

"Ich habe meine Zuversicht auf den getreuen Gott gericht" BWV 188

[1. Sinfonia]

2. Ich habe meine Zuversicht  
Auf den getreuen Gott gericht,  
Da ruhet meine Hoffnung feste.  
    Wenn alles bricht, wenn alles fällt,  
    Wenn niemand Treu und Glauben hält,  
    So ist doch Gott der allerbeste.

3. Gott meint es gut mit jedermann,  
Auch in den allergrössten Nöten.  
Verbirget er gleich seine Liebe,  
So denkt sein Herz doch heimlich dran,  
Das kann er niemals nicht entziehn;  
Und wollte mich der Herr auch töten,  
So hoff ich doch auf ihn.  
Denn sein erzürntes Angesicht  
Ist anders nicht  
Als eine Wolke trübe,  
Sie hindert nur den Sonnenschein,  
Damit durch einen sanften Regen  
Der Himmelssegen  
Um so viel reicher möge sein.  
Der Herr verwandelt sich in einen grausamen,  
Um desto tröstlicher zu scheinen;  
Er will, er kanns nicht böse meinen.  
Drum lass ich ihn nicht, er segne mich denn.

[. Sinfonia]

2. I have placed my confidence  
In faithful God,  
Where my hope rests secure.  
    If everything breaks, if everything falls,  
    If nobody maintains trustworthiness,<sup>1</sup>  
    God is yet the very best [in faithfulness].

3. God means well with everyone,  
Even in the very greatest hardships.  
If he hides his love for a little while,<sup>2</sup>  
His heart yet takes notice secretly;  
That [loving heart] he can never, at any time,<sup>3</sup> withdraw.  
And if the Lord wanted even to kill me,<sup>4</sup>  
I would yet hope in him.  
For his enraged countenance  
Is nothing other  
Than a dark cloud;  
It only blocks the sunshine  
So that by dint of a gentle rain  
Heaven's blessing  
Might be so much more abundant.  
The [kindhearted] Lord transforms himself into a cruel  
[Lord],<sup>5</sup>  
To appear all the more comforting [in the end].  
He will—he can—mean no harm.<sup>6</sup>  
Thus I will not let him go until he blesses me.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“Treu und Glauben” (literally, “faithfulness and [religious] belief”), which often appeared with the verb “halten” (“to keep/maintain”), was a stock phrase that meant “trustworthiness.” The phrase was used in this way in legal, religious, and everyday discourse. It also carries this sense in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, for example, in 2 Maccabees 11:19.

<sup>2</sup>“Gleich” is apparently being used here to mean “for a little while” (instead of “in a little while.”) This movement derives its sense and some of its language from Isaiah 54:8, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Ich habe mein Angesicht im Augenblick des Zorns ein wenig von dir verborgen; aber mit ewiger Gnade will ich mich dein erbarmen, spricht der HERR, dein Erlöser” (“In the moment of wrath, I [God] have hidden my countenance from you for a little while; but with eternal grace I will have mercy on you, says the LORD your redeemer”).

<sup>3</sup>“Niemand nicht” (“at no time/under no circumstances—ever”) is an intensification of “niemand” (“at no time”).

<sup>4</sup>The sentiment is related to Exodus 4:24, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Und als er unterwegs in der Herberg war, kam ihm der HERR entgegen und wollte ihn töten” (“And when he [Moses], on the way [to Egypt], was in the inn, the LORD came to meet him and wanted to kill him”).

<sup>5</sup>This expression comes from Job 30:21, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Du bist mir verwandelt in einen Grausamen” (“You [God] are transformed, toward me, into a cruel [God]”).

<sup>6</sup>The sense of this line derives ultimately from Deuteronomy 32:4, “Treu ist Gott, und kein Böses an ihm” (“Faithful is God and nothing evil is in him”). The line apparently borrows directly, however, from a stanza in “Nun lasst uns Gott, dem Herren” whose last line reads “Du kannst nicht böse meinen” (“You [God] can mean no harm/evil”).

<sup>7</sup>This line is derived from Genesis 32:26, the story of Jacob, the father of the tribes of Israel, 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

4. Unerforschlich ist die Weise,  
Wie der Herr die Seinen führt.  
Selber unser Kreuz und Pein  
Muss zu unserm Besten sein  
Und zu seines Namens Preise.

5. Die Macht der Welt verlieret sich.  
Wer kann auf Stand und Hoheit bauen?  
Gott aber bleibet ewiglich;  
Wohl allen, die auf ihn vertrauen!

**6. Auf meinen lieben Gott  
Trau ich in Angst und Not;  
Er kann mich allzeit retten  
Aus Trübsal, Angst und Nöten;  
Mein Unglück kann er wenden,  
Steht alls in seinen Händen.<sup>13</sup>**

Christian Friedrich Henrici (Picander)

4. Inscrutable is the manner  
In which the Lord guides those who are his.  
Even<sup>8</sup> our cross-bearing<sup>9</sup> and pain  
Must be for our welfare,<sup>10</sup>  
And for his name's praise.

5. The might of the world fades.  
Who can depend on<sup>11</sup> rank and majesty?  
But God abides eternally;  
How well it is with all who trust in him!<sup>12</sup>

**6. In my dear God  
I trust, in fear and hardship;  
He can rescue me at any time  
From tribulation, fear, and hardships;  
He can turn my misfortune around;  
Everything rests in his hands.**

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



Scan or go to <http://www.bachcantatatexts.org/BWV188> for an annotated translation

denn” (“I will not let you [go], unless/until you bless me”). According to Luther’s radically Christocentric reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, it was actually Christ himself (“the Lord”) with whom Jacob wrestled at Peniel.

<sup>8</sup>“Selber” is apparently being used here in its sense as a synonym for “sogar” (“even”).

<sup>9</sup>“Kreuz” here means the suffering of metaphorically bearing/enduring the cross, as Jesus did literally. 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>10</sup>The expression “Zu unserm Beste” was synonymous with the expression “zu unserm Wohlfahrt” (“for our welfare”). A synonymous expression for “die Wohlfahrt des Staates” (“the welfare of the state,” “the commonweal”) was “das gemeine Beste” (“das Allgemeinwohl” is a more modern expression).

<sup>11</sup>In older German, “auf einen bauen” meant “to depend on someone.”

<sup>12</sup>This line is a quotation of Psalm 2:12.

<sup>13</sup>The opening stanza of “Auf meinen lieben Gott.”