

*St. John Passion* BWV 245.2 (version II, 1725)

Erster Teil

1<sup>II</sup>. O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde gross,  
Darum Christus seins Vaters Schoss  
Äussert und kam auf Erden;  
Von einer Jungfrau rein und zart  
Für uns er hie geboren ward,  
Er wollt der Mittler  
werden.  
Den Toten er das Leben gab  
Und legt darbei all Krankheit ab,  
Bis sich die Zeit herdrange,  
Dass er für uns geopfert würd,  
Trüg unsrer Sünden schwere Bürd  
Wohl an dem Kreuze lange.<sup>1</sup>

Part 1

1<sup>II</sup>. O humankind, bewail your great sin,  
For which Christ gave up<sup>2</sup> his father's bosom<sup>3</sup> [in heaven]  
And came [to dwell] on earth.  
Of a virgin pure and tender  
He was born here, for us;  
He wanted to become the mediator [between God and  
humankind].<sup>4</sup>  
[On his earthly sojourn,] he gave life to the dead  
And drove away all illness as well,<sup>5</sup>  
Until the time broke forth<sup>6</sup>  
That he would be sacrificed for us,  
[That he] would long bear, gladly,<sup>7</sup> the heavy burden  
Of our sin upon the cross.

GENERAL NOTE: J. S. Bach is known to have performed the *St. John Passion* four times in versions that differ textually and musically from each other in varying degrees. Version I (BWV 245.1, 1724) does not survive in complete musical sources, but its text is known with good certainty. Version II (BWV 245.2, 1725) includes several replacement or additional arias, and new interpolations from Matthew's gospel. Version III (BWV 245.3, c.1730) restored some movements but replaced others with musical numbers now lost. Version IV (BWV 245.5, 1749) restored most of the text and music from Version I, with revised words in several numbers. Between versions III and IV Bach began creating a new score, musically revising the first ten numbers of the passion in 1739. His work was completed around 1749 by an assistant who presumably just copied the readings in Bach's composing score (without revising). The setting in this partially revised score, which does not represent a version performed under Bach, is now known as BWV 245.4. Most modern performances present a conflated hybrid text based on editions by Arthur Mendel (both in an influential performing score and the critical text of the New Bach Edition) or on similar modern editions that likewise mix Bach's earlier and revised musical materials while mostly retaining the verbal texts of the earlier versions. A 1728 publication of collected liturgical poetry compiled by Christoph Birkmann includes the libretto from the 1725 version of the *St. John Passion*; it was presumably based on the now-lost printed booklets that were distributed to Bach's congregation, but its exact relationship to the work is not certain.

<sup>1</sup>The first stanza of this hymn.

<sup>2</sup>The verb "äussern" here is archaic, meaning "to relinquish advantages or assets." Bach's own audiences would have readily recognized the word from Philippians 2:6-7, "Ob er wohl in göttlicher Gestalt war, hielt ers nicht für einen Raub, Gotte gleich sein: sondern äusserte sich selbst, und nahm Knechtsgestalt an, ward gleich wie ein ander Mensch" ("[Christ Jesus], though he was in the form of God, thought it not robbery [of God's honor] to be equal with God; rather [he] relinquished his own advantage, and took on the form of a servant, becoming like any other human being").

<sup>3</sup>Luther understood "[God the] father's bosom" to be a metaphor for God's essence, which embraces Jesus, the son. John 1:18, in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day reads "Niemand hat Gott je gesehen; der eingeborene Sohn, der in des Vaters Schoss ist, der hat es uns verkündigt" ("Nobody has ever seen God.; the only begotten son [Christ], who is in [or, 'into'] the bosom of [God] the father, he [Christ] has made it [Luther: 'es'; i.e., the whole Gospel message] known to us." (Note that the Greek text upon which Luther is based differs at this point from the Greek sources for many other now standard Bibles.)

<sup>4</sup>1 Timothy 2:5, "Es ist ein Gott; und ein Mittler zwischen Gott und den Menschen, nämlich der Mensch Christus Jesus" ("There is one God; and one mediator between God and humankind, namely the human being Christ Jesus").

<sup>5</sup>In older German, as here, "dabei" or "darbei" was sometimes used as a synonym for "überdies" in the sense of "besides," "in addition," "as well."

<sup>6</sup>In older German, "herdringen" was sometimes used, in connection with time references, as a synonym for "anbrechen" ("to break forth," "to dawn").

<sup>7</sup>In certain expressions in older German, "wohl" carried the sense of "gern" ("gladly") or "mit Lust" ("with pleasure"), especially when used in connection with suffering (e.g., the common phrase, "wohl leiden" ["to gladly suffer"]).

2. Jesus ging mit seinen Jüngern über den Bach Kidron, da war ein Garte, darein ging Jesus und seine Jünger. Judas aber, der ihn verriet, wusste den Ort auch, denn Jesus versammelte sich oft daselbst mit seinen Jüngern. Da nun Judas zu sich hatte genommen<sup>8</sup> die Schar, und der Hohenpriester und Pharisäer Diener, kommt er dahin mit Fackeln, Lampen und mit Waffen. Als nun Jesus wusste alles, was ihm begegnen sollte, ging er hinaus und sprach zu ihnen: Wen suchet ihr? Sie antworteten ihm: Jesum von Nazareth. Jesus spricht zu ihnen: Ich bins. Judas aber, der ihn verriet, stund auch bei ihnen. Als nun Jesus zu ihnen<sup>9</sup> sprach: Ich bins,

2. Jesus went [out from Jerusalem]<sup>10</sup> with his disciples across the brook Kidron, [to a place] where there was a garden, where Jesus and his disciples went in. Judas, however, who betrayed him, also knew the spot, for Jesus often gathered in that place with his disciples. Now when Judas had engaged the band [of Roman soldiers],<sup>11</sup> and attendants<sup>12</sup> of the chief priests<sup>13</sup> and of the Pharisees,<sup>14</sup> he comes<sup>15</sup> there with torches, lanterns, and with weapons. Now as Jesus knew everything that should happen to him [according to scriptural prophecy], he went out and declares<sup>16</sup> to them: “Whom are you seeking?” They answered him: “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus declares<sup>17</sup> to

<sup>8</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here gives “genommen hatte” instead of “hatte genommen”; there is no difference in meaning in this context.

<sup>9</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here lacks “zu ihnen” (“to them”).

<sup>10</sup>At Passover, Jerusalem itself was always overcrowded with pilgrims. Where Jesus and the disciples (who were visiting from Galilee) went out to stay overnight was still within the area that, at the time, was considered ritually proper for pilgrims to be during the festival.

<sup>11</sup>“Schar” is Luther’s rendering of John’s “speira,” a technical term that in the New Testament always refers to a “cohort” of Roman soldiers. Luther’s commentaries on the passion narrative in John make clear that his “die Schar” refers to “the band of Roman soldiers.” This term does not refer to “the Jewish crowd” (indeed, there is no talk of a “crowd” of any sort in John’s passion narrative or in Luther’s rendering of it, nor of a “mob”). Also, neither “speira” nor “Schar” (nor “Knechte,” nor “Kriegsknechte”) refer to “the Jewish troops,” a textually unwarranted interpretation sometimes encountered in modern commentary on Bach’s *St. John Passion*. The author of the Gospel of John, a writer living under Roman rule, would most unlikely have employed a technical Roman military term, “speira,” to denote a group of Jewish soldiers, had there even been any Jewish soldiers under the Roman occupation of Judea. The “speira” are a group distinguished from the “attendants” of the chief priests and of the Pharisees. That “the soldiers” more generally (Luther, “die Kriegsknechte”) were not Jews is also evident from the fact that “the soldiers” later (in movement 21) mock Jesus inside the hall of judgment—“the Jews,” according to John’s narrative (movement 16), do not go in the hall of judgment so that they would not be ritually defiled.

<sup>12</sup>Luther’s “Diener” (“attendants”) does not mean “officers,” a rendering sometimes given in modern translations of the *St. John Passion*. Also, these attendants are not part of “die Schar” (“the band/cohort”). The “band,” or “cohort” (not “crowd”), consists of “Kriegsknechte” (“[Roman] soldiers”).

<sup>13</sup>Luther Bibles of Bach’s day use “die Hohepriester” (plural) to refer to the rotation of priests who worked in the Jerusalem Temple, and “der Hohepriester” (singular) to the head priest of them all. Partly to avoid potential narrative confusion, it became conventional in English translations of the Bible to call the former “the chief priests” and the latter “the high priest.” The original Greek of the New Testament text gives “hoi archiereis” (literally, “the chief priests”) and “ho archiereus” (literally, “the chief priest”).

<sup>14</sup>Pharisees were a Jewish movement that cultivated and promoted oral Torah. After 70 C.E., rabbis who followed Pharisee attitudes toward oral religious law are believed to have been central to the Judaism known to the canonical Gospel writers. These writers tend to give a similar prominence to the Pharisees in their stories about Jesus, sometimes for polemic reasons, sometimes by presumably unintended anachronism. Some recent historical research contends that there was no substantial conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees: Jesus was executed by the Romans, and if Jews did have anything to do with the crucifixion, it would have been at the instigation of those who had access to Pilate, principally the leaders of the priesthood. Other research argues that there was actually some serious opposition to Jesus from the Pharisees.

<sup>15</sup>Historical present tense (that is, “he comes” rather than “he came”) in John and Luther. John’s narrative mixes the two tenses, perhaps to give a sense of dramatic immediacy; so does Luther’s translation, but not exactly as in John’s text.

<sup>16</sup>Historical present tense in John but not Luther.

<sup>17</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

wichen sie zurück<sup>18</sup> und fielen zu Boden. Da fraget<sup>19</sup> er sie abermal: Wen suchet ihr? Sie aber sprachen: Jesum von Nazareth. Jesus antwortete: Ich hab's euch gesagt, dass ichs sei, suchet ihr denn mich, so lasset diese gehen!<sup>20</sup>

**3. O grosse Lieb, o Lieb ohn alle Masse,  
Die dich gebracht auf diese Marterstrasse!  
Ich lebte mit der Welt in Lust und Freuden,  
Und du musst leiden.**<sup>24</sup>

4. Auf dass das Wort erfüllet würde, welches er sagte:<sup>25</sup> Ich habe der keine verloren, die du mir gegeben hast. Da hatte Simon Petrus ein Schwert und zog es aus und schlug nach des Hohenpriesters Knecht und hieb ihm sein recht Ohr ab; und der Knecht hiess Malchus. Da sprach Jesus zu Petro: Stecke dein Schwert in die Scheide! Soll ich den Kelch nicht trinken, den mir mein Vater gegeben hat?<sup>26</sup>

them: "That, 'I am.'"<sup>21</sup> Judas, however, who betrayed him, also stood among them. Now as Jesus declared to them, "That, 'I am,'" they drew back and fell to the ground.<sup>22</sup> Then he asks<sup>23</sup> them once more: "Whom are you seeking?" They again declared: "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered: "I have said this to you—'that, 'I am''"; if you are seeking me, then let these [others] go."

**3. O great love, o love beyond all measure,  
That has brought you on this path of torment!  
I [have] lived with the world in delight and joy,  
And you must suffer.**

4. So that what he [had] said, the Word, would be fulfilled:<sup>27</sup> "I have not lost one [follower] of those whom you [God the father] have given me." Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it out and struck at the high priest's<sup>28</sup> servant and cut his right ear off; and the servant's name was Malchus. Then Jesus declared to Peter: "Put your sword into its scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup<sup>29</sup> that my father has given me?"

<sup>18</sup>In his 1739 score, Bach set this with an extra syllable, "zurücke"; for the 1724, 1725, and 1749 versions, and in the 1728 printed libretto, the text here reads "zurück." There is no difference in meaning.

<sup>19</sup>In his 1739 score, Bach revised this with an extra syllable, "fragete" ("asked"). In Bach's 1724, 1725, and 1749 versions the text here reads "fraget" ("asks"; i.e., in the historical present tense). The 1728 printed libretto here reads "fragte" ("asked").

<sup>20</sup>John 18:1-8.

<sup>21</sup>Literally, "I am it" (as opposed to "It is me," or "I am he").

