Form: 1) Chorus [Chorale v. 1] & AT Recits. 2) B Recit. 3) Chorale [v. 2] & SA Recits. 4) T Recit. Last changed 18 November 2025. h Cantatas 5) B Aria. 6) A Recit. 7) Chorale [v. 3]. Note: In the NBA, movements 2 & 3 are joined.

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/22: BC A132

15. S. after Trinity (BWV 138, 99, 51)

*Galatians 5:25-6:10 (Exhortation to walk in *Matthew 6:24-34 (Sermon on the Mount:

Exhortation not to be anxious but to seek the kingdom of God)

Librettist: Unknown FP: 5 September 1723 (St. Nicholas). This cantata is a precursor to his chorale cantata cycle.

Instrumentation: Oboe d'amore I, II VIn I, II Vla SATB

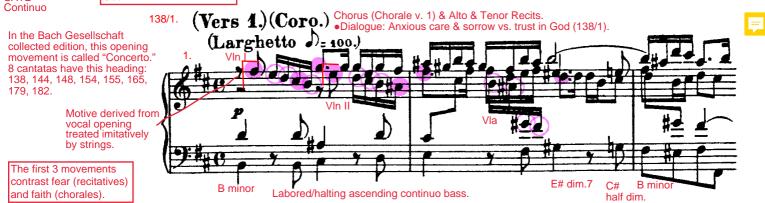
An Early Experiment with Chorale Cantata Form: Earthly Worries vs. Trust in Bach integrates the genres of chorale, chorus, and aria (using a single chorale, thus foreshadowing the works of his chorale cantata ycle and perhaps representing an exploratory effort in preparation for that cycle—for more see note). In movements that combine chorale and recitative, the latter acts as a trope on the chorale. Interestingly, the cantata has only one aria but many recitatives. In Cantata 95, for the following week, he uses 4 different chorales, integrating 2 different chorales with recitative in the first movement and connecting chorales with arias in two other movement pairs. 138/1 is a chromatic chorus based on chorale, with imaginative use of ritornello, chorale, and recitative. For each of the three chorale lines, the string ritornello is joined by Oboe I presenting the chorale melody (while Oboe II plays chromatically descending sighing figures); the tenor follows with material that incorporates the headmotive of the ritornello, which leads into a four-part rendition of the chorale phrase. An accompanied Alto recitative section follows, nen the final two lines of the chorale in 4-part setting with animated bass, instruments doubling and embellishing the vocal lines.

Cantata No. 138

Warum betrübst du dich, mein Herz

Für Sopran-, Alt-, Tenor-, Baß-Solo und Chor

In Bach's day, the underlying chorale of 1541, with 14 stanzas, was attributed to Hans Sachs (1494-1576). The cantata libretto utilizes the first three stanzas.



Each of the first 3 chorale phrases is treated in the same way: Oboe d'amore 1 plays the melody, accompanied by the other instruments, the tenor voice sings the text in a recitative, the four voices sing the chorale phrase, doubled by the two oboes in unison.

Oboe d'amore I plays chorale phrase 1, while Oboe d'amore II plays descending chromatic line with 8th-note sighing figures and pauses (3 rhetorical figures: B-B-A#. A-G#-G, F#-E#-E), possibly derived from second vocal phrase). Ob d'am I (up 8va) B minor

For word-for-word translations, see Unger, Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts.

See side note for Alfred Dürr's comments on the libretto.

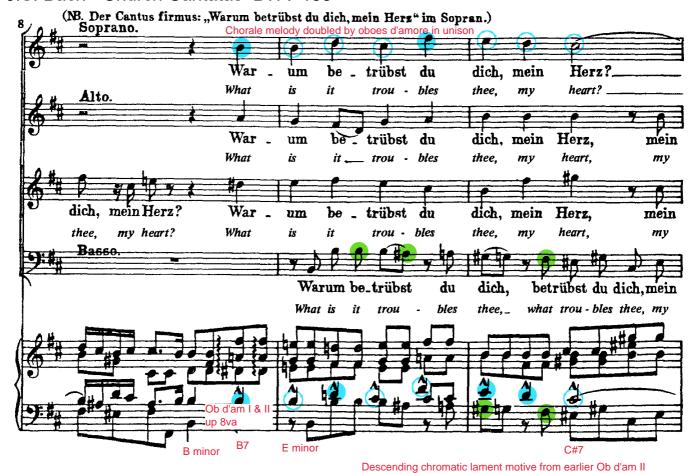
The tenor sings the first text text phrase of the chorale (but not the tune) incorporating the head motive of the ritornello. The oboes d'amore respond with the same motive.

