

“Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied” BWV 225

*Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, Die Gemeinde<sup>1</sup> der Heiligen sollen<sup>2</sup> ihn loben. Israel freue sich des, der ihn gemacht hat. Die Kinder Zion sei'n fröhlich über ihren<sup>3</sup> Könige, sie sollen loben seinen Namen in<sup>4</sup> Reihen; mit Pauken und mit Harfen sollen sie ihm spielen.<sup>5</sup>*

**Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet  
Über seine junge Kinderlein,  
So tut der Herr uns allen,  
So wir ihn kindlich fürchten rein.  
Er kennt das arm Gemächte,  
Gott weiss, wir sind nur Staub,  
Gleichwie das Gras vom Rechen,  
Ein Blum und fallend Laub.  
Der Wind nur drüber wehet,  
So ist es nicht mehr da,  
Also der Mensch vergehet,  
Sein End, das ist ihm nah.<sup>8</sup>**

Gott, nimm dich ferner unser an,  
Denn ohne dich ist nichts getan  
Mit allen unsern Sachen.

*Sing to the Lord a new song. The congregations<sup>6</sup> of saints shall praise him. Let Israel rejoice in the one who has made him. Let the children of Zion be joyful by way of<sup>7</sup> their king; they shall praise his name in ring dancing; with drums and with harps they shall play to him.*

**Like a father has mercy  
On his little young children:  
The Lord acts in the same way toward us all  
If we fear him innocently, childlike.  
He knows the wretched creature;  
We are, Lord knows,<sup>9</sup> but dust.  
Just like grass to the rake,  
Like a flower and falling foliage,  
The wind merely wafts over it,  
And it is there no more:  
In the same way, the human being passes;  
His end, it is near.**

God, take further care of us,  
For without you nothing in all our affairs  
Is accomplished.

<sup>1</sup>In modern German, “the congregation” is “der Gemeinde, and “the congregations” is “die Gemeinden”; in older German, however, “the congregation” was often “die Gemeinde,” and “the congregations” was often “die Gemeinen” but sometimes “die Gemeinde.” “Die Gemeinde” in modern German is “the [female] commoner.”

<sup>2</sup>The Luther Bibles of Bach’s day read not “die Gemeinde ... sollen” (“the congregations shall”) but “die Gemeinde soll” (“the congregation shall”).

<sup>3</sup>Bach’s own materials here read “ihren,” which has been given as “ihrem” in modern editions. Some Luther Bibles of Bach’s day read “ihrem,” while others read “ihren.” There is probably no real difference in meaning here, but the accusative-taking “über” might yield “by way of their king” or “about their king,” and the dative-taking might yield “over their king.”

<sup>4</sup>Bach’s own materials here read “in Reihen” (“in ring dancing”), which has been printed as “im Reihen” (“in the ring dance”) in modern editions. The Luther Bibles of Bach’s day typically read “im Reigen” (“in the ring dance”). “Reihen” and “Reigen” were synonymous. The Calov Bible, which Bach owned, reads “mit Reigen” (“with ring dancing”).

<sup>5</sup>Psalm 149:1-3.

<sup>6</sup>See fn. 1 and fn. 2, above, regarding the plural noun and verb here.

<sup>7</sup>See fn. 3, above, regarding an accusative versus dative use of the word “über” here.

<sup>8</sup>A stanza of “Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren.”

<sup>9</sup>The expression “Gott weiss” (literally, “God knows”) is used here not as an affirmation of the omniscience of God. It simply emphasizes the truth and obviousness of what is being said; just as, e.g., in English, one might say “Lord/Goodness/God knows I need a haircut.”

Drum sei du unser Schirm und Licht,  
Und trügt uns unsre Hoffnung nicht,  
So wirst du's ferner machen.  
Wohl dem, der sich nur steif und fest  
Auf dich und deine Huld verlässt.<sup>10</sup>

*Lobet den Herrn in seinen Taten, lobet ihn in  
seiner grossen Herrlichkeit!*<sup>11</sup> *Alles, was  
Odem hat, lobe den Herrn, Halleluja!*<sup>12</sup>

Be therefore our shield and light;  
And if our hope does not betray us,  
Then you will further carry it out [taking care of us].  
Well for him who just steadfastly  
Relies on you and your favor.

*Praise the Lord about*<sup>13</sup> *his deeds; praise him  
about*<sup>14</sup> *his great glory. Let everything that has  
breath praise the Lord, hallelujah.*

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



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<sup>10</sup>Bach's composing score includes a note that the two choirs exchange and sing a second verse of the movement that includes these two texts. Bach's surviving vocal performing parts do not reflect this, and it is not clear, in any event, whether this instruction refers to a second stanza of the chorale ("Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren") or (more likely) of the poetic text Bach refers to as an "Aria" ("Gott, nimm dich ferner unser an").

<sup>11</sup>Psalm 150:2.

<sup>12</sup>Psalm 150:6.

<sup>13</sup>Luther, idiosyncratically, employs the preposition "in" throughout this psalm verse, where others would use "für" ("for") or "wegen" ("on account of"); he apparently means "in" here in the sense of "in Anbetracht [von]" ("considering," "about").

<sup>14</sup>See fn. 13, above.