<sup>22</sup>The Greek "ego eimi" ("I am"), in the voice of a divine figure, is understood as an expression of self-revelation in the New Testament and in the Septuagint (the ancient Jewish Greek translation of the Torah and, eventually, the entire Hebrew Bible, with some additional Greek texts). Because Jesus's "Ich bins" ("It/That, 'I am'") here is a divine utterance (a theophany), all those in his presence fall involuntarily to the ground.

<sup>23</sup>Past tense, however, in John and Luther.

<sup>24</sup>A stanza of "Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen?"

<sup>25</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads "Auf das erfüllet würde, welches er sagte" ("So that what he [had] said would be fulfilled").

<sup>26</sup>John 18:9-11.

<sup>27</sup>Jesus's words in John 17:12, understood as the "word/Word of God"; in John 1:1, Jesus is called "das Wort bei Gott" ("the word/Word with God"); and Colossians 3:16 speaks of "das Wort Christi" ("the word/Word of Christ").

<sup>28</sup>Luther Bibles of Bach's day use "die Hohepriester" (plural) to refer to the rotation of priests who work in the Jerusalem Temple, and "der Hohepriester" (singular) to the head priest of them all. Partly to avoid potential narrative confusion, it became conventional in English translations of the Bible to call the former "the chief priests" and the latter "the high priest." The original Greek of the New Testament text gives "hoi archiereis" (literally, "the chief priests") and "ho archiereus" (literally, "the chief priest").

<sup>29</sup>In biblical language, "the cup" is a metaphor for what God has to offer a person, whether positive (e.g., "the cup of consolation") or negative (e.g., "the cup of wrath," and "the cup of suffering").

**5. Dein Will gescheh, Herr Gott, zugleich  
Auf Erden wie im Himmelreich.  
Gib uns Geduld in Leidenszeit,  
Gehorsam sein in Lieb und Leid;  
Wehr und steur allem<sup>30</sup> Fleisch und Blut,  
Das wider deinen Willen tut!<sup>31</sup>**

**5. May your will be done, Lord God, alike  
On earth as [it is] in the kingdom of heaven.  
Give us patience in time of suffering,  
To be obedient in love and woe;  
Restrain<sup>32</sup> and hold in check all flesh and blood  
That acts against your will.**

6. Die Schar aber und der Oberhauptmann und die Diener der Jüden nahmen Jesum und bunden ihn und führten ihn aufs erste zu Hannas, der war Kaiphas Schwäher, welcher des Jahres Hoherpriester war. Es war aber Kaiphas, der den<sup>33</sup> Jüden riet, es wäre gut, dass ein Mensch würde umbracht für das Volk.<sup>34</sup>

6. The band, however, and the captain [of the band of Roman soldiers] and the attendants of the Jews took Jesus and bound him and led him at first to Annas (the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the one who was high priest in that year). But it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews it would be good that one person would be put to death<sup>35</sup> for<sup>36</sup> the people.

7. Von den Stricken meiner Sünden  
Mich zu entbinden,<sup>37</sup>  
Wird mein Heil gebunden.  
Mich von allen Lasterbeulen  
Völlig zu heilen,<sup>38</sup>  
Lässt er sich verwunden.

7. To unbind me  
From the snares of my sins,<sup>39</sup>  
My salvation [Jesus] is bound.  
To heal me fully  
Of all vice-boils,<sup>40</sup>  
He lets himself be wounded.

8. Simon Petrus aber folgte Jesu nach und ein ander Jünger.<sup>41</sup>

8. Simon Peter, however, followed Jesus and [so did] another disciple.

<sup>30</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “allen” (i.e., “all” as plural instead of as a singular).

<sup>31</sup>A stanza of “Vater unser im Himmelreich.”

<sup>32</sup>“Wehren” is used here in one of its older-German senses, of “verhindern” (“get in the way of,” “restrain”) or “verbieten” (“to forbid”).

<sup>33</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “der den’n [i.e., ‘denen’] Jüden riet” (“who advised those Jews”).

<sup>34</sup>John 18:12-14.

<sup>35</sup>The word “umbracht” here is a standard older-German alternative version of “umgebracht,” the past tense of “umbringen” (“to bring down” in its sense of “to kill/murder”). It is not the past tense of “umbrechen” (“to plow up [a field]” or “to break up/down,” which might be theologically conceived, here, as a metaphor for the breaking up of bread, “the [physical] body of Christ,” in the Lutheran sacrament of communion). Here in John 18:14 and elsewhere, the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day employ “umbracht” as the past tense of “umbringen.”

<sup>36</sup>The expression “für das Volk” (“for the people”) here is ambiguous (as is also true of the underlying Greek words “hyper tou laou”): it can mean “instead of the people” or “on behalf of the people,” and this double meaning was apparently intended. See also John 11:50, where Caiaphas had said, “Es ist uns besser, ein Mensch sterbe für das Volk, denn dass das ganze Volk verderbe” (“It is better for us [Jews that] one person may die for the people, than that the entire people may be destroyed [by the Romans]”).

<sup>37</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden zu entbinden” (“To unbind me from the snare of my sins”).

<sup>38</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “Von der Laster Eiterbeulen mich zu heilen” (“To heal me of purulent vice-boils”).

<sup>39</sup>The notion of a “Sündenstrick” (“sin’s snare”) was derived from Proverbs 5:22, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Die Missetat des Gottlosen wird ihn fahen, und er wird mit dem Strick seiner Sünde gehalten werden” (“The godless one’s misdeed will entrap him, and he will be held [fast] with the snare of his sin”). This “Sündenstrick” was also associated with the “Teufelsstrick” (“devil’s snare”) of 2 Timothy 2:26.

<sup>40</sup>“Lasterbeulen” are “vice-boils,” not “blasphemy-boils” (which would have been “Lästerbeulen”).

<sup>41</sup>John 18:15a.

9. Ich folge dir gleichfalls mit freudigen Schritten  
Und lasse dich nicht,  
Mein Leben, mein Licht.  
Befördre den Lauf  
Und höre nicht auf,  
Selbst an mir zu ziehen, zu schieben, zu bitten.

9. I will follow you likewise with joyful steps  
And will not let you go,<sup>42</sup>  
My life, my light.  
Promote the course [of my life of faith]<sup>43</sup>  
And do not cease  
Drawing,<sup>44</sup> pushing, imploring me yourself.

10. Derselbige Jünger war dem Hohenpriester bekannt  
und ging mit Jesu hinein in des Hohenpriesters Palast.  
Petrus aber stund draussen für der Tür. Da ging der  
andere Jünger, der dem Hohenpriester bekannt war,  
hinaus und redete mit der Türhüterin und führete Petrum  
hinein. Da sprach die Magd, die Türhüterin, zu Petro:  
Bist du nicht dieses Menschen Jünger einer?<sup>45</sup> Er sprach:  
Ich bins nicht. Es stunden aber die Knechte und Diener  
und hatten ein Kohlfew gemacht (denn es war kalt) und  
wärmeten sich. Petrus aber stund bei ihnen und wärmete  
sich.<sup>46</sup> Aber der Hohepriester fragte Jesum um seine  
Jünger und um seine Lehre. Jesus antwortete ihm.<sup>47</sup> Ich

10. This same disciple was known to the high priest and  
went with Jesus into the high priest's palace. Peter,  
however, stood outside, in front of the door. Then the other  
disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and  
spoke with the woman keeping the door and led Peter in.  
Then the maid, the doorkeeper, declared<sup>48</sup> to Peter: "Are  
you not one of this person's disciples?" He declared:<sup>49</sup>  
"That, I am not." But the servants<sup>50</sup> [of the priests] and  
attendants stood around, having made a charcoal fire (for  
it was cold), and warmed themselves. But Peter stood  
among them and warmed himself. But the high priest asked  
Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus

<sup>42</sup>This is an allusion to Genesis 32:26, the story of Jacob's wrestling with God at Peniel. God says to Jacob, "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 whom Jacob wrestled with at Peniel.

<sup>43</sup>As set forth especially in 2 Timothy 4:7 and 1 Corinthians 9:24.

<sup>44</sup>See John 12:32, "Und ich, wenn ich erhöht werde von der Erden, so will ich sie alle zu mir ziehen" ("And I [Jesus], when I am lifted up from the earth [on to the cross], then will I draw them all to me").

<sup>45</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads "Bist du nicht auch dieses Menschen Jünger einer?" ("Are you not also one of this person's disciples?").

<sup>46</sup>The 1728 printed libretto lacks this sentence.

<sup>47</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads "Jesus antwortete ihnen" ("Jesus answered them [i.e., the high priest and the attendants and servants]").

<sup>48</sup>Historical present tense in John but not Luther.

<sup>49</sup>Historical present tense in John but not Luther.

<sup>50</sup>"Die Knechte" are not "the soldiers" (as this is sometimes rendered in modern translations of the libretto), but "the servants" of the Jewish chief priests and high priest.

*habe frei, öffentlich geredet für der Welt. Ich habe allezeit gelehret in der Schule und in dem Tempel, da alle Jüden zusammenkommen, und habe nichts im Verborgnen<sup>51</sup> geredt. Was fragest du mich darum? Frage die darum, die gehöret haben, was ich zu ihnen geredet habe! Siehe, dieselbigen wissen, was ich gesaget habe. Als er aber solches redete, gab der Diener einer, die dabeistunden, Jesu einen Backenstreich und sprach: Solltest du dem Hohenpriester also antworten? Jesus aber<sup>52</sup> antwortete: Hab ich übel geredt, so beweise es, dass es böse sei, hab ich aber recht geredt, was schlägest du mich?<sup>53</sup>*

**11. Wer hat dich so geschlagen,  
Mein Heil, und dich mit Plagen  
So übel zugericht?  
Du bist ja nicht ein Sünder  
Wie wir und unsre Kinder,  
Von Missetaten weisst du nicht.**

**Ich, ich und meine Sünden,  
Die sich wie Körnlein finden**

*answered him: “I have spoken freely and openly before<sup>54</sup> the world. I have always taught in the synagogue<sup>55</sup> and in the Temple, where all Jews come together, and have spoken nothing in secret. Why do you ask me about this? About this, ask those who have heard what I have spoken to them. Look, these same ones know what I have said.”<sup>56</sup> But as he spoke such things, one of the attendants standing nearby gave Jesus a blow to the cheek<sup>57</sup> and declared: “Should you answer the high priest like that?” But Jesus answered: “If I have spoken badly, then prove that it be evil; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?”*

**11. Who has struck you so,  
My salvation, and battered you  
So badly with wound-marks?<sup>58</sup>  
You are indeed not a sinner,  
As we and our children [are];  
You do not have experience of [committing] misdeeds.<sup>59</sup>**

**I, I and my sins,  
Which are as [countless as] the little grains**

<sup>51</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads not “im Verborgnen” but “in Verborgnen”; there is no difference in meaning.

<sup>52</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here lacks the word “aber” (“but”).

<sup>53</sup>John 18:15b-23.

<sup>54</sup>As is the case at several other spots in the libretto, the old form “für” appears where modern German would use “vor.” (The libretto’s usage of “vor” and “für” is not consistent.)

<sup>55</sup>“Schule” here does not really mean “school,” as it is sometime rendered in modern translation of the libretto. The Luther Bibles of Bach’s day used as various renderings of the New Testament Greek’s “sunagoge” (“synagogue”) the words “Schule,” “Jüden-Schule,” and “Jüden-Schul.”

<sup>56</sup>Jesus is quoting God’s words from Isaiah 45:18-19, “Denn so spricht der HERR: ... Ich bin der HERR, und ist keiner mehr; ich habe nicht in verborgene geredet (“For so declares the LORD: ... I am the LORD and there is no other; I have not spoken in secret”).

<sup>57</sup>“Backenstreich” (literally, a “strike of [i.e., to] the cheek”) was an older-German, loftier synonym for the more common expressions “Ohrfeige” (“slap in the face”; literally, “smack of the ear”) and “Maulschelle” (“box on the ear”; literally, “swat of the muzzle”). Consider also Luther’s rendering of Matthew 5:39, where Jesus says “so dir jemand einen Streich gibt auf deinen rechten Backen, dem biete den anderen auch dar” (“if someone gives you a blow to your right cheek, offer him the other [cheek] also”).

