

Christmas Oratorio (BWV 248)

This work was first rendered during the Christmas season of 1734–35 in the main churches of Leipzig. *Part I* on Saturday, 25 December, at the morning service in the St. Nicholas Church, and at vespers in the St. Thomas Church; *Part II* on Sunday, 26 December, at the morning service in the St. Thomas Church, and at vespers in the St. Nicholas Church; *Part III* on Monday, 27 December, in the St. Nicholas Church; *Part IV* on Saturday, 1 January, at the morning service in the St. Thomas Church, and at vespers in the St. Nicholas Church; *Part V* on Sunday, 2 January, in the St. Nicholas Church; and *Part VI* on Thursday, 6 January, at the morning service in the St. Thomas Church, and at vespers in the St. Nicholas Church.

There are some revisions entered into Bach's score and performing parts for later renderings, but we do not know in which years these were made. A traversal through all six parts is possible for the Christmas seasons of 1739–40, 1744–45, and 1745–46, since the series of festival days then were the same as for 1734–35. Possibly individual cantatas from the set were rendered in various years. In any event, the libretto appears to have been left unchanged. (In years that the Christmas Oratorio was not rendered, Bach performed various liturgically appropriate cantatas that did not form into an oratorio cycle.)

[Part I] First Festival Day in Christmas

[1] CHORUS

Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf, preiset
die Tage,
Rühmet, was heute der Höchste
getan!

Shout, exult, arise, praise the
days [of Christmas],
glorify what the Most High this
day has done!

Lasset das Zagen, verbannet die
Klage,
Stimmet voll Jauchzen und
Fröhlichkeit an!
Dienet dem Höchsten mit
herrlichen Chören,
Laßt uns den Namen des
Herrschers verehren!

Leave off faintheartedness, ban
lamenting;
break forth into song, full of
shouting and rejoicing!
Serve the Most High with
glorious choirs;
let us revere the ruler's
name!

[2] EVANGELIST

Es begab sich aber zu der Zeit, daß ein Gebot von dem Kaiser Augusto ausging, daß alle Welt geschätzt würde. Und jedermann ging, daß er sich schätzen ließe, ein jeglicher in seine Stadt. Da machte sich auch auf Joseph aus Galiläa, aus der Stadt Nazareth, in das jüdische Land zur Stadt David, die da heißet Bethlehem; darum, daß er von dem Hause und Geschlechte David war, auf daß er sich schätzen ließe mit Maria, seinem vertrauten Weibe, die war schwanger. Und als sie dasselbst waren, kam die Zeit, daß sie gebären sollte.

But it happened at that time that a commandment went out from the emperor Augustus that all the [Roman] world be appraised.¹ And everyone [from Judea] went, that he might have himself appraised, each one to his [ancestral] city. Then Joseph too made out to go up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into the Jewish region² to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, this, because he was of the house and lineage of David, so that he might have himself appraised with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was pregnant. And while they were there, the time came that she should give birth.

[3] RECITATIVE

Nun wird mein liebster
Bräutigam,
Nun wird der Held aus Davids
Stamm
Zum Trost, zum Heil
der Erden

Now will my most beloved
bridegroom,
now will the champion from the
tribe of David –
for the consolation, for the
salvation of the earth –

¹The libretto here skips over Luke 2:2: "And this census was the very first: and [it] took place at the time that Cyrinius was governor in Syria" (this is Luther's rendering—Luke 2:2 has been variously translated and is historically controversial).

²In a few particular contexts Luther does translate the Bible's *Ioudaia* as "Judea [Luther: *Judäa*]," but for the most part he renders it "the Jewish region."

Einmal geboren werden.
Nun wird der Stern aus Jakob
scheinen,
Sein Strahl bricht schon
hervor.
Auf, Zion, und verlasse nun das
Weinen,
Dein Wohl steigt hoch empor!

[4] ARIA

Bereite dich, Zion, mit zärtlichen
Trieben,
Den Schönsten, den Liebsten bald
bei dir zu
sehn!
Deine Wangen
Müssen heut viel schöner
prangen,
Eile, den Bräutigam
sehnlichst zu
lieben!

[5] CHORALE

Wie soll ich dich empfangen
Und wie begegn' ich dir,
O aller Welt Verlangen,
O meiner Seelen Zier?
O Jesu, Jesu, setze
Mir selbst die Fackel bei,
Damit, was dich
ergötze,
Mir kund und wissend
sei.

at last be born.³
Now will the star out of Jacob
shine;⁴
its stream of light⁵ is already
breaking forth.
Arise, Zion, and forsake
weeping now;
your well-being lifts on high!

Make yourself ready, Zion, with
tender desires,
to see the Most Handsome, the
Most Beloved, soon at your
side!
This day your cheeks
must sparkle much
lovelier;
hurry on, to love the
Bridegroom most
ardently!⁶

How shall I receive you,
and how shall I meet you,⁷
o desire of all the world,
o decoration of my soul?
O Jesus; Jesus, set
the torch⁸ next to me yourself,
so that whatever brings you
enjoyment
may be manifest and known to
me.

³That is, Jesus is the Messiah, and his "bride" is the church ("Zion").

⁴See the "star out of Jacob" at Numbers 24:17.

⁵See also Wisdom of Solomon 7:25-26, where the personification of wisdom is described as a "radiant stream of glory from the Almighty [Luther: *Strahl der Herrlichkeit des Allmächtigen*]."

⁶Much of this (highly erotic) imagery comes from the Song of Songs, passim. Revelation 19:7 speaks of the "marriage" of Jesus ("the Lamb") and the church ("the wife," who "makes herself ready").

⁷Sirach 15:2, "And she will meet him as a mother: and will receive him as a young bride [Luther: *wie eine junge Braut*]."

⁸See Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, and a light on my path."

[6] EVANGELIST

Und sie gebar ihren ersten Sohn
und wickelte ihn in Windeln und
legte ihn in eine Krippe, denn sie
hatten sonst keinen Raum in der
Herberge.

And she gave birth to her first-
born son⁹ and wrapped him in
bands of cloth and laid him in a
manger, for they otherwise had
no space in the lodgings.

[7] CHORALE AND RECITATIVE

Er ist auf Erden kommen arm,

Wer will die Liebe recht
erhöhn,

Die unser Heiland vor uns
hegt?

Daß er unser sich

erbarm,

Ja, wer vermag es
einzusehen,

Wie ihn der Menschen Leid
bewegt?

Und in dem Himmel mache

reich,

Des Höchsten Sohn kömmt in
die Welt,

Weil ihm ihr Heil so wohl
gefällt,

Und seinen lieben Engeln

gleich.

So will er selbst als Mensch
geboren werden.

Kyrieleis.

He has come on earth poor,

Who will properly extol the
love

that our Savior feels
for us?

that he might have mercy on

us,

Indeed, who is capable of
perceiving it,

how human suffering moves
him?

and might make [us] rich,¹⁰ in

heaven,

The Son of the Most High
comes into the world

because its salvation pleases
him so well

and [might make us] equal to

his dear angels.¹¹

that he himself wants to be
born as man.

Lord have mercy.