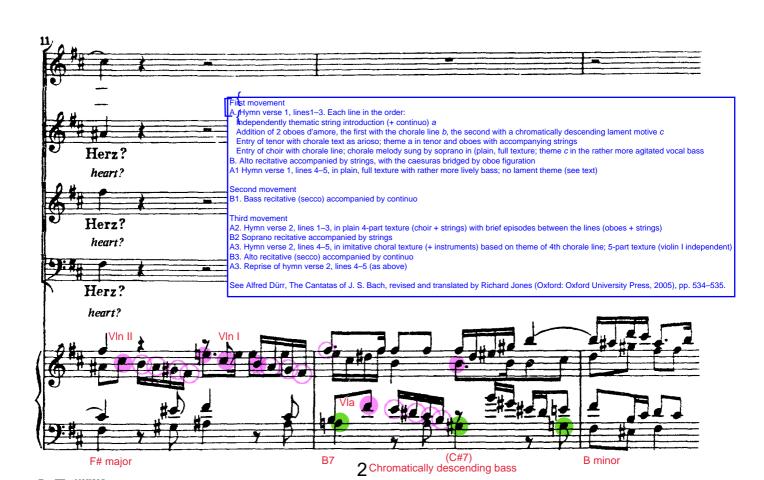
Alfred Dürr writes, "Bach's setting is as unorthodox as the structure of the text. The great ppening complex, with its constant alternation of chorale lines and recitative, is designed not as a single scheme but as a free succession. The text structure prompted the composition of the opening as a dialogue—perhaps between Fear (recitative) and Hope (chorale)—similar to that of Cantatas 60 and 66/4–5. However, by assigning the recitatives variously to alto (no. 1), bass (no. 2), and soprano and finally alto again (no. 3) Bach renounces a dramatic confrontation between a single soloist and the chorale chorus Nor do the chorale passages form a unified contrast with the solo recitative sections; instead, each chorale insertion is differently structured. If the first three movements are conceived as a single overall complex, alternating between chorale and recitative, the following structure emerges (disregarding more detailed formal correspondences, the chorale passages are designated A, A1, etc. and the recitative passages B, B1, etc.):

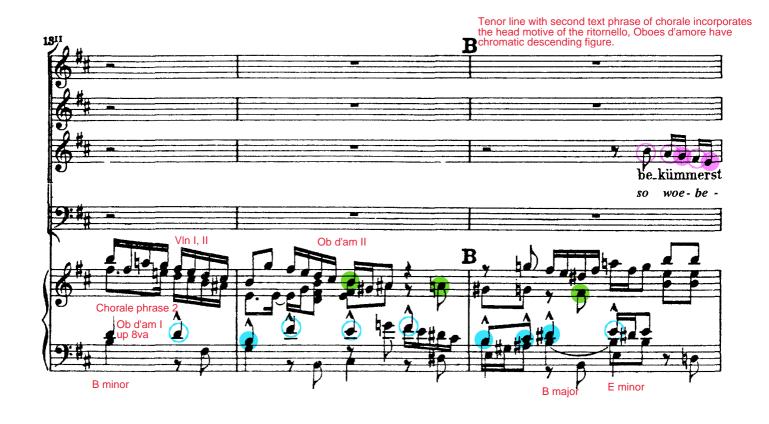


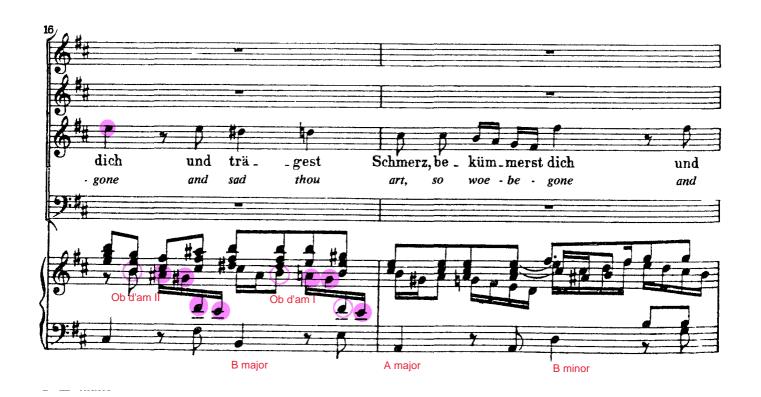
For biblical background. see note.