<sup>58</sup>The most general sense of the word “Plage” in older German was given in the leading eighteenth-century German dictionary as “Ein Schlag, ein Streich, ... und figürlich auch die dadurch verursachte Wunde” (“A blow, a stroke, ... and figuratively also the wound caused by it.”). In older English the word “plague” could likewise mean “a blow, a smiting.” Psalm 89:33, in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, reads “so will ich ihre Sünde mit der Rute heimsuchen und ihre Missetat mit Plagen” (“Then will I visit their sin with the rod, and their misdeed with strokes/wounds”). The last word of the sentence renders the plural of the Hebrew “nega,” which means variously “stroke,” “plague,” “wound,” “mark,” “plague-spot,” “wound-mark.”

<sup>59</sup>Literally, “Of misdeeds know you not.” This line is not saying that Jesus was unaware of the existence of misdeeds or sin. The sense of the line derives from 2 Corinthians 5:21, “er hat den, der von keiner Sünde wusste, für uns zur Sünde gemacht” (“he [God] has made into sin for us him [Jesus] who knew of no sin [i.e., who had no personal experience of committing a sin]”). See also the text of line 2 in movement 15.

**Des Sandes an dem Meer,  
Die haben dir erregt  
Das Elend, das dich schläget,  
Und das betrübte Marterheer.<sup>60</sup>**

11<sup>+</sup>. Himmel reisse, Welt erbebe, fällt in meinen  
Trauerton,  
**Jesu, deine Passion**  
Sehet meine Qual und Angst, was ich, Jesu, mit dir leide!  
**Ist mir lauter Freude,**  
Ja, ich zähle deine Schmerzen, zerschlagner Gottessohn,<sup>62</sup>  
**Deine Wunden, Kron und Hohn**  
Ich erwähle Golgotha vor dies schnöde Weltgebäude.  
**Meines Herzens Weide.<sup>63</sup>**  
Werden auf den Kreuzeswegen deine Dornen ausgesät,  
**Meine Seel auf Rosen geht,**  
Weil ich in Zufriedenheit mich in deine Wunden  
senke,

**Of sand on the seashore,  
They have caused you  
The misery that strikes you  
And the grievous host of torments.<sup>61</sup>**

11<sup>+</sup>. Heaven, tear apart; world, quake; fall in with my song of  
mourning;<sup>64</sup>  
**Jesus, your Passion**  
Look at my sorrow and anxiety that I suffer with you, Jesus!  
**Is pure joy to me;**  
Yes, I do count up your agonies, o shattered son of God;  
**Your wounds, crown [of thorns],<sup>65</sup> and scorn**  
I choose Golgotha over this vile edifice of the world.<sup>66</sup>  
**[Are] my heart's pasture.**  
Should your thorns be sown on the paths of the cross,<sup>67</sup>  
**My soul walks on roses,**  
[And] so long as<sup>68</sup> I, in contentment, would submerge myself  
into your wounds,<sup>69</sup>

<sup>60</sup>Two stanzas of “O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben.”

<sup>61</sup>“Das betrübte Marterheer” in this line does not mean “the miserable band of torturers”; in the older-German word “Marterheer,” the “Heer” was understood as metaphorical, which makes the sense of “das betrübte Marterheer” to be “the grievous host of torments.”

<sup>62</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “O zuschlagner Gottessohn” (“o shattered son of God”).

<sup>63</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “meiner Seelen Weide” (“my soul’s pasture”).

<sup>64</sup>“Trauerton” (literally, “tone/tune of mourning”) is a synonym for “Trauermelodie” (“mourning melody”) and “Klagelied” (“threnody,” “song/air of lamentation/mourning”).

<sup>65</sup>That is, the “crown” narrated in John 19:2, “Und die Kriegsknechte flochten eine Krone von Dornen und setzten sie auf sein Haupt” (“And the soldiers braided a crown of thorns and set it upon [Jesus’s] head,” which is set at the beginning of movement 19 in the *St. John Passion*).

<sup>66</sup>“Weltgebäude” (“edifice of the world”) was employed in older German to refer to the world as a metaphorical edifice or building, especially as reflected upon theologically. A famous usage was the Lutheran hymn “Du, o schönes Weltgebäude” (“You, o [physically] beautiful [but spiritually hollow] edifice of the world”).

<sup>67</sup>Lutheran use of the word “Kreuzeswegen” does not refer to the “stations of the cross” (i.e., representations of the successive incidents in the passion narrative from Jesus’s condemnation to his burial, which encourage series of prayers or meditations performed at each station in turn), a concept that would have been (unfavorably) associated with the Roman Catholic church. It refers here to Christians suffering on their life “paths” (“Wege”). The “Lebenswege” (“paths of [one’s] life”) should, in that view, be “Kreuzeswege” (“paths of [one’s bearing] the cross”). In the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, Jesus says in Luke 14:27, “Wer nicht sein Kreuz trägt und mir nachfolget, der kann nicht mein Jünger sein” (“Whoever does not bear his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple”).

<sup>68</sup>Sometimes in older German “weil” is to be understood not as “because” but as “so long as.”

<sup>69</sup>This is referring to the wounds in the side of Jesus’s body that are narrated in John 19:34 (see the middle of movement 36 in the *St. John Passion*), “der Kriegsknechte einer eröffnete seine Seite mit einem Speer, und alsobald ging Blut und Wasser heraus” (“[Upon seeing that Jesus was dead on the cross,] one of the soldiers opened his [Jesus’s] side with a spear, and immediately blood and water went out”). The wound-cavity in Jesus’s rib was embraced in Lutheranism as a metaphorical place of refuge for Christian believers, as for example in a chorale stanza in the Wagner Hymnal, owned by Bach, which reads: “Jesu, ... / Deiner Wunden Höhle / Ist mein Aufenthalt / ... [Ich] finde Ruh / In der offnen Seiten Ritze / Da ich sicher sitze” (“Jesus, ... your wound-cavity is my abode ... I find rest in the opened side’s cleft, where I sit securely”).

**Wenn ich dran gedenke;**

So erblick ich in dem Sterben, wenn ein stürmend Wetter weht,

**In dem Himmel eine Stätt**

Diesen Ort, dahin ich mich täglich durch den Glauben lenke.

**Mir deswegen schenke!<sup>70</sup>**

12. Und Hannas sandte ihn gebunden zu dem Hohenpriester Kaiphas. Simon Petrus stund und wärmete sich,<sup>72</sup> da sprachen sie zu ihm: Bist du nicht seiner Jünger einer?<sup>73</sup> Er leugnete aber und sprach: Ich bins nicht. Spricht des Hohenpriesters Knecht einer, ein Gefreundter des, dem Petrus das Ohr abgehauen hatte: Sahe ich dich nicht im Garten bei ihm?<sup>74</sup> Da verleugnete Petrus abermal, und alsobald krähet der Hahn.<sup>75</sup> Da gedachte Petrus an die Worte Jesu und ging hinaus und weinete bitterlich.<sup>76</sup>

13<sup>II</sup>. Zerschmettert mich, ihr Felsen und ihr Hügel,  
Wirf Himmel deinen Strahl auf mich!  
Wie freventlich, wie sündlich, wie vermessen  
Hab ich, o Jesu, dein vergessen!

**When I reflect on it [your Passion];**

Then, in [my] death, when a stormy tempest gusts, I will [truly] catch sight of

**Grant me a place in heaven**

This spot [where your honor dwells],<sup>71</sup> to which by faith I daily direct myself.

**On account of it [your Passion].**

12. And Annas sent him, bound, to the high priest Caiaphas. Simon Peter stood and warmed himself, when they declared to him: “Are you not one of his disciples?” He denied [it] again and declared: “That, I am not.” One of the high priest’s servants, a kinsman of him whose ear Peter had cut off, declares:<sup>77</sup> “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” Then Peter disavowed [Jesus] once more, and immediately the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the words of Jesus<sup>78</sup> and went out and wept bitterly.

13<sup>II</sup>. Crush me, you rocks and you hills;  
Heaven, cast your thunderbolt upon me!  
How outrageously, how sinfully, how presumptuously<sup>79</sup>  
Have I forgotten you,<sup>80</sup> o Jesus!

<sup>70</sup>A stanza of “Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod.” The librettist has ingeniously embedded this hymn stanza in an aria text that matches not only its scansion patterns but also its rhymes.

<sup>71</sup>Probably drawing upon Psalm 26:8, “HERR, ich habe lieb ... den Ort, da deine Ehre wohnt” (“LORD, I love the place/spot where your glory/honor dwells”), understood with reference to Exodus 20:24, “denn an welchem Ort ich meines Namens Gedächtnis stiften werde, da will ich zu dir kommen, und dich segnen” (“for in whatever place/spot I may make remembrance of my name, I will come to you, and bless you”).

<sup>72</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “Simon Petrus aber stund und wärmete sich” (“But Simon Peter stood and warmed himself”).

<sup>73</sup>The 1728 printed libretto identifies this as a “Chor der Juden” (“Chorus of Jews”).

<sup>74</sup>Although the narrative had just identified the person here as a “Knecht” (“servant”), the 1728 printed libretto identifies the speaker as “Diener” (“attendant”). It was earlier an attendant who gives Jesus a blow to the cheek, and it is now a servant who questions him.

<sup>75</sup>John 18:24-27.

<sup>76</sup>Matthew 26:75a and 26:75c, except for the word “gedachte,” which is taken from Luther’s rendering of the parallel passage in Mark 14:72b.

<sup>77</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

<sup>78</sup>This sentence was interpolated from Matthew 26:75. Peter is here remembering the words of Jesus in John 13:38 (Matthew 26:34).

<sup>79</sup>In the Lutheran literature of Bach’s day and earlier, the apostle Peter was often called “presumptuous” (German, “vermessen”) on account of his having self-confidently declared (in Mark 14:31), just before disavowing Jesus repeatedly, “Ja, wenn ich auch mit dir sterben müsste, wollte ich dich nicht verleugnen” (“Indeed, should I even have to die with you, I would not disavow you”).

<sup>80</sup>The one who is meditating here is said to be arrogant, like Peter, in “forgetting” Jesus, just like the ancient Israelites were said in Psalm 106:21, in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, to have worshipped a molten image of a calf and “forgotten” (“vergassen”) the God who had saved them from bondage in Egypt.



Ja, nähm ich gleich der Morgenröte Flügel,  
So holte mich mein strenger Richter wieder;  
Ach! fällt vor ihm in bitterm Tränen nieder!<sup>81</sup>

Yes, even if [to escape] I take the wings of the morning,<sup>82</sup>  
Then my stern judge [the Lord] shall fetch me back;  
Ah, fall down [on bended knee] before him with bitter tears.

**14. Petrus, der nicht denkt zurück,  
Seinen Gott verneinet,  
Der doch auf ein ernsten Blick  
Bitterlichen<sup>83</sup> weinet.  
Jesu, blicke mich auch an,  
Wenn ich nicht will büssen;  
Wenn ich Böses hab getan,  
Rühre mein Gewissen!<sup>84</sup>**

**14. Peter, who does not think back [to Jesus's word],  
Disclaims his God;  
At a penetrating glance,<sup>85</sup> however,  
He weeps bitterly.  
Jesus, glance upon me as well,  
Whenever I do not want to atone;  
Whenever I have done something evil,  
Stir my conscience.**

Zweiter Teil

Part 2

**15. Christus, der uns selig macht,  
Kein Bös hat begangen,  
Der ward für uns in der Nacht  
Als ein Dieb gefangen,  
Geführt für gottlose Leut  
Und fälschlich verklaget,  
Verlacht, verhöhnt und verspeit,  
Wie denn die Schrift saget.<sup>86</sup>**

**15. Christ, who makes us blessed [with salvation],  
Has committed no evil;  
For us, in the night, he was  
Seized like a thief,  
Led before godless people,<sup>87</sup>  
And falsely accused,  
Mocked, scorned, and spat upon,  
Just as the scripture<sup>88</sup> says.**

<sup>81</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “Ach fällt vor ihm ihr bitteren Tränen nieder!” (“Ah, your bitter tears [will] trickle down before him”), i.e., which is a statement, not a command.

<sup>82</sup>Psalm 139:8-9, “Nehme ich Flügel der Morgenröte, so bist du auch da” (“If [in escape] I take [the] ‘wings of the morning’ [i.e., the pinions of cloud that appear to lift dawn into the sky], then you [LORD] are even there”).

<sup>83</sup>In older German the adverb “bitterlich” (“bitterly”) was sometimes spelled “bitterlichen.”

<sup>84</sup>A stanza of “Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod.”

