path;
All the world shall begin
To lift up all the valleys,
So that the mountains are low.¹⁴**

Part 2

7. So you [God] are intent, then, my salvation,
On holding faithfully to the covenant that you made
With our fathers,¹⁵
And ruling over us in mercy/grace.
Thus will I, with all diligence,
Strive toward this:
At your behest, to live to you, faithful God,
In holiness and fear of God.

8. I will now hate
And forsake all
That is contrary to you, my God.
 I will not aggrieve you,
 But rather love [you] sincerely,
 Because you are so merciful/gracious to me.

9. And though otherwise inconstancy is
Kindred to [us] weak humans,
Let it hereby nonetheless be agreed:
As often as the daybreak dawns,
As long as one day is followed by the next,
This long do I wish absolutely,
My God, by your spirit,

¹³A stanza of “Tröstet, tröstet meine Lieben,” closely based on Luther’s translation of Isaiah 40:3-4.

¹⁴Lutheranism interpreted this passage, derived from Isaiah 40:3, metaphorically: the “valleys” meant hearts first made low by the law of Moses but then lifted up by the gospel of Jesus, and the “mountains” meant hearts first made proud by the hypocritical feelings of righteousness in doing good works but then made humble by the recognition of sin. In the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day the scriptural passage reads “Alle Thal sollen erhöht werden und alle Berge und Hügel sollen geniedrigt werden” (“All valleys shall be lifted up and all mountains and hills shall be made low”). These sentiments are quoted in slightly different wording by John the Baptist in Luke 3:4-6, announcing—as “a voice in the wilderness”—the coming of God’s messiah, Jesus.

¹⁵These lines are based on the Song of Zechariah, in Luke 1:68-79, where “the God of Israel” (in Christian nomenclature, “God the father”) is praised for keeping his covenant with Abraham, the father of the people of God. Regarding “our fathers,” see fn. 5, above.

¹⁶Some modern editions read “*dem* schwachen Menschen” (singular; literally, “to the weak person”), but Bach’s materials read “*den* schwachen Menschen” (plural; literally, “to the weak persons”).

Dir ganz und gar zu Ehren leben.
Dich soll sowohl mein Herz als Mund
Nach dem mit dir gemachten Bund
Mit wohlverdientem Lob erheben.

To live well and truly to you in honor.
My heart as well as my mouth,
According to the covenant made with you,¹⁷
Shall extol you with well-earned praise.

10. Eilt, ihr Stunden, kommt herbei,
Bringt mich bald in jene Auen!
Ich will mit der heiligen Schar
Meinem Gott ein¹⁸ Dankaltar
In den Hütten Kedar bauen,
Bis ich ewig dankbar sei.

10. Hasten, you hours, approach [the end time];¹⁹
Bring me soon into those meadows [in heaven].²⁰
With the holy flock [of Christians] I will
Build to my God an altar of thanksgiving
In the habitations of Kedar [the earthly church],²¹
Until I am eternally thankful [in heaven].

11. Geduld, der angenehme Tag
Kann nicht mehr weit und lange sein,
Da du von aller Plag
Der Unvollkommenheit der Erden,
Die dich, mein Herz, gefangen hält,
Vollkommen wirst befreit werden.
Der Wunsch trifft endlich ein,
Da du mit den erlösten Seelen
In der Vollkommenheit
Von diesem Tod des Leibes bist befreit,

11. Patience; the propitious day [of salvation]²²
Can no longer be far and distant,
When you, my heart,
Will be perfectly freed from all the pestilence
Of the earth's imperfection
That holds you captive.
The wish will finally come true
When, with the redeemed souls, you are freed
In the perfection [of the resurrection]

¹⁷As commanded by the covenant with God, in Isaiah 59:21.

¹⁸Poetically clipped version of “einen” (i.e., the masculine accusative form of the indefinite article).

¹⁹This line apparently combines two biblical sentiments: that no one knows “the hour” when the end time will arrive (Mark 13:32), and that “the kingdom of heaven is near in approach” (Matthew 3:2, 4:17, and 10:7, in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, “das Himmelreich ist nahe herbei kommen”).

²⁰See fn. 9, above.

²¹Without knowledge of their biblical background, the sense of these lines will be elusive. They draw on an expression from the female lover in the Song of Songs 1:5, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day reads “Ich bin schwarz, aber gar lieblich, ... wie die Hütten Kedars” (“I am black but very lovely, like the habitations of Kedar [i.e., like the color of their nomadic tents woven from the wool of black goats]”). Sometimes the underlying Hebrew word in Song of Songs 1:5 that Luther rendered with the adversative “aber” (“but”) clearly means the conjunctive “and,” and other times clearly means “but.” Whether “but” or “and” should be used for Song of Songs 1:5 has been much debated since the beginnings of biblical interpretation and translation, and this verse is especially controversial today. In Christianity, the Song of Songs was read as an allegory of the love of the “bridegroom-king,” Jesus, for his end-time “bride,” the church and/or the Christian soul. Lutheranism, and hence this cantata's poetry, subscribed to the leading early church father Augustine's adversative-inspired notion that the bride/church is “Nigra per naturam, formosa per gratium” (“black [i.e., taken here to connote “sinful”] by nature, [but] beautiful [i.e., saved] by [God's] grace”).

²²“Angenehme” here is a biblical expression meaning “acceptable (or, ‘propitious’),” not “pleasant.” The cantata's poetry derives its language from 2 Corinthians 6:2, “Jetzt ist die angenehme Zeit, jetzt ist der Tag des Heils” (“Now is the acceptable/propitious time [of mercy], now is the day of salvation [in Jesus]”). Luther described the “angenehme Zeit” as a Hebraism referring to God's “Evangelische Zeit” (“time of the gospel”), marked by forgiveness and mercy in Jesus. The Luther Bibles of Bach's day, for example, render Psalm 69:14 as “Ich aber bete, HERR, zu dir zur angenehmen Zeit” (“But I pray, Lord, to you at the acceptable/propitious time”).

Da wird dich keine Not mehr quälen.

12. Freue dich, geheiligte Schar,
Freue dich in Sions Auen!
Deiner Freude Herrlichkeit,
Deiner Selbstzufriedenheit
Wird die Zeit kein Ende schauen.

From this death of the [earthly] body,²³
When no hardship will torment you anymore.

12. Rejoice, sanctified flock [of God's people],
Rejoice over Zion's meadows [in heaven].
Of the glory of your joy,
Of your heart's content,
Time will see no end.

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



Scan or go to www.bachcantatatexts.org/BWV30.2 for an annotated translation

²³The line “von diesem Tod des Leibes” (literally, “from *this death of the body*”) is a curious variation on the famous expression in Romans 9:27, “wer wird mich erlösen von *dem Leibe dieses Todes?*” (“who will redeem me from *the body of this death*”), apparently with the same intended meaning. 1 Corinthians 15:44, in the rendering of the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, states: “hat man einen natürlichen Leib, so hat man auch einen geistlichen Leib” (“if one has a natural [earthly] body, then one also has a spiritual [heavenly] body [i.e., the natural body is transformed into the spiritual body at the resurrection of the dead, in the end time]”).