

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 157

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/34; BC A170, B20

Funeral Service (106, 157, 198) Apparently, it was later adapted for Mary's Purification (Candlemas), probably 6 February 1728 (St. Thomas in Leipzig).

Candlemas (BWV 83, 125, 82, 157, 158, [161], [200]):

*Malachi 3:1-4 (The Lord will suddenly come to his temple and purify his people)

*Luke 2:22-32 (Mary presents Jesus at the temple; Nunc Dimittis)

Librettist: Picander (Christian Friedrich Henrici)

FP: probably 6 February 1727 (Pomßen village church)

Concerning problems dealing with the cantata's source material, see note.

J.S. Bach

The cantata is in chiasmic form. Bach often used chiasmic (x-shaped/symmetrical) forms, in which center movements (where the mirror image begins) provide the crux of the matter. There antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text).

The commemorative program for the funeral included a long sermon (perhaps one hour in duration), odes, and the texts of the music.

For Alfred Dürr's summary of the background, see note.



Cantata No. 157

Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn

(Larghetto $\text{♩} = 50$)

•Clinging to Jesus till he blesses: Genesis 32:26 (157/1).

Instrumentation:

Flauto traverso

Ob d'amore

Vln I, II

Violetta (see note).

SATB

Continuo

Ritornello has the same motive as the closing chorus of the St. Matthew Passion.

Form
Rit. (mm. 1-9) Bm
Gen. 32:26 3x (9-17) Bm-F#m
Rit. (17-25) F#m
Gen. 32:26 2x (25-31) F#m
Rit. (31-32) F#m
Gen. 32:26 4x (32-49) F#m-Bm
Rit. (1-9) Bm

157/1.

1. Fl.

Ob d'am.

Vln I solo

mf

B minor

Vln solo

B major

E minor

A7

D major

6

D7

G major

F#7

B minor

The text quotes Jacob's statement to a mysterious figure (apparently, a theophany) with whom he wrestled (see note). The duet partners sing in canon, the lines tightly interlocked, like two figures clutching one another. It is noteworthy that, in subsequent movements, tenor and bass both represent the believer.



81

Tenore.

Basso.

Ich las - - - se dich nicht, du

Ich las - - - se dich nicht, du seg - - -

Fl.

Ob d'am up 8va

Vln

p

B minor

B minor

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11

seg - - - nest mich denn, ich las - se dich nicht, du seg -

- nest mich denn, ich las - - se dich nicht, du seg -

B minor

B minor

13^{II}

- nest mich denn, ich

- nest mich denn, ich las -

Instruments in concertante alternation.

B minor

16

las - se dich nicht, du segnest mich denn!

- se dich nicht, du seg - nest mich denn!

Ritornello

Ob d'am

mf

C#7

F# minor

F# minor

F# minor

F# minor

Ritornello & canon are repeated in the dominant; violin and flute parts switched; tenor & bass parts switched.

18^{II}

F# major

B minor

B minor

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21

E7 A major D major A7 D major C#7 F# minor

23II

Ich las - - se dich

Ich las - -

Instruments in concertante alternation.

F# minor

26

nicht, du seg - - nest mich denn, ich las - - se dich

- se - - dich nicht, du seg - - nest mich denn, ich las -

F# minor F# minor

28II

nicht, du seg - - nest mich

- se dich nicht, du seg - - nest mich

Six-part texture

F# minor

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The third statement of the text is twice as long as the first ones, with much longer melismas on "segnest" ("bless").

31

denn! Ich las - se dich nicht,

denn! Ich las - se dich

Fl
Ob d'am

Ritornello

Vln

F# minor F# minor

Strict imitation is abandoned in favor of interpenetration of the two lines, so that the statement "du segnest mich denn" appears more like an affirmation ("you bless me then"), and give the interjection "ich lasse dich nicht" sound both like a promise and a petition. See Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 3:534.

35

du seg -

Word painting: Long, extravagant melismas on "segnest" ("bless").

nicht, du seg -

Six-part texture

B minor B minor B7 E minor

36

- nest mich denn, ich las - se dich

Instruments in concertante alternation.

E minor

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38

nicht, du seg - nest mich denn, ich las_se dich

E minor B minor A# dim. B minor

40

nest mich denn, ich las_se dich nicht, du segnest mich

nicht, du seg

Pulsed notes suggest the words "dich nicht."

B minor E# dim.7 F# major B(7)

42

denn. du seg - nest mich denn, ich las_se dich nicht, du segnest mich denn, du segnest mich

E minor E minor A7 D major D7

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Imitation at the interval of one beat.