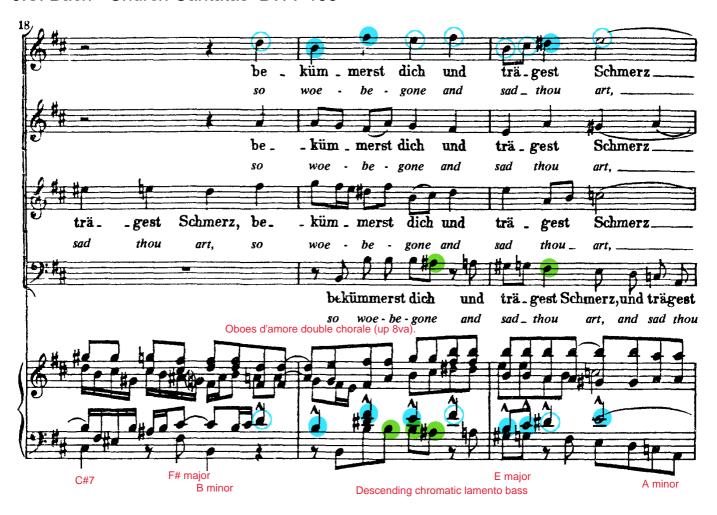
The dichotomy between solo (recitatives expressing doubt and worry) and chorus (chorale statements expressing trust in God) appears to represent a dialogue between individualized, subjective expression and objective cathechismal response rather than one between the individual and the congregation.



