

“Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende” BWV 28

1. Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende,  
Das neue rücket schon heran.  
Gedenke, meine Seele, dran,  
Wieviel dir deines Gottes Hände  
Im alten Jahre Guts getan!  
Stimm ihm ein frohes Danklied an;  
So wird er ferner dein gedenken  
Und mehr zum neuen Jahre schenken.

**2. Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren,  
Was in mir ist, den Namen sein!  
Sein Wohltat tut er mehr,  
Vergiss es nicht, o Herze mein!  
Hat dir dein Sünd vergeben  
Und heilt dein Schwachheit gross,  
Errett dein armes Leben,  
Nimmt dich in seinen Schoss;  
Mit reichem Trost beschüttet,  
Verjüngt, dem Adler gleich.  
Der König schafft Recht, behütet,  
Die leiden in seinem Reich.<sup>2</sup>**

1. Praise God! Now the year is coming to an end;  
The new one is already drawing near.<sup>1</sup>  
Remember this, my soul:  
How many good things the hands of your God  
Have done for you in the old year.  
Voice a glad song of thanks to him;  
Thus he will remember you hence  
And bestow more [good things] in the new year.

**2. Praise now the Lord, my soul;  
All that is within me, praise his name.<sup>3</sup>  
His beneficence does he increase;  
Forget it not, o my heart.  
[He] has forgiven you your sin<sup>4</sup>  
And heals your great infirmity,  
Redeems [you from] your poor life,  
Takes you into his bosom;  
Showered with rich comfort,<sup>5</sup>  
Rejuvenated [to be] like the eagle.<sup>6</sup>  
The king [Jesus]<sup>7</sup> executes justice, protects  
Those who suffer<sup>8</sup> in his kingdom.**

<sup>1</sup>This cantata was designed for the Sunday after Christmas, an occasion when “the new year is already drawing near.” The notion expressed in line 1 is that God is to be praised for having bestowed good things on the Lutheran congregation through another calendar year; i.e, the text is not saying “thank God this year is over.”

<sup>2</sup>The opening stanza of the hymn.

<sup>3</sup>“Den Namen sein” means “[you must praise] the name of his,” not “[you must] be of his name.”

<sup>4</sup>“Hat dir dein Sünd vergeben” clips several of its word endings, making it unclear whether “Sünd” is singular (“dein[e] Sünd[e]”) or plural (“dein[e] Sünd[en]”). The singular is more probable, however, as this hymn stanza quotes extensively from Psalm 103, and in verse 3 the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day read “der dir alle deine Sünde vergibt, und heilet alle deine Gebrechen” (“[the Lord,] who forgives you all your sin, and heals all your ailments”).

<sup>5</sup>This comfort is meant to be understood as both material and spiritual. The expression “rich comfort” comes from the Luther Bible’s rendering of Psalm 65:5, “Wohl dem, den du erwählst und zu dir lässest, dass er wohne in deinen Höfen; der hat reichen Trost von deinem Hause, deinem heiligen Tempel” (“Well for him whom you [God] choose and allow [to come near] to you, that he may dwell in your courts; he has rich comfort from your house, your holy temple”). The comfort from God’s house in Psalm 65 may refer to general prosperity, to the rain God will send, to meals in the temple, and to the general goodness that comes from being near to God.

<sup>6</sup>That is, this line’s sense is not “you are rejuvenated as an eagle is rejuvenated,” but “you are rejuvenated, becoming as strong as an eagle.”

<sup>7</sup>Psalm 96 declares that the Lord God is king of all nations, who rules with justice, and in Luther’s idiosyncratic rendering, Psalm 96:10 reads “Saget unter den Heiden, dass der HERR König sei, und habe sein Reich, so weit die Welt ist, bereitet, dass es bleiben soll, und richtet die Völker recht” (“Say among the gentiles that the LORD is king and has prepared his kingdom—[which is] as wide as the world is—[such] that it shall abide, and [he] will judge the peoples justly”). Luther understood this to be a prophecy of Christ’s being a ruler in the kingdom of God and of Christ.

