

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

Form: Chorale Fantasia-Recit (T)-Aria (T)-Recit (A)-Aria (B)-Chorale.

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

The Gospel reading ends: "There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents," and this becomes the primary theme of the cantata. The cantata also references the idea of reversal mentioned in the Epistle: "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you... And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you" (1 Pet. 5:10). Thus "the last become first" (see movement 1).

J.S. Bach

This cantata is highly unified, where material is often derived from the chorale tune.

Cantata No. 135

Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder

Instrumentation:

Cornetto
Tbn
Ob I, II
Vln I, II
Via
SATB
Continuo with Trombone
(Cornetto added to double Soprano in final chorale.)

Bassetto texture can symbolize
-incomprehensible realities
-lack of firm oundation
For examples, see side note.

135/1. **1. Coro** (Chorale1 Vs. 1 verbatim) • Prayer for mercy on this poor sinner (135/1). (This chorale loosely paraphrases Psalm 6.)

1. Ritornello Oboes

Strings

Counterpoint derived from the opening of the chorale tune, so this work differs from the concertante type where instruments have independent material. See Dürr/Jones 414.

E minor Bassetto Texture (no Continuo bass) in ritornello sections alternates with vocal sections where the chorale tune is in the Bass and Continuo, resulting in quasi-antiphonal or responsorial contrast.

A minor D minor G major C major

A minor

For chorales in bar form (AAB), Bach sometimes repeats the music for the second chorale line. Here he modifies the music for the second pair of chorale lines by changing the order of entries from TAS-SAT (up-down) to SAT-TAS (down-up), perhaps to differentiate statements that are directed upwards from those that have a downward direction. Alternatively, he may be alluding to Jesus' words, "The first will be last and the last, first" (e.g., Matt. 20:16, Mark 10:31, Luke 13:30).

Soprano
Alto
Tenore
Basso

Counterpoint is based on the chorale phrase. The ascending order of entries reflects the upwardly directed supplication.

Chorale stanza 1 alludes to Psalm 6:1.

Ach Herr, mich ar - men Sün - der, Herr, mich

Ach Herr, mich ar - men Sün - der, ach Herr, mich

Ach Herr, mich ar - men Sün - der, ach Herr, mich ar - men

(Mel: „Herzlich thut mich verlangen“)

Ach Herr, mich ar - men Sün - der

Chorale Phrase 1. In the vocal sections, the oboes drop out at first while the strings mostly double the voices. The oboes sometimes enter again for emphasis in 6-part texture (e.g., at the end).

Oboes tacet

+ Continuo

A minor A minor

Tune now is now in Bass. Bach's began his chorale cycle systematically: BWV 20: Soprano BWV 2: Alto BWV 7: Tenor BWV 135: Bass (See side note.) BWV 3 also puts the chorale in the bass voice.

The inclusion of trombone in the continuo group may symbolize judgment.

Bach harmonized this chorale tune in different ways. For example, see BWV 25/1, composed a year earlier for the 14th S. after Trinity, 29 August 1723. Here he begins and ends on the dominant.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

20/

armen Sün - der straf nicht in

armen Sün - der

Sün - der

Chorale Phrase 2.

straf'

+Oboes

Chorale line prefigured in strings.

Continuo tacet

D minor

27/ The descending order of entries reflects the downwardly directed action of divine wrath.

dei - - - nem Zorn, straf nicht in - dei - nem, in - dei - nem Zorn,

straf nicht in - dei - nem Zorn, - straf nicht in - dei - nem, in dei - nem Zorn,

straf nicht in dei - nem Zorn, straf nicht in - dei - nem Zorn,

nicht in dei - nem Zorn,

Oboes tacet

+Oboes

A minor

A7

D minor

A minor

33/

Chorale line prefigured in strings.

A minor

E minor

E7

A minor

A7

39/

D minor

D7

G major

G7

C major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

The music repeats mm. 14-32, with some departures in the instrumental parts. The descending order of entries reflects the downwardly directed action of divine wrath.