[8] ARIA

Großer Herr, o starker König,

Liebster Heiland, o wie

wenig

Great Lord, o mighty King,

most beloved Savior, o how

little

⁹*Erster Sohn* is Luther's rendition throughout the Bible for the "firstborn," which is a technical term: God has a claim to the "firstborn" of animals and of humans (see Exodus 13:1-2). At Luke 2:22-39 Jesus will be brought to the Temple in Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord as the firstborn (a practice actually unknown, however, in Jewish tradition from either the written or oral law). Bearing in mind this technical language, incidentally, we do not have to conclude that Mary later gave birth to other children.

¹⁰The idea that Jesus makes people rich through his poverty comes from 2 Corinthians 8:9.

¹¹This idea comes from Luke 20:36, "they are equal to the angels [Luther: *den Engeln gleich*]."

Achtest du der Erden
Pracht!
Der die ganze Welt
erhält,
Ihre Pracht und Zier
erschaffen,
Muß in harten Krippen
schlafen.

do you regard the earth's
splendor!
He, who upholds¹² the
entire world,
[who] has created its
splendor and decoration,
must sleep in harsh
mangers.

[9] CHORALE

Ach mein herzliebes Jesulein,
Mach dir ein rein sanft
Bettelein,
Zu ruhn in meines Herzens
Schrein,
Daß ich nimmer vergesse dein!

Oh my beloved little Jesus,
make for yourself a perfectly
soft little bed,
to rest in the shrine of my
heart,
that I may never forget you!

[Part II] Second Festival Day
in Christmas

[10] SINFONIA

[11] EVANGELIST

Und es waren Hirten in derselben
Gegend auf dem Felde bei den
Hürden, die hüteten des Nachts
ihre Herde. Und siehe, des Herren
Engel trat zu ihnen, und die Klar-
heit des Herren leuchtet' um sie,
und sie furchten sich sehr.

And there were in the same
vicinity shepherds in the field,
by the live-stock pens; they
guarded their flocks by night.
And look, the Angel of the Lord
approached them, and the ra-
diance of the Lord lit up around
them, and they were very afraid.

[12] CHORALE

Brich an, o schönes
Morgenlicht,
Und laß den Himmel tagen!
Du Hirtenvolk, erschrecke
nicht,
Weil dir die Engel sagen,
Daß dieses schwache Knäbelein

Break out, o lovely morning
light,¹³
and let heaven dawn!
You shepherd folk, do not be
alarmed;
for the angels tell you
that this weak little boy

¹²Not *erhält* but *gemacht* ("made") in the printed libretto distributed to Bach's Leipzig congregants – the change has destroyed the rhyme with *Pracht*.

¹³Hosea 6:3, "he [the Lord] will break forth like the lovely red [light] of the morning [Luther: *heroor brechen wie die schöne Morgenröte*]."

**Soll unser Trost und Freude sein,
Dazu den Satan zwingen
Und letztlich Friede bringen!**

**shall be our comfort and joy,
[shall] vanquish Satan, too,
and finally bring peace!**

[13] EVANGELIST

Und der Engel sprach zu ihnen:

And the angel said to them:

ANGEL

Fürchtet euch nicht! Siehe, ich verkündige euch große Freude, die allem Volke widerfahren wird; denn euch ist heute der Heiland geboren, welcher ist Christus, der Herr, in der Stadt David.

Fear not! Look, I announce to you great joy, which will come to all people;¹⁴ for to you this day is born in the city of David the Savior, who is Christ, the Lord.

[14] RECITATIVE

Was Gott dem Abraham
verheißen,
Das läßt er nun dem
Hirtenchor
Erfüllt erweisen.
Ein Hirt hat alles das
zuvor
Von Gott erfahren
müssen;
Und nun muß auch
ein Hirt
die Tat,
Was er damals versprochen
hat,
Zuerst erfüllet wissen.

What God had pledged to
Abraham,¹⁵
he now lets be shown to the
chorus of shepherds
as fulfilled.
About all of this a shepherd
[Abraham]
had to hear from God
beforehand;
and now also a shepherd has to
be the first to come to know
the deed —
what he [God] at that time had
promised —
as fulfilled.

¹⁴*Allem Volke* is ambiguous: it might most readily be taken to mean "all [of the] people [in the world]," but it might possibly be read as "all the people [of historical Israel]" (which is what the Greek text in Luke most likely means). The former is apparently what Luther intends: his commentary on the passage says *die allen Leuten widerfahren wird* (literally, "which will come to all people"). Although some commentators have, like Luther, understood Luke here to be including gentiles, noting that in Acts 15:14 and 18:10 the gentiles are reckoned in the "people of God," in Luke 2 the birth of the Davidic Savior is probably said to be for "the whole people [of (historical, "Jewish") Israel]"; see, too, Luke 3:21; 7:29; 8:47. In place of Luther's *die allem Volk widerfahren wird*, modern German Bibles read either, e.g., *die für das ganze Volk sein wird* ("that will be for the entire people [of Israel]"), or *für alle Menschen* ("for all [of the] persons [in the world]").

¹⁵See Genesis 12:2-3.

[15] ARIA

Frohe Hirten, eilt, ach
eilet,
Eh ihr euch zu lang verweilet,
Eilt, das holde Kind zu sehn!
Geht, die Freude heißt zu schön,
Sucht die Anmut zu
gewinnen,
Geht und labet Herz und
Sinnen!

Joyful shepherds, hurry, oh
hurry,
before you tarry too long;
hurry, to see the pleasing child!
Go, the joy is all too lovely;
seek to gain the refinement [of
this child];
go and refresh your hearts and
minds!¹⁶

[16] EVANGELIST

Und das habt zum Zeichen: Ihr
werdet finden das Kind in Win-
deln gewickelt und in einer Krippe
liegen.

And take this for a sign: you will
find the child wrapped in bands
of cloth and lying in a manger.

[17] CHORALE

**Schaut hin, dort liegt im finstern
Stall,
Des Herrschaft
gehet
überall.
Da Speise vormals sucht ein
Rind,
Da ruhet itzt der Jungfrau'n
Kind.**

**Look there, yonder in the dark
stall lies
he whose lordship ranges all
over [to the ends of the
earth].¹⁷
Where once an ox sought
food,
there now rests the Virgin's
child.**

[18] RECITATIVE

So geht denn hin, ihr Hirten,
geht,
Daß ihr das Wunder seht!
Und findet ihr des Höchsten
Sohn
In einer harten Krippe liegen,
So singet ihm bei seiner Wiegen
Aus einem süßen Ton

So go forth, then, you
shepherds; go,
that you may see the marvel!
And should you find the Son of
the Most High
lying in a harsh manger,
then sing for him by his cradle
— in a sweet tone

¹⁶For "refresh your hearts," see, e.g., Genesis 18:5, translated literally by Luther from the Hebrew as *ihr euer Herz labet*; for "heart and minds," see Philippians 4:7 (Luther: *eure Herzen und Sinne in Christo Jesu*).

¹⁷Zechariah 9:10 (Luther: . . . *bis an der Welt Ende*).

Und mit gesamtem Chor
Dies Lied zur Ruhe vor:

and with united choir¹⁸ –
this lullaby:

[19] ARIA

Schlafe, mein Liebster, genieße
der Ruh,
Wache nach diesem vor aller
Gedeihen!
Labe die Brust,
Empfinde die Lust,
Wo wir unser Herz
erfreuen!

