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NBA I/12; BC A71

Cantate: 4. S. after Easter (BWV 166, 108)

*James 1:17-21 (All good gifts come from above; be doers of the Word)

*John 16:5-15 (Jesus' farewell: promise to send the Holy Spirit)

Librettist: Unknown; perhaps Christian Weiß the elder

FP: 7 May 1724 (Leipzig: St. Nicholas)

This cantata belongs to Bach's first cantata cycle in Leipzig (see note).

A chamber cantata that exhorts one to consider one's destiny.

Of the first movement, Konrad Küster writes, "The 'development of the movement results...from a complex interweaving of vocal melody and motives in the introductory ritornello. This is strikingly regular in structure, almost song-like ... But in contrast to movements from the late fall of 1723, which begin in a similar way, here the voice part does not adopt motives of the ritornello (following it closely) but rather the orchestra repeatedly intervenes in the process with fragments of the introduction, which are not only accompanied independently by the voice part, but can also be continued independently." See Konrad Küster, ed., *Bach Handbuch* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), p. 233, translated from the German original.

J.S. Bach Cantata No. 166 Wo gehest du hin



Instrumentation:

Oboe

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo, Organo

Through-composed

Aria.

166/1.

(Lento $\text{♩} = 44$.)

•Vox Christi: Where goest thou? John 16:5 (166/1). In the day's Gospel reading, this question is part of a longer statement by Jesus to his disciples regarding his destiny: "But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'" In the cantata, Jesus turns the question on the disciples, challenging them gently to think of their ultimate destiny.

This 2-note motive is identified with "wo, wo?" or "wohin"? in mm. 36, 44-46, 52, 54, 59.

Continuo has a stepping figure.

The singer's line is built into the ritornello material ("Vokaleinbau").

E-flat major

Bach varies the scripture slightly to stress the destination.

For biblical background, see note.

Bach employs fragmented lines, tonal ambiguity, lack of symmetry, and chromaticism to underscore the question, "Where are you going?"

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

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

28

hin, wo ge-hest du hin, wo hin, wo

-Ob

Ob + Vln I (to end)... (tr)

p

D(7) G minor G minor A7 D minor

35

gehest du hin, wo, wo ge-hest du hin? Wo ge-

2-note motive

mf *p*

(G7) C minor B dim.7 C minor F7 B-flat major

42

- hest du hin, wo hin, wo hin, wo, wo ge-

2-note motive

B-flat major

Text painting: Florid melismas on "gehest" ("goest") illustrate the variability of one's chosen path.

48

- hest du hin, wo hin, wo hin, wo, wo ge- hest du

B-flat major B-flat7 E-flat major B-flat major (C7) F major F major F7

54

hin, wo hin, wo ge- hest du hin, wohin,

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

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

60

wo, wo, wo ge-hest du hin, wo-hin, wo ge-hest du hin?

Ritornello

B-flat major B-flat major C7 F major F major

The singer does not end in the original key.

67

Da capo

F major E-flat major B-flat major F7 B-flat major B-flat major

hemiola

Scholars have suggested that a second obbligato part—probably a violin—has been lost from surviving parts, which constitute the only original source material. The Trio in G minor for organ (BWV 584) largely corresponds to the instrumental part of the aria. For this reason, a reconstruction was created in 1960 for the *Neue Bach Ausgabe*. However, BWV 584 has now been judged inauthentic—that it is actually an arrangement (not by Bach) of the aria. See 3rd. edition of BWV catalogue, pp. 437, 705.

166/2. Adagio. (♩ = 64.)

1. Ob

Adagio marking is in original continuo parts.

Presumed entry of lost part.

Ritornello

G minor The movement is a melancholic song of farewell. G minor

Measured steps in the bass...

The long note implies imitation between 2 parts.

311

4.

F7 B-flat major D7 G minor (F7)

Circulo mezzo for "heaven" (see note).

6 Tenore.

For biblical background, see note.

