

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

Form: Chorale-Aria (A)-Chorale (S)-Recit (B)-Aria (T)-Chorale (Bach reverts to earlier pattern.) This is the first cantata in Bach's second Leipzig cycle (the chorale cantata cycle) that is not a chorale cantata (in the sense that one chorale unifies the entire work). Thus, instead of beginning with a chorale fantasia, the work begins with a through-composed setting of a scriptural verse. As explained in the side note, the reason for the change may have been that Bach had lost his librettist. The central literary theme is that of light and darkness, derived from the Gospel reading. The opening chorus is in ABA form, with sarabande-like sections framing a central fugue in 4/4 meter. For Bach, the sarabande appears to have carried special meaning, able to portray the deepest expression of introspective melancholy (e.g., the famous chaconne for violin (in BWV 1004), or the sarabandes in the cello suites). See side note for more.

## J.S. Bach Cantata No. 6

### Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden

Coro.

6/1.

(Andante  $\text{♩} = 72$ .)

Motive is repeated in vocal opening.

C minor. Triple meter with accent on beat 2 suggests a sarabande. Repeated unison notes perhaps depict the opening words of the text: "remain with us." Martin Petzoldt suggests that they represent the conscience knocking. See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, p. 727.

A-flat major E-flat major E-flat major E-flat major

C minor C minor

The sarabande rhythm results in some accents on "weak" words or syllables—presumably because the rhythm is more important than the text declamation. Largely homophonic sections in 3/4 frame a double fugue in common time. The opening motive is similar to the "ruht wohl" motive that begins the final chorus of the St. John Passion, resulting in an elegiac mood.

Soprano.  
Alto.  
Tenore.  
Basso.

Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, denn es will A - - bend  
Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, denn es will Abend  
Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, denn es will A - bend wer -

C minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

27.

wer - den und der Tag: hat sich ge - nei - get.  
 wer - den und der Tag: hat sich ge - nei - get.  
 denn es will Abend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - get.  
 den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - get.

A-flat major E-flat major A-flat major

33.

Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei  
 Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei  
 Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei  
 Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei

A Text painting: Falling motives to describe the falling of night and held notes to depict "remain with us."

E-flat major

39.

uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
 uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
 uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
 uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,

G minor G minor

Now the 3 oboes have the pulsing unison

**Strings unison pulsing**

## B-flat major



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

63.

bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
 uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
 bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
 uns, bleib' bei uns, Oboes have pulsing unison. bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, dennes will

G minor G minor C minor

69.

denn es will A - - - bend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - -  
 denn es will Abend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - -  
 denn es will Abend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - -  
 A - - bend wer - - den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - -

Oboes have pulsing D.  
 G minor

74.

get.  
 get.  
 get.  
 get.

Strings  
 G minor G7 C minor G minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

Central Fugal Section. The beginning is accompanied by continuo alone. Faster tempo suggests agitation and fear, which culminates in a unison statement of "remain with us."

Drone figure (like a psalm tone) & both fugue subjects are introduced immediately; subject entries overlap somewhat.

80. Andante. (♩ = 80.)

Fugue Subject 2

Double Fugue

Both fugue subjects sink downward to depict the "geneiget" ("declining" of the day.



Und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - - get, denn es will

Denn es will A - - - bend wer - -

Denn es will A - - - bend wer - - den, denn es will A - bend

Bleib' bei uns,

Andante.

Text painting: long notes (drone/psalm tone figure) for "remain with us."

Continuo only.

G major

C minor

83. A - - - bend wer - - - den. Bleib' bei

den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - - get, denn es will A - -

wer - - den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - - get, und der

denn es will A - - - bend wer - - - den,

86. C minor

G minor

Text painting: Descending lines for approaching evening.

uns,

denn es will A - -

- - bend wer - - - den, denn es will A - bend wer - - - den

Tag hat sich ge - nei - - get, denn es will A - - - bend wer -

denn es will A - - - bend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei -

F minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

89.

Ob I, Vln I  
Instruments double voices.