Sleep, my Most Beloved, enjoy
your rest,
awake after this for the
flourishing¹⁹ of all!
Refresh your breast,
feel the delight
[there, in your rest], where
we gladden our hearts!

[20] EVANGELIST

Und alsobald war da bei dem
Engel die Menge der himmlischen
Heerscharen, die lobten Gott und
sprachten:

And immediately there was with
the angel the multitude of the
heavenly legions, lauding God
and saying:

[21] CHOIR OF ANGELS

Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe und
Friede auf Erden und den Men-
schen ein Wohlgefallen.

May honor be to God on high,
and peace on earth, and to hu-
mankind [God's] great pleas-
ure.²⁰

¹⁸A full choir, as opposed, e.g., to the choirs of Psalm 53, whose heading, in Luther's Bible, calls for a divided assembly to sing antiphonally (Luther: *im Chor um einander vorzusingen*).

¹⁹See 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, "I have planted, Apollo has watered, but God has caused the flourishing [Luther: *hat das Gedeihen gegeben*]."

²⁰This verse has been textually contested. The source that Luther used gave the term *eudokia* ("good will," "pleasure," or "favor") in the nominative case, whereas the best ancient manuscripts have it in the genitive, *eudokias*. The Latin Bible (the Vulgate), going with the genitive, famously rendered the disputed passage with *hominibus bonae voluntatis*, and Luther was concerned that this reading ("[peace on earth] to persons of good will") suggested God's favor could be merited. Luther's translating the nominative reading—not to mention his adding the word "and"!—made it possible to understand the passage as professing "good will toward humankind," a reading more clearly promoting a "theology of unmerited grace." Luther was probably wrong to prefer the nominative over the genitive, but further evidence from word studies of the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls suggests that the genitive reading, too, should be understood primarily in terms of God's grace ("peace on earth to persons of [God's] favor").

[22] RECITATIVE

So recht, ihr Engel, jauchzt und
singt,
Daß es uns heut so schön
gelinget!
Auf denn! Wir stimmen mit euch
ein;
Uns kann es so wie euch erfreun.

Quite right, you angels: shout
and sing
that for us this day has
prospered so beautifully!²¹
Arise then! We will join with
you in song;
it can gladden us just like you.

[23] CHORALE

**Wir singen dir in deinem
Heer
Aus aller Kraft Lob, Preis und
Ehr,
Daß du, o lang gewünschter
Gast,
Dich nunmehr eingestellt hast.**

**We sing to you, amid your
host,
with all our power, "laud,
praise, and honor,"²²
that you, o long desired
guest,²³
have now presented yourself.**

[Part III] Third Festival Day
in Christmas

[24] CHORUS

Herrscher des Himmels, erhöre
das Lallen,
Laß dir die matten Gesänge
gefallen,
Wenn dich dein Zion mit Psalmen
erhöht!

Ruler of heaven, give heed to
our babble,
let our feeble songs please
you,²⁴
when your Zion extols you with
psalms!

²¹Psalm 118:24-25, "This is the day that the Lord has made . . . O Lord, let [us] prosper well [Luther: *laß wohl gelingen*]."

²²An allusion to Revelation 5:12, "The lamb . . . is worthy to receive power, . . . and honor, and praise, and laud." See, too, Revelation 7:12.

²³See Jeremiah 14:8, "why do you [God] present yourself as if you were a guest in the land [Luther: *warum stellst du dich, als wärest du ein Gast* (Hebrew: *ger* im Lande)?" Luther likewise uses the word "guest" in the sense of "stranger," "sojourner," or "alien" for the Hebrew word *ger* in Exodus 18:3 and Psalm 119:19, as well as for the Greek word *xenos* in Matthew 25:35-44, Acts 17:21, Ephesians 2:19, and Hebrews 11:13. (Incidentally, only in postbiblical writings does *ger* take on the meaning of "convert"; to be precise: Rabbinic law distinguished between the *ger toshav* [resident sojourner] who observes the Noahide Laws and is guaranteed a place in the world to come, and the *ger tsedeq* [the full "proselyte of righteousness"] who is a Jew in every respect.) Bach's chorale no. 23 appropriates Jeremiah's negative language to speak in a positive manner of God's earthly sojourn in the human body of Jesus.

²⁴See Psalm 119:108, "Let the willing offering of my mouth please you, Lord [Luther: *laß dir gefallen, HErr, das willige Opfer meines Mundes*]."

Höre der Herzen frohlockendes
Preisen,
Wenn wir dir itzo die Ehrfurcht
erweisen,
Weil unsre Wohlfahrt befestiget
steht!

Hear the exultant praises of our
hearts,
when we now show you
reverence
because our welfare stands fast!

[25] EVANGELIST

Und da die Engel von ihnen gen
Himmel fuhren, sprachen die Hir-
ten untereinander:

And when the angels went away
from them into heaven, the shep-
herds said to one another:

[26] CHORUS

Lasset uns nun gehen gen Bethle-
hem und die Geschichte sehen, die
da geschehen ist, die uns der Herr
kundgetan hat.

Let's go, now, into Bethlehem
and see what the story²⁵ is that's
taking place there, which the
Lord has made known to us.²⁶

[27] RECITATIVE

Er hat sein Volk getröst',
Er hat sein Israel erlöst,
Die Hülf aus Zion hergesendet
Und unser Leid geendet.
Seht, Hirten, dies hat er
getan;
Geht, dieses trifft ihr an!

He has comforted his people,²⁷
he has redeemed his Israel,
sent salvation out of Zion,²⁸
and ended our suffering.²⁹
Look, shepherds, this he has
done;
go, you will come upon this!

²⁵The term Luke uses is *rheima*, which normally means "word"; in Luke it is a Semitism, translating the Hebrew *davar*, which carries the double meaning of "word" and "deed." (Thus, many English translations read, "see this *thing* [or, *event*] that has taken place.") To capture both senses of *davar* in one word in German and in English is very difficult. Luther brilliantly opts for *Geschichte*, which means both "history" ("events," or "deeds") and "narrative" ("words"). To "see the history/narrative" (*die Geschichte sehen*) is a bit odd in German, and though my translation of Luther is awkward, I have tried to reflect his double sense with the colloquial rendering, "see what *the story* is." The idea in Luke 2:15 is that the birth of Jesus is a "deed" from God, one that "speaks" to humankind.

²⁶That is, that the angel of the Lord had made known to them.

²⁷Isaiah 49:13, "the Lord has comforted his people [Luther: *der HErr hat sein Volk getröstet*]." See also Luke 2:25.

²⁸Psalms 14:7, "Oh, that salvation out of Zion might come over Israel, and the Lord his captive people might redeem [Luther: *Ach, daß die Hilfe aus Zion über Israel käme, und der HErr sein gefangen Volk erlösete!*]" The same words appear at Psalm 53:7 in the Luther Bible (and the Tanakh; 53:6 in Christian Bibles in English). See also Luke 1:68.