<sup>85</sup>This refers to the “Heiland-Blick” (“gaze of the Savior”) frequently cited in Lutheran sermons on the passion narrative. As explained, e.g., in Heinrich Müller’s passion sermons, several of which Bach himself owned, it is the warmth of Jesus’s metaphoric gaze that melts the ice of Peter’s heart into tears of repentance. This also was believed to help make sense of the references in the passion narrative to Peter’s continually trying to warm himself.

<sup>86</sup>The first stanza of this hymn.

<sup>87</sup>“Godless people” here refers to the Romans (the soldiers and Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judea) in the hall of judgment to which Jesus is now being led. See movement 16 that follows. The stanzas of this well-known chorale move in sequence through the events of the passion narrative, and the stanza immediately following this one likewise concerns Jesus before Pilate.

<sup>88</sup>That is, the passion narrative of John 18:1–19:42, but referring also to elements of the passion narratives of Luke 22:39–23:46, Mark 14:26–15:47, and Matthew 26:30–27:66.

16. Da führeten sie Jesum von Kaipha vor das Richthaus, und es war frühe. Und sie gingen nicht in das Richthaus, auf dass sie nicht unrein würden, sondern Ostern essen möchten. Da ging Pilatus zu ihnen heraus und sprach: Was bringet ihr für Klage wider diesen Menschen? Sie antworteten und sprachen zu ihm: Wäre dieser nicht ein Übeltäter, wir hätten dir ihn nicht überantwortet. Da sprach Pilatus zu ihnen: So nehmet ihr ihn hin und richtet ihn nach eurem Gesetze!<sup>89</sup> Da sprachen die Jüden zu ihm: Wir dürfen niemand töten. Auf dass erfüllet würde das Wort Jesu, welches er sagte, da er deutete, welches Todes er sterben würde. Da ging Pilatus wieder hinein in das Richthaus und rief Jesu und sprach zu ihm: Bist du der Jüden König? Jesus antwortete: Redest du das von dir selbst, oder habens dir andere von mir gesagt? Pilatus antwortete: Bin ich ein Jude? Dein Volk und die Hohenpriester haben dich mir überantwortet; was hast du getan? Jesus antwortete: Mein Reich ist nicht von dieser Welt; wäre mein Reich von dieser Welt, meine Diener würden darob kämpfen, dass ich den Jüden nicht überantwortet würde; aber nun ist mein Reich nicht von dannen.<sup>90</sup>

16. Then they led<sup>91</sup> Jesus from Caiaphas before the hall of judgment, and it was early. And they did not go into the hall of judgment, so that they would not be [ritually] impure,<sup>92</sup> but might eat [of the] Easter [lamb].<sup>93</sup> Then Pilate went out to them and declared:<sup>94</sup> “What charge do you bring against this person?” They answered, declaring to him: “Were this one not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over to you.” Then Pilate declared to them: “So take him away and judge him according to your [own] law.” Then the Jews declared to him: “We are not permitted to put anyone to death.”<sup>95</sup> So that the Word of Jesus would be fulfilled—what he [had] said when he indicated what manner of death he would die.<sup>96</sup> Pilate then went back into the hall of judgment and summoned Jesus and declared to him: “Are you the King of the Jews?”<sup>97</sup> Jesus answered: “Are you speaking for yourself [when you declare] this, or have others said it to you of me?” Pilate answered: “Am I a Jew? Your people and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?” Jesus answered: “My kingdom is not from this world; were my kingdom from this world, my attendants would fight on that account,<sup>98</sup> [so] that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but now, my kingdom is not from here.”

<sup>89</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “richtet ihn nach euren Gesetze” (“judge him according to your [own] laws”).

<sup>90</sup>John 18:28-36.

<sup>91</sup>Historical present tense in John but not Luther.

<sup>92</sup>There are laws from the Hebrew Scriptures that can be cited for this (e.g., Numbers 9–11), but the text may simply be projecting theological irony against “the Jews.” Passages from the Mishnah concerning ritual impurity from exposure to rooms (like the hall of judgment) built over a burial place are also sometimes cited.

<sup>93</sup>Luther’s use of “Oster” (“Easter”) here is apparently meant to distance the observance of this festival by Jesus and his followers as much as possible from the Jewishness of Passover. Luther and Lutheranism equivocated on whether the word “Oster” referred to the (Christian) festival of “Easter” or to the (Jewish) festival of “Passover,” with the latter also understood as prefiguring the former. Luther used both “Oster” and “Passah” for “Passover” in his translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, but he used only “Oster” in his New Testament. It may have been for its lack of Jewish associations that Luther chose the non-biblical word “Oster,” derived from the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, “Eostre” or “Ostara.” In older German, “Passah” was even defined as “das judische Osterfest” (“the Jewish Easter festival”); and in English, Passover has sometimes been referred to as “Jewish Easter.”

<sup>94</sup>Historical present tense in John but not Luther.

<sup>95</sup>“Töten” here has the specific meaning of “to put to death, as capital punishment,” not just “to kill.” At least as Christian scriptural tradition had it, it was the case under the legal conditions of Roman rule that capital punishment was mostly not permitted on the part of Jews or any non-Romans. There were a few charges for which Jews evidently were permitted to carry out death sentences, but by stoning, not crucifixion: for violating prohibitions against circulating in certain quarters of the Temple, and possibly for adultery. But current biblical scholarship supports the prohibition’s historicity for the specific charges against Jesus depicted in the Gospel, namely, being an evil-doer, making himself out to be divine, and making himself “the King of the Jews.”

<sup>96</sup>That is, what Jesus said (understood as the “word/Word of God”) in John 12:32-33 (suggesting that he would die by crucifixion, the Roman method of execution); in John 1:1, Jesus is called “the word/Word of God.”

<sup>97</sup>Anyone claiming kingship without Roman authority would have been considered an insurrectionist.

**17. Ach grosser König, gross zu allen Zeiten,  
Wie kann ich gnugsam diese<sup>99</sup> Treu ausbreiten?  
Keins Menschen Herze mag indes ausdenken,<sup>100</sup>  
Was dir zu schenken.**

**Ich kanns mit meinen Sinnen nicht erreichen,  
Womit doch dein Erbarmen zu vergleichen.  
Wie kann ich dir denn deine Liebestaten  
Im Werk erstatten?<sup>101</sup>**

18. *Da sprach Pilatus zu ihm: So bist du dennoch ein König? Jesus antwortete: Du sagsts, ich bin ein König. Ich bin dazu geboren und in die Welt kommen, dass ich die Wahrheit zeugen soll. Wer aus der Wahrheit ist, der höret meine Stimme. Spricht Pilatus zu ihm: Was ist Wahrheit? Und da er das gesaget, ging er wieder hinaus zu den Jüden und spricht zu ihnen: Ich finde keine Schuld an ihm. Ihr habt aber eine Gewohnheit, dass ich euch einen losgebe,<sup>103</sup> wollt ihr nun, dass ich euch der Jüden König losgebe? Da schrieen sie wieder allesamt und sprachen: Nicht diesen, sondern Barrabam! Barrabas aber war ein Mörder. Da nahm Pilatus Jesum und geisselte ihn.<sup>104</sup>*

**17. Ah great king, great throughout all the ages,  
How can I adequately enlarge upon this faithfulness?  
Meanwhile, no human heart may conceive of  
What [is fit] to give you.**

**With my capacities I cannot arrive at  
What indeed to compare your mercy with.  
How can I, then, repay your acts of love  
In [my pursuing] the work [of the Lord]?<sup>102</sup>**

18. *Then Pilate declared to him: “So you are nonetheless a king?” Jesus answered: “You are saying so, [that] I am a king. For this I am begotten and come into the world: that I shall bear witness to the truth. Whoever is of the truth, he hears my voice.” Pilate declares<sup>105</sup> to him: “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went back out to the Jews and declares<sup>106</sup> to them: “I find no fault in him. But you have a custom that I release someone to you. Now do you want me to release the King of the Jews to you?” Then they shouted back, all together, declaring: “Not this one, but Barabbas!”<sup>107</sup> But Barabbas was a murderer.<sup>108</sup> Pilate then took Jesus and scourged him.<sup>109</sup>*

<sup>98</sup>“Darob” is an older-German synonym for “deshalb” (“on these grounds,” “for this reason”) and “darum” (in the sense of “for this reason,” “on that account”).

<sup>99</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “solche Treu” (“such faithfulness”).

<sup>100</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “Keins Menschen Herz vermag es auszudenken, was dir zu schenken” (“No human heart is able to conceive of it, what [is fit] to give you”).

<sup>101</sup>Two stanzas of “Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen?”

<sup>102</sup>This “the work”—which is in the singular, not plural (“works” would imply human actions, and Lutherans would have found abhorrent any hint that people’s good works might earn them favor in God’s eyes and thus eternal salvation)—presumably means “the work of the Lord” (i.e., the cultivation and furtherance of the Christian faith) that is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15:58, “Meine lieben Brüder, seid feste, unbeweglich, und nehmet immer zu in dem Werk des HERRN” (“My dear brothers [in Christ], be steadfast, immovable [in your faith], and always grow/increase in the work of the LORD”).

<sup>103</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads, as in Luther’s rendering of John 18:39, “Ihr habt aber eine Gewohnheit, dass ich euch einen auf Ostern losgebe” (“But you have a custom that at [Jewish] Easter [i.e., at Passover] I release someone to you”). Bach’s *St. John Passion* text does not include the words “auf Ostern” here in any version.

<sup>104</sup>John 18:37-40, 19:1.

<sup>105</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

<sup>106</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

<sup>107</sup>“Barabbas,” a name unknown in Jewish usage, means “son of the father.”

<sup>108</sup>The underlying term in Greek can mean “robber” or “revolutionary,” but the Luther Bibles render it as “murderer.”

<sup>109</sup>With regard to Jesus’s scourging, Luther called Pilate (said in Luther’s translation to have carried out the act himself) “ein rechter Bluthund” (“a proper bloodhound”).

19<sup>II</sup>. Ach, windet euch nicht so, geplagte Seelen,  
Bei eurer Kreuzes-Angst und Qual!  
Könnt ihr die unermessne Zahl  
Der harten Geisselschläge zählen,  
So zählet auch die Menge eurer Sünden,  
Ihr werdet diese grösser finden!

19<sup>II</sup>. Oh, writhe not so, stricken souls,  
At your anxiety and sorrow in [bearing] the cross.<sup>110</sup>  
If you can count up the immeasurable number  
Of the harsh scourging blows [that Jesus received],  
Then count up, too, the multitude of your sins;  
You will find this [number even] greater!

[there is no movement numbered “20.” in this version]

21. *Und die Kriegsknechte flochten eine Krone von Dornen und satzten<sup>111</sup> sie auf sein Haupt und legten ihm ein Purpurkleid an und sprachen: Sei gegrüsst, lieber Jüdenkönig! Und gaben ihm Backenstreiche. Da ging Pilatus wieder heraus und sprach zu ihnen: Sehet, ich führe ihn heraus zu euch, dass ihr erkennt, dass ich keine Schuld an ihm finde. Also ging Jesus heraus und trug eine Dornenkrone und Purpurkleid. Und er sprach zu ihnen: Sehet, welch ein Mensch! Da ihn die Hohenpriester und die Diener sahen, schrieen sie und sprachen: Kreuzige, kreuzige!<sup>112</sup> Pilatus sprach zu ihnen:*

21. *And the soldiers<sup>113</sup> braided a crown of thorns and set it upon his head and laid a purple robe on him, declaring: “Greetings, dear King of the Jews!” And gave him blows to the cheek.<sup>114</sup> Then Pilate went back out and declared<sup>115</sup> to them [the Jews].<sup>116</sup> “Look, I am leading him out to you, so that you will recognize that I find no fault in him.” So Jesus went out, wearing a crown of thorns and purple robe. And he [Pilate] declared<sup>117</sup> to them: “Look, what a man!”<sup>118</sup> When the chief priests and the attendants looked at him, they shouted, declaring:*

<sup>110</sup>In the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, Jesus says in Luke 14:27, “Wer nicht sein Kreuz trägt und mir nachfolget, der kann nicht mein Jünger sein” (“Whoever does not bear his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple”).

<sup>111</sup>“Satzten” is an older-German spelling for “setzen (“to set”).

