

When Bach took over the St. Thomas Cantorate in the spring of 1723 as the leading musician of the foremost 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 attempted 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 and then interpreted a passage from the biblical text for the day. 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 Cantata ordinarily opens with a Chorus using a Biblical dictum, normally a passage from the prescribed Gospel lesson that serves as a point of departure. Bach made a particular point of reflecting the mood of the text in his music. The Cantata usually concludes with a Chorale in the form of a hymn stanza.

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" (*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 *Soli Deo Gloria* compilations from the two hundred or so known Cantatas. In the first two volumes (BACH 733 & 734) we offered a selection of some of Bach's finest opening Choruses conducted by Karl Richter. From Volume 3 onwards we continue exploring this great treasure of some of Bach's greatest music, much of it little-heard, by working numerically through all of the Cantatas, excepting those already included in the first two Volumes of *Soli Deo Gloria* or those Cantatas exceptional throughout which we have presented in their entirety. The recordings here presented were made over a number of years at the annual Greifswald Bach Festival by the East German Radio of the former D.D.R.

**1: BWV 21 - Chorus 1:** *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis in meinem Herzen; aber deine Tröstungen erquickten meine Seele.* I had so much distress within my heart; but still Thy consoling restoreth all my spirit. **Chorus 2:** *Was betrübst du dich, meine Seele, und bist so unruhig in mir? Harre auf Gott; denn ich werde ihm noch danken, dass er meines Angesichtes Hilfe und mein Gott ist.* Why art thou distressed, O my spirit, and art so unquiet in me? Trust firmly in God for even yet shall I thank Him, that He gives comfort to my countenance and is my God. **Chorus with Chorale:** *Sei nun wieder zufrieden, meine Seele, denn der Herr tut dir Guts.* Be now once more contented, O my spirit, for the Lord serves thee well. **(Chorale):** *Was helfen uns die schweren Sorgen, was hilft uns unser Weh und Ach? Was hilf es, dass wir alle Morgen beseufzen unser Ungemach? Wir machen unser Kreuz und Leid nur grosser durch die Traurigkeit. Den nicht in deiner Drangsalshütze, dass du von Gott der im Schosse sitze, der sich mit stetem Glücke speist. Die folgend Zeit verändert viel und setzet jeglichem sein Ziel.* What help is this heavy sorrow, what use is this all our woe and "Ah"? What use that we should every morning heap sighs upon our sore distress? We only make our Cross and pain grow greater through our sadness. Think not within thy heat of torment that thou art abandoned by God and that God only embraces those who enjoy continual good fortune. The coming time will change much and sets for each his own goal. **Final Chorus:** *Das Lamm, das erwürget ist, ist würdig zu nehmen Kraft und Reichtum und Weisheit und Stärke und Ehre und Preis und Lob. Lob und Ehre und Preis und Gewalt sei unserem Gott von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit. Amen, Alleluja!* The lamb that is slaughtered now is worthy to have all might and riches and wisdom and power and honour and praise and fame. Fame and honour and praise and great might be to our God for evermore and evermore. Amen, Alleluja!

**2: BWV 26 - Chorus 1:** *Ach, wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig ist der Menschen Leben! Wie ein Nebel bald entstehet, und auch wieder bald vergehet, so ist unser Leben, sehet!* Ah, how fleeting, ah, how empty is the life of mortals! As a mist which quickly riseth and again as quickly passeth, even so is our life, witness to it! **Chorale:** *Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig sind der Menschen Sachen! Alles, alles, was wir sehen, das muss fallen und vergehen. Wer Got fürcht', bleibt ewig stehen.* Ah, how fleeting, ah, how empty are all mortal matters! All that, all that which we look at, that must fall at last and vanish. Who fears God shall stand forever.

**3: BWV 30 - Chorus 1:** *Freue dich, erlöste Schar, freue dich in Sions Hütten. Dein Gedeihen hat itzund einen rechten festen Grund, dich mit Wohl zu überschütten.* Joyful be, O redeemed throng, joyful be in Zion's dwellings. Thy success hath henceforth found a sure and solid reason to shower thee with bliss and health.

**4: BWV 31 - Chorus 1:** *Der Himmel lacht! Die Erde jubiliert, und was sie trägt in ihrem Schoss; Der Schöpfer lebt! Der Höchste triumphieret und ist von Todesbanden los. Der sich das Grab zur Ruh erlesen, der Heiligste kann nicht verwesen.* The Heavens laugh! The Earth rejoices, and all she bears within her bosom; our Maker lives! The Highest stands triumphant and from the bonds of death is now free. He who hath chosen the grave to rest, the Holy One will not allow to decay. **Chorale:** *So fahr ich hin zu Jesu Christ, mein' Arm tu ich ausstrecken; so schlaf ich ein und ruhe fein, kein Mensch kann mich aufwecken, denn Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn, der wird die Himmelstür aufthun, mich fühm zum ewgen Leben.* So forth I will go to Jesus Christ, my arm to him extending; to sleep I will go and rest so well, that no man could ever wake me, for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will the Heavenly door unlock, and lead me to eternal life.

