

BACH 734 - J.S. BACH (1685-1750): *Soli Deo Gloria* Vol. 2

When Bach took over the St. Thomas Cantorate in the spring of 1723 as the leading musician of the leading Cantorate in Protestant Germany, he achieved at long last the opportunity to realize his artistic aspirations: "the ultimate goal of a regulated church music," which he had described in 1708 to the Mühlhausen Town Council and which he had tried to pursue, on a more restricted level, at the Weimar Court. Bach at once embarked on a program to provide a piece of concerted music - a Cantata - for every Sunday and feast day of the ecclesiastical year, except for the Lenten weeks preceding Christmas and Easter, when concerted music was suspended.

The Cantata supplied the principal music piece in the liturgy of the main service, and as such it highlighted a passage from the biblical lesson then interpreted it as well. Thus all of Bach's Leipzig Cantata texts follow a standard pattern firmly grounded in the two-fold structure of a Lutheran sermon: *explicatio* and *applicatio*, biblical text and theological instruction, followed by practical and moral advice. The libretto ordinarily opens with a biblical dictum, usually a passage from the prescribed Gospel lesson that serves as a point of departure (opening chorus). It is followed by scriptural, doctrinal, and contextual explanations (a recitative-aria pair), leading to considerations of the consequences to be drawn from the lesson and the admonition to conduct a true Christian life (another recitative-aria pair). The text concludes with a congregational prayer in the form of a hymn stanza (chorale).

Bach's own Bible was well used and frequently annotated in the margin. At the end of his Cantata scores he would write "*Fine. S.D.G*" for *Soli Deo Gloria*. Though formally employed by the City Council and responsible to his Choir and Congregation, the ultimate dedication of Bach's choral writing – indeed possibly all of his music – was *to the Glory of God Alone*. We have used this as our title in these compilations from the two hundred or so known Cantatas.

It is mainly in the opening movements that Bach sets the tone of the Cantatas. The perfect matching of musical mood to the message of the relevant text shows Bach to have a deep comprehension of the Biblical texts and indeed to be a powerful advocate of the weekly message. It is for this reason that the opening movements and chorale elaborations are among the highest pinnacles of Bach's musical output.

1: BWV 61 - Chorus 1: *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, der Jungfrauen Kind erkennt, des sich wundert alle Welt; Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt.* Come now, the gentiles' Saviour, revealed as the Virgin's child, all the world marvels, that God ordained this birth for him.

Chorale: *Amen, Amen. Komm, du schöne Freudenkrone, bleib nich lange! Deiner wart ich mit Verlangen.* Amen, Amen. Come, thou lovely crown of gladness, do not tarry. I await for Thee with longing.

2: BWV 44 - Chorus 1: *Sie werden euch in den Bann tun.* In banishment they will cast you.

Chorus 2: *Es kömmt aber die Zeit, dass, wer euch tötet, wird meinen, er tue Gott einen Dienst daran.* There cometh, yea, the time, when he who slays you will think that he doeth God a good deed in this.

3: BWV 121 - Chorus 1: *Christum wir sollen loben schon, der reinen Magd Marien Sohn, so weit die liebe Sonne leucht und an aller Welt Ende reicht.* To Christ we should sing praises now, the spotless maiden Maria's Son, as far as our dear sun gives light and reaches out to all the world.

Chorale: *Lob, Ehr und Dank sei dir gesagt, Christ, geborn von der reinen Magd, samt Vater und dem Heiligen Geist, von nun an bis in Ewigkeit.* Laud, praise and thanks to Thee be given, Christ, born of a spotless maiden, with Father and the Holy Ghost, from now until all eternity.

4: BWV 137 - Chorus 1: *Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren, meine geliebte Seele, das ist mein Begehren. Kommet zu Hauf, Psalter und Harfen, wacht auf! Lasset die Musicam hören.* Praise to the Lord, the mighty King of all honor, my beloved spirit, that is my desire. Come ye in throngs, psalter and lyre, awake! Let now the music be sounding.

5: BWV 12 - Sinfonia (Adagio assai) – Chorus 1: *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen, Angst und Not sind der Christen Tränenbrot, die das Zeichen Jesu tragen.*

Weeping, wailing, grieving, fearing, dread and need, these are the Christians' tearful bread, those who wear the sign of Jesus.

6: BWV 126 - Chorus 1: *Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort, und steur' des Papsts und Türken Mord, die Jesum Christum, deinen Sohn, stürzen wollen von seinem Thron.*

Uphold us, Lord, in Thy word, and fend of the murderous Papists and infidel Turks, who are bent on overthrowing Thy Son, Jesus Christ from His throne.

7: BWV 1 - Chorus 1: *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern voll Gnad und Wahrheit von dem Herrn, die süsse Wurzel Jesse! Du Sohn Davids aus Jakobs Stamm, mein König und mein Bräutigam, hast mir mein Herz besessen, lieblich, freundlich, schön und herrlich, gross und ehrlich, reich von Gaben, hoch und sehr prächtig erhaben.*

How beautiful shines the Morning Star full of mercy and truth before the Lord, the sweet root of Jesse! Thou, son of Jacob's tribe, my King and bridegroom, hast taken over my heart, lovely, kindly, bright and glorious, great and righteous, rich in blessings, high and most richly exalted.