3. *So spricht der Herr:*<sup>9</sup> *Es soll mir eine Lust sein, dass ich ihnen Gutes tun soll, und ich will sie in diesem Lande pflanzen treulich, von ganzem Herzen und von ganzer Seelen.*<sup>10</sup>

4. Gott ist ein Quell, wo lauter Güte fleusst;<sup>12</sup>  
Gott ist ein Licht, wo lauter Gnade scheint;  
Gott ist ein Schatz, der lauter Segen heisst;  
Gott ist ein Herr, ders treu und herzlich meinet.  
Wer ihn im Glauben liebt, in Liebe kindlich ehrt,  
Sein Wort von Herzen hört  
Und sich von bösen Wegen kehrt,  
Dem gibt er sich mit allen Gaben.  
Wer Gott hat, der muss alles haben.

5. Gott hat uns im heurigen Jahre gesegnet,  
Dass Wohltun und Wohlsein einander begegnet.  
Wir loben ihn herzlich und bitten darneben,  
Er woll auch ein glückliches neues Jahr geben.  
Wir hoffens von seiner beharrlichen Güte  
Und preisens im voraus<sup>13</sup> mit dankbarn<sup>14</sup> Gemüte.

3. *Thus says the Lord: It shall be a delight to me that I do good things to them [God's people], and I will plant them in this land*<sup>11</sup> *faithfully, with all my heart and with all my soul.*

4. God is a fount where pure goodness flows;  
God is a light where pure grace shines;  
God is a treasure that is called pure blessing;  
God is a Lord who intends what is faithful and sincere.  
Whoever loves him in faith, [whoever] honors [him] innocently in love,  
[Whoever] hears his word in the heart  
And turns from evil ways,  
To him he [God] gives himself with all gifts.  
Whoever has God, must [already] have everything.

5. God has blessed us in the present year,<sup>15</sup>  
Such that well-doing and well-being have met one another.<sup>16</sup>  
We praise him sincerely and ask in addition  
That he would also grant a happy new year.  
We hope for it from his persistent goodness  
And extol it<sup>17</sup> in advance with grateful dispositions.

<sup>8</sup>Presumably it is the suffering of injustice in particular that is meant here. This line is an adaptation of Psalm 103:6, “Der HERR schafft Gerechtigkeit und Gericht allen, die Unrecht leiden” (“The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all who suffer injustice”).

<sup>9</sup>Jeremiah 32:42a.

<sup>10</sup>Jeremiah 32:41, except that the opening reads in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day “Und soll meine Lust sein” (“And shall be my delight”).

<sup>11</sup>In the book of Jeremiah, this refers to the land of Judah and Jerusalem.

<sup>12</sup>“Fleusst” is an older German form of “fließt.” (The latter would not rhyme with “heisst” in line 3.)

<sup>13</sup>The poet's printed text here reads “im Vorrat,” also suggesting something done in advance. It is unclear whose substitute wording “im voraus” is.

<sup>14</sup>Modern editions give the singular “dankbarm” here, but Bach's own materials and his poet's printed text give the plural, “dankbarn.” The poet will have clipped the last two letters from “mit dankbarn Gemütern,” then, to effect a proper rhyme with “beharrlichen Güte.”

<sup>15</sup>“Heurig,” corresponding to “honus” in Latin, means “of this year.” Thus the expression “im heurigen Jahre,” hyperliterally, would be “in the of-this-year year.”

<sup>16</sup>This line is a paraphrase of Psalm 85:11, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day reads “dass Güte und Treue einander begegnen, Gerechtigkeit und Friede sich küssen” (“such that goodness and faithfulness meet one another, righteousness and peace kiss each other”).

<sup>17</sup>That is, the granting of a happy new year.

6. All solch dein Güt wir preisen,  
Vater ins Himmels Thron,  
Die du uns tust beweisen  
Durch Christum, deinen Sohn,  
Und bitten ferner dich:  
Gib uns ein friedsam Jahre,  
Für allem Leid bewahre  
Und nähr uns mildiglich.<sup>18</sup>

Erdmann Neumeister

6. All this your goodness we extol,  
Father on the throne of heaven,  
[The goodness] that you make known to us  
Through Christ, your son,  
And further we ask you:  
Give us a peaceable year,  
Safeguard us from all suffering,  
And nourish us generously.<sup>19</sup>

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



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<sup>18</sup>A stanza of “Helft mir Gottes Güte preisen.”

<sup>19</sup>“Mildiglich,” often now mistranslated as “gently,” was formerly a synonym for “freigebig” (“generously”).