Form:
Ritornello (mm. 1-7) G minor
Lines 1-2 (2x: 7-11) Gm-Dm
Rit (12-13) Gm-Dm
Lines 1-2 (1x: 13-17) Dm
Rit (17-19) Dm-B M
Lines 1-2 (3x: 19-28) B M-Gm
Rit (28-30) Gm [Fine]
Lines 3-5 (2x: 31-48) B M-E M
Da capo

Ich will... an den Him-mel

F# dim.7 E-flat major G minor D major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

Text painting: Leap up to "heaven."

8

denken und der Welt mein Herz nicht schenken, ich will an den Himmel den - ken

D7 G minor D7 G minor A7 D minor C7

10¹¹

und der Welt mein Herz nicht schenken.

mf Ritornello

F major 7 (C7) A7 D minor G minor A7 D minor

13

Ich will an den Him-mel denken und der Welt mein Herz nicht

p

C# dim.7 A7 D minor C7 F major 7 D minor

Expressive melismas on "[der Welt mein Herz nicht] schenken" ([not] "give" the world my heart") suggest that the decision is an emotional one.

15¹¹

schen - - - ken.

mf

A7 D minor A7 D minor D minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

18

The opening lines are reminiscent of 1 John 2:15-17: Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever. (Also James 4:4.)

Ich will an den Him_mel

G7 C minor C7 F major 7 B-flat major F# dim.7

20^{II}

denken und der Welt mein Herz nicht schenken, an den Himmel will ich denken und der

G minor G minor B dim.7

23

Welt mein Herz nicht schenken, ich will an den Himmel denken und der

C minor D7 G minor

25^{II}

Welt__ mein Herz nicht schen

Expressive melisma on "schenken" ("give").

N6 D7 G minor G minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

28 ken. NBA: Denn **Wenn** ich

B Section.

mf

G minor (F7) F# dim.7 G minor G minor

31 ge-he o-der ste he, wenn ich ge-he o-der ste

Word painting: Rising scales for "gehe" ("go"); sustained notes for "stehe" ("stand"/"stop/rest").

f

B-flat major B-flat major G major

The text is reminiscent of Psalm 139:1-2: O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me! Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up; thou discernest my thoughts from afar.

34 he, so liegt mir die Frag' im Sinn, die Frag' im Sinn, so liegt

C minor C minor F minor B-flat 7 E-flat major (G7)

56 mir die Frag' im Sinn: Mensch, ach Mensch! wo gehst du

Rhetorical declamation on the call: "Man, ah, man!"

C minor G7 C minor

Detailed description: This image shows a page of a musical score for J.S. Bach's Church Cantata BWV 166. It features three systems of music, each with a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The lyrics are in German. The first system (measures 28-30) includes the text 'ken. NBA: Denn Wenn ich' and has a red arrow pointing to the 'B Section' label. The piano part has a 'mf' dynamic marking. The second system (measures 31-33) includes the text 'ge-he o-der ste he, wenn ich ge-he o-der ste'. A red arrow points to the rising scale for 'gehe'. A text box explains word painting: 'Rising scales for "gehe" ("go"); sustained notes for "stehe" ("stand"/"stop/rest").'. The piano part has a 'f' dynamic marking. The third system (measures 34-36) includes the text 'he, so liegt mir die Frag' im Sinn, die Frag' im Sinn, so liegt'. The piano part has a 'f' dynamic marking. The fourth system (measures 56-58) includes the text 'mir die Frag' im Sinn: Mensch, ach Mensch! wo gehst du'. A red arrow points to the 'Rhetorical declamation on the call: "Man, ah, man!"'. The piano part has a 'f' dynamic marking. Harmonic annotations in red text are provided below the piano part for various measures: G minor (F7), F# dim.7 G minor, G minor, B-flat major, B-flat major, G major, C minor, C minor, F minor, B-flat 7, E-flat major, (G7), C minor, G7, C minor.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

39

hin, wogehst du hin? Wenn ich ge - he o - der ste

B dim.7 B dim.7 C minor D major

Ending on a diminished 7th chord suggests a rhetorical question rather than a conclusion (see note).