44

- nest mich denn, du seg - - - - -

denn, du seg - - - - -

Instruments in concertante alternation.

G major F#7 B minor

46

- nest mich denn, ich las - - - - -

- nest mich denn, ich las - - - - - se dich nicht, ich

B minor F#7 E minor E minor

48

- se dich nicht, du seg - - nest mich denn!

las - - se dich nicht, du segnest mich denn!

Fl Ob d'am

mf Ritornello

F#7 B minor B minor Dal Segno

Jacob's words in no. 1 are now appropriated by the believer. Using language reminiscent of Song of Solomon 3:4 ("I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go," the text is also an allusion to the Gospel reading of the day, in which Simeon takes the baby Jesus into his arms (Nunc dimittis).

Aria

157/2. (Moderato $\text{♩} = 88$) •Clinging to Jesus for comfort; fixing faith on him (157/2).

1. "Ich halte" ("I hold") figure.

Ob d'amore *mf*

F# minor

F# minor

6

E major

A major

C#7

F# minor

12

"Ich halte" ("I hold") figure.

F# minor

B7

E major

E major

18

C#7

F# minor

N6

A7

D major

23

E# dim.7

C#(7)

hemiola

F# minor

28

B minor

F#7

B minor

E# dim.7

F# minor

As in Song of Solomon 3:4, where the bride seeks the bridegroom, then clings to him (see above), so the believer seeks Jesus, the heavenly bridegroom.

32 Tenore Word painting: Long held note leading to a melisma for "halte" ("hold" [my Jesus]).

Ich hal - - - - - te

F# minor F# minor F# minor

Text painting: Rising line for "not letting Jesus go into eternity" ("ewiglich").

38 mei - nen Je - sum - - - - - fe - ste, ich lass' ihn nun und e - - - - - wig

E major A major (C#7) F# minor

44 nicht, ich hal - - - - - te mei - - - - - nen

Clash

C#(7) F# minor E7 F# minor F# minor

50 Je - - - - - sum fe - - - - - ste, ich lass' ihn nun - - - - - und e - wig

E(7) C#7 F# minor B7 C#7 F# minor

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56

nicht, ich hal - te mei - nen Je - sum fe - ste, ich hal -

F# minor B7 E major E7

62

- te mei - nen Je - sum fe - ste, ich lass' ihn nun und e -

C#7 F# minor F# minor E# dim.7 F# minor

69

- wig nicht, ich lass' ihn nun und e -

G#(7) C# minor F# minor C#7 F# minor F# minor

73

- wig, nun und e - wig nicht.

Ritornello

B# dim.7 C# minor

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79

C# minor B major E major

85

G# major C# minor F#7 B major

91

B major (B7) G#7 C# minor C# minor N6

97

G#7 C# minor

103

C#7 F# minor (G#7) C# minor

107

Er ist ——— allein mein Auf. ent. halt, drum fasst ———

C# minor F#7 B minor

113

mein Glau - be mit Ge - walt

E7 F# minor E7 A major A7 D major

117

sein se - gen -

E7 A major

121

reiches An - ge - sicht; denn die - ser Trost ist doch der

hemiola

A7 D major F#7 B minor

127

be - ste: ich hal - te mei - nen Je - sum fe -

B minor A7 B minor A(7) D major

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132

ste, denn die - ser Trost ist doch der be - ste: ich hal -

D(7) B7 E minor (A7)

137

te meinen Je - sum fe - ste!

hemiola Ritornello

A# dim.7 B minor B major B7

143

Er ist allein mein Auf - ent - halt,

E minor E# dim.7 C#7 F# minor A7 D major

149

drum fasst mein Glau -

D major F#7 B minor F#7 B minor

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154

be mit Ge - walt

Text painting: Energetic melismas for "drum faßt mein Glaube mit Gewalt" ("therefore my faith grasps mightily").

F#7 B minor E7 A major

158

sein se - gen - rei - ches An -

C#7 F# minor

162

- ge - sicht, denn die - - ser Trost ist doch - - der be - ste: ich

Ob d'amore: initial melody returns (sense of recapitulation).

F# minor

168

hal - - te mei - nen Je - sum fe - - - ste, denn

F# minor E major A7 A# dim.7 F#7

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Initial tenor entry returns (sense of recapitulation).

173

die - ser Trost ist doch der be - ste: ich hal -

B minor B minor F# minor F# minor

178

te mei - nen Je - sum

F# minor A major

183

fe - ste, ich hal - te meinen Je - sum fe - ste!

hemiola Ob d'am

A major B7 E7 C#7 F# minor

Dal Segno

This is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's chiastic form, where antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). Here earthly trouble and heavenly comfort meet.