Chorale: *Wie bin ich doch so herzlich froh, dass mein Schatz ist das A und O, der Anfang und das Ende; er wird mich doch zu seinem Preis aufnehmen in das Paradies, des klopf ich in die Hände. Amen! Amen! Komm, du schöne Freudenkrone, bleib nicht lange, deiner wart ich mit Verlangen.* How truly joyful I am, that my treasure is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; He will, indeed to His great praise, receive me into His Paradise, for this I will clap my hands. Come, thou lovely Crown of gladness, be not long now, I await Thee with great longing.

8: BWV 129 - Chorus 1: *Gelobet sei der Herr, mein Gott, mein Licht, mein Leben, mein Schöpfer, der mir hat mein Leib und Seel gegeben, mein Vater, der mich schützt von Mutterleibe an, der alle Augenblick viel Guts an mir getan.* Praise be to the Lord, my God, my Light, my Life, my Creator, who has given me my body and soul, who protects me since my mother's womb, who every moment hath much good for me fulfilled.

9: BWV 65 - Chorus 1: *Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen, Gold und Weihrauch bringen, und des Herren Lob verkündigen.* They shall all come from out of Sheba, gold and incense bringing, and singing the Lord's great praises.

10: BWV 171 - Chorus 1: *Gott, wie dein Name, so ist auch dein Ruhm bis an der Welt Ende.*

God, as thy name is, so also spreads Thy fame to the ends of the Earth.

Chorale: *Dein ist allein die Ehre, dein ist allein der Ruhm; Geduld im Kreuz uns lehre, regier all unser Tun, bis wir fröhlich abschieden ins ewig Himmelreich, zu wahren Fried und Freude, den Heiligen Gottes gleich. Indes macht's mit uns allen nach deinem Wohlgefallen: solches singet heut ohn Scherzen die christgläubige Schar und wünscht mit Mund und Herzen ein seligs neues Jahr.* Thine alone is the honor, Thine alone the glory; teach us patience in the Cross, and rule our every deed, till we depart with rapture to Heaven's eternal realm, into true peace and joy, those made in God's likeness. Meanwhile deal with us according to Thy pleasure: thus sings today in earnest the Christ-believing throng and wishes with voice and heart a blessed New Year.

11: BWV 34 - Chorus 1: *O ewiges Feuer, o Ursprung der Liebe, entzünde die Herzen und weihe sie ein. Lass himmlische Flammen durchdringen und wallen, wir wünschen, o Höchster, dein Tempel zu sein, ach, lass dir die Seelen im Glauben gefallen.*

O eternal fire, O source of love, kindle our hearts and consecrate them! Let Heavenly flames now envelop and penetrate them; for we wish now, O Highest, Thy temple to be, Ah, let our spirits in faith ever please Thee.

12: BWV 38 - Chorus 1: *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir, Herr Gott, erhör mein Rufen; dein gnädig Ohr neig her zu mir und meiner Bitt sei öffne! Denn so du willst das sehen an, was Sünd und Unrecht ist getan, wer kann, Herr, vor dir bleiben?*

In deep need I cry to Thee, Lord God, hear Thou my calling; Thy gracious ear bend low to me and open to my request! For if Thou wilt regard the sins and misdeeds committed, who, Lord, shall be able to stand before Thee?

Chorale: *Ob bei uns ist der Süden viel, bei Gott ist viel mehr Gnade; Sein Hand zu helfen hat kein Ziel, wie gross auch sei der Schade. Er ist allein der gute Hirt, der Israel erlösen wird aus seinen Sünden allen.*

Though many sins abound within us, God's Mercy is even greater. His hand is ready to help without limit, however great our wrong may be. He alone is the good shepherd, who will redeem Israel from all its sin.

13: BWV 135 - Chorus 1: *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder, straf nicht in deinem Zorn, dein' emsten Grimm doch linder, sonst ist's mit mir verglorn. Ach Herr, wollst mir vergeben mein Sünd und gnädig sein, dass ich mag ewig leben, entfliehn der Höllepein.*

Ah Lord, me a poor sinner, strike me not with Thy wrath, soften Thy solemn rage, else is my hope forlorn. Ah Lord, may'st thou forgive me my sins and be merciful, that I may have life eternal and flee the pain of Hell.

Chorale: *Ehr sei ins Himmels Throne mit hohem Ruhm und Preis dem Vater und dem Sohne und auch zu gleicher Weis dem Heiligen Geist mit Ehren in aller Ewigkeit, der woll uns all'n bescheren die ewge Seligkeit.*

Glory be in Heaven's Throne with lofty fame and praise to God the Father and to the Son, as well in equal wise to the Holy Ghost with honor for all eternity, who shall let us all share in Eternal blessedness.

14: BWV 23 – Chorale: *Christe, du Lamm Gottes, der du trägst sie die Sünde der Welt, erbarm dich unser! ...gib uns dein' Frieden. Amen.* Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us! ...grant us Thy peace. Amen.