

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 165

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

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/15; BC A90

Trinity Sunday (BWV 165, [194], 176, 129)

*Romans 11:33–36 (O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!)

*John 3:1–15 (Discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus: You must be born anew)

Librettist: Salomo Franck (see notes).

FP: presumably 16 June 1715 (Weimar Palace Chapel)

Performed again in Leipzig on 4 June 1724 (St. Thomas in the morning and St. Nicholas at afternoon Vespers). See note.

Instrumentation:

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Fagotto (no independent role)

Violoncello

Continuo

Form (Rhyme: ABCDDA)

Fugal Exposition (mm. 1-9) GM

A. Lines 1-2 (mm. 9-13) GM-DM

Fugal Exp. (12[overlap]-18) DM

B (Inversion). Line 3 (18-25) DM-Em

Fugal Exp. (25-29) Em

C. Lines 4-5 (29-34) Em-Am

Fugal Exp. (33[overlap]-36) Am

B' (Inversion). Line 6 (36-41) Am-CM

Fugal Exp. (41-46) CM-GM

A'. Line 1 (45[overlap]-49) GM

Fugal Exp. (49-57) GM

J.S. Bach Cantata No. 165

O heiliges Geist- und Wasserbad

Concerto.

• Baptism by Spirit & water brings us into kingdom (165/1).

(Aria.)
(Tempo giusto) ♩ = 72.
165/1.

Vln I
Vln II
Cross relation
G major

G major

G major

Soprano. A. Lines 1–2.

O heiliges Geist- und Wasserbad, das

The fugue subject is presented imitatively by singer and Vln I.

Word painting: The flowing melismas and cross relations between F# (which signals C major) followed shortly thereafter by F# (sliding the tonality back to G major) suggest the pliant waters of baptism. Imitation between singer and violin I reflects the duality of "baptism by water and Spirit," as referred in the text.

G major

Got-tes Reich uns ein-ver-lei-bet,

Vln I
Vln II
Fugal Exp.
Vla

D major

15

18 B. Line 3 (Theme inverted). G major Word painting: Energetic melisma for "[Book of] Life."

Inverted und uns ins Buch des Le

p Vln I

D major (D7) G major

21 bensschrei

E7 A minor D7 G major B7 E minor B7

24 bet, und uns ins Buch des Le bens schreibt!

tr Fugal Exp. Vln I

Vln II mf Vla up 8va

E minor E minor

27 C. Lines 4-5 (Theme derived from m. 2).

O Fluth, die al

Vln I

p

D7 G major G7 C major B major E minor E7

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Word painting: Neapolitan 6th inflection colors "Missetat" ("iniquity").

30 Rhetorical emphasis of "alle" (all) with melismas.

le, al - le **Mis - se**

A minor D7 B7 F#7 B minor E7 A minor N6

32II

that durch ih - re Wun - der - kraft er - trän - ket,

Vln I Fugal Exp. *mf* Vla

E7 A minor A minor

35 B'. Line 6 (Inversion of Theme). Word painting: Long, energetic melisma for "[Book of] Life."

und uns - das neue Le -

p Vln I responds with theme from C inverted.

A minor G7 C major

38

- ben schen - ket, und uns das Le -

C major

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41 ben schenket!

Fugal Exp.

Vln II *mf*

C major

Vla

D7 E minor

43 II O heil' - ges

A: Line 1.

D7 (E minor)

p

tr D7 G major

46 Geist-und Was - serbad,o heil'ges Geist- und Wasser.

Vln I

G major

49 bad!

Vln I

mf

Fugal Exp.

Vln II

Vla

G major

52

Vln I

D7 (E minor)

D7 G major

55

G major

Secco

Recitativo.

• Baptism by water & Spirit heals us of sin's disease (165/2).

165/2. 1. Basso.

A

F#

D#

C

B

E

G

Tritone for "God's wrath."

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 11 mm.

The bass is often the voice of authority.

Die sün-di-ge Ge-burt verdammt Adams-erben ge-bietet Gottes

The recitative captures the great contrast between a universally inherited sinful nature deserving of God's wrath (death) and the imputed righteousness of Christ (put on like a garment in baptism).

B7

E minor

4

A# C# D G#

Zorn, den-Tod und das Ver-der-ben. Denn was vom Fleisch ge-

Extravagant word-painting colors "gebietet Gottes Zorn, den Tod und das Verderben" ("gives birth to God's wrath, death and perdition").

F#7 A# dim.7 E# dim.7 B minor B minor

7

bo-ren ist, ist nichts als Fleisch, von Sünde an-ge-steckt, vergiftet und be-

Leap to dim. 7 chord for "poisoned."

D7 G major C# dim.7 A7

10

F

fleckt. Wie se-lig ist ein-Christ! Er wird im Geist und Wasserbade ein Kind der

Bach's early recitatives often approach the style of arioso. See Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 373-374.