45

C

dein'n ern-sten Grimm doch lin - der, dein'n ern-sten
 dein'n ern-sten Grimm doch lin - der,
 dein'n ern-sten Grimm,
 dein'n ern - sten Grimm doch lin - der,

Chorale Phrase 3 (same melody as 1).

Oboes tacet
 +Continuo

A minor A minor D minor E7

51

Grimm doch lin - der,
 dein'n ern-sten Grimm doch lin - der,
 dein'n ern-sten Grimm doch lin - der,

+Oboes
 Chorale line prefigured in strings.
 Continuo tacet

A minor A minor A7

57

D The ascending order of entries reflects an upwardly directed supplication.

sonst ist's mit mir ver - lorn, sonst ist's mit
 sonst ist's mit mir ver - lorn, sonst ist's mit mir, mit
 sonst ist's mit mir ver - lorn, sonst ist's mit mir, sonst ist's
 sonst ist's mit mir ver - lorn.

Chorale Phrase 4 (same melody as 2). Oboes tacet

D minor +Continuo A minor A7 D minor
 G# dim.7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

63/

mir ver. lor'n.

mir ver - lor'n.

81 mit mir ver. lor'n.

+Oboes

Chorale line prefigured twice in strings.
Continuo tacet

69/

E

D minor (G7)

Abgesang of bar form

Ach Herr, wollst

In the Abgesang of bar form, the cantus firmus does not lead for the first time.

C major C major (D7) E7

75/

Ach Herr, wollst mir ver - ge - ben, ver - ge-ben, wollst

mir ver - ge - ben, ver - ge - ben, wollst mir ver - ge-ben, ach

81 Ach Herr, wollst mir ver - ge -

Ach Herr, wollst

Chorale Phrase 5 (Abgesang of Bar form).

Ob. tacet

A major (A7) D major +Continuo G major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

81

mir ver - - geben, Herr, wollst mir ver - ge - - ben

Herr, wollst mir ver - geben, Herr, wollst mir ver - ge - ben

ben, wollst mir ver - geben, Herr, wollst mir ver - ge - ben

mir ver ge - - - ben

+Oboes

Chorale line prefigured in strings.

C major F major B dim.7 C major

Continuo tacet

87

E7 A major A minor D minor G7 C minor

93

F

mein' Sünd', mein' Sünd', mein' Sünd' und gnä - dig sein, und gnä - dig

mein' Sünd', mein' Sünd' und gnä - dig sein, und gnä - dig, gnä - dig

mein' Sünd', mein' Sünd' und gnä - dig sein, und gnä - dig, gnä - dig

Chorale Phrase 6.

mein' Sünd' und gnä - dig sein,

F

+Continuo

C# dim.7 D minor E7 A minor

These words are set homophonically rather than in imitation, perhaps to make them very clear: no voice is first or last.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

99

sein,
sein,
sein,

Continuo tacet

A minor D7 G# dim.7 A minor E dim.7

Chorale line prefigured in strings.

Original, chorale-based motive returns.

105

Order of entries: AST-STA: The alto line, which was second for the first four lines of the chorale is now first AND last.

dass ich mag
dass ich mag e - - -

Chorale Phrase 7 with longer note values, probably to depict "ewig leben" of the text.

dass ich Ob. 1 tacet

+Continuo

A major D minor D major D7 G minor G major C major

111

e - - - wig, ich mag e - wig, e - wig, e - wig
- wig, ich mag e - - - wig, ich mag e - wig leben, ich mag
dass ich mag e - - - wig, e - - - wig, e - wig
mag e - wig le - - ben,

Oboe 2 tacet

D major B7 E minor A7 E minor E minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

117

le - - - ben,
e - wig le - - - ben,
le - - - ben,

+Oboes

Continuo Tacet
E minor

D7

G major

123

entflieh'n der Höl -

entflieh'n der

Chorale Phrase 8.

entflieh'n der Höl -

ent - - flieh'n der Höl - len -

Chorale line prefigured in strings.

+Continuo

B7

E avoided

D minor

E major

A minor

129

len - - - pein, ent - flieh'n der Höl - - - len - - - pein.
Höl - - - len - - - pein, der Höl - - - len - - - pein.
len - - - pein, entflieh'n der Höl - - - len - - - pein.
pein.

pein.