<sup>112</sup>Although the narrative had just identified the group here as the (Jewish) chief priests and the (Jewish) attendants, the heading in the 1728 printed libretto identifies more broadly those who are singing this utterance as “[Das] Volk,” by which would be meant the Jewish people in general. (In German, “the people” in general, Jews and gentiles together, would much more likely be called “die Leute,” not “das Volk.”) See also the “gottlose Leut” (“Godless people”) in line 5 of movement 15.

<sup>113</sup>That is, the soldiers who formed the “Schar,” first mentioned in movement 2. “Kriegsknecht” was defined in the leading eighteenth-century German dictionary as “eine nunmehr veraltete Benennung eines gemeinen Soldaten, welche noch häufig in der Deutschen Bibel vorkommt” (“a now archaic designation for a common soldier, which yet frequently is found in the [orthographically but not verbally updated] German Bible [of Luther, still in current use in the eighteenth century]”). The number of soldiers is indefinite here in John’s narrative; in the parallel gospel passages, Mark 15:16 and Matthew 27:27, the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day speak of “die ganze Schar” of “Kriegsknechte” (“the entire cohort/band” of [technically, 600] “soldiers”).

<sup>114</sup>“Backenstreich” (literally, a “strike of [i.e., to] the cheek”) was an older-German, loftier synonym for the more common expressions “Ohrfeige” (“slap in the face”; literally, “smack of the ear”) and “Maulschelle” (“box on the ear”; literally, “swat of the muzzle”). Consider also Luther’s rendering of Matthew 5:39, where Jesus says “so dir jemand einen Streich gibt auf deinen rechten Backen, dem biete den anderen auch dar” (“if someone gives you a blow to your right cheek, offer him the other [cheek] also”).

<sup>115</sup>Historical present tense in John but not Luther.

<sup>116</sup>The location (outside the hall of judgment) makes it clear that this “them” refers to the Jews (see movement 16), not to the Roman soldiers (who are inside the hall of judgment).

<sup>117</sup>Historical present tense in John but not Luther.

<sup>118</sup>The precise import of this line, and of its underlying Greek text, is much contested. The Greek source text reads “kai legei autois, idou ho anthropos” (literally, “And [he] says/declares to them: ‘Behold the person/man!’”). Strictly grammatically speaking, the “he” in the text who utters these words appears to be Jesus, not Pilate. In this (unlikely) reading one might understand the gospel to depict Jesus’s declaring of Pilate, the Roman soldiers, and the Jews: “See what humankind is like!” But the speaker was most likely meant to be taken as Pilate, and the simplest and most likely construal is that he was declaring of Jesus: “Look at this poor fellow.” Very often, however, “Behold the man” is interpreted theologically, Pilate’s having (unwittingly) declared: “Behold the Man [of Sorrows]” (i.e., applying the language of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 to Jesus), or “Behold the [Son of] Man.” Luther’s translation, “Sehet [i.e., in the imperative plural], welch ein Mensch!” (literally, “Look, what a person/man!”) was taken in Lutheranism to mean “Look, what a great man this is!” This reading strongly emphasizes a specific theological message—the glory of Jesus’s ignoble situation—to the exclusion of others. Many

*Nehmet ihr ihn hin und kreuziget ihn; denn ich finde keine Schuld an ihm! Die Jüden antworteten ihm:<sup>119</sup> Wir haben ein Gesetz, und nach dem Gesetz soll er sterben; denn er hat sich selbst zu Gottes Sohn gemacht. Da Pilatus das Wort hörte, fürchtet er sich noch mehr und ging wieder hinein in das Richthaus, und spricht zu Jesu: Von wannen bist du? Aber Jesus gab ihm keine Antwort. Da sprach Pilatus zu ihm: Redest du nicht mit mir? Weissst du nicht,<sup>120</sup> dass ich Macht habe, dich zu kreuzigen, und Macht habe, dich loszugeben? Jesus antwortete: Du hättest keine Macht über mich, wenn sie dir nicht wäre von oben herab gegeben; darum, der mich dir überantwortet hat, der hats grössre Sünde. Von dem an trachtete Pilatus, wie er ihn losliesse.<sup>121</sup>*

*“Crucify, crucify!” Pilate declared<sup>122</sup> to them: “Take him away and crucify him;<sup>123</sup> for I find no fault in him.” The Jews answered him: “We have a law, and according to that law<sup>124</sup> he ought to die: for he has made himself the son of God.” When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid yet,<sup>125</sup> and went back into the hall of judgment, and declares<sup>126</sup> to Jesus: “Where do you come from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate declared<sup>127</sup> to him: “Will you not speak with me? Do you not know that I have power to crucify you, and have power to release you?” Jesus answered: “You would have no power over me, if it were not given down to you from on high; therefore, the one who has handed me over to you, he has the greater sin.”<sup>128</sup> Upon this, Pilate sought how he might release him.*

modern German Bibles still give Luther’s rendering, whereas others read, in a more direct rendering, “Siehe [i.e., in the imperative singular], der Mensch!” (“Look, the person/man!”). Some modern translations of the *St. John Passion* libretto, whether intentionally or unintentionally, sidestep the linguistic and interpretive challenges of Luther’s German text by providing a direct rendering of the Greek text, “Behold the man!”

<sup>119</sup>The narrative had just identified the group here as “die Jüden” (“the Jews”), and the heading in the 1728 printed libretto identifies this utterance as sung by “[Das] Volk,” evidently (and accurately) equating “das Volk” with “die Jüden.”

<sup>120</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “Redest du nicht mit mir, und weisst du nicht” (“Will you not speak with me, and do you not know”).

<sup>121</sup>John 19:2-12a.

<sup>122</sup>Historical present tense in John but not Luther.

<sup>123</sup>This reflects mockery on Pilate’s part, as he should know that the chief priests and attendants are not permitted to put Jesus to death on the charges brought against him. The leaders evidently understand Pilate not to be serious, for they continue pressing him for Jesus’s death.

<sup>124</sup>In the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, blasphemy is cited as a capital offense in Leviticus 24:16 (the meaning of whose Hebrew text is critically contested), “Welcher des HERRN Namen lästert, der soll des Todes sterben” (“Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD, [it is] of death [that] he [this person] shall die”). In John 10:30 (the meaning of whose Greek text is critically contested) Jesus evidently makes himself out to be equal to God (the father), declaring “Ich und der Vater sind eins” (“I and [God] the father are one [i.e., in divine essence and in eternal nature, according to the contemporary Lutheran understanding of this verse]”), and in 10:33 “the Jews” are depicted as taking Jesus’s declaration to be blasphemy (i.e., against the majesty of the “one God” or “LORD alone” proclaimed in Deuteronomy 6:4).

<sup>125</sup>Luther believed Pilate was afraid not that Jesus might be “the son” of the “one God” proclaimed by Jews, but rather that he was a potentially troublesome son of the pagan gods.

<sup>126</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

<sup>127</sup>Historical present tense in John but not Luther.

<sup>128</sup>That is, Pilate is to be considered sinful as well. Luther’s commentary states that Jesus does not excuse Pilate but shows Pilate’s own guilt. The “greater sin” presumably lies either with Caiaphas, who, technically, has turned him over to Pilate, or with Jesus’s disciple Judas. In fact, Luther suggests that the singular “der” (“the one”) may here be taken as a plural. The libretto of Bach’s *St. John Passion* further extends the levels of guilt to subsequent Christians (see especially movements 11 and 37).

22. Durch dein Gefängnis, Gottes Sohn,  
Muss uns die Freiheit kommen;  
Dein Kerker ist der Gnadenthron,  
Die Freistatt aller Frommen;  
Denn gingst du nicht die Knechtschaft ein,  
Müsst unsre Knechtschaft ewig sein.<sup>129</sup>

23. *Die Jüden aber schrieen und sprachen: Lässest du diesen los, so bist du des Kaisers Freund nicht; denn wer sich zum Könige machet, der ist wider den Kaiser. Da Pilatus das Wort hörete, führete er Jesum heraus, und satzte<sup>132</sup> sich auf den Richtstuhl, an der Stätte, die da heisset: Hochpflaster, auf Ebräisch aber: Gabbatha. Es war aber der Rüsttag in Ostern um die sechste Stunde, und er spricht zu den Jüden: Sehet, das ist euer König! Sie schrieen aber: Weg, weg mit dem, kreuzige ihn! Spricht Pilatus zu ihnen: Soll ich euren König kreuzigen? Die Hohenpriester antworteten: Wir haben keinen König*

22. [It is] through your imprisonment,<sup>130</sup> son of God, [that] Freedom [from sin] must<sup>131</sup> come to us; Your dungeon is the throne of grace, The refuge of all the devout; For had you not assumed [temporal] servitude, Our servitude [to sin] would have had to be eternal.

23. *But the Jews shouted, declaring: "If you release this one, then you are not the emperor's friend; for whoever makes himself king is against the emperor." When Pilate heard this statement, he led Jesus out and set himself on the judgment seat,<sup>133</sup> at the place that is called "High Pavement," but "Gabbatha" in Hebrew.<sup>134</sup> It was, however, the preparation day,<sup>135</sup> in [Jewish] Easter,<sup>136</sup> at the sixth hour,<sup>137</sup> and he [Pilate] declares<sup>138</sup> to the Jews: "Look, this is your king!" But they shouted: "Away, away with him; crucify him!" Pilate declares<sup>139</sup> to them: "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered: "We have*

<sup>129</sup>An aria text (i.e., not a hymn stanza), probably by Christian Heinrich Postel, that Bach set to the melody of the hymn "Machs mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt" in a typical simple harmonization. In Bach's own *St. John Passion* materials, this movement is, nonetheless, headed "Choral" ("hymn"). In the 1728 printing of the libretto, this movement is headed "Choral. / Mel[odie]. Machs mit mir Gott nach deiner Güte. etc." ("Hymn. Melody. Machs mit mir Gott nach deiner Güte. etc."), and the text is given there in the boldface type reserved for hymns.

<sup>130</sup>"Gefängnis" is employed here not in its modern-German sense of "prison" but in its original, older-German sense as a synonym for "Gefangenschaft" ("imprisonment"); it is often used this way in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day (e.g., Esra 1:11, Psalm 126:4). The state of being imprisoned ("Gefängnis") is here contrasted with the state of being free ("Freiheit"); in the next lines the place where one is imprisoned ("Kerker") is contrasted with the place where one is free ("Freistatt").

<sup>131</sup>"Must" here in the sense of "it has to be this way" (i.e., because it is God's will), not "it is intrinsically required to be this way." Lutheran theologians would presumably have balked at reading these lines as saying "Jesus, by dint of your imprisonment, God is 'required' to grant us freedom."

<sup>132</sup>"Satzte sich" is an older-German spelling for "setzte sich ("set/sat/installed himself").

<sup>133</sup>Some Bibles understand John's Greek to mean "and Jesus sat on the judgment seat," thus picturing Jesus mocked by Pilate as a judge or king. Luther, however, clearly read the Greek to mean that Pilate was on the judgment seat: Luther Bibles employ the reflexive "Pilatus ... satzte sich" ("Pilate 'set himself' [or, 'installed himself'; or simply, 'sat']"), and Luther stressed that Pilate went there to make sure his judgment was completely open and in public.

<sup>134</sup>The name is actually Aramaic, not Hebrew.

<sup>135</sup>That is, the day when the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the Temple.

<sup>136</sup>By "Oster" ("Easter") here, Luther's translation relies on an understanding of "Passah" (Passover) as "das judische Osterfest" ("the Jewish Easter festival"), what was called in the English tradition, "Jewish Easter." Thus the text can refer to "Easter" before the events of the Christian Easter have taken place.

<sup>137</sup>The "sixth hour" is at noon.

<sup>138</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

<sup>139</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

denn den Kaiser. Da überantwortete er ihn,<sup>140</sup> dass er gekreuziget würde. Sie nahmen aber Jesum und föhreten ihn hin. Und er trug sein Kreuz und ging hinaus zur Stätte, die da heisset Schädelstätt; welche heisset auf Ebräisch: Golgotha.<sup>141</sup>

24. Eilt, ihr angefochtenen Seelen,  
Geht aus euren Marterhöhlen,  
Eilt—Wohin?—nach Golgotha!  
Nehmet an des Glaubens Flügel,  
Fliehet—Wohin?—zum Kreuzeshügel,  
Eure Wohlfahrt blüht allda!

