

"Alles, was von Gott geboren" BWV 80a

1. Alles, was von Gott geboren,
Ist zum Siegen auserkoren.
Was bei Christi Blutpanier
In der Taufe Treu geschworen,
Siegt in Christo für und für.

Everything born of God
Is chosen for triumph.
Whatever in baptism has sworn fealty
By Christ's banner of blood,¹
Triumphs in Christ ever and ever.

2. Erwäge doch,
Kind Gottes, die so grosse Liebe,
Da Jesus sich
Mit seinem Blute dir verschriebe,
Womit er dich
Zum Kriege wider Satans Heer
Und wider Welt, und Sünde
Geworben hat!
Gib nicht in deiner Seele
Dem Satan und den Lastern statt!
Lass nicht dein Herz,
Den Himmel Gottes auf der Erden,
Zur Wüste werden!
Bereue deine Schuld mit Schmerz,
Dass Christi Geist mit dir sich fest verbinde!

Consider well,
Child of God, this love so great,
When Jesus
Committed himself to you by his blood;
Whereby,
For the war against Satan's host
And against the world and sin,
He has recruited you.
Do not allow in your soul
Satan and vices.
Do not let your heart,
God's paradise on earth,
Become a wasteland.
Rue your guilt with pain,
That the Spirit of Christ² may securely bond itself to you.

3. Komm in mein Herzenshaus,
Herr Jesu, mein Verlangen!
Treib Welt und Satan aus
Und lass dein Bild in mir erneuet prangen!
Weg, schnöder Sündengraus!

Come into my heart as your house,
Lord Jesus, my desire.
Drive world and Satan out,
And let your image shine in me [who is] renewed.³
Away, sin, you odious horror!

4. So stehe dann
Bei Christi blutgefärbten Fahne,

So stand secure, then,
By Christ's blood-tinged flag,⁴

¹Christ's "banner of blood" is the cross.

²The "Spirit of Christ" (and the "Spirit of God") was traditionally understood to be the "Holy Spirit," the third person of the Trinity. This line is an allusion to Romans 8:9, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day reads "Ihr aber seid nicht fleischlich, sondern geistlich, so anders Gottes Geist in euch wohnt. Wer aber Christus Geist nicht hat, der ist nicht sein" ("You [plural], however, are not fleshly, but spiritual, if then the Spirit of God dwells in you. But whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ [dwelling in him], he [that person] is not his [Christ's]").

³The German text of this line is potentially confusing. It might seem straightforwardly to affirm that the divine image should "shine again/anew/renewed in me." But the meaning is a bit different, and its biblical background is complicated. The wording of the cantata line reflects Luther's subtle but theologically significant understanding of Colossians 3:9-11, which he rendered as "Lüget nicht untereinander; ziehet den alten Menschen mit seinen Werken aus und ziehet den neuen an, der da *erneuert* wird zu der Erkenntnis, nach dem *Ebenbilde* des, der ihn geschaffen hat: da nicht ist Grieche, Jude, Beschneidung, Vorhaut, Ungrieche, Scythe, Knecht, Freier; sondern alles und in allen Christus" ("Do not lie to one another; put off the old man [that is, the fallen Adam] and his works and put on the new [that is, the sinless Christ, who is the 'new man'], which is being *renewed* in knowledge according to the *image* of him who has created him: where there is no Greek, Jew, circumcision, foreskin, non-Greek, Scythian, servant, free man; rather all, and in all, is Christ"). In Luther's reading of Paul's letter, a person who has "put on" the "new man" (Christ, the "new Adam") is renewed according to the image of God. A person's whole being as the "image of God" is restored by union with Christ (hence the talk of Christ's secure bonding at the end of the previous movement in the cantata), and Christ is the very "image of the invisible God," according to Colossians 1:15. So it is not God's image itself that is renovated; more exactly, fallen human beings are made new into God's image. The cantata line, then, would be speaking of a renewed person, not of a radiance anew or of God's image being made new.

⁴Christ's "blood-tinged flag" is the cross.

O Seele, fest
Und glaube, dass dein Haupt dich nicht verlässt,
Ja, dass sein Sieg
Auch dir den Weg zu deiner Krone bahne!
Tritt freudig an den Krieg!
Wirst du nur Gottes Wort
So hören als bewahren,
So wird der Feind
Gezwungen auszufahren,
Dein Heiland bleibt dein Hort.

Oh soul,
And believe that your head [Christ]⁵ will not desert you;
Yes, that his triumph [on the cross]
May pave the way for even⁶ you to your crown [of glory].⁷
Joyfully enter into the war.
If you only will both hear and keep
God's word,
Then the enemy [Satan]
Will be forcibly cast out;⁸
Your savior remains your refuge.