²⁹See Isaiah 40:2, "Speak in a friendly way with Jerusalem, and preach to her that her difficult obligation has [come to] an end [Luther: *Redet mit Jerusalem freundlich; und prediget ihr, daß ihre Ritterschaft ein Ende hat*]." Luther considered this "Ritterschaft" to be the life of sin under the law of Moses; Jesus, the Messiah believed to be prophesied here in Isaiah, came to forgive sin through grace, to free people, Luther believed, from that of which the law accuses them.

[28] CHORALE

Dies hat er alles uns getan,
 Sein groß Lieb zu zeigen an;
 Des freu sich alle
 Christenheit
 Und dank ihm des in
 Ewigkeit.
 Kyrieleis!

All this he has done for us³⁰
 to show his great love;³¹
 for this let all of Christendom
 be glad
 and thank him for this in
 eternity.
 Lord have mercy!

[29] ARIA

Herr, dein Mitleid, dein
 Erbarmen
 Tröstet uns und macht uns frei.
 Deine holde Gunst und
 Liebe,
 Deine wundersamen Triebe
 Machen deine
 Vätertreu
 Wieder neu.

Lord, your compassion, your
 mercy
 comforts us and makes us free.
 Your pleasing favor and
 love,
 your wondrous desires,
 make your Fatherly
 faithfulness
 new again.³²

[30] EVANGELIST

Und sie kamen eilend und funden
 beide, Mariam und Joseph, dazu
 das Kind in der Krippe liegen. Da
 sie es aber gesehen hatten,
 breiteten sie das Wort aus, welches
 zu ihnen von diesem Kind gesaget
 war. Und alle, für die es kam,
 wunderten sich der Rede, die ih-
 nen die Hirten gesaget hatten.

And they came in a hurry and
 found both Mariam and Joseph,
 and also the child lying in the
 manger. But when they had seen
 it, they spread the word³³ that
 had been told to them of this
 child.³⁴ And all who met with³⁵
 it were surprised at the account
 that the shepherds had told

³⁰See Psalm 126:3, "the Lord has done great things [for] us [Luther: *der HErr hat grosses an uns getan*]."

³¹John 3:1, "Look, what love [God] the Father has shown to us [Luther: *Sehet, welch eine Liebe hat uns der Vater gezeigt*]."

³²Lamentations 3:22-23, "the Lord's mercy . . . is new every morning, and great is your [the Lord's] faithfulness [Luther: *seine Barmherzigkeit . . . ist alle Morgen neu, und deine Treu ist groß*]."

³³Luther here too brilliantly renders the meaning of *rheima* (see n. 25, above) with *das Wort ausbreiten*, whose double meaning I've tried to preserve with "spread the word." Another beauty of the German is that since both *Kind* and *Wort* are neuter, the *es* in this sentence and the next can be understood both of the "child" and of the "word" — Jesus is, after all, "the Word made flesh," according to John 1:14.

³⁴Mary already knew that Jesus was to be both the Messiah (Luke 1:32-35) and "Lord" (1:43). The shepherds add that he will be "the Savior" (2:11).

³⁵Here the archaic form of the separable verb *vorkommen* is used (Luther: *für . . . kam*).

Maria aber behielt alle diese Worte
und bewegte sie in ihrem Herzen.

them. But Mary kept all these
words³⁶ and tossed them about³⁷
within her heart.

[31] ARIA

Schließe, mein Herze, dies selige
Wunder
Fest in deinem Glauben ein!
Lasse dies Wunder, die
göttlichen Werke,
Immer zur
Stärke
Deines schwachen Glaubens
sein!

My heart, include this blessed
marvel
steadfastly in your faith!
Let this marvel, [[let all] the
Godly deeds,
be ever at hand for the
strengthening
of your weak
faith!³⁸

[32] RECITATIVE

Ja, ja, mein Herz soll es
bewahren,
Was es an dieser holden Zeit
Zu seiner Seligkeit
Für sicheren Beweis erfahren.

Yes, yes, my heart should
safeguard
what it at this pleasing time,
for its [eternal] blessedness,
has experienced as sure proof.

[33] CHORALE

**Ich will dich
mit Fleiß
bewahren,
Ich will dir
Leben hier,
Dir will ich abfahren,
Mit dir will ich endlich
schweben
Voller Freud**

**I will safeguard you [in my
heart and memory] with
diligence;
I will
here [in this life] live to you;³⁹
to you will I retreat;
with you will I at last
hover,⁴⁰
full of joy,**

³⁶Greek: *rheima* (see n. 25, above).

³⁷Luke's verb *sympallein* means literally "to throw side by side."

³⁸Luke 17:5, "And the apostles said to the Lord, strengthen our faith [Luther: *stärke uns den Glauben*]."

³⁹Romans 14:8, "If we live, then we live to the Lord; if we die, then we die to the Lord [Luther: *Leben wir, so leben wir dem HErrn; sterben wir, so sterben wir dem HErrn*]."

⁴⁰See Isaiah 58:14, "Then you will have delight in the Lord, and I will have you hover over the heights of the earth [Luther: *ich will dich über die Höhen auf Erden schweben lassen*] . . . for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

**Ohne Zeit
Dort im andern Leben.**

**time no longer,⁴¹
there in the afterlife.**

[34] EVANGELIST

Und die Hirten kehrten wieder
um, preiseten und lobten Gott um
alles, das sie gesehen und gehöret
hatten, wie denn zu ihnen gesaget
war.

And the shepherds went back
again, praising and lauding God
for all that they had seen and
heard, just as had been told to
them.

[35] CHORALE

**Seid froh dieweil,
Seid froh dieweil,
Daß euer Heil
Ist hie ein Gott und auch ein
Mensch geboren,
Der, welcher ist
Der Herr und Christ
In Davids Stadt, von vielen
auserkoren.**

**Be joyful meanwhile,
be joyful meanwhile,
that your Salvation
has been born here [on earth]
as God and also as man –
he who is
the Lord and Christ,
in the city of David, chosen of
many [cities].⁴²**

REPEAT [24] CHORUS

[Part IV] Festival of the
Circumcision of Christ

[36] CHORUS

Fallt mit Danken, fallt mit
Loben
Vor des Höchsten
Gnadenthron!
Gottes Sohn
Will der
Erden
Heiland und Erlöser werden,

Bow with thanksgiving, bow
with lauding
before the Most High's Throne
of Grace!
God's Son
is willing to become the
earth's
Savior and redeemer⁴³;

⁴¹See Revelation 10:6, "And the angel swore by him who lives from eternity to eternity, who created heaven . . . that there should be time no more [Luther: *daß hinfort keine Zeit mehr sein soll*]."

⁴²See Micah 5:1 (in Luther and Tanakh; 5:2 in other Bibles), "And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, you who are small among the thousands in Judah, out of you shall come to me the one who in Israel would be Lord." Bethlehem is the chosen city.

⁴³Isaiah 49:26, "I am the Lord, your Savior and redeemer."

Gottes Sohn
Dämpft der Feinde Wut und
Toben.

God's Son
dampens the enemies' fury
and rage.

[37] EVANGELIST

Und da acht Tage um waren, daß
das Kind beschnitten würde, da
ward sein Name genennet Jesus,
welcher genennet war von dem
Engel, ehe denn er im Mutterleibe
empfangen ward.

And as eight days were up,
when the child would be cir-
cumcised, his name was called
Jesus,⁴⁴ [the name he] was called
by the angel, before he was con-
ceived in the womb.

