BACH PERSPECTIVES 8

# J. S. Bach and the Oratorio Tradition

EDITED BY Daniel R. Melamed

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VOLUME EIGHT

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# J. S. Bach and the Oratorio Tradition

*Edited by*
*Daniel R. Melamed*

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# PREFACE

Versions of the first four essays in this collection were presented at the American Bach Society's conference "Bach and the Oratorio Tradition" held in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in May 2008, a meeting that emphasized the place of Bach's oratorios in their repertorial context. The expanded group approaches Bach's oratorios from a variety of perspectives: in relation to models, antecedents, and contemporary trends; from the point of view of the construction of musical and textual types; and from analytical vantage points as different as instrumental music and theology.

I want to thank the authors for their contributions to the volume; the anonymous readers for advice and suggestions; and Kerry O'Brien and Karen Anton for their excellent editorial assistance.

Daniel R. Melamed
Bloomington, Indiana

# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| BC | [Bach Compendium] Hans-Joachim Schulze and Christoph Wolff. *Bach Compendium: Analytisch-bibliographisches Repertorium der Werke Johann Sebastian Bachs.* Leipzig and Frankfurt, 1985–. |
| BWV | [Bach Werke-Verzeichnis] Wolfgang Schmieder. *Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von Johann Sebastian Bach.* Rev. ed. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1990. |
| BUXWV | [Buxtehude Werke-Verzeichnis] Georg Karstadt. *Thematisch-systematisch Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von Dietrich Buxtehude.* 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1985. |
| TVWV | [Telemann Vokalwerke-Verzeichnis] Werner Menke. *Thematisches Verzeichnis der Vokalwerke von Georg Philipp Telemann.* 2nd ed. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988 and 1995. |

# Under the Spell of Opera?

## *Bach's Oratorio Trilogy*

### Christoph Wolff

The first summary catalogue of Johann Sebastian Bach's works from his obituary (1750/54) begins with a listing of the vocal compositions and sorts them into four groups. Whereas the first, third, and fourth consist of clearly defined types of compositions (church cantatas, passions, and motets), the second resembles a catch-all collection that lumps together "many oratorios, Masses, Magnificat, single Sanctus, Dramata, serenades, music for birthdays, name days, and funerals, wedding masses, and also several comic singing pieces."[1]

This random mixture of genres and works not only intermingles sacred and secular music, but also quantifies the pieces in a most general way. Beginning with oratorios, the adjective "many" refers equally to Masses, Magnificat, and the rest of the lot. This casual accounting suggests that the compiler of the summary catalogue, in all likelihood none other than Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, either had no clear overview and no opportunity of surveying the pertinent repertory more closely, or lacked an interest in presenting a more accurate and differentiated picture. Regardless of the explanation, the above-mentioned catalogue entry does not, in fact, suggest that Bach composed many—in the sense of more than the three extant—oratorios, or that further oratorios, like so many other vocal works, must be considered lost.

The three known sacred works specifically designated by Bach as "oratorio" form a coherent and topically interrelated group of oratorios for Christmas, Easter, and Ascension Day, the three jubilant ecclesiastical feasts. Bach consistently designed Latin titles for all of them: "Oratorium Tempore Nativit: Xsti" (with corresponding subtitles for the individual feast days "Pars I [II, III, etc.] Oratorii"),[2] "Oratorium Festo Paschatos," and "Oratorium Festo Ascensionis Xsti." If one adds to this trilogy of major works for the festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Ascension the traditional Good Friday Passion (for which Bach formulated Latin titles, as well: *Passio secundum Joannem / Matthaeum*), a grand overall design emerges in a musical series for the four principal Christological feast days of the ecclesiastical year, a series comprising large-scale compositions for narration and contemplation. They commemorate the major stations of the biblical story of the life of Jesus Christ that are singled out and emphasized in the Christian creed: his birth, suffering and death, resurrection, and ascension.

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[1] *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, ed. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, revised and enlarged by Christoph Wolff (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), no. 306.

[2] In the *Christmas Oratorio* Bach fit "Oratorium" into the heading at a later point, making it correspond to the other two.

However, the overall triumphant character of the *Christmas*, *Easter*, and *Ascension Oratorios*, musically underlined by the sound of orchestral brass, separates them as a group from the passions and their focus on the suffering and death of Jesus. In addition, there are further reasons to distinguish them: liturgical function, chronological context, and considerations of genre.

## Liturgical Function

The works composed and designated by Bach for Christmas, Easter, and Ascension Day deliberately conform to the general function, liturgical place, and proportions of the regular church cantata. Like a cantata, each oratorio was planned to be performed as festive *Haupt-Music* for the respective feast day at its proper place before the sermon in the principal morning service. Moreover, the Leipzig custom of repeat performances of the principal music on high feasts at the morning service in one church (alternating between the St. Nicholas and St. Thomas churches), at the vesper service of the other,[3] and then for the so-called old service of the University Church, resulted in three musical presentations on the same day.

The musical passions, on the other hand, had their unique place in the afternoon vesper service on Good Friday in just one of the main churches, alternating annually between St. Thomas's and St. Nicholas's. This special service, established in Leipzig only two years before Bach's arrival, assumed a musical character. Indeed, under Bach, with performances of multiple-hour works, the event turned into the musical pinnacle of the year; it was an absolute exception that a piece of music would dominate the liturgy and take up more time than the sermon, the traditional centerpiece of the Lutheran service. The shorter first part of the musical passion had to be timed in such a way that the sermon could start near the beginning of the second hour of the service, whereas there were no time restrictions for the longer second part.

Because the principal feasts of the ecclesiastical calendar from Christmas to Ascension focus on the main stations of the life of the biblical Jesus, Bach's oratorio trilogy and his passion settings are interrelated despite their differences in liturgical function and musical design. The oratorios originating in the 1730s correspond to, continue, and complement (on a lesser scale) the role of the musical passions from the 1720s. In fact, Bach's work on the oratorios may also have prompted the major revisions to which he subjected the passions in 1736 and later, not only the two according to St. Matthew and St. John, but apparently also the *St. Mark Passion*.[4]

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[3] As applicable here on the First and Second days of Christmas, New Year's Day, Epiphany, First and Second days of Easter, and Ascension Day.

The question of why Bach did not plan a three-part oratorio for the three-day festival of Easter, analogous to the multipart design of the *Christmas Oratorio*, can easily be answered by the brevity of the biblical story of the resurrection. The traditional gospel reading for Easter Sunday consists of only the short lesson from Mark 16:1–8. However, Bach's *Easter Oratorio* compensates for its limitation to a single feast day by exceeding the ordinary half-hour limit adhered to by all six parts of the *Christmas Oratorio* and by the *Ascension Oratorio*, as well.

## Chronological Context

Bach's Leipzig passions according to John, Matthew, and Mark were composed and presented between 1724 and 1731, that is, well before his oratorios originated. However, all three passions were slated for thorough revisions: the *St. Matthew* in 1736, the *St. John* in around 1739 (incomplete), and the *St. Mark* by 1744.[5] Bach's schedule for passion performances after 1733, when the performance was cancelled because of an official state mourning period, remains sketchy. However, Bach's only passion presentations documented by printed texts and other corroborating external evidence are his performances of Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel's "Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld" in 1734, the second version of the *St. Matthew Passion* in 1736, and the expanded *St. Mark Passion* in 1744.[6]

Beginning with the first Sunday after Trinity in 1735, Bach apparently performed the entire annual cantata cycle "Das Saitenspiel des Herzens" by Stölzel in 1735–36. The extended pattern—uncovered by recent research[7]—of Bach performing music by other composers during the mid-1730s may have implications for a better understanding of the composer's creative activities in the same period, notably in regard to his liturgical music projects. He may have wanted to free up time to focus on revising and updating older large-scale works, as well as on borrowings and reworkings of extant compositions. Works in this category include his passions, the five Kyrie-Gloria Masses BWV 232–36, and the three oratorios.

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[4] Tatjana Schabalina, "'Texte zur Music' in St. Petersburg—Neue Funde," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 95 (2009): 11–48.

[5] The thoroughly revised *St. Matthew Passion* was recorded in a calligraphic fair copy of 1736. The revision of the *St. John Passion* was undertaken in the late 1730s; an autograph fair copy of the score was begun in the late 1730s but left incomplete, apparently in 1739.

[6] The 1743 and 1744 performances are evidenced by recently discovered dated original text booklets; see Tatjana Schabalina, "'Texte zur Music' in St. Petersburg. Neue Quellen zur Leipziger Musikgeschichte sowie zur Kompositions- und Aufführungstätigkeit Johann Sebastian Bachs," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 94 (2008): 33–98; and "'Texte zur Music' in St. Petersburg—Neue Funde." The 1736 performance was recorded in the church diary by the custodian Rost; see *New Bach Reader*, no. 114.

[7] Schabalina, "'Texte zur Music' in St. Petersburg"; Marc-Roderich Pfau, "Ein unbekanntes Leipziger Kantatentextheft aus dem Jahr 1735—Neues zum Thema Bach und Stölzel," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 94 (2008): 99–122; Peter Wollny, "'Bekennen will ich seinen Namen'—Authentizität, Bestimmung und Kontext

The first of these is the *Christmas Oratorio* from 1734–35, spanning six feast days from the First Day of Christmas 1734 through Epiphany 1735.[8] The *Christmas Oratorio* was followed within the same ecclesiastical year by the *Ascension Oratorio*, first performed on May 19, 1735.[9] Nothing indicates that the *Easter Oratorio* belongs between the two in narrative-liturgical sequence (Easter Sunday 1735). Source evidence rather points to a later year, most likely 1737 or perhaps also 1738.[10] At the same time, there can be no doubt about a relatively narrow time frame for the origin of the oratorio trilogy. In particular, the titles of the three works suggest that Bach intended a close interrelationship, as is obvious not only from a consistent linguistic phraseology, but also from a close match of the autograph handwriting.

## Considerations of Genre

By focusing on the biblical narrative of the life of Jesus, Bach's oratorios offered an alternative to the regular cantatas composed for the same high feast days but based on non-narrating texts and ordinarily beginning with biblical verses containing theological messages related to the prescribed liturgical readings or, in the case of chorale cantatas, consisting of the appropriate seasonal hymns. Biblical narrative as structural backbone links Bach's oratorio trilogy with his passions, even though the traditional *historia* format is far more pronounced in the passions because of their extended scriptural texts. Nonetheless, Bach's renewed interest in the *historia* concept that began with the *Christmas Oratorio* of 1734–35 may well have prompted his subsequent major revisions of his passions to complete and unify the large-scale musical cycle on the story of the biblical Jesus.[11]

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der Arie BWV 200. Anmerkungen zu Johann Sebastian Bachs Rezeption von Werken Gottfried Heinrich Stölzels," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 94 (2008): 123–58; Andreas Glöckner, "Ein weiterer Kantatenjahrgang Gottfried Heinrich Stölzels in Bachs Aufführungsrepertoire?" *Bach-Jahrbuch* 95 (2009): 95–115.

[8] The date is in the published original libretto.

[9] Dating based on scribal and paper evidence; BC D 9.

[10] See BC D 8b.

[11] It seems that Bach never treated his *St. Mark Passion* like those according to St. John and St. Matthew nor gave it the same weight.

At any rate, the *historia* tradition in sacred music provided a strong common denominator, and hence passion and oratorio represented for Bach essentially the same genre with respect to both text and music. The differences in their liturgical function pertained primarily to their assignment to different worship services in Leipzig. However, the term *Passion* or *Musicalische Passion* had long been firmly established in Lutheran Germany, whereas *Oratorium*, derived from the Italian oratorio, was (as the more modern term) only rarely applied and remained loosely defined for a long time.

The literary and musical genre of oratorio was, of course, familiar to Bach. To mention but one specific example, Christian Friedrich Henrici (alias Picander) published in 1725 a passion libretto under the heading *Erbauliche Gedanken . . . über den Leidenden Jesum, in einem Oratorio entworfen von Picandern* (Edifying reflections . . . on the suffering Jesus, drafted in an oratorio by Picander)—a publication well known to Bach, for it influenced the text of his *St. Matthew Passion* and perhaps encouraged his collaboration with Picander that began in 1725, if not before. However, Picander's passion oratorio did not make use of biblical narrative but, like most modern passion librettos, paraphrased it poetically. Another example of a similar libretto is found in the oratorio *Joseph* performed in Leipzig by the Collegium musicum under Georg Balthasar Schott prior to 1729, when Bach took over the directorship.[12]

Independent of the Italian oratorio tradition of the seventeenth century, the term *oratorio* came into use in protestant Germany after 1700, specifically in Hamburg and promoted there by Christian Friedrich Hunold and Erdmann Neumeister. Texts by these two prolific writers and leading exponents of sacred poetry were set to music by many composers, including Bach. From the very beginning, the term *oratorio* was not specifically defined by its German users and generally applied to various types of church composition. Telemann occasionally used it for regular cantatas. Even Johann Christoph Gottsched remained vague when he wrote in his *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst:*

> Church pieces generally called oratorios—that is, prayer pieces—resemble cantatas in that they, too, contain arias and recitatives. They also generally introduce various speaking personae so that there might be variety amongst the singing voices. Here now the poet must introduce biblical persons, from the gospels or other texts, even Jesus and God himself, or allegorical figures representing religious functions such as Faith, Love, Hope, the Christian Church, Sacred Bride, Shulamite, Daughter Zion, or Faithful Soul, and the like in a speaking manner so that the outcome corresponds to purpose and place.[13]

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[12] Michael Maul, "Neues zu Georg Balthasar Schott, seinem Collegium musicum und Bachs Zerbster Geburtstagskantate," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 93 (2007): 61–104.

[13] "Die Kirchenstücke, welche man insgemein Oratorien, das ist Bethstücke nennet, pflegen auch den Cantaten darin ähnlich zu seyn, daß sie Arien und Recitative enthalten. Sie führen auch insgemein

As this passage makes clear, however, oratorio was generally understood as a work of narrative or dramatic content based on a text that introduced dialogue of biblical or allegorical persons. Hence, opera invariably served as a point of reference. Accordingly, Johann Gottfried Walther, Bach's distant cousin, defines oratorio in the following way in his influential *Musicalisches Lexicon:*

> Oratorium . . . a sacred opera, or musical performance of a sacred historia in the chapels or chambers of great lords, consisting of dialogues, duos, trios, ritornellos, big choruses, etc. The musical composition must be rich in everything that art can muster in terms of ingenious and refined ideas.[14]

Oratorio as sacred opera—this definition posed a direct problem with respect to Bach's contractual obligations as cantor of St. Thomas's. Prior to his election as cantor, Town Councilor Steger had the town scribe record in the minutes of the meeting that he "voted for Bach, but he should make compositions that were not theatrical."[15] Moreover, and not surprisingly, Bach's final pledge to the town council of May 5, 1723, included a paragraph that specified that "the music . . . shall not last too long, and shall be of such a nature as not to make an operatic impression, but rather incite the listeners to devotion."[16]

How could Bach resolve this conflict? In passions, for example, there had been a tradition from medieval times, and continuing after the Reformation, of presenting the story of Christ's passion in dramatized form, with the Evangelist as musical narrator; the roles of Jesus, Peter, Pilate assigned to soliloquentes; and the crowds of the High Priests, the people, and soldiers as *turba* choruses. Bach's passions strictly adhered to this tradition by making use of the biblical narrative as structural backbone and by adding contemplative sacred poetry and congregational hymns. Therefore, the overall shape and character of the musical passion was clearly different from that of an opera. It is clearly for this reason that Walther modifies his definition by expressly adding to

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verschiedene Personen redend ein, damit die Abwechslung verschiedener Singstimmen statt haben möge. Hier muß nun der Dichter entweder biblischen Personen, aus den Evangelien, oder andern Texten, ja Jesum, und Gott selbst; oder doch allegorische Personen, die sich auf die Religion gründen; als Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung, die christliche Kirche, geistliche Braut, Sulamith, die Tochter Zion, oder die gläubige Seele, u.d.m. redend einführen: damit alles der Absicht und dem Orte gemäß herauskomme." (Leipzig, 1751), 728.

14. "Oratorium . . . eine geistliche Opera, oder musicalische Vorstellung einer geistlichen Historie in den Capellen oder Cammern gewisser großer Herrn, aus Gesprächen, Soli, Duo und Trio, Ritornellen, starcken Chören etc. bestehend. Die musicalische Composition muß reich an allen seyn, was nur die Kunst sinnreiches und gesuchtes aufzubringen vermag." (Leipzig, 1732), 451f.

15. *New Bach Reader*, no. 98.

16. *New Bach Reader*, no. 100.

"sacred opera" the reference to "sacred historia." Bach's use of the term *oratorio* for his trilogy of the 1730s goes in the same direction by conceptually adhering to the biblical *historia* tradition. However, as the genesis of the *Easter Oratorio* demonstrates, he originally came from someplace else and by no means drew a strict line between opera and oratorio.

## The Experimental Background of the *Easter Oratorio*

What eventually became the *Easter Oratorio* in 1737–38 had first been performed—with the same number of movements, yet in a slightly different configuration—as a cantata on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1725. However, the Easter cantata of 1725 represented an arrangement of a secular piece, a "dramma per musica" commissioned by the court of Saxe-Weißenfels and presented as *Tafel-Music* for the birthday of Duke Christian and performed in Weißenfels on February 23, 1725. The time between the duke's birthday ceremony and Easter spanned not quite six weeks. On Palm Sunday, celebrated that year also as Annunciation Day, the last piece of the chorale cantata cycle, "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" BWV 1, had its premiere. A few days later, on Good Friday (March 30), the performance of the second version of the *St. John Passion* with the new opening movement of "O Mensch, bewein' dein' Sünde groß" took place. Considering this tight schedule, it seems plausible that adapting an occasional work of substantial proportions, performed out of town for a secular event, into a festive liturgical repertoire piece was premeditated by the composer and was neither an accident nor an emergency solution.

The libretto for the Weißenfels *dramma per musica*, a theatrical Arcadian scene involving four mythological characters (Doris, Sylvia, Menalcas, and Damoetas), was provided by Picander and marked the beginning of his collaboration with Bach. In the work the pastoral characters playfully serenade the duke. Its opening movement begins with the line "Entfliehet, verschwindet, entweichet, ihr Sorgen" (Flee, vanish, yield, ye sorrows), and the finale starts with the words "Glück und Heil, bleibe dein beständig Teil" (Luck and health will be steadily with you).

References in the text to the honored duke as "Großer Fürst" and "Großer Herzog," as well as the overall congratulatory quality and celebratory nature, made the piece entirely suitable for conversion into festal music in praise of the risen Lord. For the Easter cantata, the roles of the four pastoral characters were changed to fit the image of biblical figures—the disciples and their followers—running to the empty grave of Jesus risen from death: "Kommt, fliehet und eilet" (Come, flee and hurry) is now the opening line, and the entire text is adapted to the biblical early-morning scene after the resurrection. The roles of the four mythological characters are exchanged for the biblical figures of Mary, wife of James; Mary Magdalene; Peter; and John. All four voices maintain the vocal ranges of their models (see Table 1).

Table 1. Mythological and biblical characters

| *Tafel-Music*<br>February 23, 1725 | *Easter Cantata*<br>April 1, 1725 |
|---|---|
| Doris (S) | Maria Jacobi (S) |
| Sylvia (A) | Maria Magdalena (A) |
| Menalcas (T) | Petrus (T) |
| Damoetas (B) | Johannes (B) |

The music of the arias and choruses remained the same, as the metrical structure of the new text exactly follows the patterns of the secular model. Only the recitatives had to be newly composed, because the new dialogue, based on the biblical story, required extensive changes. The biblical text is not presented verbatim but rather is transformed into a narrative dialogue of the Hunold-Brockes variety—that is, a type that differs substantially from the literal scriptural recitatives of Bach's passions. Moreover, the newly created Easter cantata included not a single chorale, thereby making it truly exceptional within Bach's church cantatas. Because the work was so unusual in this regard, Bach apparently realized that it had to be balanced in the same Easter Sunday service by the performance of a second cantata. The work selected for this purpose consisted exclusively of chorale-based movements, a revision of the early cantata "Christ lag in Todes Banden" BWV 4.

The Easter cantata of 1725, a reworking of the Weißenfels *dramma per musica*, essentially matches the definition of oratorio as sacred opera, for *dramma per musica* was the eighteenth-century term for opera. Yet it should be noted that Bach did not call the 1725 cantata "oratorio." It is unlikely that the town councilors or anyone else took notice of Bach's contractual violation by making "an operatic impression," because the choruses, arias, and recitatives sounded like those of any other church cantata by Bach, and only chorales were missing. Nevertheless, Bach apparently put the Easter cantata aside for quite a while; in fact, it seems as if he withdrew the piece for at least a decade. Its secular model, however, was revived only one year later in the form of the *dramma per musica* "Die Feier des Genius" BWV 249b for the birthday in 1726 of Count Flemming, governor of Leipzig, with a reshaped libretto and new dramatis personae: Genius, Mercurius, Melpomene, and Minerva.

While there is no evidence that Bach performed the Easter cantata again between 1725 and 1735, he returned to it in the later 1730s after completing the *Christmas* and *Ascension* oratorios, and in doing so he made a few remarkable changes.[17] First of all, he gave the piece a new title: "Oratorium Festo Paschatos." In two stages, for a performance around 1738 and then for a re-performance in around 1743, he not only polished the text and refined the score quite significantly, but, in particular, eliminated the identification of the vocal solo parts with the roles of Peter, John, and the two Marys. Among the more notable changes are the opening "Aria Duetto," originally sung by Peter and John, which was retexted "Kommt, eilet und laufet" (from "Kommt, fliehet und eilet"), rescored for four parts, and designated "Chorus"; similarly, the concluding "Aria à 4" became a "Chorus," as well. Moreover and throughout the work, SATB entirely lost their role functions as dramatis personae. Thus, for example, the opening scene, with Peter and John cheering each other up with the words "Come, hasten, and race" to reach the empty grave, is stripped of its genuine theatrical flavor. Despite singing the same words, the four-part choir now neutralizes the function of the original operatic duet by simultaneously addressing and representing the congregational audience. The exhortation "Come, hasten, and race" to see the miracle of the empty grave is meant to involve all. Thereby—and in spite of the continuing absence of chorales—the character of the whole work deliberately changes from theatrical to devotional music. The choir gallery, once a quasi-operatic stage for the Easter cantata, returned to its proper place as a venue for musical sermons.

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[17] For a detailed overview, see BC D 8a and 8b.

Even in its new guise, the *Easter Oratorio* still differs in some basic points from the other two oratorios, especially in the total absence of scriptural text and hymns. At the same time, the work and its prehistory serve as a reminder both of the close connections between opera and oratorio, and of Bach's development in the 1730s of a concept of a devotional oratorio based on a biblical story but largely without exchange of dramatic dialogue. Moreover, Bach seems to have become fond of the *Easter Oratorio* in its new version, for he re-performed it more than once, the last time on Easter Sunday 1749, some fifteen months before his death.

## Biblical Stories without Dialogue

The conceptual change affecting the *Easter Oratorio* lines up well with the idea for the earlier *Christmas* and *Ascension* oratorios. In contrast to the passion story, the biblical accounts of Christmas, Easter, and Ascension in all four gospels contain little if any dialogue. The only soliloquentes who sing in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, for instance, are Angelus (the Angel, in BWV 248/13) and Herodes (King Herod, in BWV 248/55), both for only very short musical passages. The Angel in Part II (Luke 2:10–12, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings") is assigned to the soprano voice, but the continuation of the angel's words (verse 12, "And this shall be a sign unto you") is taken up by the Evangelist, indicating that Bach here, too, intended a deemphasis of drama. The biblical text of the *Ascension Oratorio*, taken from the gospel harmony by Luther's colleague Johannes Bugenhagen, combines passages from Luke, Acts, and Mark. The short text is distributed over four recitatives and includes but a single dialogue: "Two men in white garments stood beside them, who also said: 'You men of Galilee, why do you stand and gaze up to heaven?'"

Major portions of the music in all three oratorios are borrowed, for the most part from secular *drammi per musica* in which the dramatis personae engage in dialogue. However, because Bach largely eliminated dialogue from the oratorios, what are the remaining typical features of the *dramma per musica?* There is, first of all, a general narrative quality—text and music join in presenting a biblical story. This story replaces the original mythological tale of the secular model, but, for the most part, connections remain. This is most obvious when a complete or nearly complete secular model is adapted, as, for instance, in the case of the *dramma per musica Herkules auf dem Scheidewege* (Hercules at the Crossroads) BWV 213. Six out of seven arias and choruses from this work were incorporated in the *Christmas Oratorio.* The mythological tale of the young Hercules, destined to be the strongest man on earth, was written for the birthday of the young Saxon crown prince. The imagery could not have been more fitting for the original occasion (anticipating the future of the young prince as ruler of Saxony) or for the sacred parody (the Christ child as the ruler over heaven and earth)—again, most probably a case of premeditated reuse of the material to create a permanent repertoire piece.

For Bach, the connections between *dramma per musica* and oratorio manifest themselves also in single arias, for these arias focus primarily on human virtues, qualities, and emotions and generally relate to the character of the original dramatis persona. For example, Fama, the mythological personification of popular rumor and the bass voice in the congratulatory drama BWV 214, pronounces the praise of the electoress: "Kron und Preiß gekrönter Damen" (crown and prize of crowned ladies). The same character, now a nameless bass voice, pronounces the Christ child in the *Christmas Oratorio* "Großer Herr und starker König" (great lord and strong king). "Die Schamhaftigkeit" (Chastity)—in dialogue with Natur (Nature), Tugend (Virtue), and Verhängnis (Destiny)—sings Gottsched's aria text "Unschuld, Kleinod reiner Seelen" (Innocence, jewel of pure souls) BWV Anh. 196/5 that also mentions "das Lilien Kleid unberührter Reinigkeit" (the lily-white gown of untouched purity). Its parody in the *Ascension Oratorio*, "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke . . . deine Liebe bleibt zurücke" (Jesus, your mercy's glances . . . your love remains), is sung by the soprano, a voice that often represents the pure soul. Similarly, the soprano Doris of the Weißenfels Tafel-Music BWV 249a offers "Hunderttausend Schmeicheleien" (hundred thousand flatteries). The name of the Greek sea nymph Doris means pure or unmixed. This character remains behind the oratorio soprano who sings "Seele, deine Spezereien" (soul, your spices) with direct reference to the pure soul. This association of imagery may not be immediately perceived by the oratorio listener who does not know the secular original, but it definitely played a decisive role in the literary and musical process of parodying, for both the poet and the composer had an interest in preserving, if not intensifying, the intended character of expression.

Finally, chorale stanzas add a specifically sacred element to Bach's oratorios, but, as the absence of chorales in the *Easter Oratorio* demonstrates, they are by no means the principal or crucial distinguishing feature of his oratorios. Rather it is the extended sequence of choruses, recitatives, and arias and the presentation of (and reflection on) a self-contained biblical story that proves to be the difference between oratorio and cantata (see Table 2). For a regular church cantata not only typically has fewer movements, but ordinarily also arranges its texts in the form of a sermon, with a first part focusing on the exegesis of the text and a second on the application of the theological message for the conduct of Christian life. Therefore, it is misleading to label, for example, the six parts of the *Christmas Oratorio* as "cantatas."

## Conclusion

I have referred to Bach's three oratorios as a trilogy, and would like to argue more specifically for this view. There is, first of all, the deliberate choice of the term *oratorium.* Beyond this, the three works are linked by another feature: The majority of all movements is taken over from occasional secular works, the texts of which had become obsolete after their performance. Bach therefore wanted to save the music for permanent use. This sets the oratorios of the 1730s apart from the passions of the 1720s[18] and their generally original music.

Table 2. Outlines of three oratorios and a "standard" church cantata by J. S. Bach

| Christmas Oratorio I‡ | Easter Oratorio | Ascension Oratorio | "Standard" Cantata |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Chorus | 1. Sinfonia | 1. Chorus | 1. Chorus |
| 2. Recitative* | 2. Adagio | 2. Recitative* | 2. Recitative |
| 3. Recitative | 3. Chorus | 3. Recitative | 3. Aria |
| 4. Aria | 4. Recitative | 4. Aria | 4. Recitative |
| 5. Chorale | 5. Aria | 5. Recitative* | 5. Aria |
| 6. Recitative* | 6. Recitative | 6. Chorale | 6. Chorale |
| 7. Chorale + Recitative | 7. Aria | 7a. Recitative* | |
| 8. Aria | 8. Recitative | 7b. Recitative | |
| 9. Chorale | 9. Aria | 7c. Recitative* | |
| | 10. Recitative | 8. Aria | |
| | 11. Chorus | 9. Chorale | |

‡ Parts II–VI contain 14, 13, 7, 11, and 11 movements, respectively.

* Biblical text

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[18] The *St. Mark Passion* of 1731 is different in that it incorporates many borrowings but, as far as can be determined, none from secular dramatic works.

It seems that in the 1730s Bach complemented the large number of his church cantatas from the 1720s with oratorios for the three major Christological feasts of the liturgical year, works that served as vehicles for accommodating music whose secular texts had fulfilled their onetime purpose. Besides, as most of these secular pieces were written for ceremonial functions such as birthdays of the royal-electoral family in Dresden, the elaborate scores and rich instrumentation would not make them practical for ordinary Sundays. Hence, the feast days of Christmas, Easter, and Ascension were particularly appropriate for the reuse of this music.

Moreover, the oratorios have yet another trait in common. Nearly all their model pieces were originally designed as "Drammi per musica," theatrical works involving dialogue of mythological or allegorical figures. As the contemporary term for opera was *dramma per musica*, as well, and as Bach's secular cantatas indeed represented genuine operatic scenes, the definition provided in Walther's *Lexicon* (for which Bach was not only a collaborator, but also the Leipzig sales agent) has particular relevance: "Oratorium . . . a sacred opera."

The dictionary of 1732 may even have given Bach the idea to devise, beginning in the summer of 1733 and subsequent to the dedication of the performing parts of the Missa BWV 232 to the Dresden court, a series of homage cantatas in the form of *drammi per musica* for an ultimate sacred destination. It remained for Bach to determine what a sacred opera should be, but his oratorio trilogy makes that clear. After the abortive attempt in 1725 of converting a dramatic dialogue through the simple exchange of mythological figures for biblical ones, a decade later he took a different approach and rejected converting biblical narration into a dramatic plot. Following the traditional model of the *historia*, he preserved the scriptural narrative, including, for the most part, the dialogue. In that respect the oratorio is different from the cantata, because cantatas ordinarily make no use of narrative dialogue. Similarly, choruses and arias were not conceived in a cantata-like manner, either—that is, not as personified pronouncements but as reflective and meditative contemplations.

Nevertheless, like cantatas and passions, the oratorios grew out of a delicate yet deliberate balancing act and were ultimately intended by Bach to fulfill one and the same purpose, namely that of arousing, inciting, and steering devotion—true to his pledge upon taking the office of cantor of St. Thomas. Perhaps not insignificantly, this pledge corresponds to a later account. For sometime after 1733, pondering the preconditions for invoking the presence of God's grace, Bach recorded two decisive words in the margins of his Calov Bible: "devotional *musique*." "Devotional" also signifies Bach's chief intention in the concept for his oratorios.

# Johann Sebastian Bach and Barthold Heinrich Brockes

Daniel R. Melamed

Johann Sebastian Bach never joined the likes of Reinhard Keiser, Georg Philipp Telemann, Georg Friedrich Händel, Johann Mattheson, Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, and Johann Friedrich Fasch in setting the most influential passion text of the early eighteenth century, "Der für die Sünden der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus" by Barthold Heinrich Brockes. Nonetheless, Brockes was arguably the most important textual influence on Bach's composition and performance of passion music. Bach had the opportunity of learning Brockes's text and several musical settings of it; he used movements drawn from one of those settings in a Leipzig passion performance; his *St. Matthew Passion* was influenced by it, perhaps even more than has been recognized; and his *St. John Passion* can be regarded as a Brockes setting adapted to the needs of a gospel oratorio.

The Brockes text and its early settings were widely circulated, and in Leipzig Bach had ample opportunity to encounter them. The original text printed in connection with the private Hamburg premiere in 1712 probably had only limited distribution.[1] But the revised version dating from 1713, with some additional texts, was published in 1715 as a supplement to Brockes's German translation of Giambattista Marino's *Slaughter of the Innocents.* That volume was frequently reprinted in the first half of the eighteenth century and appears to have been in wide circulation.[2]

Three of the four earliest musical settings of the *Brockes Passion* may also have been available to Bach. Keiser's complete setting was known in the region around Leipzig,

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[1] See the chronology of the Brockes Passion and related works in the Appendix.

[2] *Herrn Barthold Henrich Brockes . . . verteutschter Bethlehemitischer Kinder-Mord des Ritters Marino. Nebst etlichen von des herrn übersetzers eigenen Gedichten, mit Dessen Genehmhaltung ans licht Gestellet, Sammt einer Vorrede, Leben des Marino, und einigen Anmerckungen von König* (Cologne and Hamburg: B. Schillers Wittwe, 1715), a translation of Marino's "La strage degli innocenti." There is evidence of editions from 1715, 1725, 1727, 1734, 1739, 1740, 1742, and 1753.

having been performed in Sondershausen around 1727 under the direction of Johann Balthasar Christian Freislich. Freislich also composed his own version of the text, probably between 1721 and 1726.[3] Excerpts of Keiser's setting reduced for voice and continuo were published by the composer himself in 1714 under the title *Auserlesene Soliloquia aus dem . . . Oratorio gennant Der für die Sünde der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus;* this print was available at the Leipzig book fair in the year of its publication. There is no overlap between the pieces in this collection and those used or adapted by Bach and his librettist in his *St. John Passion*, and this may not be a coincidence; they may have systematically avoided the texts in the *Auserlesene Soliloquia* as familiar and overused.[4] The Erfurt musician Johann Martin Klöppel performed Keiser's setting in that city's Barfüßerkirche in the first half of the 1730s.[5]

Georg Philipp Telemann's Brockes setting can be traced more directly to Leipzig. In a letter published in Johann Mattheson's *Grosse General-Baß-Schule*, Telemann refers to performances of his composition that must have taken place before September 14, 1718, the date of the letter, including one in Leipzig. The circumstances are unknown, though the Neukirche in 1717 or 1718 has been proposed as the venue.[6] There was also once a copy of Telemann's score in the library of the Thomasschule, to which

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[3] Irmgard Scheitler, *Deutschsprachige Oratorienlibretti. Von den Anfängen bis 1730*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kirchenmusik 12 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2005), 212n165, 344n229. Karla Neschke, *Johann Balthasar Christian Freislich (1687–1764). Leben, Schaffen und Werküberlieferung. Mit einem thematisch-systematischen Verzeichnis seiner Werke*, Schriftenreihe zur Mitteldeutschen Musikgeschichte 3 (Oschersleben: Ziehten, 2000), 50ff.

[4] See Albert Göhler, *Verzeichnis der in den Frankfurter und Leipziger Messkatalogen der Jahre 1564 bis 1759 angezeigten Musikalien* (Leipzig: C. F. Kahnt, 1902), section 3, p. 9. The pieces in the *Auserlesene Soliloquia* were well known and were used in the assembling or pastiching of passion settings, for example, in a version of a Hamburg *St. Mark Passion* transmitted in a score now in Göttingen. See Daniel R. Melamed and Reginald Sanders, "Zum Text und Kontext der 'Keiser' Markuspassion," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 85 (1999): 41ff.

[5] Klöppel's performance is documented in a printed libretto at Duke University overlooked by scholars. Both this presentation and in Nuremberg in 1729 (composer unknown, cited in Scheitler, *Deutschsprachige Oratorienlibretti*, 225) were presented in multiple parts spread over Lent, a striking parallel to J. S. Bach's performance of his *Christmas Oratorio* BWV 248 during the Christmas season 1734–35. I am preparing a study of the Erfurt libretto and of oratorio performances spread over several days.

[6] Johann Mattheson, *Grosse General-Baß-Schule* (Hamburg: J. C. Kissner, 1731), 178. Telemann lists Frankfurt (the site of the well-documented premiere in 1716); Hamburg (where the earliest documented performance in 1719 was evidently preceded by an earlier one); Augsburg (about which there is no record), and Leipzig. Henning Friedrichs, *Das Verhältnis von Text und Musik in den Brockespassionen Keisers, Händels, Telemanns und Matthesons*, Musikwissenschaftliche Schriften 9 (Munich: Emil Katzbichler, 1975), 7, suggests an unconfirmed Hamburg date of 1716 following Richard Petzoldt, *Georg Philipp Telemann. Leben und Werk* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1967), 47. On the

Bach presumably had access if it indeed dated from his time. Without knowing its age and origin we cannot be sure, but this further suggests that Telemann's setting was available to Bach.[7]

There is no evidence that J. S. Bach knew the Brockes setting by Johann Mattheson, a work that was evidently little circulated.[8] But Bach's knowledge of Georg Friedrich Händel's *Brockes Passion* is documented in a manuscript copy of the score begun by Bach circa 1746/47 and completed circa 1748/49 by his assistant J. N. Bammler.[9] We also know that Bach used movements from Händel's setting in his performance of a *St.*

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Leipzig performance see Carsten Lange, "Georg Philipp Telemanns Passionsoratorium auf Worte von Barthold Heinrich Brockes," in *Telemanns Auftrags- und Gelegenheitswerke. Funktion, Wert und Bedeutung*, ed. Wolf Hobohm et al. (Oscherleben: Ziethen, 1997), 125n21; Lange points out that only the years 1717/1718 are possible. Andreas Glöckner, *Die Musikpflege an der Leipziger Neukirche zur Zeit Johann Sebastian Bachs*, Beiträge zur Bachforschung 9 (Leipzig: Nationale Forschungs- und Gedenkstätten Johann Sebastian Bach, 1990), 79, cites a report of a 1717 passion performance that evidently took place somewhere other than Leipzig's principal churches. He places it "zweifelsfrei in der Neukirche," probably under the direction of Johann Gottfried Vogler, and identifies it as likely having been Telemann's Brockes setting.

[7] The Thomasschule copy is reported in Werner Menke, *Thematisches Verzeichnis der Vokalwerke von Georg Philipp Telemann*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983). Glöckner and Lange (see note above) each acknowledge that it is unclear whether this copy was connected to the performance reported by Telemann. Glöckner earlier suggested that Bach may have made this copy for himself and proposed a possible connection with Bach's problems with his passion performance in 1739. "Bach and the Passion Music of His Contemporaries," *Musical Times* 116 (1975): 613–16. Kirsten Beißwenger has questioned whether the copy had any connection to Bach at all. *Johann Sebastian Bachs Notenbibliothek*, Catalogus Musicus 13 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1992), 69ff. C. P. E. Bach's estate catalogue, p. 87, lists "Die Broksche Passion von Telemann, in Partitur." That source, transmitted through Georg Poelchau (and listed in the catalogue of his collection), is Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin/Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz Mus. ms. 21711. Although its title page (in Poelchau's hand) and its second title page (reportedly in pencil in C. P. E. Bach's) credit Telemann, the work is actually the pastiche of four Brockes settings discussed by Friedrichs, *Das Verhältnis von Text und Musik*, 55ff., not Telemann's integral setting.

[8] Steffen Voss has raised the possibility that Bach may have performed Mattheson's church music in Leipzig, and if Bach really did have access to Mattheson's compositions the *Brockes Passion* could have been among the works he acquired, perhaps during his 1720 visit to Hamburg. But we do not know how closely the men were in contact; Mattheson made repeated public attempts to get biographical information from Bach, and one wonders how close their communication really was. See Steffen Voss, "Did Bach Perform Sacred Music by Johann Mattheson in Leipzig?" *Bach Notes* 3 (2005): 1–5, who cites a 1725 Leipzig Magnificat paraphrase that agrees with one performed by Mattheson in 1718. The autograph score of Mattheson's *Brockes Passion* returned to Hamburg in 1998 after its disappearance during World War II; Richard Charteris, "Thomas Bever and Some Rediscovered Sources in the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg," *Music & Letters* 81 (2000): 188—93.

[9] Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin/Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz Mus. ms. 9002/10. Full description and references to literature are in Kirsten Beißwenger, *Johann Sebastian Bachs Notenbibliothek*, 289ff.

*Mark Passion* in the late 1740s.[10] Bach's contact with Händel's setting is indisputable, but there are several questions. The first is that we do not know from what source Bach learned the piece. It had long been assumed that the movements he used in the pastiched *St. Mark Passion* came from his and Bammler's score, but Kirsten Beißwenger has demonstrated that they could not. Bach must have had another source[11] that could have come to him at any time after the work's composition in the late 1710s, and we should not take the date of the Bach/Bammler copy as an indication that Bach acquired Händel's setting only late in his life. He may well have learned the piece much earlier from a source that does not survive.[12]

A second question concerns the opening vocal text in Bach's copy of Händel's work, in which the two stanzas of the original poem (beginning "Mich vom Stricken meiner Sünden" and "Es muß meiner Sünden Flecken," respectively) have been replaced.[13] The new text consists of only a single verse, arguably a more modern construction than the strophic original.[14] It is also a much more explicit exordium; in fact, its exhorta-

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On the dates of copying see Yoshitake Kobayashi, "Zur Chronologie der Spätwerke Johann Sebastian Bachs: Kompositions- und Aufführungstätigkeit von 1736 bis 1750," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 74 (1988): 57, 62. On the identification of Bammler as the second copyist see Peter Wollny, "Neue Bach-Funde," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 83 (1997): 44.

[10] See Daniel R. Melamed, "Bachs Aufführung der Hamburger Markus-Passion in den 1740er Jahren," in *Bach in Leipzig—Bach und Leipzig. Konferenzbericht Leipzig 2000*, ed. Ulrich Leisinger, Leipziger Beiträge zur Bach-Forschung 5 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2002), 289–308.

[11] Beißwenger, *Johann Sebastian Bachs Notenbibliothek*, 180. The one substantial performing part that survives was not copied from the score. It makes sense that Bach owned another source, given that the jointly copied score was completed by an assistant months or years after Bach began it; evidently he had long-term access to at least one model from which they worked. There may be a loose analogy to the fair copy of BWV 245, also begun by Bach and also completed by an assistant.

[12] This possibility was suggested and ultimately dismissed—at least for the period before Bach's composition of BWV 245 and 244—by Bernd Baselt, "Händel und Bach: Zur Frage der Passionen," in *Johann Sebastian Bach und Georg Friedrich Händel—zwei führende musikalische Repräsentanten der Aufklärungsepoche*, ed. Walter Siegmund-Schulze (Halle, 1976), 58–66.

[13] The new text is noted in Beißwenger, *Johann Sebastian Bachs Notenbibliothek*, 157n50; Friedrichs, *Das Verhältnis von Text und Musik*, 50; and Andreas Glöckner, "Johann Sebastian Bachs Aufführungen zeitgenossischer Passionsmusiken," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 63 (1977): 105. It was also mentioned by Friedrich Chrysander, *G. F. Händel*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1858), 440, who defended Händel against the apparently puzzling setting of "Bach's" text. We do not know whether Bach acquired Händel's *Brockes Passion* with this adapted text, but there is no evidence to suggest he was responsible for it.

[14] The revised text has invited some speculation. Friedrichs, *Das Verhältnis von Text und Musik*, 50, called it "durchaus eine Verschlechterung" and proposed that Bach himself had made the change in connection with a performance of BWV 245 to disguise the connection with Brockes and the overlap with the alto aria BWV 245/7. There is, in fact, no evidence either way on Bach's responsibility for this

tions ("Kommet," "Seht," addressed outward to listeners) are exactly those of Picander and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* BWV 244 ("Kommt, ihr Töchter," "Sehet!").[15] The new text reduces the original's emphasis on the first person even though individuality is an essential characteristic of Brockes's text, whose first word is, tellingly, "Me." In adapting this text in the *St. John Passion*, Bach and his collaborator similarly changed its focus, rearranging the syntax and moving the first-person pronoun away from the beginning. "Mich vom Stricken meiner Sünden" becomes "Von den Stricken meiner Sünden."

Opening text of the *Brockes Passion*

*ORIGINAL*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden | From the ropes of my sins |
| | Zu entbinden / | To unbind me |
| | Wird mein Gott gebunden; | My God is bound; |
| | Von der Laster Eyter-Beulen | From the putrifying vice-boils |
| | Mich zu heilen / | To heal me |
| | Läst er sich verwunden. | He allows himself to be wounded. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2. | Es muß meiner Sünden Flecken | The stains of my sins |
| | Zu bedecken / | To cover |
| | Eignes Blut ihn färben; | He must be dyed in his own blood; |
| | Ja / es will / ein ewig Leben | Yes, eternal life |
| | Mir zu geben / | To give me |
| | Selbst das Leben sterben. | Must Life itself die. |

*JSB COPY OF HÄNDEL'S SETTING*

| | |
|---|---|
| Kommet, ihr verworfnen Sünder, | Come, you rejected sinners, |
| Todeskinder; | Children of death; |

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new text. Bach's copy includes another correction that has gone unremarked. At the beginning of the aria "Erwäg, ergrimmte Natternbrut" Bach initially entered a different text. The underlay originally read, "Erwege doch" (like BWV 80/3?), then was corrected to "erweg, erweg." This is the very movement and exact passage in which someone, perhaps even Bach, added a continuo line to support the unaccompanied vocal opening. Beißwenger, *Johann Sebastian Bachs Notenbibliothek*, 182–83, stresses this passage as a significant variant whose origin appears to lie in an attempt to avoid an unaccompanied voice. The two issues—the musical revision and changed texts—may be related.

[15] Perhaps a reference to John 4:29, "Kommt, seht einen Menschen, der mir gesagt hat alles, was ich getan habe, ob er nicht Christus sei!"; or to Psalms 66:5, "Kommet her und sehet an die Werke Gottes"; or to John 1:39, "Kommt und sehet's!"; or to Matthew 28:6, "Kommt her und seht die Stätte, da der Herr gelegen hat."

| | |
|---|---|
| Seht, hier stirbt das Leben. | See, here Life dies. |
| Euer Tod soll mit ihm sterben; | Your death shall die with him; |
| Sein Verderben | His demise |
| Soll euch Rettung geben. | Shall give you rescue. |

### *ADAPTATION IN BWV 245/7*

| | |
|---|---|
| Von den Stricken meiner Sünden | From the ropes of my sins |
| Mich zu entbinden, | To undbind me, |
| Wird mein Heil gebunden. | My salvation is bound. |
| Mich von allen Lasterbeulen | From all my vice-boils |
| Völlig zu heilen, | Fully to heal me |
| Läßt er sich verwunden. | He lets himself be wounded. |
| | (trans. M. Marissen) |

The *Brockes Passion* text appeared in Leipzig at least once more in a performance in the Neukirche on April 15, 1729 (Good Friday), under the direction of C. G. Fröber. No musical sources survive, and it is unclear who composed the setting heard then, but the documented performance of the Brockes text further demonstrates Leipzig's familiarity with the libretto in the 1720s.[16] In all, Bach had ample opportunity to learn the text and one or more musical settings, and this exposure is reflected in music he performed in Leipzig.

In the mid-to-late 1740s he turned (for at least the third time in his career) to a *St. Mark Passion* setting from Hamburg, a work he attributed, perhaps incorrectly, to Reinhard Keiser. In that performance Bach incorporated seven arias from Händel's *Brockes Passion* as replacements or additions, inserting each in the equivalent spot in the narrative.[17] I have argued that in drawing movements from Händel's *Brockes Passion* Bach sought to make as thorough and systematic a use of that work as the context permitted.[18] His adoption of the material, typically seen from the perspective of the pastiched *St. Mark Passion*, is equally well viewed as his presentation of portions of the Brockes text—as a liturgical use of the *Brockes Passion*.

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[16] The performance is documented in a printed text and a report. The work was considerably shortened, evidently omitting approximately half of the arias. In the absence of the church's former music director Georg Balthasar Schott (recently decamped for Gotha), the performance was led by Fröber, one of the applicants for the vacant position. See Andreas Glöckner, *Die Musikpflege an der Leipziger Neukirche*, 88, and Winfried Hoffmann,"Leipzigs Wirkungen auf den Delitzscher Kantor Christoph Gottlieb Fröber," *Beiträge zur Bachforschung* 1 (1982): 54–73. The title page and first page of the printed text are reproduced on p. 60. The text of the first movement is the original, not the replacement version found in Bach's copy of the Händel setting, but this libretto is clearly modeled on original print, so it is not out of the question that the text of the opening number was simply reproduced from the model libretto, whatever text might have been sung. Hoffmann reports that in the twelve-leaf text print, fourteen arias (of twenty-seven) were omitted, as were nine recitatives (of forty-eight), three ariosos (of six), and one duet (of two); one recitative and one chorale were added. Hoffmann suggested that it was Fröber's reworking of another composer's setting; Glöckner leans towards a piece of Fröber's own composition.

