

“Ich geh und suche mit Verlangen” BWV 49

1. Sinfonia

2. JESUS

Ich geh und suche mit Verlangen,  
Dich, meine Taube, schönste Braut.  
Sag an, wo bist du hingegangen,  
Dass dich mein Auge nicht mehr schaut?

3. JESUS

Mein Mahl ist zubereit,  
Und meine Hochzeittafel fertig,  
Nur meine Braut ist noch nicht gegenwärtig.

SEELE

Mein Jesus redt von mir;  
O Stimme, welche mich erfreut!

JESUS

Ich geh und suche mit Verlangen,  
Dich, meine Taube, schönste Braut.

SEELE

Mein Bräutigam, ich falle dir zu Füßen.

JESUS

Komm, Schönste, komm und lass dich küssen,  
Du sollst mein fettes Mahl genießen.  
Komm, liebe Braut, und eile nun,  
Die Hochzeitkleider anzutun.

SEELE

Komm, Schönster, komm und lass dich küssen,  
Lass mich dein fettes Mahl genießen.  
Komm, Mein Bräutigam, ich eile nun,  
Die Hochzeitkleider anzutun.

4. SEELE

Ich bin herrlich, ich bin schön,  
Meinen Heiland<sup>3</sup> zu entzünden.  
Seines Heils Gerechtigkeit  
Ist mein Schmuck und Ehrenkleid;  
Und damit will ich bestehn,

1. Sinfonia

2. JESUS

I go and seek you,  
My dove, most beautiful bride, with longing.  
Tell [me], where have you gone  
That my eye no longer beholds you?

3. JESUS

My feast is prepared,  
And my wedding table ready;  
Only my bride is not yet present.

SOUL

My Jesus speaks of me;  
Oh voice that gladdens me!

JESUS

I go and seek you,  
My dove, most beautiful bride, with longing.

SOUL

My bridegroom, I fall at your feet.

JESUS

Come, most beautiful, come and let yourself be kissed;  
You shall savor my rich feast.<sup>1</sup>  
Come, dear bride, and hurry now  
To put on your wedding garments.

SOUL

Come, most beautiful, come and let yourself be kissed;  
Let me savor your rich feast.<sup>2</sup>  
Come, my bridegroom, I hurry now  
To put on my wedding garments.

4. SOUL

I am glorious; I am [so] beautiful [as]  
To inflame [the heart of] my savior.  
The righteousness of his salvation

<sup>1</sup>The expression “fettes Mahl” (“feast of fat things”) comes from Luther’s rendering of Isaiah 25:6, “Und der HERR Zebaoth wird allen Völkern machen auf diesem Berge ein fettes Mahl, ... von Fett, von Mark” (“And the LORD of [army] hosts will make on this mount [Zion] for all the peoples a feast of fat [things] ... of fat [things], of marrow”). That passage was understood as a foreshadowing of the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22:1-14 (which was the gospel portion chanted at the liturgical occasion for which this cantata was designed) and Luke 14:15-24. In the Hebrew Bible, “fat things” and marrow were associated with sumptuous entertainment, and were taken to symbolic of the rich provisions of God’s mercy.

<sup>2</sup>With regard to the expression “fettes Mahl” (“feast of fat things”), see fn. 1, above.

<sup>3</sup>In m. 16 of Bach’s own score and original performing part this reads “Jesum”; all other instances in both of these sources, however, read “Heiland.” A book of librettos printed in 1728 gives only “Jesum.”

Wenn ich werd in Himmel gehn.<sup>4</sup>

Is my [priestly]<sup>5</sup> adornment and festal garment;<sup>6</sup>  
And with this [imputed righteousness] I will withstand [God's  
judgment],<sup>7</sup>  
When I shall enter into heaven.

5. SEELE

Mein Glaube hat mich selbst so angezogen.

JESUS

So bleibt mein Herze dir gewogen,

So will ich mich mit dir

In Ewigkeit vertrauen und verloben.

SEELE

Wie wohl ist mir!

Der Himmel ist mir aufgehoben:

Die Majestät ruft selbst und sendet ihre Knechte,

Dass das gefallene Geschlechte

Im Himmelssaal

Bei dem Erlösungsmahl

Zu Gaste möge sein,

5. SOUL

My faith has indeed thus clothed me [in the savior's  
righteousness].<sup>8</sup>

JESUS

Thus my heart remains well disposed to you;

Thus will I betroth and join myself in marriage<sup>9</sup>

To you in eternity.<sup>10</sup>

SOUL

How well it is with me!