Recitativo

●Clinging to Jesus in trouble, who else is there? (157/3).

157/3. 1. Te E D C# B A G F# F

Mein lie - ber Je - su du, wenn ich Ver - druss und Kum - mer

Opening phrase is reminiscent of the chorale "O Gott, du frommer Gott."

A "halo" of strings depicts the comfort in Jesus, as referenced in the text.

A major A7 D major G# dim.7

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 9 mm.

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8
lei-de, so bist du mei-ne Freu-de, in Un-ruh' mei-ne Ruh' und in der

Vln I

E7 A major E# dim.7 B# D# F# minor

Figure from movement no. 1.

5 II
Angst mein sanftes Bet-te! Die fal-sche Welt ist nicht ge-treu, der

N6 F# minor F# minor B# dim.7 C# minor

8
Him-mel muss ver-al-ten, die Lust der Welt vergeht wie Spreu; wenn ich dich

A# A7 F# major B minor

The text's reference to the earth growing old and the the lust of the world passing away suggests various biblical passages (see note).

10
nicht, mein Je-sus, hät-te, an wem sollt' ich mich son-sten hal-ten? Drum

B7 E major C#7

12
lass' ich nimmermehr von dir, dein Segen bleibe denn bei mir!

F# minor B major E minor D major A7 D major

Reminiscent singer's motive in movement no. 1.

This type of aria is called a "Disenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) 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.

Form:
[Aria] Rit (mm. 1-13) DM
Lines 1-2 (13-36) DM-AM)
Rit (36-42) AM
Lines 3-4 (36-50) AM-Bm
Rit (50-54) Bm
Lines 5-6 (54-62) Bm-GM
Rit (62-66) GM-DM
Lines 5-6 (66-71) DM
Rit (71-73) DM
[Recit trope] Lines 7-10 (74-78) D7
[Arioso] Lines 1-2 (79-82) AM-F#7
[Adagio trope] Lines 11-12 (83-85)
F#7-F#m
[Arioso] Lines 3-4 (86-89) A7-Bm
[Recit trope] Lines 13-16 (89-94)
D7-DM
[Arioso] Lines 5-6 (94-102) DM-GM
Rit (102-106) GM-DM
Lines 5-6 (106-111) DM
Rit (111-113) DM

Aria

In the second half of the movement the 3 couplets of the aria are interspersed with troping poetry.

157/4. (Tempo ordinario $\text{♩} = 72$)

•Clinging to Jesus affords entrance to heaven (157/4).

For Alfred Dürr's comments, see note.

Ritornello

Vln solo

D major D7 G major

The striding bass line becomes a unifying feature. The violin and flute interact in concertante fashion.

The bubbling obbligato with walking bass depicts ascent to heaven, as referenced in the text.

A major D major A7

Flute

D major D major

C# minor F# minor B minor E major

A(7) D major B7 E minor A7

D major

13. **Basso**

Ja, ja, ich hal - te Je - - sum fe - ste,

p *f* *Ritornello*

D major D7 G major A major

15 II

B7 E minor A7 D major

18

ja, ja, ich hal - te Je - - sura

p See full score for 8va.

D major D7 G major

21

fe - ste, so geh' ich auch zum Him - mel ein, so

B minor E minor A7 D major

23 II

geh' ich auch zum Himmel ein, ja, ja, ich hal - te

E7 A major A major D major

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26

Je - sum fe - ste, so - geh' ich auch zum Him - mel

F# minor A major E7

28II

ein, ja, ja, ich hal - te Je - sum fe -

Word painting: Melisma with syncopated long notes for "feste" ("firmly").

A major A7

31

- ste, ja, ja, ich hal - te Je -

D major B7 E7 F#7 B minor

33II

- sum fe - ste, so geh' ich auch zum Himmel

Ascending run for "ascending into heaven."

Flute

E7 A major A major

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36.

ein,

Ritornello

Vln (up. 8va)

A major See full score for 8va.

E7 A major

41

wo Gott und sei - nes Lam - mes

Allusion to Revelation 19 (description of the marriage feast of the Lamb (see note).

A major A major See full score for 8va. A7

44

Gä - ste in Kro - nen zu der Hochzeit sein, wo

Word painting: Swirling melismas for "crowns."

D major F#7

46II

Gott und sei - nes Lam - mes Gä - ste in Kro -

B minor A(7) D major

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49

- nen zu der Hochzeit sein.

