

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

Cantata 196 has come down to us only by means of a secondary source, copied by one of Bach's students around 1730. The fact that the libretto contains no additional poetry in the form of recitatives or reflective arias suggests that the cantata is an early work, perhaps dating from Bach's time in Mühlhausen (1707–1708). There is no chorale. The 4 psalm verses are set as independent movements; the tonal scheme is simple with modulations often restricted to dominant or relative minor keys. The work's modest orchestration (strings and continuo but with independent violoncello part) is nevertheless handled imaginatively, especially in the opening sinfonia, which establishes a buoyant mood with pervasive dotted rhythms. The work is one of Bach's shortest cantatas, taking only about 10 minutes to perform. The occasion for which the work was intended is not specified, but its text (Psalm 115:12–15) suggests that it was probably written for a marriage ceremony—Martin Petzold reviews Philipp Spitta's arguments for identifying the bridegroom as a widowed pastor with children from a previous marriage, i.e., Johann Lorenz Stauber (1660–1723). See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 3, p. 432).

J.S. Bach

## Cantata No. 196

### Der Herr denket an uns

#### 1. Sinfonia

196/1. Form: Sinfonia (orch)-Chorus (with orch)-S aria (trio with Vlns & Continuo)-T/B duet (with orch)-Chorus (with orch).

Vln II Vln I

Dynamic markings have been editorially added here.

Instrumentation:

Vln I, II  
Vla  
SATB  
Basso (Violoncello), Violone,  
Organo

Perhaps the sinfonia served as music for the entrance of bride and groom.

C major. Concerto-like texture in which Vln I & II lead in imitative dotted rhythms, over steady 8ths in the continuo, with cello doubling the continuo about 2/3 of the time.

Vln II Vln I

Opening motive in A minor

G major C major A minor

Contrasting middle section, with triplets.

A minor B7 E minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

12 Vln II Vln I  
Opening motive in E minor  
E minor  
Opening motive inverted  
Vln I  
Vln II  
C major

15 *p* *mf*  
F major

17 Opening material returns.  
C major  
C major

19 C major

## 196/2. 2. Coro • Lord remembers and blesses his people: Ps. 115:12 (196/2).

The first vocal movement is set in a sort of "motet" style, in which individual phrases of the psalm verse are each given appropriate (and contrasting) musical gestures. The first text segment ("der Herr denket an uns") is presented in imitation by pairs of voices, punctuated with affirmations from the entire ensemble.

A 1-measure statement of the words "und segnet uns" (echoed by the instruments) then serves as a brief transition to a substantial fugue on the second half of the Psalm text. Petzoldt notes that the emphasis on "us" is balanced in a symmetrical structure by an emphasis on "you" in movement 4, which also has the same (full) orchestration.

Soprano  
Der Herr den - - - ket, der Herr den - ket an

Alto  
Der Herr den - ket an

Tenore  
Der Herr, der Herr den - - - ket, den - ket an

Basso  
Der Herr den - ket an

Viol. I, II  
Va.  
Vc.  
Continuo  
*p* *mf*  
Figura corta  
C major  
Tutti response

4

uns, der Herr den - ket an  
 uns, der Herr, der Herr den - ket, den - ket an  
 uns, der Herr den - ket an  
 uns, der Herr den - ket an uns, den - ket an

*p* Contino alone *mf* Tutti Response

G major

7

uns, der Herr den - ket, er den - ket an uns, der  
 uns, der Herr den - ket an uns, an uns, an uns, der  
 uns, der Herr den - ket an uns, an uns, der Herr den -  
 uns, der Herr den - ket an uns, der Herr den -

Imitative treatment with strings doubling

C major

9

Herr den - ket an uns, an uns, der Herr den - ket an uns und seg - net uns.  
 Herr den - ket an uns, an uns, der Herr den - ket an uns und seg - net uns.  
 - ket an uns, an uns, an uns, der Herr den - ket an uns und seg - net uns.  
 - ket, der Herr den ket an uns, der Herr den - ket an uns und seg - net uns.

*p* Contino alone for choral cadential phrase. *pp*

D7 G major

A Instruments repeat choral statement.

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Permutation fugue. The first subjects' opening is based on upward leap of a fourth (derived from opening of the movement), then descending scale of diatonic fourth.

12

Er seg - net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg -

Second phrase of the psalm text is handled fugally.

Continuo alone

G7 C major

Tonal answer of subject is at the subdominant.

15

net das Haus Aaron, er seg -

seg - net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg - net das Haus

Er seg - net das Haus

18

net das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aaron.