25. Allda kreuzigten sie ihn, und mit ihm zween andere zu beiden Seiten, Jesum aber mitten inne. Pilatus aber schrieb eine Überschrift und satzte<sup>147</sup> sie auf das Kreuz, und war geschrieben: "Jesus von Nazareth, der Jüden König." Diese Überschrift lasen viel Jüden, denn die Stätte war nahe bei der Stadt, da Jesus gekreuziget ist. Und es war geschrieben auf ebräische, griechische und lateinische Sprache. Da sprachen die Hohenpriester der

no king but the emperor."<sup>142</sup> Then he handed him over, so that he would be crucified. They took Jesus again and led him away. And he carried his cross and went out to the place that is called "Place of Skulls," which in Hebrew<sup>143</sup> is called: "Golgotha."

24. Hurry, you besieged souls,  
Leave your dens of [spiritual] torment,<sup>144</sup>  
Hurry—where to?—to Golgotha!  
Accept faith's wings;  
Fly<sup>145</sup>—where to?—to the cross's hilltop;  
Your welfare blossoms in that very place!<sup>146</sup>

25. In that very place they<sup>148</sup> crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, but Jesus in the middle. But Pilate wrote [on a board the text for] a superscription and set it on the cross, and [it] was written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many Jews read this superscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. And it was written in [the] Hebrew, Greek, and Latin language[s]. Then the chief priests of the

<sup>140</sup>The 1728 printed libretto, reflecting the Greek text of John, here reads "überantwortete er ihn ihnen" ("handed him over to them [antecedent: 'the chief priests']"). The shorter text, i.e., without the words "to them," in Bach's setting (and which was the standard reading in Luther Bibles of Bach's day and earlier, even though Luther's particular source text, the 1519 edition of the New Testament by Erasmus, did contain the longer text, in both Greek and Latin) readily allows for the (proper) understanding that Pilate turned Jesus over for the act of being crucified not to Jews but to Roman soldiers, the "they" who lead Jesus away (see also the "they" in movement 25); thus the text Bach set, without the phrase "to them," does not suggest that it was "the Jews" who crucified Jesus.

<sup>141</sup>John 19:12b-17.

<sup>142</sup>Listeners are presumably to understand the chief priests as saying "we have no Jewish king right now." Jews had not been led to expect a messiah who acted like Jesus of Nazareth; in Jesus's day, Jews had no human king of their own, and it would have been part and parcel of a chief priest's framework of belief to hold that his only divine king was the one Almighty God, not a human/divine person associated or equated with God.

<sup>143</sup>"Golgotha" is actually closer to the Aramaic than the Hebrew equivalent.

<sup>144</sup>The poetry of this aria does not contain the egregiously anti-Jewish remarks found in its well-known source, the so-called *Brockes-Passion*, a leading eighteenth-century poetic rendering by Barthold Heinrich Brockes both of the passion narrative and meditations on it. The second line in Brockes is concerned not, as in Bach's *St. John Passion*, with Christians leaving inner spiritual turmoil for the peace of the cross, but with Jews "leaving Achshaph's dens of murder." Achshaph (sometimes confused, in modern commentary on Brockes, with "Asaph," a musician in the First Jerusalem Temple) was one of the many cities the Israelites, under Joshua, are depicted as having destroyed in their battles to take over the promised land of Canaan. "Leaving none that breathed" (Joshua 11:11), the Israelites burned Canaan's cities to the ground, except for those that stood on Canaan's hills (11:12-13). Brockes's apparent moral: "Old Israel" should leave its murderous depths behind and fly to the hilltop of Calvary.

<sup>145</sup>"Fliehen" would ordinarily mean "to flee," and that rendering could reasonably work here, but more likely the word's older-German alternate sense as a synonym for "fliegen" ("to fly") is what was intended. The sense "to fly" places the emphasis on the end point, whereas the sense "to flee" places the emphasis on the starting point.

<sup>146</sup>In older German, "allda" was an intensified form of "da" in its sense of identifying a location.

<sup>147</sup>"Satzte" is an older-German spelling of "setzte" ("set").

<sup>148</sup>According to Luther, this "they" refers to the Roman soldiers. He notes that Pilate had not even commanded that Jesus should be crucified along with the two "murderers" but that the soldiers did this as a service to the malicious chief priests. See also the comment concerning the "they" in movement 27.

*Jüden zu Pilato: Schreibe nicht: der Jüden König, sondern dass er gesaget habe: Ich bin der Jüden König. Pilatus antwortet:*<sup>149</sup> *Was ich geschrieben habe, das habe ich geschrieben.*<sup>150</sup>

**26. In meines Herzens Grunde,  
Dein Nam und Kreuz allein  
Funkelt all Zeit und Stunde,  
Drauf kann ich fröhlich sein.  
Erschein mir in dem Bilde  
Zu Trost in meiner Not,  
Wie du, Herr Christ, so milde  
Dich hast geblut zu Tod!**<sup>154</sup>

*27. Die Kriegsknechte aber, da sie Jesum gekreuziget hatten, nahmen seine Kleider und machten vier Teile, einem jeglichen Kriegesknechte sein Teil, dazu auch den Rock. Der Rock aber war ungenähet, von oben an gewürket*<sup>158</sup> *durch und durch. Da sprachen sie untereinander:*<sup>159</sup> *Lasset uns den nicht zerteilen, sondern darum losen, wes er sein soll. Auf dass erfüllet würde die Schrift, die da saget: “Sie haben meine Kleider unter sich geteilet und haben über meinen Rock das Los geworfen.”*

*Jews declared to Pilate: “Write not: ‘The King of the Jews’; rather, that ‘He said.’*<sup>151</sup> *“I am the King of the Jews.””*<sup>152</sup> *Pilate answers:*<sup>153</sup> *“What I have written, that have I written.”*

**26. At the bottom of my heart,  
Your name and cross alone  
Blazes forth all times and seasons,**<sup>155</sup>  
**For which I can be joyous.  
Appear to me in the image—  
For consolation in my distress—  
Of how you, Lord Christ, so copiously/generously**<sup>156</sup>  
**Have [for my salvation] bled yourself**<sup>157</sup> **to death.**

*27. The soldiers, however, when they [themselves] had crucified Jesus, took his clothes and made four parts, to each soldier his part, with these also the robe. But the robe was unseamed, woven from the top through and through. Then they declared to one another: “Let us not rend it apart, but toss for it, [to see] whose it shall be.” So that the scripture would be fulfilled, which says: “They have parted my clothing among themselves and have cast lots*

<sup>149</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “antwortete” (“answered”).

<sup>150</sup>John 19:18-22.

<sup>151</sup>“Er gesaget habe” (rather than “gesagt hat” or “gesagt hätte”) is not perfect subjunctive but oblique expression (reported speech; old form).

<sup>152</sup>The chief priests may have wished the many Jews visiting Jerusalem for Passover to see from the superscription that Jesus was dangerous to “the people” both politically (“king”—claiming power when in a province under Roman rule) and religiously (“I am”—in what is called its “absolute usage,” claiming divinity). Bibles that Bach owned do link Pilate’s superscription with the “I am” material in John 18:37 and 18:5.

<sup>153</sup>Historical present tense in Luther but not John.

<sup>154</sup>A stanza of “Valet will ich dir geben.”

<sup>155</sup>“Zeit und Stunde” (literally, “time and hour”) was a common expression in older German, serving as the equivalent of the English expression “times and seasons” (e.g., Milton, *Paradise Regained*, “He [God] in whose hand all times and seasons roul”). The two nouns were meant to cover the senses of “quantitative time” (in Greek, “chronos”) and “qualitative time” (“kairos”).

<sup>156</sup>The word “milde” in this context most likely means not “calmly” or “gently” but “copiously,” or “abundantly,” or “generously” (in older German, “milde” was often used as a synonym for “freigebig”). The word “milde” is apparently used in this same older-German sense in the aria “Können Tränen meiner Wangen” from Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*. Compare also Psalm 37:21, as rendered in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, “Der Gottlose borget und bezahlet nicht; der Gerechte aber ist barmherzig und milde” (“The Godless one borrows and [re]pays not; the righteous one, however, is merciful and generous” [the underlying Hebrew, literally: “shows mercy and gives [generously]”).

<sup>157</sup>The use of the reflexive rather than simple indicative with the verb “bluten” (“bleed”) is presumably meant to emphasize that Jesus actively bled on the cross, to give of himself—his bleeding was not passive, merely the inevitable result of his violent treatment.

<sup>158</sup>“Gewürken” (or “gewürcken”) is an older-German spelling of “gewirken” (“to knit,” “to weave”).

<sup>159</sup>Although the narrative had just identified the group here as “die Kriegsknechte” (“the [Roman] soldiers”), the 1728 printed libretto inexplicably identifies the speakers of this line as “Juden” (“[The] Jews”). That “the soldiers” were not Jews is also evident from the fact



*Solches taten die Kriegesknechte. Es stund aber bei dem Kreuze Jesu seine Mutter und seiner Mutter Schwester, Maria, Kleophas Weib, und Maria Magdalena. Da nun Jesus seine Mutter sahe und den Jünger dabei stehen, den er lieb hatte, spricht er zu seiner Mutter: Weib, siehe, das ist dein Sohn! Darnach spricht er zu dem Jünger: Siehe, das ist deine Mutter!*<sup>160</sup>

**28. Er nahm alles wohl in acht  
In der letzten Stunde,  
Seine Mutter noch bedacht,  
Setzt ihr ein Vormunde.  
O Mensch, mache Richtigkeit,  
Gott und Menschen liebe,  
Stirb darauf ohn alles Leid,  
Und dich nicht betrübe!**<sup>164</sup>

*for my robe.*<sup>161</sup> *Such a thing the soldiers did. But there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, Cleophas's wife, and Mary Magdalene. Now when Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he declares*<sup>162</sup> *to his mother: "Woman, look, this is your son." After that he declares*<sup>163</sup> *to the disciple: "Look, this is your mother."*

**28. He took good heed of everything  
In the final hour;  
Considerate yet of his mother,  
[He] sets her a guardian.  
O humankind, put things straight,<sup>165</sup>  
Love God and humanity,  
Die after that beyond all woe,  
And do not sadden yourself.**<sup>166</sup>

that “the soldiers” later (in movement 21) mock Jesus inside the hall of judgment—“the Jews,” according to John’s narrative (movement 16), do not go in the hall of judgment so that they would not be ritually defiled.

<sup>160</sup>John 19:23-27a.

<sup>161</sup>Psalm 22:19 in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day.

<sup>162</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

<sup>163</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

<sup>164</sup>A stanza of “Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod.”

<sup>165</sup>“Richtigkeit machen” (literally, “to make correctness”) was an older-German expression that meant not “make [for] righteousness” but “to put things straight (especially, e.g., to pay a debt).” This language was famously employed in Luther’s rendering of Matthew 3:3, “Er ist der, von dem der Prophet Jesaias gesagt hat und gesprochen: Es ist eine Stimme eines Predigers in der Wüsten: Bereitet dem HERRN den Weg und macht richtig seine Steige!” (“He [Jesus] is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah has said, declaring: ‘It is a voice of a preacher in the wilderness: “Prepare the way for the Lord and make his paths straight””).

<sup>166</sup>This hymn line would readily have called to mind the consolations of Psalm 42:12 (repeated in 43:5), “Was betrübst du dich, meine Seele, und bist so unruhig in mir? Harre auf Gott; denn ich werde ihm noch danken, dass er meines Angesichtes Hilfe und mein Gott ist” (“Why do you sadden yourself, my soul, and why are you so restless within me? Wait for God; for I will yet thank him, because he is the help/salvation of my countenance, and my God”).

29. Und von Stund an nahm sie der Jünger zu sich.  
Darnach, als Jesus wusste, dass schon alles vollbracht  
war, dass die Schrift erfüllet würde, spricht er: Mich  
dürstet! Da stund ein Gefässe voll Essigs. Sie fülleten  
aber einen Schwamm mit Essig und legten ihn um einen  
Isopen, und hielten es ihm dar zum Munde. Da nun Jesus  
den Essig genommen hatte, sprach er: Es ist  
vollbracht!<sup>167</sup>

30. Es ist vollbracht!  
O Trost vor die gekränkten Seelen!  
Die Trauernacht  
Lässt nun die letzte Stunde zählen.  
Der Held aus Juda siegt mit Macht  
Und schliesst den Kampf.  
Es ist vollbracht!