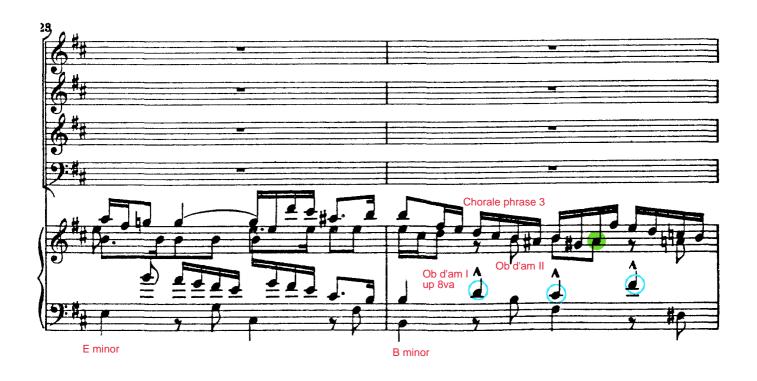




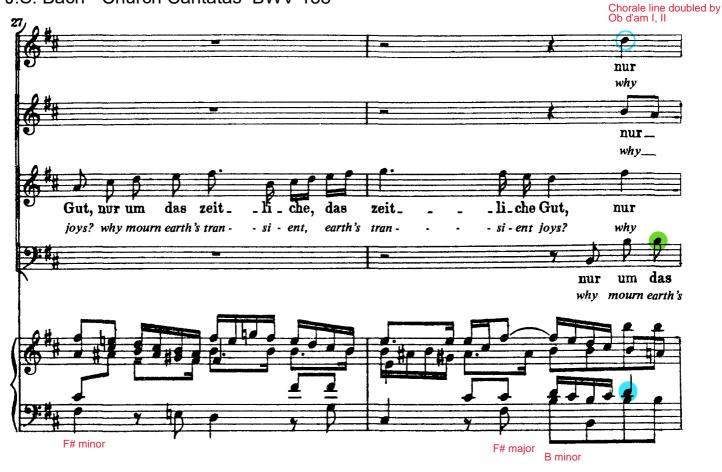


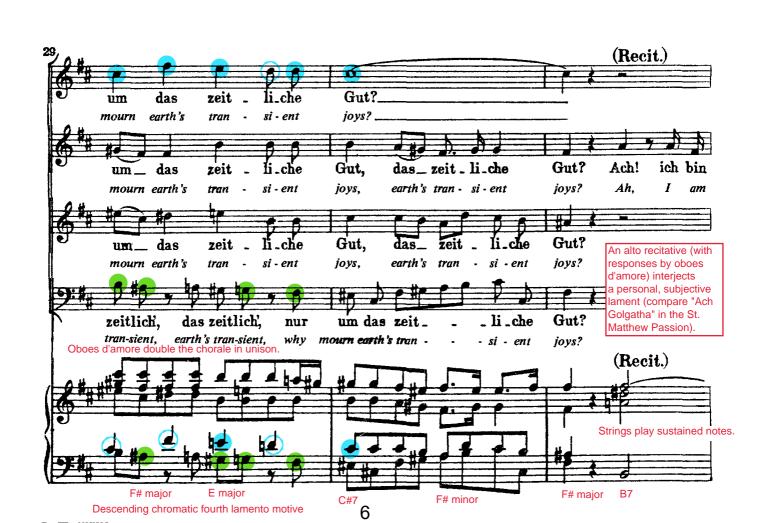




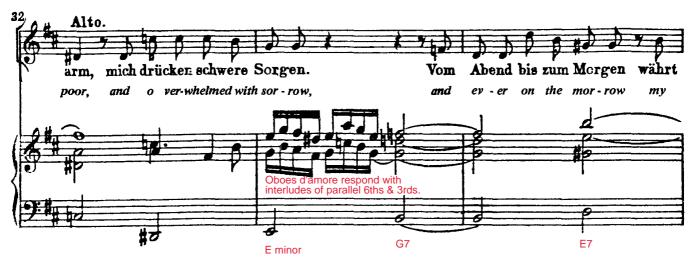


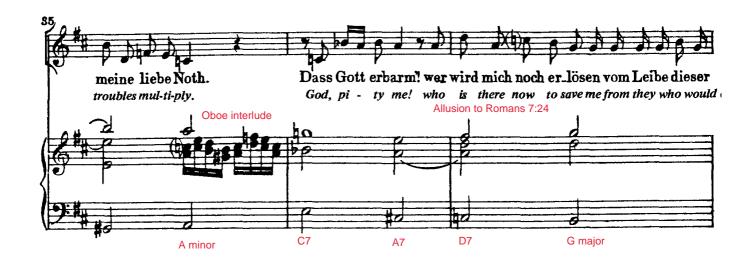


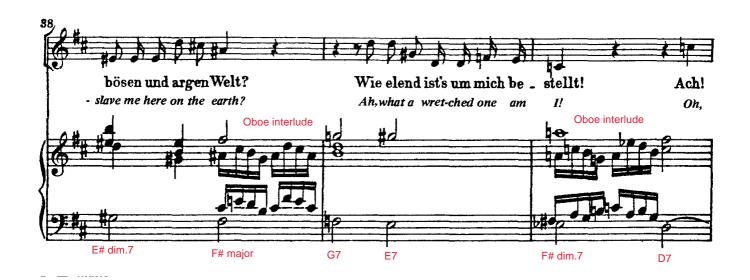


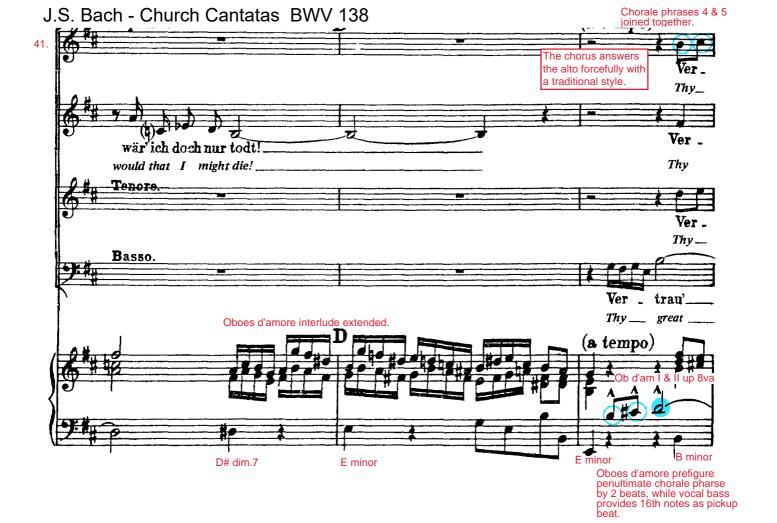


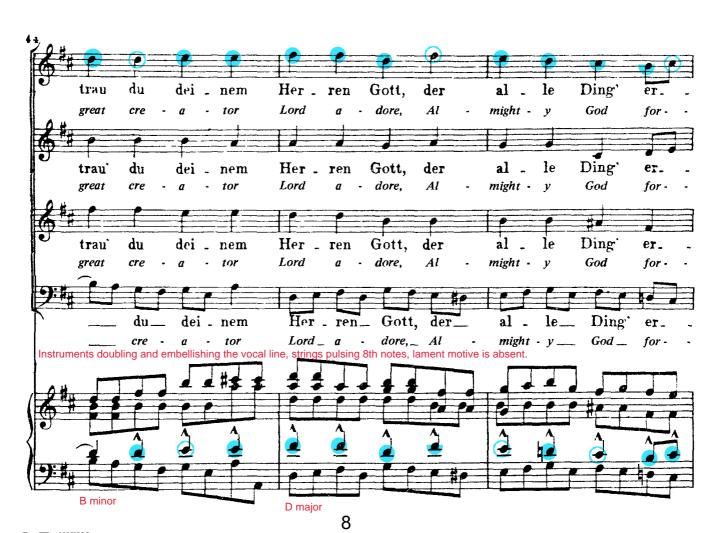
Alto is often the voice of intimate/heartfelt faith.