- bend wer - - den und der  
und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - - get, hat sich ge - nei -  
den, denn es will A - - - bend wer - - den, denn es will A - -  
get. Bleib' bei uns, denn es will A - - - bend wer - -

C7 F minor

92. C minor

Tag hat sich ge - nei - - get und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - get, es will A -  
get, denn es will A - - - bend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei -  
- bend wer - den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - - get.  
den, denn es will A - - - bend wer - -

F minor C minor G minor A7

95. F minor

- bend werden, denn es will A - - - bend wer -  
get, denn es will A - - - bend wer - - den.  
Bleib' <sup>+Ob da caccia, Via</sup> bei uns, denn es will A - -  
den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei -  
D major D7 G minor C minor C7



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

98.

den, denn es will A - - - bend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - get.

Bleib' +Ob II, Vln II bei uns, denn es will A - - -

- - - bend wer - - - den, es will A - bend wer - - - den,

get, der Tag hat sich ge - nei - get, denn es will A - - - bend wer - - -

F major B-flat major B-flat 7

101.

Bleib' bei uns, denn der Tag hat sich ge -

- - - bend wer - - - den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei -

denn es will A - - - bend wer - den. Bleib' bei -

- den, A - - bend wer - den, denn es will A - - - bend werden..

+Ob I, Vln I E-flat major E-flat 7

104.

nei - get, hat sich ge - nei - get, denn es will A - - - bend wer -

- - - get, und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - - - get, denn es will A - - -

uns, denn es will A - - - bend wer -

Bleib' bei uns,

A-flat major

107.

den, denn es will A-bend werden und der  
- bend wer- den, A-bend wer- den und der  
den und der Tag hat sich ge-nei-get, hat sich ge-neiget, und der  
denn es will A-bend wer- den, denn es will A-

Ob I, Vln I intone "Bleib bei uns."

F minor

110. Agitated section ends with unison, syncopated cry to "remain with us" while instruments present 2 more entries of subject 1 and 1 entry of subject 2

Tag hat sich ge-nei-get. Bleib' bei uns,  
Tag hat sich ge-nei-get. Bleib' bei uns,  
Tag hat sich ge-nei-get. Bleib' bei uns,  
- bend wer- den. Bleib' bei uns,  
bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, denn es will

Unison

Ob 1 Vln I

Subject 1

Vln II

Ob da caccia via

C minor

Fugal agitation culminates (and is joined by) a unison cry by voices for help.

bleib' bei uns! Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
bleib' bei uns! Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
bleib' bei uns! Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,  
bleib' bei uns! Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, denn es will

(Tempo I.) Shortened sarabande section returns.

Repeated unison notes in the strings depict "remain with us" (knocking conscience according to Petzoldt).

C minor



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

118. Text painting: Descending motives and descending order of entries to depict nightfall.

denn es will A - - bend wer - den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei -

denn es will Abend wer - den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei -

denn es will Abend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei -

A - bend wer - - - den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei -

123.

A-flat major

E-flat major

get. Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,

get. Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,

get. Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns,

get. Bleib' bei uns, bleib' bei uns, denn es will

128.

E-flat major

E-flat major

F minor

denn es will A - - bend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - get.

denn es will Abend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - get.

denn es will Abend werden und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - get.

A - - bend wer - den und der Tag hat sich ge - nei - get.

Repeated notes in strings

C minor

C major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

Obbligato oboe da caccia or viola (used in a later performance).

Ritornello is based on opening vocal material. The upbeat mood (with major key, minuet rhythm, and pizzicato bass) is established by the singer's motto or "devise," which identifies Jesus' royal station. Nevertheless, the low timbre of the voice and obbligato shows Bach's sensitivity to varying degrees of light and shade.

6/2. **Aria.** •Prayer: O Christ, remain our light (6/2). Physical light becomes metaphor for spiritual light. Alto is often the voice of the believing soul. See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 541.

(Andante,  $\text{♩} = 104$ .)

