

“Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen” BWV 12

[1. Sinfonia]

2. Weinen, Klagen,
Sorgen, Zagen,
Angst und Not
Sind der Christen Tränenbrot,
Die das Zeichen Jesu tragen.

3. *Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal in das Reich Gottes
eingehen.*

4. Kreuz und Kronen⁴ sind verbunden,
Kampf und Kleinod sind vereint.
Christen haben alle Stunden
Ihre Qual und ihren Feind,
Doch ihr Trost sind Christi Wunden.⁵

5. Ich folge Christo nach,
Von ihm will ich nicht lassen
Im Wohl und Ungemach,

[1. Sinfonia]

2. Weeping, lamenting,
Worries, faintheartedness,
Anguish and distress
Are the bread-of-tears¹ of Christians,
Those who bear the [brand-]mark² of Jesus.

3. *We must through much tribulation enter into the
kingdom of God.*³

4. Cross and victory wreaths are bound together,
Contest and prize medal are united.⁶
Christians may have, at every hour,
Their sorrow and their enemy,
Yet Christ's wounds are their comfort.

5. I follow Christ;
I will not let go of him⁷
In well-being and in affliction,

¹“Bread of tears” may sound strange, but the expression comes from Psalm 80:5, as rendered in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, “Du speisest sie mit Tränenbrot” (“You [i.e., God] feed them [i.e., your people] with bread-of-tears”).

²The “mark of Jesus” is, more specifically, a “brand-mark” burned into the skin, according to Galatians 6:17, as rendered in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, “Hinfort mache mir niemand weiter Mühe, denn ich trage die Malzeichen des HErrn JESu an meinem Leibe” (“Henceforth no one may further give me trouble, for I [as a slave/servant of Christ] bear on my body the brand-marks of [my owner] the Lord Jesus”). In the ancient world, brand-marks were burned into the skin of enslaved people to prove that they belonged to a particular owner. Luther says concerning Galatians 6:17, “Die Malzeichen, so ich an meinem Leibe trage, ... zeigen gnugsam an, wes Knecht ich sei” (“The [metaphorical] brand-marks [of suffering that] I bear on my body indicate sufficiently whose servant I am”).

³A slight adaptation of Acts 14:22, as rendered in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, “und [Paulus] ermahneten sie, dass sie im Glauben blieben, und dass wir durch viel Trübsal müssen in das Reich Gottes gehen” (“and [the Apostle Paul] exhorted them [i.e., the new followers of Jesus], that they might abide in the faith, and [he also exhorted them, saying] that we must through much tribulation go into the kingdom of God”).

⁴Most editions of the cantata give the singular (“Krone”) here, but Bach's original materials clearly have the plural.

⁵Unusually, Bach repeats the opening lines of the aria within the “B” section of his da capo setting.

⁶Translations typically stray from the apparently intended meaning of these lines, which draw heavily upon Luther's rendering of 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, “Wisset ihr nicht, dass die, so in den Schranken laufen, die laufen alle, aber Einer erlanget das *Kleinod*? Laufet nun also, dass ihr es ergreifet. Ein jeglicher aber, der da *kämpfet*, enthält sich alles Dinges: jene also, dass sie eine vergängliche *Krone* empfangen; wir aber eine unvergängliche.” (“Do you not know that they who run in the race-course, run all; but [only] one gets the [prize-]medal? Now then, run, that you may obtain it [i.e., the prize medal]. But each man who *competes*, abstains from all things: those men [will exercise this self-control], then, that they may receive a perishable *crown* [i.e., a victory wreath, whose leaves decay eventually]; but we [abstain so that we may receive] an imperishable one.”) All four nouns in lines 1–2 of this aria are united in German by starting with a “K” (and they are presumably also meant to be linked, by this same initial consonantal sound, to the words “Christen,” “Qual,” and “Christi” in lines 3–5).

⁷This is an allusion to Genesis 32:26, the story of Jacob's wrestling with God at Peniel. God says to Jacob, as rendered in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, “Lass mich gehen” (“Let me go”), and Jacob answers, “Ich lasse dich nicht [gehen], du segnest mich denn” (“I will not let you [go], unless you bless me”). According to Luther's radically Christocentric reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, it was actually Christ himself with whom Jacob wrestled at Peniel.

Im Leben und Erblassen.
Ich küsse Christi Schmach,
Ich will sein Kreuz umfassen.
Ich folge Christo nach,
Von ihm will ich nicht lassen.

6. Sei getreu, alle Pein
Wird doch nur ein Kleines sein.
Nach dem Regen
Blüht der Segen,
Alles Wetter geht vorbei,
Sei getreu, sei getreu!

**7. Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan,
Dabei will ich verbleiben,
Es mag mich auf die rauhe Bahn
Not, Tod und Elend treiben,
So wird Gott mich
Ganz väterlich
In seinen Armen halten;
Drum lass ich ihn nur walten.¹⁰**

In life and in [deathly] pallor.
I kiss Christ's humiliation;
I will embrace his cross.
I follow Christ;
I will not let go of him.

6. Be faithful; all pain
Will indeed be but a little while.⁸
After rain,
Blessing blooms;⁹
Every storm passes;
Be faithful, be faithful.

**7. What God does is done well —
I will abide by this;
If distress, death, and sorrow may
Drive me on the rough course [of life],
Then God will,
Most paternally,
Hold me in his arms;
That is why I just let him rule.**

(transl. Michael Marissen & Daniel R. Melamed)



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⁸The idea here, apparently, is not that the pain is “only a small *thing*”; rather, the idea is that it will last “only a little *while*.” The Luther Bibles of Bach’s day employ the expression “ein Kleines” to mean “a little while,” for example, in John 14:19 and 16:16-19 (this passage is part of the Gospel reading specified for Cantata 12’s liturgical occasion), and in Haggai 2:6.

⁹A looser rendering might be “April showers bring May flowers.”

¹⁰ A stanza of the hymn “Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan.”