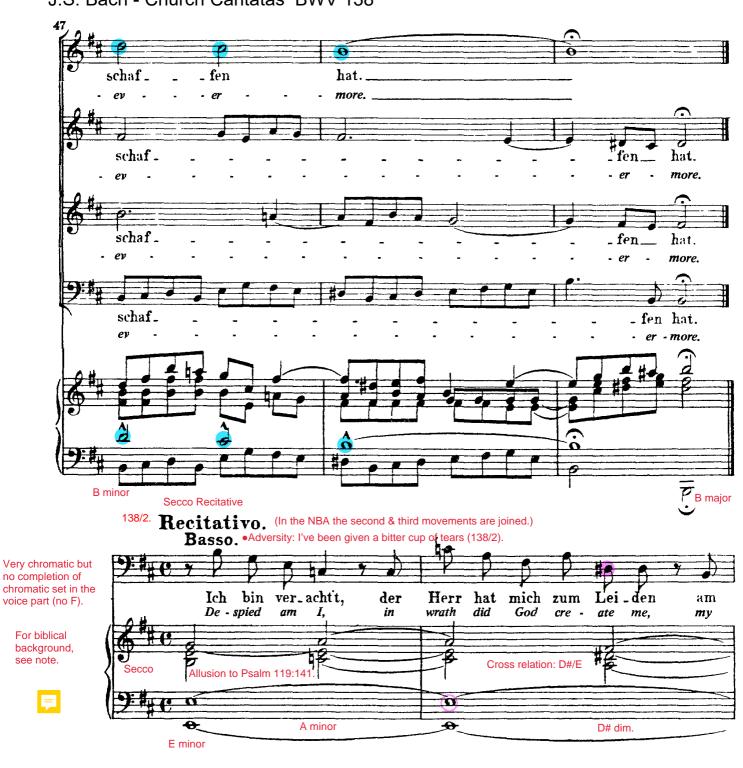












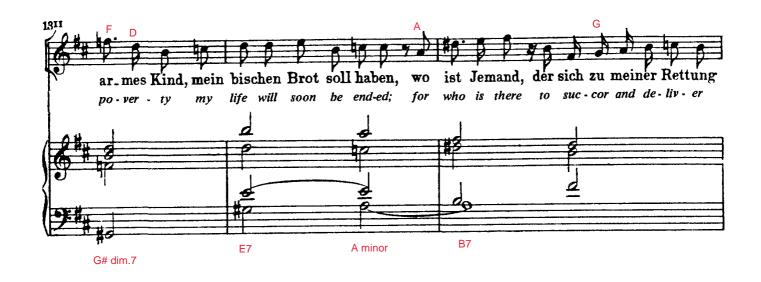


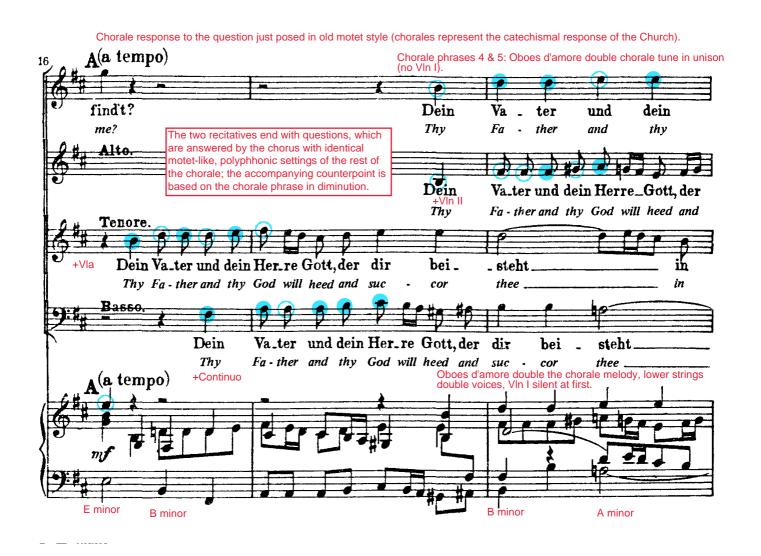
B minor

B minor

E minor



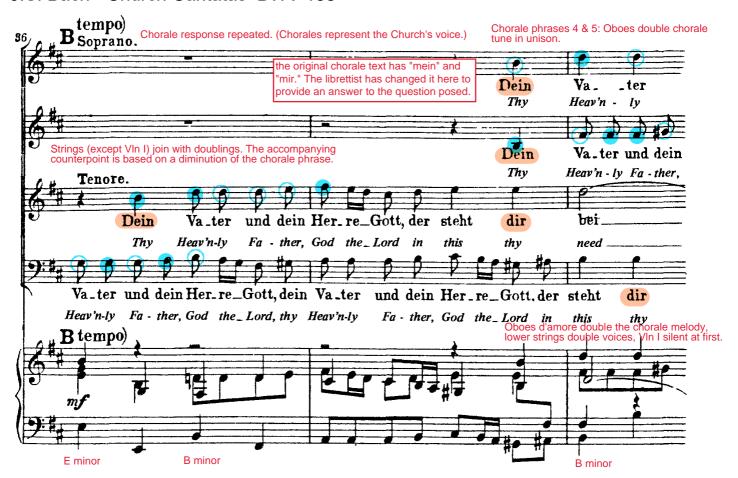


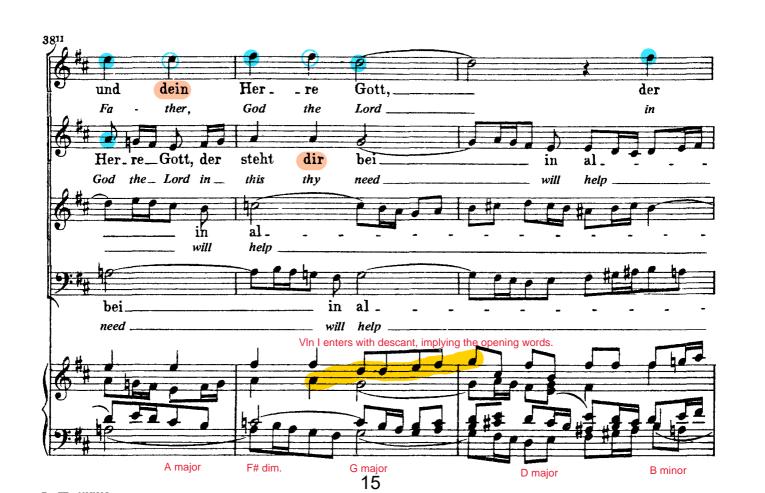














Secco Recitative. The mood shifts as faith gains hold (the music is mostly diatonic and major). The tenor "takes up the hopeful, consoling text of the chorus." See Helmuth Rilling, *Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 1 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2000), p. 74. The following movement begins *attacca*.

