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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 (chamber-sized):

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.

Because the Gospel for Trinity Sunday recounts Jesus' words to Nicodemus, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God," theologians of Bach's day focused on Trinitarian baptism ("baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"). For Alfred Dürr's comments on the cantata, see note. In the opening movement, the inflexibility of Jesus' statement is reflected in the fugal rigidity of the instrumental episodes, while the duality of Jesus' description ("baptism by water and Spirit") is depicted through imitation between singer and violin. The formal sequence of ascending subject - inversion - ascending subject - inversion may symbolize the act of baptism (lifting the water, then letting it pour down; more metaphorically, rebirth), while also serving to frame the central statement C, which summarizes the significance of "baptism by water and Spirit"—a "flood that drowns all iniquity through its miraculous power."

(Aria.) **Tempo giusto** (♩ = 72.) • Baptism by Spirit & water brings us into kingdom (165/1).

165/1. **Permutation Fugue** (Wavy, flowing fugue subject = water of baptism).

Cross relation

G major

G major

G major

Soprano. A. Lines 1–2.

O heil' ges Geist und Was serbad, 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

A7 D major

For biblical background, see note.

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

Got tes Reich uns ein ver lei bet,

Vln I

Vln II

Fugal Exp.

Vla

D major

E7

A7

D major

15

D7 G major A7 D major

18

B. Line 3 (Theme inverted). Inverted und uns ins Buch des Le

Word painting: Lengthy, animated melisma for "[Book of] Life."

Vln I

D major (D7) G major

21

E7 A minor D7 G major B7 E minor B7

benschrei

24

bet, und uns ins Buch des Lebens schreibt!

Fugal Exp. Vln I

Vln II

mf Vla up 8va

E minor E minor

As is typical with Franck's librettos, the text alludes to various biblical passages (see note for examples).

27

O Fluth, die al O flood

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

Vln I

D7 G major G7 C major B major E minor E7

The reference to a flood that washes away all iniquity suggests biblical examples of baptism that involved immersion in the Jordan River.

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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 - ke - t,

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 -

A minor G7 C major

38

- ben schen - ke - t, 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

Cross relations

A: Line 1.

O heil' - ges

p

D7 (E minor)

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

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55

G major

Secco Recitativo.

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

165/2. 1. Basso.

Chromatic saturation
in the vocal part in
11 mm.

The bass is often the
voice of authority.

Tritone for
"God's wrath."

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

For biblical
background,
see note.

Secco

The recitativo 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).

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)."

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

Leap to dim. 7 chord
for "poisoned."

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

Contrast: Diatonic writing, turning to the subdominant for "how blessed is a Christian."

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

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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

16

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

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

8th notes in continuo for emphasis.

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

Aria. •Prayer: May my baptism's healing purpose ever be realized (165/3).

165/3.

1. (Larghetto $\text{♩} = 50.$)

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

For biblical background, see note.

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.

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

Je_su.der_aus grosser Lie.be in_der Tauf.e mir ver_schrie-ben Le

Vocal insertion (Vokaleinbau)

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

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,

Vocal Insertion

E minor E minor F#7 B minor

10 II

Heil und Se - ligkeit,

Ritornello
See full score.

mf

B minor

13

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

NBA: Gnadenbund (covenant of grace) each time.

Vocal Insertion

p

B minor A7 D major

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 .

tr

Word painting: Ascending, ornamented melisma for "freue" ("rejoice").

pp Sequentially descending continuo bass.

Vocal insertion *cresc.*

D7 G major B7

21

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

tr

p

Vocal insertion

E minor

23

zeit.

Ritornello

mf

E minor E minor

Descriptions of Christ as Lamb of God of the soul and as Lamb of God are rooted in biblical passages such as the statements by John the Baptist: "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full" (John 3:28–29); "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). See also John 1:36.

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

For Alfred Dürr's comments, see note.

165/4.

Basso. ("con stroment[ij]" = with instruments)

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

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

1. 