Bach's own *St. Matthew Passion* BWV 244 has a close relationship to Brockes's text, perhaps closer than has been acknowledged. Several of the work's poetic texts are derived from an earlier work by its poet Picander, his "Erbauliche Gedancken auf den Grünen Donnerstag und Charfreytag über den leidenden Jesum, in einem Oratorio entworffen," published in 1725. This text presents an abbreviated poetic narrative of the passion story in the voice of an Evangelist, along with poetry presented by allegorical characters (Zion, Gläubige Seele, Seele [possibly the same character]) and by figures in the narrative (Johannes, Petrus, Jesus, and Maria).[19] The text is the entry for Maundy Thursday/Good Friday in a cycle of reflective texts organized around the liturgical year. This one differs from the others in that it is cast as an oratorio, as the author himself wrote, and it is clearly modeled on the *Brockes Passion*.[20] At the least, Picander's reliance on Brockes for a work published in 1725 suggests his intensive engagement with the *Brockes Passion* text in Leipzig in the 1720s.

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17. He used only arias that responded to Mark's gospel, avoiding more generally contemplative pieces. When his model and Händel's Brockes setting each offered interpolated movements, he favored arias over chorales and fuller textures over continuo arias. Most often he retained the tonality of the borrowed movements but adjusted either the surrounding material or the new aria when keys were too distant.

18. Melamed, "Bachs Aufführung der Hamburger Markus-Passion." I suggested there that one of Bach's motivations was the supposed impossibility of performing a poetic passion in the liturgy of the principal Leipzig churches, an assumption now upended by the documentation of a 1734 performance of just such a work in the Thomaskirche. See Tatjana Schabalina, "'Texte zur Music' in Sankt Petersburg. Neue Quellen zur Leipziger Musikgeschischte sowie zur Kompositions- und Aufführungstätigkeit Johann Sebastian Bachs," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 94 (2008): 77–84.

19. Elke Axmacher points out that Picander's text gives no words to antagonists of Jesus. "*Aus Liebe will mein Heyland sterben.*" *Untersuchungen zum Wandel des Passionsverständnisses im frühen 18. Jahrhundert*, Beiträge zur theologischen Bachforschung 2 (Stuttgart: Carus, 1984), 168n10. The text does not appear to have been written for musical setting, but see Scheitler, *Deutschsprachige Oratorienlibretti*, 345–47, who cites a libretto from a Nuremberg performance in 1729, and Hans-Joachim Schulze, "Bemerkungen zum zeit- und gattungsgeschichtlichen Kontext von Johann Sebastian Bachs Passionen," in *Johann Sebastian Bachs historischer Ort*, Bach-Studien 10, ed. Reinhard Szeskus (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1991), 209, 214, on a possible performance in the Leipzig Neukirche under Schott and one in Dresden under Christoph Ludwig Fehre.

20. Scheitler, *Deutschsprachige Oratorienlibretti*, 215, suggests that Picander's text is singular in the degree of its modeling on Brockes.

The connection is evident from the title of Picander's work, which resembles the title pages associated with early Brockes performances;[21] from the use of the term "soliloquium" for commentary texts;[22] and the assignment of every nonnarrative text to the voice of an allegorical or gospel character with no commentary by unidentified speakers, a characteristic of Brockes's text.[23] In fact, this is one of the features that aligns Picander's oratorio most closely with his Brockes model, and it is significant because allegorical characters (the very ones who appear in both Brockes and in the "Erbauliche Gedancken") are so important to his libretto for the *St. Matthew Passion.* In that work the voices of Daughter Zion and the Believers appear in prominent places, including effectively the opening and closing numbers of each half.[24] This has long been understood as an influence of the *Brockes Passion.*

In the reprinted libretto of the *St. Matthew Passion* that appeared in 1729, these allegorical characters are named only in dialogue numbers—that is, only when they are paired.[25] The standard interpretation has long been that the other recitatives and arias are presented by anonymous unidentified voices. But are they? It is at least plausible that all the poetic texts in the *St. Matthew Passion* are in the voices of Daughter Zion or the Believers. Nothing in the print specifically cancels the identification of Daughter Zion. There are no Evangelist or interlocutor identifications to shift the speaker, because the print includes only the poetry, omitting the gospel narrative, and it is possible that all the poetic texts are in this voice (or perhaps that of the Believers, or of individual faithful souls).[26]

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[21] The title page of the 1716 Frankfurt performance of Telemann's setting, for example, reads, "Der Für die Sünde der Welt Leidende und Sterbende JESUS Aus Den IV. Evangelisten In einem PASSIONS ORATORIO Mit gebundender Rede vorgestellet."

[22] Picander evidently used the term differently than Brockes. In the *Brockes Passion*, "Soliloquium" essentially means "scena" and can include arias, ariosos, and texts evidently meant as accompagnati. (For example, one sometimes finds the heading "Soliloquio" followed immediately by a textual label like "Arioso" identifying one of the constituent parts of the soliloquy.) Brockes's "Soliloquia" encompass many different combinations of arias, recitatives, and ariosos, but they always consist of multiple textual and musical units. Picander, in contrast (or in misunderstanding), evidently took "Soliloquium" to mean "recitative" or "accompagnato." Texts with this heading (always recitative-like blank verse) are sometimes found individually and never appear with a double label. Arias are always separately labeled, and there are two Soliloquium-Aria pairs corresponding to the kind of accompagnato/aria pairs found throughout Picander's text for the *St. Matthew Passion.*

[23] Even the hymn stanzas are cast quasi-allegorically as "Choräle der christlichen Kirche."

[24] No. 27a and b may well have originally been conceived as the conclusion of Part 1. Certainly they are the poetic end of that part, as a look at Picander's text print makes clear.

[25] The text appears in the second collection of Picander's poetry, *Picanders Ernst-Schertzhaffte und Satÿrische Gedichte*, *Anderer Theil* (Leipzig, 1729), 101–12. Reproduced in Werner Neumann, ed., *Sämtliche von Johann Sebastian Bach vertonte Texte* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1974), 321–24.

In this regard, the assignment to Zion of the recitative no. 59 “Ach, Golgotha,” a movement for only one voice, is striking, because in this piece an allegorical character is identified outside the context of a dialogue. It is possible that the voice is labeled because of the accompagnato’s pairing with the genuine dialogue aria no. 60 “Sehet, Jesus hat die Hand,” in which both Zion and the Believers are indeed named. But it demonstrates that a solo number in this work can be connected with an allegorical voice. This leaves open the possibility that Picander conceived all the free poetry in the *St. Matthew Passion* for his (that is, Brockes’s) allegorical figures. If so, the connection of the work to the Brockes model is even stronger than has been suspected. We would be justified in regarding BWV 244 as a biblical oratorio drawing heavily on the poetic type, and particularly on the *Brockes Passion.*[27] Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* is many things; one of them may be a Brockes setting once removed.

Picander evidently continued to take Brockes’s passion poem as a model, even beyond his turn to the earlier “Erbauliche Gedancken” texts based on it. The ensemble poetic number BWV 244/27b “Sind Blitze, sind Donner” in the *St. Matthew Passion* appears to draw on the Brockes text, specifically an aria for Peter just after Judas’s kiss and the capture of Jesus.[28]

*BROCKES, ARIA [PETRUS]*

| | |
|---|---|
| Gifft und Gluht / | Poison and embers |
| Strahl und Fluht | Thunderbolts and floods, |
| **Ersticke / verbrenne / zerschmettre / versencke** | Smother, burn, smite, sink |
| **Den falschen Verrähter / voll mördrische Rencke!** | The false betrayer, full of murderous intrigue. |

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[26] The matter is difficult to evaluate because the published text omits the gospel narrative that may well have been present in an original libretto connected with the liturgy.

[27] Of course there is no mention of these characters in any musical source for BWV 244, so it is difficult to say whether this possibility, if true, had musical consequences. But from a textual point of view, if all the recitatives and arias are for Daughter Zion, that would mean that voices in Chorus 2, when functioning individually in recitatives and arias, represent that character just as the voices in Chorus 1 do; and that Chorus 2 stands for the Believers only when it is used as a four-voice group in dialogue pieces. This would certainly challenge interpretations that distinguish the words of the allegorical characters from other commentary movements.

[28] This was noted at least as early as Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1873–80), 2:386n106.

| | |
|---|---|
| Man fesselt JESUM jämmerlich / | Jesus is pitiably bound |
| Und keine Wetter regen sich? | And the elements do not stir? |
| Auf dann / mein unverzagter Muht / | Up then, my undaunted courage |
| Vergieß das frevelhaffte Blut / | Shed the sacrilegious blood |
| Weil es nicht thut | Because they do not: |
| Gifft und Gluht / | Poison and embers, |
| Strahl und Fluht. | Thunderbolts and floods. |

### *PICANDER, BWV 244/27B*

| | |
|---|---|
| Sind Blitze, sind Donner in Wolcken verschwunden! | Are lightning and thunder vanished in clouds? |
| Eröffne den feurigen Abgrund o Hölle! | Open up the fiery bottomless pit, o hell; |
| **Zerdrümmre, verderbe, verschlinge, zerschelle.** | Smash, ruin, swallow up, break to pieces |
| Mit plötzlicher Wuth | With sudden fury |
| **Den falschen Verräther, das mördrische Blut.** | That false betrayer, that murderous blood! |
| | (trans. M. Marissen) |

Modern literature probably goes too far in citing Brockes as the author of the text of BWV 244/27b, but it is likely that Picander continued to be influenced by the *Brockes Passion* as he assembled the *St. Matthew Passion*.

Bach was not alone in his use of Brockes's text for liturgical passions, and settings by Georg Philipp Telemann are the most prominent examples. Telemann arrived in Hamburg in the fall of 1721 and began performing passions in the city's principal churches in the spring of 1722.[29] Text and music for his earliest passions there are lost, but outlines can be reconstructed from material used by Hans Hörner in his 1935 study.[30] Telemann's first passion, in 1722 (Table 1), was a St. Matthew setting incorporating eight free poetic texts, all drawn from the *Brockes Passion* (not just six, as incorrectly reported in most of the literature); one of the chorales specified by Brockes is also used in its original place. Telemann's next passion, the 1723 St. Mark setting

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29. Stephen Zohn, "Telemann, Georg Philipp," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

30. Hans Hörner, "Gg. Ph. Telemanns Passionsmusiken. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Passionsmusik in Hamburg" (PhD diss., Kiel, 1933), 59ff. Hörner is incorrect in identifying only six of eight insertions in the 1722 passion as texts by Brockes; numerous authors have followed.

(Table 2), uses thirteen free poetic texts, nine from the *Brockes Passion* and four of unknown origin.[31] Telemann did not draw on the complete Brockes setting he already had—the arias were evidently newly composed—so his choice was not simply one of expediency.[32] Brockes represented his closest tie to the city both personally and by musical reputation, and his use of the poetry speaks to its continuing relevance.

One complete movement from these lost settings does survive in an unlikely place. In an effort to demonstrate the weakness of Telemann's Brockes settings compared to Bach's, Philipp Spitta included the aria "Mich vom Stricken meiner Sünden" from Telemann's 1723 passion in the musical appendix to the second volume of his Bach biography. This aria, which does not appear in the English translation, is a compact ritornello form with a repeat to accommodate the two stanzas of the text (Example 1).[33] The aria's characteristic syncopations and ties presumably reflect the words "gebunden" and "entbinden," just as Bach's setting does in a somewhat different way in the *St. John Passion.*

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[31] The last aria in Telemann's 1723 passion, "Zwölf Jünger folgten Jesu nach," attracted the attention of Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739), 200–201, who criticized a composer who set this piece with twelve canonic entries. Mattheson characteristically ridiculed this focus on the followers rather than on the one left behind. It is not clear whether he is referring to Telemann's setting or that of some source composition from which Telemann may have taken the text. The passage is cited in Birger Petersen-Mikkelsen, *Die Melodielehre des "Vollkommenen Capellmeisters" von Johann Mattheson*, Eutiner Beiträge zur Musikforschung 1 (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2002), 157.

[32] Perhaps characteristically, Telemann's 1722 and 1723 passions do not share any texts—the works are entirely complementary and systematic in their use of poems from the *Brockes Passion.* Proceeding in this way, Telemann could theoretically have produced a setting of all the Brockes arias over several years. Even though both the 1722 and 1723 scores are lost, we know that Telemann did not use the arias from his complete *Brockes Passion*, because incipits for 1723 were recorded by Hörner, and they show that the arias were not those of Telemann's earlier Brockes setting, but rather were distinct and presumably newly composed. The same is likely to have been true for the aria texts he used in 1722.

[33] Spitta chose it from among the available Brockes settings because of its scoring as a solo aria, which made it a plausible comparison to "Von den Stricken" BWV 245/7 based on the same text. (All the other settings treat this as an aria tutti scored for multiple voices.) Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685–1750*, trans. Clara Bell and John Alexander Fuller-Maitland, 3 vols. (London, 1884—85), 2:533f: "There is hardly any interest to be found in comparing Bach's settings of Brockes' text with those of other composers. Not only do they surpass them immeasurably in richness and depth, but, in consequence of the profound church feeling [tiefinneren Kirchlichkeit] that prevades [*sic*] his style, they stand forth as something totally distinct when compared with the operatic religionism [opernhaften Religiosität] of the other German masters. The solitary grandeur in which Bach dwells as a composer of church music is only rendered more clear by a comparison with similar works by Keiser, Telemann, Mattheson, Stölzel,

Table 1. G. P. Telemann, *St. Matthew Passion* TVWV 5:7 (1722)

| Gospel text/Chorale interpolations | Free poetic interpolations | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Choral Wenn meine Sünd mich kränken | | (also opens 1736, 1750) |
| *Und es begab sich . . . zur Vergebung der Sünden* | | |
| | **O Gott, du Brunnquell alles Guten** | Brockes (TZ) [orig. 2nd v. of following] |
| *Ich sage euch . . . meines Vaters Reich* | | |
| | **Aria Der Gott, dem alle Himmels-Kreise** | Brockes (TZ) |
| *Choral Ach, wie hungert mein Gemüt [end of Alte Osterlamm]* | | |
| *Und da sie den Lobgesang . . . sondern wie du willst* | | |
| Choral Wen seh ich dort an jenem Berge liegen | | |
| | **Aria Brich, mein Hertz! Zerfließ in Tränen!** | Brockes (TZ) |
| *Und er kam zu seinen Jüngern . . . dieselben Worte* | | |
| Choral Du Nacht voll Angst | | |
| *Da kam er zu seinen Jüngern . . . wer ist's, der dich schlug?* | | |
| | **Aria Was Bären-Tatzen, Löwen-Klauen** | Brockes (TZ) |
| Choral Du, auch du hast ausgestanden | | |
| *Petrus aber saß draußen . . . weinte bitterlich* | | |
| | **Arioso Welch ungeheurer Schmertz** | Brockes (Petrus) |
| | **Aria Heul du Schaum der Menschenkinder** | Brockes (Petrus) |
| *Choral Ach Gott und Herr [end of Caiphas]* | | as in Brockes |
| *Des Morgens aber . . . Landpfleger sich verwunderte* | | |

Table 1. *Cont.*

| Gospel text/Chorale interpolations | Free poetic interpolations | Notes |
|---|---|---|
|  | **Aria (duetto) Sprichst du denn auf dies Verklagen/Nein, ich will euch itzo zeigen** | Brockes (TZ, Jesus) |
| *Auf das Fest aber . . . daß er gekreuzigt würde* |  |  |
| Choral Herzliebster Jesu, was hast Du verbrochen |  |  |
| *Da nahmen die Kriegsknechte . . . schlugen damit sein Haupt* |  |  |
|  | **Aria Laß doch diese herben Schmerzen** | Brockes (TZ) |
| *Und da sie ihn verspottet hatten . . . wollte er nicht trinken* |  |  |
|  | **Aria Eilt, ihr angefochtenen Seelen** | Brockes (TZ, GS) |
| *Da sie ihn aber gekreuzigt hatten . . . einer zu Linken* |  |  |
| Choral O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben, |  |  |
| *Die aber vorübergingen . . . Ich bin Gottes Sohn* |  |  |
| Choral Du, ach du hast ausgestanden, |  |  |
| *Desgleichen schmähten ihn auch . . . und verschied* |  |  |
| Choral Ich danke dir/Wenn ich einmal/Erscheine mir |  |  |
| *Und siehe da . . . versiegelten den Stein* |  |  |
| Choral Nun ich danke dir von Hertzen, |  |  |
| Choral Nun ich kann nicht viel geben/Ich wills vor Augen |  |  |

[Music and text lost; outline reconstructed from Hans Hörner, *Gg. Ph. Telemanns Passionsmusiken* (Leipzig, 1933).]

Table 2. G. P. Telemann, *St. Mark Passion* TVWV 5:8 (1723)

| Gospel text/Chorale interpolations | Free poetic interpolations | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| [Sinfonia] | | |
| Choral Ein Lämmlein geht [und trägt die Schuld/und weidete?] | | |
| *Und nach zweien Tagen war Ostern . . . [Aufruhr im Volk werde]* | | |
| | **Aria Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden** | Brockes (GS); originally opening text |
| *Und da es zu Bethanien war . . . [was sie jetzt getan hat]* | | |
| | Aria Laßt die mit Frieden | New (unknown) |
| Choral Ach höchster Gott verzeihe mir | | |
| *Und Judas Ischariot . . . [in dem Reich Gottes]* | | |
| | Aria Ach, Herr, ich habe dich verraten | New (unknown) |
| *Choral Jesus Christus unser Heiland [end of Alte Osterlamm]* | | |
| *Und da sie den Lobgesang gesprochen . . . [sondern was du willst]* | | |
| | **Aria Sünder schaut mit Furcht und Zagen** | Brockes (TZ) |
| *Und kam und fand sie schlafend . . . [das Fleisch ist schwach]* | | |
| Choral Wer fleißig betet und dir | | |
| *Und ging wieder hin und betete . . . [die Schrift erfüllt werde]* | | |
| *Choral Nun er tut es herzlich gern [approx. end of Öleberg]* | | |
| *Und die Jünger verließen . . . [und Schriftgelehrten]* | | |
| | Aria Soll selbst der Herr und Richter aller Welt | New (unknown) |
| *Petrus aber folgete ihm . . . [dass er des Todes schuldig wäre]* | | |
| | **Aria Erwäg, ergrimmte Natternbrut** | Brockes (GS?) |
| *Da fingen an etliche ihn . . . [hob an zu weinen]* | | |
| *Choral Erbarme dich, o Herre Gott [end of Caiphas]* | | |
| *Und bald am Morgen hielten. . . [überantworteten ihn dem Pilatus]* | | |

Table 2. *Cont.*

| Gospel text/Chorale interpolations | Free poetic interpolations | Notes |
|---|---|---|
|  | **Arioso Hat dies mein Heiland leiden müssen** | Brockes (TZ) |
|  | **Aria Meine Laster sind die Stricke** | Brockes (TZ) |
| *Und Pilatus fragte ihn . . . [daß er gekreuzigt würde]* |  |  |
|  | **Soliloquio Besinne dich, Pilatus** | Brockes (TZ) |
|  | **Aria Dein Bä [renherz ist felsenhart]** | Brockes (TZ) |
| *Die Kriegsknechte aber führeten . . . [und beteten ihn an]* |  |  |
| *Choral Dass ihn, Gott, so [end of Pilatus]* |  |  |
| *Und da sie ihn verspottet hatten . . . [er nahm's nicht zu sich]* |  |  |
|  | **Aria Heil der Welt, dein schmerzlich Leiden** | Brockes (TZ) |
| *Und da sie ihn gekreuziget hatten . . . [da sie ihn kreuzigten]* |  |  |
| Choral Wie wunderbarlich ist doch |  |  |
| *Und es war oben übergeschrieben . . . [von obenan bis untenaus]* |  |  |
|  | **Aria Bei Jesus Tod und Leiden** | Brockes (GS) |
| *Der Hauptmann aber . . . [gen Jerusalem gegangen waren]* |  |  |
| *Choral O Jesu du mein Hilf [end of Creutz]* |  |  |
| *Und am Abend dieweil es Rüsttag . . . [um den Leichnam Jesu]* |  |  |
|  | Aria Zwölf Jünger folgten Jesu nach | New (unknown) |
| Choral O Jesu dessen Schmerzen |  |  |
| *Pilatus aber verwunderte sich . . . [?]* |  |  |
| *Choral O hilf, Christe, Gottes Sohn [end of Sepulchrum]* |  |  |
| Choral Bleibt in Andacht meine Sinnen |  |  |

[Music and text lost; outline reconstructed from Hans Hörner, *Gg. Ph. Telemanns Passionsmusiken* (Leipzig, 1933).]

Table 3. G. P. Telemann, *St. Luke Passion* TVWV 5:9 (1724)

| Gospel text/Chorale interpolations | Free poetic interpolations | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| *Es war nahe das Fest der süßen Brot . . .* | | |
| . . . *überantwortete ohne Lärmen [Rumor]* | | |
| | Aria Du Otter-Zucht, was soll der schnöde Raht? | unknown |
| . . . *die fielen auf die Erde.* | | |
| | Aria Erweiche, diamantenes Herze | Hunold |
| . . . *Petrus aber folgte von ferne.* | | |
| | Aria Schau, Se[e]l, auf deine Sünden | Hunold |
| . . . *viele andere Lästerungen sagten sie wider ihn.* | | |
| | Aria Süßer Trost, durch dieses Leiden | Hunold |
| . . . *und sandte ihn wieder zu Pilatus.* | | |
| | Aria Fürst verklährter Engelsorden | Hunold |
| . . . *so helf dir selber!* | | |
| | Aria Mein Herz, reiß aus dir die Lust | Hunold |
| . . . *verschied er.* | | |
| | Aria Bebet, ihr Berge! zerberstet ihr Hügel | Postel |
| . . . *den Sabbath über waren sie stille nach dem Gesetz.* | | |
| ? | Aria “Gott läßt es nicht bey einer Wohltat bleiben/ Unzählig sind die Gaben seiner Hand” | unknown |
| ? | [Aria] | unknown |
| ? | [Aria] | unknown |

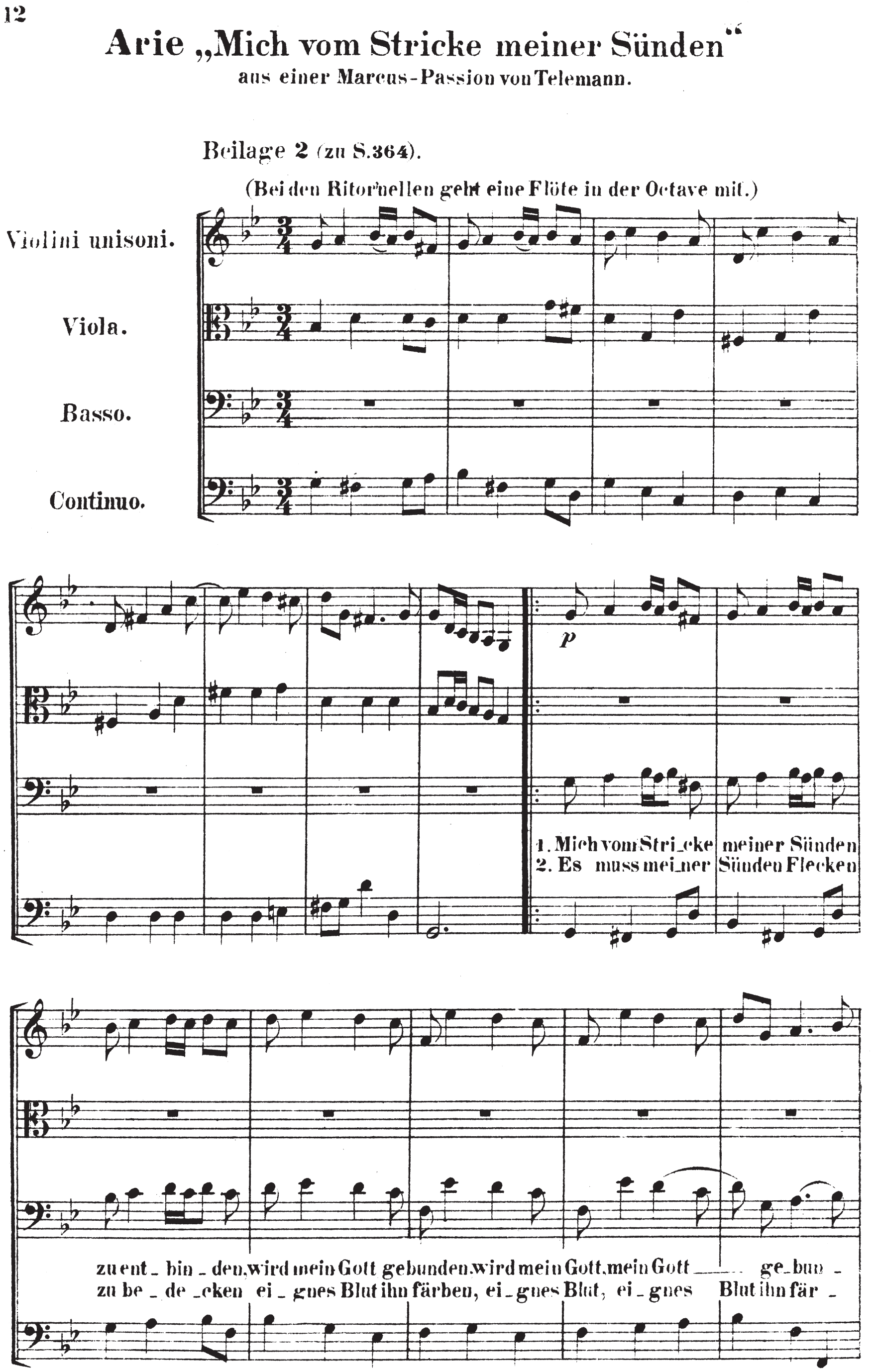
[Music and text lost; partial outline reconstructed from Hans Hörner, *Gg. Ph. Telemanns Passionsmusiken* (Leipzig, 1933).]

Table 4. J. S. Bach, *St. John Passion* BWV 245 (1724)

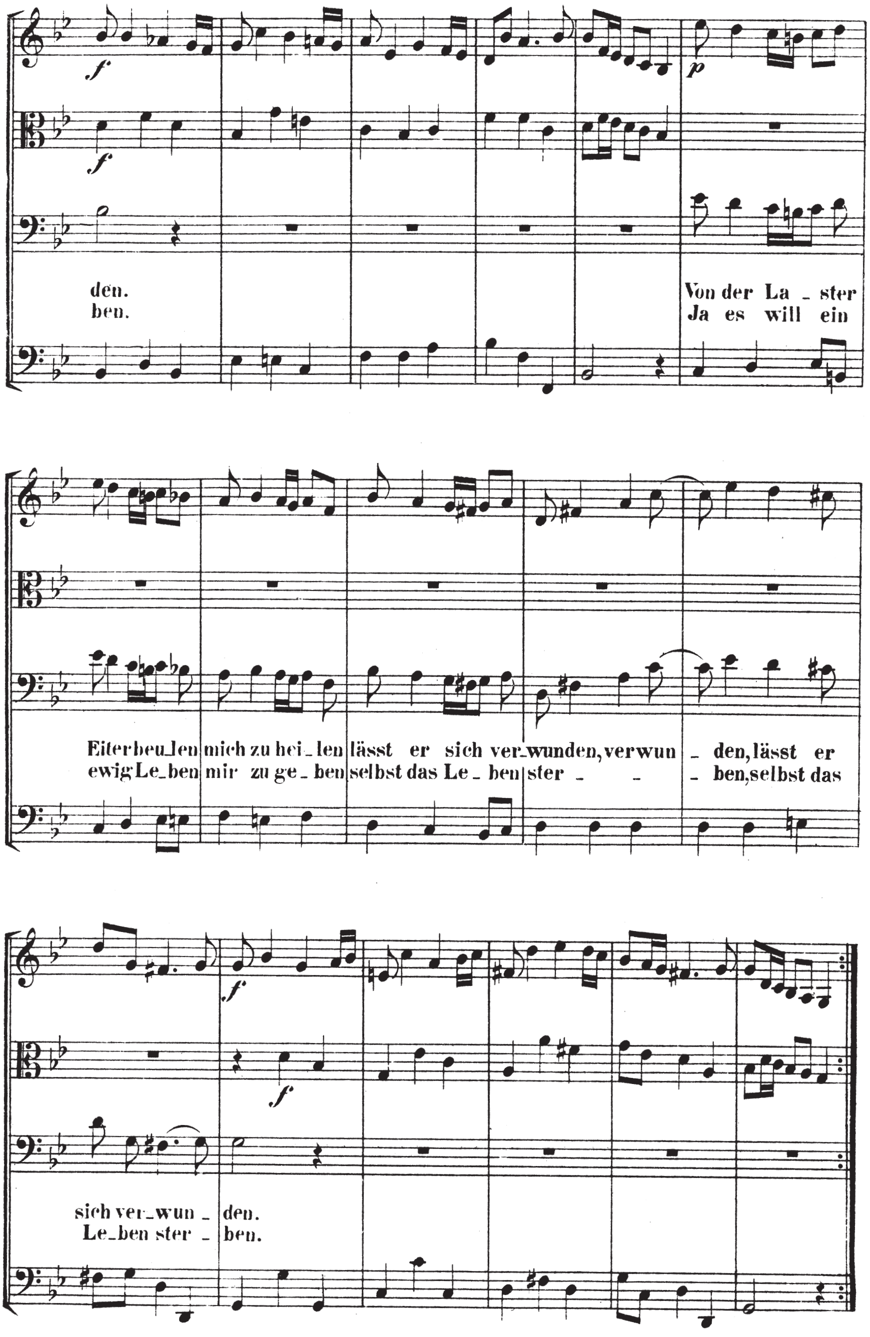
| Gospel text/Chorale interpolations | Free poetic interpolations | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| | 1. Herr, unser Herrscher, dessen Ruhm | New (unknown); in place of orig. opening text |
| 2. *Jesus ging mit seinen Jüngern . . . so lasset diese gehen!* | | |
| 3. O große Lieb, o Lieb ohn alle Maße | | |
| 4. *Auf dass das Wort . . . mein Vater gegeben hat?* | | |
| 5. Dein Will gescheh, Herr Gott, zugleich [end of Hortus] | | |
| 6. *Die Schar aber . . . umbracht für das Volk.* | | |
| | **7. Von den Stricken meiner Sünden** | Brockes (GS); originally opening text, moved here |
| 8. *Simon Petrus aber folgete Jesu nach und ein ander Jünger* | | |
| | 9. Ich folge dir gleichfalls | New (unknown) |
| 10. *Derselbige Jünger war . . . was schlägest du mich?* | | |
| 11. Wer hat dich so geschlagen [2x] | | |
| 12. *Und Hannas sandte ihn . . . und weinete bitterlich.* | | Interpolation from Mt |
| | 13. Ach, mein Sinn | New (Weise) used in context |
| 14. *Petrus, der nicht denkt zurück [end of Pontifices]* | | |
| 15. Christus, der uns selig macht | | |
| 16. *Da führeten sie Jesum . . . mein Reich nicht von dannen.* | | |
| 17. Ach großer König, groß zu allen Zeiten [2x] | | |
| 18. *Da sprach Pilatus zu ihm . . . geißelte ihn.* | | |
| | **19. Betrachte, meine Seel** | Brockes (GS), used in place |

Table 4. *Cont.*

| Gospel text/Chorale interpolations | Free poetic interpolations | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| | **20. Erwäge** | Brockes (GS), used in place |
| 21. *Und die Kriegsknechte flochten. . .  ihn losließe.* | | |
| | 22. Durch dein Gefängnis | New (Postel) used in place |
| 23. *Die Jüden aber . . . auf Ebräisch: Golgatha* | | |
| | **24. Eilt, ihr angefochtnen Seelen** | Brockes (TZ/GS), used in place |
| 25. *Allda kreuzigten sie ihn . . . das habe ich geschrieben.* | | |
| 26. In meines Herzens Grunde [approx. end of Pilatus] | | |
| 27. *Die Kriegsknechte aber . . . das ist deine Mutter!* | | |
| 28. Er nahm alles wohl in acht | | |
| 29. *Und von Stund an . . . Es ist vollbracht!* | | |
| | 30. Es ist vollbracht! | New (Postel?) used in place |
| 31. *Und neiget das Haupt und verschied* | | |
| | **32. Mein teurer Heiland** | Brockes (TZ/GS), used in place |
| 33. *Und der Vorhang im Tempel . . . von obenan bis untenaus.* | | Interpolation from Mk [later Mt] |
| | **34. Mein Herz, in dem die ganze Welt** | Brockes (GS), used in place |
| | **35. Zerfließe, mein Herze** | Brockes (GS), used in place |
| 36. *Die Jüden aber . . . sie gestochen haben* | | |
| 37. O hilf, Christe, Gottes Sohn [end of Crux] | | |
| 38. *Darnach bat Pilatum Joseph . . .  das Grab nahe war* | | |
| | **39. Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine** | Brockes (TZ), used in place [ending] |
| 40. Ach Herr, lass dein lieb Engelein [end of Sepulcrum] | | |


12
Arie „Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden"
aus einer Marcus-Passion von Telemann.
Beilage 2 (zu S.364).
(Bei den Ritornellen geht eine Flöte in der Octave mit.)
Violini unisoni.
Viola.
Basso.
Continuo.
p
1. Mich vom Stri_cke meiner Sünden zu ent_bin_den, wird mein Gott gebunden, wird mein Gott, mein Gott ge_bun_
2. Es muss mei_ner Sünden Flecken zu be_de_cken ei_gnes Blut ihn färben, ei_gnes Blut, ei_gnes Blut ihn fär_

Example 1. Aria from G. P. Telemann, *St. Mark Passion* (1723), as printed by Philipp Spitta


f
f
p
den. Von der La - ster
ben. Ja es will ein
Eiterbeu_len mich zu hei_len lässt er sich ver_wunden, verwun _ den, lässt er
ewig Le_ben mir zu ge_ben selbst das Le_ben ster - - - ben, selbst das
f
f
sich ver_wun _ den.
Le_ben ster _ ben.

Example 1. *Cont.*

In his 1723 passion Telemann moved this text, originally the first number of the *Brockes Passion*, from its opening position to a spot a little later in the narrative where there is an explicit reference to Jesus's capture. Its poetic metaphor ("Mich vom Stricken meiner Sünden zu entbinden / Wird mein Gott gebunden") is thus treated more literally as a commentary on a specific event in the narrative; Telemann opens the 1723 work instead with a chorale stanza.

Telemann's 1724 *St. Luke Passion* (Table 3) follows a similar pattern, drawing on Christian Friedrich Hunold's influential poetic passion *Der blutige und sterbende Jesus* from circa 1704 for its interpolated movements. Once again a poetic passion oratorio supplied a substantial fraction of the aria texts; four more are from an unknown source, and one is from the infamous *St. John Passion* with aria texts by Christian Heinrich Postel, a work sometimes attributed to Händel. Telemann probably knew the Postel aria he used from Hunold, who printed three of Postel's aria texts with his libretto.[34] But there is, of course, a Bach connection here: Postel's work was the source of "Durch dein Gefängnis, Gottes Sohn" BWV 245/22, used at the center of the *St. John Passion*, and possibly indirectly also the origin of "Es ist vollbracht" BWV 245/30.[35] Both Bach and Telemann thus drew on this passion text in 1724. We do not know how Bach and his librettist learned the Postel text: from a libretto, a copy of the Hamburg setting,

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or even by Handel." A footnote in the German original (2:364n85) adds: "Nonetheless, to provide the opportunity for such a comparison, the setting of the text 'Mich vom Stricke meiner Sünden' from Telemann's St. Mark Passion (B♭ major) is given as Music Example 2. I choose it because in the other passions this text is composed as a chorus, and thus cannot be easily compared with Bach's aria." This piece represents the only complete movement known to survive from any of Telemann's liturgical passions before 1728.

[34] The Postel text Telemann employed, the aria "Bebet, ihr Berge! zerberstet, ihr Hügel," is in fact included in the published version of Hunold's libretto, which was evidently Telemann's source, so he did not need direct access to Postel's complete text. Three aria texts are reproduced (and the attribution to Postel made) in Christian Friedrich Hunold, *Der blutige und sterbende Jesus*, printed in his *Theatralische, galante und geistliche Gedichte* (Hamburg: G. Liebernickel, 1706), 34–35. This is pointed out by Scheitler, *Deutschsprachige Oratorienlibretti*, 188.

[35] The work has been the subject of decades of scholarly debate. There is an overview and movement-by-movement discussion in Scheitler, *Deutschsprachige Oratorienlibretti*, 101–9. The latest entries are a forceful reclamation of the work for Händel in Rainer Kleinertz, "Zur Frage der Autorschaft von Händels *Johannespassion*," *Händel-Jahrbuch* 49 (2003): 341–76, and "Handel's *St John Passion:* A Fresh Look at the Evidence from Mattheson's *Critica Musica*," *The Consort* 61 (2005): 59–80; and a much more convincing argument that Reinhard Keiser is the "world-famous man" referred to by Mattheson in his notorious criticism of the work, and its likely composer, in John H. Roberts, "Placing 'Handel's *St. John Passion*,'" *Händel-Jahrbuch* 51 (2005): 153–77. The context of the work was evidently the presentation of St. John passions at Hamburg's St. Jacobi Church from approximately 1696/97.

or some other way. It is not out of the question that Bach came into contact with it through Hunold himself in Cöthen.

Telemann's 1722, 1723, and 1724 passion settings represent liturgical gospel oratorios that make use of aria texts from the *Brockes Passion* (or Hunold's poetic passion) presented essentially intact and largely in their original places in the narrative. The context is different—a biblical setting rather than an entirely poetic oratorio—so presumably the theological and even the esthetic perspective is distinct. But it is not difficult to see Telemann's use of these texts as a response to the popularity of this kind of religious poetry in general and to the fondness for Brockes's poems in particular, even when liturgical requirements did not permit the complete presentation of a poetic passion.

The appeal of Brockes's passion text is also reflected in J. S. Bach's *St. John Passion*, which uses numerous texts by Brockes either essentially intact or adapted (Table 4). It is widely accepted that Bach's work and the *Brockes Passion* are fundamentally different in construction and theological outlook.[36] It is also typical to view the text of the *St. John Passion* as heterogeneous—as a mixture drawn from various sources.[37] But it is also possible to see the *St. John Passion* as unified in its initial conception and as fundamentally a Brockes setting.

There are many points of contact between BWV 245 and the Brockes text. First, the allegorical characters so central to Brockes's passion, Daughter Zion and the Faithful Soul, evidently appear in the *St. John Passion* in no. 24, "Eilt, ihr angefochtnen Seelen," and no. 32, "Mein teurer Heiland"—at least, that is the implication of their adaptation from Brockes's dialogues cast for these voices.[38] We do not know if Bach and his librettist retained the characters in adapting these texts, but it seems likely: individual texts might be offered by unnamed characters, but dialogues almost certainly involve particular figures, allegorical or otherwise.

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[36] The former, as a biblical oratorio, conformed to the typical requirements of the Good Friday liturgy in Leipzig in Bach's time and may well reflect a conservative theological climate. Brockes's nonliturgical poetic oratorio provides many more interpolations, including some sung by characters in the drama; offers extended scenes of commentary labeled "Soliloquia"; and takes a different theological approach. That different outlook is, in fact, a principal thesis of Elke Axmacher's discussion of Bach's *St. John Passion* BWV 245, in which she is at pains to distinguish the two works, repeatedly emphasizing the ways in which the work differs from the *Brockes Passion*. *Aus Liebe will mein Heyland sterben*, 116–48. Other writers also point out the distinction, though less stridently. Michael Marissen, for example, contrasts the commentary in Bach's passions as exegesis, on the one hand, with that in the *Brockes Passion* as inviting the listener's participation in the narrative, on the other. *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's* St. John Passion (New York: Oxford, 1998), 47n20.

[37] Hans-Joachim Schulze has called it a "Florilegium," a careful selection from among the best available texts of the age. "Bemerkungen zum zeit- und gattungsgeschichtlichen Kontext von Johann Sebastian Bachs Passionen," in *Johann Sebastian Bachs historischer Ort*, Bach-Studien 10, ed. Reinhard Szeskus (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1991), 205.

[38] On the consequences of these adaptations, see Daniel R. Melamed, "The Double Chorus in J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* BWV 244," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57 (2004): 3–50. It

These movements possibly aside, named characters do not offer commentary in BWV 245 as Jesus, Peter, Judas, and Maria do in the *Brockes Passion*, but there is a suggestion of first-person reflection in the *St. John Passion*'s no. 13, "Ach, mein Sinn." That aria was sung in Bach's 1724 performance by the principal tenor, not the bass singer who delivered Peter's words. But its text, from Christian Weise's "Der weinende Petrus," can be read as a first-person lament of Peter, at least in its original context. Bach was capable of putting an aria in Peter's voice; in 1726 and after, in the equivalent spot in the anonymous *St. Mark Passion*, Bach assigned the mournful aria "Wein, ach wein itzt um die Wette" to the tenor who presented Peter's words, not the tenor concertist/Evangelist. This tendency toward direct expression by characters is realized in the *St. Mark Passion* and hinted at in Bach's *St. John*, and it most likely reflects the influence of poetic oratorios like the *Brockes Passion*.

Another feature of "Ach, mein Sinn" also points to the influence of the *Brockes Passion*. The middle portion of the text contemplates inviting mountains to fall on the speaker, and the 1725 replacement no. $13^{\text{II}}$ "Zerschmettert mich" invokes the same image. This is a reference to scripture, but not from John's gospel. Rather it is from Luke; here the poetic portion of the libretto refers to a different narration of the passion story.

### *NO. 13 (1724), OPENING*

| | |
|---|---|
| Ach, mein Sinn, | O, my disposition, |
| Wo willt du endlich hin, | Where do you at last intend to go; |
| Wo soll ich mich erquicken? | Where shall I restore myself? |
| Bleib ich hier, | Shall I stay here, |
| Oder wünsch ich mir | Or do I wish |
| Berg und Hügel auf den Rücken? | Mountains and hills [to fall] upon my back? |
| | (trans. M. Marissen) |

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is also possible that some of the nondialogic pieces in BWV 245 were conceived in the voices of these characters, particularly Daughter Zion, but we have no original text sources to tell us, and the music sources of BWV 245 do not mention the characters.

*NO. $13^{II}$ (1725), OPENING*

| | |
|---|---|
| Zerschmettert mich, ihr Felsen und ihr Hügel, | Crush me, you rocks and you hills, |
| Wirf, Himmel, deinen Strahl auf mich! | Hurl, heaven, your thunderbolt upon me! |

*LUKE 23:30*

| | |
|---|---|
| Dann werden sie anfangen, zu sagen zu den Bergen: Fallet über uns! und zu den Hügeln: Decket uns! | Then they will begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us! And to the hills, Cover us! |

Borrowings from other gospels are a prominent feature of BWV 245, reflected not only in this aria, but also in the narrative itself. Peter's scene (no. 12c) incorporates words from Matthew 26:75 ending with "und weinete bitterlich," the cue for "Ach, mein Sin" (and in later versions for other pieces). The chorale stanza that follows the aria further refers to a passage from Luke's gospel.[39] Just after Jesus's death (no. 33), Bach and his collaborator originally inserted lines from Mark 15:38 that describe the rending of the temple veil and other events. In later versions this was further expanded by the substitution of most of the parallel passage from Matthew 27:51–52 that describes the scene in even more detail.[40] Listeners in the eighteenth century were thoroughly familiar with the tradition of the so-called Evangelienharmonie, a narration that combined features of all four gospels; the most famous exemplar was the *summa passionis* of Bugenhagen.[41] But in the early eighteenth century the conflation of gospels made itself most strongly felt in poetic passion texts like Brockes's, whose title page refers prominently to its construction "aus den IV. Evangelisten." Brockes's use of material from all the gospels was probably one of the models for this characteristic feature of Bach's *St. John Passion*.

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[39] Alfred Dürr, *Johann Sebastian Bach's* St. John Passion: *Genesis, Transmission, and Meaning*, trans. Alfred Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38, connects the chorale line "Jesu, blicke mich auch an" with Luke 22:61, "Und der Herr wandte sich um und sah Petrus an."

[40] These passages are the cues in the *Brockes Passion* for extensive commentary. The first is the occasion for a Soliloquio for Peter consisting of two recitatives and two arias (followed by a chorale) that emphasizes the themes of lament and remorse. The second triggers an aria ("Brich, brüllender Abgrund") that concentrates on earthquake imagery, and then (after some more narration) a large complex of concluding numbers that treat the cataclysms and the theme of lamenting.

[41] Dürr, *Johann Sebastian Bach's* St. John Passion, 32, suggests that the tendency to listen in a synoptic manner and the desire to provide opportunities for the composition of affective commentary prompted the use of borrowed gospel material in BWV 245.

The most important evidence of the *Brockes Passion*'s influence on the *St. John Passion* lies in the sheer number and placement of its poems in Bach's setting. In all, eight poetic movements are used or adapted from the *Brockes Passion* out of a total of twelve (thirteen counting the problematic no. 22 "Durch dein Gefängnis," a free poetic text that Bach set to a chorale melody in a four-part cantional-style harmonization). These Brockes borrowings appear in six of the ten or eleven places selected for poetic commentary, including the final poetic number.[42] This is such a high proportion that we can fruitfully view BWV 245 as a Brockes setting using John's narrative. Each of the borrowed poetic texts is used in its original context except the adapted opening number, "Von den Stricken meiner Sünden mich zu entbinden . . . wird mein Heil gebunden," which was moved later in the story, where its metaphor of binding is literally suggested by events: "und die Diener der Jüden nahmen Jesum und bunden ihn" (and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound him). Aside from the new opening number supplied to replace it (a poetic Psalm paraphrase) there are only three new arias, four if you count "Durch dein Gefängnis." The use of textual sources other than Brockes has typically suggested a view of the *St. John Passion* as an assemblage most notable for its diversity, but it is equally compelling to see the Brockes texts as the starting point and as the basis of the work's interpolated movements.

This view is supported by the likelihood that the arias drawn from elsewhere were each calculated departures from the Brockes model. No. 13 "Ach, mein Sinn," which replaces Brockes's four-movement Soliloquium for Peter (Recit-Aria-Recit-Aria), might have had local significance: Its text by Christian Weise is reported to have been written to fit a composition by the Thomascantor Sebastian Knüpfer and was published in Leipzig.[43] At least one (and perhaps two) of the other non-Brockes interpolations are from the *St. John Passion* with poetic texts by Postel. No. 22 "Durch dein Gefängnis," inserted to comment on a detail (Pilate's contemplation of releasing Jesus) from John's narrative not taken up by Brockes, is certainly from that work. The aria no. 30 "Es is vollbracht" does not itself appear in the Postel passion, but Friedrich Smend observed that its poetic organization matches that of Postel's aria in the equivalent place, and it may be closely related.[44] Brockes's text at this point is a strophic poem, "O Donner-Wort," each of whose two stanzas ends with the words "Es ist vollbracht."

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[42] This analysis suggests that chorales are used in this work largely for structural articulation, marking the beginning or end of each of the two parts, and closing off each of the actus. Only a fraction of them—nos. 3, 11, 17, and 28—are used in the manner of free poems to comment on moments within an actus.

[43] Weise reported that he had constructed the text to fit an Intrada composed by his friend Sebastian Knüpfer. Knüpfer was already Thomascantor by the time of Weise's arrival at Leipzig University in 1660, and it is likely that the two men knew each other from there. *Der grünen Jugend nothwendige Gedanken* (Leipzig: Johann Fritzsche, 1675), 352. Weise was in Leipzig circa 1660–68, Knüpfer from 1657. George Buelow, "Weise, Christian" and "Knüpfer, Sebastian," *New Grove Dictionary.*

*FROM THE POSTEL PASSION*

O grosses Werk,
Im Paradies schon angefangen!
O Riesenstärk',
Die Christus lässt den Sieg erlangen!
Dass nach dem Streit in Siegespracht
Er sprechen kann:
Es ist vollbracht!