[38] RECITATIVE AND CHORALE

Immanuel, o süßes Wort!
Mein Jesus heißt mein
Hort,
Mein Jesus heißt mein Leben.
Mein Jesus hat sich mir
ergeben;
Mein Jesus soll mir immerfort
Vor meinen Augen schweben.
Mein Jesus heißet meine Lust,
Mein Jesus labet Herz und
Brust.
**Jesu, du mein liebstes
Leben,
Meiner Seelen Bräutigam,**
Komm! Ich will dich mit Lust
umfassen,
Mein Herze soll dich nimmer
lassen.
**Der du dich vor mich
gegeben
An des bittern Kreuzes
Stamm!**
Ach, so nimm mich zu dir!

"Emmanuel,"⁴⁵ o sweet word!
My Jesus is called "my
refuge,"⁴⁶
my Jesus is called "my life."
My Jesus has submitted himself
to me;
my Jesus shall evermore, to me,
hover before my eyes.
My Jesus is called "my delight,"
my Jesus refreshes heart and
breast.
**Jesus, you, my most beloved
life,
my soul's bridegroom,**
Come! With delight I will
embrace you,
my heart shall never leave
you.
**you who has given himself
for me
on the beam of the bitter
cross!**
Oh, so take me to you!

⁴⁴Luther translates literally the Semitism "his name was called Jesus."

⁴⁵*Emmanuel* is Hebrew for "God with us."

⁴⁶Bach's score reads *Hirt* ("shepherd"); his original performing part at first read *Hirt* but was changed (possibly by Bach) to *Hort*, which is also the reading in the libretto booklets distributed to Bach's congregants in Leipzig. On the face of it, *Hort* would seem the more likely reading, as it rhymes with the first line's *Wort*. In Luther's Bible *mein Hort* is a common, figurative rendering of what is typically translated from the Hebrew more literally in English Bibles as "my rock" (see, e.g., 2 Samuel 22:47).

Auch in dem Sterben sollst du
 mir
 Das Allerliebste sein;
 In Not, Gefahr und Ungemach
 Seh ich dir sehnlichst nach.
 Was jagte mir zuletzt der
 Tod für Grauen
 ein?
 Mein Jesus! Wenn ich sterbe,
 So weiß ich, daß ich nicht
 verderbe.
 Dein Name steht in mir
 geschrieben,
 Der hat des Todes Furcht
 vertrieben.

Even in dying shall you be to
 me
 the most beloved of all;
 in need, danger, and affliction
 I gaze after you most ardently.
 How in the end might death [be
 able to] scare me with
 fright?⁴⁷
 My Jesus! When I die,
 I know that then I will not be
 ruined.
 Your name, inscribed within
 me,
 has driven out the fear of death.

[39] ARIA

Flößt, mein Heiland, flößt
 dein Namen
 Auch den allerkleinsten Samen
 Jenes strengen Schreckens
 ein?
 Nein, du sagst ja selber nein;
 (Nein!)
 [Nein, du sagst ja selber:
 (Nein!)]
 Sollt ich nun das Sterben
 scheuen?
 Nein, dein süßes Wort ist da!
 Oder sollt ich mich erfreuen?
 Ja, du Heiland sprichst selbst ja.
 (Ja!)
 [Ja, du Heiland sprichst selbst:
 (Ja!)]

Is it, my Savior, is it [true] that
 your name instills
 even the very tiniest seed
 of that stark horror [of the Day
 of Judgment]?
 No, yes you yourself say, "no";
 ("No!")
 [No, yes you yourself say:
 ("No!")]
 Now shall I shy away from
 having to die?
 No, your sweet word is there!
 Or shall I rejoice?
 Yes, you yourself, Savior,
 declare, "yes." ("Yes!")
 [Yes, you yourself, Savior,
 declare: ("Yes!")]

[40] RECITATIVE AND CHORALE

Wohlan, dein Name soll
 allein
 In meinem Herzen sein!
**Jesu, meine Freud und Wonne,
 Meine Hoffnung, Schatz und
 Teil,**

Well then, your name alone
 shall
 be in my heart!
**Jesus, my joy and gladness,
 my hope, treasure, and
 portion,**

⁴⁷For this somewhat awkward expression, compare Isaiah 21:4, "fright has alarmed me [Luther: *Grauen hat mich erschreckt*]."

So will ich dich entzückt
nennen,
Wenn Brust und Herz zu dir vor
Liebe brennen.
**Mein Erlösung, Schmuck und
Heil,**
Doch, Liebster, sage mir:
Wie rühm ich dich, wie dank ich
dir?
**Hirt und König, Licht und
Sonne,**
**Ach! wie soll ich würdiglich,
Mein Herr Jesu, preisen dich?**

These are what I, in a trance,⁴⁸
will call you,
when [my] breast and heart
burn with love for you.
**my redemption, adornment,
and salvation,⁴⁹**
But tell me, Most Beloved:
How may I glorify you, how
may I thank you?
**shepherd and king, light and
sun,⁵⁰ –**
**oh! – how shall I worthily
praise you, my Lord Jesus?⁵¹**

[41] ARIA

Ich will nur dir zu Ehren
leben,
Mein Heiland, gib mir Kraft und
Mut,
Daß es mein Herz recht eifrig
tut!
Stärke mich,
Deine Gnade würdiglich
Und mit Danken zu erheben!

For honor I will live only to
you⁵²;
my Savior, give me power and
courage,
that my heart will do it right
zealously!
Strengthen me⁵³
to exalt your grace worthily
and with thanksgiving!

[42] CHORALE

**Jesus richte mein
Beginnen,
Jesus bleibe stets bei
mir,**

**May Jesus direct my
embarking;
may Jesus remain with me
ever;**

⁴⁸*Entzückt*, here, is Lucan biblical language, not that of today's polite society (e.g., today's greeting, "enchanted, I'm sure"); see Acts 10:10, 11:5, 22:17.

⁴⁹The text reads *Mein Erlösung, Schmuck und Heil* in Bach's score and in the libretto booklets distributed to his congregants in Leipzig. In Bach's original performing parts his copyist evidently misread the score and wrote *Mein Erlöser, Schutz und Heil* ("my redeemer, bulwark, and salvation"). The copyist's reading corresponds to none of the hymnbooks of Bach's day.

⁵⁰The transfigured Jesus is so depicted in Matthew 17:2, "[Jesus'] face lit up like the sun; and his clothes became white, as a light."

⁵¹Revelation 4:11, "Lord, you are worthy to take praise, and honor, and power [Luther: *HErr, du bist würdig zu nehmen Preis, und Ehre, und Kraft*]."

⁵²Romans 14:8, "If we live, then we live to the Lord [Luther: *Leben wir, so leben wir dem HErrn*]."

⁵³Psalms 119:28, "Strengthen me according to your word [Luther: *stärke mich nach deinem Wort*]."