Aa - ron, er seg - net

Is - ra - el, er seg - net das Haus Aaron, er seg -

Er seg - net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg -

Vln II

Strings begin to join independently with theme, resulting in 9-voice fugue.



21

das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aaron. net das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aaron, er seg-

Vln I (eighth C)

24

Aa - ron. net das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aaron.

Cello with theme 8va up

26

**B**

Second fugue exposition; entries again alternate between C major and F major, but starting in F.

Er seg - net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg -

+Vln II

ron.

**B**

G major C major

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29

seg-net das Haus Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus Aa-ron, er seg-

+Cello & Continuo

Er

G major C major

31

net das Haus Aa-ron, er seg-net seg-net das Haus Is-ra-el, er seg-

Er +Vla

C major

33

das Haus Aa-ron, das Haus Aa-ron, er seg-net das Haus Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus Aa-ron, er seg-

+Vln II

G major

35

seg - net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg-net das Haus  
 seg-net, er seg-net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg-net das Haus  
 seg-net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg-net das Haus  
 seg-net, er seg-net das Haus

37<sup>II</sup>

Is - ra - el, er seg-net das Haus Aa - ron. Der Herr den -  
 Is - ra - el, er seg-net das Haus Aa - ron. Opening material returns for short coda.  
 Is - ra - el, er seg-net das Haus Aa - ron. Der Herr, der  
 Is - ra - el, er seg-net das Haus Aa - ron.

*p* Continuo alone

C major

40

ket an uns, den - ket an uns!  
 Der Herr den - ket an uns!  
 Herr den - ket, den - ket an uns!  
 Der Herr den - ket an uns!

*mf* Tutti Response

C major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

• God blesses all who fear him: Ps. 115:13 (196/3).  
Trio texture: Vlns unison, Soprano, Continuo

196/3. **3. Aria** A short, "divisen," da capo aria with related ritornello for soprano (early example of da capo form). Its lilting gracefulness suggests tender intimacy and joy; violins combine for obbligato. Its forward-looking traits include the vocal motto at the beginning of the aria ("Divise"), triplets, and "Vokaleinbau" in its A section (vocal texture embedded in instrumental fabric).

Petzzoldt (vol. 3, p. 432) notes that this movement serves as the central movement in a symmetrical structure.



**Ritornello**

Viol. I, II unis.  
Continuo

A minor

Bach repeats the text several times in the A section, covers the text of the B section only briefly, then the A section repeats.

**Soprano**

3

Triplets reappear as in opening sinfonia.

Motives are spun out sequentially ("Fortspinnung").

Voice rhythm is like that of 78/2 ("Wir eilen mit schwachen, doch emsigen Schritten...")

**Er seg -**  
Vocal motto ("Divise")

C major

A minor

5 II

6

net.

Shortened and modified ritornello

**er seg -**  
Complete vocal entry

D minor

A minor

A minor

8

net.

die den Herrn fürch - ten, die

Ritornello with vocal part built in ("Vokaleinbau")

10

den Herrn fürch - ten, er seg -

C major

A minor



12

- net, die den Herrn fürch - ten.

A minor A minor

14

bei-de,

16

Klei - ne, beide, Klei - ne und

A minor G major

18

Gro - ße, und Gro - ße.

E minor E major A minor

dal segno

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

•Blessing on you and your children: Ps. 115:14 (196/4).

196/4. **4. Duetto** The duet for tenor and bass, with its string and vocal duets in imitation, continues the mood of courtly beneficence. Dürr notes that the exchange of short units makes it sound antiquated. See Dürr/Jones, p. 780.

Viol. I, II  
Va.  
Vc.  
Continuo

*p* Violin motives appear derived from Sinfonia

hemiola at cadence

C major

**7 Tenore** Text painting: overlapping imitative entries and rising sequences to depict multiplied, greater and greater blessing.

**Basso**

Der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch.

Der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch je mehr und

Strings drop out.

G major

**13**

- je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr;

mehr. je mehr, - je mehr und mehr;

Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.

C major

**19**

der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch je mehr und

der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch.

Strings drop out.

G major

25

mehr, je mehr, — je mehr und mehr;

— je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr;

Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.

G major

31

der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr

je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr,

Voices and strings together, strings now chordal.

E minor

A minor

36

seg - ne euch je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr. — je mehr und

je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr. — je mehr und mehr. je mehr

Strings drop out.

G major

40

mehr, je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr, — je mehr und

— und mehr, je mehr und mehr, je mehr, — je mehr und mehr, je mehr und

Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.

50

Text painting: voices in parallel thirds perhaps suggest sweetness, and perhaps represent the wedding couple.