*BWV 245/30*

Es ist vollbracht!
O Trost vor die gekränkten Seelen!
Die Trauernacht
Läßt nun die letzte Stunde zählen.
Der Held aus Juda siegt mit Macht
Und schließt den Kampf.
Es ist vollbracht!

*BROCKES PASSION AT "ES IST VOLLBRACHT"*

1. O Donner-Wort! o schrecklich Schreyen
O Thon / den Tod und Hölle scheuen!
Der Ihre Macht zu Schanden macht.
Schall! der Stein und Felsen theilet /
Wovor der Teuffel bebt und heulet /
Wovor der düstre Abgrund kracht!
Es ist vollbracht!

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[44] Smend suggested that Bach derived "Es ist vollbracht" from Postel's original and implied that the new text was superior. *Bach in Köthen*, trans. John Page (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1985), 147ff. We should also consider the possibility that the aria in BWV 245 represents a second stanza of the original text, which we know only from the manuscript score that transmits the musical setting, D-B Mus. ms. 9001. Many of the poetic texts in the Postel Passion resemble stanzas of the kind of strophic "aria" common in Hamburg passions in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, particularly in their metrical organization and stanza construction. (Recall Bach's telling decision to set "Durch dein Gefängnis" to a chorale melody, with its implication of strophic construction, in BWV 245.) So it is possible that this aria was not only inspired by, but also adopted from, Postel's material.

2. O seeligs Wort! o heilsam Schreyen!
Nun darffst du Sünder nicht mehr scheuen
Des Teuffels und der Höllen Macht.
O schall! der unsern Schaden heilet /
Der uns die Seeligkeit ertheilet /
Die GOtt uns längst hat zugedacht!
Es ist vollbracht.

The similarity of the *St. John Passion*'s "Es ist vollbracht" to both Postel's and Brockes's texts is at least as striking as the substitution of a new poem. The one in BWV 245 is not far from the Brockes model.

These three new texts ("Ach, mein Sinn," "Durch dein Gefängnis," and "Es ist vollbracht") plus the fourth, no. 9 "Ich folge dir gleichfalls," which also responds to a detail not mentioned by Brockes, can be viewed as exceptions. Most of the aria texts in Bach's *St. John Passion* are from Brockes, and it appears that he and his collaborator chose texts from the *Brockes Passion* to fit John's gospel.[45] This perspective has been hinted at before. Philipp Spitta took John's narrative to be Bach's starting point. Regarding the work as having been composed in a hurry in Cöthen, he asserted that Bach had turned "naturally" to Brockes's text for commentary.[46] Friedrich Smend took the position that "for the production of the libretto Bach used the poetry of . . . Brockes."[47] Each writer emphasizes the changes of language and context and the distinctiveness of BWV 245, though. One commentator did consider BWV 245 fundamentally a Brockes setting: Albert Schweitzer wrote that the work was "founded on" Brockes's poem and that Bach "substitutes text of the fourth Gospel" in place of Brockes's "bombastic versified narrative."[48] This view goes a step further in suggesting that Bach started with the complete Brockes text, including its paraphrased narrative, and "substituted" gospel text.

I think Schweitzer was correct, at least about Brockes as the starting point. Bach and his anonymous collaborator found a way to make use of the *Brockes Passion*'s poetry even as they adapted and reworked it in a new (gospel) context. They moved its opening text to a location where its imagery was more literal, allowing a new exordium (no. 1 "Herr, unser Herrscher") to set the tone. In two significant places they turned to other sources: to a poem with a Leipzig connection (no. 13 "Ach, mein Sinn") in place of Brockes's long Soliloquium for Peter, and possibly to another passion of Hamburg origin in place of Brockes's strophic aria on the words "Es ist vollbracht." In two places in which Brockes did not provide commentary they supplied no. 22 "Durch dein Gefängnis" from that same Hamburg passion and no. 9 "Ich folge dir gleichfalls" from an unknown source to amplify the commentary. This raises the question whether the *St. John Passion*, though admittedly different in outlook from the *Brockes Passion*, really contrasts as strongly as commentators have suggested. The many revisions to the borrowed Brockes texts—fundamental, in some commentators' views—actually makes the choice all the more striking; Bach and his librettist stuck largely with the *Brockes Passion* even though its poetry evidently required substantial changes for the new context. The critical focus on revisions and differences has come at the cost of recognizing the fundamental nature of BWV 245—it is a Brockes passion.[49]

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[45] It is also possible that the Brockes adaptations and other texts predate Bach's use of the material; we simply do not know.

[46] *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 2:520.

[47] *Bach in Köthen*, 143.

[48] The perspective here is striking: Bach begins with the Brockes text and "substitutes" the gospel narrative. Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach*, 2 vols. (London: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911), 2:174.

It is worth recalling that Telemann did the same thing at almost the same time. His first two passions for Hamburg drew on Brockes's poetry, just as BWV 245 did. In 1722 Telemann exclusively used texts by Brockes. In 1723 he also borrowed from Brockes and moved the original opening text to connect directly with the narration,[50] in addition to incorporating four poems from other sources. In this regard the outlines of Telemann's 1723 *St. Matthew Passion* and Bach's 1724 *St. John* are strikingly similar; in fact, it is difficult to imagine a closer parallel.[51] I suspect that Telemann and Bach were each motivated by the pervasive influence and wide popularity of Brockes's text. Telemann began his tenure in Hamburg with two liturgical passions that drew on Brockes, then turned to another (even older) poetic text by Hunold. Bach did the same, drawing on Brockes in 1724 and 1725 with the two earliest versions of the *St. John Passion*, then indirectly relying on it again in 1727 in the *St. Matthew*. Even the work he presented in 1726—the Hamburg *St. Mark Passion*—was eventually brought around to the Brockes model many years later with the use of Händel's arias. Bach's own 1731 *St. Mark Passion* BWV 247, whose poetic texts were newly constructed to fit existing music, departs most significantly in this regard from Bach's other passion repertory. With its domination by chorale interpolations, it is clearly a different kind of setting. It may represent Bach's only departure from the Brockes text on which he otherwise relied so heavily throughout his career.

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[49] Bach's 1725 revisions (version II) affect both Brockes and non-Brockes movements. His revisions around 1730 (version III) restore the Brockes pieces cancelled in version II but remove others. The last version (IV, 1749) restores most of the original movements; its revised texts involve both Brockes and non-Brockes movements.

[50] Mark 14:1–2: "Und die Hohenpriester und Schriftgelehrten suchten, wie sie ihn mit List griffen und töteten. Sie sprachen aber: Ja nicht auf das Fest, daß nicht ein Aufruhr im Volk werde!"

[51] See the brief but insightful comparison in Günther Massenkeil, *Oratorium und Passion*, part 1, *Handbuch der musikalischen Gattungen* 10/1 (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1998), 210. Carl von Winterfeld, *Der evangelische Kirchengesang und sein Verhältnis zur Kunst des Tonsatzes*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1847), 368–72, makes a detailed comparison of Bach's BWV 245 and other composers' Brockes settings.

## Appendix: Selective Chronology of the *Brockes Passion* and Related Works

| | |
|---|---|
| c. 1704 | Hunold/Menantes, *Der blutige und sterbende Jesus* |
| 1712 | R. Keiser, *Brockes Passion*, first performance (Hamburg) / first publication of text |
| 1713 | *Brockes Passion* revised text published |
| 1714 | Keiser, *Auserlesene Soliloquia* (*Brockes Passion* excerpts) |
| 1715 | *Brockes Passion* text published in *Bethlehemitischer Kinder-Mord* |
| 1716 | G. P. Telemann, *Brockes Passion*, Frankfurt premiere |
| 1716 | G. F. Händel, *Brockes Passion*, likely Hamburg premiere |
| c. 1717–18 | Telemann, *Brockes Passion*, Hamburg/Augsburg/Leipzig performances |
| 1718 | J. Mattheson, *Brockes Passion*, Hamburg premiere |
| 1720 | J. S. Bach's visit to Hamburg |
| 1722 | Telemann, *St. Matthew Passion* TVWV 5:7 |
| 1723 | Telemann, *St. Mark Passion* TVWV 5:8 |
| 1724 | Telemann, *St. Luke Passion* TVWV 5:9 |
| 1724 | Bach, *St. John Passion* BWV 245 (version I) |
| 1725 | Bach, *St. John Passion* BWV 245 (version II) |
| 1725 | Henrici/Picander, "Erbauliche Gedanken . . . in einem Oratorio entworffen" |
| c. 1721–26 | J. B. C. Freislich, *Brockes Passion* (Sondershausen) |
| 1727 | Bach, *St. Matthew Passion* BWV 244 |
| 1727 | Keiser, *Brockes Passion*, Sondershausen performance (under Freislich) |
| 1729 | *Brockes Passion* performance, Leipzig Neukirche (composer unknown) |
| c. 1730–37 | Keiser, *Brockes Passion*, Erfurt Barfüßerkirche |
| 1746/47 | Bach's copy of Händel, *Brockes Passion* (completed by Bammler) |
| late 1740s | Bach's performance of *St. Mark Passion* w/ mvts. from Händel, *Brockes Passion* |

# Drama and Discourse

## *The Form and Function of Chorale Tropes in Bach's Oratorios*

Markus Rathey

### Musical Drama in Time and Space

Classical drama in the Aristotelian tradition demanded unity of time and space. Drama theorists in the eighteenth century emphasized this repeatedly in their treatises. The Leipzig poet Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766) pointed out that tragedy had to avoid leaps in time and that the time in the dramatic narrative and in the action onstage must be congruent:

> Die Einheit der Zeit ist das andere, das der Tragödie unentbehrlich ist. Die Fabel eines Helden-Gedichtes kann viel Monate dauren . . . das macht, sie wird nur gelesen: Aber die Fabel eines Schau-Spieles, die mit lebendigen Personen in etlichen Stunden lebendig vorgestellet wird, kann nur einen Umlauf der Sonnen, wie Aristoteles spricht, das ist einen Tag dauren.[1]
>
> The unity of time is the other thing that is essential for the tragedy. The narrative of an epos can take several months . . . because it is only read: but the narrative of a drama, which is presented with living persons in several hours, can only take one circle of the sun, as Aristotle says, that is one day.

The same is true, Gottsched continued, for the unity of space:

> Zum dritten gehört zur Tragödie die Einheit des Ortes. Die Zuschauer bleiben auf einer Stelle sitzen, folglich müssen auch die spielenden Personen alle auf einem Platze bleiben.
>
> Thirdly is the unity of space essential for a tragedy. The members of the audience sit in one place; therefore, all acting persons have to stay at one place, as well.

Sulzer's *Theorie der schönen Künste* (1778), one of the fundamental works of aesthetics in the second half of the eighteenth century, reiterated this demand when it stated:

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[1] Johann Christoph Gottsched, "Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst vor die Deutschen," in *Schriften zur Literatur*, ed. Horst Steinmetz (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972), 163.

> Natürlicher Weise ist die Handlung auf eine gewisse Kürze der Zeit eingeschränkt. . . . Daher ist die Einrichtung des Drama gekommen, die überall beobachtet wird, dass ein paar Stunden hinlänglich sind, die ganze Handlung zu sehen.
>
> Naturally, the action is limited to a certain span of time. . . . Therefore, the conception of drama came into being, which can be observed everywhere, that a few hours are enough to see the entire action.

Similarly, Sulzer says of the unity of space:

> Soll die Handlung natürlich vorgestellt werden, so muss sie so beschaffen sein, dass auch in dem Orte, wo wir die handelnden Personen sehen, nichts widersprechendes sei. . . . Man muss eine sehr genaue Übereinkunft der Dinge, die geschehen, und der Orte, da sie geschehen, beobachten.[2]
>
> If the action shall be presented in a natural way, it has to be of a kind that nothing contrary [= not natural] shall be at that place, where we see the acting characters. . . . One has to observe the exact congruence of the things that happen and the places where they happen.

Essential for both Gottsched and Sulzer were the credibility and the authenticity of the dramatic action onstage. If the drama was a reflection of reality, the means used had to conform to reality, as well.

The oratorio of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries does not necessarily conform to this ideal, even though contemporary writers like Johann Gottfried Walther (1684–1748) emphasize its relationship to musical drama and opera. The texts of German Protestant oratorios combined dramatic and epic elements, which allowed for a freer disposition of the temporal structure of the text than contemporary drama. This is also true for Johann Sebastian Bach's oratorios, which grew out of the tradition of the protestant *historia*[3] and which interpolate the biblical text with pious reflections in arias and recitatives and with chorale stanzas. This created a three-layered texture of biblical narrative, reflections of the individual (arias, recitatives), and meditations by the congregation (hymns). Karol Berger has recently suggested the extent to which this multilayered fabric in the *St. Matthew Passion* differs from contemporary opera (which, as musical drama, had to conform to the Aristotelian ideals). Even though he focuses in his observations on one work, we can generalize his observations for all of Bach's oratorios: "The dramaturgy of the Passion closely resembles that of the contemporary *opera seria* in its practice of punctuating the action, set as simple recitative, with reflective and musically fully developed numbers, mostly arias, in which the action halts to allow the passion aroused by the most recent event to be expressed. However, whereas in an opera the job of passionate reflections is left to the protagonists of the drama, in the Passion the reflection comes from outside."[4] The reflections leave the unity of time and space intact and provide, to use Berger's terms, a "timeless moment of contemplation."[5] The librettos for Bach's oratorios violate the basic rules of classical drama to provide reflection from beyond the time (and the implied space) of the narrative. And the reflections provided justify this technique because they are presented from the perspective of the believer—an observer who shares the observing position with the devout listener.

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[2] Sulzer, "Drama," 275.

[3] For the genre of the *historia* see Bernd Baselt, "Actus musicus und Historie um 1700 in Mitteldeutschland," *Hallesche Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft*, Ser. G1 (1968/8): 77–103.

Bach employs not only arias and recitatives in these reflective moments, but uses hymns, as well. However, while the arias focus on the perspective of the individual, the hymns provide the perspective of the Christian congregation. Berger suggests that "the chorales are the collective voice of the several generations of Lutheran faithful up to and including Bach's own congregation, and thus they represent the objective, authoritative utterance of the church."[6] In other words, breaking the rules of classical drama—which do not necessarily apply to a liturgical composition such as Bach's oratorios, but which still formed the aesthetic background for the reception of dramatic or quasidramatic pieces in Bach's time—served a dramatic purpose that included the listeners (as individuals and as a group) as part of the action.

A connection between two of these layers—the individual and the reflection of the community—is drawn in a type of chorale setting, the chorale trope, which combines a newly written text with a traditional hymn. The function of these settings is significantly different from other large-scale hymn settings in Bach's oratorios, which occur only at the beginning and the end of sections (like the framing movements of the 1725 version of the *St. John Passion*) and which are not integrated into the dramatic development. Chorale tropes appear at crucial moments, mostly at points where the doubt of the individual, ignited by the biblical narrative, must be overcome by the faith of the congregation. The individual and the community cease to be mere spectators and engage in the dramatic action themselves.

A chorale trope is the combination of a hymn with a free poem or a biblical text. The chorale can either sound simultaneously with a second text (a simultaneous trope), or the single lines of the hymn may be interrupted by the other text (an alternating trope).[7] Bach used this kind of polytextuality in approximately seventy-eight movements, from his time in Mühlhausen to the middle of the 1730s. Bach did not invent this technique; rather, he inherited it from the seventeenth century, when composers like Andreas Hammerschmidt (1611/12–1675), Wolfgang Carl Briegel (1626–1712), and members of Bach's own family used it extensively.[8] However, even though Bach borrows a historically established compositional model, it is remarkable how extensively he employs it in his vocal works. Different types of chorale tropes can be generally differentiated: some of them combine a hymn with a recitative, some with an aria, whereas others juxtapose the chorale with a motet-like texture. All of these types occur in Bach's oratorios.

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[4] Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 106.

[5] Ibid., 106.

[6] Ibid., 102.

[7] A larger study of Bach's chorale tropes is in preparation by the author.

## The *St. John Passion*

The only combinations of aria and chorale in Bach's oratorios occur in the various versions of the *St. John Passion* bwv 245.[9] The thirty-second movement of the passion layers the text "Mein teurer Heiland" (My precious Savior) with a stanza from the hymn "Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod." Bach added a second chorale trope during his revisions in 1725 when he inserted the aria "Himmel reiße, Welt erbebe" (Heaven, tear apart, world, quake) bwv 245/11$^{+}$, which features another stanza from the same hymn.[10] Even though both movements are arias with additional chorale layers, Bach's approach is significantly different.

The *aria con coro* "Mein teurer Heiland" from 1724 follows immediately after the death of Jesus, "Und neiget das Haupt und verschied" (And bowed his head and departed this life). The libretto layers two texts: the chorale and the words of the bass inquiring about the salvific meaning of Christ's death. The text of the aria layer is, as Alfred Dürr has pointed out,[11] based on an *aria à 2* by Barthold Heinrich Brockes (1680–1747).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Tochter Zion* | Sind meiner Seelen tieffe Wunden | Are the deep wounds of my soul |
| | Durch deine Wunden nun verbunden? | Now dressed by his wounds? |
| | Kan ich durch deine Quaal und Sterben | Can I, through his suffering and dying, |

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[8] See Friedhelm Krummacher, "Traditionen der Choraltropierung in Bachs frühem Vokalwerk," in *Das Frühwerk Johann Sebastian Bachs. Kolloquium veranstaltet vom Institut für Musikwissenschaft der Universität Rostock*, ed. Karl Heller and Hans-Joachim Schulze (Cologne: Studio, 1995), 217–43.

[9] For the versions of the *St. John Passion* see Daniel R. Melamed, *Hearing Bach's Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 66–77; and Arthur Mendel, *Neue Bach Ausgabe* II/4, Kritischer Bericht.

[10] Regarding the genesis and chronology of this movement see Markus Rathey, "Weimar, Gotha oder Leipzig. Zur Chronologie der Arie 'Himmel, reiße' in der zweiten Fassung der Johannes-Passion (bwv 245/11+)," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 91 (2005): 291–300.

[11] Alfred Dürr, *St John Passion: Genesis, Transmission, and Meaning*, trans. Alfred Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 47.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Nunmehr das Paradieß ererben? | Now inherit Paradise? |
| | Ist aller Welt Erlösung nah? | Is the salvation of the world close now? |
| *Gläubige Seele* | Dieß sind der Tochter Zion Fragen; | These are the questions of the Daughter Zion; |
| | Weil JEsus nun nichts kan vor Schmertzen sagen / So neiget er sein Haupt / und wincket: Ja! | Because Jesus cannot say anything for pain, He bows his head and indicates: Yes! |

Whereas Brockes juxtaposes the questions of the Daughter Zion and the answers by the Faithful Soul, Bach's libretto assigns both the questions and the answers to the bass voice, who does not represent the Daughter Zion. Bach's libretto introduces a chorale stanza as a partner in the dialogue, sung in a four-part setting by the chorus and leading the bass from questions to the answers at the end. The chorale is the thirty-fourth stanza of the passion hymn "Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod," a hymn also used in movements 14 (stanza 10) and 28 (stanza 20).

The two texts highlight the meaning of Christ's death from different angles:

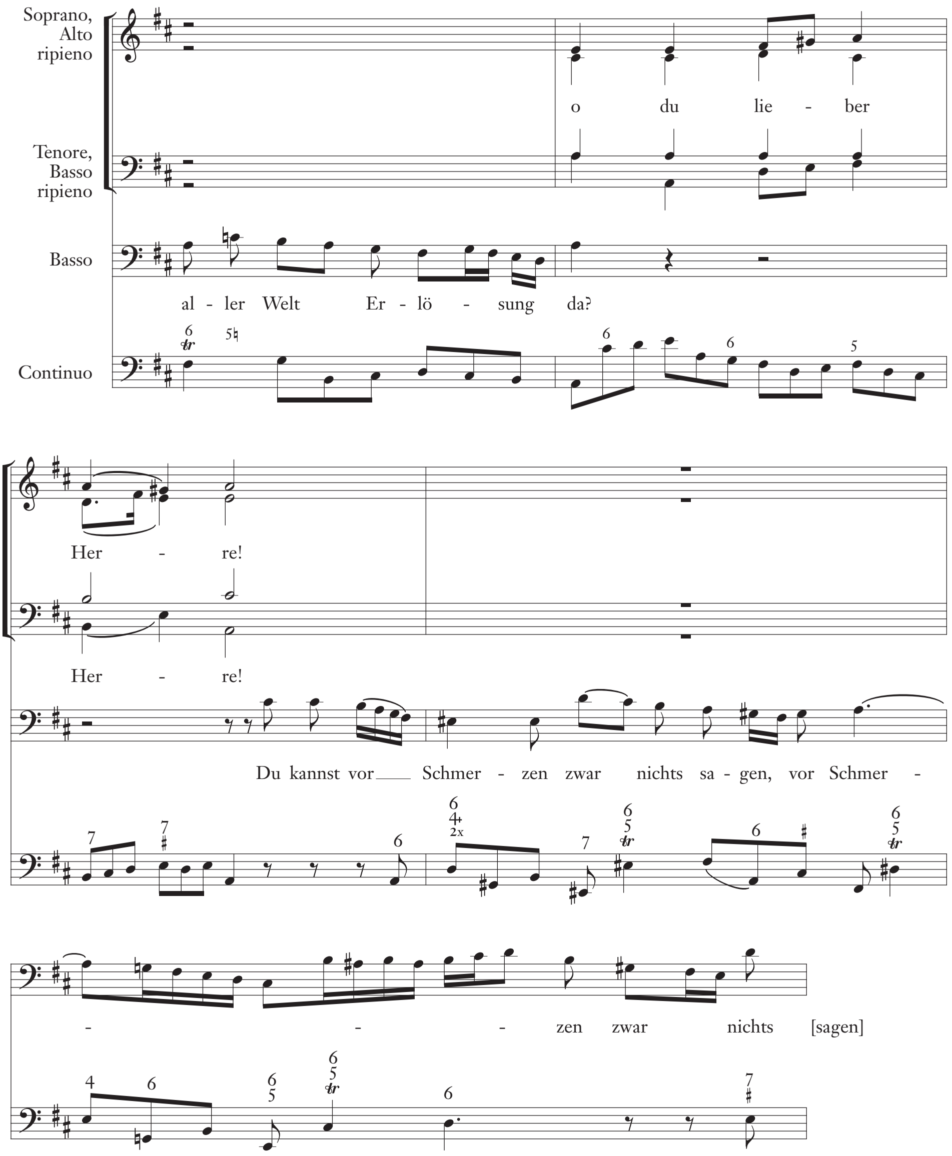
| | |
|---|---|
| Mein teurer Heiland, laß dich fragen, | My precious Savior. let me ask you: |
| **Jesu, der du warest tot,** | **Jesus, you who were dead,** |
| Da du nunmehr ans Kreuz geschlagen | Since you were nailed to the cross |
| Und selbst gesaget: Es ist vollbracht, | And have yourself said, "It is accomplished," |
| **Lebest nun ohn Ende,** | **[But] now lives without end;** |
| Bin ich vom Sterben frei gemacht? | Have I been made free from death? |
| **In der letzten Todesnot,** | **In the final throes of death,** |
| **Nirgend mich hinwende** | **[I] turn myself nowhere** |
| Kann ich durch deine Pein und Sterben | Can I through your pain and death |
| Das Himmelreich ererben? | Inherit the kingdom of heaven? |
| Ist aller Welt Erlösung da? | Is the redemption of all the world here? |
| **Als zu dir der mich versühnt,** | **But to you, who reconciled me,** |
| **O du lieber Herre!** | **O you dear Lord!** |
| Du kannst vor Schmerzen zwar nichts sagen; | You can, in agony, it is true, say nothing; |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Gib mir nur, was du verdient** | **Give me only what you have merited;** |
| Doch neigest du das Haupt | But you bow your head |
| Und sprichst stillschweigend: ja. | And say in silence, "Yes." |
| **Mehr ich nicht begehre!** | **More do I not desire!** |
| | (trans. M. Marissen) |

The aria layer does not look beyond the crucifixion; the bass expresses his lack of understanding and only toward the end comes to the conclusion "but you bow your head and say in silence 'yes.'" The hymn, representing the view of the Christian congregation, is already aware of Christ's resurrection and of the salvific and soteriological meaning of his death. In the course of the aria, the confidence of the congregation, expressed in the hymn, transforms the doubt of the individual (= bass) into understanding. The turning point from questions to answers is the third-to-last line, "Du kannst vor Schmerzen zwar nichts sagen."

In his setting, Bach establishes two distinct sonic layers. The primary layer is the solo for bass, accompanied by the basso continuo. The movement is a typical continuo aria; the thematic material is first presented by the continuo section in a short ritornello and then handed over to the vocalist in m. 3. As a second layer Bach introduces the four-part hymn setting in m. 4. The two layers are kept distinct throughout the movement. They are motivically independent (in contrast to earlier trope arias from Bach's Weimar period, such as BWV 161/1 and 163/5), and the two layers are in different meters, the aria in 12/8 and the chorale in C. For most of the movement, the chorale is sung simultaneously with the soloist; only during the words "O mein lieber Herre" is the chorale heard alone. Bach here highlights the doxological sentence "O you dear Lord" and also marks the turning point from question to answer. This is the very moment at which Brockes's model aria switched characters from the Daughter Zion to the Faithful Soul. Bach's compositional procedure, however, does more; he not only marks the transformation from doubt to understanding, but also inserts a line from the chorale into the text of the aria layer. The listener perceives—for the first time—the two layers in succession and thereby hears them as a single sentence, "O you dear Lord! You can, in agony, it is true, say nothing" (Example 1).

When Bach revised the *St. John Passion* for a performance on Good Friday 1725, he not only replaced the framing movements with two elaborated hymn settings, but also inserted two new arias, one of them a chorale trope, which was placed after movement 11: "Himmel reiße, Welt erbebe" (Heaven tear apart, world quake). The immediate context for the movement is the scourging of Jesus and reaction in the chorale "Wer


Soprano, Alto ripieno
Tenore, Basso ripieno
Basso
Continuo
o du lie - ber
al - ler Welt Er - lö - sung da?
Her - re!
Her - re!
Du kannst vor Schmer - zen zwar nichts sa - gen, vor Schmer -
- - - zen zwar nichts [sagen]

Example 1. J. S. Bach, *St. John Passion* BWV 245/32, mm. 27–32 hat dich so geschlagen" (Who has struck you so?). The aria, again sung by the bass, is combined with the chorale "Jesu deine Passion," the thirty-third stanza of the hymn "Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod." The chorale is now sung by the soprano alone, and in contrast to the continuo texture of "Mein teurer Heiland," Bach furthermore uses two flutes as an accompaniment.[12] The most significant difference between the two trope arias in the 1725 *St. John Passion* is the closer relationship between the two texts in this later addition. The lines of the chorale are integrated into the rhyme scheme of the aria layer, and the two layers conceived as a poetic unity: "Trauerthon" rhymes with "Passion," "Freude" with "leide," and so on. Such a close connection would have been unusual in Bach's earlier cantatas, but it occurs frequently in his chorale cantata cycle,[13] composed in the months before the second version of the *St. John Passion*.

The text of the aria outlines a similar transformation as did movement 32 of the first version:[14]

| | |
|---|---|
| Himmel reiße, Welt erbebe, | Heaven, tear apart; world quake; |
| fallt in meinen Trauerthon, | Fall in with my air of grief; |
| **Jesu, deine Passion,** | **Jesus, your Passion** |
| **Ist mir lauter Freude,** | **is pure joy to me;** |
| Sehet meine Qual und Angst, | Look at my sorrow and fear: |
| was ich, Jesu, mit dir leide! | What I suffer with you, Jesus! |
| Ja, ich zähle deine Schmerzen, | Yes, I do count up your agonies, |
| o zerschlagner Gottessohn, | O shattered Son of God; |
| **Deine Wunden, Kron und Hohn** | **your wounds, crown, and scorn** |
| **Meines Herzens Weide.** | **my heart's pasture.** |
| Ich erwähle Golgata | I choose Golgotha |
| vor dies schnöde Weltgebäude. | Before this vile earthly vault. |
| Werden auf den Kreuzeswegen | Should your thorns be sown |
| deine Dornen ausgesät, | On the path of the cross, |
| **Meine Seel auf Rosen geht,** | **My soul walks on roses,** |
| **Wenn ich dran gedenke;** | **when I reflect on it;** |

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[12] Ulrich Leisinger has suggested that the flutes were added in 1725 to an existing movement. See "Die zweite Fassung der Johannes-Passion von 1725. Nur ein Notbehelf?," in *Bach in Leipzig—Bach und Leipzig. Konferenzbericht 2000*, Leipziger Beiträge zur Bachforschung 5, ed. Ulrich Leisinger (Hildesheim: Olms, 2002), 43.

[13] See the overview in Markus Rathey, "Der zweite Leipziger Kantatenjahrgang—Choralkantaten," in *Bach-Handbuch 1*, ed. Reinmar Emans and Sven Hiemke (Laaber: Laaber, 2010).

[14] Translation: Marissen, *Bach's Oratorios*, 129–30.

| | |
|---|---|
| Weil ich in Zufriedenheit | Because I in contentment |
| mich in deine Wunden senke, | Submerge myself into your wounds, |
| So erblick ich in dem Sterben, | I will recognize, at my death, |
| wenn ein stürmend Wetter weht, | When a stormy tempest roars, |
| **In dem Himmel eine Stätt** | **grant me a place in heaven** |
| **Mir deswegen schenke!** | **because of it!** |
| Diesen Ort, dahin ich mich | This spot, where by faith I |
| täglich durch den Glauben lenke. | Daily direct myself. |

The bass begins with an outburst of rage over the torture of Jesus (“Himmel reiße, Welt erbebe”), which turns into compassion (“Was ich, Jesu, mit dir leide”) and leads finally to contentment (“Weil ich in Zufriedenheit mich in deine Wunden senke”). The chorale, on the other hand, expresses joy and contentment from the very beginning (“Jesu, deine Passion, ist mir lauter Freude”). The hymn, as the voice of the church, represents the state of contentment and confidence in salvation the bass must reach in the course of the aria. The two layers also differ in their musical character. The bass sings a virtuosic rage aria representing the tearing of heaven and the quaking of the earth, while the chorale melody proceeds in calm quarter notes, reflecting sonically the state of calm and contentment that is the goal of the movement.

The juxtaposition of the hymn stanza and the text sung by the bass conforms to the eighteenth-century understanding of this hymn. Johann Martin Schamelius (1671–1742)[15] published an extensive hymn commentary in Leipzig in 1724/25 and wrote that the appropriate reaction to Jesus’s suffering in the stanza quoted in this movement was not mourning but rather joy. Schamelius criticizes the very attitude represented by the bass in Bach’s aria:

> Ich bins versichert in meinem Heylande / ich thue ihm mehr Ehre, wenn ich mit gläubigen Hertzen mich über alle seine Pein freue / und in einer freudigen Liebe dancke und ihm diene / als wenn ich noch so viel Wehklagen darüber mache. Wer dies nicht mit mir thun will / der ist mir verdächtig. daß er weder die Krafft noch den Zweck dieses Leidens wise: sagt der seel. Hinckelmann Betr. von der Reinigung des Bluts Christi, p. 441.[16]

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15. See Andreas Lindner, *Leben im Spannungsfeld von Orthodoxie, Pietismus und Frühaufklärung: Johann Martin Schamelius, Oberpfarrer in Naumburg*, Kirchengeschichtliche Monographien 3 (Gießen: Brunnen-Verlag, 1998), passim.

16. Johann Martin Schamelius, *Evangelischer Lieder-Commentarius, worinnen das glossirete Naumburgische Gesang-Buch weiter ausgeführet und verbessert wird und vornehmlich die alten Kirchen- und Kern-Lieder mit . . . Anmerkungen versehen werden*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Lankisch, 1724), 175. He quotes a treatise by

> I trust in my savior that I do him more honor when I rejoice in his pain with a joyous heart, and when I thank him in joyful love and serve him than when I mourn over it. Whoever does not wish to do this with me is suspicious; he knows neither the power of this suffering nor it purpose; the late Hinckelmann says this in his *Reinigung des Bluts Christi*, p. 441.

The chorale trope in the second version of the *St. John Passion* juxtaposes the two possible reactions to the suffering: mourning and rage at the beginning of the bass part, and love in the text of the chorale. The transformation of the bass, again representing the faithful observer, is more gradual than in the earlier aria, and it lacks the clear "turning point" that was indicated by the presentation of one line of the chorale without the bass. However, both trope arias from the *St. John Passion* fulfill a similar dramatic (and theological) function as they demonstrate the reaction of the faithful believer to the suffering of Christ and outline the path of the individual from doubt to confidence and contentment by confronting him with the theological insights present in the congregational hymn.

### The *St. Matthew Passion* I

In his *St. Matthew Passion* BWV 244, Johann Sebastian Bach employed two different types of chorale tropes. The first movement, arguably Bach's largest-scale chorale trope, is based on the model of the polychoral motet, and I will return to it later. No. 19 is an accompanied recitative for tenor and wind instruments of the *chorus primus* alternating with lines from the hymn "Was ist die Ursach aller solcher Plagen?" sung by *chorus secundus.*[17] The dramatic function of the movement is clear from its immediate context. The chorale trope is part of a sequence of movements consisting of a section from the passion narrative (no. 18) and its theological interpretation in a recitative (no. 19) and an aria (no. 20) both involving the tenor from *chorus primus* and the combined voices of the *chorus secundus* (Example 2). The narrative reports Jesus's fear in Gethsemane. The text is set—as are the other words of the "testo"—as a simple recitative; only the words of Christ (mm. 4–6 and 11–15) are, as is usual for the *vox Christi* in Bach's compositions, accompanied by the strings of the first chorus.[18] Initially the accompaniment of the words of Christ is limited to a halo-like extended

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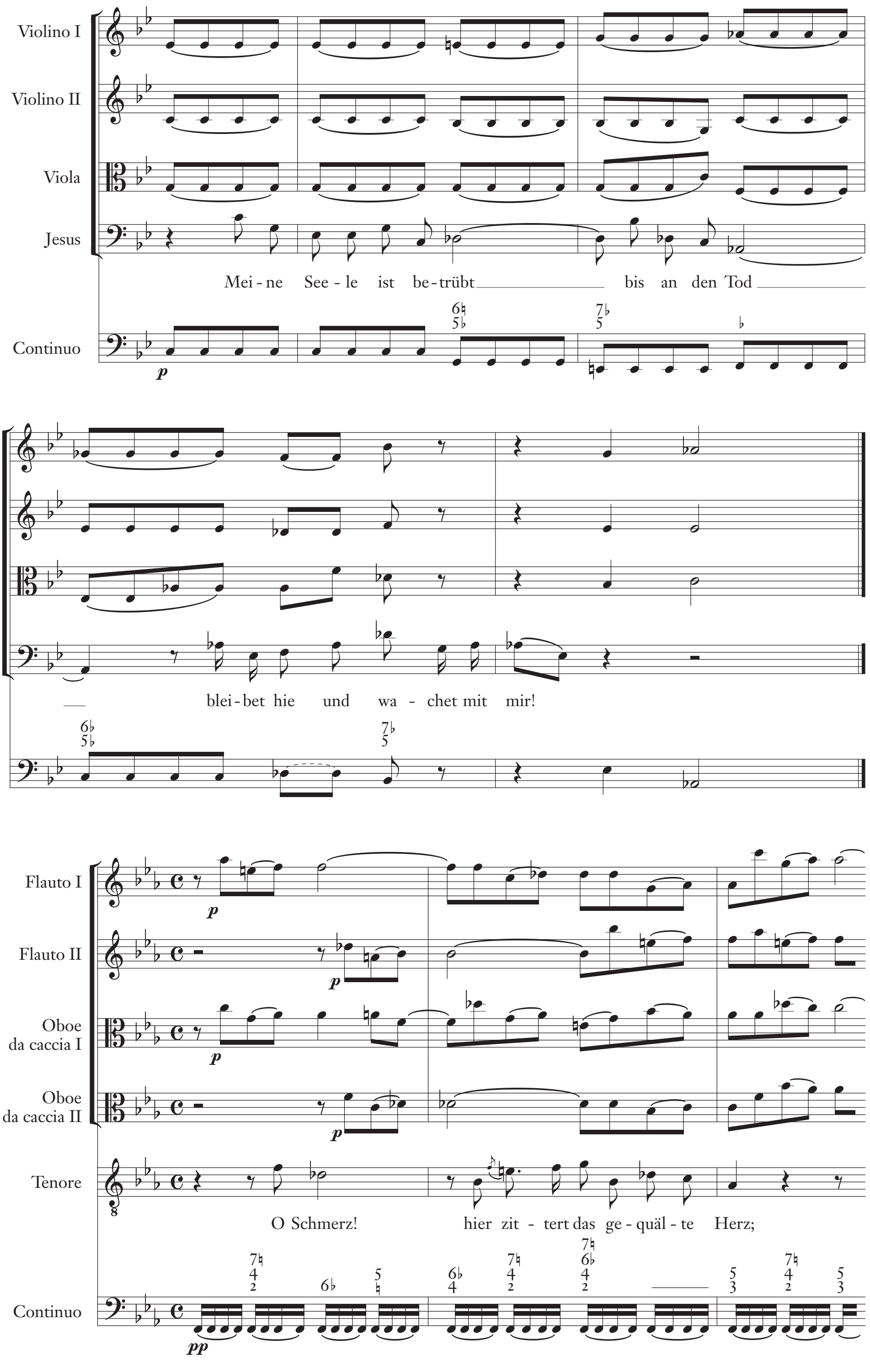
the theologian and Islam scholar Abraham Hinckelmann (1652–1695), *Christliche Betrachtungen von der Reinigung des Blutes Christi. 1 Joh. 1, v. 7* (Hamburg: Dose, 1687).

[17] It is the third stanza of the chorale "Herzliebster Jesu." Picander and Bach use three stanzas of this Good Friday hymn in the *St. Matthew Passion* spread over the piece in nos. 3, 19, and 46. The other two settings are simple four-part harmonizations.

[18] Cf. Martin Geck, "Die vox-Christi-Sätze in Bachs Kantaten," in *Bach und die Stile*, ed. Martin Geck, Dortmunder Bach Forschungen, 2 (Dortmund: Klangfarben Musikverlag, 1999), 79–101.


Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Jesus
Mei-ne See-le ist be-trübt bis an den Tod
blei-bet hie und wa-chet mit mir!
Continuo
p
Flauto I
Flauto II
Oboe da caccia I
Oboe da caccia II
Tenore
O Schmerz! hier zit-tert das ge-quäl-te Herz;
Continuo
pp

Example 2. J. S. Bach, *St. Matthew Passion* BWV 244/18, mm. 12–15 and 244/19, mm. 1–3 chord, with eighth-note motion accentuating only the cadence. Later, the strings dissolve the chords in a sequence of obstinately repeated eighth notes depicting the fear and trembling of Jesus implied in the text.[19]

The following accompaganto for tenor elaborates musically and textually on the fear of Jesus in Gethsemane. The tenor of *chorus primus* laments, "O Schmerz! hier zittert das gequälte Herz" (O agony! How the afflicted heart trembles), and is accompanied by a web of sigh motives in the wind instruments and an organ point in the continuo group, which is subdivided into a chain of repeated sixteenth notes. The sixteenth-note motion (which is maintained in the recitative sections throughout the movement) sonically depicts the trembling of the heart. It also refers back to a similar motive in the preceding *vox Christi* section (there as eighth notes) and ties the two movements together motivically, realizing musically the textual connection between the two movements.

The trope-recitative finally leads to an aria for tenor solo (chorus 1) and choir (chorus 2), "Ich will bei meinem Jesus wachen" (I will stay awake beside my Jesus), continuing the combination of soloist and choir already established in the preceding recitative. The text of the aria elaborates on the contrast of sleep and being awake: Staying awake with Jesus makes sins fall asleep. The accompagnato therefore serves as a bridge between the aria and the biblical narrative (which urges the disciples to stay awake with Jesus), and as it points out that Jesus's afflictions were caused by the sins of the faithful ("Ach! meine Sünden haben dich geschlagen"). The movement features an alternation between recitative sections and lines of the chorale. Until the last statements the recitative sections have a length of four measures, while the lines of the chorale are three measures long. Only the last phrases in both layers are longer. This is in part because the very last line of the chorale is shorter (only five notes compared to the eleven in the unembellished versions of the other lines), prompting Bach to combine the last two lines of the hymn into one phrase of five measures, which is then followed by a similarly lengthened recitative section of seven measures. On a structural level, however, the expansion toward the end of the movement also creates the impression of a climax.

The setting of the chorale lines is simple and accompanied only *colla parte* by the strings of the *chorus secundus*, which creates an additional contrast to the wind instruments from *chorus primus* accompanying the tenor. The simplicity of the setting, however, is blurred by a highly chromatic harmonization and a continuous eighth-note motion that runs through the accompanying voices and that occasionally surfaces in the melody as embellishments, emphasizing words like "Plagen" (torments), "dich geschlagen" (have struck you), and "was du erduldet" (that you endure). The eighth-note motion and the two-note melismas are taken over by Bach in the following aria, where they appear in the second choir. This ensures a motivic connection between the two movements. Thus the recitative not only serves as a theological bridge between the biblical narrative and the aria, but its motivic material also refers back to the narrative (repeated notes in the basso continuo) and forward (flowing eighth notes). This Janus-like character of the trope reinforces the contrast between the two layers within the recitative.

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[19] Bach's setting of the text stands in a long tradition of compositions that depict the trembling of Jesus in a similar way, like the passions by Valentin Meder and the anonymous passion formerly attributed to Keiser.

The contrast serves a distinct function in the passion, but it is unusual in comparison to similar combinations of recitative and chorale composed by Bach before 1727, in which Bach attempted to unify the chorale and the trope motivically. An early example is the cantata "Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee vom Himmel fällt" BWV 18, composed in Weimar around 1713/15. Four more examples originate from Bach's first year in Leipzig (1723–24),[20] during which BWV 18 saw another performance, as well. The majority of Bach's chorale trope recitatives were composed during his Chorale Cantata Cycle (1724–25).[21] After abandoning the cycle in February 1725, he only occasionally used the combination of recitative and chorale. The only extant example between 1725 and 1727 is the first movement of, "Wer weiß, wie nahe mir mein Ende" BWV 27 from October 1726. In other words, with nineteen previous examples, the movement in the *St. Matthew Passion* is by no means unique; however, Bach's compositional realization of this established model differs from its predecessors. In previous trope recitatives Bach attempts to integrate the two layers motivically. The earliest examples still exhibit a rather loose connection, for instance the second movement of "Erfreute Zeit im neuen Bunde" BWV 83 (February 2, 1724), which combines elements of an aria and a recitative. During the Chorale Cantata Cycle, Bach attempts more and more to unify the two layers. The last trope recitative in the cycle shows the closest integration of recitative and hymn setting. In the cantata "Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr' dahin" BWV 125 (February 2, 1725), the third movement is unified by a small motive that is continuously repeated at different pitch levels and that accompanies both the chorale and the recitative sections (Example 3). Although the chorale and the recitative are still distinguishable, the movement clearly appears as a unity.

The accompagnato recitative "O Schmerz" from the *St. Matthew Passion*, on the other hand, breaks with this earlier concept. While the recitative and the chorale layers themselves are each unified by consistent musical ideas, the two layers do not share musical material. Furthermore, the chorale and recitative are separated sonically

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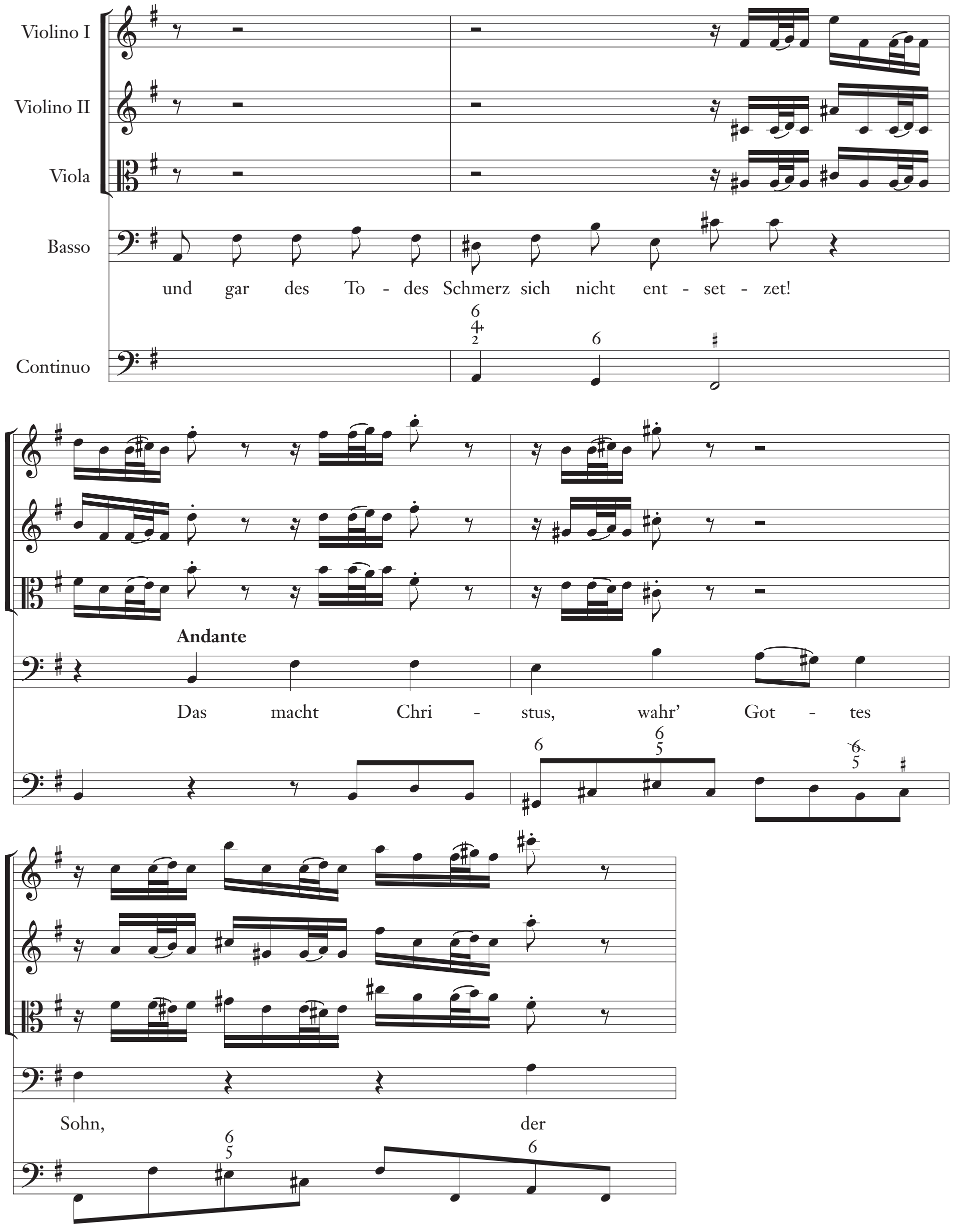
[20] BWV 138/1–3, BWV 190/2, BWV 73/1, and BWV 83/2.

[21] See the overview in Krummacher, *Choralkantaten*, 162.


Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Basso
Continuo
und gar des To - des Schmerz sich nicht ent - set - zet!
Andante
Das macht Chri - stus, wahr' Got - tes
Sohn, der

Example 3. J. S. Bach, “Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin” BWV 125/3, mm. 3–7 (woodwind versus string instruments), spatially (distinct ensembles), and in tessitura. The reasons for Bach's decision is the epic-dramatic concept of the passion, with its juxtaposition of the Daughter Zion (*chorus primus*) and the Faithful (*chorus secundus*), which is established in the first movement and which shapes the overall structure of the passion, as well. Within this polychoral concept of the work, the recitative no. 19 serves as a link between the biblical narrative (no. 18) and the theological interpretation in no. 20, and features both motivic material from the preceding movement and from the following one.