Jesus zäume mir die
Sinnen,
Jesus sei nur mein Begier,
Jesus sei mir in
Gedanken,
Jesu, lasse mich nicht wanken!

may Jesus bridle my
inclinations;
may Jesus only be my desire;
may Jesus be in the plans I
devise;
Jesus, let me not waver!⁵⁴

[Part V] Sunday after New Year

[43] CHORUS

Ehre sei dir, Gott,
gesungen,
Dir sei Lob und Dank
bereit'.
Dich erhebet alle Welt,
Weil dir unser Wohl
gefällt,
Weil anheut
Unser aller Wunsch
gelungen,
Weil uns dein Segen
so herrlich
erfreut.

May honor, God, be sung to
you,
may laud and thanks be
extended to you.
All the world exalts you,⁵⁵
because our well-being
pleases you,
because today
the wish of all of us has
come true,
because your blessing
gladdens us so
splendidly.

[44] EVANGELIST

Da Jesus geboren war zu Beth-
lehem im jüdischen Lande zur Zeit
des Königes Herodis, siehe, da
kamen die Weisen vom Morgen-
lande gen Jerusalem und sprach-
en:

When Jesus was born at Beth-
lehem in the Jewish region at the
time of King Herod, look: there
came the wisemen of the Orient
to Jerusalem, saying:

[45] CHORUS

Wo ist der neugeborne König der
Jüden?

Where is the newborn King of
the Jews?⁵⁶

⁵⁴The hymnbooks of Bach's day read, *lasse mich nie Wanken*. The change from *nie* ("never") to *nicht* ("not") may have been made on the basis of Hebrews 10:23, "let us keep the profession of our hope and [let us] not waver [Luther: *lasset uns halten an dem Bekenntnis der Hoffnung und nicht wanken*]."

⁵⁵Psalm 57:6 (Luther and Tanakh; 57:5 in other Bibles), "Be exalted, God, . . . and your honor [be exalted] over all the world [Luther: *Erhebe dich, Gott, . . . und deine Ehre über alle Welt*]."

⁵⁶Herod was known by the title "King of the Jews," according to the 1st-century historian Flavius Josephus. Suggesting this title for Jesus would represent a challenge to Herod. The wisemen are gentiles, and thus they call Jesus "King of the Jews" — Jews would normally use the expression "King of Israel."

RECITATIVE

Sucht ihn in meiner Brust,
Hier wohnt er, mir und ihm zur
Lust!

Seek him in my breast;
here he dwells, to my and his
delight!

CHORUS

Wir haben seinen Stern gesehen
im Morgenlande und sind kom-
men, ihn anzubeten.

We have seen his star⁵⁷ in the
Orient and have come to wor-
ship⁵⁸ him.

RECITATIVE

Wohl euch, die ihr dies Licht
gesehen,
Es ist zu eurem Heil
geschehen!
Mein Heiland, du, du bist das
Licht,
Das auch den Heiden scheinen
sollen,
Und sie, sie kennen
dich noch
nicht,
Als sie dich schon verehren
wollen.
Wie hell, wie klar muß nicht dein
Schein,
Geliebter Jesu, sein!

Well for you, you who have
seen this light⁵⁹;
it has taken place for your
salvation!
You, my Savior, you are the
light
that shall shine also to the
gentiles,⁶⁰
and they [these gentiles, the
wisemen], they do not know
you yet,⁶¹
[even now] as they already
want to revere you.
How bright, how clear must not
your luminosity be,
beloved Jesus!

[46] CHORALE

**Dein Glanz all Finsternis
verzehrt,
Die trübe Nacht in Licht
verkehrt.
Leit uns auf deinen Wegen,**

**Your luster consumes all
darkness,
turns the murky night into
light.
Lead us along your pathways,**

⁵⁷Such (miraculous) stars were believed in the ancient world to attend the birth of a great person.

⁵⁸There is some debate as to whether the Gospel of Matthew should here be understood as saying that Jesus is "paid homage to" (as a king) or "worshiped" (as a divine figure). Luther's *anzubeten* (literally, "to pray to") has the latter connotation.

⁵⁹Isaiah 9:2 (9:1 in Tanakh), "The people, walking in the dark like that, will see a great light [Luther: *das Volk, so im Finstern wandelt, siehet ein grosses Licht*]."

⁶⁰Isaiah 49:6, "I [God] have also made you [Israel] for the light to the gentiles, that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth [Luther: *Ich habe dich auch zum Licht der Heiden gemacht, daß du siehest mein Heil bis an der Welt Ende*]."

⁶¹Isaiah 55:5, "Look, you will call gentiles whom you do not know; and gentiles who do not know you will run to you for the sake of the Lord your God [Luther: *Siehe, du wirst Heiden rufen, die du nicht kennest; und Heiden, die dich nicht kennen, werden zu dir laufen um des HErrn willen, deines GOTTes*]."

**Daß dein Gesicht
Und herrlichs Licht
Wir ewig schauen mögen!**

**that we may see your face
and glorious light
eternally!**

[47] ARIA

Erleucht auch meine finstre
Sinnen,
Erleuchte mein Herze
Durch der Strahlen klaren
Schein!
Dein Wort soll mir die hellste
Kerze
In allen meinen Werken sein;
Dies lässet die Seele nichts
Böses beginnen.

Light up, too, my dark
inclinations,
light up my heart
with the clear luminosity of
your streams of light!
Your word shall be the
brightest candle to me
in all my works;
this will let the soul embark
on nothing evil.

[48] EVANGELIST

Da das der König Herodes hörte,
erschrak er und mit ihm das ganze
Jerusalem.

When Herod the King heard
that, he was alarmed, and with
him all of Jerusalem.

[49] RECITATIVE

Warum wollt ihr
erschrecken?
Kann meines Jesu Gegenwart
euch solche Furcht erwecken?
O! solltet ihr euch nicht
Vielmehr darüber freuen,
Weil er dadurch verspricht,
Der Menschen Wohlfahrt zu
verneuen.

Why would you all want to be
alarmed?
Can the presence of my Jesus
arouse such fear in you?
O! shouldn't you
rather be glad about that,
because he promises through it
to renew the welfare of
humankind.

[50] EVANGELIST

Und ließ versammlen alle Hohe-
priester und Schriftgelehrten unter
dem Volk und erforschte von
ihnen, wo Christus sollte geboren
werden. Und sie sagten ihm: Zu
Bethlehem im jüdischen Lande;
denn also stehet geschrieben

And [Herod] had all the chief
priests and scripture experts⁶²
among the people gather, and
inquired of them, where [the]
Christ was expected to be born.
And they told him: "at Beth-
lehem in the Jewish region; for

⁶²This group consisted of men who copied biblical writings on scrolls and were learned in Mosaic laws and teachings. The standard English translation "scribe" might seem to overemphasize the writing component of their duties, while Luther's rendering *Schriftgelehrten* (literally, "scholars of Scripture") would seem to place the greater emphasis on their biblical learning.

durch den Propheten: Und du Bethlehem im jüdischen Lande bist mitnichten die kleinest unter den Fürsten Juda; denn aus dir soll mir kommen der Herzog, der über mein Volk Israel ein Herr sei.

so it stands written by the prophet,⁶³ 'And you Bethlehem in the Jewish region are by no means⁶⁴ the smallest among the princes⁶⁵ of Judah; for out of you shall come to me⁶⁶ the leader⁶⁷ who would be a ruler⁶⁸ over my people Israel.'"