Voices and instruments together

F major

Strings enter with material before finish.

55

der, der Herr seg-ne euch je mehr und

der, der Herr seg-neeuch je mehr, jemehr und

Strings drop out.

D minor

D minor

Strings drop out.

61

mehr, euch und eu - re Kin - der.

mehr, euch und eu - re Kin - der.

Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.

C major

C major

Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.



67

Der Herr seg - neuch!

Der Herr seg - neuch!

*pp*

C major

C

• You are the Creator's blessed ones: Ps. 115:15 (196/5).

196/5. **5. Coro** The cantata ends with a bipartite, elaborate chorus (not a chorale as is more typical in Bach's cantatas), in which the main text is embedded chordally in an instrumental fabric. The bulk of the movement, however, is given over to an extended loosely constructed fugue on the word "Amen," as if verbal expression is insufficient to capture the joy of the poet. Extended settings of "Amen" are rare for Bach, unlike for other composers of Bach's time. See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. III, p. 439.

**Soprano**

**Alto**

**Tenore**

**Basso**

Chordal choral opening

Ihr seid die Ge-

Ihr seid die Ge-

Ihr seid die Ge-

Ihr seid die Ge-

Motives consist of scales and arpeggios.

*f*

F major

3

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

Descending arpeggios, presumably depict descending divine blessings.

*mf*

5

Ihr seid die Ge-seg - ne-ten, die Ge.

Ihr seid die Ge-seg - ne-ten, die Ge.

Ihr seid die Ge-seg - ne-ten, die Ge.

Ihr seid die Ge-seg - ne-ten, die Ge.

*f* C major

7 II

seg-ne-ten des Herrn! der Himmel und

seg-ne-ten des Herrn! der Himmel und

seg-ne-ten des Herrn! der Himmel und

seg-ne-ten des Herrn! der Himmel und

*mf* A

Text painting: contrasting registers for heaven and earth

10

Er - de, der Him-mel und Er - de ge - macht

Er - de, der Him-mel und Er - de ge - macht

Er - de, der Him-mel und Er - de ge -

Er - de, der Him-mel und Er - de ge - macht hat,

*f*

12

hat, der Him - mel und Er - de, der Him - mel und  
 hat, ge - macht hat, der Him - mel und Er - de, der Him -  
 macht hat, der Him - mel und Er - de, der Him - mel und  
 der Him - mel, der Him - mel und Er - de, der Him

14

Er - de ge - macht hat. Ihr  
 mel. Him - mel und Er - de, Him - mel und Er - de ge - macht hat. Ihr  
 Er - de gemacht hat. Ihr  
 mel und Er - de, der Him - mel, Him - mel und Er - de gemacht hat. Ihr

16

**B (Fuga)**

seid die Geseg - neten des Herrn! A - men, a - men, a - men.  
 seid die Geseg - neten des Herrn! A - men, a - men, a - men.  
 seid die Geseg - neten des Herrn! A - men, a - men, a - men.  
 seid die Geseg - neten des Herrn! A - men, a - men, a - men.

**B**

*mf*

C major

Quasi-fugue (loosely constructed fugue) in which the subject's opening motive allows for interplay between 2 voices or pairs of voices.

Countersubject introduced immediately, includes a descending scale.

Instruments drop out.

19

amen, amen, amen,  
A - - - men, amen, a - - - men, amen, a -  
A -  
amen, amen, amen, amen, amen,

G major

22

Subject's opening motive treated imitatively between 2 voices, perhaps to represent the wedding couple.

men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

Instruments enter.

C major

25

men!

men!

men!

men!

G major



28

A - men, A - men, a -

C major

31

men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

Instruments drop out for 3 measures.

G major

33<sup>II</sup>

men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

C major

[illegible][illegible]

42

Parallel 6ths suggest sweetness and perhaps represent the couple. A minor

a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

- men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

C major

45

men!

men!

men!

men!

C major

48

D

A

D A - - men, a - men, a - - men.

G major

51

A

men, a - - men, a - - men, a -

A - - - men, a - men, a -

a - men, a - - men, a - - - men, a -

G major

C major

53

men. a - men. a -

men, a - men, a - men. a -

men, a - men, a - men, a - men. a -

men. a - men, a - men, a -

55

men, a - men, a - men, a -

men, a - men, a -

men, a - men, a - men. a -

men, a - men, a -

*mf*

57

men. a - men. a - men. a - men. a - men!

men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men!

men. a - men. a - men, a - men. a - men!

men, a - men, a - men. a - men. a - men!

*p*

Piano marking  
by Bach. See side note.