A second feature of the trope recitative that also differentiates it from earlier examples is also due to the concept of the passion. In seven earlier tropes, Bach juxtaposed recitative sections with lines from a hymn in four-part harmony. In most cases the recitative interpolations are sung by rotating soloists who then come together to sing the lines of the chorale (see Table 1). (The only exception seems to be BWV 138/1, but its opening sequence of recitatives and hymns is unusual; the first three movements, with recitative passages for several voices, should be seen as a unity.)[22] That this form of combination of a recitative and a chorale was familiar is shown by Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg's *Anleitung zur Singekomposition* (1758), which devotes a large section to the composition of polychoral pieces. He "mentions explicitly that recitatives in settings for unequal choruses are sometimes distributed among all four soloists."[23] The *St. Matthew Passion* contains a similar movement, the recitative "Nun ist der Herr zur Ruh gebracht" (no. 67), which juxtaposes the soloists from one chorus with the ensemble of the second one; however, Bach does not use a chorale in that movement.

Table 1. Troped recitatives in J. S. Bach's cantatas before 1727

| Movement (Year) | Text | Soloists in Recitative |
|---|---|---|
| 18/3 (1713/15) | Mein Gott, hier wird mein Herze sein | S/T/B |
| 138/1 (1723) | Warum betrübst du dich mein Herz | T |
| 190/2 (1724) | Herr Gott, dich loben wir | A/T/B |
| 73/1 (1724) | Herr, wie du willt | S/T/B |
| 3/2 (1724) | Wie schwerlich läßt sich Fleisch und Blut | S/A/T/B |
| 92/7 (1725) | Ei nun, mein Gott, so fall ich dir | S/A/T/B |
| 27/1 (1726) | Wer weiß, wie nahe mir mein Ende | S/A/T |

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[22] On the problems in dividing the movements in BWV 138, see Dürr, *Cantatas*, 134–35.

[23] Ulrich Leisinger, "Forms and Functions of the Choral Movements in J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*," in *Bach Studies 2*, ed. Daniel R. Melamed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 78.

In other words, Bach normally conceptualizes trope recitatives with four-part chorale settings as ensemble pieces in which the singers of the chorale step out of the ensemble (figuratively speaking) to sing their lines of recitative and then reunite with the other voices to sing the lines of the hymn. In the *St. Matthew Passion* Bach sacrifices this unity on a micro level (and his model used in earlier cantatas) to emphasize the juxtaposition of the two choruses and their respective epic-dramatic function on the macro level of the passion.

### The *Christmas Oratorio*

The last trope movements Bach composed appear in the *Christmas Oratorio* BWV 248 from 1734/35. The libretto for the oratorio was probably by Picander, who also provided the text for the *St. Matthew Passion.* While Bach borrowed about a third of the movements of the oratorio from earlier (mostly secular) cantatas, the two tropes (no. 7 and no. 38/40) were, as far as we know, composed for this piece.[24]

The seventh movement of the first part of BWV 248 is a chorale trope that is close to the compositional models employed in earlier cantatas. It is part of a sequence of movements that form the second half of the cantata. Whereas the first half focuses on the interpretation of the advent and birth of Christ (nos. 2–5), the second half concentrates on the relationship (or rather, paradoxical dichotomy) between the earthly poverty of Jesus (symbolically visible in the image of the manger in the Gospel text from Luke 2) and the spiritual wealth the believer gains from Christ's incarnation (nos. 6–8).[25] The movements in the second half are an interpretation of the Gospel text, quoted in no. 6; however, the polarity between "rich" and "poor" refers clearly to 2 Cor. 8:9, "For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." The paradox of God incarnate is also one of the underlying topics of Martin Luther's Christmas hymn "Gelobet seist du Jesu Christ,"[26] and it was therefore appropriate that the librettist chose a stanza from this hymn for the chorale trope that follows the biblical narrative.[27]

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[24] Cf. Walter Blankenburg, *Das Weihnachts-Oratorium von Johann Sebastian Bach* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), 47–48 and 98–105.

[25] Cf. Martin Petzold, *Bach-Kommentar. Theologisch-musikalische Kommentierung der geistlichen Vokalwerke Johann Sebastian Bachs. Band II: Die geistlichen Kantaten vom 1. Advent bis zum Trinitatisfest* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007), 122.

[26] Cf. the interpretation of the hymn in Gerhard Hahn, *Evangelium als literarische Anweisung. Zu Luthers Stellung in der Geschichte des deutschen kirchlichen Liedes*, Münchner Texte und Untersuchungen 73 (Munich: Niemeier, 1981), 188–89.

[27] "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ" was also one of the hymns prescribed by contemporary hymnbooks for the first day of Christmas. We find this tradition also reflected in the cycle of hymn sermons

The trope movement juxtaposes the text (and the melody) of the hymn in the soprano with a newly written text in the bass. The two voices engage in a dialectic discourse, leading from questions sung by the bass, “Wer will die Liebe recht erhöhn?” (Who will properly extol the love?) to the confident statement, “So will er selbst als Mensch geboren werden” (That he himself wants to be born as man);[28] meanwhile, the chorale proclaims the meaning of Christ’s incarnation in poverty. As in the *St. John Passion*, the two voices have distinct functions: the bass utters questions in recitative, while the hymn, the symbolic voice of the congregation, answers with confidence. Although the two voices in this movement engage in a discourse, they are also a multilayered commentary on the biblical narrative. The hymn comments on the paradoxical dichotomy of rich and poor in the Gospel, while the recitative questions this view and only toward the end agrees with the words of the chorale. The dialectic of rich-poor is continued in the following bass aria, “Großer Herr, o starker König” (Great Lord, o mighty King). The text of the aria continues the inner development of the bass from his initial questions to his confidence toward the end of the trope movement. Thus the aria serves as an emphatic confirmation of the belief in the paradox.

In his setting of the chorale trope, Bach alternates between lines of the chorale and recitative sections. With the different musical material he changes meter—the hymn is in 3/4 and the recitative in common time.[29] The contrast between the two layers is further emphasized by a change in the accompaniment. Whereas the chorale sections are accompanied by a trio of two oboi d’amore and continuo,[30] the recitative sections are mostly simple, with occasional ragged motives by the oboes. The short oboe motives are syntactically important because they connect the two otherwise

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preached by Leipzig theologian Johann Benedict Carpzov in 1688/89; cf. Markus Rathey, “Schelle, Carpzov und die Tradition der Choralkantate in Leipzig” (forthcoming). The *Christmas Oratorio* uses only two stanzas from this hymn, but it is safe to assume that on Christmas Day 1734 the congregation sang the chorale in its entirety. Another example of Bach’s use of the hymn is the chorale cantata “Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ” BWV 91, composed for Christmas Day 1724 and performed again in the early 1730s.

[28] Cf. Meinrad Walter, *Johann Sebastian Bach—Weihnachtsoratorium* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2006), 63.

[29] Walter Blankenburg, *Das Weihnachts-Oratorium*, 48, has suggested that the triple meter in the chorale sections should be understood as a symbol for the Trinity. The text of the movement makes no reference to Trinitarian theology, and it is unlikely that the change of meter has any theological significance. Rather, it emphasizes the contrast between the chorale sections and the recitative.

[30] The oboe motive foreshadows a similar one in the aria “Schlafe, mein Liebster” in the second part of the *Christmas Oratorio*. The aria was originally composed for the secular cantata BWV 213, and Bach uses the motive in both the aria and the chorale trope to depict the rocking of the child in the manger.

disjunct spheres of the chorale and the recitative by carrying over from the chorale sections into the recitative. The connection is not as tight as in the trope recitatives of the chorale cantata cycle, but the underlying concept is similar.

The entire movement is framed by a ritornello of twelve measures that provides the motivic material for both the short interludes between sections and for the accompaniment of the chorale. When the ritornello is played at the end of the movement in slightly modified form, the last phrase of the hymn melody ("Kyrieleis") is built into the beginning of the instrumental trio. In the course of the movement, the motivic material never appears in its original version, but it is transposed several times during the chorale sections and interludes, beginning in G major, then in E minor, D minor, A minor, and A minor, then finally back into C major and G. Ignace Bossuyt has recently suggested (based on Blankenburg's interpretation) that the "series of modulations moves constantly 'downwards,' as if to indicate that God had to lower himself to the level of humanity."[31] It should be added, however, that toward the end the modulations ascend again back to G major. Therefore, Bach uses descent and ascent to symbolize the incarnation as a process, in which Christ descends and the human heart ascends to God, the very idea that is expressed in the text of the hymn. Bach also uses a melodic descent in his setting of the words of the bass, "Des Höchsten Sohn kömmt in die Welt" (The son of the Most High comes into the world), which is set with a descending line from d' down to d (mm. 42–43); this is followed by a leap of an octave upward from e to e' on "Mensch" (man) in measure 53.

From a functional perspective, the movement prepares (like a normal recitative) the following aria. The two movements even share some motivic ideas, like the descending line from d' to d (mm. 42–43 in the recit and mm. 15–17 in the aria) and the brief oboe motive from the recitative sections that returns in the aria (for instance in m. 16). Because Bach originally composed the aria for another cantata and parodied it in the *Christmas Oratorio*, it is clear that he designed the material in the newly composed recitative to fit the following, preexisting aria.[32] The recitative therefore serves a syntactic purpose within the sequence of movements by connecting the preexisting aria with the rest of the piece, and a dramatic purpose by first staging and then resolving the dichotomy between "rich" and "poor."

The last chorale trope in the *Christmas Oratorio* is bipartite, framing the echo-aria "Flößt, mein Heiland" BWV 248/39. The two movements (38 and 40) share the same chorale stanza from a hymn by Johann Rist ("Jesu, du mein liebstes Leben"); the first half of the stanza is quoted in no. 38 and the second half in no. 40, both sung by the soprano and combined with a recitative layer assigned to the bass. Surprisingly, Bach uses the words of the chorale but not the melody that was traditionally associated with it and which must have been familiar to him. This is unusual for Bach and unique among his chorale tropes. The melody Bach composes resembles a song rather than a chorale and is not unlike the melodies in the *Schemelli Gesangbuch* published in 1736.[33] Bach's reason for composing his own melody was in part the highly emotional character of the text, which was only insufficiently captured in the original tune by Johann Schop (~1590–1667).[34] The newly composed melody also gives Bach the opportunity to disregard the AAB form of the original tune and to create a through-composed melody instead, one that can more closely follow the character and meaning of the individual words of the text. It is remarkable that Bach still loosely follows the "grammar" of a traditional hymn melody, by ending what was the end of the A section in no. 38 in the dominant C (m. 17) and modulating back to the tonic F in the B section in no. 40 (m. 16). Both parts of the melody are clearly conceived as a unity.

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[31] Ignace Bossuyt, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Christmas Oratorio. BWV 248*, trans. Stratton Bull (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 80; cf. Blankenburg, *Das Weihnachts-Oratorium*, 47.

[32] Bach does this often in the *Christmas Oratorio;* the most obvious example is the first alto aria ("Bereite dich, Zion") and its preceding recitative, which quotes the beginning of the aria's vocal line.

The sources for the *Christmas Oratorio* differ in their separation of the movements in the fourth cantata. The printed libretto suggests two separate recitatives instead of what is now no. 38. The first recitative was labeled only "Recit." and contained the litany-like praise of the name of Jesus (until "dein JEsu labet Herz und Brust"), followed by another movement headed "Choral und Recitat," containing the chorale trope and the following simple recitative of the bass. Bach decided instead to compose the entire text in one section so that the chorale trope stands framed by two simple recitative sections.

The fourth part of the *Christmas Oratorio* is a meditation on the power and meaning of the name of Jesus, elaborating on the Gospel reading for the day about his circumcision and naming (Luke 2:21) in no. 37. No. 38 begins as a litany on the name of Jesus until the focus shifts to the meaning of this name for the individual ("pro me") in the hour of dying and in the face of death. This is the point where the soprano enters with the chorale. The relationship of the two simultaneous texts is unusual for a chorale trope by Bach. Instead of juxtaposing two texts that stand in some kind of tension (as in the *St. John Passion*), the two layers express similar ideas—the emotional closeness of the faithful believer and Christ in the time of death.[35] Bach's decision not to use the traditional melody of the chorale reflects this relationship, because the character of the voices is much more similar than in earlier trope movements. The difference between the bass and the soprano lines is small, with the bass more declamatory than the upper voice. A second feature that differentiates the movement from other trope recitatives is the simultaneous combination of recitative and chorale (or, in this case, a chorale-like melody). The two movements are not the first time that Bach used a simultaneous trope in a recitative. Between February 1723 and December 1725 he composed five movements of this type, but in each of the earlier examples the chorale is played by an instrument and never sung (see Table 2).

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[33] Cf. Renate Steiger, *Gnadengegenwart. Johann Sebastian Bach im Kontext lutherischer Orthodoxie und Frömmigkeit*, Doctrina et Pietas. Zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung. Texte und Untersuchungen, II 2 (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002), 177–85; Martin Geck refers to the melody as an example for the Pietist aria, *'Denn alles findet bei Bach statt'. Erforschtes und Erfahrenes* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000), 104–5. The association with Pietism made by Geck is problematic because this style, even though favored by some Pietist composers and theorists, was not limited to this religious camp. In fact, the *Schemelli Gesangbuch* was intended to serve as a more orthodox counterpart to the popular Pietistic songbooks of the time.

[34] The concept of abandoning a preexisting chorale melody in order to better capture the emotional qualities of a hymn text has its models in the seventeenth century. Bach's predecessor as cantor at St. Thomas's in Leipzig, Johann Schelle (1648–1701), composed a setting of "Ach mein herzliebes Jesulein," the thirteenth stanza of Luther's hymn "Vom Himmel hoch," in which he replaces the familiar chorale melody with his own setting that emphasizes the emotive qualities of the text; cf. Markus Rathey, "Rezeption als Innovation. Zur Aktualisierung traditioneller geistlicher Texte durch die Musik im 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhundert," in *Aedificatio. Erbauung im interkulturellen Kontext der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Andreas Solbach (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005), 234–36.

The combination of chorale and recitative is a difficult task. The first reason is that the regular meter of the hymn conflicts with the (more or less) free declamation of the recitative. The second is that the simultaneous presentation of texts makes it difficult for the listener to perceive both. This is less problematic in an aria, where text repetitions are common, and Bach makes sure in those arias that contain chorale tropes that the aria text is heard at least once without the chorale. To ensure that the texts are perceivable in the recitatives nos. 38 and 40, Bach employs a similar technique and repeats sections of the recitative text, breaking with a common principle of recitative composition.

In the fourth cantata of BWV 248, no. 38 functions as a preparation (like a regular recitative) for the following soprano aria, which elaborates further on the salvific significance of Jesus's name in the face of death. The melodic contour of the aria (which is a parody of an aria from BWV 213) resembles that of the trope recitative. Most of

Table 2. Simultaneous troped recitatives in Bach's cantatas

| Movement (Year) | Poetic Text | Chorale | Scoring |
|---|---|---|---|
| 23/2 (1723) | Ach! gehe nicht vorüber | Christe, du Lamm Gottes | T, str, ob I+II, bc |
| 70/9 (1723) | Ach, soll nicht dieser große Tag | Es ist gewißlich an der Zeit | B, tr, str, bc |
| 5/4 (1724) | Mein treuer Heiland tröstet mich | Wo soll ich fliehen hin | A, ob I, bc |
| 38/4 (1724) | Ach! daß mein Glaube noch so schwach | Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir | A, bc |
| 122/3 (1724) | Die Engel, welche sich zuvor | Das neugeborne Kindelein | S, fl I–III, bc |

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[35] This was pointed out by Martin Petzold, *Bach Kommentar II*, 317.

the time, the soprano sings in a songlike aria style without longer melismas; only twice (both times on “erfreuen” [rejoice]) does Bach compose more extensive melismas. It is therefore likely that Bach designed the soprano line in no. 38 (and later in no. 40) with the preexisting aria in mind.

The soprano aria is followed by the second half of the chorale trope in no. 40. The text continues the praise of the name of Jesus and emphasizes hope for those who carry his name in their hearts, “Dein Name soll allein . . . in meinem Herzen seyn.” As in no. 38, the two texts do not stand in a dialectical relationship but basically express the same thing. This becomes especially clear toward the end of the movement when the two voices end with a question to Jesus, each culminating in a personal pronoun, *dir/dich*.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Bass* | Doch, Liebster, sage mir: | But tell me, Most Beloved: |
| | Wie rühm ich dich, wie dank ich **dir**? | How may I glorify you, how may I thank **you**? |
| *Soprano* | Hirt und König, Licht und Sonne, | Shepherd and king, light and sun, |
| | Ach! wie soll ich würdiglich, | O! how shall I worthily |
| | Mein Herr Jesu, preisen **dich**? | Praise **you**, my Lord Jesus? |

Ending with this open question, the recitative leads to the following tenor aria “Ich will nur dir zu Ehren leben” (For honor I will live only for you). Even though the trope recitatives nos. 38 and 40 are related and follow a similar idea, the realization of this idea is slightly different in each movement. In no. 38 the hymn text is embedded into a larger recitative text and is framed by passages of simple recitative. In no. 40 the two voices sing together almost from the beginning. Only four short recitative sections without the soprano interrupt the combination of the two texts. Furthermore, the character of the two voices in no. 40 is similar, with the bass singing in a more arioso-like tone, as well. The movement ceases to be a traditional chorale trope and dissolves instead into a real duet.

## The *St. Matthew Passion* II

The culmination of Bach’s chorale tropes based on the model of the motet is the first movement of the *St. Matthew Passion*, in which Bach combines a dialogue between two choruses with the chorale “O Lamm Gottes unschuldig” (O Lamb of God without guilt). Earlier examples of this type reach from his *Kyrie* BWV 233a, composed for Good Friday 1708,[36] to motets from Bach’s tenure in Weimar like the funeral motet “Fürchte dich nicht" BWV 228.[37] BWV 228 is a polychoral motet featuring a chorale trope in the second half. The two choirs open the piece with a dialogue not much different from the first movement of the passion.[38] When the hymn enters in BWV 228, Bach abandons the polychoral structure and continues with a trope motet that features the motet text in the lower three voices and the chorale in the soprano (Example 4).

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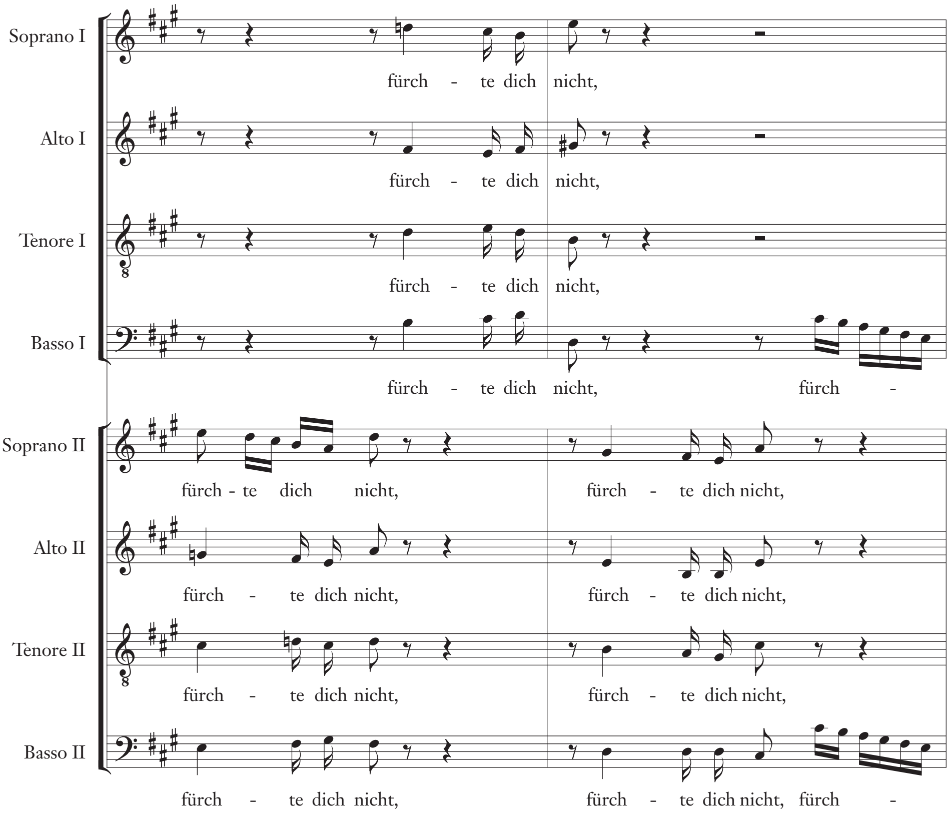
[36] Cf. Markus Rathey, “Zur Datierung einiger Vokalwerke Bachs in den Jahren 1707 und 1708,” *Bach-Jahrbuch* 92 (2006): 73–77.


Soprano I
Alto I
Tenore I
Basso I
Soprano II
Alto II
Tenore II
Basso II
fürch - te dich nicht,
fürch - te dich nicht,
fürch - te dich nicht,
fürch - te dich nicht, fürch -
fürch - te dich nicht, fürch - te dich nicht,
fürch - te dich nicht, fürch - te dich nicht,
fürch - te dich nicht, fürch - te dich nicht,
fürch - te dich nicht, fürch - te dich nicht, fürch -

Example 4. J. S. Bach, "Fürchte dich nicht" BWV 228, mm. 75–81

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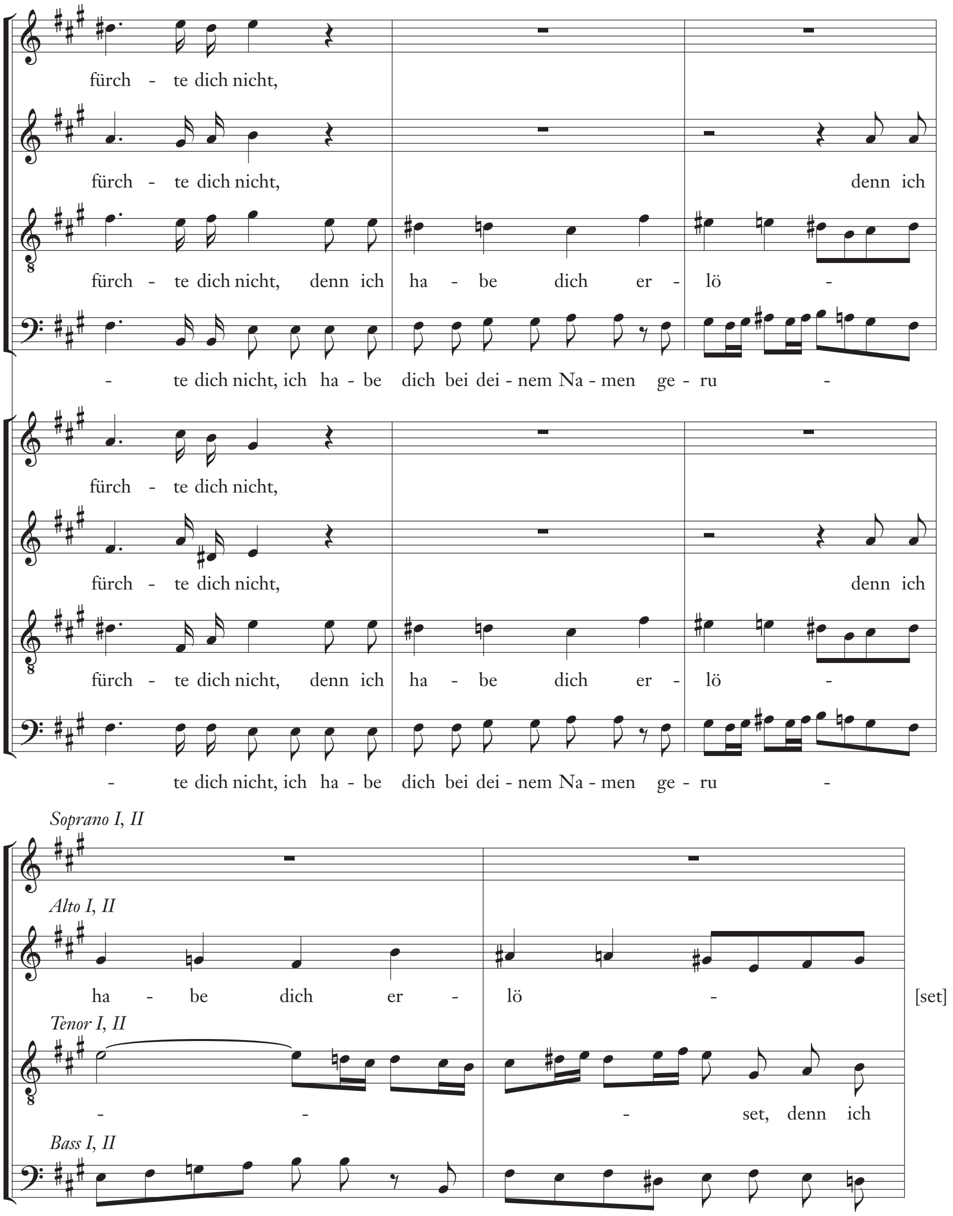
[37] On the dating of this motet see Daniel R. Melamed, *J. S. Bach and the German Motet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 59–60.

[38] In our context it is less relevant whether the passion has two equal choirs—as earlier research suggested—or rather reflects a *soli ripieni* structure, as Daniel R. Melamed, *Hearing Bach's Passions*, 49–65, has pointed out.


fürch - te dich nicht,
fürch - te dich nicht, denn ich
fürch - te dich nicht, denn ich ha - be dich er - lö -
- te dich nicht, ich ha - be dich bei dei - nem Na - men ge - ru -
fürch - te dich nicht,
fürch - te dich nicht, denn ich
fürch - te dich nicht, denn ich ha - be dich er - lö -
- te dich nicht, ich ha - be dich bei dei - nem Na - men ge - ru -
Soprano I, II
Alto I, II
ha - be dich er - lö - [set]
Tenor I, II
- - - set, denn ich
Bass I, II
- - fen, ge - ru - fen, denn ich

Example 4. *Cont.*

The reduction of voices with the entrance of the chorale melody conforms to traditions of the German motet in the late seventeenth century. Similar examples are known by other members of the Bach family, as in Johann Michael Bach's *Fürchtet euch nicht*.[39] His piece also begins with a polychoral dialogue that turns into a polytextual four-part setting when the chorale is introduced. The opening movement of the *St. Matthew Passion* is obviously based on these earlier models but surpasses them.

The dialogue between the two protagonists of the first movement can be read (and was probably conceived) as an elaboration on the text of the hymn, a German *Agnus Dei*. The Daughter Zion admonishes the Faithful to see the bridegroom (= Christ) like a lamb, and with the mention of the word "Lamm" the libretto inserts the first two lines of the hymn "O Lamm Gottes unschuldig." The next section of the dialogue instructs "Seht die Geduld," which is answered by the hymn with the phrase "allzeit erfunden geduldig." Finally, the last lines of the text by Picander use the words "Schuld" and "tragen," which correspond to the chorale's "Sünd" and "getragen."[40]

Instead of following Picander's suggestion of juxtaposing a soloist and choir, Bach conceived the part of the Daughter Zion for chorus, as well. Karol Berger has recently discussed this movement extensively and has pointed out the theological (or rather, dramaturgical) reasons for Bach's deviation from the libretto: "The Passion tells the story of the pivotal turning point of human history. From the start, therefore, the tone needs to be set high. The effect of epic monumentality that Bach undoubtedly sought to create here is not one that a solo, even one accompanied by a choir, could have provided."[41] In other words, the opening movement both sets the tone for the monumentality of the passion (which corresponds to the monumentality and audacity of the story told: God dies for the atonement of humankind) and sets the stage for further dialogues between the Daughter Zion and the Faithful in the movements to come. Like an exordium in a traditional passion setting, the first movement provides the hermeneutic key for understanding the following narrative both musically and theologically.

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[39] Cf. Rathey, "Rezeption als Innovation," 237–38.

[40] Picander's decision to use the German *Agnus Dei* for the exordium of the passion, the very movement that traditionally provided the hermeneutic key for the following passion, conforms to the contemporary understanding of the hymn "O Lamm Gottes." Schamelius, quoting Simon Pauli, writes in his *Lieder-Commentarius* of 1724, 1:178: "Dis geistliche Lied singet unsere Kirche, wenn das heilige Abendmahl gehalten wird / unter der Verreichung und Niessung des wahren Leibes und Blutes JEsu Christi, und wenn die Paßion geprediget wird." Other authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries call the song a "small passion" ("kleine Paßion") and a summary of the essence of Christ's suffering; see Johann Christoph Olearius, *Hymnologia Passionalis i.e. Homiletische Lieder-Remarques* (Arnstadt: Ehrt, 1709), 69.

[41] Berger, *Bach's Cycle*, 47.

The compositional realization of Picander's libretto surpasses its predecessors and models in several respects. In this movement Bach blends two contradictory structures: the da capo form (ABA') of the two choirs and the XXY form of the chorale. The structural problem is solved by combining the hymn mostly with the two choirs in the B section while the A section does not quote the melody. The A' section (mm. 72–90) combines a shortened musical recapitulation of A, but instead of returning to the A text, Bach uses the last lines of the B text (here combined with the final line of the hymn). Only after the hymn has ended, the text of the A section returns.[42]

An aspect that contributes to the monumentality and the effect of the opening movement is the way the chorale is introduced into the polychoral texture. Traditionally, a polychoral movement would have abandoned its original texture, as seen both in Bach's motet BWV 228 and the earlier piece by Johann Michael Bach. Now, however, Bach maintains the polychoral juxtaposition even after the hymn has entered in m. 30. Instead of leading to a collapse of the polychorality, the chorale adds an additional layer to the already complex texture. Only toward the end of the movement, starting in m. 72, Bach abandons the distinction between the two ensembles and assigns the words of the Daughter Zion to both choirs, while the "Soprano in ripieno" sings the last phrase of the hymn, "Erbarm dich unser, o Jesu." The conflation of the forces, which would have been expected for the entrance of the hymn, is delayed until the final cry for God's mercy. With the short modified da capo, beginning in m. 83, Bach separates the two ensembles again for a brief call-and-response, but in the final cadence (mm. 89–90) the *chorus secundus* sings the same text as *chorus primus* (although with different notes).

The structural characteristics of the movement are significant. Viewed within the history of trope motets, the conflation of the two choirs toward the end (even though delayed) conforms to the conventions of the genre. The conflation, however, also has a semantic function. We have observed in earlier chorale tropes that they are often used to juxtapose the voice of a believer, often doubtful or at least full of questions, and the confident voice of the congregation, symbolized by the hymn. The opening movement features a similar dialogue carried out by the Daughter Zion, representing the confident part, and the Choir of the Faithful, who ask questions. In earlier tropes the doubts of the believer vanished and he/she was convinced by the confidence expressed in the chorale. Picander's libretto does not make this step from question to answers (the second chorus never stops asking questions), but Bach's composition goes a step further and combines the two choirs with the same text at exactly the moment at which the hymn has finished praising the salvific Lamb of God and culminates in a final cry for God's mercy, "Erbarm dich unser, o Jesu." Even though the two choirs split again for a moment, the movement ends with both ensembles singing the phrase "Als wie ein Lamm," a deliberate paraphrase of the beginning of the chorale.

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[42] Karol Berger, noticeably in awe of Bach's compositional solution, writes: "In short, the opening is a varied da capo, but one with a most extraordinary ending, which conflates in a single phrase what normally is presented in successive ones—the end of the B section and the beginning of the A' section, as well as the recapitulations of the vocal phrase and the ritornello—and for good measure also blends the texts of the two protagonists into one. The effect is one not of impatient abbreviation or acceleration but, rather, of synthesizing culmination." *Bach's Cycle*, 59.

It is clear that Bach erects this monumental movement from the blueprints of earlier chorale tropes, but at the same time he surpasses these models. The movement has a semantic and a syntactic function in the context of the *St. Matthew Passion.* On a syntactic level, the chorus serves as a grand portal to the passion. Furthermore, the conflation of the forces toward the end of the chorus anticipates a similar combination of forces at the end of each part of the passion in nos. 29 (after the revision of 1736) and 68.[43] On a semantic level, it presents the theological understanding of the passion narrative that is about to follow, combining the dialogue between the Daughter Zion and the questions of the Faithful with a traditional hymn. Even though the answers to the questions of the *chorus secundus* are given by the Daughter Zion (and not by the hymn), the words of the first chorus are clearly derived from the text of the chorale. The hymn (= the voice of the congregation) is, as in earlier movements, the final source of the answers.

## Conclusions

Chorale tropes, the skillful combination of a hymn and free poetry, occur in Bach's works throughout his career, beginning in his earliest compositions for Mühlhausen and ending in Leipzig during the 1730s. Bach's contributions to this genre stand in the tradition of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; however, he not only imitates earlier models, but deals intensely with the compositional challenges that are inherent in the combination of different musical and textual layers. Especially during his chorale cantata cycle from 1724/25, Bach worked out the compositional problems of integrating the two distinct layers and creating unity in diversity.[44]

In his oratorios, chorale tropes bridge the gap between individual reflection and response of the congregation. They serve especially as a means to juxtapose the confidence of the church and the doubt or questions of the individual. Bach uses the choral trope in most of his oratorios as a discursive element; two positions are juxtaposed in a dialectical way and lead to a conclusion. This is not really a true discourse, because

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43. Cf. Berger, *Bach's Cycle*, 49.

44. See Krummacher, *Choralkantaten*, and Rathey, "Der zweite Leipziger Kantatenjahrgang."

the winner of the argument (the chorale) is predetermined. However, it is significant that Bach uses the model of the chorale trope in his oratorios almost consistently in this dramatic way.

The polarity of the two layers is reflected on a musical level by the fact that only one of the layers is newly composed while the other one is a chorale melody. More than in most discursive-dramatic dialogues in contemporary opera or in Bach's sacred cantatas, the two protagonists are clearly defined by their musical material. This is confirmed *ex negativo* by Bach's very last chorale trope, the bipartite movement in the fourth part of the *Christmas Oratorio:* the relationship between the texts of soprano and bass is not dialectical, and Bach therefore refrains from using the original melody and composes his own tune instead. The two characters are still musically distinct, but the musical realization makes clear that this is a juxtaposition of two individuals and not of an individual and the voice of the Christian community in the chorale. Even though the chorale trope loses its importance in Bach's cantatas in the later 1720s, we find several examples of this genre in his oratorios. At the same time, however, the trope is transformed. Bach abandons earlier compositional concepts like the motivic unity of the two layers in the trope-recitative in the *St. Matthew Passion* to emphasize the epic-dramatic concept of the passion as a juxtaposition of two distinct characters.

The chorale tropes in Bach's oratorios, even though they interrupt the flow of the narrative and break the unity of time and space in the story, contribute to the unification of the pieces by creating, at least for a moment, the illusion of a unity of time and space for the individual and communal response. The chorale tropes create their own dramatic moments in the epic interpolation into the biblical narratives of the oratorios. In most cases they transform the individual by contrasting his or her doubts about the paradox of the incarnation or Christ's suffering with the position and knowledge of the congregation as it is spelled out (and codified) in the congregational hymns. This goes beyond the use of chorale tropes in Bach's earlier cantatas, particularly in Weimar, where the introduction of a chorale (instrumental or vocal) served as an additional commentary to the primary text and had no dramatic function.

# Oratorio on Five Afternoons

## *From the Lübeck Abendmusiken to Bach's* Christmas Oratorio

Kerala J. Snyder

Most oratorios, like most operas, are performed within a single day as measured by real time in the theater, church, or oratory, regardless of the dramatic time that might be portrayed in their librettos. The Lübeck Abendmusiken and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* BWV 248 form notable—although by no means unique—exceptions to this principle.[1] As is well known, the *Christmas Oratorio* consists of six parts, each similar to a cantata and first performed on the first, second, and third Christmas days of 1734 and on New Year's Day, the Sunday after New Year, and Epiphany of 1735. The Lübeck Abendmusiken, according to a guidebook from 1697, were "presented yearly on five Sundays between St. Martin's [November 11] and Christmas, following the Sunday vesper sermon, from 4 to 5 o'clock";[2] those five Sundays were the last two of Trinity and the second, third, and fourth of Advent.

Bach carefully timed his famous trip to visit Dieterich Buxtehude in Lübeck during the fall of 1705 to coincide with the Abendmusik season. He would have expected the regular performances to take place on November 15 and 22 and December 6, 13, and 20 of that year. From the Arnstadt archival records we know that he was back on February 7 and that he had been away for sixteen weeks, because "he had asked for only four weeks, but had stayed about four times as long."[3] That suggests that he departed around October 18. From his obituary, we know that he "tarried" in Lübeck "for almost a quarter of a year,"[4] which would be about twelve weeks, leaving four weeks for the trip there and back, exactly what it would take to walk the 280 miles each way at an average of 20 miles a day (see Table 1).[5]

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[1] Another exception is Friedrich Funke's Christmas oratorio, its two parts performed in Lüneburg on December 25 and 26, 1693. See Peter Wollny, "Über die Beziehungen zwischen Oper und Oratorium in Hamburg im späten 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhundert," in *Il teatro musicale italiano nel Sacro Romano Impero nei secoli XVII e XVIII* (Como: Antiquae Musicae Italicae Studiosi, 1999), 172.

[2] *Die Beglückte und Geschmückte Stadt Lübeck. Was ist Kurtze Beschreibung der Stadt Lübeck So wol Vom Anfang und Fortgang Derselben In ihrem Bau, Herrschafften und Einwohnern, Als sonderlich Merckwürdigen Begebenheiten und Veränderung* (Lübeck: Johann Gerhard Krüger, 1697), 114.

[3] *Bach-Dokumente* II: *Fremdschriftliche und gedruckte Dokumente zur Lebensgeschichte Johann Sebastian Bachs 1685–1750*, ed. Werner Neumann and Hans-Joachim Schulze (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969), 19–20.

During the years in which Buxtehude served as organist of St. Mary's Church in Lübeck, from 1668 to 1707, he composed and directed three different types of Abendmusiken there: dramatic oratorios, ceremonial oratorios, and mixed programs of unrelated vocal works, as he did in the year 1700.[6] In 1705, while Bach was there,

Table 1. Hypothetical calendar of Bach's 1705–6 trip to Lübeck

| | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| October 1705 | ***18*** | ***19*** | ***20*** | ***21*** | ***22*** | ***23*** | ***24*** | *Bach travels to Lübeck* |
| | ***25*** | ***26*** | ***27*** | ***28*** | ***29*** | ***30*** | ***31*** | |
| November | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | |
| | **15** | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | Sun.: *Abendmusik* |
| | **22** | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | Sun.: *Abendmusik* |
| December | 29 | 30 | 1 | **2** | **3** | 4 | 5 | Wed., Thurs.: Extraordinary Abendmusiken |
| | **6** | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Sun.: *Abendmusik* |
| | **13** | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | Sun.: *Abendmusik* |
| | **20** | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | Sun.: *Abendmusik* |
| January 1706 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | |
| | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | |
| | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | |
| | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | |
| | ***24*** | ***25*** | ***26*** | ***27*** | ***28*** | ***29*** | ***30*** | *Bach returns to Arnstadt* |
| February | ***31*** | ***1*** | ***2*** | ***3*** | ***4*** | ***5*** | ***6*** | |

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[4] *Bach-Dokumente* III: *Dokumente zum Nachwirken Johann Sebastian Bachs 1750–1800*, ed. Hans-Joachim Schulze (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1972), 82.

[5] See Kerala J. Snyder, "To Lübeck in the Steps of J. S. Bach," *Musical Times* 127 (1986): 672–77; German translation as *Nach Lübeck in den Fußstapfen von J. S. Bach*, trans. Martin Botsch (Lübeck: Stadtbibliothek Lübeck, 2005).

[6] Listed in Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck*, rev. ed. (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 425–26, and its German translation, *Dieterich Buxtehude: Leben, Werk, Aufführungspraxis*, trans. Hans-Joachim Schulze (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007), 467–68. References are to the revised English edition unless noted.

Buxtehude presented two ceremonial oratorios that he himself designated as "extra ordinaire": *Castrum doloris*, commemorating the death of the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I and performed on Wednesday, December 2, and *Templum honoris*, celebrating the accession of his successor, Joseph I, performed the following evening, Thursday, December 3.[7] We have the librettos but not the music for these works.[8] Their characters are almost all allegorical: Fame, Fear of God, Righteousness, Grace, the Sciences, and a choir of lamenting women in *Castrum doloris;* Fame, Germany, Honor, Wisdom, Bravery, and Happiness in *Templum honoris*.

We cannot be certain that Buxtehude presented his "ordinary" five-concert Sunday series in 1705, but it appears likely that he did, since he so carefully positioned the "extraordinary" works on weekdays following the first Sunday of Advent (November 29 in 1705), when no Abendmusik concert ever took place. But since these "extraordinary" works required extraordinary resources, both musical and scenic, I suspect that those five ordinary concerts that year consisted of a mixture of unrelated works, as in 1700, requiring no new composition and little rehearsal. So Bach probably did not have the opportunity to hear a "classic" dramatic Lübeck Abendmusik series, in which, to quote the later Lübeck cantor Caspar Ruetz, "the poet uses a biblical story as the basis and constructs it according to the rules of theatrical poetics, dividing it into five parts, which are performed on as many Sundays."[9] But surely Buxtehude would have shown Bach some of his old scores, since the young man had walked so far to witness the Lübeck Abendmusiken.

Buxtehude had established this classic five-part structure no later than 1684, the year in which he announced the future publication of two Abendmusiken—most likely just their librettos—in the Frankfurt and Leipzig book fair catalogues. The first of these was listed as "*Heavenly Joy of the Spirit on Earth over the Incarnation and Birth of Our Dearest Savior Jesus Christ*, in five separate acts, in opera style, with many arias and ritornelli, brought into a musical harmony for six concerted voices, various instruments and capella voices."[10] This must have been Buxtehude's own Christmas oratorio, and it has disappeared without a further trace. The preserved librettos and scores of the eighteenth-century Lübeck Abendmusiken composed by Buxtehude's successors Johann Christian Schieferdecker, Johann Paul Kunzen, Adolf Carl Kunzen, and Johann Wilhelm Cornelius von Königslöw adhere to Buxtehude's five-part structure.[11]

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[7] Buxtehude's entry into the account book of St. Mary's Church; transcription in Snyder, *Buxtehude* (2007), 476.

[8] *Castrum Doloris, Dero in Gott Ruhenden Römis. Käyserl. auch Königl. Majestäten Leopold dem Ersten, Zum Glorwürdigsten Andencken, In der Käyserl. Freyen Reichs-Stadt Lübecks Haupt-Kirchen zu St. Marien, Zur Zeit gewöhnlicher Abend-Music, Aus Aller-Unterthänigster Pflicht Musicalisch vorgestellet Von Diterico Buxtehuden, Organisten daselbst; Templum Honoris, Dero Regierenden Römis. Käyserl. auch Königl. Majestät Joseph Dem Ersten, Zu Unsterblichen Ehren, In der Käyserl. Freyen Reichs-Stadt Lübecks Haupt-Kirchen zu St. Marien, Im Jahr Christi 1705. Zu beliebter Zeit bey der gewöhnlichen Abend-Music, Aus Aller-Unterthänigster Pflicht Glückwünschend gewidmet Von Diterico Buxtehuden, Organisten daselbst* (Lübeck: Schmalhertzens Wittwe, 1705; facsimile reprint Lübeck: Bibliothek der Hansestadt, 2002; also in Georg Karstädt, *Die "extraordinairen" Abendmusiken Dietrich Buxtehudes* [Lübeck: Max Schmidt-Römhild, 1962]).

[9] Caspar Ruetz, *Widerlegte Vorurtheile von der Beschaffenheit der heutigen Kirchenmusic und von der Lebens-Art einiger Musicorum* (Lübeck: Peter Böckmann, 1752), 44. For a translation of the complete passage, see Snyder, *Buxtehude*, 55–56; for the original German text see the German edition, 79–81.

### Buxtehude's Abendmusik *Die Hochzeit des Lamms*

All the music for Buxtehude's known Abendmusiken is lost,[12] and we have just one other extant libretto, that of his first known Abendmusik, *Die Hochzeit des Lamms* BUXWV 128, a dramatic oratorio in two parts, presented on December 8 and 15, 1678, the second and third Sundays in Advent that year. Its title page (Figure 1) reads in part:

> *The Wedding of the Lamb and the Joyful Reception of the Bride to It in the Five Wise [Maidens] and the Exclusion of the Ungodly from It in the Five Foolish Maidens, as It is Told by the Bridegroom of the Soul, Christ Himself, in Matthew 25, and in Other Passages of Scripture . . . to Be Presented by Dieterico Buxtehude, Organist of [St.] Mary in Lübeck, in the Customary Time of the Abend-Musik on the second and third Sundays of Advent in the Main Church of St. Mary from four until five o'clock. Lübeck . . . 1678.*[13]

It is clear from this title that by 1678, Buxtehude's presentation of concerts known as Abendmusiken on certain Sunday afternoons had become customary, but those earlier concerts most likely consisted of unrelated offerings of vocal and instrumental music. His predecessor, Franz Tunder, had presented such concerts on Thursday

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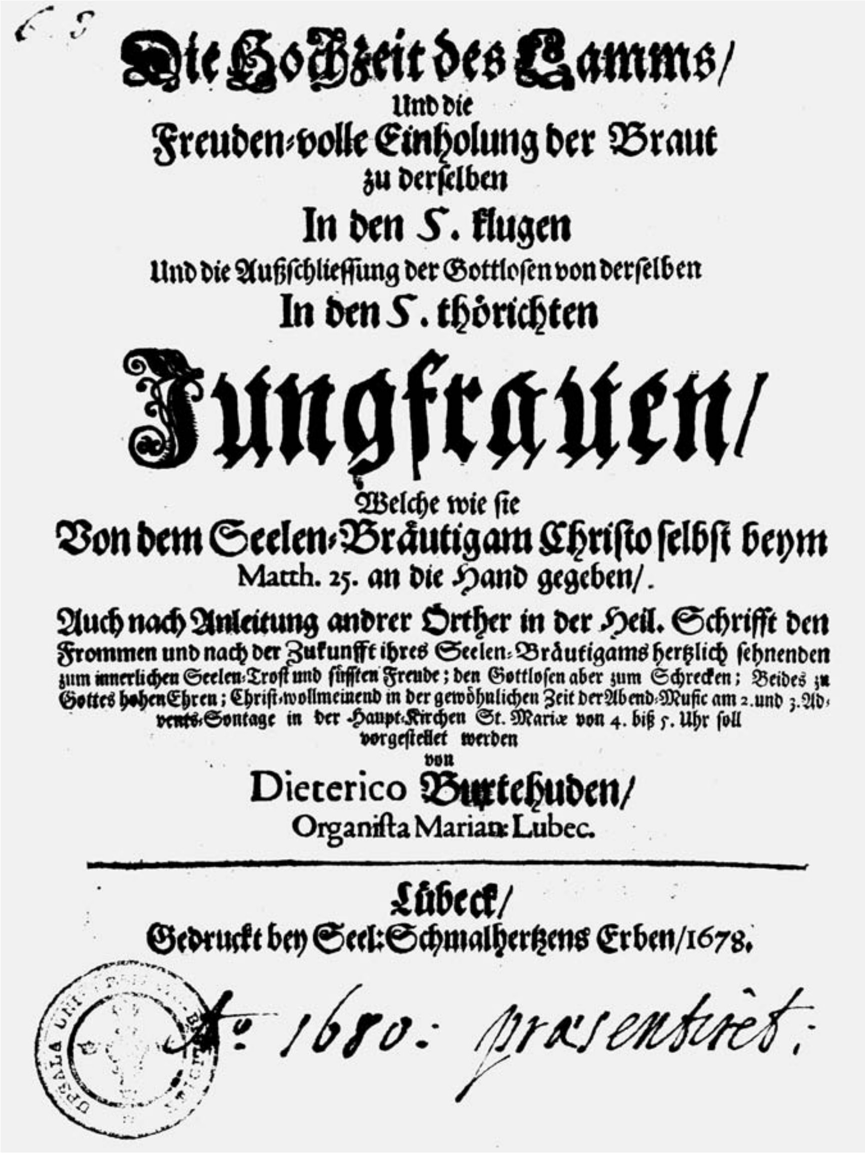
[10] "Himml. Seelenlust auf Erden über die Menschwerdung u. Geburt unsers allerliebsten Heil. u. Seligm. J. Chr. [in 5. unterschiedenen Abhandlungen auf der Operen Art mit vielen Arien u. Ritornellen, in einer musikal. Harmonia à 6 voc. concert. nebst divers. Instr. u. Capell-Stimmen gebracht.];" listed in Albert Göhler, *Verzeichnis der in den Frankfurter und Leipziger Messkatalogen der Jahre 1564 bis 1759 angezeigten Musikalien* (Leipzig, 1902; reprint Hilversum: Knuf, 1965), part 2, p. 12.