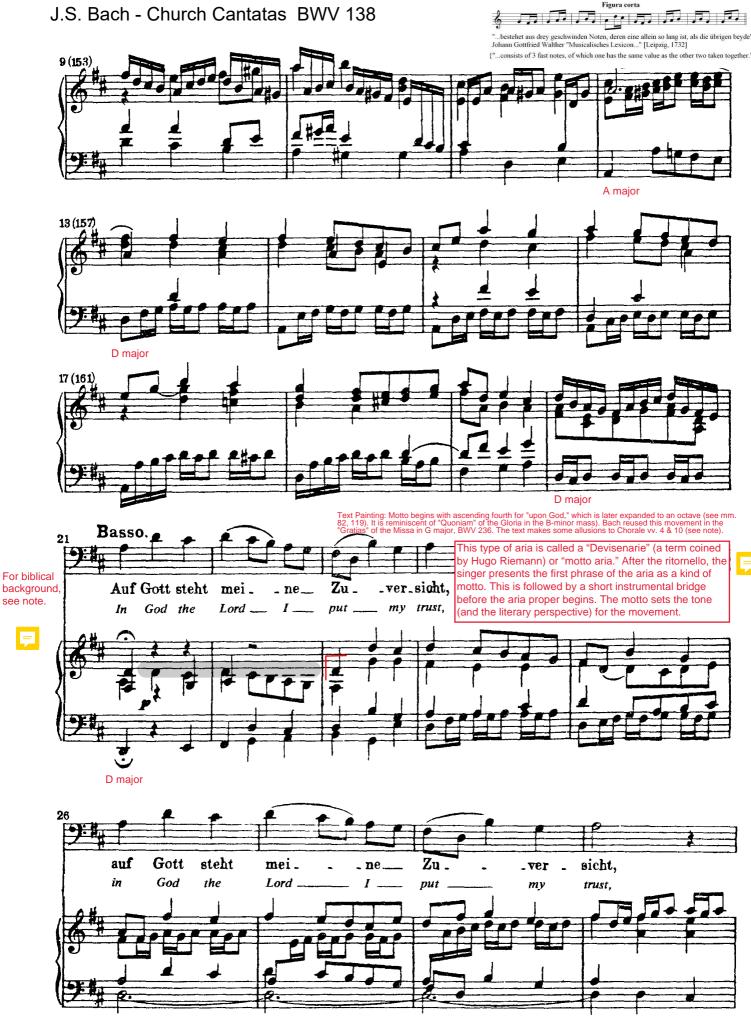




J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 138 Text painting: Arioso melisma on "joy." Allusion to 1 Peter 5:7. den auf den Herrn; und hilft er heuste werf ich mei he Sorgen mit Freu. my load of sor-row with glad --ness on the_Lord, and help will He af-G major B minor D7 die nicht, leg' ich herzlich gern so hilft er mir doch mor gen. - ford, to bring a joy - ous mor - row. And so with hap py heart I F# dim.7 und mag nichts mehr als dies Sorgen unter's Kissen zu meinem Troste wissen: for Faith and Hope have ri - sen and are shin - ing. at last put a-way re-pin-ing, B minor (Attacca.) D major •Trust in God exercised: Calmness in suffering (138/5). Opening phrase derived from vocal line, Vln I playing the head motive. Then Vln I starts descant (with figura corta), presumably representing God's attending care as suggested by the words. Rhyme scheme is ABCCDDB. Phrase structure: Rit - 1 - 2 - Rit - 3 - 4 - Rit - 1 