Heaven is set aside for me;

Majesty indeed summons and sends [out] its servants [as  
inviters],<sup>11</sup>

That the fallen [human] race may be,

In heaven's hall,

<sup>4</sup>The text of the B section in this aria is a near verbatim quotation of the title stanza of a Lutheran hymn: "Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit, / Das ist mein Schmuck und Ehrenkleid, / Damit will ich vor Gott bestehn, / Wenn ich zum Himmel werd eingehn" ("Christ's blood and righteousness, / That is my [priestly] adornment and festal garment; / With this [imputed righteousness], before God I will withstand [his judgment], / When I will enter in at [the gate of] heaven"). With regard to the biblical background of these lines, see fn. 5, below.

<sup>5</sup>The sense of these lines is derived from Isaiah 61:10, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day reads "Gott ... hat mich angezogen mit Kleidern des Heils und mit dem Rock der Gerechtigkeit gekleidet, wie einen Bräutigam, mit priesterlichem Schmuck geziert, und wie eine Braut, die in ihrem Geschmeide berdet" ("God has clothed me with garments of salvation and dressed [me] with the robe of righteousness, like a bridegroom decked out with [the] priestly adornment [of a turban/crown], and like a bride who preens about in her jewelry").

<sup>6</sup>"Ehrenkleid" was a synonym for "Feierkleid" ("festal garment"), i.e., the clothes one wears on special occasions.

<sup>7</sup>This line derives its sense from Job 9:2, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day reads "ich weiss ... dass ein Mensch nicht rechtfertigt bestehen mag gegen Gott" ("I know ... that against [the judgment of] God a person may not stand justified").

<sup>8</sup>The sense of this line is derived from Galatians 3:26-27, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day reads "ihr seid alle Gottes Kinder, durch den Glauben an Christo Jesu; denn wie viel euer getauft sind, die haben Christum angezogen" ("you [followers of Jesus] are all God's children, through faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you [who] are baptized [in Christ], they have been clothed with [the righteousness of] Christ").

<sup>9</sup>"Verloben" means "to betroth," and "vertrauen" could mean "to marry" or "to betroth." See also the citation of Hosea 2:19 in fn. 10 below.

<sup>10</sup>This is a near verbatim quotation of Hosea 2:19, "Ich will mich mit dir verloben in Ewigkeit; ich will mich mit dir vertrauen" ("I will in eternity betroth myself to you; I will join myself to you in marriage"). Luther uses two different verbs here—"verloben" and "vertrauen"—where the underlying Hebrew uses only one verb twice, "aras" ("to betroth").

<sup>11</sup>These lines are drawing on Matthew 22:2-3, from the cantata occasion's gospel reading, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day reads "Das Himmelreich ist gleich einem Könige, der seinem Sohn Hochzeit machte und sandte seine Knechte aus, dass sie den Gästen zur Hochzeit rufeten, und sie wollten nicht kommen" ("The kingdom of heaven is like a king who made his son a wedding [feast] and sent his servants out, that they might summon the guests to the wedding [feast], and they [who had been invited] would not come"); God is understood to be the "king" (referred to via metonymy here in the cantata with the word "majesty"), and Jesus to be "his son."

Hier komm ich, Jesu, lass mich ein!  
JESUS  
Sei bis in Tod getreu,  
So leg ich dir die Lebenskrone bei.

At the feast of redemption  
As guest.  
Here I come, Jesus; let me in.  
JESUS  
Be faithful, unto death,  
And I will lay the [victor's] crown of [eternal] life upon you.<sup>12</sup>

6. JESUS  
Dich hab ich je und je geliebet,  
Und darum zieh ich dich zu mir.  
Ich komme bald,  
Ich stehe vor der Tür,  
Mach auf, mein Aufenthalt!  
SEELE  
**Wie bin ich doch so herzlich froh,  
Dass mein Schatz ist das A und O,  
Der Anfang und das Ende.  
Er wird mich doch zu seinem Preis  
Aufnehmen in das Paradeis;**

6. JESUS  
You have I ever and ever loved,  
And therefore I draw you unto me.<sup>14</sup>  
I am coming soon;<sup>15</sup>  
I stand before the door [of your heart];<sup>16</sup>  
Open up [oh heart], my dwelling place.  
SOUL  
**How so heartily glad I am indeed  
That my darling/treasure<sup>17</sup> [Jesus]<sup>18</sup> is the alpha and omega,  
The beginning and the end;  
He will indeed take me up into paradise  
For his [eternal] praise;<sup>19</sup>**

<sup>12</sup>The concluding lines are based on Revelation 2:10, “Sei getreu bis an den Tod, so will ich dir die Krone des Lebens geben” (“Be faithful up to the [point of] death, and I [Jesus] will give you the [victor's] crown of [eternal] life”).

