

J.S. Bach: *Christ lag in Todesbanden*  
Synlogosation by William R. Stewart

A *Synlogosation* is a translation of the text in which the English word or words appear directly under the German ones they represent. The translation is not wholly literal, as the English words here have been chosen for the specific context of this particular text. The system of asterisks and parentheses is designed to restore something like normal English word order, to help make sense out of the translation. It works this way: if you see: “has \*you so (beaten)”, read: “has beaten you so”. If you see **double** parentheses, make the changes in the parentheses *first*, thus: “who \*it (\*receive (will))” reads: “who will receive it”. Punctuation follows correct English word order. [Brackets indicate words required by the English translation but not specifically stated in the German text.]

The synlogosation is thus the most accurate modern English translation (which the format will allow), and is provided to help give you a more precise understanding of the words you are singing. It is hoped this will provide a more meaningful performance.

I. *Christ lag in Todesbanden für unser Sünd' gegeben er ist wieder erstanden und hat*  
Christ lay in bonds of Death, \*for our sins. (given [over]) He has \*again (arisen) and has

*uns Bracht das Leben; dess wir sollen fröhlich sein, Gott loben und ihm*  
\*us (brought) [eternal] life; for that we should \*joyful, (be) \*God, (praise) and \*to him,

*dankbar sein und singen Hallelujah!*  
(\*thankful (be)) and sing hallelujah!

II. *Den Tod niemand zwingen kunnt' bei allen Menschenkindern, das macht*  
\*Death (No one \*master (could)) among all human children, \*that was caused by

*alles unser Sünd', kein Unschuld war zu finden. Davon kam der Tod so bald und*  
(all) our sins, no innocence was to [be] found. Therefrom \*came (Death) at once and

*nahm über uns Gewalt, hielt uns in seinem Reich gefangen. Hallelujah!*  
took \*over us, (power) held us \*in his realm. (prisoner) Hallelujah!

III. *Jesus Christus Gottes Sohn an unser Statt ist kommen, und hat die Sünde weggetan,*  
Jesus Christ, God's son, \*in our place, (has come) and has \*our sins, (done away with)

*damit dem Tod genommen all sein Recht und sein Gewalt, da bleibt nichts*  
so that \*from Death, (\*are taken (all his claims and his powers)) thus \*remains (nothing)

*denn Tods Gestalt, den Stach'l hat er verloren. Hallelujah!*  
but Death's shadow; \*his stinger. (\*has (he) lost) Hallelujah!

IV. *Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg da Tod und Leben rungen, das Leben das behielt*  
It was a [most] remarkable war, in which Death and Life wrestled; Life received

*den Sieg, es hat den Tod verschlungen. Die Schrift hat verkündigt das, wie*  
the victory; it has \*Death. (swallowed up) [Holy] Writ had prophesied this, how

*ein Tod den andern frass, ein Spott aus dem Tod ist worden. Hallelujah!*  
one [man's] death \*the other; (devoured) a mockery \*of that Death. (has become) Hallelujah!

V. *Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm, davon Gott hat geboten, das ist hoch an*  
Here is the proper Easter lamb, of which God has offered [us some], which is high upon

*des Kreuzes Stamm in heisser lieb' gebraten, das Blut zeichnet unser Tür das*  
the \*cross (trunk of [the]) \*in hot love, (roasted) His blood marks our door which

*hält dem Glaub' die Tode für; der Würger kann uns nicht mehr schaden. Hallelujah!*  
\*holds [up] (our faith) \*Death; (to) this strangler can \*us (no longer. harm) Hallelujah!

VI. *So feiern wir das hohe Fest mit Herzens-freud' und Wonne, das uns*  
Thus \*celebrate (we) the [great] high feast with hearts [of] joy and gladness, which \*to us;

*der Herre scheinen läßt, er ist selber die Sonne, der durch seiner Gnaden Glanz*  
(the Lord (\*to appear (allows)) He is himself the sun who by [the] \*of His Grace (brilliance)

*erleuchtet unsre Herzen ganz, der Sünden Nacht ist verschwunden. Hallelujah!*  
enlightens our hearts entirely; the \*of sin (night) has disappeared. Hallelujah!