D major G major G7 C major C7

Contrast: Diatonic writing for "how blessed is a Christian."

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13

Se_ligkeit und Gnade, er ziehet Christum an und seiner Unschuld wei_sse —

F major G major C major E7

For the significance of C major, see note.

16

Seide, er wird mit Christi Blut, dem Ehren_Purpur_kleide, im Taufbad ange_than.

The text alludes to biblical passages such as Galatians 3:27: As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

8th notes in continuo for emphasis.

A minor A7 D minor E7 Am Dm Dm7 A minor EM

Form (Rhyme: AABCCB)
(The end of each vocal section is inserted into a statement of the ritornello.)

Ritornello (mm. 1-3) Em
Lines 1-3 (3-7) Em-GM
Rit (7-8) Em
Lines 1-3 (8-11) Em-Bm
Rit (11-13) Bm
Lines 4-6 (13-17) Bm-F#m
Rit (17-18) F#m-DM
Lines 4-6 (18-23) DM-Em
Rit (23-25) Em

Aria. •Prayer: May my baptism's healing purpose ever be realized (165/3).
(Larghetto $\text{♩} = 50.$)

1.

Ritornello derived from the vocal line. Continuo alone (right hand is editorial realization).

E minor The ritornello (a large leap followed by a undulating melody in a flowing 12/8 meter) informs the entire aria, appears to symbolize the healing waves of baptism, especially if practiced as immersion.

3 **Alto.**

Je_su.der_aus grosser Lie_be in_der Tau_fe mir ver_schrie_ben Le_.

Alto is often the voice of faith. See Martin Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 2:110.

The vocal line is related to the continuo line and, in the course of the segment, inserted into it (Vokaleinbau).

Vocal insertion (Vokaleinbau)

E minor

5 II

ben, Heil und Se_ligkeit,

Ritornello

D7 G major G major B7

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8

Je - su, der - aus gro - sser Lie - be in - der Tau - fe mir - ver - schrieben Le - ben,

E minor

E minor

F#7

B minor

Vocal Insertion

10 II

Heil und Se - ligkeit,

Ritornello
See full score.

B minor

mf

13

helf, dass ich - mich des - sen freu - e - und den Le - bensbun - der -

NBA: Gnadenbund (covenant of grace) each time.

Vocal Insertion

B minor

A7

D major

p

15

neu - e in - der - gan - zen Le - bens -

C#7

F# minor

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17

zeit, hilf, dass ich mich des . sen

Ritornello

mf

F# minor A7 D major

19

freu e und den Le . bensbund er .

Word painting: Ornamented melisma for "freue" ("rejoice").

pp

Vocal insertion *cresc.*

D7 G major B7

21

neu e in der gan . zen Le . bens .

p

Vocal insertion

E minor

23

zeit.

Ritornello

mf

E minor E minor

Recitativo. • Baptismal vows often broken, sanctification needed (165/4).

165/4.

Basso. ("con stroment" = with instruments)

"Soul's bridegroom" is emphasized with a flourish.

The melodic style of the movement flows between recitative and arioso.

1. 

Ich ha-be ja, mein **Seelen-bräu** - tigam, da du mich neu ge-bo-ren, dir

Strings *p sempre*

B minor A# dim.7 B minor D major

Adagio. (♩ = 50)

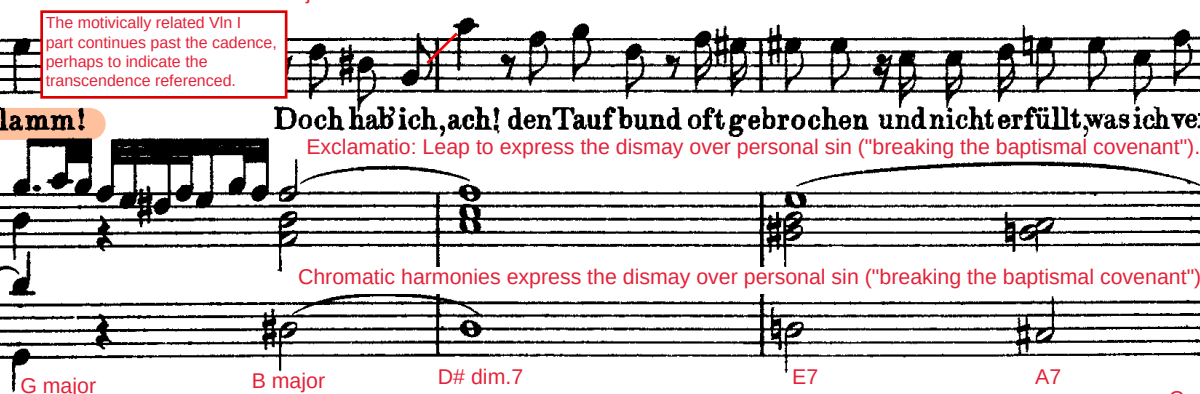
"Most holy Lamb of God" emphasized with an ornamented melisma accompanied by a motivically related violin I line in an adagio arioso.



ewig-treu zu sein ge-schworen, hoch-heil' - - - ges Got - tes.