[11] For a list of titles and present locations see Volker Scherliess and Arndt Schnoor, eds., "*Theater-Music in der Kirche*": *Zur Geschichte der Lübecker Abendmusiken* (Lübeck: Bibliothek der Hansestadt Lübeck–Musikhochschule Lübeck, 2003), 73–75.

[12] I have argued that the anonymous oratorio *Wacht! Euch zum Streit gefasset macht* is Buxtehude's Abendmusik from 1683 (see Snyder, *Buxtehude*, 68–69), but that work does not figure in the present discussion.

[13] *SUu* vmhs 6:8. The complete libretto appears in facsimile in Erik Kjellberg and Kerala J. Snyder, eds., *The Düben Collection Database Catalogue*, http://www.musik.uu.se/duben/Duben.php.



6 9

Die Hochzeit des Lamms/
Und die
Freuden-volle Einholung der Braut
zu derſelben
In den 5. klugen
Und die Außſchlieſſung der Gottloſen von derſelben
In den 5. thörichten
Jungfrauen/
Welche wie ſie
Von dem Seelen-Bräutigam Chriſto ſelbſt beym
Matth. 25. an die Hand gegeben/.
Auch nach Anleitung andrer Orther in der Heil. Schrifft den
Frommen und nach der Zukunfft ihres Seelen-Bräutigams hertzlich ſehnenden
zum innerlichen Seelen-Troſt und ſüſſten Freude; den Gottloſen aber zum Schrecken; Beides zu
Gottes hohen Ehren; Chriſt-wollmeinend in der gewöhnlichen Zeit der Abend-Muſic am 2. und 3. Advents-Sontage
in der Haupt-Kirchen St. Mariæ von 4. biß 5. Uhr ſoll
vorgeſtellet werden
von
Dieterico Buxtehuden/
Organiſta Marian: Lubec.

Lübeck/
Gedruckt bey Seel: Schmalhertzens Erben/1678.

Ao. 1680: präsentiret:

Figure 1. Buxtehude, *Die Hochzeit des Lamms* BUXWV 128, title page of libretto (Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek)

afternoons.[14] It is probably no accident that this first *dramatic* Lübeck Abendmusik of which we know occurred in 1678; at the beginning of that year, the Hamburg Opera had opened its doors with an opera by Buxtehude's friend Johann Theile. Buxtehude himself characterized his 1684 Abendmusik *Heavenly Joy* as "in opera style, with many arias and ritornelli," and Ruetz could still write in 1752 that "these Abendmusiken . . . are not just theatrical, but a complete *Drama per Musica*, as the Italians say, and the singers would only need to act for it to be a sacred opera."[15] Buxtehude's contemporary Hinrich Elmenhorst, preacher at St. Catherine's church in Hamburg and a librettist for the Hamburg Opera, wrote in 1688 that "Musicians understand the word *operas* to mean the compositions of poets and composers performed not only in theaters, but also in churches. . . . In this connection I must mention how the world-famous Lübeck musician Diedericus Buxtehude has performed more than one such opera in public churches there in the Abendmusik customary at a certain time of year, whose poetry has been published."[16] Two years before Bach composed his *Christmas Oratorio*, Johann Gottfried Walther defined oratorio as "sacred opera."[17]

The libretto for *Die Hochzeit des Lamms* "uses a biblical story as the basis," just as the eighteenth-century Abendmusiken did, in this case the parable of the wise and foolish maidens found in Matthew 25:

> [1]Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. [2]Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. [3]For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; [4]but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. [5]As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. [6]But at midnight there was a cry, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." [7]Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. [8]And the foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." [9]But the wise replied, "Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves." [10]And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. [11]Afterward the other maidens came also, saying "Lord, lord, open to us." [12]But

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14. See Snyder, "Franz Tunder's Stock-Exchange Concerts: Prelude to the Lübeck Abendmusiken," *GOArt Research Reports* 2 (2000): 41–57.

15. Ruetz, *Widerlegte Vorurtheile*, 44.

16. Hinrich Elmenhorst, *Dramatologia Antiquo-Hodierna* (Hamburg: Georg Rebenl. Wittwe, 1688; facsimile reprint Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der deutschen demokratischen Republik, 1978), 100–101; translation from Snyder, *Buxtehude*, 65; original in German edition, 91.

17. Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig: Wolffgang Deer, 1732; facsimile reprint, ed. Richard Schaal (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1953), 451.

> he replied, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you." [13]Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.[18]

As with the later Abendmusiken, the poet constructed the story "according to the rules of theatrical poetics," dividing it not yet into five parts, but into only two at this early date. The scenario can be divided into two acts, not designated as such, but clearly separated by sonatas and printed stars (fol. 4r):

*Act I* [2nd Sunday in Advent]

*Scene 1:* Betrothal, Christ and the Church (fols. 1v–2v)
*Scene 2:* Wise and foolish maidens sleep (fols. 2v–3v)
*Scene 3:* The Bridegroom approaches (fols. 3v–4r)

*Act II* [3rd Sunday in Advent]

*Scene 1:* Foolish maidens ask for oil (fols. 4r–4v)
*Scene 2:* Christ invites wise maidens and angels into the feast (fols. 4v–5v)
*Scene 3:* Christ rejects foolish maidens (fols. 5v–6r)
*Conclusion:* The moral of the story (fols. 6r–6v)

The characters are both biblical (Christ, the wise maidens, the foolish maidens, the angels) and allegorical (the church, as the bride, who is entirely missing from the biblical story).[19] Christ is always a bass, but the role of the church is variously played by a soprano (fol. 2r), an alto (fol. 2r), and an entire chorus of voices and instruments (fol. 1v). This varied scoring artfully reflects the church as a collection of individual believers; in her role as a bride, however, all the pronouns are singular, even when the whole chorus is singing. The angels, too, have varied scorings, but the wise maidens are always represented by two sopranos and the foolish maidens by two altos.

This libretto embroiders upon the biblical narrative considerably, beginning with the addition of a betrothal scene. Christ proposes with the words of Hosea 2:19: "I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy." The church responds with a verse from Isaiah, "I rejoice in the Lord . . . as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (both fol. 1v). They then sing a love duet, to which I shall return. In the second scene both the wise and foolish maidens fall asleep, but the wise maidens frame an aria sung by an angel with words from the Song of Solomon: "I sleep, but my heart is awake" (fol. 3v). As the bridegroom approaches in scene 3, the wise maidens awaken, and the act closes as the angels announce that the wedding day has arrived.

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[18] *The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952), New Testament, 31.

[19] The *Revised Standard Version* has a footnote to verse 1: "Other ancient authorities add *and the bride*."

As the plot resumes a week later, the foolish maidens ask for oil from the wise maidens, who refuse to give it to them. When Christ, the bridegroom, appears in the second scene, he speaks with words from the Song of Solomon: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. . . . Let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is comely" (fol. 4v). Yet, as in the biblical text, the bride is missing from this scene. The wise maidens enter the wedding hall amid great rejoicing from angels and a heavenly choir. In the final scene, Christ rejects the foolish maidens with the words "I do not know you," spoken only once in Matthew 25:12 but eight times in the libretto (fols. 5v–6r), after which the foolish maidens descend into the flames of hell. A concluding section draws the moral of this drama: woe to those who disdain the word of the Lord; joy to the righteous. It differs considerably from that of the biblical parable in Matthew 25:13, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Although the entire plot is based on the parable narrated in Matthew 25:1–13, the only words from this biblical passage that actually appear in the libretto are those of the direct quotations, sometimes repeated: "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him" (fols. 3v, 4r); "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out"; "Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves" (fol. 4r); "Lord, Lord, open to us" (fol. 5v); and finally, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you" (fols. 5v–6r). The story is filled in with numerous other biblical passages, all of which are meticulously identified. For example, because the parable text gives no direct lines to Christ, the bridegroom, when he invites the wise maidens into the wedding feast the libretto borrows words for him from Isaiah 26:2, "Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps faith may enter in," and Genesis 24:31, "Come in, O blessed of the Lord; why do you stand outside?" (fols. 4v–5r).

At the celebration that follows, a heavenly choir sings the biblical passage from which the title *Die Hochzeit des Lamms* had been drawn: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready" (Revelation 19:6–7; fol. 5r). Up to this climactic point, the image of Jesus as lamb and bridegroom had appeared only twice, but now it becomes incorporated into a refrain that occurs four times: "Wonne Wonne über Wonne! Gottes Lamm ist unsre Sonne" (fols. 5r, 5v, 6r).

Three familiar chorales are integrated into the plot. Verse 7 of "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" ("Wie bin ich doch so herzlich froh") forms part of the love duet (fol. 2r), and verse 6 ("Zwingt die Saiten in Cithara," fol. 5r) is sung as the wise maidens enter the wedding hall. An undesignated soloist sings the first verse of "Jesu meine Freude" (fol. 2v) before the maidens fall asleep, but its text points to the bride as the character who is singing: "Jesu meine Freude . . . Gottes Lamm, mein Bräutigam." The presence of all three verses of "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme" comes as no surprise, since it paraphrases the parable of the wise and foolish maidens. The wise maidens sing the first two verses as the bridegroom arrives (fol. 3v), and a heavenly choir sings the final verse after the wise maidens have entered the wedding hall (fol. 5v).

Biblical verses and chorales have no place in opera; to be in operatic style an Abendmusik must have, in Buxtehude's words, "many arias and ritornelli." Three poems are specifically designated "Aria" (fols. 3r, 4r, 6v), two of them with numbered strophes articulated by ritornelli. Buxtehude may also have set the librettos numerous other poems in aria style, and ritornelli abound throughout.

Unlike many opera librettos of the day, the title page of *Die Hochzeit des Lamms* prominently displays Buxtehude's name but makes no mention of the poet responsible for the text. Caspar Ruetz wrote in 1752 that Karl Heinrich Lange, the *Conrector* of the Katharineum, Lübeck's renowned Latin school, was the usual Abendmusik poet,[20] but no similar documentation exists for Buxtehude's time. Nevertheless, his librettist for *Die Hochzeit des Lamms* can be identified with reasonable certainty as Johann Wilhelm Petersen, based on Petersen's subsequent publication of a devotional treatise with a remarkably similar title: *Die Hochzeit Des Lammes und der Braut*.[21]

Johann Wilhelm Petersen (1649–1727) grew up in Lübeck and attended the Katharineum until 1669, the year after Buxtehude's arrival in the city. Petersen studied philosophy and theology at the universities of Gießen and Rostock, and, following a short stint as professor of poetry in Rostock, he embarked upon a career as an orthodox Lutheran pastor with appointments as pastor of the Aegidienkirche in Hannover (1677), court preacher and superintendent in Eutin (1678), and superintendent in Lüneburg (1688). He had established contact with Philipp Jakob Spener during his student years, and Spener officiated at his marriage to Johanna Eleonora von und zu Merlau (1644–1724), a member of Spener's congregation in Frankfurt, in 1680. As husband and wife their theology moved increasingly toward radical pietism and millenarianism, and in 1692 Johann Wilhelm was dismissed for this reason from his position as superintendent and ordered to leave Lüneburg.[22] A hymnal published that year, *Andächtig Singender Christen-Mund*, contains a strophic text by Petersen that Buxtehude set to music (BUXWV 90).[23] Its first verse reads:

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[20] Ruetz, *Widerlegte Vorurtheile*, 44.

[21] Johann Wilhelm Petersen, *Die Hochzeit Des Lammes und der Braut Bey Der herannahenden Zunkunfft Jesu Christi Durch ein Geschrey in dieser Mitternacht, zur heiligen Wache: Beweglich vorgestellet, und mit vielen Kupffern, auch dreyen Registern außgezieret.* Offenbach am Mayn, Bonaventura de Launoy, n.d. [1701]. I first noted the similarity of titles in the first edition of *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck* (New York: Schirmer, 1987), 147. Jürgen Heidrich investigated the matter further and identified Petersen as the librettist in "Andachts- und Erbauungsliteratur als Quelle zur norddeutschen Musikgeschichte um 1700: Dieterich Buxtehude, Johann Wilhelm Petersen und die 'Hochzeit des Lamms,'" in *Bach, Lübeck und die norddeutsche Musiktradition: Bericht über das Internationale Symposion der Musikhochschule Lübeck April 2000*, ed. Wolfgang Sandberger (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2002), 86–100.

| | |
|---|---|
| O wie selig sind, die zu dem Abendmahl des Lammes berufen sind. | Oh how blessed are those who are called to the communion of the Lamb. |
| Liebster Jesu, liebstes Leben, | Dearest Jesus, dearest life, |
| Der du bist das Gotteslamm, | Who is the Lamb of God, |
| Das die Sünde auf sich nahm, | That took sin upon himself, |
| Dir hab' ich mich ganz ergeben. | I have devoted myself to you completely. |
| Dich will ich den Bräut'gam nennen, | I will call you the Bridegroom, |
| Den ich bin ja deine Braut, | For I am your bride, |
| Die du ewig dir vertraut. | To whom you pledged your troth eternally. |
| Nichts soll unsre Liebe trennen. | Nothing shall separate our love. |

As evidence for Petersen's authorship of Buxtehude's *Hochzeit* libretto, Jürgen Heidrich advances Petersen's composition of a now lost wedding poem for Buxtehude in 1668;[24] the fact that Petersen and another pupil at the Katharineum had taken the roles of the Church and Christ in a poetic paraphrase of the Song of Solomon that they had written, memorized, and performed; and similarities in theme and wording between the libretto, the text of "O wie selig," and the foreword to his 1701 treatise.

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22. Both Johann Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Petersen wrote autobiographies. The information from Johann Wilhelm's *Lebens-Beschreibung* (1719) up to 1692 is included in Markus Matthias, *Johann Wilhelm und Johanna Eleonora Petersen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); *Leben Frauen Joh. Eleonora Petersen* (1718) is translated as *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen, Written by Herself: Pietism and Women's Autobiography in Seventeenth-century Germany*, ed. and trans. Barbara Becker-Cantarino (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 59–98.

23. *Andächtig Singender Christen-Mund, Das ist: Wahrer Kinder Gottes Geheiligte Andachten, bestehende In einem dreyfachen Christlichen Hand- und Gesang-Buche* (Wesel: Andreas Luppius, 1692), 150–51. It contains hymns by Petersen and others and is dedicated to Philip Jacob Spener, August Herman Franck, and Petersen, among others. I have seen only the title page and dedication; Martin Geck identified it as the source for the text of BUXWV 90 in *Die Vokalmusik Dietrich Buxtehudes und der frühe Pietismus* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1965), 214. See also Snyder, *Buxtehude*, 344–45.

24. Heidrich, 87–89; for a list of similar poems by Petersen see Matthias, 385–86.

This treatise consists of a detailed exegesis of the parable of the wise and foolish maidens, with a chapter devoted to each biblical verse, preceded by a foreword, with each illustrated by an engraving containing an excerpt from that verse.[25] The biblical verse accompanying the foreword, "the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready," comes from Revelation 19:7, from which the titles of both the libretto and the treatise are derived. But the foreword does not offer an exegesis of this verse; rather, it considers the entire parable, giving the complete text of Matthew 25:1–13 in both Greek and German.

To Heidrich's evidence I would add one further point of similarity between the libretto and Petersen's 1701 treatise: the addition of a bride to the biblical story. As mentioned in note 19, some ancient manuscripts add "and the bride" to the bridegroom in verse 1 (although not to his appearances in subsequent verses). Martin Luther's translation does not include this phrase in verse 1, but Petersen's foreword has it in both the Greek and German versions, and he devotes a portion of chapter 2 to a discussion of its omission by the early church fathers.[26] A bride appears with the bridegroom in the engraved illustrations preceding both the foreword and chapter 2; in both cases they are seen in clouds above the earth (Figure 2). Petersen also includes the bride in his title for the 1701 treatise. The betrothal scene at the beginning of Buxtehude's libretto definitely includes a bride, although she does not reappear as the plot moves on to the narrative of the wise and foolish maidens, just as she disappears from the illustrations in Petersen's treatise after chapter 2.

Petersen declares his millenarianism in the full title of his treatise:

> *The Wedding of the Lamb and the Bride at the Approaching Future of Jesus Christ, through a Cry in this Midnight to Holy Watchfulness, Movingly Presented, and Decorated with Many Engravings and Three Indexes.*

One can see a hint of it in the much earlier libretto's full title:

> *The Wedding of the Lamb and the Joyful Reception of the Bride to It in the Five Wise [Virgins] and the Exclusion of the Ungodly from It in the Five Foolish Virgins, as It is Told by the Bridegroom of the Soul, Christ Himself, in Matthew 25, and in Other Passages of Scripture, [to provide] Inner Consolation of the Soul and Sweetest Joy to the Pious and Those who Heartily Long for the Future of their Bridegroom of the Soul, but Fright to the Ungodly.*

But whereas the millennium (*Zukunfft Jesu Christi*) is fast approaching in the treatise title, the pious are still longing for it in the libretto.

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[25] Listed in Heidrich, 91–92; the engravings illustrating chapters 3, 5, and 6 appear in facsimile in his appendix, pp. 95–97. The chapters do not correspond exactly to verses of the parable; verse 1, for example, is divided between chapters 1 and 2.

[26] Petersen, *Hochzeit*, 50–57.

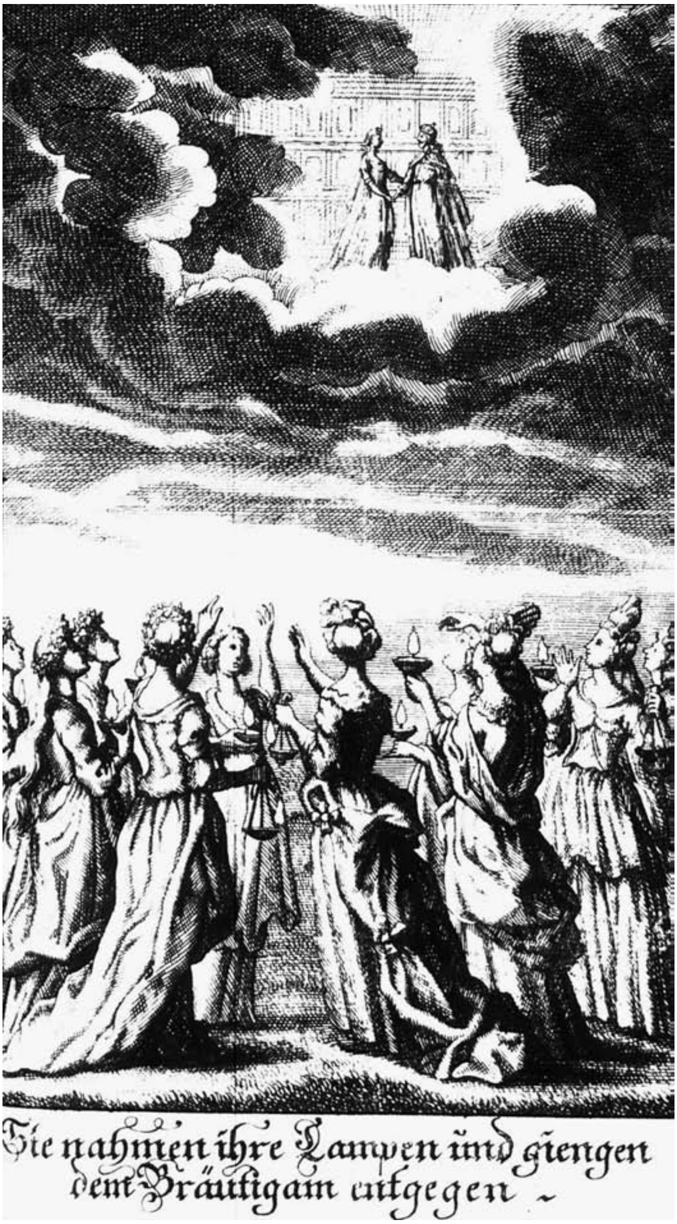
Sie nahmen ihre Lampen und giengen
dem Bräutigam entgegen

Figure 2. Illustration for chapter 2 of J. W. Petersen, *Die Hochzeit des Lammes und der Braut*, opposite page 40. The five wise maidens are on the left, with garlands on their heads. (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University)

### Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and Buxtehude's Abendmusiken

In choosing a biblical story and dividing it into a specified number of parts to be performed on different days, the librettist of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*—also anonymous[27]—appears to have followed the pattern of the Lübeck Abendmusiken as Ruetz described it in 1752. The story is lengthy—the account of the birth of Jesus and the visit by the wise men, as narrated in Luke 2:1–21 and Matthew 2:1–12—and so familiar that a summary will suffice (see Table 2). These selections follow generally, but by no means exactly, the Leipzig lectionary readings for these days.[28] By contrast, the biblical text that forms the basis of Buxtehude's *Die Hochzeit des Lamms* is specified for the 27th Sunday after Trinity in the Lübeck lectionary, not the second and third Sundays in Advent, when this Abendmusik was performed.

An even greater difference between Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and Buxtehude's *Hochzeit* comes to light when one considers how these biblical texts function within their respective libretti. As noted above, only the direct quotations from the chosen text appear in *Die Hochzeit*, whereas in the *Christmas Oratorio* the entire text is present, most of it narrated in simple recitative by the tenor Evangelist. The direct quotations are handled in three different ways. In only three instances, named characters sing them: in Part II an angel (soprano, no. 13): "Fear not! Look, I announce to you great joy, which will come to all people; for to you this day is born in the city of David the Savior, who is Christ, the Lord," and a choir of angels (chorus, no. 21): "May honor be to God on high, and peace on earth, and to humankind [God's] great pleasure"; and in Part VI Herod (bass, no. 55): "Set out and search diligently for the little child,

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[27] According to Walter Blankenburg and Alfred Dürr, Christian Friedrich Henrici (Picander) is generally considered the author, although it appears in none of his printed works (Johann Sebastian Bach, *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, *Serie II*, *Band 6: Weihnachts-Oratorium*, *Kritischer Bericht* [Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962], 190). But in 2006, Hans-Joachim Schultze describes the librettist as "leider unbekannt" (*Die Bach-Kantaten: Einführungen zu sämtlichen Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs* [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006], 634).

[28] The Leipzig lectionary readings were Luke 2:1–14 for Christmas 1; Luke 2:15–20 for Christmas 2 (or an alternate for St. Stephen's Day); John 1:1–14 for Christmas 3 (or an alternate for St. John's Day); Luke 2:21 for New Year's Day; Matthew 2:13–23 for the Sunday after New Year; and Matthew 2:1–12 for Epiphany. See Alfred Dürr, *Die Kantaten von Johann Sebastian Bach* (Kassel: Bärenreiter/Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1975), for each day. The Lübeck lectionary from 1703 divides Luke 2:1–20 among the three days of Christmas just as Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* does. See "Anweisung Wie die Gesänge Sonntäglich nach den Evangelischen und Epistalischen Texten können gebraucht werden," in *Lübeckisches Gesang-Buch . . . Auff Verordnung Eines Hoch-Edlen Hochweisen Raths Von Einem Ehrwürdigen MINISTERIO Ausgegeben* (Lübeck: Christian Ernest Wiedemeyer, 1729), fols. (b)3–4.

Table 2. The six days of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* BWV 248 and their gospel readings

| Date | Gospel | Events |
|---|---|---|
| Christmas 1<br>Dec. 25, 1734 | Luke 2:1, 3–7 | Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem, and Mary gives birth to a son |
| Christmas 2<br>Dec. 26, 1734 | Luke 2:8–14 | The angels appear to the shepherds and tell them of the child; the heavenly host proclaim "Glory to God" |
| Christmas 3<br>Dec. 27, 1734 | Luke 2:15–20 | The shepherds go to the child and tell Mary and Joseph what the angels had said; Mary ponders their words |
| New Year<br>Jan. 1, 1735 | Luke 2:21 | After eight days, the circumcision and naming of Jesus |
| Sunday after NY<br>Jan. 2, 1735 | Matt. 2:1–6 | The wise men see the star and inquire of King Herod in Jerusalem about the child |
| Epiphany<br>Jan. 6, 1735 | Matt. 2:7–12 | The wise men follow the star to Bethlehem, pay the child homage, and return without informing Herod |

and when you find it, report this to me, so that I, too, may come and worship it." The words spoken by groups of humans in the biblical text are for the most part assigned simply to the chorus, although the text itself identifies them: the shepherds in Part III (no. 26): "Let's go, now, into Bethlehem and see what the story is that's taking place there, which the Lord has made known to us;" and the wise men in part V (no. 45): "Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We have seen his star in the Orient and have come to worship him." But the chief priests and scripture experts whom Herod consulted do not give their answer as a chorus; the evangelist alone recites their quotation (no. 50): "at Bethlehem in the Jewish region; for so it stands written by the prophet . . ." In one other instance the Evangelist sings words that are ascribed in the text to a specific character: the continuation of the Angel's address to the shepherds in Part II (no. 16): "And take this for a sign: you will find the child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."[29]

Unlike Buxtehude's *Hochzeit des Lamms*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* names no characters for any of the accompanied recitatives or arias set to newly composed poetry. Most of them are contemplative and appear to be the words of a believing soul commenting upon the action and at times even addressing the characters, as the bass does in the recitative (no. 17) “So go forth, then, you shepherds” in Part II and the soprano to King Herod in Part VI (no. 56): “You deceitful one, just try to bring down the Lord.” Two arias, both for alto, appear however to flow naturally from the lips of Mary. In Part III, following the Evangelist’s recitation of Luke 2:19, “But Mary kept all these words and tossed them about within her heart,” the alto sings, “Schließe, mein Herze, dies selige Wunder fest in deinem Glauben ein” (no. 31, My heart, include this blessed marvel steadfastly in your faith). The lullaby in Part II, “Schlafe, mein Liebster, genieße der Ruh” (no.19, Sleep, my Most Beloved, enjoy your rest), is even more convincing as a song for Mary, even though the bass recitative that precedes it tells the shepherds to sing the lullaby as a choir. The parodied aria that lies behind it, “Schlafe, mein Liebster, und pflege der Ruh,” which the soprano “Wollust” (sensual pleasure) sings to Hercules in *Herkules auf dem Scheidewege* BWV 213 is also a lullaby. The fact that the *Christmas Oratorio* lullaby occurs in Part II, after the angel has told the shepherds that they will find the child in a manger, rather than in Part III, when they actually arrive at the stable, does not present a serious problem; a baroque illustration might have put the manger scene in a cloud, just as Petersen’s illustrator did with the bride and groom, who had not yet arrived.

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[29] All translations from the *Christmas Oratorio* are from Michael Marissen, *Bach's Oratorios: The Parallel German-English Texts with Annotations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5–28.

Using the alto arias “Schließe, mein Herze” and “Schlafe, mein Liebster” as his point of departure, Walter Blankenburg concluded that the alto voice represents Mary throughout the *Christmas Oratorio*.[30] Renate Steiger followed with the identification of the bass/soprano duets as representing dialogues between the faithful soul and faith.[31] More recently, Ernst Koch has proposed that the alto part further represents “the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in the faithful heart.”[32] These varied attempts to identify voices in the *Christmas Oratorio* all underline the fact that Bach and his librettist refused to do so. Clearly, their model was not the same as that of the poets of the Lübeck Abendmusiken, who sought to construct the biblical story according to the rules of theatrical poetics.

All these differences between Buxtehude’s *Hochzeit des Lamms* and Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio*—the latter’s use of an Evangelist to recite the complete biblical story, including some of the direct quotations, its correspondence to the lectionary, and its lack of

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30. Walter Blankenburg, “Die Bedeutung der solistischen Alt-Partien im Weihnachts-Oratorium, BWV 248,” in *Studies in Renaissance and Baroque Music in Honor of Arthur Mendel*, ed. Robert L. Marshall (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1974), 139–48.

31. Renate Steiger, “Die Einheit des Weihnachtsoratoriums von J. S. Bach,” *Musik und Kirche* 51 (1981): 273–80; 52 (1982): 9–15.

32. Ernst Koch, “Die Stimme des Heiligen Geistes: Theologische Hintergründe der solistischen Altpartien in der Kirchenmusik Johann Sebastian Bachs,” *Bach-Jahrbuch* 81 (1995): 76.

specific characters—can be ascribed to the greatest disparity between the two oratorios: each of the six parts of the *Christmas Oratorio* took the place of the cantata within the liturgy at St. Thomas's or St. Nicholas's church, whereas the Lübeck Abendmusiken occurred outside the liturgy, as concerts following the afternoon vesper services at St. Mary's. And in avoiding the assignment of specific characters to the singers of the nonbiblical portions of the *Christmas Oratorio*, Bach may have been remembering that he had signed a pledge to the Leipzig town council on May 5, 1723, that included the requirement that his music should be "of such a nature as not to make an operatic impression."[33] Nevertheless, powerful dramatic forces lie beneath the non-operatic impression that Bach may have been seeking to convey, and these can be illuminated by a further comparison between the *Christmas Oratorio* and Buxtehude's Lübeck Abendmusiken. Their points of similarity go beyond their serial nature to include their mutual use of the love duet, of chorale dialogues, and of trumpets and timpani associated with nobility.

In the libretto for *Die Hochzeit des Lamms*, in the opening betrothal scene, Christ and the church (bass and alto) sing:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ich bin dein und du bist mein | I am thine and thou art mine, |
| Du bist mein und ich bin dein, | thou art mine and I am thine, |
| Ewig sol die Liebe seyn. | our love shall be eternal. |

This elemental expression of love goes back to the Minnesänger:

| | |
|---|---|
| Du bist mein, ich bin dein: | Thou art mine, I am thine: |
| Des sollst du gewiss sein.[34] | of that you should be certain. |

and long before that to the Song of Solomon:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mein Freund ist mein, und ich bin sein. | My friend is mine, and I am his.<br>(Song of Solomon 2:16) |

We can get a suggestion of how Buxtehude might have set this love poetry from the soprano-bass duet in one of his compositions based on the Song of Solomon, *Dialogus inter Christum et fidelem animam* (Dialogue between Christ and the faithful soul BuxWV 111). The text of this work consists of six strophes of poetry that loosely paraphrase the narrative in the Song of Solomon of the lover lost and then found, followed by a single strophe of a second poem celebrating the love between Jesus and the soul. The lovers find each other during strophes 3 and 4, which Buxtehude set as a lyrical interlude in triple time and E♭ tonality (Example 1), contrasting with the common time and B♭ or g-minor tonality of the surrounding strophes. One can imagine that the bride and groom in *Die Hochzeit des Lamms* might similarly have begun by singing separately and then coming together in parallel motion. One layer beneath this allegorical love duet for Jesus and the faithful soul, in which the contrast in register between bass and soprano reflects the polarity between male and female, could lie a love duet between actual lovers on the stage of the Hamburg Opera.

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[33] *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, ed. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, revised and enlarged by Christoph Wolff (New York: Norton, 1998), 105.

[34] Modern German version in Calvin Thomas, ed., *An Anthology of German Literature* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1909), 84.

Bach traces the same trajectory of lovers apart and then together in the two duets for soprano and bass that separate the three strophes of the chorale in his cantata “Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme” BWV 140, first performed November 25, 1731, on the 27th Sunday after Trinity. Just as in Buxtehude’s *Hochzeit des Lamms*, the unknown librettist of BWV 140 brings together the parable of the wise and foolish maidens, its chorale paraphrase, and imagery from the Song of Solomon and Revelation. The recitatives preceding the duets introduce the interlocutors as bridegroom and bride; the text of the first duet identifies them further as Jesus and the soul (*liebliche Seele*); and the text of the second quotes from the Song of Solomon:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mein Freund ist mein und ich bin sein, | My friend is mine and I am his, |
| die Liebe soll nichts scheiden. | Nothing shall separate our love. |
| Ich will mit dir / Du sollst mit mir in Himmels Rosen weiden, | I will with you / you shall with me feed among heaven’s roses, |
| Da Freude die Fülle, da Wonne wird sein. | Where fullness of joy and delight will be. |

E. Ann Matter proposes that in keeping the third-person construction from the Song of Solomon (Ich bin sein—I am *his*) instead of turning it into a true dialogue (Ich bin dein—I am *thine*), the bridegroom is distancing himself somewhat. This gives the story an apocalyptic edge, suggesting that this bridegroom is the Christ of the Last Days, in keeping with the theme of the last Sunday in Trinity.[35] The lovers do address each other in the second person in the B section, but in the future tense. Buxtehude’s lovers, by contrast, speak to each other directly in the second person

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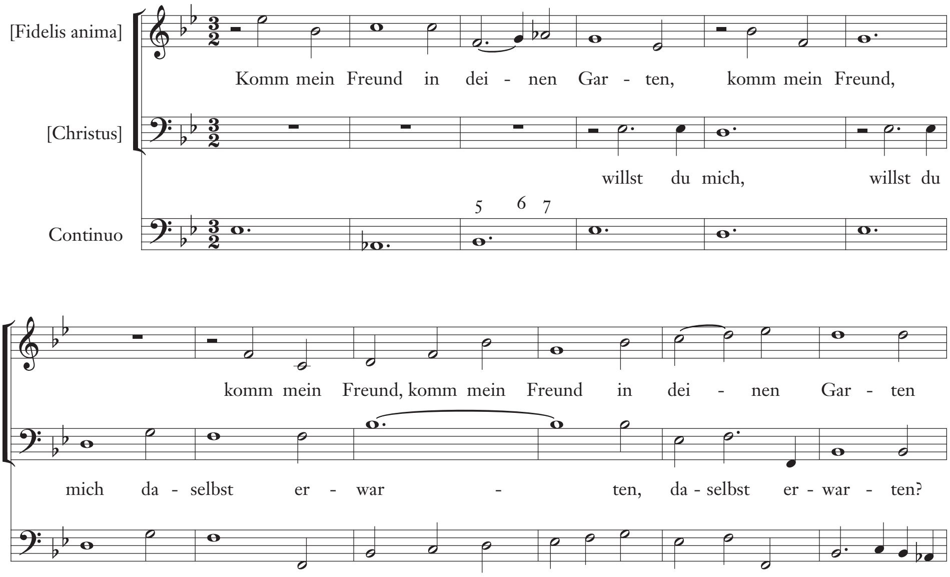
[35] E. Ann Matter, “The Love between the Bride and the Bridegroom in Cantata 140 ‘Wachet auf!’ from the Twelfth Century to Bach’s Day,” in *Die Quellen Johann Sebastian Bachs: Bachs Musik im Gottesdienst*, ed. Renate Steiger (Heidelberg: Manutius, 1998), 116.


[Fidelis anima]
[Christus]
Continuo
Komm mein Freund in dei - nen Gar - ten, komm mein Freund,
willst du mich, willst du
5 6 7
komm mein Freund, komm mein Freund in dei - nen Gar - ten
mich da - selbst er - war - ten, da - selbst er - war - ten?

Example 1. Buxtehude, *Dialogus inter Christum et fidelem animam* BUXWV 111, mm. 84–95

and the present tense in both the "Ich bin dein" duet of *Die Hochzeit* and throughout the *Dialogus.*

Bach composed another love duet to a remarkably similar text in *Herkules auf dem Scheidewege* BWV 213 between Hercules (alto) and Virtue (tenor):

| | |
|---|---|
| Ich bin deine, Du bist meine, | I am thine, thou art mine, |
| Küsse mich, ich küsse dich. | Kiss me, I kiss thee. |
| Wie Verlobte sich verbinden, | As betrothed couples unite, |
| Wie die Lust, die sie empfinden, | As the desire that they feel |
| Treu und zart und eiferig, | Is true and tender and passionate, |
| So bin ich. | So am I. |

Here the lovers speak in the second person and in the present tense. Bach designated this work a "Drama per musica,"[36] and he performed it with his Collegium musicum at Zimmerman's coffeehouse on September 5, 1733, honoring the birthday of Crown Prince Friedrich Christian of the Dresden court. The following year he parodied it for the third part of the *Christmas Oratorio*, with a text emphasizing compassion, mercy, and love:

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[36] See the facsimile of the libretto in Werner Neumann, *Sämtliche von Johann Sebastian Bach vertonte Texte* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1974), 353.

| | |
|---|---|
| Herr, dein Mitleid, dein Erbarmen | Lord, your compassion, your mercy |
| Tröstet uns und macht uns frei. | Comforts us and makes us free. |
| Deine holde Gunst und Liebe, | Your pleasing favor and love, |
| Deine wundersamen Triebe | Your wondrous desires, |
| Machen deine Vatertreu | Make your Fatherly faithfulness |
| Wieder neu. | New again. |

With his transposition of the original aria up a third from F major to A major, Bach changed the voice parts of this duet from alto and tenor to soprano and bass, as in the love duets of the cantata "Wachet Auf" and Buxtehude's *Dialogus.* The concomitant shift from the violas of *Herkules* to two oboes d'amore also calls to mind the oboe obbligato of the second duet in BWV 140, "Mein Freund ist mein." This transposition may have been necessary in order to attain tonal symmetry, as Blankenburg suggests,[37] but with it Bach also obtained the typical pairing of bass and soprano for Jesus and the faithful soul, his bride. The new text does not suggest this pairing in a love duet, but the layers beneath it, in *Herkules* and "Wachet Auf," do. The text for the *Herkules* duet, and Bach's music for it, is far more erotic than one would expect for a conversation between a mythical man and an allegorical character named "Virtue" in an unstaged coffeehouse production; lurking beneath it is a love duet for a human man and woman on the operatic stage. In its *Christmas Oratorio* version it moves even further away from opera, but its dramatic power is still present.

In the betrothal scene of Buxtehude's *Die Hochzeit des Lamms*, the sensuous "Ich bin dein/du bist mein" love duet between Christ and the Church is immediately followed by another duet, this time in dialogue and with the Church now represented by a soprano.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Die Kirche* | Wie bin ich doch so hertzlich froh! | How heartily joyful I am |
| | Das mein Schatz ist das A und O, | That my treasure is the alpha and omega, |
| | Der Anfang und das Ende. | The beginning and the end. |

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[37] Blankenburg, "Alt-Partien," 139, and Walter Blankenburg, *Das Weihnachts-Oratorium von Johann Sebastian Bach* (Kassel: Bärenreiter/Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982), 82. See also Ulrich Siegele, "Das Parodieverfahren des Weihnachtsoratoriums von J. S. Bach als dispositionelles Problem," in *Studien zur Musikgeschichte: Eine Festschrift für Ludwig Finscher*, ed. Annegrit Laubenthal (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995), 263.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *JESUS* | In meines Vaters Hause sind viel Wohnungen, und ich wil wieder kommen, und euch zu mir nehmen, auff daß ihr seyd wo ich bin, Joh 14:2–3. | In my Father's house are many rooms; . . . and I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (John 14:2–3) |
| *Die Kirche* | Er wird mich doch zu seinem Preiß, | As his reward, |
| | Auffheben in daß Paradeiß | He will lift me up into Paradise, |
| | Des klopff ich in die Hände. | For which I clap my hands. |
| *JESUS* | Ich komme bald, Offenb. 22/20 | I am coming soon. (Revelation 22:20) |
| *Die Kirche* | Amen, Amen | Amen, Amen, |
| | Komm du schöne Freuden Krohne, | Come, you lovely crown of joy, |
| | Bleib nicht lange, | do not delay. |
| | Deiner wart ich mit Verlangen | I am waiting for you with longing. |

The Church's lines come from the final verse of the chorale "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern," while Jesus's scriptural words are identified in the libretto. As the voice part for the Church changes from alto to soprano, and the source of the text moves from the duet's free poetry to scripture, its theme changes, too, from erotic to eschatological, from present love to the second coming of Christ. The characters no longer address one another, but speak only in the first person. Presumably the soprano sang this poetry to the chorale melody, and the bass in the lyrical recitative style that Buxtehude typically used for words of scripture assigned to a bass soloist. His extant vocal works contain no similar interruption of a chorale verse, but the dialogue "Wo soll ich fliehen hin" BuxWV 112 opens with an alternation between the soprano singing two complete verses of that chorale and the bass responding to each with words of scripture:

| | |
|---|---|
| S: Wo soll ich fliehen hin? | S: Whither shall I flee? |
| Weil ich beschweret bin | For I am laden down |
| Mit vielen großen Sünden: | With many grievous sins; |
| Wo sol ich Rettung finden? | Where shall I find rescue? |
| Wenn alle Welt herkähme, | If all the world came here |
| Mein Angst sie nicht wegnehme. | It could not take away my anguish. |

| | |
|---|---|
| B: Kombt her zu mir alle, die ihr | B. Come to me, all who are |
| mühselich und beladen seid, | weary and heavy laden, |
| ich will euch erquicken. | and I will give you rest. |
| Nehmet auf euch mein Joch, | Take my yoke upon you, |
| und lernet von mir; den ich bin | and learn from me; for I |
| sanftmühtig und von Herzen | am gentle and lowly in |
| demühtig. | heart. |
| | (Matthew 11:28–29) |

The words of the bass are spoken by Jesus in the biblical text; the soprano implicitly represents the faithful soul.

Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* contains three chorale/recitative dialogues (nos. 7, 38, and 40), each also scored with the soprano singing the chorale and the bass responding, but with poetry rather than the scriptural quotations that appear in Buxtehude's chorale dialogues. In the first of these (no. 7), the soprano sings a verse added by Luther to an even older Christmas hymn, "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ":

| | |
|---|---|
| Er ist auf Erden kommen arm, | He has come on earth poor, |
| Daß er unser sich erbarm, | That he might have mercy on us, |
| Und in dem Himmel mache reich, | And might make [us] rich, in heaven, |
| Und seinen lieben Engeln gleich. | And [might make us] equal to his dear angels. |
| Kyrieleis. | Lord have mercy. |

The soprano takes the lead, singing the chorale melody nearly unadorned, and the bass then comments upon it line by line:

| | |
|---|---|
| Wer will die Liebe recht erhöhn, | Who will properly extol the love |
| Die unser Heiland vor uns hegt? | That our Savior feels for us? |

His answering recitative contrasts strongly with the arioso of the chorale and its accompanying oboes d'amore. In this dialogue the voices have exchanged roles; the bass unexpectedly represents not Jesus but rather the faithful soul, the individual responding to the collective faith stated by the soprano with a chorale from the Reformation era.

The soprano reassumes the role of the faithful soul in the other two soprano/bass duets (nos. 38 and 40) and addresses Jesus as her bridegroom in the words of a hymn by Johann Rist, first published in 1642 in part 5 of his *Himlische Lieder:*

38

| | |
|---|---|
| Jesu, du mein liebstes Leben, | Jesus, you, my most beloved life, |
| Meiner Seelen Bräutigam, | My soul's bridegroom, |
| Der du dich vor mich gegeben | You who has given himself for me |
| An des bittern Kreuzes Stamm! | On the beam of the bitter cross! |

40

| | |
|---|---|
| Jesu, meine Freud und Wonne, | Jesus, my joy and gladness, |
| Meine Hoffnung, Schatz und Teil, | My hope, treasure, and portion, |
| Mein Erlösung, Schmuck und Heil, | My redemption, adornment, and salvation, |
| Hirt und König, Licht und Sonne, | Shepherd and king, light and sun, |
| Ach! Wie soll ich würdiglich, | Oh! How shall I worthily |
| Mein Herr Jesu, preisen dich?[38] | Praise you, my Lord Jesus? |

These ten lines that Bach or his librettist divided between two chorale-recitative dialogues form the first strophe of Rist's thirteen-verse hymn. The two parts have different rhyme schemes: abab / cddcee, and Johann Schop's setting in the *Himlische Lieder* articulates this division with binary form. Schop's melody appears in numerous hymnals, including Gottfried Vopelius's *Das Neu Leipziger Gesangbuch* of 1682,[39] but Bach did not use it here. Instead he wrote a new melody, completely through-composed, and more in the style of a spiritual song than a church chorale, with many syllables set to two notes of music. The two dialogues form a frame—textually, tonally, and stylistically—around the soprano's echo aria "Flößt, mein Heiland" (no. 39).

The bass assumes a complex role in these latter two dialogues. This time he begins the conversation with his recitative, and at first it appears that he still represents the faithful soul:

| | |
|---|---|
| Immanuel, o süßes Wort! | "Emanuel," O sweet word! |
| Mein Jesus heißt mein Hort, | My Jesus is called "my refuge," |
| Mein Jesus heißt mein Leben. | My Jesus is called "my life." |
| Mein Jesus hat sich mir ergeben; | My Jesus has submitted himself to me; |

---

[38] Johann Rist, *Himlische Lieder, Mit sehr anmuthigen, von dem weitberühmten, Herrn Johann: Schopen gesetzten Melodeyen, Das Fünffte und letzte Zehn* (Lüneburg: Johann und Heinrich Sternen, 1642), 19–20. Facsimile of all five parts ed. Siegfried Kross (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1976). The text given here is that of the *Christmas Oratorio*, which contains slight variants from the original.

[39] See Johannes Zahn, *Die Melodien der deutschen evangelischen Kirchenlieder*, 6 vols. (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1888–93; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1963), no. 7891.

But when the soprano enters with the chorale, the bass does not stop to listen; instead, he joins in arioso style and metamorphoses into the bridegroom that the soprano, as bride, is invoking:

| | |
|---|---|
| Komm! Ich will dich mit Lust umfassen, | Come! With delight I will embrace you, |
| Mein Herze soll dich nimmer lassen. | My heart shall never leave you. |

With this, two formerly separate genres have merged; the chorale-recitative dialogue has briefly become a love duet (Example 2).

Finally, Buxtehude and Bach each made dramatic use of trumpets to represent the nobility. Buxtehude dedicated his two "extraordinary" Abendmusiken of 1705 to the very highest nobility—the Holy Roman Emperor—and scored for trumpets in both of them. In *Castrum doloris*, dedicated to the memory of Emperor Leopold I, who had died May 5, 1705, he used muted trumpets; in *Templum honoris*, honoring his successor, Emperor Joseph I, he specified two choirs of trumpets and timpani. In 1673 Buxtehude had purchased two of the six trumpets that St. Mary's Church owned and described them as "for the embellishment of the Abendmusik, made in a special way, the likes of which have not been heard in the orchestra of any prince."[40]

*Templum honoris* begins with an "Intrada" for the double choir of trumpets and timpani. We can get an idea of how this opulent music might have sounded from a cantata that Buxtehude had composed for the wedding of Joachim von Dalen and Catharine Margarethe Brauer von Hachenburg in1681. Von Dalen was a lawyer, and his bride the daughter of a Bürgermeister. Both belonged to the nobility, which occupied a small but privileged position in Lübeck society. The social classes in seventeenth-century Lübeck were highly stratified, and sumptuary laws governed the conduct of weddings: how many guests one could invite, how many musicians could play, and what sort of food and drink one could serve. Von Dalen, as a member of the highest class, was permitted 120 guests (not including those from out of town); wine; a meal of four courses including pastry, fish, game, and roasted meat; and a large ensemble of musicians, including players of trumpets and drums.[41] Thus Buxtehude scored this wedding cantata for four singers (two sopranos, alto, and bass), two violins and violone, two trumpets with timpani, and continuo, and he began it by referring to the work's scoring: "Schlagt, Künstler! die Pauken" BUXWV 122. Its printed libretto

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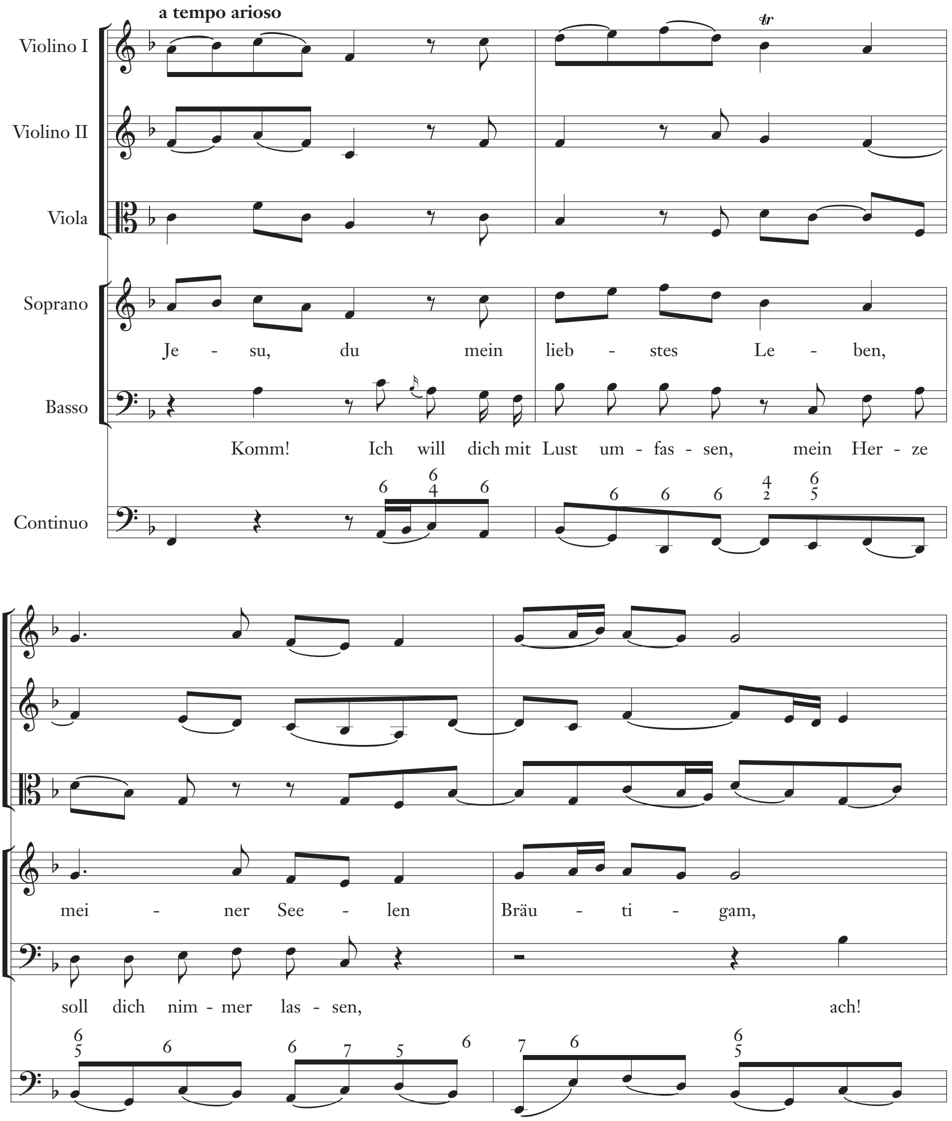
[40] Snyder, *Buxtehude*, 58, 465.