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 1 - 2 - Rit. Finally, an aria, the only one in the 58<u>6</u>6 74 82 91 95 103 119 128 145 Mm. 1 21 30 (Allegro moderato J = 100.) cantatá. Ritornello VIn Modified da capo aria, accompanied by strings. Ritornello reappears in m. 46 & m.74. Triple meter in which cantabile quarter notes alternate Minuet rhythi Strings Figura corta (see note) with a conspicuous mf figure of two sixteenths-eighth (figura corta), then running sixteenths. The result is a very positive statement of joy and faith. VIn I figuration dominates...

17

A major

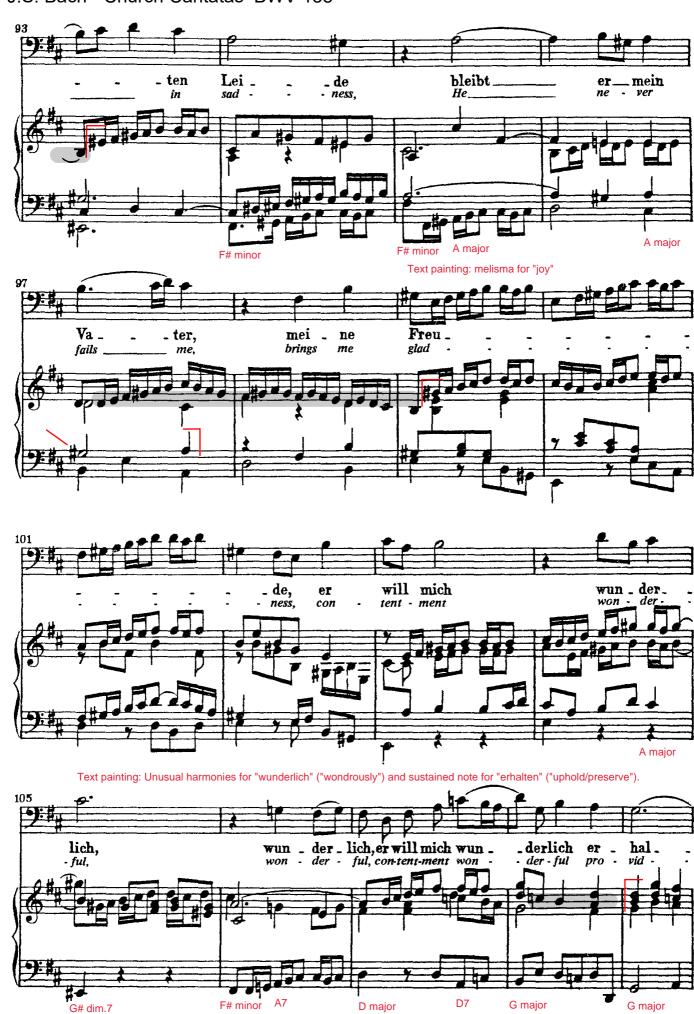


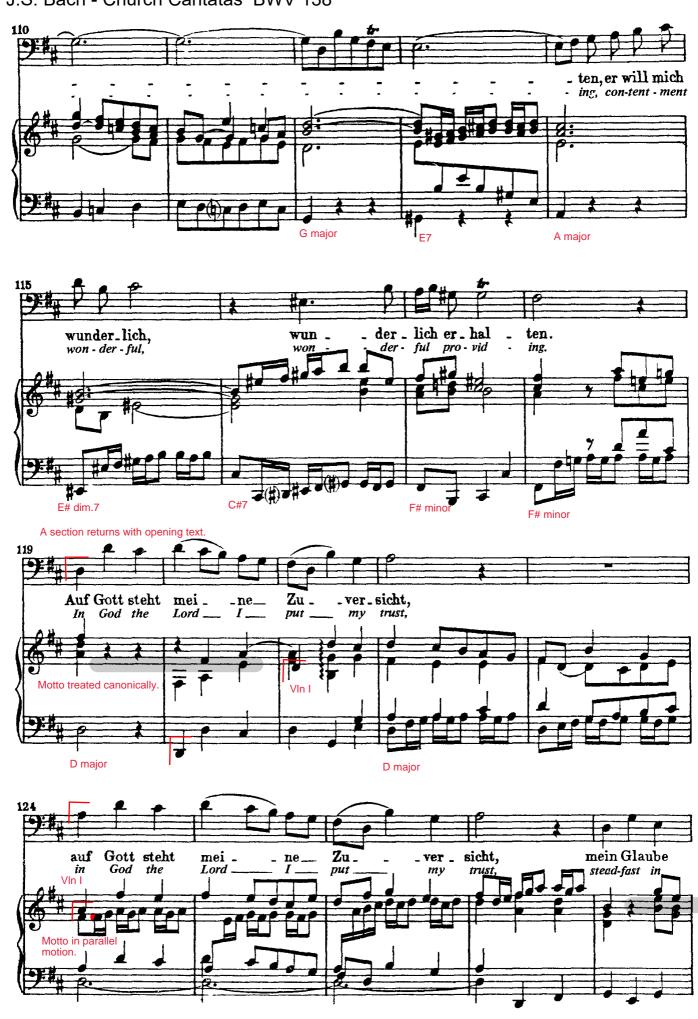
Text painting: Long melisma for faith in God's soverign control ("walten" means to "hold sway over" or "to rule"). The striking text painting on "walten" and "Freude" in this movement emphasize the reason for renewed faith and joy: God's sovereignty, while the repetition of the opening line, emphasizes the poet's determination to believe.