31. Und neiget<sup>175</sup> das Haupt und verschied.<sup>176</sup>

29. And from [that] hour on, the disciple took her to his  
own. After this, as Jesus knew that everything had already  
been accomplished, [and, so] that the scripture<sup>168</sup> would  
be fulfilled, he declares:<sup>169</sup> “I thirst!”<sup>170</sup> A vessel full of  
vinegar was standing there. But they filled a sponge with  
[the] vinegar, laid it upon a hyssop branch, and held it up  
to his mouth. Now when Jesus had taken the vinegar, he  
declared: “It is accomplished!”<sup>171</sup>

30. It is accomplished!  
O comfort for<sup>172</sup> the debilitated<sup>173</sup> souls!  
The night of mourning  
Now lets its final hour be counted.  
The hero out of [the lineage of] Judah<sup>174</sup> triumphs with power  
And brings the battle to a close.  
It is accomplished!

31. And bowed his head and departed [earthly] life.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>167</sup>John 19:27b-30a.

<sup>168</sup>The passages that Lutheran theologians most often mentioned for this were Psalm 22, Psalm 42, or Job 15:16.

<sup>169</sup>Historical present tense in John and Luther.

<sup>170</sup>That is, “Mich dürstet [es]” (literally, “it thirsts me”; or “it is thirsting me”), an archaic impersonal expression for “Ich dürste” (“I thirst”; or, “I am thirsty”). Older English employed, as a corresponding impersonal expression, “me thirsteth” (“[it] thirsts me”), not unlike the now old-fashioned or regional impersonal verb “methinks” (“it seems to me”).

<sup>171</sup>“Es ist vollbracht” is often rendered in English as “It is finished.” But Luther’s German is more emphatic than this, suggesting the stronger rendering “It is accomplished”; the declaration “Es ist vollbracht” connotes not simply “It [the earthly mission of Jesus] has been brought to its conclusion” but, more forcefully, “It has been brought to its fullness.”

<sup>172</sup>As is the case at several other spots in the libretto, the old form “vor” appears where today’s German would use “für.”

<sup>173</sup>The adjective “gekränkt” is apparently being used here in its older-German sense of “geschwächt” (“weakened”; or, “debilitated”).

<sup>174</sup>The name “Held aus Juda” (“hero out of [the lineage of] Judah”) was a title given to Jesus in German Lutheran theology and hymnody, based on the belief that Jesus as God’s messiah was prophesied as a “hero” (Luther’s idiosyncratic rendering of the Hebrew word “shiloh”) in Genesis 49:10, a passage the meanings of whose Hebrew text is now unknown and much contested, and which in the German of the Luther Bibles in Bach’s day reads “Es wird das Scepter von Juda nicht entwendet werden ... bis dass der Held komme [or, in some Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, instead of the subjunctive, the indicative: ‘kommt’]” (“The scepter will not be taken away from [the lineage of] Judah ... until the [peace-instituting] hero come [or: ‘comes’]”).

<sup>175</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “Und er neiget” (“And he bowed”).

<sup>176</sup>John 19:30b.

32. Mein teurer Heiland, lass dich fragen,  
Da du nunmehr ans Kreuz geschlagen  
Und selbst gesaget: Es ist vollbracht,  
Bin ich vom<sup>177</sup> Sterben frei gemacht?  
Kann ich durch deine Pein und Sterben  
Das Himmelreich ererben?<sup>178</sup>  
Ist aller Welt Erlösung da?  
Du kannst vor Schmerzen zwar nichts sagen;  
Doch neigest du das Haupt  
Und sprichst stillschweigend: ja.

**Jesu, der du warest tot,  
Lebest nun ohn Ende,  
In der letzten Todesnot,  
Nirgend mich hinwende  
Als zu dir, der mich versöhnt,<sup>179</sup>  
O du lieber Herre!  
Gib mir nur, was du verdient,  
Mehr ich nicht begehre!<sup>180</sup>**

33. *Und siehe da, der Vorhang im Tempel zerriss<sup>183</sup> in zwei Stück von oben an bis unten aus. Und die Erde erbebete,<sup>184</sup> und die Felsen zerrissen,<sup>185</sup> und die Gräber täten sich auf, und stunden auf viele Leiber der Heiligen.<sup>186</sup>*

34. Mein Herz, indem die ganze Welt  
Bei Jesu Leiden gleichfalls leidet,  
Die Sonne sich in Trauer kleidet,  
Der Vorhang reisst, der Fels zerfällt,  
Die Erde beb't, die Gräber spalten,  
Weil sie den Schöpfer sehn erkalten,  
Was willst du deines Ortes tun?

32. My precious Savior, let [me] ask you:  
Now that you [were] nailed to the cross<sup>181</sup>  
And [have] said yourself, “It is accomplished,”  
Have I been made free from death?  
Can I, through your pain and death,  
Inherit the kingdom of heaven?  
Is redemption of all the world [to be found] here?  
You can, in agonies [of pain and death], it is true, say nothing;  
But you bow your head  
And declare silently, “Yes.”

**Jesus, you who were dead,  
Now [you] live without end;<sup>182</sup>  
In the final throes of death,  
[May I] turn myself nowhere  
But to you, who reconciles me [with God, the father],  
O you dear Lord!  
Give me only what you have earned [for us];  
More I do not ask for!**

33. *And look, there: the veil in the Temple split apart<sup>187</sup> wholly and utterly into two pieces, from top to bottom.<sup>188</sup> And the earth quaked,<sup>189</sup> and the rocks split apart,<sup>190</sup> and the graves opened,<sup>191</sup> and many bodies of the saints arose.<sup>192</sup>*

34. My heart, while<sup>193</sup> the entire world  
With Jesus’s suffering likewise suffers:  
The sun clothes itself in mourning,  
The veil tears apart, the rock crumbles,  
The earth quakes, the graves break asunder,  
Because they see the creator [Jesus]<sup>194</sup> grow cold;<sup>195</sup>  
What will you [my heart] do for your part?<sup>196</sup>

<sup>177</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads not “vom Sterben frei” (“free from death”; literally, “free from the death”) but “von Sterben frei” (“free from dying”).

<sup>178</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “Kann ich durch deine Pein und Sterben nunmehr das Himmelreich ererben?” (“Can I through your pain and death now inherit the kingdom of heaven?”).

<sup>179</sup>An older-German spelling of “versöhnt” (“reconciles”).

<sup>180</sup>A stanza of “Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod.”

<sup>181</sup>This phrase is sometimes rendered not as “nailed to the cross” but as “slain on the cross” or “stricken on the cross.” Those renderings would, however, have required the dative “am [i.e., ‘an dem’] Kreuz” (“on the cross”) instead of (the accusative) “ans [i.e., ‘an das’] Kreuz” (“to the cross”). The accusative form of the phrase is employed in Luther’s rendering of Colossians 2:13-14, “Er hat uns geschenkt alle Sünde und ausgetilgt die Handschrift, ... und hat sie ... an das Kreuz geheftet” (“He [God/Jesus] has remitted us all sin and blotted out the promissory note and affixed it to the cross [where it is deluged with the redeeming blood of Jesus]”).

<sup>182</sup>The full sense of these lines is derived from Revelation 1:17-18, “Ich bin der Erste und der Letzte, und der Lebendige; ich war tot, und siehe, ich bin lebendig von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit” (“I [the ‘one like a son of man,’ the resurrected Jesus] am the first [because from me come all things] and the last [because to me come all things], and the living one; I was dead, and look, I am alive [without end,] from eternity to eternity”).

<sup>183</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads “zerreiss” (“splits apart”; i.e., historical present tense).

35. Zerfließe, mein Herze, in Fluten der Zähren  
Dem Höchsten zu Ehren!  
Erzähle der Welt und dem Himmel die Not:  
Dein Jesus ist tot!

35. Dissolve, my heart, into floods of tears  
To honor the Most High!  
Report to the world and to heaven the distress:  
Your Jesus is dead!

<sup>184</sup>In the 1728 printed libretto, the phrase “Und die Erde erbebete” (“And the earth quaked”) does not appear.

<sup>185</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads not “Felsen zerrissen” (“rocks [did] split apart”; i.e., past tense) but “Felsen zerreißen” (“rocks [do] split apart”; i.e., in historical present tense).

<sup>186</sup>Matthew 27:51-52b.

<sup>187</sup>A Bible owned by Bach explains that this happened in order to indicate that Jesus, as God’s high priest, would enter the Temple’s Holy of Holies with his own blood and earn for his followers an everlasting redemption (i.e., and thus the Temple sacrifices would no longer be necessary).

<sup>188</sup>“Von oben an bis unten aus” (hyperliterally, “from above in until below out”) was a rare expression in Luther’s day and also in Bach’s day (likewise “von oben bis untenaus”). The standard expression was simply “von oben bis unten” (“from top to bottom,” which would be a more direct translation of the Greek in Matthew). By rendering not only with the “oben” versus “unten” but additionally with the “an” versus “aus,” Luther apparently meant to intensify and emphasize strongly the very thoroughness of the temple veil’s being torn apart (“top-to-bottom,” “in-and-out [i.e., ‘out-and-out’]”).

<sup>189</sup>There are many examples in the Hebrew Scriptures of the earth shaking as a sign of divine judgment of God’s people or of the last times.

<sup>190</sup>In the Calov Bible (a book owned by Bach), the seventeenth-century Lutheran theologian Abraham Calov says that the rocks were split apart as a sign of Godly wrath against the Jews. The Olearius Bible (also owned by Bach) provides similar commentary.

<sup>191</sup>Using language from Ezekiel 37:12.

<sup>192</sup>Lutheranism held that the true church of God had been established before the fall of Adam and Eve into sin and, further, that all messianic promises in the Hebrew Scriptures refer to Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, living by faith in God’s promises, the saintly Israelites of the Hebrew Scriptures (but not later Jews) were considered to be part of the true church, “die Heiligen” (“the saints”), and could rise at this moment.

<sup>193</sup>The German conjunction “indem” corresponds to the English conjunction “while” (i.e., “during the time that”) (“as/while”). In modern editions of the *St. John Passion* the German is sometimes given as two words, “Mein Herz, in dem die ganze Welt,” and this line is sometimes read as the preposition “in” (English, “in”) with the dative pronoun “dem” (“whom”), yielding the probably misconstrued sense “My heart, ‘in whom/which’ the entire world.” In some eighteenth-century manuscript sources for Bach’s *St. John Passion*, the wording is indeed given as two words, but in older German, the conjunction “indem” was routinely spelled as either one word or as two. For example, in the Calov Bible, John 4:51 reads “Und in dem er hinab ging, begegneten ihm seine Knechte, ...und sprachen: ‘Dein Kind lebt’” (“And during the time that he [a royal official, whose son was deathly ill] was going down [from Cana, where Jesus was; home to Capernaum, where his son was], his servants met him ... and said: ‘Your child lives’”); the Olearius Bible here gives not “in dem” but “indem.” In the 1728 printing of the *St. John Passion* libretto, this expression is given in movement 34 unambiguously as one word, “indem.”

<sup>194</sup>In John 1, Jesus is called “the Word [of God] made flesh,” “the Word” through whom “all things were made/created.”

<sup>195</sup>In older German, “erkalten” (“to wax cold”) was sometimes used as a synonym for “sterben” (“to die”); here its use also accommodates a rhyme with “spalten” (here, “to break asunder”). The concern in this poem, apparently, is not that they “see” the body of Jesus getting colder before or after his dying, or both, but that they see him die.

<sup>196</sup>“Deines Ortes” (literally, “of your place”) is an older-German synonym for “deinerseits” (“for your part”). The sense of this line is not “What will you, my heart, do in the geographical/metaphorical place/spot where you are at present?” but “What will you, my heart, do for your part in all this mourning and shattering?”