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

13. **Alto.**

The text of the motto apparently alludes to Mark 14:61, where Pilate asks Jesus, "Are you Christ, the son of the highly exalted one?" Since the disciples in the Gospel reading did not at first recognize Jesus, it is appropriate that this aria focuses on the identity of Jesus before moving on to supplication.

Text painting: upward leap to depict "highly praised."

19.

Got - tes - sohn,

25.

hoch - ge - lob - ter Got - tes - sohn, lass es - dir - nicht

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

31.

sein ent - ge - - gen, lass es dir nicht sein ent - ge - - gen,

G7 C minor B-flat 7 E-flat major

37


37. E-flat major

dass wir itzt vor dei - nem Thron ei - ne Bit - te

E-flat major E-flat 7

43. Text painting: rising figure for prayerful petition followed by descending line for more literal rendering of the repeated words, "laying down."

A-flat major F7 B-flat major F major F7 B-flat major B-flat major

49.  B-flat major

55.

Bleib, ach bleib bei uns

B-flat major G7 C minor



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

61. *tr*  
Licht, bleib', ach blei - - - - - be un - ser Licht, weil die -

C minor C7 F minor

66. Fin - - - - - ster - niss ein - bricht, bleib', - - - - - ach blei - - - - -

E-flat 7

72. - - - - - be un - ser Licht, weil die Fin - - - - -

A-flat major Text painting: Descending whole-tone line for "darkness" with tonal descent to extreme number of flats.

E-flat 7 A-flat major F minor B-flat 7 E-flat minor A-flat 7

78. - - - - - sterniss ein - bricht,

D-flat minor E-flat 7 A-flat major A-flat major

*mf*

84. *tr*

E-flat 7 A-flat major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

89.

bleib', ach blei - - - - - be un - ser Licht, bleib', ach blei - - -

*p*

F7 B-flat minor B-flat minor B-flat 7 E-flat minor

95.

- - - - - be un - ser Licht, weil die Fin - - - - - sterniss einbricht,

B-flat 7 E-flat minor F7 B-flat major

101.

NBA has A-flat

bleib', - - - - - ach blei - - - - - be un - ser - - - - - Licht, - - - - - weil die

B-flat 7 E-flat 7 E-flat major A-flat major B-flat major E-flat major G7

108. Text painting: Descending whole-tone line for "darkness" with tonal descent to extreme number of flats.

Fin - - - - - - - - - - - ster-nissein-bricht.

C minor F7 B-flat minor E-flat 7 A-flat minor D-flat 7 B-flat 7 E-flat major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

## Chorale Aria

14 (156) 6/3.

## Choral.

•Prayer: Thy Word is our light, help us keep it to end (6/3). This chorale is different from the one that ends the cantata, a phenomenon found in Bach's first cantata cycle (before the chorale cantata cycle). Music is repeated for the second of two chorale stanzas. Bach later transcribed this movement for organ as one of the Schübeler chorales (BWV 649).

### Instrumentation:

Obbligato by violoncello piccolo (see side note) plus continuo.

The busy obbligato, with its biplanar, leaping melody, is an effective foil to the chorale tune with its slower, conjunct movement. It perhaps symbolizes the flickering flame of the church's lampstand, referenced at the end of the first stanza and in the following movement.

1. (Allegro  $\text{♩} = 104$ .)

Violoncello piccolo *mf*

B-flat major

3/47. F major

4/48.

B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major F7

8/52.

C7 F major B-flat 7 E-flat major A minor 7

11/55.

D minor G minor C minor F7 B-flat major

13/57.

F7

15/59.

## Soprano

The individualized prayer of the preceding movement gives way to a corporate prayer by the Church. Bach chooses one of the tunes associated with this chorale.

The chorale represents the church's response. It contrasts the metaphorical darkness of evening with the light of Christ/the divine Word. The first stanza's prayer that the light not be extinguished foreshadows the threat implied in the following recitative—that Christ could overthrow the church's lampstand (a reference to Revelation 2:5). The second stanza's reference to keeping Word and Sacrament pure applies the image of "remaining" to the church ("remaining faithful"), while the association of Word and Eucharistic Sacrament reflects the Gospel reading for the day, where the 2 disciples do not recognize Jesus until he breaks bread with them.