Longer notes for "eternally."

G major

7. 

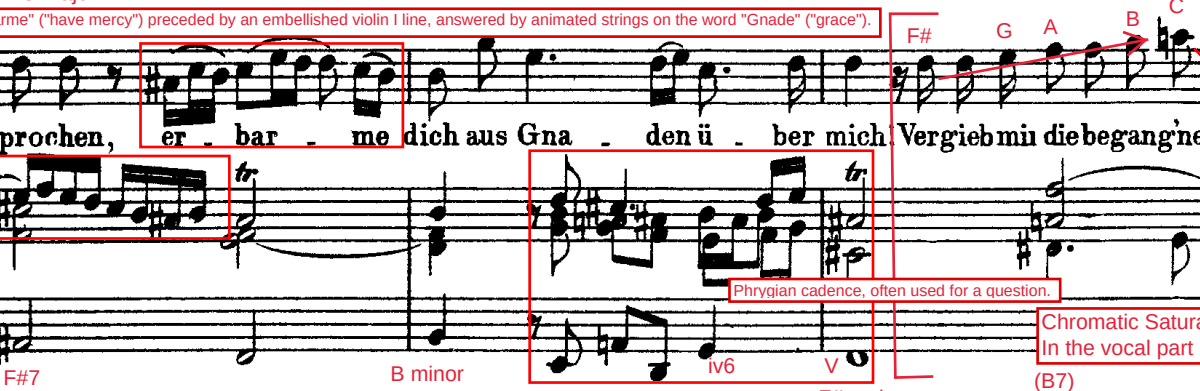
lamm! Doch hab' ich, ach! den Taufbund oft gebrochen und nicht erfüllt, was ich ver-

The motivically related Vln I part continues past the cadence, perhaps to indicate the transcendence referenced.

Exclamatio: Leap to express the dismay over personal sin ("breaking the baptismal covenant").

Chromatic harmonies express the dismay over personal sin ("breaking the baptismal covenant").

G major B major D# dim.7 E7 A7

10. 

sprochen, er - bar - me dich aus Gna - den ü - ber mich Vergiebm die begang'ne

Ornamented melisma for "erbarne" ("have mercy") preceded by an embellished violin I line, answered by animated strings on the word "Gnade" ("grace").

Heightened chromaticism for the plea for mercy.

Phrygian cadence, often used for a question.

Chromatic Saturation in the vocal part in 5 mm.

F#7 B minor iv6 V (B7)

13. 

Sünde, du weisst, mein Gott, wie **schmerz-lich** ich em - pfinde der alten **Schlan - ge**

Scalar ascent, then drop of a seventh for "forgive the sins I've committed."

Tritone for "painfully."

Twisting melisma on a broken chord for "snake."

B7 E minor C# dim.7 A7

The reference to "the ancient serpent and its venom" alludes to the doctrine of original sin—that the fall of Adam and Eve infected all future generations with a sinful nature. The reference to a "crucified serpent" alludes to Moses' bronze serpent, which foreshadowed the crucified Christ. See note for biblical passages.



16

D G#

Stich; das Sündengift verdirbt mir Leib und Seele, hilf, dass ich gläubig dich er.

Tritone for "sin's venom." NBA: verderbt

D minor (E7) G# dim.7 A minor G major

19

Tritone The image of Jesus as a snake substitute is set more diatonically than in m. 15. Tritones

wähle, blut-rothes Schlangenbild, das an dem Kreuz erhöhet, das alle Schmerzen

blood-red image of a snake, which on the cross has been raised

Rising vocal line, answered by Vln I for "raised on the cross"; tritones in the voice for "all sufferings."

G major G# dim.7

The day's Gospel reading includes Jesus' statement, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." (John 3:14-15).

Text painting: The strings sink downwards, stopping before completing the phrase to illustrate the text ("all strength vanishes")

22

22.

stillt und mich erquicket, wenn alle Kraft vergehet.

pp L. H. NBA: senza accompagnamento

A minor D7 G major G (without a chord)

The singer, apparently too tired to finish as he sings "wenn alle Kraft vergehet" ("when all strength fails"), "dies out" first, followed by the upper strings, leaving only the continuo to play the final bar. To emphasise the intended effect, Bach marks the upper strings of the penultimate bar pp, and the continuo part "senza accomp." so that the movement ends with a lone bass note played by the continuo. The long note with fermata allows for contemplation.