<sup>14</sup>Lines 1–2 have Jesus, the son, quoting nearly verbatim the celebrated words of God, the father, that were expressed to Israel in Jeremiah 31:3, “Ich habe dich je und je geliebt; darum habe ich dich zu mir gezogen aus lauter Güte” (“I have loved you ever and ever; therefore out of pure goodness have I drawn you unto me”).

<sup>15</sup>These words are quoted from Revelation 22:20, which speaks of a future return of Jesus, at the end time. In Lutheran doctrine, this future return was called the Third Advent of Christ (often otherwise called the Second Coming). The First Advent was the birth of Jesus, and the Second Advent was the term for the (physical) advent of Jesus in the sacrament of communion. The cantata libretto, also in Lutheran fashion, to an extent conflates these Second and Third Advents, such that the Second Advent is held to be a prefiguring or foreshadowing of the Third.

<sup>16</sup>This line derives its sense from Lutheran interpretation of Luther's rendering of Revelation 3:20, “Siehe, ich stehe vor der Tür und klopfe an; so jemand meine Stimme hören wird und die Tür auftun, zu dem werde ich eingehen und das Abendmahl mit ihm halten und er mit mir” (“Look, I stand before the door and knock; if anyone ends up hearing my voice and opening the door, I will go in, to him, and keep the Lord's Supper with him, and he with me”). Note that in and of itself, the word “Abendmahl” can refer either simply to a quotidian “supper” (literally, “evening meal”) or it can refer to “the Lord's Supper,” the sacrament of bread-eating and wine-drinking observed in Christian worship, which is understood to be a foreshadowing of the Church's meal-sharing with Jesus at the End Time. In Luther's rendering of Revelation 3:20, Jesus says that he will “keep the Abendmahl.” The Luther Bible introduces the verb “keep” (which is not found in the original Greek source-texts) and links it with “supper” whenever Luther evidently wants to make explicit a connection to the sacrament. The idea in this cantata, then, is that Jesus knocks at the “door” of the believer's heart, and he (physically) inhabits the heart in the sacrament of communion.

<sup>17</sup>“Schatz” here can mean simply “darling” or “sweetheart,” but the word is used frequently, in a variety of other meanings in the Luther Bibles, and a key passage, Colossians 2:3, speaks of “[Christi,] in welchem verborgen liegen alle Schätze der Weisheit und der Erkenntnis” (“[Christ,] in whom lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”), a passage drawing on language from Isaiah 11:1-2 that in Christian interpretation was applied to Jesus as God's messiah.

<sup>18</sup>In Revelation 22:13, Jesus says “Ich bin das A und das O, der Anfang und das Ende, der Erste und der Letzte” (“I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last”); “alpha” (Α) and “omega” (Ω) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

<sup>19</sup>“Zu seinem Preis” here means not “as his prize” or “at [costly] price” but “for his praise.” The Luther Bibles of Bach's day used this phrase, e.g., in Romans 3:7, “so die Wahrheit Gottes durch meine Lüge herrlicher wird zu seinem Preis, warum

**Des klopf ich in die Hände.  
Amen!  
Amen!  
Komm, du schöne Freudenkrone, bleib nicht lange!  
Deiner wart ich mit Verlangen.<sup>13</sup>**

**At this I clap my hands.  
Amen!  
Amen!  
Come, you beautiful crown of joy, tarry not long;  
[Exceedingly fair bridegroom, Jesus,]<sup>20</sup> I wait for you with  
longing.**

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



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sollte ich denn noch als Sünder gerichtet werden” (“if [as some might perversely say,] the truth of God becomes more glorious unto/for his praise through my lie, why should I then yet be judged [i.e., assessed] as [a] sinner”).

<sup>13</sup>A stanza of “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern.”

<sup>20</sup>The antecedent for this “you,” and for the metaphorical “crown of joy,” was “Jesulein” (“darling Jesus”), “dem wunderschönen Bräutigam mein” (“the exceedingly fair bridegroom of mine”) from lines 4–6 in the previous stanza of this well-known hymn.