Ach bleib' bei uns, Herr Je - - su  
In die - ser letzt - - be - - trüb - - ten

B-flat major

B-flat 7 E-flat major



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

19/63.

Christ, Zeit weil ver -

E-flat major F7 B-flat major

23/67.

Evening understood metaphorically as spiritual darkness.

es nun A - bend wor - den  
leih' uns, Herr, Be - stän - dig -

D7 G minor B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major

26/70.

ist, keit,

B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major

29/73.

dein gött - lich  
dass wir dein

B-flat major B-flat major D7

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

Christ's divine Word enlightens, just as the confused disciples in the Gospel reading are led to understanding by Jesus' exposition of Old Testament scriptures and the subsequent "breaking of bread."

33/77

Wort, das hel - le Licht,  
Wort und Sa - kra - ment

G minor F7 G minor C7 F major

36/80. In the Gospel reading, Christ explains his death and resurrection to the 2 confused disciples in light of the Old Testament scriptures (Word).

The prayer to keep the Word and Sacrament pure applies the image of "remaining" to the church ("remaining faithful"), while the linking of Word and Sacrament reflects the Gospel reading for the day, where the 2 disciples do not recognize Jesus (are not enlightened) until he breaks bread with them. "Breaking bread" becomes a common New Testament term for the Eucharist.

F major D major

39/83. The prayer that the church's light not be extinguished points to the implied threat in the next recitative, which alludes to Christ's words in Revelation 2:5: "Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."

39/83.

ja bei uns aus - lö - schen nicht!  
be - halt'n bis an un - ser End!

D7 G minor B-flat major B-flat 7 B-flat major E-flat major B-flat 7

43/87.

E-flat major F7

46. 1. 2. 90.

B-flat major B-flat major F7 Dal Segno.

## Secco

#### 6/4. **Recitativo.**

1. **Basso.**

Es hat die Dunkelheit an vielen Orten überhandgenommen. Woher ist

Continuo  
only

C# dim.7

## D minor

3

aber dieses kommen? Bloss da - her, weil sowohl die Kleinen, als die Grossen nicht in Ge-

## F major

F7

D major

G7

C7

F7

E-flat 6.

6.

## A-flat

rech - tig - keit vor dir, o Gott, ge - wandelt und wi - der ih - re Christenpflicht ge -

## B-flat major

B-flat 7

G major

C7

B dim.7

8

handelt.

Drum hast du auch den Leuch-ter um-ge - stossen.

G7

C minor

A dim.

F# dim.7

## E-flat major

G minor



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

•Prayer: Jesus, keep us with the light of thy Word (6/5). Martin Petzoldt suggests that this aria is to be understood as a prayer by the individual, which moves in the next movement to a prayer by the Church. See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 729. In this regard, he argues that the last three movements parallel the first three.

## 6/5. Aria. (Moderato ♩ = 72.)

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" or "motto aria" (see above at movement no. 2). Here the motto may allude to Hebrews 12:1-2 ("... looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...").

1. (Moderato ♩ = 72.)

Strings *mf*

G minor A7

4.

D minor

Alfred Dürr argues that the main motive is to be understood as a reference to the cross; similarly, Martin Petzoldt notes that the name of Jesus is synonymous with the cross and the power to save from sin. See Dürr/Jones, "Die Kantaten," 280, Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, p. 729. However, the monotonous, trudging rhythm of the motive may also depict walking (as represented by the 2 disciples in the Gospel account walking with Jesus, and by the text's reference to avoiding the path of sin).

### Tenore.

7.

The triplet passages may be intended to represent the shimmering light (see the tenor's melisma in m. 34).

Je - su, lass uns auf dich se - hen,

D major G minor G minor

9.

*mf*

G7 C minor F# dim.7 G minor

Je - su, lass uns

12.

auf dich se - hen, dass wir nicht auf den Sündenwegen gehen, auf den

C# dim.7 D minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

15.