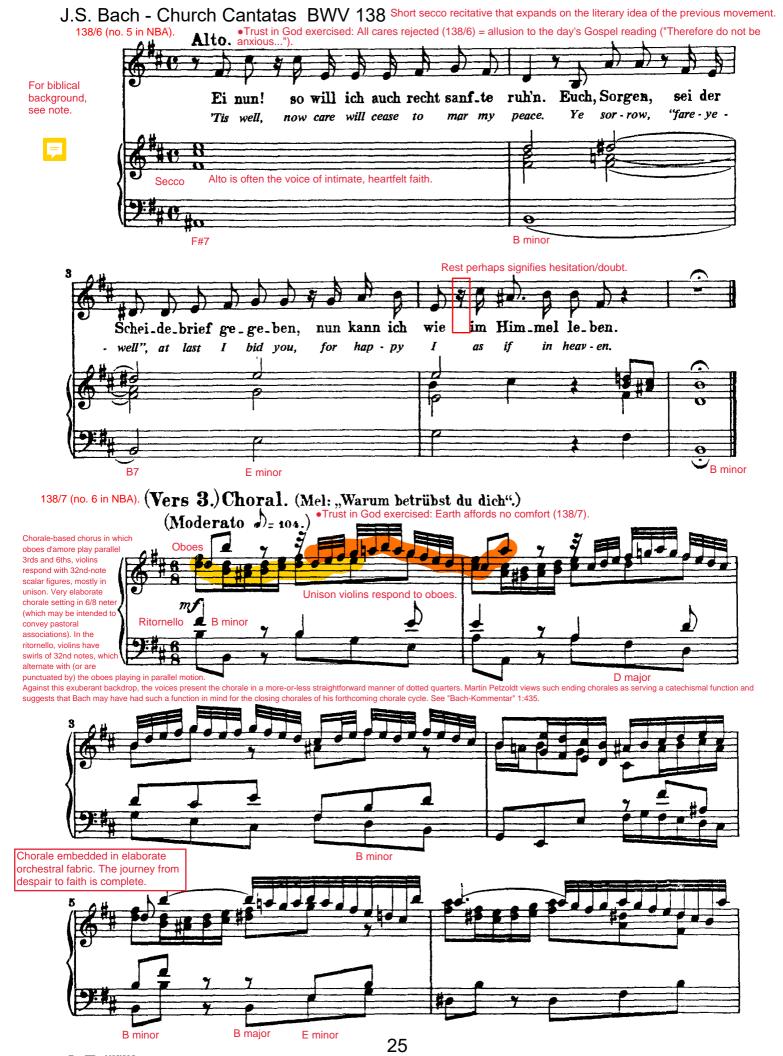


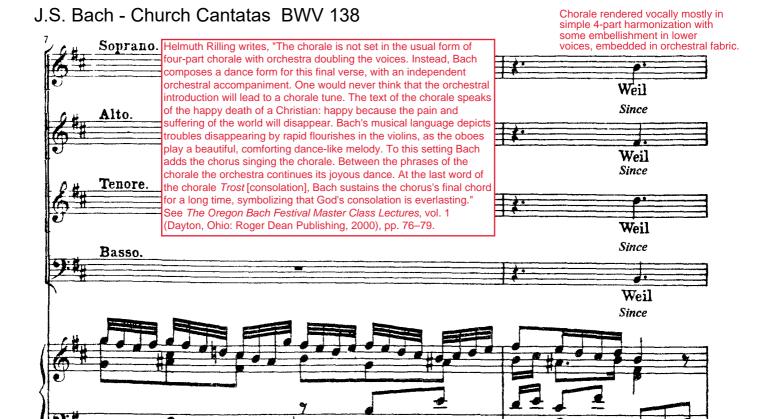












B minor

B minor

For biblical background, see note.

E minor