p sempre "Halo" of strings

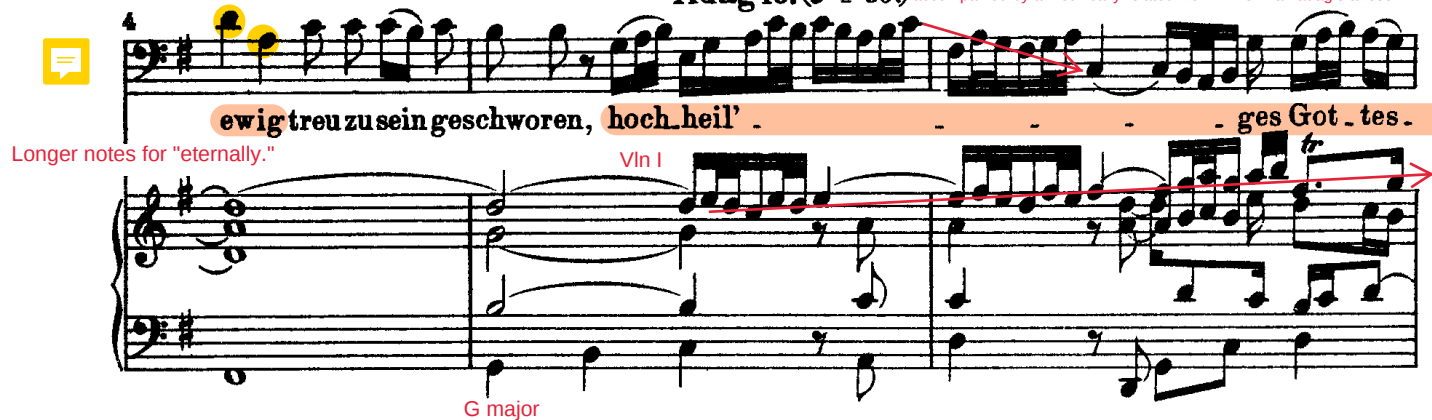
B minor A# dim.7 D major

The strings alternate between held chords ("halo" effect) and animated responses to the vocal line.

For biblical background, see note.

Adagio. (♩ = 50.)

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



ewigtreu zusein geschworen, hochheil' - ges Got - tes.

Vln I tr

G major

Longer notes for "eternally."

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

lamm!

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

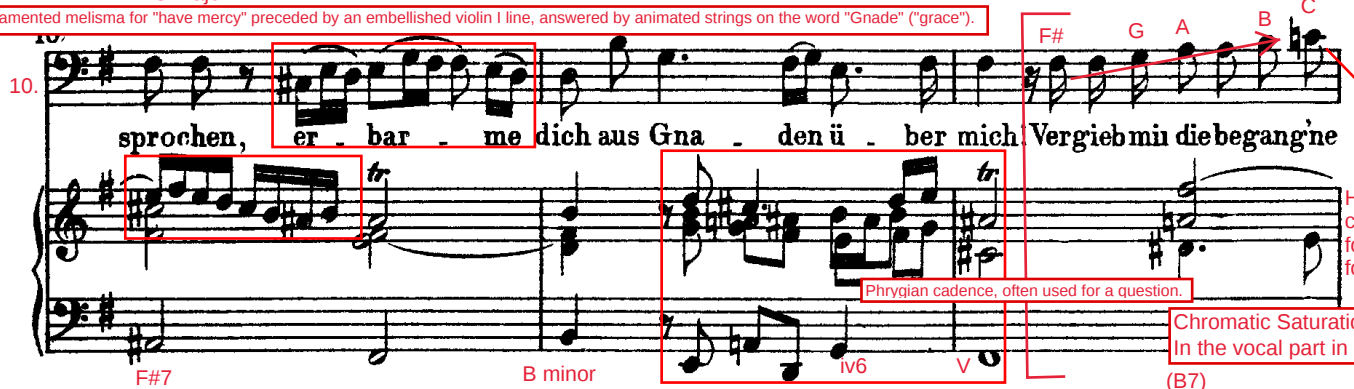
Exclamatio: Leap to express the dismay over personal sin ("breaking the baptismal covenant").

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



G major B major D# dim.7 E7 A7

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

10. 

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

F#7 B minor iv6 V F# major (B7)

Heightened chromaticism for the plea for mercy.

Phrygian cadence, often used for a question.

Chromatic Saturation In the vocal part in 5 mm.

13. 

Sünde, du weisst, mein Gott, wie schmerzlich ich empfinde der alten Schlan - ge

D# B-flat F# major E F C#

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."

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 G7

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(7) C 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 emphasize 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.

Form (Rhyme: ABABCD) 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

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.

my

G major Walking bass... A7 D major

For Alfred Dürr's comments, see note.



3 II

D major D7 G major

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G major G7 C major D7

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)

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

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

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

Lines 1-2 (Vokaleinbau)

This "snake" is sweet, representing Christ.

For biblical background, see note.

The melody portrays the "Heilschlänglein" ("Serpent of Salvation").

G major G major G major

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

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)

D7 G major G major

19

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

21II

meiner letzten Noth — (vor) mir für Au — gen schwe — ben, dass du mein Heilschlänglein (Er lö ser)

that you my little-snake-of-salvation

24

seist, Episode

dass du mein Heilschlänglein seist (Er lö ser) (von dem) vor das

26II

Gift — der Sün.de, (von dem) vor das Gift der Sün.de, dass du mein Heil. (Er)

A7 D minor B7 E major A minor

G7 A7 D major

Motto (Line 5)

(Vokaleinbau)

Lines 5–6

mf p

A minor A minor A minor

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29

Motto (Line 7)

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

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 Petzold, *Bach-Kommentar* 2:1067.

Soprano. 1.
Alto.
Tenor.
Basso.
+Fagotto

Sein Wort, sein' Tau fe, sein Nachtmahl dient wi - der al - len Un - fall, der
Sein Wort, sein' Tau fe, sein Nachtmahl dient wi - der al - len Un - fall, der
Sein Wort, sein' Tau fe, sein Nachtmahl dient wi - der al - len Un - fall, der
Sein Wort, sein' Tau fe, sein Nachtmahl dient wi - der al - len Un - fall, der

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

For biblical background, see note.



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