Sün - den - we - - - - - gen ge - - hen!

The end of each vocal section is accompanied by the end of the ritornello (triplets).

B-flat major  
D minor

D minor

D7

18.

Je - - su, lass uns auf dich se - hen,

G minor

G7 C minor

21.

Je - su, lass uns auf dich se - hen, dass wir

D7

G minor

F7

Text painting: The earlier passage is transposed down a major third so that it modulates far "flatward" (to B-flat minor) for "paths of sin" (compare mm. 13-16).

24.

nicht auf den Sünden - wegen gehen, auf den Sün - den - we - - -

F7

B-flat minor

B-flat minor

B-flat minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

26. *tr.*  
- gen ge - hen!

G7 C minor A7 D major

29. Lass das

G7 C minor C minor

32. Licht, das Licht, lass — das Licht, das Licht dei — nes Worts uns hel — ler  
NBA: "helle"

C minor C7 F minor B-flat 7 E-flat major

34. Text painting: Melisma of triplets to represent the shimmering light.  
schei — — — — — nen — und dich je — — der — zeit — treu

E-flat major

The poet asks Jesus to let his word shine brightly (reflecting the Gospel story of Jesus enlightening the disciples on the way to Emmaus after his resurrection) and "dich jederzeit treu meinen"—to always incline him faithfully to Jesus.



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 6

Martin Petzoldt suggests that the melisma on "meinen" (i.e., to mean, or to be inclined toward), especially in mm. 42–43, is to stimulate the believer's agency. See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, p. 730. Furthermore, giving "meinen" a melisma serves to match the rhyming couplet (the word "scheinen").

36.

mei - - - - - nen, je - der - zeit treu mei - nen! Lass das Licht

G minor D major E-flat major G7 C minor

39.

dei - nes - Worts uns hel - ler schei - - - - - nen

NBA: "helle"

F7 B-flat major F# dim.7 D7

41.

Text painting: Melisma for "meinen" (here: to be inclined toward). See above note.

und dich jederzeit treu mei - - - - -

G minor

44.

- - - - - nen, dich je - der - zeit treu - mei - nen!

The end of each vocal section is accompanied by the end of the ritornello (triplets).

G minor

47.

A major D minor G7 C minor F7 B-flat major F# dim.7 D7

50.

G minor G minor G minor

6/6. **Choral.** •Prayer for King of Kings to protect Christendom (6/6). Second stanza of chorale "Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort."

A short, simple 4-part chorale setting ends the cantata, representing the voice of the church. Thus, as noted above, the more individualized prayer of the previous movement gives way to this prayer by all of "poor Christendom."

Perhaps the short stanza (set simply) was chosen to end the libretto because of its emphasis on Christ's identity and his ability to protect the Church—a fitting perspective in view of the Gospel reading for Easter Monday, with its account of 2 disciples confused, afraid, and unable to recognize at first who Jesus is.

1.

Soprano. Be-weis' dein' Macht, Herr Je - su Christ, der du Herr al - ler Her - ren bist, be-

Alto. Be - weis' dein' Macht, Herr Je - su Christ, der du Herr al - ler Her - ren bist, be-

Tenore. Be - weis' dein' Macht, Herr Je - su Christ, der du Herr al - ler Her - ren bist, be-

Basso. Be-weis' dein' Macht, Herr Je - su Christ, der du Herr al - ler Her - ren bist, be-

Be - weis' dein' Macht, Herr Je - su Christ, der du Herr al - ler Herren bist, be-

G minor G minor B-flat major G minor

5.

schirm' dein' ar - me Christen - heit, dass sie dich lob' in E - wig - keit!

schirm' dein' ar - me Chri - stenheit, dass sie dich lob' in E - wig - keit!

schirm' dein' ar - me Chri - stenheit, dass sie dich lob' in E - wig - keit!

schirm' dein' ar - me Chri - sten - heit, dass sie dich lob' in E - wig - keit!

B-flat major G minor G major