[41] *Ordnung Eines Erbahren Raths der Keiserlichen Freyen, und des heiligen Reichß Stadt LÜBECK Darnach sich hinführo dieser Stadt Bürger und Einwohner bey Verlöbnüssen, Hochzeiten, in Kleydungengen, Kindbetten, Gefatterschafften, Begräbnissen, und was denselben allen angengig sampt ihren Frawen, Kindern und Gesinde, verhalten sollen* (Lübeck, 1619).


a tempo arioso
Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Soprano
Basso
Continuo
tr
Je - su, du mein lieb - stes Le - ben,
Komm! Ich will dich mit Lust um - fas - sen, mein Her - ze
6 6 4 6
6 6 6 4 2 6 5
mei - ner See - len Bräu - ti - gam,
soll dich nim - mer las - sen, ach!
6 5 6 6 7 5 6
7 6 6 5

Example 2. Bach, *Christmas Oratorio* BWV 248/38
“Recitativo con Chorale,” mm. 10–13

specifies that it, too, begins with an Intrada for trumpets and timpani,[42] but that section may have been improvised, because the preserved parts do not contain a separate opening instrumental movement. The opening vocal movement does, however, begin with eleven measures of music for trumpets and timpani alone in the style of a fanfare (Example 3). Its text makes explicit the relationship between the instruments and the nobility of its dedicatees:

| | |
|---|---|
| Schlagt, Künstler! Die Paucken und Saiten auffs best, | Strike the drums, you artists, and the strings at your best! |
| Stosst eilend zusammen in eure weitschallende Silber-Trompeten: | Rush to bring together your broadly ringing silver trumpets; |
| Vermischet das Trummeln auff Kupfernen Trummeln mit klaren Klareten | Blend the drumming of copper drums with the clear clarions, |
| Heut feyren zwey Edle ihr Ehliches Fest. | Today two nobles celebrate their wedding feast. |

Bach drew similarly on the association of trumpets and timpani with the nobility in "Tönet ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!" BWV 214, which he composed in 1733 for the birthday of the Electress Maria Josepha of Saxony, who was also queen of Poland and the daughter of Emperor Joseph I. Its opening movement names the musical instruments and directly addresses the queen:

| | |
|---|---|
| Tönet ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten! | Sound, you drums! Ring out, you trumpets! |
| Klingende Saiten, erfüllet die Luft! | Resonant strings, fill the air! |
| Singet itzt Lieder, ihr muntren Poeten, | Sing songs now, you lively poets! |
| "Königin lebe!" Wird fröhlich geruft. | "Long live the Queen" is joyfully cried. |

This chorus became the opening movement of the *Christmas Oratorio*, which celebrates the birth of a king. "Großer Herr, o starker König," the only aria with trumpet obbligato in the *Christmas Oratorio* (no. 8), also emanates from "Tönet ihr Pauken." Klaus Hofmann has noted that the fanfare theme that first appears against the bass voice in m. 15 of both this aria and its parodied original, "Kron und Preiß gekrönter Damen, Königin!" might have been used in ceremonies at the Dresden court.[43] Bach designated

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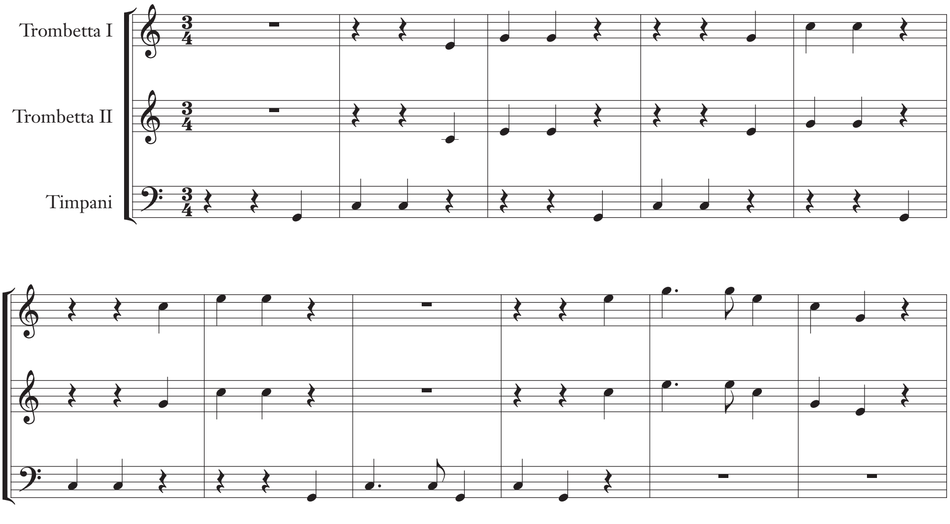
[42] Facsimile in *The Düben Collection Database Catalogue*, http://www.musik.uu.se/duben/displayFacsimile.php?Select_Path=vmhs050,015_p12_01v.jpg (accessed October 15, 2009).

[43] Klaus Hofmann, "'Großer Herr, o starker König': Ein Fanfarenthema bei Johann Sebastian Bach," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 81 (1995): 31–46.



Example 3. Buxtehude, *Schlagt, Künstler! die Pauken* BuxWV 122, mm. 1–11

"Tönet ihr Pauken" a "Drama per musica,"[44] with the four singers assigned the roles of the antique goddesses Irene, Bellona, and Pallas and the allegorical character Fame.

Court ceremonies are inherently dramatic, and trumpets play no small role in the drama. But in free imperial cities such as Lübeck and Mühlhausen there was no court; the city council answered directly to the Holy Roman Emperor. In addressing his "extraordinary" Abendmusiken of 1705 directly to the emperors, dead and alive, Buxtehude was celebrating this fact. Bach was in Lübeck for those performances, most likely playing a violin or continuo instrument, and it is unlikely that he had ever witnessed ceremonial music as elaborate as this. He soon had the opportunity to emulate it, when it fell to him to compose the music for the inauguration of the city council of Mühlhausen in 1708. Richly scored for four choirs of instruments, including trumpets and timpani, with both solo and capella voices, "Gott ist mein König" BWV 71 demonstrates the young composer's grasp of the ceremonial genre.

By 1734, Buxtehude's vocal music had become much too old-fashioned to serve as a direct model for new composition. It is quite possible, however, that his radical but long-lived concept of the dramatic Abendmusik series, in which a story is stretched out over five performances in as many weeks, inspired the structure of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, with its six performances produced in a more reasonable time span of under two weeks. But that raises the question of why it took him twenty-nine years to implement this concept. Perhaps the answer lies in events of Bach's life during the late 1720s and early 1730s: his interest in the Dresden court and the opera there, including his attendance at the 1731 premiere of Hasse's *Cleofide;* his application in 1733 for the position of *Hofkapellmeister;* and his assumption of the leadership of the Leipzig Collegium musicum, which gave him the means to produce *drammi per musica* honoring members of the electoral court. These works in turn provided the building blocks for a larger, multipartite dramatic structure, the *Christmas Oratorio.* Both the Lübeck Abendmusiken and the Dresden opera may have inspired Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, just as the Hamburg Opera had spawned Buxtehude's dramatic Abendmusiken. Although Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* lacks the named characters that populate Buxtehude's Abendmusiken, and its venue lay in the liturgy of the church rather than in public concerts, it nonetheless displays drama in music of the very highest art.

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[44] See facsimile in Neumann, *Sämtliche vertonte Texte*, 406–7.

# The Triumph of “Instrumental Melody”

## *Aspects of Musical Poetics in Bach’s* St. John Passion

Laurence Dreyfus

How does J. S. Bach set poetry to music? It is not a question one asks very often. Yet if we want to understand Bach’s aims in his vocal music, we need to pay attention to his attitudes toward poetic verse, querying the compositional actions he takes with respect to it. It is fair to say—despite the proliferating interpretations treating Bach’s passions and cantatas—that this methodological concern has been given relatively short shrift in the literature. It is often tacitly assumed, for example, that one can ignore the specific poetic articulation of madrigalian verse, yet at the same time have direct access to its meaning. Instead of engaging with the poetry, we are often content to devise a condensed digest of its import, and then—moving on to what really interests us—observe how the musical conduit of Bach’s craft, genius, and religiosity conveys this sense into a legible amalgam of words and sounds.

Things are never that simple, however, and I suggest that Bach was in fact an unusually wayward setter of texts, a composer whose musical praxis both obscures and undermines a straightforward translation of literary ideas. For if one exhibits even the slightest sympathy for the poetry that precedes the compositional invention, it is easy to show that Bach defies virtually every rule of musical propriety advocated by his contemporaries, whether literati or musicians. We need, therefore, to confront his obstructive attitude toward language and diction, and ask what it signifies in the early eighteenth century. Far from wishing to deprive anyone of aesthetic pleasure or theological edification found in Bach’s vocal music, I try to peel off a veneer of misplaced respect attached to Bach’s compositions so as to grasp what is so extraordinary about music that has outlived its original function. Some arias from the *St. John Passion* suggest how Bach not only fails to reflect his texts in a conventionally appropriate manner, but has an unusual way of overshadowing—even eclipsing—the representation of their assembled and explicit meanings. In the interplay between musical processes and the poetic verse, one can see how Bach’s music invariably “says” something different from the accompanying words. To the extent that Bach has crafted a distinctly new experience, therefore, it is worth assessing the curious features of his musical poetics.

Before turning to Bach's peculiarity, it is useful to describe a conventional and respectful attitude toward poetry. To this end, I turn briefly to an aria from Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (1724), where the linking of text and music differs so strikingly from Bach's. The text for the first part of an aria sung by Sesto (act 1, scene 4) reads as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Svegliatevi nel core | Awaken in my heart |
| Furie d'un alma offesa, | Ye furies of an offended soul, |
| A far d'un traditor | To take upon a traitor |
| Aspra vendetta! | Bitter vengeance! |

When Sesto enters, he closely shadows the first four bars of the opening ritornello represented in Example 1. The music skillfully mimics key aspects of the poetic structure, rushing headlong from the first line into a syncopated emphasis on the "furie"—the furies or the wrath—of the second line. The music even helps the emphatic rendition of the fourth line, setting it off by inserting a short breath after "traditor." The elaboration in sixteenth notes in the remaining bits of the ritornello—one finds out later—serves, not surprisingly, to depict the "furore"—a furious backdrop against which the stage character declaims his incensed imperative to cease lamentations and turn to avenging his father. Even the continuo line subsequently sets the word "svegliatevi" in a clear echo of the singer. There can be no doubt that the music not only elaborates, but also adheres to the text. The notes become a transparent cipher for the words: we hear the music but think the meaning of the poetry. So when literal repetitions or reformulated passages occur later in the aria, Handel refers us back to the aria text as a primary source of meaning.

This effective representation and enhancement of the text is exactly what enlightened critics of the time demanded and precisely what Handel supplies. If one follows Johann Mattheson's rules of clarity in composing arias found in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), for example, one can see how, barring a liberty taken here and there, Handel fulfils every critical desideratum. The first rule is that one must strictly observe the caesuras and punctuation in the poetry. "It is mind-boggling [*fast nicht glaublich*]"—Mattheson continues—"how even the greatest masters defy this rule, expending all their efforts in rousing the ears [*die Ohren aum Aufstande zu bringen*] with booming and noisy figurations which in no way satisfy the senses, much less move the heart."[1] Next, Handel complies with Mattheson's strict rule to observe the accent and empha-

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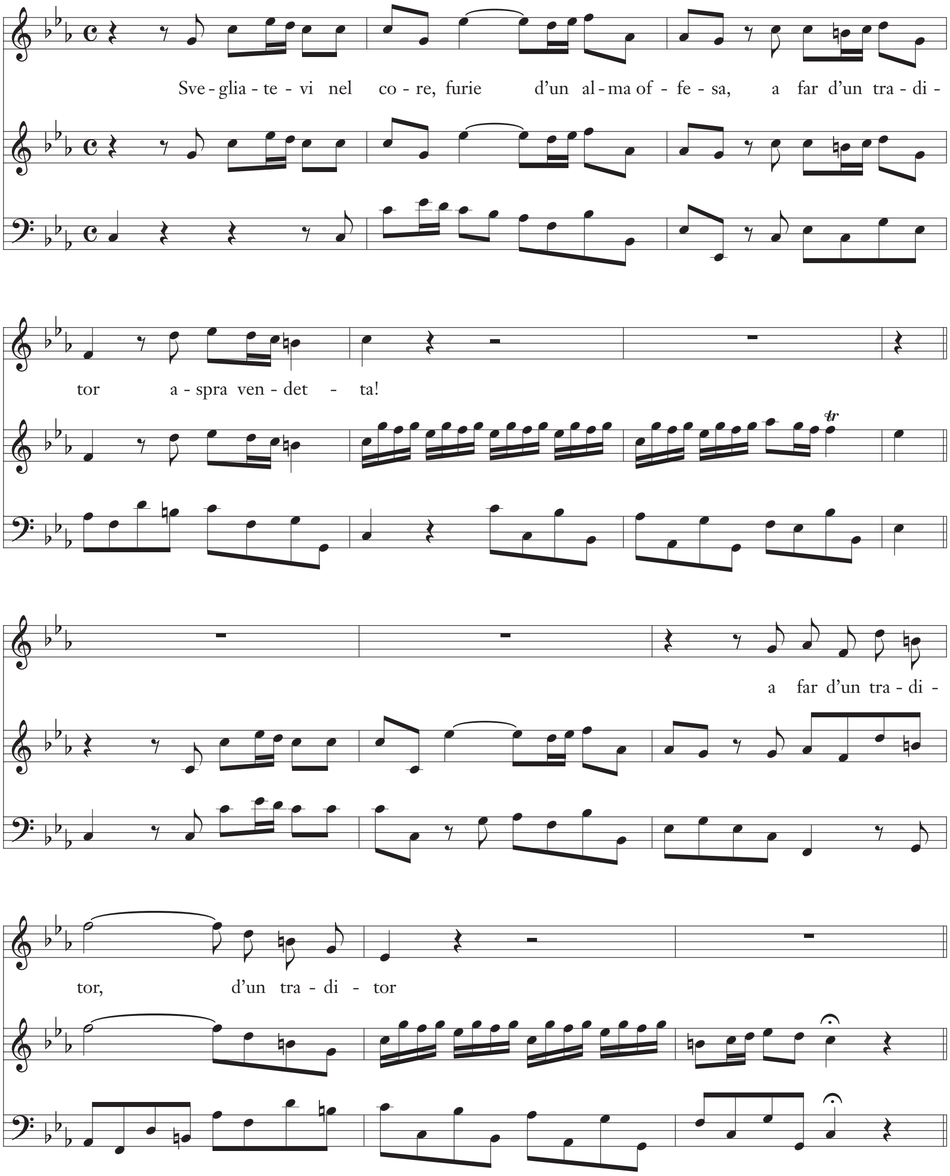
[1] Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739; facsim. Kassel, 1980), 141, 145. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.


Sve - glia - te - vi nel co - re, furie d'un al - ma of - fe - sa, a far d'un tra - di -
tor a - spra ven - det - ta!
a far d'un tra - di -
tor, d'un tra - di - tor
tr

Example 1. G. F. Handel, "Svegliatevi nel cuore" from *Giulio Cesare*, idealized ritornello and opening vocal line compared

sis of the words. "The actual emphasis," he writes, "always calls for a precise type of musical accent: the chief thing is to know which words take musical accents."[2] One never really attains clarity, moreover, unless each melody contains (no more than) one emotion (*Gemütsbewegung*).[3] Mixing and matching affects in one and the same melody, he implies, is bound to be confusing. As one might expect of Mattheson, he provides a host of practical examples and elaborations to illustrate these prescriptions.

Mattheson's final rule of clarity insists that the composer base settings of poetry on the "sense and meaning" (*Sinn und Verstand*) of the words rather than on any one of them individually: the aim is "communicative sounds" (*redende Klänge*) rather than "colorful notes."[4] He amplifies this rule later on with a crucial distinction between aria melodies for singing and those for playing (*Vom Unterschiede zwischen den Sing- und Spiel-Melodien*), to which he devotes an entire chapter. Vocal melody is indisputably the mother, while instrumental melody is her daughter. Vocal melody not only "claims rank and privilege, but also instructs the daughter how best to fulfil her mother's wishes so as to make everything lyrical and fluent whereby one can tell whose child she is." There is even some fear of illegitimacy: "We can easily tell which among the instrumental melodies are the real daughters and which are, as it were, produced out of wedlock."[5]

Mattheson's key point is that when instruments and voices collaborate, "the instruments must not predominate [*hervorragen*]." "Many a beautiful painting is obscured in this way when fitted with a gold carved frame which alone diverts the eye and detracts from the painting. Any connoisseur of painting will prefer to choose a dark over a bright frame. The same thing applies to instruments," which provide no more than a frame for the words set to music.[6] Relying on these prescriptions, one can see why Handel's text settings were commended by those even occasionally critical of him who praised his exceptional powers. Writing about expression in vocal works, one such critic, Charles Avison, confesses in 1752 that he has "chosen to give all [his] illustrations on this Matter from the works of Mr Handel, because no one has exercised this talent more universally, and because these instances must also be most universally understood."[7]

From several passages in Mattheson's *Capellmeister* one can infer that Bach was a special irritant, but even fourteen years earlier, Mattheson had subjected Bach to a scathing criticism of his text setting at an early stage in his career as a church composer. In a passage in the *Critica Musica* of 1725 Mattheson notes:

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[2] Ibid., 148.

[3] Ibid., 145.

[4] Ibid., 141.

[5] Ibid., 204.

[6] Ibid., 207.

[7] Charles Avison, *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752; 2nd ed. London, 1753), 65.

> In order that good old Zachau may have company and not be quite so alone, let us set beside him an otherwise excellent practicing musician of today, who for a long time does nothing but repeat: — "I, I, I, I had much grief, I had much grief, in my heart, in my heart. I had much grief, etc., in my heart, etc., etc., I had much grief, etc., in my heart, etc., I had much grief, etc., in my heart etc., etc., etc., etc., etc. I had much grief, etc., in my heart, etc., etc.[8]

It is paradoxical that Mattheson singles out the first fugal chorus from Bach's "Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis" BWV 21, a cantata written for Weimar in 1714, because here Bach has taken the syllabic declamation of the text more literally than is often his practice. The problem is not only the initial repetitions that Mattheson finds irksome, but also that the fugal subject fails to set the phrase "in meinem Herzen" with a convincing or audible declamation.

The arias from the *St. John Passion* were composed in the same year as Handel's *Giulio Cesare* and were performed only months before Mattheson penned his poisonous jibe about Cantata 21. But in them Bach is working to a completely different plan. No. 13 "Ach, mein Sinn" is the shortest aria in the *St. John Passion* but is long on musical substance by any reckoning. Peter has just repeated his denial of Jesus in recent recitatives, and the aria text (an adaptation of the first verse of a poem by Christian Weise) comments on the biblical verses in which Peter is said to have "gone out and wept bitterly" (*ging hinaus und weinte bitterlich*).

| | | End rhyme | Stresses |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Ach, mein Sinn, wo willt du endlich hin?** [$V_1$] | [a] | 5 |
| 2 | **Wo soll ich mich erquicken?** [$V_2$] | [b] | 3 |
| 3 | Bleib ich hier? oder wünsch ich mir | [c] | 4 |
| 4 | Berg und Hügel auf den Rücken? | [b] | 4 |
| 5 | Bei **der Welt ist gar kein Rat** [*part of* $V_1$] | [d] | 4 |
| 6 | Und im Herzen stehn die Schmerzen | [e] | 4 |
| 7 | Meiner Missetat, | [d] | 3 |
| 8 | Weil der Knecht den Herrn ver**leugnet hat**. [$E_1$–*end*] | [d] | 5 |

**boldfaced text** = words set to ritornello subject

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[8] Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, rev. and enlarged Christoph Wolff, *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents* (New York: Norton, 1998), 325, document 319.

(Oh my soul, where do you wish to go, where should I find relief? / Should I stay here or do I wish mountains and hills [to fall] upon my back? / There's no answer in the world and the pains of my misdeed remain in my heart, because the servant has denied his Lord.)

The poem consists of one strophe of eight lines, with end rhymes abcb dedd that break the octave into two quatrains and with additional internal rhymes in lines 1, 3, and 6 (*Sinn/hin; hier/mir; Herzen/Schmerzen*). The first quatrain is held together by its repeating scheme of pentameter followed by a trimeter and by its grammatical questions. The second quatrain breaks new ground by answering the questions posed in the first four lines but without abandoning a desperate tone of hopelessness. Its stresses form a kind of mirror image to the first quatrain, so that the final two lines replicate in reverse order the stresses of the two first lines of the poem, binding the two quatrains in a subtly balanced unit. The insistent end rhymes on *Rat*, *Missetat*, and *verleugnet hat* in lines 5, 7, and 8 are punctuated by the internal rhymes *Herzen* and *Schmerzen*—heart and pains—which themselves mirror the internal rhyme in line 3 and drive the poem forward speedily toward its concluding explanation, stark in its literal recall of Peter's denial but terse in contrasting "servant" (*Knecht*) with "Lord" (*Herr*) in powerful monosyllables. Not *too* bad a poem, in fact, were it not for too many contrived end rhymes. The surprise is that that the poet and theorist Christian Weise (1642–1708)—on whose version the *St. John Passion* text is based—composed his original five-stanza poem around 1675 in an introduction to the art of poetry and rhetoric so as to show how a poet can add words to a preexisting instrumental work.[9] The musical piece for which it provided a singable text—an intrada by Sebastian Knüpfer—is lost, but the musical incipit of the treble line survives, as shown in Example 2. Although the notation without barlines and with ambiguous fermatas is a bit obscure—each fermata seems to be merely a *signum congruentiae* corresponding to the commas in the text—Weise shows clearly how his metrical accents in the first line match the rhythmic stresses in, as he puts it, Knüpfer's "nimble entry music [*bewegliche Intrade*]."[10]

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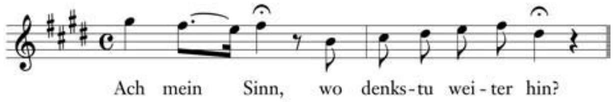
[9] In Christian Weise's version the poem was called Weeping Peter (*Der weinende Petrus*); the first strophe, which includes all the text Bach eventually used, is laid out in eight lines. "Ach, mein Sinn, wo denkstu weiter hin" is one line, for example. Strophes 2–5 were ignored by Bach's poetic collaborator, whose identity remains unknown. See Alfred Dürr, *Johann Sebastian Bach's* St. John Passion: *Genesis, Transmissions and Meaning*, trans. Alfred Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 43.

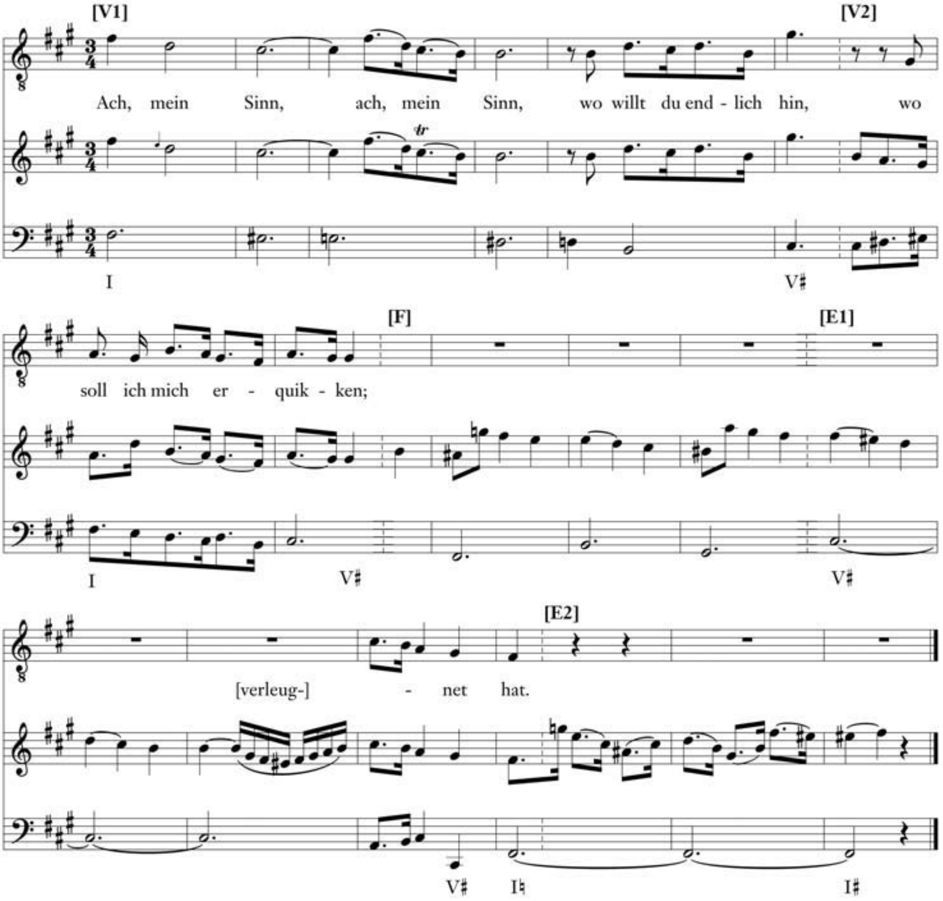
[10] Christian Weise, *Der grünen Jugend Nothwendigen Gedancken* [Necessary Thoughts for an Inexperienced Youth] (Leipzig, 1675), 352. I'm grateful to Daniel Melamed for providing me with a facsimile of the original.



Example 2. Christian Weise, "Ach, mein Sinn," as hypothetically underlaid to Knüpfer's Intrada

So how did Bach engage with this poetic structure? Not terribly well, as one quickly discovers. (A reduction of Bach's ritornello for "Ach, mein Sinn" is shown in Example 3.) The harmony, as one can see, features a prominent bass line that chromaticizes a falling tetrachord from the tonic F♯ down to C♯, and stays in the close proximity of the tonic and dominant for the next few bars, before initiating (on the second line of the sketch) the linear intervallic pattern 10–7–10, 10–7–10. This sequence works well with a progression of fifths in the bass before landing on the dominant. This dominant chord on C♯ is prolonged for a few bars, cadences in the minor tonic, and is extended via diminished harmonies long enough to raise the third in the final F♯ minor chord from A♮ to A♯.

It is clear that Bach designed only part of the ritornello melody to be sung: just the first two lines fit the music, and some words fit far better than others. So the first problem is that the instrumental melody overwhelms the vocal line. Far worse, the emphatic declamation of the line "Ach, mein Sinn," with its willful emphasis on the possessive pronoun "mein," breaks the fundamental rule about music observing poetic accents: Bach's first musico-poetic act is to slap the trochee (long-short-long) in the face, as well as to insert an unnecessary textual repetition. Rather than respect the prosody of "Ach, mein Sinn," he accentuates the word "my," reinforcing a conventional trope of passion sermons in which Peter's sin and remorse are applied to the modern Christian. He also seems to have alighted on the declamatory possibilities of "wo wíllt du éndlich hín," which evoke the gently swinging rhythmic inequality of French dance types, especially those with three beats to the bar. The most suitable candidate, given Peter's departure (in lines 3 and 4) following his shameful denial of Christ, was the French chaconne, not only because of its metrical scheme and fast tempo, but also because—in the minor mode—it boasted a venerable link to the gravitas of falling lamento bass lines. The proliferation of accents on the second beat (in mm. 1, 3, 5, 6, 11, and 15) confirms, moreover, that the implied dance type is the tragic if spirited chaconne rather than the more grandiose and slower sarabande grave marked by a conventional second-beat stress only in the first measure and a *mouvement* that wafts over rather than drives the music's pulse. (The absence of a caesura or feminine ending in the fourth measure also points away from the sarabande.) The result was Bach's genial idea for a ritornello comprising two quick eight-measure


[V1]
[V2]
Ach, mein Sinn, ach, mein Sinn, wo willt du end - lich hin, wo
tr
I
V♯
soll ich mich er - quik - ken;
[F]
[E1]
I
V♯
V♯
[E2]
[verleug-] - net hat.
V♯
I♮
I♯

Example 3. J. S. Bach, *St. John Passion* BWV 245/13, ritornello and vocal line compared

periods of chaconne overlying an initial lamento bass with a tagged-on (if curtailed) *petite reprise* at the end.

None of the bright ideas and pointed associations found in the ritornello can mask the fact that the setting of the end of line 2 is less than poetically inspired: in a common failing of Bach's text settings, the composer assigns too many notes to the end of the poetic line. Whereas the music fits "wo willt du endlich hin" hand in glove, it is wide of the mark on "wo sóll ich mích erquícken," with the rhythmic punch on the word "erquicken" both garbled and drawled. Because the remainder of the ritornello is virtually devoid of text, Bach seems to have followed the impulse of his already devised instrumental melody rather than return to the poetry. For only at the very end does he invite the voice to join the instruments for the closing phrase, with its final rhyme and grammatical period, before concluding—again, instrumentally—with a valedictory afterword and dancelike *reprise.*[11]

To select some words as inspiration and blatantly ignore the rhythm of others suggests an odd approach to setting texts. What is more, few words of the poem are sung to the ritornello subject (these are in boldface above). Apart from the words in the musical sketch, only a bit of line 5, "Bei der Welt ist gar kein Rat," sounds to the strain of the theme. Yet even here, the words can hardly be said to fit the music: they have been pasted onto the melodic line as best Bach could, but not persuasively so. As a result, these lines project less conviction than those for which the composer thought out a compelling declamation in advance. (How different is the Handel aria, where the opening of the ritornello sets the entire text conforming to the rule of predominant vocal melody!) Everything else the tenor sings in the entire Bach aria is, in fact, in free counterpoint that makes a point of never repeating itself. As a result, one can guess which words were most important to Bach: they are the ones set to the ritornello. After all, there is good evidence that they served as the topic of invention for some aspects of the ritornello, since they have been assigned a clear declamation that others words lack.

The design of the aria as a whole also helps explain Bach's unusual attitude toward the poetry. Although his arias and choruses display several different constructive methods, the harmonic functions of this ritornello closely resemble those he had developed earlier in several fast movements of his instrumental concertos.[12] Just as there are the two opening sections that define the key—Vordersatz 1 and 2 [$V_1$ and $V_2$]—there is a middle, "wandering" Fortspinnung that withholds the key [F], as well as two Epilog segments that confirm and close in the tonic. The individual segments, no matter what one calls them, are not merely analytic constructs, but discrete objects of Bach's invention, for each one of them becomes detached and repeated during the course of the piece. The segmentation, moreover, occurs during the course of an alternation between ideas belonging to the ritornello and those called episodes, which, unlike ritornello segments, are not strung together as a syntactic unit. Indeed, one might consider how, for Bach, the higher the style of an aria or chorus, the greater number and depth of paradigmatic inflections he crafts—the more, in other words, he pays attention to the working out of the music.

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[11] A related association between chaconne and lamento is found in the opening chorus of Bach's cantata "Jesu, der du meine Seele" BWV 78 (composed five months later in 1724) and is discussed in Dreyfus, "Bachian Invention and Its Mechanisms," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bach*, ed. John Butt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 184–92. In "Ach, mein Sinn," the reprise, which I have labeled a second Epilog, is attached to the ritornello only in its last statement at the end of the aria.

[12] The concerto processes developed from the works of Antonio Vivaldi are discussed in Dreyfus, *Bach and the Patterns of Invention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. 43–94. An analysis of an aria from the *St. John Passion* with another segmentable ritornello, "Eilt, ihr angefochtnen Seelen," can be found on pp. 94–101.

These paradigms are represented in Table 1, a "ritornellogram" that represents in shorthand one kind of constructive thinking that went into the composition of the movement. The main part of the table identifies each appearance of ritornello segments in order of their occurrence within the piece, $R_1$ through $R_9$. As the table shows, this is music saturated with ritornellos. For each ritornello occurrence, moreover, the table details the scale degree on which the ritornello recurs, the mode (minor or major), whether the voice is participating at the time, and the identity and order of segments. An inspection across and down reveals that not one ritornello is identical to another—even the first and last differ. We are dealing with a composer obsessed with permutations and reformulations of his musical material.

The musical permutations are far from a random act of juggling, however, because the function of each ritornello segment is laden with affective associations. The Vordersatz in "Ach, mein Sinn" is, for example, translated into major mode to mark a moment of hope at the beginning of the question "Bleib ich hier?" But if the Epilog had been translated into the major mode—a procedure Bach would have taken pains to include in a concerto—the operation would have sent an unmistakably pastoral message of galant tranquility and comforting closure. It is easy to devise a perfectly grammatical example of what I elsewhere have called a Bachian MODESWITCH by playing the Epilog segments in F♯ major,[13] but the translation is utterly inappropriate to this aria. Because this message would contradict the dramatic situation of the aria, an Epilog in major was unacceptable, so Bach omits it.

It is also Bach's habit to seek out connective links between segments, researching how he can forge new connections, as one can see in the last column that lists three unexpected linkages. Between $R_2$ and $R_3$ (at m. 26), the composer has noticed a clever if seamless connection between the end of the second Vordersatz segment in the tonic and the second Epilog in the dominant that produces a caesura prolonging C♯ major. Similar kinds of RESEARCH investigating possible joins between nonadjacent segments occur between $R_3$ and $R_4$ (at m. 32), a transition that moves from a varied Fortspinnung to the Vordersatz at the upper fifth (the dominant); and in a parallel move, this time from the major to the minor at m. 63 from a Fortspinnung in E major to an opening Vordersatz in B minor.

To appreciate this mind-boggling Bachian musicianship, one can dismantle the aria and listen for the paradigms rather than follow the nominal order of the piece, hearing it as a set of variations of its fundamental segments. Taking the two Vordersatz

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[13] See Dreyfus, *Bach and the Patterns of Invention*, esp. 18–19, 72–77.

Table 1. Ritornellogram of J. S. Bach, *St. John Passion* BWV 245/13

| Rit | Mm. | Degree | Mode | Voice | $V_1$ | $V_2$ | F | $E_1$ | $E_2$ | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $R_1$ | 1–16 | I | minor |  | $V_1$ | $V_2$ | F | $E_1$ |  |  |
| $R_2$ | 17–24 | I | minor | X | $V_1$ | $V_2$ |  |  |  |  |
|  | 24–26 | I | minor | X |  | $V_2$ |  |  |  |  |
| $R_3$ | 26–28 | V | minor |  |  |  |  |  | $E_2$ | RESEARCH [$V_2$(I)–$E_2$(V)] |
| $R_4$ | 28–32 | I | minor | X |  |  | F* |  |  | RESEARCH [F(I)–V/V)] |
| $R_5$ | 32–47 | V | minor | X | $V_1$ | $V_2$ | F | $E_1$ |  | NB m.42 diatonic substitution |
| $R_6$ | 47–50 | V | minor | X | $V_1^*$ |  |  |  |  | absent melodic subject, decorations from [F] |
| $R_7$ | 52–59 | VII | MAJOR | X | $V_1$ | $V_2$ |  |  |  |  |
|  | 59–63 | VII | MAJOR |  |  |  | F |  |  | RESEARCH [F(VII)–$V_1$(IV)] |
| $R_8$ | 63–74 | IV | minor | X | $V_1$ | $V_2$ | F |  |  |  |
| $R_9$ | 74–89 | I | minor | X | $V_1^*$ | $V_2$ | F | $E_1$ |  |  |
|  | 89–91 | I | minor |  |  |  |  |  | $E_2$ |  |

| | |
|---|---|
| *R* | *Ritornello* |
| *V* | *Vordersatz* |
| *F* | *Fortspinnung* |
| *E* | *Epilog* |
| * | *varied segment* |
| X | *voice present* |

| Segment | Mm. | Text |
|---|---|---|
| $V_1$ | 1–6 | Ach, mein Sinn, wo willt du endlich hin |
| $V_2$ | 6–8 | wo soll ich mich erquicken |
| F | 8–12 |  |
| $E_1$ | 12–16 | (ver)leugnet hat |
| $E_2$ | 89–91 |  |

[$V_1$–$V_2$] segments together, one hears the second segment vocalized on its in own in the tonic, as well as both segments played on the fourth and fifth scale degrees in the minor and on the seventh scale degree in the major; the vocal lines in each case never repeat themselves. Listening down the occurrences of the F segment, one hears it arrayed on four different scale degrees: the first, fifth, seventh, and fourth. Like the Vordersatz segments, the Fortspinnung can also be translated into the major, which Bach undertakes at m. 59. The first Epilog, as mentioned, is permissible only in the minor and occurs at the beginning of the aria, in the very middle, and at the end. The second Epilog, more interestingly, occurs first on the dominant at m. 26, where its function as a prolongation of a cadential gesture is not yet clearly defined with respect to the ritornello; $E_2$ is then attached in its correct syntactic relation to $E_1$ only in the final measures of the piece.

One would think that the ritornellos in "Ach, mein Sinn" constituted only the basic scaffolding of the aria. In fact, in charting the ritornello segments out of order, one has accounted—amazingly—for every measure of the piece. So dense and self-sustaining are Bach's ritornello procedures that he has composed virtually nothing episodic in the entire aria. What might be considered structurally equivalent to something free and episodic is, strikingly, the elaboration of the vocal line, which could not be further from a submission of instrumental to vocal melody in Mattheson's terms. If anything, this kind of saturated permutation of strictly identified materials signals a clear if anarchic revolt of the instrumental realm over and against the vocal.

This musical thicket of continuous variations therefore has implications for an understanding of Bach's poetics. For given the inordinate attention paid to musical reworkings in "Ach, mein Sinn," Bach has done serious violence to the text as a work of poetry. As a setting of a poem, the music shows so little respect for the structure as to make one wonder why a poem with a meter and rhyme scheme was necessary in the first place. Even the simplest poetic parallelisms are ignored, as in the rhymes of the first quatrain or the metrical scheme in lines 3 and 4. Nor does the punctuated question ending line 4, for example, even coincide with a local cadence, an obvious enough point that is stressed by Bach's cousin Johann Gottfried Walther in his article "Aria" in the *Musicalisches Lexicon* of 1732.[14] Even the second Epilog segment occurs as an arbitrary medial close just before Bach returns to repeat the opening text "Ach, mein Sinn" once again. As a champion of poetry, one has to be grateful for those moments when Bach makes a point of setting a word with a clear accentuation, as in the evocative declamation of "meine Missetat" near the end of the aria, or when the second quatrain repeats the first Vordersatz in B minor.

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14. Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1732; facsim. ed. Richard Schaal, Kassel, 1953), 46–47.

For these reasons, it makes more sense to claim that the poetic text largely accompanies the music, not the other way round. To extend Mattheson's imagery, one can even suggest that in eighteenth-century terms the composer has fathered a bastard child incapable of demonstrating its filial duty to the words and their sense. If, on the other hand, one hears the ritornello as key to Bach's rendition of thoughts underlying the text, then one can see how the ritornello acts as a microcosm for Bach's partial reading of the text, in which part substitutes for whole. The ritornello also filters this partial experience through the prism of its musical associations, together with all they can evoke, so that the act of confronting the singer in this aria (a personage universalized from the situation of Peter) is not remotely the same as reading his words. Even though the vocalist recites all the words of the text, he does not, if you will, communicate all of them. Most are drowned out by the music, by all the attention Bach has paid to the ritornello. Even words that emerge with some clarity from the vocal texture are outbursts contained within a ritornello that one has already come to know rather well. The words are not so much framed or embellished by music, but rather confirm and expand the affective sense already assigned to the emblem of the ritornello, which evoke a group of metaphors through which one Bach recasts his selective experience of the poem.[15]

We might also think about the ritornello's recastings in terms of an unusual and inappropriate mode of "work" that Bach is all too happy to display in his music. Having no doubt read Abraham Birnbaum's defense of Bach in the dispute with Johann Adolph Scheibe, Mattheson even makes a point of taking to task Bach's aesthetic of musical *Fleiß*—industriousness or diligence—as reported even in the form of a modest admission. As reported by Birnbaum, "that which I [Bach] have achieved by industry and practice, anyone else with tolerable natural gift and ability can also achieve."[16] Mattheson phrases Bach's words slightly differently, slightly garbling the original:

> I have recently read an opinion of a master which reads as follows: "What I've been able to achieve myself through diligence and practice [*durch Fleiß und Übung*], someone else who possesses only half the natural talent must also be able to achieve." At that I thought, if this were true, then why is such a master the only one in the world without equal? Pieces difficult to play can be excused in another way, but because most men who want [to compose this way] in fact utterly lack the necessary natural talent, hard work is little use to them. This is indisputably true and borne out by adverse experience.[17]

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[15] The issue of nonlinguistic metaphors in music has become a fruitful topic in recent aesthetics. I have entered this debate in "Christopher Peacocke's 'The Perception of Music: Sources of Significance,'" *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49 (2009): 293–97.

[16] Wolff, *New Bach Reader*, 346.

[17] Mattheson, *Vollkommene Capellmeister*, 144–45.

So even if Bach as musical master is unique in his command of difficult works, hard work as a compositional value is actually overvalued because it more often than not leads to an excess of art, something artificial and wholly unnatural. As Mattheson (obviously struggling with this conundrum) continues in a footnote: "All excellent things possess a certain difficulty, but difficult things aren't all excellent."

With Bach's difficult and excellent aria "Ach, mein Sinn," we therefore come across something very different from a conventional musical setting of a poem. Rather, we encounter a metamorphosis of ideas, images, and affects into music that has, as it turned out, claimed rather an unexpected afterlife. Whereas Handel achieved an admirable musical transparency in his setting of the text, boasting, as it were, how clearly the text and its meaning had been enhanced and transmitted, Bach is busy focusing in his anti-literary way on a peculiarly personal and pointedly self-authorized rendering. Right from the start, this "performance" of the text targets an experience that asserts Bach's own favored reading of the text, a reading that subverts and transcends the point of departure. By crafting a remarkable ritornello configuring the experience of the first two lines of the poem, Bach has turned a quick chaconne and grave lament into a dance of desperation from which one cannot escape. As for the words, the gesture and sense surrounding the phrase "wo willt du endlich hin" become the aria's leading motive, if you will. No wonder, then, that professors of literature such as Gottsched took pains to develop critical theories that urged managerial restraint over the excesses of unruly composers, Bach chief among them.

Bach as an uncontrollable spirit isn't perhaps an especially pleasant characterization, and for theologically inclined writers in particular, Bach is never allowed to be unruly. Instead, he has to be seen to toe some line grounded in specifiable doctrine. But how does one specify the doctrine? The usual route is to examine a poetic text as a whole, condense its sense into a verbal gloss that the music can then represent and adorn. From the perspective of my analysis of "Ach, mein Sinn," this method seems peculiarly anathema to an adequate treatment of Bach's music and can lead to some exaggerated interpretations. In his monograph on the *St. John Passion*, Michael Marissen suggests that "Bach's music [for 'Ach, mein Sinn'] conveys the message that all is not lost. The noble dance rhythms," he asserts, "underlying the aria's tortured mood can be understood as God's Yes behind his No, Luther's way of expressing the paradoxical coexistence of God's condemning wrath and merciful grace."[18] Yet how does the music even begin to represent this kind of complex theological paradox? Despite its theological credentials, the reading proves unconvincing precisely because the supposed sign of God's grace—the noble dance Marissen mistakenly labels a sarabande—can be understood only conceptually via theological explanations that are seen to "amplify and deepen the verbal messages of the [passion] libretto."[19]

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[18] Michael Marissen, *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's* St. John Passion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 17.

It is significant that Marissen, a sensitive critic willing to celebrate an active interpretative voice for the composer, falls into a similar trap when he claims that "the melodic shape of the soprano aria, 'Ich folge dir gleichfalls mit freudigen Schritten,' captures an irony extremely well. . . . The listener to the narrative, like Peter, cheerfully declare[s] to Jesus that I am his follower; but actually, just as Peter is about to do, I will continually deny my discipleship and *not* follow Jesus." Bach's joyous music, in other words, is not telling the truth and asserts the exact opposite of what it represents. This interpretation may be plausible theologically but is completely at odds with the affective character of the aria. Based likewise on a three-part ritornello, it is the charming opening line, "I follow you likewise with joyous steps," in which the Vordersatz played by the flute revels. (The Vordersatz also works as a lighthearted and not entirely serious canon at the unison.) The only break from following in the joyous steps of the Savior as Simon Peter and an anonymous disciple did, we are told in the previous recitative, is found in the setting of the words "und höre nicht auf" (and do not cease), which, like the running patterns of sixteenth notes in the Fortspinnung and Epilog, spin out a conceit of continuous melodic pleasure, so desirous is the happy soul to tag along in what has temporarily become a rather galant garden party festooned with the pastoral costume of characters dancing a passepied in B♭ major. We might just have to live with the anomalous, even tasteless placement of this aria: the Evangelist had recounted in the previous recitative how Simon Peter also "followed" Jesus, and the aria text puns inappropriately on a joyful and universal "following" of Jesus with joyful steps, oblivious to the serious and dramatic context of Peter's denial that has already been introduced. Already in the 1870s, Philipp Spitta wa s in no doubt that this aspect of the *St. John Passion* text "leaves much to be desired. . . . We cannot always consider the places where the free poetry is brought in," Spitta notes, "as well chosen. . . . Whereas the incident [of Peter's denial] leads to one of contemptible weakness and cowardly retraction, it needs no very subtle sense of fitness to perceive that a transient feeling is made prominent at the cost of the whole effect."[20]

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[19] Ibid., 8. Several other writers, including Doris Finke-Hecklinger, author of *Tanzcharactere in Johann Sebastian Bachs Vokalmusik* (2nd ed., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), cited by Marissen, oddly misidentify the dance type as a sarabande. The mistaken identity is repeated in Bernard Sherman, "Notation of Tempo and Early-Music Performance: Some Reconsiderations," *Early Music* 28 (2000): 458. Sherman worries (having subscribed to the sarabande reference) that contemporary performances of the piece are too fast and "lack historical justification." Marissen even goes so far as to maintain that the performance of the aria need not "be rendered in sarabande tempo." The problem disappears as soon as one appreciates the marked difference between the French sarabande and chaconne.

[20] Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685–1750*, trans. Clara Bell (New York: London: Novello, 1889), 2:523–24.