[51] ARIA

Ach, wenn wird die Zeit
erscheinen?
Ach, wenn kömmt der
Trost der
Seinen?
Schweigt, er ist schon würllich
hier!
Jesu, ach so komm zu mir!

Oh, when will the time
appear?
Oh, when shall the consolation
of his own [saved people]
come?
Silence! — he really is already
here!
Jesus, oh then come to me!

⁶³A combination of Micah 5:1 (Luther and Tanakh; 5:2 in other Bibles) and 2 Samuel 5:2.

⁶⁴Matthew refers to Bethlehem in this way (i.e., the Gospel adds the expression "by no means") presumably to counter the Hebrew Scriptures, where Bethlehem is generally considered insignificant. The birth of Jesus makes the city great.

⁶⁵The now standard Hebrew text (the "Masoretic Text") of Micah here reads *elephe* ("thousands," "clans") but the Hebrew of the (consonants-only) ancient text could have been provided with different vowels to yield *alluphe* ("princes"), and this would explain how Matthew arrived at "princes" in citing Micah. The same ambiguity underlies the words translated in English Bibles either as "clans" or "dukes" in the genealogies of Genesis 36:15–43 and 1 Chronicles 1:51–54 (Luther there opts for *Fürsten*).

⁶⁶"To me" does not appear in Matthew. These words are presumably added on the basis of Micah 5:1 (in Luther and Tanakh; 5:2 in other Bibles), which Luther renders, "And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, you who are small among the thousands in Judah, out of you shall come to me the one who in Israel would be Lord [Luther: *Und du, Bethlehem Ephrata, die du klein bist unter den Tausenden in Juda, aus dir soll mir der kommen, der in Israel Herr sei*]."

⁶⁷To render *Herzog* here as "Duke" (an aristocratic title higher than a Count but lower than a King) would technically be correct but would sound too awkward. "Duke" comes from the Latin *dux* ("leader"), and *Herzog* comes from combining the noun *Heer* ("armed forces") and the past tense of the verb *ziehen* ("to draw or pull"); thus a *Herzog* or "Duke" is literally or figuratively "a military leader." At 1 Samuel 25:30 and 2 Samuel 5:2 in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, King David is rendered a "*Herzog* [Hebrew: *nagiya*, literally "one in front"] over Israel"; at Hebrews 2:10, Jesus is called a *Herzog der Seligkeit*, a "captain" (or, "pioneer") [Greek: *archegos*, "chief leader"] of [eternal] "blessedness" (or, "salvation").

⁶⁸*Herr* ("Lord") here presumably in the sense of *Herrscher* ("ruler"), as in the first line of the recitative no. 52, below.

[52] RECITATIVE

Mein Liebster herrschet schon.
Ein Herz, das seine Herrschaft
liebet
Und sich ihm ganz zu eigen
gibet,
Ist meines Jesu Thron.

My Most Beloved already rules.
A heart that loves his
Lordship,
and gives itself to him
completely for his own,
is [to be] my Jesus' throne.

[53] CHORALE

Zwar ist solche
Herzensstube
Wohl kein schöner
Fürstensaal,
Sondern eine finstre Grube;
Doch, sobald dein
Gnadenstrahl
In derselben nur wird blinken,
Wird es voller Sonnen dünken.

True, such a heart-cellar [for
Jesus to dwell in] is
certainly no choice hall of
princes,
but rather a dark pit;
yet, as soon as your grace-filled
stream of light
flashes in this same [pit],
it will seem full of sunlight.

[Part VI] Festival of Epiphany

[54] CHORUS

Herr, wenn die stolzen Feinde
schnauben,
So gib, daß wir im festen
Glauben
Nach deiner Macht und Hülfe
seh'n!
Wir wollen dir allein
vertrauen,
So können wir den scharfen
Klauen
Des Feindes unversehrt
entgehn.

Lord, when our insolent⁶⁹
enemies snort,⁷⁰
then grant that we in steadfast
faith
will look to your strength and
salvation!
We want to put our trust in
you alone,
so that we can
escape
the enemy's sharp claws
unharm'd.

⁶⁹While *Stolz* primarily means "proud" in a more dignified sense, it is also an archaic synonym for *übermutig*, in the sense of "insolent" or "cocky." In this way the word *Stolz* has the same double sense as the word *zed* in Hebrew, which means both "presumptuous" and "insolent" (thus, e.g., Psalm 86:14 reads in the KJV, "O God, the proud are risen against me," but in the NRSV, "O God, the insolent rise up against me" [Luther: *Gott, es setzen sich die Stolzen wider mich*]). The closing movement, no. 64, identifies the four eschatological enemies of humankind: death, devil, sin, and hell.

⁷⁰See Jeremiah 8:16, concerning the enemy approach, "One heard their horses snorting [Luther: *ihre Rosse . . . schnauben*]."

[55] EVANGELIST

Da berief Herodes die Weisen heimlich und erlernet mit Fleiß von ihnen, wenn der Stern erschienen wäre. Und weiset sie gen Bethlehem und sprach:

HEROD

Zieheth hin und forschet fleißig nach dem Kindlein, und wenn ihr's findet, sagt mir's wieder, daß ich auch komme und es anbete.

Then Herod convened the wise-men secretly and sought with diligence to learn from them when the star might have appeared. And [he] directed them to Bethlehem, saying:

Set out and search diligently for the little child, and when you find it, report this to me, so that I, too, may come and worship it.

[56] RECITATIVE

Du Falscher, suche nur den Herrn zu fällen,
Nimm alle falsche List,
Dem Heiland nachzustellen;
Der, dessen Kraft kein Mensch ermißt,
Bleibt doch in sichrer Hand.
Dein Herz, dein falsches Herz ist schon,

You deceitful one, just try to bring down the Lord;
use all your deceitful cunning to have it in for⁷¹ the Savior;
he, whose power no human comprehends,
remains nonetheless in safe hands.⁷²
Your heart, your deceitful heart,

⁷¹Compare Mark 6:19, "But Herodias had it in for him [John the Baptist] and wanted to kill him [Luther: *Herodias aber stellte ihm nach, und wollte ihm töten*]." Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great (the Herod of the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke), and sister of Herod Agrippa I (the Herod of Acts 12). She was first married to her paternal half-uncle Herod (mistakenly called "Philip" in Mark 6:17 and in many manuscripts of Matthew 14:3), to whom she bore a daughter, identified by the 1st-century historian Josephus as "Salome" (not to be confused with the Salome of Mark 15-16, possibly the wife of Zebedee). Salome was the one who at Herodias's instigation asked her uncle and now step-father Herod Antipas (another half-uncle of Herodias and her second husband) for the head of John the Baptist as a reward for a special dance of Salome's that Antipas had enjoyed. Herodias had it in for John because he had publicly condemned her marriage to Antipas (she had abandoned her first husband, and Antipas had divorced his royal Nabatean wife). In all the potential confusion of names, the one clear thing is that there is a great deal of depravity among the Herodians, and the Christmas Oratorio librettist may have used the language of Mark 6 because of this: just like Herodias later has it in for John, so does Herod now for Jesus.