36. Die Jüden aber, dieweil es der Rüsttag war, dass nicht die Leichname am Kreuze blieben den Sabbat über (denn desselbigen Sabbats Tag war sehr gross), baten sie Pilatum, dass ihre Beine gebrochen und sie abgenommen würden. Da kamen die Kriegsknechte und brachen dem ersten die Beine und dem andern, der mit ihm gekreuziget war. Als sie aber zu Jesu kamen, da sie sahen, dass er schon gestorben war, brachen sie ihm die Beine nicht; sondern der Kriegsknechte einer eröffnete seine Seite mit einem Speer, und alsobald ging Blut und Wasser heraus. Und der das<sup>197</sup> gesehen hat, der hat es bezeuget, und sein Zeugnis ist wahr, und derselbige weiss, dass er die Wahrheit saget, auf dass ihr gläubet. Denn solches ist geschehen, auf dass die Schrift erfüllet würde: "Ihr sollet ihm kein Bein zerbrechen." Und abermal spricht eine andere Schrift: "Sie werden sehen, in welchen sie gestochen haben."<sup>198</sup>

**37. O hilf, Christe, Gottes Sohn,  
Durch dein bitter Leiden,**

36. But the Jews, because it was the preparation day,<sup>199</sup> that the corpses might not remain on the cross during the sabbath (for that same sabbath day was highly solemn),<sup>200</sup> asked Pilate that their legs would be broken,<sup>201</sup> and that they would be taken down. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, because they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs; rather, one of the soldiers opened his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water went out [of the side of Jesus's dead body].<sup>202</sup> And he who has seen this has given witness to it, and his witness is true, and this same one knows that he says the truth, so that you all may believe. For such a thing has taken place so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "You all shall<sup>203</sup> break apart no bone in it [the Easter lamb]." <sup>204</sup> And again another scripture declares: "They will look on whom they have pierced."<sup>205</sup>

**37. O help, Christ, son of God,  
Through your bitter suffering,**

<sup>197</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads "der es gesehen hat" ("he who has seen it").

<sup>198</sup>John 19:31-37.

<sup>199</sup>That is, the day when the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the Temple.

<sup>200</sup>In the biblical narrative of the institution of Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:1-29), it is said regarding the first day of the festival, in Luther's rendering (of 12:16a), "Der Tag soll heilig sein" ("The day shall be holy/solemn"). The original text of John 19:31 calls the sabbath day of its passion narrative a "great/solemn" day, and Luther ratchets this up to a "very/highly great/solemn" day. The supposition was that this particular sabbath was an especially great, solemn, and holy day because it was a sabbath that fell on the same day as the beginning of the festival. (There is, however, no known pre-John attestation of "great/holy/solemn" being employed to designate a sabbath that is also a festival day.)

<sup>201</sup>That is, to hasten their deaths.

<sup>202</sup>Luther (like many others) noted that blood and water cannot flow from dead bodies and, seeing forgiveness of sin written all over the narrated event, suggested (as did many others) that this was a miracle, pointing to the sacrament of communion and to the sacrament of baptism in the name of Jesus.

<sup>203</sup>Here, "Ihr sollet" is not subjunctive but an old-fashioned spelling, employed frequently in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, of the indicative conjugation that is otherwise spelled "Ihr sollt" ("you [plural] shall"). The 1728 printed libretto here reads "Ihr sollt."

<sup>204</sup>The scripture passage is Exodus 12:46, "Ihr sollt kein Bein an ihm zerbrechen" ("You all shall break apart no bone in it [the lamb selected for the Passover meal, as specified in 12:3]"), which means that John was citing Passover lamb imagery—note that in older German, "Passah" ("Passover") was defined as "das judische Osterfest" ("the Jewish Easter festival"), and in English, "Passover" was sometimes referred to as "Jewish Easter." The commentary in Bach's Bibles here at John 19:37 thus also cite 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Denn wir haben auch ein Osterlamm, das ist Christus, für uns geopfert" ("For we also have an Easter lamb; this is Christ, sacrificed for us"). Luther comments on the passage in John: "Er hat sollen das rechte Osterlamm sein, welches man ganz essen sollte" ("He has to be the proper Easter lamb, which should be eaten whole"). The libretto's "ihm" should be read as a neuter, not masculine, dative pronoun, referring to Jesus as the lamb rather than to Jesus by name.

<sup>205</sup>The citation in John does not correspond exactly to the received Hebrew text or to the most common Septuagint reading of Zechariah 12:10.

**Dass wir dir stets untertan  
All Untugend meiden,  
Deinen Tod und sein Ursach  
Fruchtbarlich bedenken,  
Dafür, wiewohl arm und schwach,  
Dir Dankopfer schenken!**<sup>206</sup>

38. *Darnach bat Pilatum Joseph von Arimathia, der ein Jünger Jesu war*<sup>210</sup> (doch heimlich, aus Furcht vor den Jüden), dass er möchte abnehmen den Leichnam Jesu. Und Pilatus erlaubete<sup>211</sup> es. Es kam aber auch Nikodemus, der vormals bei der Nacht zu Jesu kommen war, und brachte Myrrhen und Aloen untereinander, bei

**That we, ever submissive to you,  
May shun all iniquity,**<sup>207</sup>  
**[And may] consider your death and the reason  
For it fruitfully;  
In return, though [we be]**<sup>208</sup> **poor and weak,  
[May we] give you thank-offerings.**<sup>209</sup>

38. *After that, Joseph of Arimathea,*<sup>212</sup> *who was a disciple of Jesus (but secretly, for fear of the Jews),*<sup>213</sup> *asked of Pilate that he might take down Jesus's corpse. And Pilate allowed it. But there came also Nicodemus, who formerly had come to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes,*<sup>214</sup> *about*<sup>215</sup> *a hundred pounds.*<sup>216</sup> *Then*

<sup>206</sup>A stanza of "Christus, der uns selig macht."

<sup>207</sup>Reflecting biblical usage, "Untugend" is apparently used here to refer to violation of divine law. It was Luther's rendering of one of the corresponding senses of the term "adikia," defined as "sin against God," as it is used in the New Testament, e.g., in 1 John 1:9, "So wir aber unsere Sünde bekennen, so ist er treu und gerecht, dass er uns die Sünde vergibt und reiniget uns von aller Untugend" ("But if we confess our sin, then he [God] is faithful and just, so that he forgives us the sin and purifies us of all iniquity"). Sin against God is what this hymn stanza is pointing to in its next line: "Deinen Tod und sein Ursach fruchtbarlich bedenken" ("[May we] consider your [Jesus's] death and the reason for it [namely, to atone for humanity's sin]").

<sup>208</sup>Grammatically, the adjectives "arm und schwach" ("poor and weak") could modify either the "Dankopfer" ("thank-offerings") of line 8 or the "wir" ("we") of line 3. But semantically it seems more likely for these particular adjectives to apply to people than to offerings. For example, the adjectives "arm" or "arm und elend" ("poor and wretched") are frequently applied to people in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day but never to offerings, and Sirach 11:12, in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, speaks specifically of "Mancher, der ist schwach und arm" ("Many a [person] who is weak and poor").

<sup>209</sup>Biblically, a "thank-offering" was a particular kind of "peace-offering," i.e., a literal sacrifice on the altar, offered to God, in ancient Israel. Lutheranism used the term "Dankopfer" figuratively for Christian prayers and songs of thanksgiving, but the idiosyncratic rendering of Sirach 35:4 in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day is presumably also relevant here: "Wer Barmherzigkeit übet, das ist das rechte Dankopfer" ("Whoever practices mercy, this is the proper thank-offering").

<sup>210</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads not "der ein Jünger Jesu war" ("who was a disciple of Jesus") but "der ein Jünger war" ("who was a disciple").

<sup>211</sup>The 1728 printed libretto here reads "Und Pilatus erlaubet es" ("And Pilate allows it"; i.e., in historical present tense).

<sup>212</sup>Some Bible lexicons of Bach's day give "der Löwe wird sterben" ("the lion will die") as the meaning of the name "Arimathia"; and the Olearius Bible (which Bach owned) noted in its commentary on Mark 15:43, "Leo mortuus Domino, vel lux mortis Domini" ("the lion dead unto the Lord, or 'the light-of-the-Lord's death'"). Revelation 5:5 speaks of God's messiah as "the lion from the tribe of Judah."

<sup>213</sup>John 9:22, "denn die Juden hatten sich schon vereinigt, so jemand ihn für Christum bekennte, dass derselbige in den Bann getan würde" ("for the Jews had already agreed, if anyone acknowledged himself for [Jesus as] Christ, that this person would be put under the ban"); and 16:2, "Sie werden euch in den Bann tun; es kömmt aber die Zeit, dass, wer euch tötet, wird meinen, er tue Gott einen Dienst daran" ("They [the Jews] will place you [followers of Jesus] under the ban; but the time is coming that whoever [of the Jews] kills you will suppose he thereby does God a service"). Bach set the latter passage, verbatim, in his church cantata "Sie werden euch in den Bann tun" BWV 44.

<sup>214</sup>With echoes from the Hebrew Scriptures (Jeremiah 34:5; 2 Chronicles 16:14), the Gospel is describing an honorable burial for a regal figure, culminating the triumph of Jesus's glorifying crucifixion.

<sup>215</sup>"Bei," here, is a synonym for "circa" ("about").

<sup>216</sup>Whether or not this "hundred pounds" is to be taken literally, and whether the units of measure underlying the word "pounds" specifies a heavy weight of precious spices or a high value in coinage for (a lighter amount) of these precious spices, this was in any event a superabundant quantity of myrrh and aloes, which seems to be the main point. Large numbers are used in John elsewhere as well, apparently to suggest messianic plenitude.

*hundert Pfunden. Da nahmen sie den Leichnam Jesu und bunden ihn in leinen Tücher mit Spezereien, wie die Jüden pflegen zu begraben. Es war aber an der Stätte, da er gekreuziget ward, ein Garte, und im Garten ein neu Grab, in welches niemand je geleyet war. Dasselbst hin legten sie Jesum, um des Rüsttags willen der Jüden, dieweil das Grab nahe war.*<sup>217</sup>

39. Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine,  
Die ich nun weiter nicht beweine,  
Ruht wohl und bringt auch mich zur Ruh!  
Das Grab, so euch bestimmt ist  
Und ferner keine Not umschliesst,  
Macht mir den Himmel auf und schliesst die Hölle zu.

**40<sup>II</sup>. Christe, du Lamm Gottes,  
Der du trägst die Sünd<sup>220</sup> der Welt,  
Erbarm dich unser!**

**Christe, du Lamm Gottes,  
Der du trägst die Sünd der Welt,  
Erbarm dich unser!**

**Christe, du Lamm Gottes,  
Der du trägst die Sünd der Welt,  
Gib uns dein Frieden! Amen.**<sup>221</sup>

*they took Jesus's corpse and bound it in linen cloths with spices, the way the Jews are accustomed to burying. But there was by the place where he was crucified a garden, and in the garden a new grave, into which nobody had ever been laid. In that place they laid Jesus, for the sake of the preparation day of the Jews, because the grave was nearby.*

39. Rest well, you saintly bones,<sup>218</sup>  
Which I will no longer bewail;  
Rest well and bring also me unto rest.  
The grave—which is appointed to you  
And from now on will enclose no distress—  
Opens heaven unto me and closes hell.<sup>219</sup>

**40<sup>II</sup>. Christ, you Lamb of God,  
You who bear the sin of the world,<sup>222</sup>  
Have mercy on us.**

**Christ, you Lamb of God,  
You who bear the sin of the world,  
Have mercy on us.**

**Christ, you Lamb of God,  
You who bear the sin of the world,  
Grant us your peace. Amen.**

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



Scan or go to [www.bachcantatatexts.org/BWV245.2](http://www.bachcantatatexts.org/BWV245.2) for an annotated translation

<sup>217</sup>John 19:38-42.

<sup>218</sup>“Heilige Gebeine” does not mean “relics” (i.e., in this case, any physical remains of a deceased holy/saintly person), a concept that would have been (unfavorably) associated with the Roman Catholic church.

<sup>219</sup>That is, “opens [the gates of] heaven unto me and closes [the gates of] hell.”

<sup>220</sup>Here, and throughout this movement, “Sünd” is a clipped form of the singular “Sünde” (“sin”), not of the plural “Sünden” (“sins”). The 1728 printed libretto here reads “Der du trägst die Sünde der Welt” (“You who bear the sin of the world”).

<sup>221</sup>The German “Agnus Dei.”

<sup>222</sup>John 1:29, “Siehe, das ist Gottes Lamm, welches der Welt Sünde traget” (“Look, this one is God’s lamb, which bears the sin [i.e., not: ‘the sins,’ plural] of the world”).