41

he, wenn ich ge - he o - der ste

G minor G minor C major F major

Second statement is very dramatic...

44

he, so liegt mir die Frag' im Sinn: Mensch, ach Mensch! wogehst du

Declamatory... C# dim.7 D minor N6 (F7)

Exclamatio

After the anguish, the B section ends sweetly.

46

hin. Mensch, ach Mensch! wogehst, du hin, wo gehst du hin?

F# dim.7 D7 G minor G7 C minor E-flat major E-flat major Da Capo.

This is the third stanza of 9 in the 1582 chorale "Herr Jesu Christ, ich weiß gar wohl!" by Bartholomäus Ringwald (1530–1598).

Alfred Dürr writes, "The hymn melody, sung in unadorned long notes by the soprano, is surrounded by a vigorous unison of violins and violas. The whole movement thereby acquires a somewhat severe quality in accordance with the character of the text." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, p. 317.

Choral I. (Mel.: Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut.)

166/3.

(Moderato. ♩ = 80.)

• Prayer to keep resolve firm until I reach heaven (166/3).



Figura corta, here a repeated figure of emphatic resolve (see note for more).

Canonic bass line is likewise a figure of resolve.

A purposeful headmotive, imitated by the continuo, which then continues with treading 8th notes, underscores the steadfast and consistent resolve of the text.

Soprano. The word change more immediately identifies the speaker with the previous movement.

Original chorale words: *Ich bit - te dich, Herr Je - su*
So bitt ich dich. I ask of-thee, Lord Jesus

For biblical background, see note.

Christ, Christ,

Flights of notes in the string obbligato possibly represents the bird leaving its nest, as referenced in the chorale text.

halt' hold

mich bei den Ge - dan -
me to these thoughts

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

17

ken

mf

C minor C major F minor G7 C minor

19^{II}

und lass mich ja zu
and let me indeed at

p

C minor C minor C minor C minor

23

kei - no - ner Frist
no time

mf

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

The text is reminiscent of biblical passages such as
Hebrews 10:23. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (Luther 1545: wanken), for he who promised is faithful.
Hebrews 3:14. We share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end.
Matthew 24:13. But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved (German 1545: Wer aber beharret bis ans Ende, der wird selig).

26^{II}

von die - ser Mei - nung
from this intention

p

F minor G7 C minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

29

wan - - - ken,
waver,

mf

C minor C(7)

33

~~(dass)~~
son
rather

p

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

38

ieh - - - da - - - bei - - - be - - - ste -
dern da in-it bei ver persist har

(G7) C minor C minor

3811

hen - - - bleib,)
ren fest,
firmly,

C minor F minor F7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

41

bis until dass - die (my)

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

44

Seel' soul aus out-of ih - its - rem Nest nest

G minor G minor

47

wird will

G minor F7 B-flat major G major

50

in into den Him - heaven - - mel

C minor F minor C minor C7 G7 C minor

Changing the text from "go to heaven" to "come to heaven" has the effect of emphasizing arrival.

53

Original chorale words: fahren

kom - come. - - - men.

G7 C minor B-flat 7 E-flat major

mf

56

C major F minor G7 C minor C minor

Secco

•Worldly pleasures & life itself can vanish quickly (166/4).

Recitativo.

166/4. 1. Basso.

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 11 mm.

The text is reminiscent of various biblical passages (see note on biblical background).

Bass is often the voice of authority.

Gleich.wie die Re-gen - was - ser bald ver - fließen und manche

Just-as the rain-waters soon subside and (many)

Secco

Text painting: Quick descending scale for the rainwaters subsiding.

D major D7 G minor B

3

Far-ben leicht verschies-sen, so geht es auch der Freu - de in der

colors easily fade, so is it too (with the joy (of) the

Text painting: Quick rising melisma for "Freude" leading to a dissonant chord depicts the unstable foundation of earthly joy.