⁷²The line reads in *sichern Stand* ("in a safe foothold") in the printed librettos distributed to Bach's Leipzig congregants. This was probably the librettist's original reading, as it provides a better contrast with line 1's *fällen*. Whether the new version was an intended revision or simply a copying mistake is unclear. A possible advantage of the new reading is that it would identify the source of Jesus' security, despite his own humanly incomprehensible power, more clearly in God the Father. See also the "hands" in line 1 of the next movement.

Nebst aller seiner List, des
Höchsten Sohn,
Den du zu stürzen suchst, sehr
wohl bekannt.

with all its cunning, is already
very well known
to the Son of the Most High,
whom you seek to
overthrow.

[57] ARIA

Nur ein Wink von seinen Händen
Stürzt ohnmächtger Menschen
Macht.
Hier wird alle Kraft verlacht!
Spricht der Höchste nur
ein Wort,
Seiner Feinde Stolz zu
enden,
O, so müssen sich sofort
Sterblicher Gedanken
wenden.

Just one signal from his hands
overthrows the feeble strength
of humankind.
Here all power is mocked!
The Most High has to utter just
one word
to put a stop to the insolence⁷³
of his enemies.
O, then the plans of mortals
will have to be immediately cut
short.⁷⁴

[58] EVANGELIST

Als sie nun den König gehöret
hatten, zogen sie hin. Und siehe,
der Stern, den sie im Morgenlande
gesehen hatten, ging für ihnen hin,
bis daß er kam und stund oben
über, da das Kindlein war. Da sie
den Stern sahen, wurden sie hoch
erfreuet und gingen in das Haus
und funden das Kindlein mit
Maria, seiner Mutter, und fielen
nieder und beteten es an und täten
ihre Schätze auf und schenkten
ihm Gold, Weihrauch und Myr-
rhen.

Having heard the king, then,
they set out. And look: the star
that they had seen in the Orient
went forth before them, until,
having come [to Bethlehem], it
settled over [the place] where
the little child was. When they
saw the star, they became ex-
ceedingly glad and went into the
house and found the little child
with Mary its mother, and
bowed down and worshiped it,
and opened their treasures, giv-
ing it gold, frankincense, and
myrrh.

[59] CHORALE

**Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier,
O Jesulein, mein Leben;**

**Here I stand at your manger,
O little Jesus, my Life;**

⁷³See n. 69, above.

⁷⁴*Sich wenden* here is an archaic synonym for *sich endigen* (or, *sich enden*). Psalm 33:10, "The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nought; and cuts short the plans of the peoples [Luther: *und wendet die Gedanken der Völker*]."

Ich komme, bring und schenke
dir,
Was du mir hast gegeben.
Nimm hin, es ist mein Geist und
Sinn,
Herz, Seel und Mut, nimm alles
hin,
Und laß dir's wohlgefallen!

I come to bring and give
to you
what you have granted me.
Take this, it is my spirit and
inclination,
heart, soul and courage⁷⁵; take
this all,
and let it please you greatly!

[60] EVANGELIST

Und Gott befahl ihnen im Traum,
daß sie sich nicht sollten wieder zu
Herodes lenken, und zogen durch
einen andern Weg wieder in ihr
Land.

And God⁷⁶ commanded them in
a dream that they should not di-
rect themselves back to Herod,
and [they] set off by another way
back to their country.

[61] RECITATIVE

So geht! Genug, mein
Schatz geht nicht
von hier,
Er bleibt da bei mir;
Ich will ihn auch nicht von mir
lassen.
Sein Arm wird mich
aus Lieb
Mit sanftmutsvollem Trieb
Und größter Zärtlichkeit
umfassen;
Er soll mein Bräutigam
verbleiben,
Ich will ihm Brust und Herz
verschreiben.
Ich weiß gewiß, er liebet
mich,

So go! [It is] enough that
my Treasure will not go
from here;
he stays with me;
I will also not let him [free]
from me.⁷⁷
His arm⁷⁸ will embrace me out
of love
with gentle desire
and greatest
tenderness;
he shall remain my
bridegroom;
I will entrust breast and heart to
him.
I know for certain that he loves
me;

⁷⁵Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierces until it separates soul and spirit [Luther: *Geist*] . . . and is a judge of the thoughts and inclinations of the heart [*Sinnen des Herzen*]."

⁷⁶The Greek text in Luke does not specify "God," but understanding Luke's "he" to mean God makes good sense; the *Protoevangelium of James* (a noncanonical gospel) says an angel gave the warning. According to certain ancient rabbinic teachings, God does not communicate to the gentiles in the daytime.

⁷⁷Song of Songs 3:4, "I hold him, and will not let him go [Luther: *Ich halte ihn, und will ihn nicht [los]lassen*]."

⁷⁸Luke 1:51, "He exercises dominion with his arm [Luther: *er übet Gewalt mit seinem Arm*]."

Mein Herz liebt ihn auch
inniglich
Und wird ihn ewig ehren.
Was könnte mich nun für ein
Feind
Bei solchem Glück versehren!
Du, Jesu, bist und bleibst mein
Freund;
Und werd ich ängstlich zu dir
flehn:
Herr, hilf!, so laß mich Hülfe
sehn!

my heart also loves him
deeply
and will honor him eternally.
Now, at such good fortune,
how could any enemy
harm me!
You, Jesus, are and remain my
friend;
and if I anxiously beseech⁷⁹
you:
"Lord, save [me]!",⁸⁰ then let
me see salvation!

[62] ARIA

Nun mögt ihr stolzen Feinde
schrecken;
Was könnt ihr mir für Furcht
erwecken?
Mein Schatz, mein Hort ist hier
bei mir!
Ihr mögt euch noch so
grimmig stellen,
Droht nur, mich ganz und
gar zu
fällen,
Doch seht! mein Heiland
wohnet hier.

Now you insolent⁸¹ enemies
might horrify;
[yet] how could you arouse any
fear in me?
My Treasure, my Refuge is here
with me!
You do still so like to feign
being fierce;
just [go ahead and]
threaten to bring me
down completely;
but look! my Savior dwells
here.

[63] RECITATIVE

Was will der Höllen Schrecken
nun,
Was will uns Welt und Sünde
tun,
Da wir in Jesu Händen ruhn!

What will the horrors of hell
intend now,
what will World and Sin intend
to do to us,
since we rest in Jesus' hands!

[64] CHORALE

**Nun seid ihr wohl gerochen
An eurer Feinde Schar,
Denn Christus hat zerbrochen,**

**Now you all are well avenged
of your band of enemies,
for Christ has broken apart**

⁷⁹Psalm 55:2,5 (Luther and Tanakh; 55:1,4 in other Bibles), "God . . . do not hide yourself from my beseeching [Luther: *flehn*] . . . my heart is in anguish within my body [Luther: *mein Herz ängstet sich in meinem Leibe*]."

⁸⁰Psalm 118:25, "O Lord, save [us]; O Lord, let well-being prosper [Luther: *O HErr, hilf, o HErr, laß Wohl gelingen!*]"

⁸¹See n. 69, above.

**Was euch zuwider war.
Tod, Teufel, Sünd und Hölle
Sind ganz und gar geschwächt;
Bei Gott hat seine Stelle
Das menschliche Geschlecht.**

**what was against you.
Death, devil, sin, and hell
are completely diminished;
the human family
has its place by God.**