For Marissen to propose an ironic reading for this aria not only proceeds from the questionable notion of Bach as a persuasive "musical preacher," but, more generally, from an inflated sense of confidence in the potential of poetic texts to articulate clear theological arguments to which Bach's music must subscribe. Quite the opposite turns out to be true: that Bach's music reveals with some precision exactly what he took the texts to mean, which is the same as saying that the actual value of words in the Bachian musical universe is best assessed by his actions in setting them. Especially in works in which Bach was handed a text that dictated the outline of his actions, it is important to realize that we are dealing with music far removed from a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. It also will not do to cite Bach's underlinings in the Calov Bible as keys to his musical interests in his sacred music, because Bach did not acquire the Calov Bible until 1733, when the passions and the bulk of the cantatas had already been written: this crucial point of historical fact is often forgotten in theological accounts of Bach's texted music.[21]

What is downplayed in these kinds of readings, it seems to me, is Bach's supplemental and often suprarepresentational approach to musical invention. Naturally there will be theological implications that one is welcome to read into Bach's compositional practice, but to be credible, they need proceed from the musical evidence rather than from some superimposed theological intentions of the text to which music has easy access.[22] Even as a devout believer—or better, because he was a devout believer—Bach can be shown to have ignored through his musical actions certain sanctioned doctrinal views so as to treat aspects of the experience he found especially compelling. Needless to say, if the music only parrots ideas from Luther, one might as well dispense with the music. Yet Luther provides little support for Bach's compositional practice. In his famous poem titled "Frau Musica," Luther personifies music and "singing" as a lady "who gives God more joy and mirth / than all the pleasures of the earth."[23] More valuable even than "the precious nightingale," God created Music to be his true songstress (*sein rechte sengerin*) and mistress (*meisterin*) who tirelessly offers thanks:

| | |
|---|---|
| Denn singt und springt sie tag und nacht | For she sings and dances day and night |
| Seines lobs sie nichts müde macht. | Never tiring [of singing] His praise. |

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[21] Marissen, *Lutheranism*, 19. For the date of Bach's acquisition of the Calov Bible, see Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (New York: Norton, 2000), 335.

[22] Theological superimpositions on readings of Bach's vocal music are the subject of Rebecca Lloyd's "Bach among the Conservatives: The Quest for Theological Truth" (PhD diss., King's College London, 2006).

[23] Robin A. Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 74–75.

A "fine art" rather than a discrete discourse or a vehicle for interpretation, "the notes," as Luther puts it in the *Tischreden*, "make the words live," which is rather different from claiming that music comments on the words.[24] This mistress who enlivens words to sing praises scarcely evokes a character authorized to wander into a theological seminar to lecture on hermeneutics. Ultimately, Lutheran principles of music may even be inhospitable to Bach's unusual approach to composing sacred works, for Luther was obviously in no position to anticipate the expressive possibilities of much later music.

Another telling example of Bach's selective poetics is the aria "Es ist vollbracht!" no. 30 ("It is accomplished") that occurs just before Jesus's final words sung at the end of the preceding recitative. Here the unknown poet sings of "consolation for grieving souls" and of "the funereal night" that "now counts [its] final hour." Apart from Christ's words "Es ist vollbracht!" that accompany the Epilog, none of the words in the main part of the aria are set to the ritornello.

| | End rhyme |
|---|---|
| Es ist vollbracht! | [a] |
| O Trost vor die gekränkten Seelen! | [b] |
| Die Trauernacht | [a] |
| Läßt nun die letzte Stunde zählen. | [b] |
| Der Held aus Juda siegt mit Macht, | [a] |
| **Und schließt den Kampf.** [$F_3$?] | [c] |
| **Es ist vollbracht!** [$E_2$] | [a] |

In fact, all these potent images play a marginal role in the emotional state depicted by the music. Only in the wildly contrasting middle section of the aria, marked *vivace*, in which the "hero of Judah ends his victorious fight," does the contrasting heroic music evoke a Handelian setting of the text with "Der Held aus Juda siegt mit Macht." If anything, this section shows that Bach knows how to write a pleasing and conventional vocal melody not eclipsed by the instruments, though he once again ignores the end rhymes. Yet it is also true that in the latest autograph part, the gamba obbligato doubles the vocalist at the lower octave, no doubt hindering the comprehension of the text.[25] Yet just in this exciting patch of passagework, Bach dispenses with an underlying

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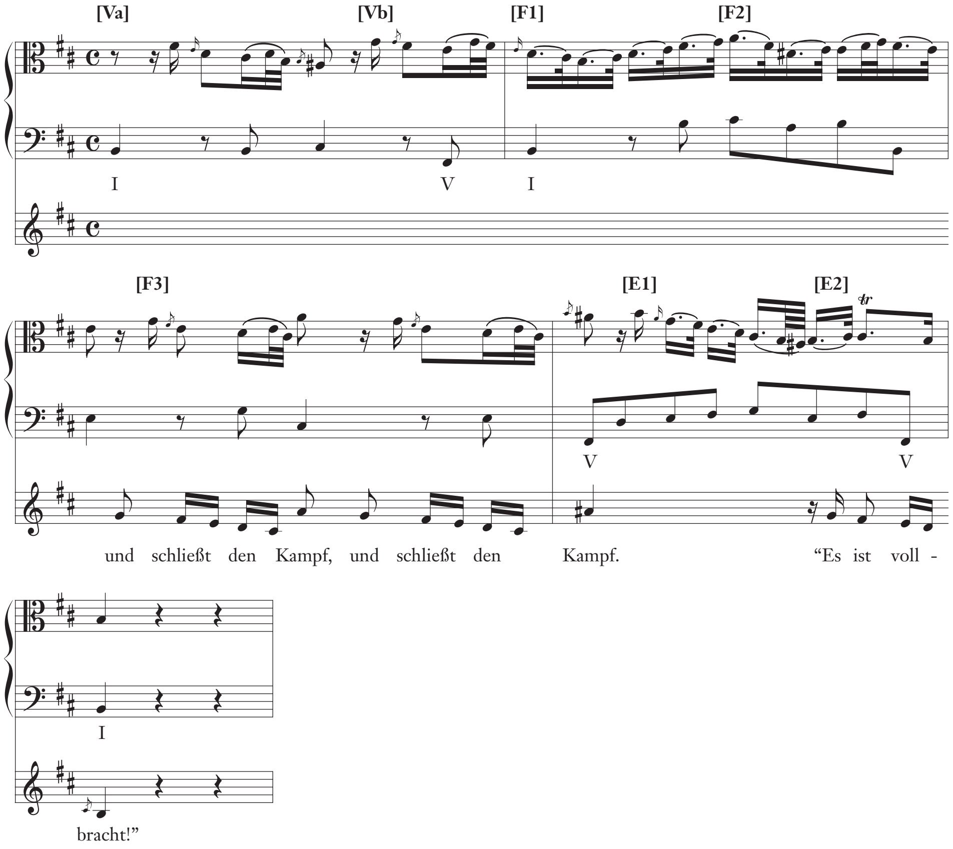
[24] Ibid., ix.

[25] This instrumental doubling of a vocal line at the lower octave is a rarity in Bach's works. One antecedent that Bach is unlikely to have known is found in Handel's early *La Resurrezione* (1708), in which the viola da gamba doubles a soprano voice (Maddalena) in the aria "Ferma l'ali, e sù miei lumi." There the doubling uncannily suits the pastoral tone and references to shepherd's pipes; Bach's odd shadowing of the heroic victor of Judah is inventive but not easy to decipher.


[Va]
[Vb]
[F1]
[F2]
I
V
I
[F3]
[E1]
[E2]
tr
V
V
und schließt den Kampf, und schließt den Kampf. "Es ist voll - bracht!"
I

Example 4. J. S. Bach, *St. John Passion* BWV 245/30, ritornello and vocal line compared

ritornello or any structurally repeating material, apart from a subtle melodic reference to the ritornello in the linking line "und schließt den Kampf." One can see a sketch of the ritornello in the main part of the aria and its relation to the text in Example 4.

More interesting for the focus on Bachian poetics is, again, the concentrated density of the ritornello processes, which, as can be seen from Table 2, decompose this mournful dirge played by the viola da gamba into seven discrete bits deployed with remarkable variety on five separate scale degrees. As in "Ach, mein Sinn," there is scarcely more than a brief episodic moment: the saturation with the musical ideas of the ritornello is well nigh complete. The setting of the alto vocalist's words, by contrast, weaves a tissue of free counterpoint around the mesh of ritornello segments in the viol part, and only in the last notes of the aria does he sing the haunting opening words to the second Epilog, the same sighing phrase we had heard in the final moments of the preceding recitative.

Table 2. Ritornellogram of J. S. Bach, *St. John Passion* BWV 245/30

| Rit | Mm. | Degree | Mode | Voice | $V_a$ | $V_b$ | $F_1$ | $F_2$ | $F_3$ | $E_1$ | $E_2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $R_0$ | No. 29, mm.13–14 | V | minor | SOLO | | | | | | | $E_2$ |
| $R_1$ | 1–5 | I | minor | | $V_a$ | $V_b$ | $F_1$ | $F_2$ | $F_3$ | $E_1$ | $E_2$ |
| $R_2$ | 5–8 | I | minor | X | $V_a$ | $V_b$ | $F_1$ | $F_2$ | $F_3$ | | |
| $R_3$ | 8–9 | I | minor | X | | $V_b$ | $F_1$ | | | | |
| $R_4$ | 10–12 | III | MAJOR | | $V_a$ | $V_b$ | $F_1$ | $F_2$ | | | |
| $R_5$ | 12–13 | IV | minor | x | $V_a^*$ | $V_b^*$ | | | | | |
| $R_6$ | 13–17 | V | minor | X | $V_a$ | $V_b$ | $F_1$ | $F_2$ | $F_3$ | $E_1$ | $E_2$ |
| $R_7$ | 18–19 | VII | MAJOR | | | | $F_1$ | $F_2$ | | | |
| $R_8$ | 40 | I | minor | SOLO | | | | | | | $E_2$ |
| $R_9$ | 40–44 | I | minor | | $V_a$ | $V_b$ | $F_1$ | $F_2$ | $F_3$ | $E_1$ | |
| | 44 | I | minor | X | | | | | | | $E_2$ |

Recurrent solo episodes

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $S_1$ | 5 | I | minor | X |
| $S_2$ | 17–18 | V | minor | instrumental |

| Segments | Mm. | Text |
|---|---|---|
| $V_a$ | 1 | |
| $V_b$ | 1 | |
| $F_1$ | 2 | |
| $F_2$ | 2–3 | |
| $F_3$ | 3–4 | und schliesst den Kampf |
| $E_1$ | 4 | |
| $E_2$ | 4–5 | Es ist vollbracht! |

The inventive possibilities Bach devises for this ritornello are especially rich: whereas the tonal process opens and closes in the same key of B minor, the second Fortspinnung [F2] (first heard in mm. 2–3) concludes with an unusual full cadence in IV before pressing on to the expected dominant chord to end the Fortspinnung and begin the Epilog. This medial cadential figure amid the flow of the ritornello allows Bach to conclude the MODESWITCH of $R_4$ in G major in m. 12, permitting a glimmer of autonomous instrumental hope unprompted by the text. Perhaps this is compensation for having ignored any sympathetic depiction of the word "Trost" in the previous measures: instead Bach despairs of any "comfort" by his ravaged declamations of that word setting. He also takes advantage of the cadence in $F_2$ to set $R_7$ on the seventh scale degree, thereby preparing a proper move to III for the victorious *vivace* section. The concentration of reused and reworked musical material in the *molt'adagio* is astounding when one considers its brevity and the number of tonal areas toward which it beckons.

But how is one to understand the expressive content of the ritornello? By convention, an instrumental ritornello was meant to accord with the poetic ideas in the text subsequently to be sung. As Johann Adolph Scheibe writes in the *Critischer Musikus:* "As for what concerns the ritornello in particular, one should note that the words and [musical] content of the aria should suit one another [*gemäß seyn soll*]." Naturally the instruments may play some independent role even in this model, and, as he puts it, may participate "in a kind of pleasant competition [with the vocal melody] which always gives church music a special beauty as long as one does not go too far and obscure the understanding of the words."[26] Yet a darkening (*Verdünkelung*) of the perception of the words is exactly what Bach has triggered. One may forgive Bach because of the slant he takes to the words in all their experiential *musical* complexity, but this post-Wagnerian, romanticized reception of Bach—in which one subordinates the goal of transparency of words in a poem to a poetic vagueness—cannot hide the consequence of these kinds of compositional actions in an alien eighteenth-century context hostile to the remotest whiff of obfuscation.

If Bach can hardly be said to set the words of the poetic text in his instrumental ritornello for "Es ist vollbracht," we have a right to ask what he *is* doing. Here, in an act of creative borrowing from instrumental genres, Bach seems to have appealed to a musical fantasia or tombeau that takes the gestural sighs of Christ's dying words, disregards the poetic reckoning of time (as in counting the last hour), ignores the funereal night (but for an exaggerated slow tempo), and instead performs a soliloquy on a musical hexachord—the descent of six notes—that repeatedly depicts Christ's poignant sigh. One cannot know for sure, but Bach might have intended an oblique reference to Marin Marais's two eloquent tombeaux for Lully and Ste. Colombe printed in the second book of his *Pièces de violes* (1701). This "incomparable viola da gambist," J. G. Walther noted in 1732, had printed works that were "known all through Europe."[27] In both tombeaux (the openings are shown in Examples 5a and 5b), Marais spins out elegies in B minor and E minor that keep returning to altered restatements of exclamatory tragic figures with which the pieces each begin. The theme and treatment of the viola da gamba line in "Es ist vollbracht" are rather similar, especially if one imagines Bach's notation according to French conventions in augmented note values.

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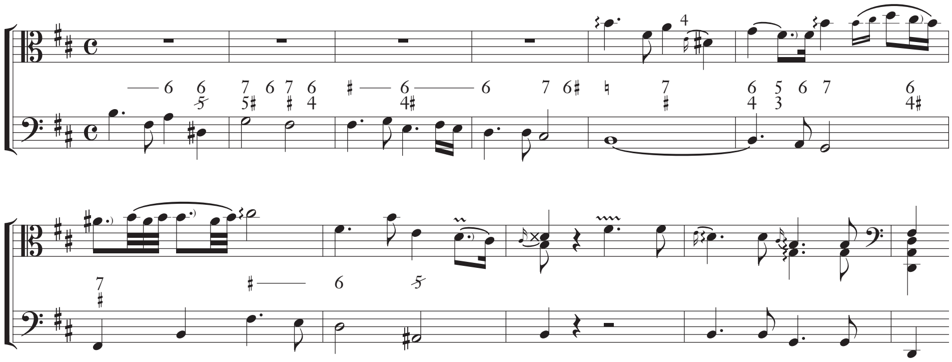
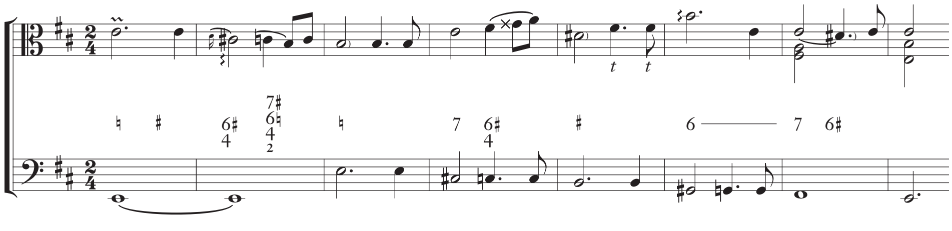
[26] J. A. Scheibe, *Critischer Musikus: Neue, vermehrte und verbesserte Auflage* (1745; facsim. ed. Hildesheim, 1970), 432–33.

Whatever the intention of the viola da gamba part, the affective logic of Bach's ritornello is compelling: the high-level, aristocratic diction of the French ornaments expressing the *grands sentiments* of tragedy; the notated dotted figures evoking royal overtures and *entrées;* the two rhetorical questions punctuated by gasping breaths, the first hopeful (in pointing the major mode), the second pathetic in its leap of a seventh onto a painful appoggiatura; finally, the dotted descent through the octave portending the bitterness



Example 5a. Marin Marais, *Tombeau pour Monsr. Lully*, opening



Example 5b. Marin Marais, *Tombeau po[ur] Mr. de Ste. Colombe*, opening

of resignation. The *vivace* interjection challenges this view with a contrasting fantasy of heroic triumph, but as it dissolves into fragments of the ritornello, Bach suggests—in the very looseness of his construction—that, at least for the moment, the messianic dream of a hero's redemption is but sound and fury signifying nothing. So as one succumbs to the dominant mood in the *molto adagio*, and confronts the satisfying if wildly unconventional ending—where the mute vocalist dare not utter even a word until the final exclamation—it is evident that Bach's music results neither from setting a poetic text nor from sending a theological message, but rather from a musician taking the law into his own hands, defining his own, more amorphous theological and poetic space.

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[27] Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon*, 382.

As a tool for observing ruptures and disparities between text and music, filtering the poetry through the lens of a ritornello, this kind of musico-poetic analysis tries to pinpoint Bach's demonstrable aims in a particular aria, that is, which aspects of the poetry he wished to emphasize and which he was happy to overlook. In "Von den Stricken" no. 7, for example, the crucial theological punch line about salvation at the end of the first strophe is perversely severed from any connection with the ritornello. The Evangelist has just related how the army, the captain and the servant of the Jews had taken Jesus and bound him to take him before the High Priest. The text of the aria begins with two punning references to the binding—"my salvation is bound [i.e., bound up] with the unbinding or disengagement from the ropes of my sins." The allegorical point of the poetry implies that because Jesus was bound and brought to trial and crucifixion, the sinning Christian gains salvation and forgiveness of sins. Bach's music, on the other hand, is rather too preoccupied with the binding—in the form of a musical canon in the Vordersatz of this three-part ritornello, a sign of what was called the bound style or *der gebundene Styl.* The musical emblem of the aria—to borrow a useful historical term—prompts a canonic fantasy on bondage to the exclusion of any serious treatment of salvation.

Bach gains little by diminishing the notion of salvation. Certainly he is not trying to deny its theology. What he asserts instead is a metaphorical highlighting of only segments of the poetic text. It is the depiction of the ropes of sin as a canon (the "Stricken," which are lavishly embellished and emphasized throughout the aria) and the desire to unravel them so as "to release me" (mich zu entbinden), which constitute the two foci of musico-poetic interest. So even as the poem moves into the second, parallel strophe—with its grim hyperbole speaking graphically of Christ's body, which will "heal all the running sores of vice" (von allen Lasterbeulen völlig zu heilen)—the oboes and basso continuo patiently chirp out fragments related to the "cordal" or ropelike disengagement from the first stanza. In fact, the word "Lasterbeulen" is set so melismatically that no one hears it properly. Who can recall Bach's music for "the running sores of vice"? The music has not only overshadowed the poetry, but has monopolized the commanding images about which it generates its own compelling fantasy. If one needs evidence to support this view, it is found surely in Bach's habitual revisiting of ritornello segments and related fragments in the aria: the more frequently the composer forces upon us his associations—expressed musically through a mechanism that disparages the poetic form—the less one takes each word of the poetry seriously, at least those relatively neglected by Bach.

This pattern, which highlights some words and downplays others, is widespread in Bach's oeuvre but has not been taken seriously in criticism of his arias. Bach's native piety is commonly supposed to have engendered music that serves as a dutiful if intelligent receptacle for theological ideas conscripted from the often mediocre poetic texts with which the composer mostly had to contend. Perhaps it would be more fruitful to assert that the poor quality of the poetry takes the blame for some less than wholly inspired music. For not every note of the music for the *St. John Passion* inhabits the same exalted plane. There are, if one is honest, substantial *longeurs* in certain arias and choruses when Bach lands himself in some evident compositional trouble. For example, the huge investment in displaying the work of invertible counterpoint for the two viole d'amore in the tenor aria "Erwäge" no. 20 prompts an elegant but very protracted three-part ritornello that has little to do with the cryptic opening lines of poetry, which ask the Christian to "ponder how his blood-stained back resembles heaven in all its parts." (Only on the words "dem Himmel gleich" [resembling heaven], which see a jump up of a widened interval, does the tenor double—seemingly trivially—the ritornello's Epilog.) One needs to await an episode in the lengthy second section of the aria both to hear what the cryptic natural simile signifies and to confirm that the watery waves of sins have poured down (in the form of a wearying dactyl of sixteenth and thirty-second notes) to reveal the most beautiful rainbow marking God's sign of grace. But this we learn only in the last line of the poem. As functional *poesia per la musica*, the text is particularly lame, and Bach's poetic response is perhaps equally so, since his music does little more than discourse at great length on the watery waves of sin, while painting an arched rainbow figure marking God's grace, which we are repeatedly told to "consider" seriously at the beginning of the poem. In this case Bach's inventive fantasy got the better of him, in that he fashioned an elaborate and discursive ritornello forced to bear the weight of the many strenuous repetitions needed to clear a path through the poetic thicket.

A similar mishap can be said to occur, I think, in the protracted final chorus "Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine" no. 39. Despite an auspicious start with touchingly simple minuet phrasing, and wonderful cascading descents into what is no doubt the comforting "grave [that] no longer contains suffering" (Das Grab, [daß] ferner keine Not umschließt), the formal disposition of the chorus—a kind of *menuet en rondeau* in which a static ritornello structure is unvaryingly repeated on the same scale degree—offers, in the end, a depiction of weariness verging dangerously on undiluted gloominess, the reigning affect of the entire work identified by Philipp Spitta. It was a brilliant risk to take in the conclusion of this journey of suffering—albeit in only one of the four versions of the passion—but one that may have betrayed first principles in failing to construct musical materials allowing both syntactic and semantic alteration. For to return to some of the greatest achievements in this massive work, Bach is at his best when he doesn't stand to rapt attention admiring a poetic image from afar, but engages actively with its meaning and dances around it to sing praises with the most vivid musical figures.

This is the kind of musical invention and elaboration one sees, for example, in the soprano aria "Zerfließe, mein Herze in Fluten der Zähren" no. 35 (Dissolve my heart in floods of tears), in which a ritornello that refuses to be translated from the minor into the major mode creates a musical world rich in contrasting affects: no matter how slowly the *molt'adagio* is taken, one encounters ideas both similar and yet always different. In fact, Bach liked his invention for this aria so much that he recast it for the *St. Matthew Passion* as a siciliano for "Erbarme dich."

To sum up my main argument: Bach discloses his musical point of view in the *St. John Passion* by composing arias that clearly flout reasonable eighteenth-century standards of text setting. Not only does he develop selective ideas from his texts that spark a dominating instrumental melody, but he also attaches signs, genres, and styles foreign to the text that impose, by way of a kind of performance or execution of the text, an obscuring palimpsest on the poetry. Rather than subscribe to the transparency of music, Bach's musical diligence and ever-inventive permutations teach listeners to see one experience through the focused lens of another, rejecting long-established notions of musical propriety and resemblance. This is not to say that Bach succeeds at every moment of this rather wild and willful process of discovery: it can't, after all, be a good thing to thumb one's nose at perfectly lucid principles of poetry any more than it would have been sensible to throw overboard established principles of harmony and voice leading. Instead, one admires the courage of Bach's actions and the often stirring musical result.

In the end, my consideration of Bach's musical poetics is not much more than a return to Philipp Spitta, whose critical edge in writing about the *St. John Passion* drives a useful wedge between poetry and music. Despite his hagiographic baggage, Spitta strikes a fresh and irreverent critical pose in his celebrated biography, which feels free to slate poetic inconsistencies and musical indulgences while never ignoring the religious depth of the music. As mentioned earlier, Spitta was not greatly impressed with much of the passion text and inveighs against "sacred poetry which . . . had sunk, under the successors of Neumeister to be a false and hollow mockery. It would not be too much to say that the influence of the cantata-poem upon the development of poetry at that time was really ruinous" and that "those who chiefly threw themselves into this branch of poetry were persons who either had no poetic faculty at all, or in whom whatever talent there might be inclined to another kind of work."[28] Of course Spitta marvels at the music, asserting that the arias in the *St. John Passion*, with a few exceptions, "are among the best that Bach ever wrote," with "the solitary grandeur in which Bach dwells as a composer of church music . . . only rendered more clear by a comparison with similar works by Keiser, Telemann, Mattheson, Stölzel, or even Handel . . . which lack the profound church feeling that pervades [Bach's style]."[29] For "Ach, mein Sinn," for example, he notes the aria's "novelty and captivating ingenuity," its "ingenious construction" and its "superiority to that which subsequently took its place, . . . [how] we are insensibly led on from the second part into the third, which here consists only of the opening ritornello, while the vocal line continues its course independently."[30] Yet Spitta is fearless when it comes to criticizing some of Bach's text setting, especially the passion's recitatives:

> The composer wanders through the realm of musical imagery and gives himself up to realizing it, now in one way and now in another—prompted to do so now by some important factor, and now by something wholly unimportant. . . . We can find no reason in the nature of things why in one place he should devote all the means at his command to an exhaustive illustration of some emphatic word, while in another he passes it over with complete indifference; it was his good pleasure, so he did it.[31]

Bach, he claims, displays a cavalier disregard of textual coherence and superiority. Instead,

> the supreme and sole principle of form that governs [recitatives of the *St. John Passion*] throughout is the result of [Bach's] own innate tendency towards vigorous melodic movement. Everything else is merely a means to this end; if it were not so it would be inconceivable why Bach should sometimes introduce picturesque details which have no dramatic musical purpose, and which, in themselves, are mere sport of the composer—e.g. when the word "Pavement" [*Hochpflaster*] in German is declaimed in such a pronounced way [i.e. emphasizing a dramatic leap downwards of a sixth].[32]

Perhaps Spitta goes too far in suggesting Bach's treatment is so arbitrary, but his critical intelligence, on balance, is surely preferable to readings that treat Bach's text setting as if it were the most natural thing in the world. What became an indigenous nineteenth-century *topos*—the triumph of musical autonomy over a servitude to words—is foreshadowed in Bach in ways not easily tolerated by his contemporary thought or historical categories. Bach's struggles with his texts are much like his struggles with music generally: they expose imperfections while they achieve remarkable things. In the end, we are left with a not unexpected but attractive paradox: the more human, even flawed, our image of Bach, the more riveting his musical thought and the more justified his status as inimitable icon.

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[28] Spitta, *Bach*, 2:347–48.

[29] Ibid., 2:532, 534.

[30] Ibid., 2:533.

[31] Ibid., 2:531.

[32] Ibid., 2:530.

# Bach's *Ascension Oratorio*

## *God's Kingdoms and Their Representation*

Eric Chafe

As is well known, Bach's *Ascension Oratorio*, "Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen" BWV 11, composed in all probability in 1735, follows a pattern that is very close to that of its much more extended sister work, the *Christmas Oratorio*, composed a few months earlier for the 1734–35 Christmas season. In part it is parodied from earlier secular cantatas, and its movement layout resembles that of the *Christmas Oratorio* closely in its sequences of biblical recitatives for voice(s) and basso continuo only, nonbiblical accompanied recitatives, arias, and chorales (see Table 1).

Although the *Ascension Oratorio* has been studied from both the theological and musical standpoints, there has been no close coordination of the two approaches.[1] The musical and textual design of the oratorio relates closely to the liturgical and scriptural background for Ascension Day, and to contemporary theological perspectives that can be gleaned from writings by Lutheran authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The tonal plan of the oratorio reflects its theological meaning. Bach's structure can be described as consisting of two parallel halves (as shown in Table 1), with framing movements in D major and two arias that feature somewhat unusual qualities: "Ach, bleibe doch," in the relatively rare key of the dominant minor, and "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke," belonging to the very small number of arias without basso continuo in Bach's oeuvre. The theological meaning of the oratorio revolves around the relationship of the two arias and their placement in the design of the whole. In their different ways the two halves of the oratorio mirror the theological presentation of God's kingdoms as worlds "above" and "below," united for the faithful through Jesus's ascension.

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[1] Two commentaries are particularly valuable: Walter Hindermann, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Himmelfahrts-Oratorium: Gestalt und Gehalt* (Hofheim: F. Hofmeister, 1985), and Martin Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar*, vol. 2, *Die Geistlichen Kantaten vom 1. Advent bis zum Trinitatisfest* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007), 920–37.

Table 1. Outline of the *Ascension Oratorio*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Chorus: "Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen"<br>(SATB, 3 tpts., timp., fl. 1 & 2, ob. 1 & 2, str., b.c.)<br>**D major** | 6. Chorale: "Nun lieget alles unter dir"<br>(SATB doubled by ww. and str., b.c.)<br>**D major** |
| 2. Recitative (Evangelist): "Der Herr hub seine Hände auf"<br>(T, b.c.) [Luke 24:50–51a]<br>**B minor to A major** | 7a. Recitative (Evangelist, Two Men from Galilee): "Und da sie ihm nachsahen gen Himmel fahren"<br>(Tenor, Bass, b.c.) [Acts 1:10–11]<br>**D major** |
| 3. Accompagnato: "Ach, Jesu, ist dein Abschied schon so nah?"<br>(B, fl. 1 & 2, b.c.)<br>**V/F♯ minor to A minor** | 7b. Accompagnato: "Ach ja! so komme bald zurück"<br>(Alto, fl. 1 & 2, b.c.)<br>**G major to B minor** |
| 4. Aria: "Ach, bleibe doch, mein liebstes Leben"<br>(A, vn. 1 & 2, b.c.)<br>**A minor** | 7c. Recitative (Evangelist): "Sie aber beteten ihn an"<br>(Tenor, b.c.) [Luke 24:52; Acts 1:12; Luke 24:52b]<br>**V/D major to G major** |
| 5. Recitative (Evangelist): "Und war aufgehaben zusehends"<br>(T, b.c.) [Acts 1:9a; Luke 24:51b; Acts 1:9b; Mark 16:19c]<br>**E minor to F♯ minor** | 8. Aria: "Jesu deine Gnadenblicke"<br>(S, fl. 1 & 2, ob. 1, unison vn. and va., no b.c.)<br>**G major** |
| 6. Chorale: "Nun lieget alles unter dir"<br>(SATB doubled by ww. and str., b.c.)<br>**D major** | 9. Chorale: "Wann soll es doch geschehen"<br>(Same instrumentation as no. 1)<br>**D major** |

## The Liturgical and Scriptural Background

The initial words of the *Ascension Oratorio*, "Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen," urge praise of God in his kingdoms ("Reichen," dative plural), a detail that, as Martin Petzoldt remarks, refers to the "streitende Kirche" (church militant) on earth and the "triumphirende Kirche" (church triumphant) of the "heiligen Engel und Menschen" (angels and saints) in heaven.[2] Petzoldt associates the plural with passages from the book of Revelation, of which chapter 11, verse 15 is the most direct (in the sense that it alone employs the plural "Reiche"): "And the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there arose great voices in heaven, which said, The kingdoms [Reiche] of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Petzoldt is undoubtedly correct in making this association, although in commentaries other than that of Johann Olearius (on which Petzoldt bases his discussion), it is not necessary to go beyond the readings for Ascension Day itself to understand what underlies the reference to God's kingdoms. These commentaries suggest a different interpretation. The reference to "Reiche" arises primarily from the Epistle for the day (Acts 1:1–11), where we read, “He also showed himself as the living one with many proofs to them [that is, the apostles, as mentioned in the previous verse] after his passion, and was seen among them for forty days, and spoke with them of the kingdom of God” [verse 3]. A little later, in verse 6, the disciples ask, “Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” The words “at this time” refer to the preceding verse (5), in which the author of Acts reports Jesus as saying, “but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not long after these days.” The references to the kingdom of God in verse 3 and the kingdom of Israel in verse 6 underlie the meaning of Ascension Day for the faithful as it is discussed in many Lutheran theological treatises and commentaries between the time of the reformer and that of Bach (and beyond).[3] In those discussions we find copious references (explicit or implicit) to the distinction between heavenly (or spiritual) versus worldly (or physical) kingdoms. The passage from Revelation 11, cited by Petzoldt, most likely suggests in its particular wording (“kingdoms of this world”) only the latter, not both heavenly and earthly realms.

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[2] Martin Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar*, 2:923.

The Epistle for Ascension Day plays a major part not only in the text of the *Ascension Oratorio*, but also in the formation of the liturgical year itself, in which Ascension Day (although not one of the three principal feasts of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost) is only a notch lower in importance. The placement of Ascension Day on the fortieth day after Easter (always a Thursday), ten days before Pentecost, is directly owing to the reference to “forty days” in the passages from Acts 1:3–5 cited earlier.[4] Pentecost itself was derived, of course, from the Jewish Pentecost (the feast of “first fruits” or feast of “weeks”: 7 × 7 days, origin of the early Christian term “great Sunday”), celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover to commemorate the Israelites reaching Mount Sinai and the giving of the Law, as God had commanded (Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 23:15–16).[5] In the Christian church, Pentecost celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit, which was viewed as a counterpart of the Jewish celebration of the giving of the Law. In his Pentecost sermon from the *Kirchenpostille*, Luther explained Pentecost in terms of the giving of a "new law," that of the Spirit as described by St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:6, where the apostle juxtaposes it to the law of Moses, opposing "letter" (or "flesh") and "spirit."[6]

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[3] See, for example, Johann Arndt, *Postille. Das ist Auslegung der Sonn- und Fest-Tage Evangelien durchs gantze Jahr* (Frankfurt, 1713), part 3 (Easter through Pentecost), 164–68 (on Jesus’s visible ascension), 168–74 (on Jesus’s invisible ascension, further subdivided into three levels or Kingdoms), 176–78 (on Jesus’s “königliche Ampt,” his removing the faithful from the “Reich der Finsternüs” to the “Reich der Gnaden und Seligkeit”). Among the writers who followed, and made similar distinctions among God’s kingdoms, see Joachim Lütkemann, *Apostolischer Hertzens-Wekker*, published along with Heinrich Müller’s *Evangelischer Hertzens-Spiegel* (Stade, 1736), 754; Heinrich Müller, *Apostolischer Schluß-Kette* (Frankfurt, 1671), 505–8; August Hermann Francke, *Predigten über die Sonn- und Fest-Tags Episteln* (Halle, 1726), 705–9; Johann Jacob Rambach, *Evangelische Betrachtungen über die Sonn- und Fest-Tags-Evangelia des gantzen Jahrs* (Halle, 1732), 646–48 (on Jesus’s “Reich der Natur” and “Reich der Gnaden”). Behind all these discussions lies the (sometimes unspoken) belief that God’s kingdom is actually one—that it is the human perspective that speaks of it in plural terms.

[4] All the sources cited in the preceding note make this point, several characterizing the forty-day span as a “Spiegel [or ‘Vorbild’] des ewigen Lebens.”

The part of the year from Easter to Pentecost, known as the "great fifty days," is the oldest part of the Christian liturgy, the climactic fulfillment of the first half of the year, centered on the life of Jesus. Within it Ascension Day marks the end of Jesus's time on Earth, following the resurrection and forty days of post-resurrection appearances to the disciples and others (sometimes known as the "great forty days").[7] The gospel readings for most of the Sundays and feast days from the Sunday after Easter to Pentecost and Trinity are drawn from John, an association that suggested to some Lutheran authors that Jesus's discourse with the disciples on "the kingdom of God" would have involved essentially the same content as that of the greatest discourse of this kind in all of New Testament scripture, the so-called farewell discourse of John (chapters 14–17).[8] The single exception is Ascension Day, because John has no narrative of the ascension per se. But the very quality of spirituality that led to Pentecost and ran throughout the farewell discourse is bound up with the absence of a specific ascension narrative in John. For most theologians Jesus's ascension is, as Stephen Smalley puts it, "'built in' to every part of John's theological line," and for some, notably C. H. Dodd, the seventeenth chapter of John (in which, following the farewell discourse to the disciples Jesus anticipates the "glorification" of the passion) is understood as the equivalent for John of Jesus's ascension.[9] In other words, Ascension Day is embedded within the context of a season permeated by Johannine gospel readings, particularly those of the farewell discourse, chosen to reflect what Jesus might have said to the disciples during the great forty days.[10] Its gospel and epistle readings, from Mark (16:14–20) and Acts (1:1–11), were chosen because of their narrative character, whereas their full meaning is supplied by the Johannine context.[11]

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[5] Oddly, Arndt (*Postille*, part 3, 165) equates the Jewish Pentecost with the fortieth day, viewing Jesus's teaching the disciples of his kingdom in Acts 1 with baptism, the Holy Spirit, and their preparation for Pentecost.

[6] For an English translation of Luther's sermon see *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol. 4.1, *Sermons on Epistle Texts for Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), 330.

[7] The Lutheran tradition retained the much older practice of relating the forty days of Jesus's post-resurrection appearances to one or more of the following: the forty hours that Jesus was dead between the crucifixion and resurrection (commonly cited), the forty days of Lent, the forty years of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, and the forty days between Jesus's birth and his presentation in the temple (with a parallel between the temple "built by hands" and the temple of God's Kingdom). See the sources cited in note 2.

[8] Strictly speaking, the farewell discourse consists of chapters 14 to 16 of John, whereas the seventeenth chapter is addressed by Jesus to God rather than to the disciples. Some authors include the seventeenth chapter within the discourse; some do not. August Hermann Francke, for example, makes this point in his *Predigten über die Sonn- und Fest-Tags Episteln*, 704, interpreting Jesus's command that the disciples wait in Jerusalem for the "promise of the Father" as the promise made in John 14, 15, and 16, in which Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit. For some modern authors the seventeenth chapter has been understood as the equivalent for John of Jesus's ascension.

In the farewell discourse, and throughout John's gospel, the "transfigured nature" of Jesus mentioned by Smalley is associated particularly with one of John's most famous dualistic oppositions, that of "above" and "below."[12] Jesus not only descends and ascends, but he speaks often of the two spheres after the following manner (8:23): "And he said unto them, You are from below; I am from above: you are of this world; I am not of this world." In the farewell discourse Jesus makes many references to his going and returning, the return suggesting at times the second coming, but more often his return through the Holy Spirit. Such passages seem, like the epistle for Ascension Day itself, to have determined the relationship of Ascension Day to Easter and Pentecost. That is, Ascension Day completes the triumphant "upswing" of the resurrection, and its own meaning is completed with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost). In this view, Ascension Day was an extension of Jesus's Easter victory, predicted, as was believed, in Psalms 3, 47, 68, and 104 and described as such by St. Paul in Colossians 2:15. It celebrated Jesus's triumphant return to the world above from which he came, his victorious work now completed, after which Pentecost commemorated his return and continued presence through the Holy Spirit. Many Lutheran commentaries retained the ancient threefold interpretation of Easter, Ascension Day, and Pentecost as celebrating three aspects of Jesus's work, as "Überwinder" (conqueror), "Durchbrecher" (breaker of barriers), and "Tröster" (giver of life to the faithful through the word, the sacraments and the Holy Spirit).[13] In this sequence the "upswing" of Jesus's resurrection and ascension to God's kingdom has as its counterpart the establishing of another kingdom, that of the church and the faithful below.

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[9] Stephen S. Smalley, *John Evangelist and Interpreter* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 237; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 419.

[10] As is well known, John was Luther's favorite gospel because of its emphasis on Jesus's words rather than his works; and within the fourth gospel the farewell discourse was Luther's favorite part. The set of sermons he preached on it between Easter and Pentecost 1537 he later declared his best book. See *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 361–62. For a concise assessment of this topic, see Victor C. Pfitzner, "Luther as Interpreter of John's Gospel: With Special Reference to His Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 18 (1984): 65–73.

[11] Petzoldt alludes to this in his commentary on the word "Abschied" in the text of the *Ascension Oratorio* ("Abschiedsreden" = farewell discourse). Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar*, 2:924.

[12] See Miroslav Volf, "Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdman, 2008), 19–50.

Aligned as Jesus's references to his ascending/descending character are with John's other well-known sets of dualistic oppositions—good/evil, spirit/flesh, light/darkness, and the like, such passages often create the impression of two simultaneously existing worlds and of humanity as belonging intrinsically to one or the other. This "vertical" view of salvation is usually described in terms of John's tendency toward realized eschatology, according to which humans are saved or judged by God in the present. Two passages, from the gospel for Ascension Day and the second day of Pentecost respectively, make clear the difference between John and the synoptic gospels in this regard. In the gospel for Ascension Day, Jesus says to the disciples, "Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved; but whoever does not believe will be damned" (Mark 16:16). And in the gospel for the second day of Pentecost, Jesus says, "Whoever believes in him [the Son of God] is not judged: but whoever does not believe is judged already, because he does not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

We can only speculate whether those who originally formed the gospel readings for this time period intended a specific association between these two apparently contradictory passages, which come so close together in the liturgical calendar. But in the interpretation of Ascension Day by Lutheran theologians between the time of Luther and Bach, we find that there is a substantial emphasis, if not exactly on fully realized eschatology, then at the very least on the verifying of the hope of salvation in the present for the faithful, even at times of its certainty. In fact, among all the feast days of the year, those qualities were associated with Ascension Day in particular. In this regard, the most widely cited metaphor (a very ancient one) for the above/below view of salvation was that of Haupt and Glieder, or head and body (members), which can be found in several Bach cantatas.[14] According to the metaphor, Jesus, the head of the church,

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13. In addition to the sources cited in note 2, good discussions can be found in August Pfeiffer, *Evangelische Schatz-Kammer*, part 1 (Nuremberg, 1697), 523–27: and Martin Moller, *Praxis Evangeliorum*, part 2 (Görlitz, 1614), 258. Pfeiffer also uses the traditional Latin terms for Jesus's three aspects: *mortis triumphatio*, *coeli referatio*, and *vitae aeterniae donatio* (523–24). For a still more detailed description of Jesus as *Überwinder* and *Durchbrecher* (the latter based, as are all such characterizations, on Micah 2:13), see Valerius Herberger, *Epistolische Herz-Postilla*, part 1 (Leipzig, 1736), 46–54.

14. Nearly all the sources cited in note 2 draw on this metaphor. Among Bach's Ascension Day cantatas it is prominent in the first movement of Cantata 128, "Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein" (1725).

is joined to the members as a head to a body; when he ascends, therefore, the head is in heaven, while the body remains below, to be fetched up at the right time, usually identified with the second coming. In the interpretation of the metaphor, therefore, its vertical aspect (above/below) is tempered by the horizontal (temporal) element. Although the relationship between the vertical and horizontal views of salvation may vary in emphasis from author to author, one thing never does: that Jesus's ascension provided the assurance of salvation for the faithful who constituted his body. The meaning of Ascension Day could be said to lift the believer, in spirit, out of the world.

There is another, more doctrinal aspect to Jesus's ascension that the Lutheran authors almost never fail to bring up in their commentaries: that Jesus's ascent was a visible one, not a simple disappearance or sudden vanishing, as the phrase "schied er von ihnen" (he departed from them) might be taken to mean. The difference, for August Pfeiffer, was one between Calvinists and Lutherans; and the latter staunchly opposed what they viewed as a purely metaphysical interpretation of the ascension.[15] In the Lutheran view, Jesus ascended in his human nature, a matter of central concern in the interpretation of the certainty of salvation for the faithful below. Thus Lutheran interpretations often describe the ascension in terms of degrees, inherited from much older authors, that pass from the physical to the spiritual spheres, the lowest one completely visible to the human senses. The upward progression passed through higher stages of physical bodies (e.g., the stars) until the point, no longer physical, where Jesus sat at the right hand of God, as described by Luke.[16] The place where physical seeing changed to spiritual seeing (faith) corresponded to the moment narrated in scripture at which a cloud concealed the ascent from the eyes of those below.[17] The latter part of the ascent was then an instantaneous one, beyond the senses.

Nevertheless, in Mariane von Ziegler's text for "Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein" (Upon Christ's ascension alone) BWV 128, for Ascension Day 1725, we hear the believer proclaim, "Ich sehe durch die Sterne, daß er sich schon von ferne zur Rechten Gottes zeigt" (I see through the stars that he already shows himself in the distance at the right hand of God). There is, of course, no contradiction between this passage and the line

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[15] August Pfeiffer, *Evangelische Schatz-Kammer*, 1:518. See also Lütkemann, *Apostolischer Hertzens-Wekker*, 656; Müller, *Hertzens-Spiegel*, 646; Rambach, *Evangelische Betrachtung*, 659; Arndt, *Postille*, 163–66.

[16] Usually such discussions speak of four stages of the ascent: through the air (*Luft*), the stars (*Sterne*), the souls (*Seele*), and the divinely majestic, the right hand of God. See, for example, Pfeiffer, *Evangelische Schatz-Kammer*, 1:519; Müller, *Apostolische Schluß-Kette*, 510; *idem*, *Hertzens-Spiegel*, 646.

[17] Pfeiffer, *Evangelische Schatz-Kammer*, 1:519; Lütkemann, *Apostolischer Hertzens-Wekker*, 656–57; Müller, *Apostolische Schluß-Kette*, 511; Rambach, *Evangelische Betrachtung*, 640.

"Ich sehe schon im Geist, wie er zu Gottes Rechten auf seine Feinde schmeißt. . . . Ich stehe hier am Weg und schau ihm sehnlich nach" (I see already in the Spirit how at God's right hand he strikes out at his enemies. . . . I stand here on the path and look longingly after him) from Bach's Ascension Day cantata for 1726, "Gott fähret auf mit Jauchzen" (God ascends with rejoicing), BWV 43. In such passages it is clear that for Lutherans, even the purely spiritual seeing of faith has a physical dimension, essential to the view that through the ascension of his human nature Jesus remains connected to the fleshly beings below who constitute his body.

The sense of continuity from the physical to the spiritual that was associated with Jesus's ascension thus became equivalent to the seeing through faith of those who, while remaining on earth, were joined "in the Spirit" with Jesus and the world above. That meant that Jesus was present "continuously" (beständig) on earth even as he sat at the right hand of God in heaven. This is the ancient view of Jesus as the "Durchbrecher" (one who breaks through), who in his ascension penetrated the barrier between heaven and earth, permitting the faithful to see with the eyes of faith into the spiritual sphere (above), and at the same time to experience Jesus's "Gnadengegenwart" (presence through grace, that is, his presence below).[18] Of course, for most Lutherans the fulfillment of Jesus's ascension would be the second coming, when the faithful would be physically resurrected and ascend as Jesus had before them. (This is the meaning of Paul's naming Jesus the "first fruits of them that slept.") But within the pietist sphere there was a tendency to emphasize the presentness of salvation still more. Thus August Hermann Francke (1663–1727), in a sermon for Ascension Day titled "Die samt Christo in das himmlische Wesen versetzte Gläubigen" (The faithful, transferred into the heavenly condition along with Christ), sets forth, as the background to his delineation of the meaning of the ascension, the idea that the faithful are transferred ("versetzt") to the heavenly condition ("himmlische Wesen") already, in advance of the second coming. Noting that Paul, in the first and second chapters of Ephesians, had used the same Greek verb for Jesus's ascension and the raising up of humanity, Francke argues:

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[18] In this emphasis on Jesus's *Gnadengegenwart*, the ascension is the other side of Jesus's return through the Holy Spirit, as predicted by him in the farewell discourse (and set to music by Bach in Cantatas 108 and 74). Heinrich Müller (*Apostolischer Schluß-Kette*, 505, 511, 513) makes this clear in his use of the expression "Gnadengegenwart" and synonymous expressions such as "wahrhafftig anwesende Gegenwart," associating the latter with Jesus's words from the gospel for Pentecost (John 14:28), "You have heard that I have said unto you, I go away and come again unto you." See also Renate Steiger, "'Gnadengegenwart': Johann Sebastian Bachs Pfingstkantate BWV 172 'Erschallet, ihr Lieder, erklinget, ihr Saiten,'" in *Die Quellen Johann Sebastian Bachs. Bach's Musik im Gottesdienst*, ed. Renate Steiger (Heidelberg: Manutius Verlag, 1998), 15–57.