VII. *Wir essen und leben wohl im rechten Osterfladen, der alte Sauerteig nicht soll*  
We eat [of] and live secure in the true Easter host; the old sourdough \*not (shall)

*sein bei dem Wort der Gnaden, Christus will die Koste sein und speisen die Seel'*  
be [there] with the Word of Grace; Christ will \*our Passover (be) and feed our souls

*allein, der Glaub will keins andern Leben. Hallelujah!*  
alone; Faith wants no other life. Hallelujah!

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Below is the text and a translation for the bulletin (Microsoft Word format):

Johann Sebastian Bach

Cantata #4: *Christ lag in Todesbanden (Christ Lay in Death's Bondage)*

- I. *Christ lag in Todesbanden für unser Sünd' gegeben er ist wieder erstanden und hat uns Bracht das Leben; dess wir sollen fröhlich sein, Gott loben und ihm dankbar sein und singen hallelujah!*

Christ lay in Death's bondage, handed over for our sins. He has arisen again and brought us eternal life; for that we should be joyful, praise God, be thankful, and sing unto him hallelujah!

- II. *Den Tod niemand zwingen kunnt' bei allen Menschenkindern, das macht alles unser Sünd', kein Unschuld war zu finden. Davon kam der Tod so bald und nahm über uns Gewalt, hielt uns in seinem Reich gefangen. Hallelujah!*

That no one among all human children could master Death, was all caused by our sins; there was no innocence to be found in us. Thus Death came at once and took control over us, holding us prisoner in his kingdom. Hallelujah!

- III. *Jesus Christus Gottes Sohn an unser Statt ist kommen, und hat die Sünde weggetan, damit dem Tod genommen all sein Recht und sein Gewalt, da bleibt nichts denn Tods Gestalt, den Stach'l hat er verloren. Hallelujah!*

Christ Jesus, God's only son, has taken our place and has done away with all our sins, so that Death is deprived of all his sway and dominion. Thus nothing remains but Death's shadow; Death has lost his sting. Hallelujah!

- IV. *Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg da Tod und Leben rungen, das Leben das behielt den Sieg, es hat den Tod verschlungen. Die Schrift hat verkündigt das, wie ein Tod den andern frass, ein Spott aus dem Tod ist worden. Hallelujah!*

It was a remarkable war in which Life and Death contested; Life received the victory and has swallowed up Death. Holy Writ had prophesied how one man's death would swallow up the other Death; *that* Death is become a mockery! Hallelujah!

- V. *Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm, davon Gott hat geboten, das ist hoch an des Kreuzes Stamm in heisser lieb' gebraten, das Blut zeichnet unser Tür das hält dem Glaub' die Tode für, der Würger kann uns nicht mehr schaden. Hallelujah!*

Here is the one true Paschal Lamb which God has offered to us, seared in passionate love high upon the tree of the cross. His blood marks our door; thus our Faith can defy Death. The destroyer can no longer harm us. Hallelujah!

- VI. *So feiern wir das hohe Fest mit Herzens-freud' und Wonne, das uns der Herre scheinen läßt, er ist selber die Sonne, der durch seiner Gnaden Glanz erleuchtet unsre Herzen ganz, der Sünden Nacht ist verschwunden. Hallelujah!*

Thus we celebrate the great high feast with hearts of joy and gladness; the feast our Lord reveals\* to us. He is himself the sun who by the brilliance of his grace entirely enlightens our hearts. The night of sin has disappeared. Hallelujah!

\*in the original German, literally, "shines" (in the sense of "sheds light on, makes visible"); a play on words that doesn't quite work in English

VII. *Wir essen und leben wohl im rechten Osterfladen, der alte Sauerteig nicht soll sein bei dem Wort der Gnaden, Christus will die Koste sein und speisen die Seel' allein, der Glaub will keins andern Leben. Hallelujah!*

We eat of and live securely in the one true Paschal host; the old leaven shall not abide in the Word of Grace. Christ will be our Passover and our souls shall feed on Him alone; there is no other life for the believer. Hallelujah!

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