F#7 B minor B minor

51

B minor B minor

54

Da lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, von

See full score for 8va.

B minor B7 E minor D7

56

dir, da bleibt dein Se gen auch bei

G major

58

mir, da lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, von

FI Vln E7 A minor D7

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60

dir, da bleibt dein Se - gen auch bei mir.

G major

Vln

Ritornello

63

G major B minor E minor

65

Da lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, von

A7

D major D major

67II

dir, da bleibt dein Se - gen auch bei mir, da

D7

G major

70

bleibt dein Se - gen auch bei mir.

Ritornello

FI

Vln

See full score for 8va.

A major

D major

D major

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72

D major D major

Recit.

Chromaticism for "Sterbekasten" ("deathbed").

74

Ei, wie vergnügt ist mir mein Sterbe-kasten, weil Je-sus mir in Armen liegt! So

D7 D# dim.7 E minor F#7

Arioso (♩ = 72)

77

kann mein Geist recht freu-dig rasten! Ja, ja, ^{Vln} ich hal - te

B minor D major D7 G major

80

Je - - sum fe - ste, - - so - geh' - - ich auch zum Him - - mel

See full score for 8va. B minor E minor A7

Adagio (♩ = 72)

82II

ein! - O schö - - ner Ort! Komm, sanf - ter - Tod, - und

Descending lines for "Come, sweet death."

pp F#7 B minor E# dim.7

(Arioso ♩ = 72)

85 führ' mich fort, wo Gott und sei - nes Lam - mes

p

F# minor A7 D major

87 Gä - ste in Kro - nen zu der Hochzeit sein. Ich bin er.

Word painting: Swirling melisma for "crowns."

Recit.

F#7 B minor B minor

90 freut, das Elend dieser Zeit noch von mir heute ab zu - legen, denn Jesus wartet

Shivering melisma for "erfreut" ("delighted").

Editorial realization of figured bass.

D7 G major D# dim.7 E minor (A7)

93 mein im Himmel mit dem Segen. Da lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, von

Arioso (♩ = 72)

Fl

Vln up 8va

D major D major D7 G major

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96

dir, — da bleibt — dein Se - gen auch bei

G major

98

mir, — da lass' — ich nicht, mein Heil, — von

G major E7 A minor D7

100

dir, da bleibt — dein Se - - gen auch bei —

G major

102

mir.

Vin Fl

G major

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104

Da

G major

D major

106

lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, — von dir, — da bleibt dein

See full score for 8va.

D major

D major

D7

108II

Se - gen auch — bei mir, — da bleibt dein Se -

G major

See full score for 8va.

A(7)

111

- gen auch bei mir.

FI

Vin

D major

D major

D major

D major

This is the 6th and final stanza of the 1658 chorale by Christian Keyser (1607–1662). While Picander's libretto followed the chorale's original text, "Jesum laß ich nicht von mir," Bach changed it to match the closing line, disrupting the rhyme scheme but providing cyclical closure. He had done this already earlier in BWV 154/8.

157/5. **Choral** (Mel: „Meinen Jesum lass' ich nicht“) (See also 124/6, 154/8.)

•Clinging to Jesus; he leads me to streams of life (157/5).

+Fl in 8va,
Ob d'amore,
Vln I

+Vln II

+Violetta

The stanza's reference to the "water of life" is based on various biblical passages (see note). To depict the "Lebensbachlein" (stream of life) Bach writes flowing 8ths in the accompanying voices.

Soprano 1.
Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht, geh' ihm e-wig an-der Sei-

Alto.
Meinen Je-sum lass' ich nicht, geh' ihm e-wig an-der Sei-

Tenore.
Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht, geh' ihm e-wig an-der Sei-

Basso.
Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht, geh' ihm e-wig an-der Sei-

D major D major A major (E7) A major

ten; Chri-stus lässt mich für und für zu dem Le-bens-bäch-lein-

ten; Chri-stus lässt mich für und für zu dem Le-bens-bäch-lein

ten; Chri-stus lässt mich für und für zu dem Le-bens-bäch-lein

ten; Chri-stus lässt mich für und für zu dem Le-bens-bäch-lein

A major D major D major F# minor B7 E minor A7 D major

lei-ten; se-lig, wer mit mir so spricht: Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht!

lei-ten; se-lig, wer mit mir so spricht: Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht!

lei-ten; se-lig, wer mit mir so spricht: Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht!

lei-ten; se-lig, wer mit mir so spricht: Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht!

D major B minor C#7 F# minor F# minor E minor A major D major