> Without doubt the apostle again (in the following second chapter, sixth verse) uses this very word with great care concerning the faithful, when he says of them, that they are transferred along with him into the heavenly condition . . . into the heavenly things, into the heavenly blessings, into the heavenly glory and splendor. Accordingly, God shows just the same degree of his power, just the same working of his mighty strength, as he showed with Christ when he resurrected him from the dead and placed him in the heavens, also with the faithful members of Jesus Christ, that they not only on the day of judgment, but already in this world are transferred into the heavenly condition along with and in Christ. . . . Thus you see clearly that already here you shall rejoice in such blessedness as members of heaven, there, however you shall enjoy the same eternally and fully. In this, therefore, the truly blossoming power of faith shall demonstrate in you that your heart is continually occupied with heavenly things, that you are better known in heaven than on earth, that for you everything in the entire world is foreign and bitter, and your greatest joy and bliss consists in the fact that you have your head in heaven and are united with the same in faith.[19]

Later in the same sermon, Francke emphasizes that Paul does not speak of the transferring of the faithful to heaven in the future "but in the past. He does not say 'you shall one day be transferred with Christ in the heavenly condition,' but 'you are already transferred along with Christ into the heavenly condition.'"[20]

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[19] August Hermann Francke, *Sonn- und Fest-Tags Predigten* (Halle, 1724), 862–63: "Eben dieses Wort nun hat der Apostel ohne Zweifel mit allem Fleiß im nachfolgendem 2 Cap. V. 6 wieder gebrauchet von denen Gläubigen, wenn er von ihnen saget; daß sie samt ihm **in das himmlische Wesen,** . . . in die himmlische Dinge, in die himmlische Güter, in die himmlische Glorie und Herrlichkeit versetzet sind. Es erzeiget demnach GOTT eben dieselbe Grösse seiner Kraft, eben dieselbe Wirckung seiner mächtigen Stärcke, die er an CHristo erzeiget hat, da er ihn von den Todten auferwecket und ihn in den Himmel gesetzet, auch an allen gläubigen Gliedern JEsu CHristi, daß sie nicht erst am jüngsten Tage, sondern bereits in dieser Welt in das himmlische Wesen samt und in CHristo gesetzet sind . . . . So sehet ihr ja, daß ihr euch solcher Seligkeit, als Genossen des Himmels, schon hier erfreuen, dort aber derselben ewig und völlig geniessen sollet. Darinnen soll sich also die rechte grünende Kraft des Glaubens bey euch beweisen, daß euer Hertz beständig mit himmlischen Dingen umgehe, daß ihr besser im Himmel als auf Erden bekant seyd, daß euch alles in der gantzen Welt fremde und bitter sey, und eure höchste Freude und Wonne darinnen bestehe, daß ihr euer Haupt im Himmel habet, und mit demselben in Glauben vereiniget seyd." Johann Jacob Rambach (*Evangelische Betrachtungen*, 650) follows Francke in this regard.

[20] Francke, *Sonn- und Fest-Tage Predigten*, 865: "Denn es redet ja, wie schon erinnert worden, und mit Fleiß abermal erinnert wird, Paulus nicht in der zukünftigen Zeit, sondern in der **vergangenen.** Er spricht nicht: ihr sollt einmal mit Christo ins himmlische Wesen versetzet werden, sondern, ihr seyd bereits samt Christo ins himmlische Wesen versetzet."

## The *Ascension Oratorio*: Musical and Textual Design

How does Bach's *Ascension Oratorio* relate to the questions I have outlined? Can we discern any theological position reflected in the music? We must first consider the textual and musical design. As Table 1 shows, the textual structure is a variant of that of the *Christmas Oratorio*, first performed a few months earlier; it has been outlined in more or less the same way by many writers. I have given no. 6 double duty, not to insist that the oratorio be thought of as divided into two parts but to bring out the parallel between its two stages of meditation.[21] That is, nos. 1–6 are preparatory to nos. 7–9 in that they deal with the narrative of the ascension, which is completed in no. 5 and meditated on in no. 6. This part of the oratorio then serves as background to the remaining movements, which deal with the human response. Of course, the first accompanied recitative and aria (nos. 3 and 4) also represent the human response, but it is a different kind of response from that in nos. 7b and 8. The difference is that in the scriptural passages on which the second half is based, the meaning of the ascension is already interpreted for the faithful (by the two "men in white" who appear to the disciples), whereas in the first half the response is unmediated by scripture. Bach's structure pivots around this distinction.

Table 1 makes clear that the *Ascension Oratorio* is solidly anchored in D major, as are, to varying degrees, its great counterparts, the *Christmas Oratorio* and the *Easter Oratorio*. Within each half, however, there is a significant pattern of digression from D, in association with the human response to events. The first is to the ascension itself in nos. 3 and 4, the first accompanied recitative and the aria "Ach, bleibe doch," which urge Jesus to remain. In the second half the reaction is to the explanation given the disciples by the "two men in white" who appear while the disciples are still looking upward. This occurs in no. 7b, in which the believer cries for Jesus to return soon, and (following no. 7c, another biblical recitative narrating the disciples' return to Jerusalem "mit großer Freude" [with great joy]) in the aria no. 8 "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke," in which the idealized believer voices the primary meaning of the ascension, the "seeing" of Jesus "continually" through the Spirit (i.e., Jesus's "Gnadengegenwart") and the experience of his love in the present.

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[21] The NBA's numbering of movements 7a, 7b, 7c, 8, and 9 (rather than as 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) of the Ascension Oratorio is illogical and inconsistent with the practice followed in the passions. No. 7b is a madrigal-texted movement set as an accompanied recitative and, following the practice of the other oratorios, should have been assigned a new number (8). Also, the biblical recitatives 7a and 7c do not form a continuous biblical recitative, since 7a is from Acts, whereas 7c begins and ends with excerpts based on Luke. Numbering the movements from 7 through 11 would make the correspondence between the two halves much clearer.

If we were to understand the first of these two arias, "Ach, bleibe doch," in the strict theological terms that Elke Axmacher has applied to several movements of the St. Matthew Passion (the aria "Gebt mir meinen Jesum wieder," for example), we would have to conclude that it is inappropriate, in that it cries out for the halting of God's plan for the salvation of humanity.[22] That is, of course, not the intention, which is that of depicting two human responses in the two arias. Nevertheless, the fact that the first aria is in minor and the second in major is a telling detail, reflecting the different characters of the two points of meditation. The former, "Ach, bleibe doch," is entirely sorrowful, whereas the latter, "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke," affirms the believer's joy in the certainty or presentness of salvation. This lifting of the believer out of the framework of physical sorrow to spiritual joy is also a feature of many Ascension Day commentaries. Heinrich Müller (1631–1675), for example, in the introduction to his sermon on the gospel for Ascension Day from the *Evangelischer Herzens-Spiegel*, says:

> If one friend of the heart journeys away from the other, then this does not occur without mourning, tears and lamenting. For departure, one says, brings suffering. What one possesses in joy one loses with weeping. David and Jonathan wept as they departed from one another. The very dearest friend of our soul, Jesus, also took his departure from us a thousand and several hundred years ago on this day and withdrew his visible presence from us, but not that he would thereby cast us into sorrow, but much more into joy. For He is not removed from us, but only gone before, so that he prepares the way and opens the door of heaven. . . . To be sure, he has withdrawn his visible presence, yet he has remained with us and remains with us until the end of the world with His invisible consolation, with his grace. Therefore we should rejoice much more than be sorrowful on this day. If the head has gone up, then also the members will not remain here below but follow after; we rejoice and sing for joy: "Christ ascended to heaven," etc.[23]

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22. Elke Axmacher, *"Aus Liebe will mein Heyland sterben": Untersuchungen zum Wandel des Passionsverständnisses im frühen 18. Jahrhundert* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler-Verlag, 1984), 195–96.

23. Heinrich Müller, *Herzens-Spiegel*, 739: "Wenn ein Hertzens-Freund von dem andern abreiset, da gehet es nicht ab ohne Trauren, Thränen und Klagen; Denn Scheiden, saget man, bringet Leiden. Was man mit Lust besitzet, das verleuret man mitWeinen. David und Jonathan weineten als sie von einander schieden. Unser allertheurester Seelen-Freund JESUS, hat auch vor tausend und etlichen hundert Jahren auff diesen Tag seinen Abschied von uns genommen, und uns seine sichtbahre Gegenwart entzogen, nicht aber, daß er uns dadurch in Leid, sondern vielmehr in Freude, versetze. Denn er ist uns nicht entzogen, sondern nur vorhin gegangen, daß er uns den Weg bahne, und die Himmels-Thür öffne . . . . Er hat uns zwar seine sichtbahre Gegenwart entzogen, doch ist er bey uns geblieben, und bleibet bey uns bis ans Ende der Welt mit seinem unsichtbahren Trost, mit seiner Gnade. Darum freuen wir uns vielmehr am heutigen Tage, als daß wir trauren sollten. Ist das Haupt hinauff, so werden auch

Directly following this introduction, Müller introduces the theme of love, foremost in most of his writings, as the key to human participation in Jesus's ascension. It is this response of joy, replacing the immediate response of sorrow, that "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke" represents, along with the ideas of seeing Jesus continuously (beständig) through faith, and experiencing his "Gnadengegenwart" as the love that remains behind:

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|---|---|
| Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke | Jesus, your glance of grace |
| Kann ich doch beständig sehn. | I can still see continuously. |
| Deine Liebe bleibt zurücke, | Your love remains behind, |
| Daß ich mich hier in der Zeit | So that I, here in the present time, |
| An der künftgen Herrlichkeit | Already refresh myself in the Spirit |
| Schon voraus im Geist erquicke, | With the coming splendor, |
| Wenn wir einst dort vor dir stehn. | When we will finally stand there before you. |

To set up the joy that belongs to the completed Ascension Day message, the librettist of the *Ascension Oratorio* added, as the final recitative (no. 7c), a compound of parts of two verses from Luke and Acts. The twelfth verse of the first chapter of Acts (that is, one verse beyond the Epistle reading, which ends with verse 11) is embedded within the two halves of Luke 24:52 (the postscript to Luke's ascension narrative, not among the readings for the day but, like Acts 1:12, cited frequently in Lutheran commentaries). This enabled the recitative to accomplish two things. First, it confirms the shift of focus of the biblical narrative itself to the disciples and the effect of the resurrection on them, so that with "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke," the believer, by extension of the situation of the disciples to that of the contemporary faithful, could express the "great joy" with which the disciples returned to Jerusalem. Second, it introduces the information that the ascension took place on the Mount of Olives, a "Sabbath-Day's" journey from Jerusalem.[24] As we might expect, virtually all Lutheran commentaries from Bach's time and earlier carried forward the much older tradition of drawing a parallel between Jesus's suffering on the Mount of Olives in the passion and his ascen-

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die Glieder nicht hienieder bleiben, sondern nachfolgen, wir freuen uns, und singen für Freuden: Christ fuhr gen Himmel, u."

[24] "Sie aber beteten ihn an, wandten um gen Jerusalem von dem Berge, der da heißet der Ölberg, welcher ist nahe bei Jerusalem und liegt einen Sabbater-Weg davon, und sie kehreten wieder gen Jerusalem mit großer Freude" (They however prayed to him, turned around toward Jerusalem from the mountain which is known there as the mount of olives, which is near to Jerusalem and lies a Sabbath day's journey away, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.) (Based on Acts 1:12).

sion from the Mount of Olives. Johann Jacob Rambach, for example, refers to it in at least two treatises, making the point narrated throughout scripture that God chose high and low places to emphasize the character of events (Mount Sinai, the Sermon on the Mount, and the like). In this case, to bring out the "Niedrigkeit" (humiliation, abasement) of the passion and the "Herrlichkeit" (gloriousness, splendor) of the ascension, Rambach emphasized that Gethsemane was a low place, whereas the Mount of Olives was a high one.[25]

"Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke," as is well known, is one of the very select number of pure *bassetchen* arias in Bach's oeuvre. That is, it has no basso continuo realization, and its bass line is at high pitch, played by unison violins and violas (Example 1). The practice it represents is described in thoroughbass treatises throughout the baroque period with the terms *bassetto*, *petit basse*, or *bassetchen* (sometimes *bassetgen*), all meaning "little bass," a designation that is particularly applicable to Bach's examples, in which the high bass line always mimics the character of a normal low bass. And Bach often causes the accompanimental instrumental lines to move in parallel thirds, sixths, tenths, and the like, all of which gives the impression that harmonic completeness is essential. The primary meaning therefore seems to be that the entire pitch framework is transferred temporarily to a higher sphere. There is often a substantial contrast between the bassetchen movement or section of a movement and the music that surrounds it, as, for example, in the best-known instance, the aria "Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben" from the *St. Matthew Passion*. In fact, underlying all Bach's uses of the technique is the immediate impact of the contrast of high and low pitch spheres. This contrast may be almost purely pictorial in nature, but it may also be the background for theological ideas, such as God's judgment (above) and his mercy or love (below), Jesus's taking away (above) the sins of the world (below), and the like.[26]

One instance that is both close to "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke" in time and comparable to it in meaning is found in the first and last movements of the second cantata of the *Christmas Oratorio*, which are musically related in their thematic material. In the introductory Sinfonia, Bach distinguishes between two instrumental choirs, one

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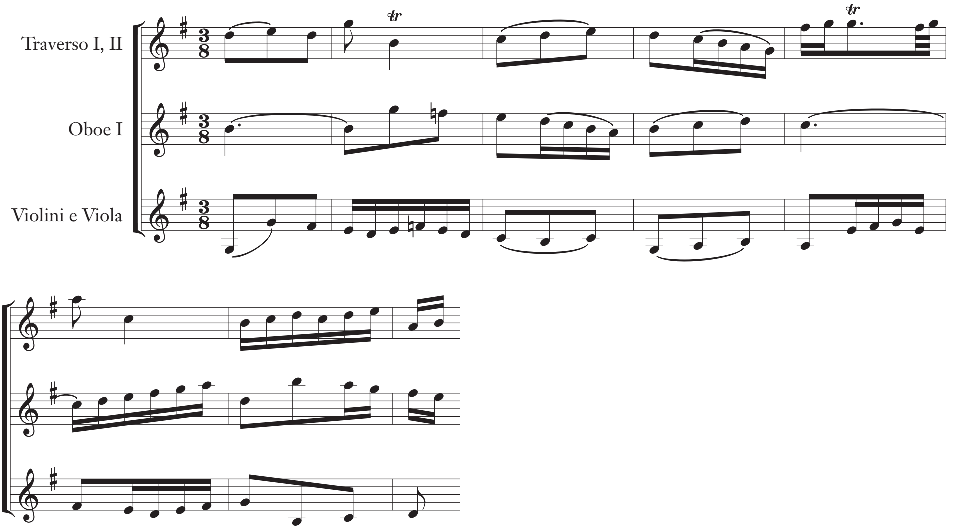
25. Rambach, *Evangelische Betrachtungen*, 639–40; *idem*, *Betrachtungen über das gantze Leiden Christi* (Jena, 1730), 5. The sources cited in notes 2 and 12 all give similar interpretations of the Mount of Olives.

26. Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, rev. and trans. Richard D. P. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 435, says the following of Bach's omitting the basso continuo: "As a rule, its omission by Bach has a symbolic character and refers either to someone who does not need this support or else to someone who has lost it, who no longer has the ground under his feet and has withdrawn from God." Dürr is certainly correct in viewing the device as symbolic. But Bach's use of the *bassetchen* technique is subtler than Dürr's commentary indicates, with background (high/low) and foreground (theological) dimensions that encompass a much wider range of theological associations.



Example 1. J. S. Bach, *Ascension Oratorio* BWV 11/8, mm. 1–8

of which has a bassetchen part, the other the normal basso continuo. The former, as Albert Schweizer argued many years ago, seems to be associated with the angels of the incarnation and the latter with the shepherds, a simple above/below pictorialism that is amplified by the pastoral style and instrumentation: transverse flutes and strings for the shepherds, pairs of oboes d'amore and oboes da caccia for the angels (with the second oboe da caccia playing the bassetchen part, a sustained g (Example 2).[27] The melody of the angelic music begins with a descending line, then settles on a decorated perfect fifth—g'-d''—as if to suggest a hovering quality, whereas the shepherd music always has an upward direction. If there is any doubt about these associations, it is dispelled at the end of the cantata, where in the final recitative, following the chorus "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill toward humanity," a bass recitative proclaims, "Just so, you angels; rejoice and sing that it has turned out so well for us today! Up, then! We will join in with you; it can make us joyful just like you." The bass voice is, of course, that of the contemporary believer who projects his identity "through" that of one of the shepherds. It is as if one of the shepherds of the incarnation stepped forward to address the angels, to announce the joining of shepherds below and angels above in the hymn with which the cantata ends. And in his setting of the subsequent chorale, Bach brings back the angelic music from the Sinfonia as the interludes between the chorale phrases, its bassetchen texture now

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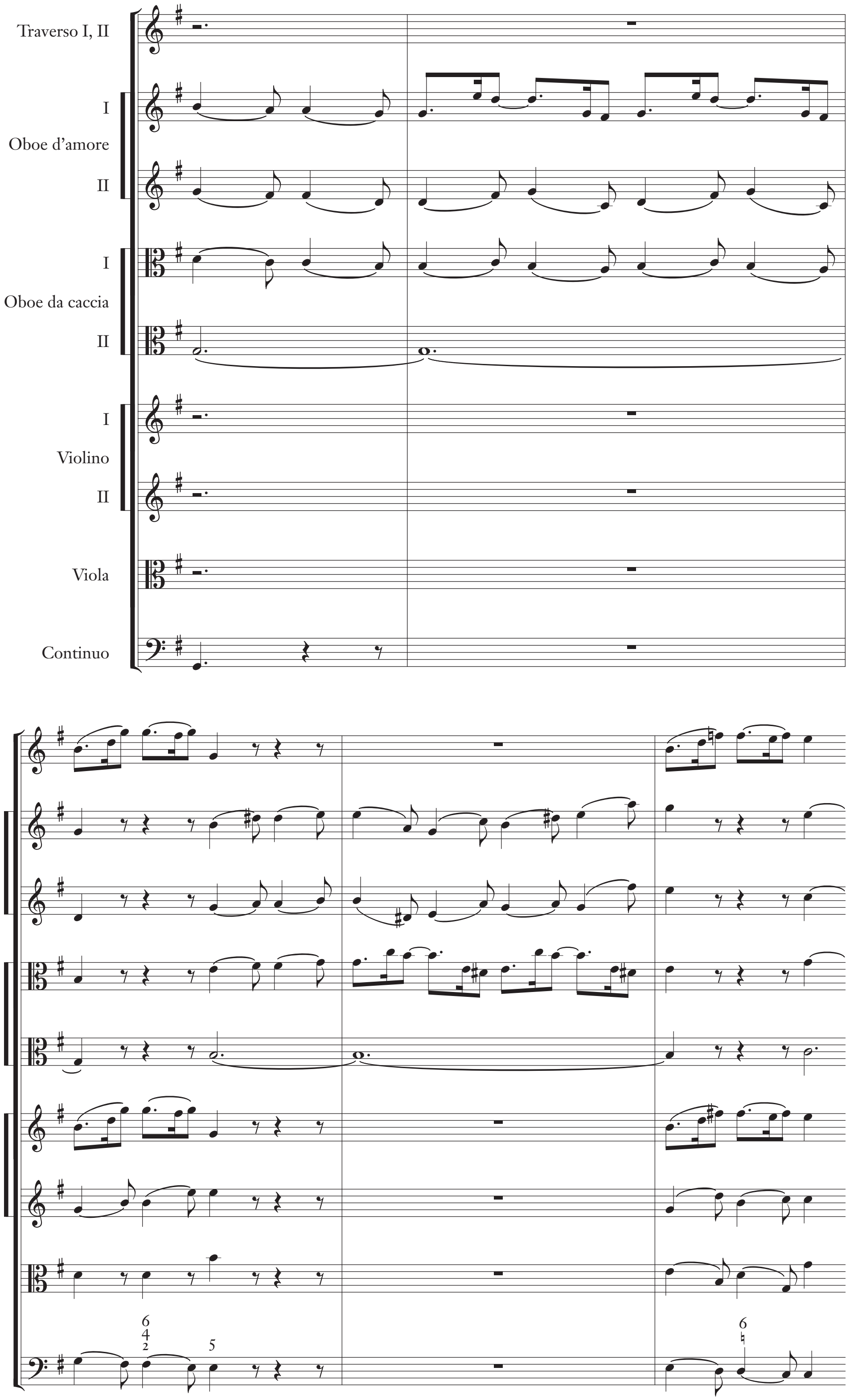
[27] Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach* (1905), trans. Ernest Newman (London: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911), 80.


Traverso I, II
I
Oboe d'amore
II
I
Oboe da caccia
II
I
Violino
II
Viola
Continuo
6
4
2
5
6
♮

Example 2. J. S. Bach, *Christmas Oratorio* BWV 248/10, mm. 9–12 contrasting with the chorale lines, which are all set with basso continuo and which all feature the rising theme associated with the shepherds as the bass line.

The meaning seems clear: The final chorale represents a joining, a unanimity of the shepherds representing the world below and the angels representing that above (in the purely pictorial, physical senses of those words). The pastorale style, however, as Renate Steiger has argued, projects an additional eschatological character that emerges most clearly in the aria "Beglückte Herde, Jesu Schafe, die Welt ist euch ein Himmelreich" (Fortunate flock, Jesus's sheep, the world is a heavenly kingdom for you), from Cantata 104.[28] In that aria (not a bassetchen piece), the pastoral style suggests that the world (below) is transformed into a "heavenly kingdom" by the presence of Jesus, the "good shepherd." This is the underlying meaning of the ending of the second part of the *Christmas Oratorio.* And it underlies the meaning of "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke" in the *Ascension Oratorio*, as well. In the *Christmas Oratorio* the angels come down to announce Jesus's incarnation; in "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke" the believer, mimicking the upward-looking disciples, sees in the Spirit Jesus's ascension, his return to the kingdom above, and through his or her faith perceives continuity of that kingdom with the one below.

## The Tonal Design of the *Ascension Oratorio*

There is another aspect to the design of the *Christmas Oratorio* that applies to the *Ascension Oratorio*, as well. As is well known from studies of the former work, the pastorale-centered second cantata seems to associate its subdominant tonality, G, with the world into which Jesus is incarnated, a world whose relative darkness is projected in the motion toward its subdominant, C, in which the chorale "Schaut hin, dort liegt im finstern Stall" (Look there, he lies in a dark stable) is set. And this association has its opposite number in the fifth cantata of the oratorio, the only one in the dominant key, A.[29] In that cantata the star of Bethlehem is interpreted as bringing light to the world, first in the recitative "Wohl euch, die ihr dies Licht gesehen, es ist zu eurem Heil geschehen! Mein Heiland, du bist das Licht, das auch den Heiden scheinen sollen" (Blessed are you who have seen this light; it has appeared for your salvation); then in the chorale, "Dein Glanz all Finsternis verzehrt" (Your brilliance consumes all darkness), virtually the opposite association (but not the opposite meaning) to that of

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[28] Renate Steiger, "'Die Welt ist euch ein Himmelreich': Zu J. S. Bachs Deutung des Pastoralen," *Musik und Kirche* 41 (1971): 1–8, 69–79.

[29] See Walter Blankenburg, *Das Weihnachts-Oratorium von Johann Sebastian Bach* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1982), 64, 109; Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 121, also brings out the fact that "Schaut hin, dort liegt im finstern Stall" sounds in a low register, a fifth below the pitch at which the same chorale melody sounds at the end of the cantata.

"Schaut hin, dort liegt im finstern Stall," then in the aria "Erleucht auch meine finstre Sinnen" (Illuminate also my dark senses). Throughout the cantata the emphasis on light imagery projects the sense that the dominant (sharp) tonality is a kind of opposite to the subdominant of the second cantata.

In the *Ascension Oratorio*, however, we find that the subdominant G major tonality of "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke" has a place in the design of the whole that is comparable to the role of the subdominant in Bach's other festive D major works.[30] That is, it depicts a vision from below (the subdominant) of the world above (the *bassetchen* texture, associated with the ascended Jesus) through faith, a vision according to which the believer is joined with Jesus or sees "continually" (beständig) Jesus's glance of grace through the love that remains behind.[31] This is the final and most important message of the ascension within the Lutheran framework.

But how does the vision projected in "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke" relate musically to that of its counterpart in the first half of the oratorio, "Ach, bleibe doch"? Their relationship is a key to understanding the design of the oratorio as a whole. For "Ach, bleibe doch" is in the unusual key of the dominant minor, following a recitative that makes a pronounced tonal descent from the initial announcement of Jesus's ascension in the first recitative, "The Lord Jesus raised up his hands and blessed his disciples, and it took place that as he blessed them he departed from them," which had ended in A major. In the opening chorus, the kingdoms of the first line of the text seem to be associated respectively with the two principal sections, the first of which is in D major, ending in A major on its first sounding (the A section), whereas the second is in B minor, ending in F♯ minor. The former segment is festive, dominated by the trum-

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[30] What I have said of the role of the subdominant is true of the supertonic, as well. A few movements to consider in this context would be the "Et in terra pax" of the Gloria of the Mass in B Minor (which moves from the initial D major to G major and E minor), the "Qui tollis" of the Glorias of all three major-key Missae Breves (all in the supertonic of the keys of their respective masses); the G major "Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum" of the Credo of the Mass in B minor; the G major aria "Sanfte soll mein Todeskummer" of the *Easter Oratorio;* and the G major aria "Wo zwei und drei versammlet sind" of Cantata 42. In these and a great many similar instances, the key sequence moves from the tonic major to the subdominant or supertonic to project an affect of contrast that mirrors an above/below element in the text. Within the second part of the *Christmas Oratorio* an outstanding instance of the association of tonal directions (flat/sharp) with earth and heaven appears in the choral setting of the song of the heavenly hosts, "Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe und Friede auf Erden" (Glory be to God on high and peace on earth) origin of the beginning of the Gloria. For the first half of the text ("Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe"), Bach modulates progressively by the circle of fifths in the sharp direction (G, D, a, e, b), then immediately reverses the direction for "Friede auf Erden" (B, e, a, d). Such devices are ubiquitous among the vocal works.

[31] August Hermann Francke, *Predigten über die Sonn- und Fest-Tags Episteln*, 712, describes, on the basis of the original Greek ("used for kinds of diligent and zealous contemplations"), that the narrative of the disciples' looking upward in the Epistle means to "ignite the affect of heartfelt love."

pets and kettledrums, whereas the latter, in addition to emphasizing minor keys, drops the trumpets and drums and begins with syncopated music, projecting a considerably less definite and majestic character. After the pronounced praise of God in the first segment, the text of the second sets the lines "sucht sein Lob recht zu vergleichen wenn ihr mit gesamten Chören ihm ein Lied zu Ehren macht" (Seek to match his praise when you make a song to his honor with entire choirs). As Petzoldt points out, the verb "vergleichen" here retains a meaning it shares with an archaic meaning of "vergelten," used frequently in scripture; it urges those below to provide a response or counterpart to the heavenly praise of God.[32] The "gesamten Chören" do not sound in this segment—the trumpets and drums are out. The text refers to their return directly following the central segment in response to it. The movement as a whole is not to be thought of as corresponding directly to the praise of God that occurs in the heavenly kingdom, but rather as an earthly counterpart of which the first and last segments represent a self-consciously human imagining of what the heavenly praise might be like. In theological terms it parallels the idea that music can provide a foretaste of the kingdom of God, a topic that was taken up by Heinrich Müller in his *Himmlischer Liebeskuß* and was given a more directly musical twist in Christoph Raupach's treatise *Veritophili*, published by Johann Mattheson along with the third part of Friedrich Niedt's *Musicalische Handleitung*.[33] The foretaste is, of course, an entirely theological concept; but following Luther's remarks on the capacity of music to provide such a foretaste, it was invoked by Lutherans to justify concerted church music.[34]

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32. Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar*, 1:924. Petzoldt cites the Grimm brothers' *Deutches Wörterbuch* on the older meaning, which he relates to the use of the word "vergelten" in Psalms 116:12. The Bible with concordances published in Halle from the time of August Hermann Francke to the mid-nineteenth century (with preface by Francke) gives still better instances of this usage with reference to the apocryphal book of Tobias (chapter 12, verses, 2, 5, and 7), which, citing psalm 116, also projects a striking sense of the praise of God (verses 7 and 8). See *BIBLIA, Daßist: Die gantze Heil. Schrift, Altes und Neues Testaments, Nach der Teutschen Ubersetzung D. Martin Luthers . . . Die XIX. Auflage* (Halle, 1725). 614.

33. Heinrich Müller, *Himmlischer Liebeskuß oder Übung des wahren Christenthumbs* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1686), 786. Raupach's treatise *VERITOPHILI Deutliche Beweis-Grunde / Worauf der rechte Gebrauch der MUSIC, beydes in den Kirchen / als ausser denselben / beruhet, . . . Samt einer Vorrede / heraus gegeben von Mattheson*, was sent anonymously to Mattheson, who published it along with the third part of Niedt's *Musicalische Handleitung* (Hamburg, 1717). It has been issued in facsimile, along with the three parts of the *Musicalische Handleitung* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2002). Chapter 7 of Raupach's treatise, titled "Von dem Nützen der Kirchen-Music, krafft welcher man den Vorschmack des dwigen Freuden-Lebens empfindet," cites Müller and Luther (and other theologians such as Christian Scriver, as well as musicians such as Werckmeister) on the quality in question.

34. An illustration from Heinrich Müller's *Göttliche Liebes-Flamme* (the alternate title of the *Himmlischer Liebes-Kuß*) published by Renate Steiger, "'Gnadengegenwart': Johann Sebastian Bachs Pfingstkantate BWV 172," 55, depicts the union of harmonies above and below, the latter showing organ with sing-

Bach's opening chorus subtly suggests God's kingdoms of heaven and earth by the musical means just described, after which the first recitative moves from b to A, narrating first Jesus's blessing of the disciples, traditionally viewed as a manifestation of his "priestly office" (priesterliches Amt), concerned with present life, followed by his ascension, traditionally viewed as his "kingly office" (königliches Amt).[35] The modulation is direct, centering entirely on the fifth-related harmonies B minor, E major, and A major. The voice rises to its highest pitch for the cadence to A, while the basso continuo outlines rising, then falling, thirty-second-note groups that frame the phrase that narrates Jesus's blessing as if mimicking the gesture itself.

The unusual tonal motion within the recitative no. 3 that follows suggests a shift in perspective from the upward direction of the ascension itself and its A major cadence, to the initial response of sorrow from those left below (Example 3). Whereas the relationship of G major to D major in "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke" and the final movement of the oratorio is not in any sense one of opposition, the shift from A major to A minor that leads to "Ach, bleibe doch" is. Here the believer resists (or, like the disciples misunderstanding Jesus's reference to the Kingdom in Acts 1, has not yet grasped) the true meaning of the ascension, focusing, as in Heinrich Müller's description cited earlier, on the sorrow that corresponds to a physical loss rather than on the beneficial meaning of the ascension. "Ach, bleibe doch," as is well known, is a parody of a lost aria, from which the Agnus Dei of the Mass in B minor was also parodied.[36] The Agnus, in G minor, is the only flat-key movement in the mass, serving as a kind of symbolic plagal cadence to the D major of the final Dona nobis pacem. This may or may not have been intended in the Mass as a reminder of the world below, but as

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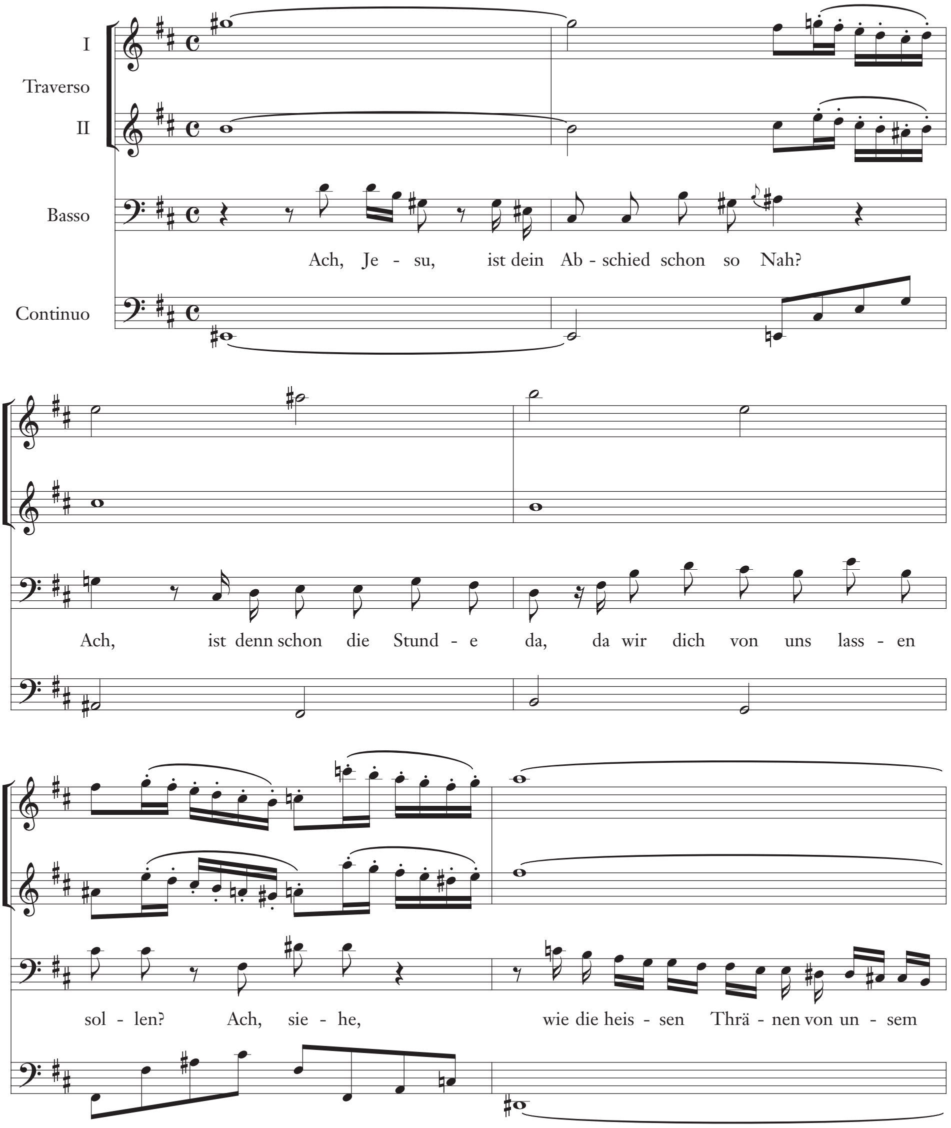
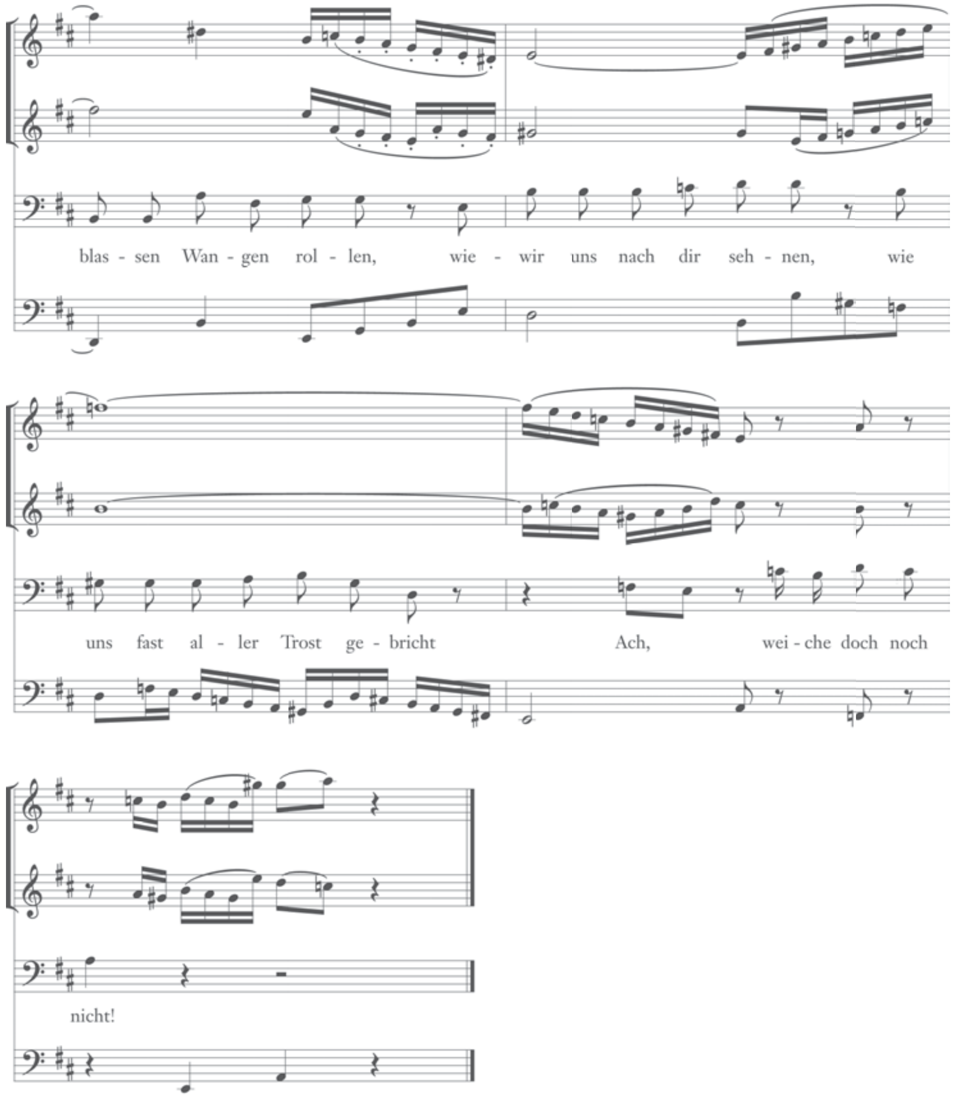
ers and instruments within a representation of the human heart, while above, the vista opens up to reveal the heavenly choirs, again with organ, singers, and instrumentalists. The accompanying poem ends with the lines "Der Himmel lobet dich, den Himmel hier auf Erden / hab ich wann ich dich lob so muß man Englisch werden" (Heaven praises you; I have heaven here on earth when I praise you; thus one becomes like the angels). This is an exact illustration of the "Himmel in Hertzen" described by Müller with respect to the Epistle for Ascension Day (*Apostolischer Schluß Kette*, 505): "Das ist das Reich Gottes in uns / der Himmel im Hertzen . . . . In einem andächtigen Gespräch vom Reich Gottes ist offt ein lieblicher Vorschmack des Himmels" (That is the kingdom of God within us, heaven within our hearts . . . . In a devout conversation on the kingdom of God there is often a lovely foretaste of heaven). It depicts all that underlies God's "kingdoms" and the verb "vergleichen" in the opening chorus of the Ascension Oratorio.

[35] In nearly all the Lutheran commentaries on Ascension Day cited in this article, Jesus is often described in terms of his two or three "offices" (*Ämter*), of prophet, priest, and king (sometimes just the second and third).

[36] The opening chorus and second aria were also parodied from occasional works. See Dürr, *Cantatas*, 338.


I
Traverso
II
Basso
Continuo
Ach, Je - su, ist dein Ab - schied schon so Nah?
Ach, ist denn schon die Stund - e da, da wir dich von uns lass - en
sol - len? Ach, sie - he, wie die heis - sen Thrä - nen von un - sem

Example 3. J. S. Bach, *Ascension Oratorio* BWV 11/3


blas - sen Wan - gen rol - len, wie - wir uns nach dir seh - nen, wie
uns fast al - ler Trost ge - bricht Ach, wei - che doch noch
nicht!

Example 3. *Cont.*

the final cry for mercy it certainly partakes of an above/below element,[37] and the Neapolitan inflections in the main melody might be taken to suggest something similar.

After "Ach, bleibe doch," however, the narrative of the ascension picks up again, this time from the Epistle for the day (Acts 1:9), which is much more specific about the ascent being a visible one, about the cloud that hid Jesus from the disciples' eyes (in the Lutheran interpretation only the upper stages were hidden, whereas the adverb "zusehends" [visibly] made the question of a visible ascent clear), and about Jesus's sitting on the right hand of God: "Und ward aufgehaben zusehends und fuhr auf gen Himmel, eine Wolke nahm ihn weg vor ihren Augen, und er sitzet zur rechten Hand Gottes" (And was visibly lifted up and journeyed up toward heaven; a cloud removed him from their eyes; and he sits at the right hand of God). Once again the modulation is a straightforward circle of fifths, now in the opposite direction; after the a of "Ach, bleibe doch," it picks up on e and moves from there through b to F♯ minor. The D major chorale "Nun lieget alles unter dir" (Now everything lies beneath you) provides the affirmation of Jesus's ascent into his "königliches Amt" (kingly office).

From this point what remains is the all-important revelation of the tropological meaning of Jesus's ascent, its benefit for the faithful below. The narrative of the two men in white introduces this theme in their questioning of the disciples' upward gaze; since they (the two men) were traditionally understood to be angels, their meaning is one given as if from above. It is that, since Jesus will return exactly as the disciples have just seem him ascend—that is, in a cloud, as in Jesus's prediction of his second coming (well known from the *St. Matthew Passion*)—it is futile to seek him in physical form until that day. Rather, it is in his Gnadengegenwart, his presence through the Holy Spirit, in word and sacraments that he must be sought. In keeping with the other pillars of the structure of the oratorio and their association with God's kingdom, this movement is set solidly in D major.

But in the subsequent accompanied recitative no. 7a, another very human affective response suggests torment and instability once again, even though the range of the tonal ground it traverses from beginning to ending is not wide: it begins from a D 4/2 chord (immediately suggesting a turn downward after the D of the preceding movement) and ends in B minor (Example 4). Its bass line, however, is a continuously descending chromatic scale from c' to e♯ (leading tone to the dominant of B minor), while its harmonies (after the initial one) outline mostly diminished-seventh chords changing to dominant sevenths and moving according to the circle of fifths in the flat direction until the arrival on the first B minor chord in m. 5. That pattern was used in a more straightforward (less chromatic) fashion in the recitative no. 3 preceding "Ach, bleibe doch" (see Example 3), which began on an E♯ diminished-seventh chord that changed to a dominant seventh on C♯, then basically followed that pattern (with only slight variations) for two additional degrees of progressive flattening (i.e., A♯ diminished followed by F♯ dominant, then a brief B minor and Phrygian cadence to F♯ major followed by D♯ diminished and B dominant seventh, and finally, G♯ diminished and E dominant seventh, closing in A minor).[38] In the later recitative (Example 4), the harmony, following the initial D 4/2 chord, introduced the E♯ diminished-seventh chord again, changing to a C♯ 4/2 chord, followed by an A♯ diminished seventh, changing (only on the last sixteenth note of the harmony) to an F♯ dominant harmony and a B 4/2 chord, before chromatically inflecting what could have been an E major harmony, to E♯ instead (for the move to the B minor cadence).

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[37] A similar conception perhaps underlies the C minor tonality of Cantata 6, "Bleib bei uns," for Easter Monday 1725, which marks a striking shift in tone from the D major Easter cantata of the preceding day (BWV 249, "Kommt, fliehet und eilet").

I have given this much detail to make clear that the two accompanied recitatives that respond to Jesus's ascension both follow circle-of-fifths patterns, although the second is more hidden, chromatic, and tortured than the first. The text of this recitative, instead of urging Jesus to remain, cries for him to return soon and remove the believer's sorrowful demeanor (Gebärde); otherwise, every moment (of waiting) will be hateful and seem to last years. The meaning is that, as other Bach cantatas argue, taking a sorrowful approach to life simply augments one's torment. After the B minor cadence the final narrative recitative, no. 7c, continues the downward tonal motion from its initial B minor to an E minor cadence for the narrative of the disciples' descent from the Mount of Olives and on to C major (now about to become the subdominant of G major) for their return to Jerusalem. The arrival on C is at very low pitch, after which the voice leaps up an octave to complete the arrival on G "mit grosser Freude." The turn toward E minor, beginning on "Ölberg," was perhaps intended as a reminder of the passion, whereas the shift to G major, affirmed of course by "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke," is aligned with the disciples' finally coming to a true understanding of the ascension.

In all this Bach uses modulation from D major in the flat (or subdominant) direction to depict two different kinds of relationship of the world to Jesus's ascension. "Ach, bleibe doch" is Müller's more literal, physical response of sorrow and "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke" his tropological understanding of the joy of Jesus's ascension. "Ach, bleibe doch" retains a degree of antithesis, while "Jesus, deine Gnadenblicke" does not. In the recitatives Bach utilizes circle-of-fifths modulations to move in continuous step-by-step fashion between the perspectives of above and below. Throughout the oratorio Bach of course also lavishes attention on figurational details that amplify

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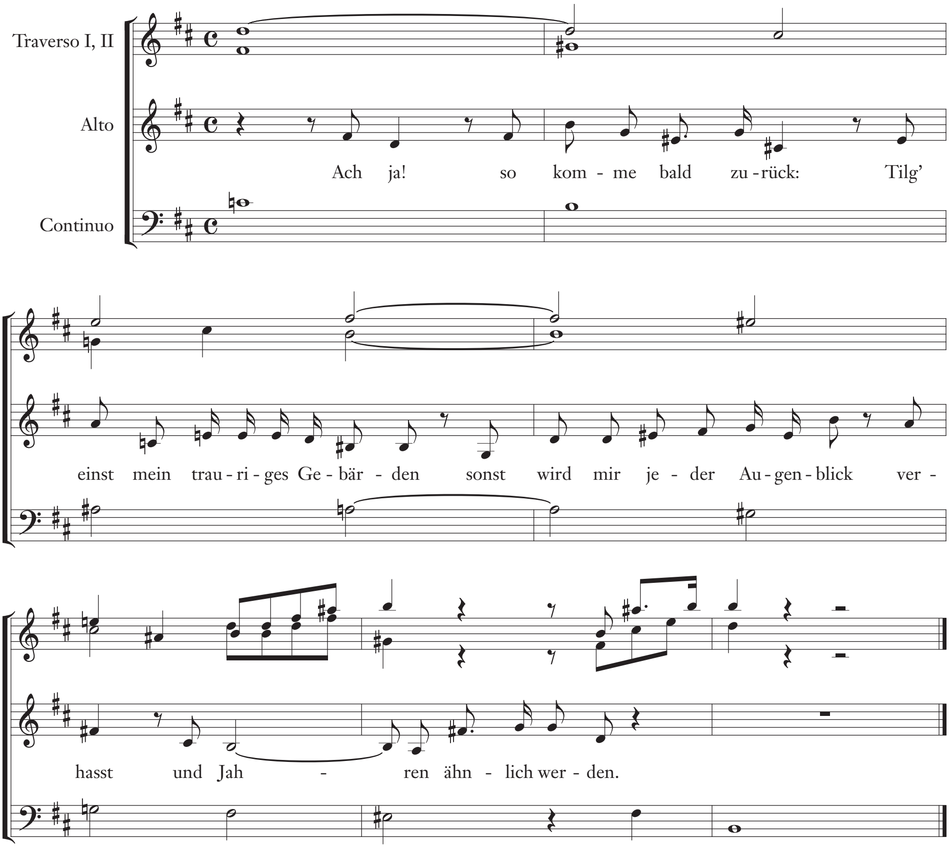
[38] I cannot agree with Alfred Dürr's designation of the beginning key of this recitative as F♯ minor (*Cantatas*, 336). There is no cadence to F♯ and no F♯ harmony in the entire movement. The first cadence is a Phrygian cadence to F♯ major; but this is a movement dominated by the circle-of-fifths motion, that is, a continual process of transition, not by specific keys (until, of course, the A minor final cadence).


Traverso I, II
Alto
Continuo
Ach ja! so kom - me bald zu - rück: Tilg'
einst mein trau - ri - ges Ge - bär - den sonst wird mir je - der Au - gen - blick ver -
hasst und Jah - ren ähn - lich wer - den.

Example 4. J. S. Bach, *Ascension Oratorio* BWV 11/7b

the sense of upward/downward directions that I have discussed in terms of the tonal design. The long upward sequences on "sehn" in "Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke" are perhaps the culmination of what the Lutheran theologians viewed as the primary message of Ascension Day: that the faithful learn to direct their lives upward to God—to see him continually in the Spirit—and the future that awaits them. I think it likely that in the final chorale, which returns to D major and the instrumentation of the opening chorus, Bach intended a representation of the praise of God that is called for in the middle section of the opening movement. That is, the final movement is a "Lied" for "gesamten Chören," but one that now centers entirely on the longing of the faithful for God's kingdom. The chorale itself is in B minor, but it is embedded within the D major framework of the instrumental parts, particularly the trumpets, which project a strikingly eschatological quality, the tonal dualism invoking the idea of God's two kingdoms and the awaiting of the faithful for fulfillment in the one above.

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