E7

A minor

A minor

D# dim.7

E major

No closing ritornello.

E pedal functions like a dominant preparation but the movement avoids ending in A, perhaps to depict "fleeing hell's pain."

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

135/2 **2. Recitativo** (Based on Chorale Vs. 2, alludes to Psalm 6:2-3.) Text painting: Chromaticism, chromatic saturation
 • Healing sought from physician of souls (135/2). • Healing sought from physician of souls (135/2). for human misery/spiritual sickness.

Chromatic saturation
in the vocal part in
5 mm.

Tenore

1. G C# D E F A B-flat G# B

Ach hei-le mich, du Arzt der See-len, ich bin sehr krank und

Continuo

Text painting: Descending diminished triad in voice for plea for spiritual healing at beginning and end (framing the recitative).

A7 D minor

3 C D# F#

schwach; man möchte die Ge-bei-ne zäh-len, so jämmerlich hat mich mein Un-gemach, mein

E7 A7 D# dim. B major

6 A# dim.7 B7 E minor C# dim.7 A7

Kreuz und Leiden zu-ge-richt't. Das An-ge-sicht ist ganz von Thränen aufgeschwollen, die,

Text painting: 32nd notes for rushing torrents (of tears).

Text painting: downward scale for tears running down.

9 F# dim.7 G7 C minor

schnel - - - len Fluthengleich, von Wan-gen ab-wärts rol-len. Der

11 A dim.7 F7 G major C major

See-le ist vor Schrek - ken angst und ban-ge; ach, du Herr, wie so lan-ge?

Chorale text line verbatim

Descending diminished triad in voice as at beginning.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

Rhyme Scheme: ABABCD CD
Bach divides this into 3 sections: ABAB-CD-CD

(Based on Chorale Vs. 3, alludes to Psalm 6:4-5.)
135/3 **3. Aria** • Comfort sought; how can God be praised in death? (135/3).

Ritornello Aria with opening motive based on vocal motive.

Ob. I, II
Continuo

Triple meter, song-like melody, and oboe accompaniment suggest a dance. See Dürr/Jones, 415.

mf Ritornello

C major (Bach often uses C for Christ).

The mood is comforting, as if the prayer has already been answered.

G major

G major

G7

C major

G major

Tenore

8 Trö - ste mir, Je - su, mein Ge - mü - the,

C major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

Text painting: Descending lines covering nearly 2 octaves for sinking into death.

21
8 sonst ver_sink' ich in den Tod, _____ sonst ver_sink' ich in den

Text painting: Descending 7th for "death."

G major G major

24
8 Tod, _____ sonst versink' ich in den Tod,

Text painting: Descending 7th for "death." Text painting: Descending passage for sinking into death.

27
8 hilf mir, hilf mir durch dei - ne Gü - te aus

G major C major

30
8 der grossen See - len - noth!

G major G minor F# dim.7 G major

mf Ritornello

34

C major

G major

Second Section.

Chorale text line verbatim

39

Denn, denn im Tod, im Tod ist Al - les

p

G major

A minor E7

Text painting: Rests for "silence in death."

42

stil - le, stil - le, stil - le, da ge - denkt — man dei - ner

A major

D minor

Chorale line verbatim

47

nicht, — nicht, da ge - denkt — man dei ner nicht.

mf Ritornello

D minor

D minor

51

C7

F major

54

57

D minor

61

Third Section

8 Lieb - ster Je - su, ist's dein

D minor

D minor

F major

65

8 Wil - le, lieb - ster Je - su, ist's dein Wil - - - le,

B-flat major

C7

69

8 lieb - ster Je - su, lieb - ster Je - su, ist's dein Wil - le,

F major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

73

8 so er - freu' mein An - ge - sicht, so er -

G7 C major

76

8 freu'

Text painting: Long melisma for "rejoice."

79

8 - mein An - ge - sicht, er freu' mein An - ge - sicht.

Text painting: 16ths notes in counterpoint for "gladden."