165/5. **Aria.** Bach devises a chain-like formal structure with walking bass for a text that develops a continuous line of thought.

(Tempo giusto ♩ = 72.) Prayer: Sanctify me till death; You conquered death & sin (165/5).

Vln I & II unison

Ritornello related to vocal theme.

G major Walking bass... A7 D major

- Form (Rhyme: ABABCD CD)
- Ritornello (mm. 1-8) GM
- A. Motto-Line 1 (9) GM
- Episode (10) GM
- Lines 1-2 (11-15) GM-DM
- A. Motto-Line 3 (16) DM
- Episode (17) GM
- Lines 3-4 (18-22) GM-DM
- B. Motto-Line 5 (23) DM
- Episode (24) EM
- Lines 5-6 (25-29) Am-Em
- B'. Motto-Line 7 (30) Em
- Episode (31) G7
- Lines 7-8 (32-36) CM-GM
- Ritornello GM

For Alfred Dürr's comments, see note.

3 II

D major D7 G major



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G major G7 C major D7

9 **Tenore.** A sweet, spiraling melody points to Jesus' statement (already referenced in the previous movement): "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." See m. 23ff.

Motto (Line 1)

Je - su, mei - nes To - des Tod, Je - su, mei - nes To - des Tod, Je - su, mei - nes To - des Tod

Lines 1-2 (Vokaleinbau)

Episode

G major G major

The idea of "one death devouring the other" is found in the central movement of Cantata 4.

Compare the chorale "Jesu, meines Lebens Leben, Jesu meines Todes Tod" by Christoph Homburg (1605-1681).

This "snake" is sweet, representing Christ.

mei - nes To - des Tod, mei - nes To - des Tod, mei - nes To - des Tod

G7 A7

Tod, Je - su, mei - nes To - des Tod, — lass in mei - nem Le - ben und in

Motto (Line 3)

D major D major

mei - ner letz - ten Noth, und in mei - ner letz - ten

Episode

Lines 3-4 (Vokaleinbau)

G major G major

19

Noth, und in meiner letzten Noth, und in meiner letzten Noth, und in

G7 A7 D major

21II

meiner letzten Noth — mir für Au — gen schwe — ben, dass du mein Heilschlänglein

(vor) (Er lö ser)

that you my little-snake-of-salvation

D major G major A minor E7

24

seist, dass du mein Heilschlänglein seist (von dem) vor das

are, Episode

Lines 5-6

Vokaleinbau

Er lö ser

(von dem)

seist

dass du mein Heilschlänglein seist

von dem

vor das

A minor A minor A minor

26II

Gift — der Sün.de, vor das Gift der Sün.de, dass du mein Heil.

(von dem) (Er

A7 D minor B7 E major A minor

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29

lö ser) (von dem) schlanglein seist vor das Gift der Sün - de. Hei - le, Je - su, Seel' und Geist,

Motto (Line 7)

Episode

D# dim.7 E minor G7 C major

31 II

(Vokaleinbau)

Lines 7-8

hei - le, Je - su, Seel' und Geist, dass - ich Le - ben

Word painting: Leaping melismas for "Leben" ("life").

C major C7

34

fin - de, dass - ich Le - ben fin - de, hei - le, Je - su,

F major D7 G major G7 C major

36

Seel' und Geist, dass ich Le - ben fin - de.

Ritornello

D7 G major A7

38 II

B minor A7 D major D major D7

G major G major G7 C major D7 G major

This is the 5th stanza of 8 in the 1575 chorale "Nun laßt uns Gott dem Herrn" by Ludwig Helmbold (1532–1598).

165/6. **Choral.** (Mel.: „Wach auf, mein Herz, und singe.“) • Baptism, Word, and Eucharist guard us from evil (165/6).

Martin Petzold suggests that this setting appears to use a Thuringian melodic version. See *Bach Kommentar* 2:1067. By contrast, Bach sets the tune in triple meter in 194/12 and 79/6.

While "Unfall" can mean any accident or calamity, here it becomes a keyword for the entire cantata, encompassing all of the adverse consequences of the Fall, (resulting in a universally inherited sinful nature). Meanwhile, baptism appears to be represented here with flowing eighth notes. See Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 2:1067.

Soprano. 1.
Alto.
Tenor.
Basso.

+Vln I
+Vln II
+Vla
+Fagotto

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

heil' - ge Geist im Glau - ben lehrt uns da - rauf ver - trau - - en.
heil' - ge Geist im Glau - ben lehrt uns da - rauf ver - trau - - en.
heil' - ge Geist im Glau - ben lehrt uns da - rauf ver - trau - - en.
heil' - ge Geist im Glau - ben lehrt uns da - rauf ver - trau - - en.

E minor G major A7 D major B7 C major G major G major