5. Wie selig ist der Leib, der, Jesu, dich getragen,
Doch selger ist das Herz, das dich im Glauben trägt!
Es bleibt unbesiegt und kann die Feinde schlagen,
Und wird zuletzt gekrönt, wenn es den Tod erlegt.

How blessed is the [mother's] body that bore you, Jesus;⁹
Yet more blessed is the heart that bears you, by faith!
It [faith] remains unvanquished and can strike down the
enemies,
And will finally be crowned when it slays¹⁰ death.¹¹

**6. Mit unser Macht is nichts getan,
Wir sind gar bald verloren;
Es streit' vor uns der rechte Mann,
Den Gott hat selbst erkoren.
Fragst du, wer der ist?
Er heisst Jesus Christ,**

**With our own power nothing is done,
We are quite soon lost.
The right¹³ man fights for us,¹⁴
[This man] whom God himself has chosen.
You ask who he is?
He is called Jesus Christ,**

⁵The New Testament continually refers to the Christian community, or the church, as the “members” of “the body of Christ” (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:27), such that Jesus is the “head” of this body (e.g., Colossians 1:18).

⁶The word “auch” here apparently means not “also” but “even,” given that this line quotes from 1 Thessalonians 2:19, as explained in the note on the “crown [of glory],” immediately below.

⁷The “crown of glory” is given to Christian believers at the End Time. This understanding is based on 1 Thessalonians 2:19, as rendered in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, “Wer ist unser Hoffnung oder Freude, oder Krone des Ruhms? Seid nicht auch ihrs vor unserm HERRN Jesus Christus zu seiner Zukunft?” (“Who is our hope or joy, or crown of glory? Will not there be even you [fellow believers] before [the face of] our Lord Jesus Christ at his parousia [Second Coming]?”).

⁸Forms of the verb “ausfahren” are used in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day for the exorcising or casting out of demons (e.g., in Luke 8:29 and 14:11).

⁹“The body that bore you, Jesus” refers not to the physical body of the human Jesus bearing in itself the divine nature of God (as the second person of the Trinity), but to the body of Jesus's mother, Mary of Nazareth, who bore him as a baby in her womb. Line 1 of this movement derives from Luke 11:27, “Selig ist der Leib, der dich getragen hat” (“Blessed is the [mother's] body that has borne you [Jesus]”).

¹⁰With the word “erlegen” (“to slay”), the poet is playing on the word “legen” (“to lay”) in 1 Corinthians 15:25 (this verse, in turn, is quoting from Psalm 110:1), “Er muss aber herrschen, bis dass er alle seine Feinde unter seine Füße lege” (“He [Jesus] must rule [the kingdom of God] until he may lay all his enemies beneath his feet”).

¹¹Death is “der letzte Feind” (“the final enemy”), according to 1 Corinthians 15:26.

¹³Jesus, according to Christian reading of Psalm 110:1 (a verse quoted frequently in the New Testament) is now “at the right hand of God [the Father].” In Exodus 15:3, the Luther Bibles of Bach's day read “Der HERR ist der rechte Kriegsmann” (“The Lord is the right[-hand] man of war”).

¹⁴The set phrase that God “fights for [on behalf of]” his people, is frequent in the Bible. “Vor” and “für” were interchangeable in older German, and in this instance the “uns” in “vor uns” is to be understood as accusative, not dative. (A dative “streitet für uns” or “streitet vor uns” would mean “fights out in front of us [as our leader]”).

**Der Herre Zebaoth,
Und ist kein andrer Gott,
Das Feld muss er behalten.**¹²

**The Lord of Sabaoth,¹⁵
And [Christ] is no other god;¹⁶
He must hold the battlefield.**

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



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¹²Stanza 2 of “Ein feste Burg.”

¹⁵The “Lord of Sabaoth” (or “Lord of Hosts”) is an ancient title for God as divine warrior who leads the armies of Israel. Luther applies the army title to Jesus, who as the “second person of the Trinity,” is the same god as ancient Israel’s God (see the next line in this stanza).

¹⁶That is, Jesus is God, but not a different god from ancient Israel’s God. Among the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:3 reads, in the Luther Bible’s of Bach day, “Du solt keine andere Götter neben mir haben” (“You shall have no other gods besides me [the God of ancient Israel]”). In Christian teaching, this was understood to mean no other gods than God who is one in “substance” but a Trinity of “persons”: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), God the Holy Spirit.