C major

82

8 er - freu' mein An - ge - sicht, so er - freu' mein

Last line of chorale tune embellished.

C major

85

8 An - - ge - sicht! Ritornello

Mm. 86-92 waffle between B and B \flat , perhaps to depict Luther's "poor, weak sinner" and the contrast between "Law & Gospel" (see side note).

88

91

C major

(Based on Chorale Vs. 4, alludes to Psalm 6:6-7.)

• Grief & suffering has sapped all my strength (135/4).

The first 7 vocal pitches form a palindrome. Possibly Bach wanted to mark the center of an arch form where there is no central movement. Compare the "Et resurrexit" palindrome in the B-Minor Mass, which marked the center of a chiasmic form before Bach modified the structure (by creating an additional movement for the "Et incarnatus") and made the "Crucifixus" the center.

135/4. 4. Recitativo

Secco

Adagio

Alto

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 6 mm. Text painting: Chromaticism used to depict total human misery.

A B-flat D C A-flat G F#

Ich bin von Seufzen mü-

Chorale text line verbatim, melody a chromatic transformation of the first chorale phrase. Text painting: Sighing motive with rest..

p Arioso beginning, though accompanied by continuo alone.

F major D7

Ger. Aug.6

3 Plain secco...

E-flat C# E F

de, mein Geist hat weder Kraft noch Macht, weil ich die ganze Nacht, oft ohne Seelenruh' und

G minor A7

6

B

Frie-de, in grossem Schweiss und Thränen lie-ge. Ich gräme mich fast todt und

F# dim.7

D minor C minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

9
bin von Trau-ern alt, denn mei-ne Angst ist man-nig-falt!

G minor G# dim.7 D# dim.7 A minor

(Based on Chorale Vs. 5, alludes to Psalm 6:8-10.)
 135/5. **5. Aria** *Allegro*
 •Suffering passes; Jesus comforts; foe is dispersed (135/5). This movement relates to the Epistle reading, specifically to the idea of reversal noted in 1 Peter 5:5b-6: "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you."

Energetic rhythms (including syncopations), leaps (combined with fast notes in Vln I), and syllabic declamation (except for some melismas on important words) depict aggression against foes. The syllabic declamation, major tonality, and symmetrical phrases, make it operatically galant in style.

Energetic Vln I part
Ritornello

A minor G major G major C7

Rhyme Scheme
ABCCBDD

Bach's form:
Rit-AB-
Rit-CC-
Rit-BDD
AB-Rit

Thus, the movement begins and ends with the command for evil-doers to depart.

6 (109)

F major A7 D minor G7 E7 A minor

11 (114)

A minor A minor

Text painting: Voice begins with fast melisma for aggressive command to depart.

Chorale line verbatim

16 (119) **Basso**

Weicht, all' ihr Ü-bel-thä-ter, weicht!

A minor
Fine

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

Syllabic declamation with leaps for aggressive affect.

21

weicht, all' ihr Ü - bel - thä - ter, weicht, all' ihr Ü - bel - thä - ter, weicht,

A minor D7 G major C7

26

weicht, weicht, weicht, weicht, all' ihr Ü - bel - thä - ter, mein Je - sus trö - stet

F major A7 D minor G7 E7 A minor A minor G7

31

mich, mein Je - sus trö - stet mich, mein Je - sus trö - stet mich, weicht, all' ihr

D7 G major C major Summary

36

Ü - bel - thä - ter, mein Je - sus trö - stet mich.

Ritornello

C major C7 F major

41

G7 C major G major dominant... C major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

B Section

Text painting: Chromaticism for tears; Melisma for joy. Allusion to Psalm 126:5-6.

46

Er lässt nach Thrä - - - nen und nach Wei - - - nen die Freu - - -

C major A minor A minor

Text painting: Long melisma for "shine."

51

- - - den.son.ne wie - der - - - schei - - -

D major D7 G major G major D dominant...

56

- - - nen, die Freuden.son.ne wie - der schei - - - - - nen;

D7 G major G major

Ritornello

Text painting: Chromaticism for storm of affliction.