5: BWV 33 - Chorus 1: *Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, mein Hoffnung steht auf Erden; ich weiss, dass du mein Tröster bist, kein Trost mag mir sonst werden. Von Anbeginn ist nichts erkorn, auf Erden war kein Mensch geboren, der mir aus Nöten helfen kann. Ich ruf dich an, zu dem ich mein Vertrauen hab. Alone to thee, Lord Jesus Christ, my hope stays on Earth; I know Thou art my comforter, I need no other comfort. From the beginning nothing was singled out and no man ever born that can help me in distress. I will call upon Thee, in whom I put my trust.*

*Chorale: Ehr sei Gott in dem höchsten Thron, dem Vater aller Güte, und Jesu Christ, sein'm liebsten Sohn, der uns allzeit behüte, und Gott dem Heiligen Geiste, der uns sein Hilf allzeit leiste, damit wir ihm gefällig sein, hier in dieser Zeit und folgend in der Ewigkeit. Glory be to God upon the highest throne, to the Father of all goodness, and to Jesus Christ, His only Son, who protects us at all times, and to God, the Holy Ghost, who affords us aid at all times, that we may be pleasing to Him, here in this world and thereafter in all eternity.*

6: BWV 37 - Chorus 1: *Wer da gläubet und getauft wird, der wird selig werden. He who trusteth and is baptized, he shall have salvation. Chorale: Den Glauben mir verleihe and dein' Sohn Jesum Christ, mein Sünd mir auch verzeihe allhier zu dieser Frist. Du wirst mir nich versagen, was du verheissen hast, dass er mein Sünd tu tragen und lös mich von der Last. Belief bestow upon me, in thy Son Jesus Christ, forgive me also my sins while I am in this life. Thou wilt not ever deny me what Thou has promised me, that He shall carry my sin and loose me of its burden.*

7: BWV 40 - Chorus 1: *Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes, dass er die Werke des Teufels zerstöre. For this the Son of God has appeared, that he destroy all the works of the Devil. Chorale 1: Die Sünd macht Leid; Christus bringt Freud, weil er zu Trost in diese Welt gekommen. Mit uns ist Gott nun in der Not: wer ist, der uns als Christen kann verdammen? Though sin brings pain, our Christ brings joy, for our comfort He hath entered this world. God is now with us in our need: who is there now, who could bring damnation upon us as Christians?*

8: BWV 41 - Chorus 1: *Jesu, nun sei gepreiset zu diesem neuen Jahr für dein Güt, uns beweiset in aller Not and G'fahr, dass wir haben erlebet die neu fröhliche Zeit, die voller Gnaden schwebet und ewiger Seligkeit; dass wir in gutter Stille das alt Jahr haben erfüllet. Wir woll'n uns dir ergeben jetzund und immerdar, behüt Leib, Seel und Leben hinfort durchs ganze Jahr! Be praised now, O Lord Jesus, at this the New Year for Thy help which Thou showest in all our dread and stress. We ourselves have witnessed the new and joyful age, which is full of blessing and lasting happiness; that we in goodly stillness have completed the old year. We would surrender to Thee for now and evermore, protect us our life, soul and body henceforth through all the year! Chorale: Dein ist allein die Ehre, dein ist allein der Ruhm; geduld im Kreuz uns lehre, regier all unser Tun, bis wir fröhlich abscheiden ins ewig Himmereich, zu wahren Fried und Freude, den Heiligen Gottes gleich. In des 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 is alone the honour Thine alone the praise; teach us now to bear the Cross, and rule our every deed, till we depart with rapture to Heaven's eternal realm, into true peace and gladness, like that of the Saints of God. Deal with us in the meanwhile according to Thy wish: thus sing today in earnest the Christ-believing throngs and wish with voice and spirit a new and blessed year.*

9: BWV 43 - Chorus 1: *Gott fähret auf mit Jauchzen und der Herr mit heller Posaunen. Lobsinget, lobsinget Gott, lobsinget, lobsinget unserm Könige. God goeth up with rejoicing and the Lord with ringing of trumpets. Sing praises, sing praise to God, sing praises, sing praises, sing praises to our Lord and King.*

10: BWV 45 - Chorus 1: *Es ist dir gesagt, Mensch, was gut ist und was der Herr von dir fordert, nämlich: Gottes Wort halten und Liebe üben und demütig sein vor deinem Gott. It hath been told thee, Man, what is good and what the Lord asketh of thee, namely: to hold fast God's word and practise love, and to be humble before thy God. Chorale: Gib, dass ich tu mit Fleiss, was mir zu tun gebühret, worzu mich dein Befehl in meinem Stande führet! Gib, dass ich's tue bald, zu der Zeit, da ich soll; und wenn ich's tu, so gib, dass es gerate wohl! Grant that I do with care what I am given to do, that which Thy command leadeth me to do in my position! Grant that I do it quickly, just at the right time; and then when I do, grant me that it may prosper well!*