61

das Trüb - - - sals.wet - - - ter_

G major C# dim.7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

66

än_dert sich, das Trüb_sals_wet_ter än_dert sich,

D minor G# dim.7 A minor D# dim.7 E minor

Text painting: Chromaticism and downward leaps for sudden downfall of enemies.

71

die Fein_de müs_sen plötz_lich, plötz_lich fal_len und ih_re

A# dim.7 B major dominant... E minor Am7 D major

Text painting: Descending chromatic line for the arrows that recoil backwards against the attackers.

75

Pfei_le rückwärts pral_

GM7 C major B7 E minor A# dim.7 B major D# dim.7 B7 E minor

Text painting: Melisma for aggressive command for foes to depart.

80

len. Weicht, all' ihr Ü_bel_thä_ter, weicht,

E major A minor

Bach repeats vocal opening section (mm. 17–28) without intervening ritornello, ending it differently for special effect (see below).

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

85

weicht, all' ihr Ü - bel - thä - ter, weicht, all' ihr Ü - bel - thä - ter, weicht,

A minor D7 G major C7

Chorale melody Phrase 2 with long notes to depict Jesus' comfort.

90

weicht, weicht, weicht, weicht, all' ihr Ü - bel - thä - ter, mein Je - sus

F major A major D minor (G7) E7 A minor A minor

Bach sets the end of the repeated text with new music.

95

trö - stet mich,

A minor A7 D minor

100

weicht, all' ihr Ü - bel - thä - ter, mein Je - sus trö - stet mich.

Summary; modulation back to A minor.

E7 A minor A minor dal segno

The image displays a musical score for J.S. Bach's Church Cantata BWV 135, specifically measures 85 through 100. The score is written for a vocal line (soprano or alto) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are in German, and the music is in A minor. The score includes various harmonic annotations in red, such as 'A minor', 'D7', 'G major', 'C7', 'F major', 'A major', 'D minor', '(G7)', 'E7', and 'A minor'. There are also red annotations in the right margin: 'Chorale melody Phrase 2 with long notes to depict Jesus' comfort.' and 'Bach sets the end of the repeated text with new music.' The score is divided into four systems, each starting with a measure number (85, 90, 95, 100). The final system ends with a double bar line and a 'dal segno' marking.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 135

135/6. 6. Choral (Vs. 6 verbatim)
 •Doxology: Praise to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (135/6).

The 4-part cantional setting of the chorale represents the church's response. Soprano doubled by both oboes, Vln I and added cornetto. The voice leading is enhanced with 8th-note passing tones.

Soprano
 Ehr' sei in's Himmels Thro - ne mit ho - hem Ruhm und Preis,
 dem Va - ter und dem Soh - ne und auch zu glei - cher Weis'!

Alto
 Ehr' sei in's Himmels Thro - ne mit ho - hem Ruhm und Preis,
 dem Va - ter und dem Soh - ne und auch zu glei - cher Weis'!

Tenore
 Ehr' sei in's Himmels Thro - ne mit ho - hem Ruhm und Preis,
 dem Va - ter und dem Soh - ne und auch zu glei - cher Weis'!

Basso
 Ehr' sei in's Himmels Thro - ne mit ho - hem Ruhm und Preis,
 dem Va - ter und dem Soh - ne und auch zu glei - cher Weis'!

5
 dem heil'-gen Geist mit Eh - ren in al - le E - wig - keit! Der
 dem heil'-gen Geist mit Eh - ren in al - le E - wig - keit! Der
 dem heil'-gen Geist mit Eh - ren in al - le E - wig - keit! Der
 dem heil'-gen Geist mit Eh - ren in al - le E - wig - keit! Der

9
 woll' uns all'n be - sche - ren die ew'-ge Se - lig - keit.
 woll' uns all'n be - sche - ren die ew'-ge Se - lig - keit.
 woll' uns all'n be - sche - ren die ew'-ge Se - lig - keit.
 woll' uns all'n be - sche - ren die ew'-ge Se - lig - keit.

Chord Progressions:
 A minor, A minor, A minor, C major, D minor, C major, C major, E major