B-flat major B dim.7 G7 C minor F# dim.7

511

Welt, auf wel-che man-cher Mensch so vie-le Stücken hält; denn ob man

world, of which many-a person so (high-an-opinion) holds; for though one

D7 G minor G minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

8

gleich zu wei len sieht, dass sein ge wünschtes Glück ke blüht, so kann doch

occasionally sees, that his wished-for fortune blooms, yet can nevertheless

B-flat major C7 F major

[Arioso]

10

wohl in be sten Ta gen ganz unvermuth die letz te Stunde schlagen.

indeed in (the) best-of days quite unexpectedly the final hour strike.

Text painting: Bass creeps up chromatically to an unexpected C# dim.7 chord.

Sudden rhythmic regularity and movement to unfamiliar tonal areas underscore the suddenness and inexorability of the fixed hour of death.

F7 D7 G minor C# dim.7 D minor N6 G minor D minor D minor

[Arioso]

Alfred Dürr writes, "The aria, whose dance character is unmistakable, [Meredith and Little do not list it as a dance] doubtless portrays in its shaking figures the laughter of good fortune, which is also to be heard in the long coloraturas and trills of the voice. With the typical indifference of the baroque musician, Bach here takes advantage of all possibilities for pictorial representation of the 'affects,' even though they are contradicted or dismissed by the text. A broad contrast is thereby achieved between the opening movements and the second half of the work: their opposing affects correspond with the textual opposition between heaven and earth." See The Cantatas of J. S. Bach, revised and translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 317.

Aria. 166/5. (Allegro moderato ♩ = 80.) • Worldly good fortune can change before nightfall (166/5).

Ob/Vln I

1.

mf Ritornello

Faux bourdon for sweetness.

L. H.

5.

B-flat major C7 F major

In a dance-like lilt in triple meter, Bach depicts the (frivolous?) laughter of the world's joys with "giggling" 16ths in both ritornello and singer's melismas.

The singer combines a kind of patter diction with giggling melismas.

F(7) The continuo's bass transitional line transition becomes the alto's laugh figure in m. 12.

9

Alto.

(Mensch, nimm dich wohl in Acht,) (schon das Glück dir)

Man neh-me sich in Acht, wenn das Ge-lük-ke

(Let) everyone heed, when (good) fortune

sempre L. H.

B-flat major B-flat major

For biblical background, see note.

12

lacht, laughs, Giggling melismas (caricature of worldly laughter).

C7

15

(schon das Glück dir) wenn das Ge - lük - ke lacht, (Mensch, nimm dich wohl in man neh - me sich in

F major F(7) B-flat major

18

Acht,) Acht, (schon das Glück dir) wenn das Ge - lük - ke lacht,

A-flat major E-flat major C minor (F7)

21

(Mensch, nimm dich wohl in Acht,) man neh - me sich in Acht,

B-flat major B-flat 7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

24

(Mensch, nimm dich wohl in Acht,) (schon das Glück dir)
man neh - me sich in Acht, wenn das Ge - lük - ke

E-flat major C7 F major

27

lacht,

B-flat major B-flat major

30

C7

All instruments join the singer's laughter in unison.
F major

33

(schon das Glück dir)
wenn das Ge - lük - ke lacht.

Up 8va

Continuo continues unison with singer.
B-flat major

mf Ritornello

B-flat major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

36

L. H.

B-flat major

39

42

The B section alludes to Sirach (Apocrypha) 18:26: From morning to evening conditions change, and all things move swiftly before the Lord (see note for more). Bach illustrates this idea with unexpected harmonic progressions.

B Section.

Denn es kann leicht auf Er - den

For (things) can easily on earth den

Each warning is met with laughter by the instruments.

Continuo plays laughter figure as transition.

B-flat major G minor G minor F7 B-flat major

45

vor A - bend an - ders wer - den, denn es kann leicht auf

before evening (quite) different become, den, denn es kann leicht auf

G major C minor C minor

48

Oboe tacet

Er - den vor A - bend an - ders wer - den,

The oboe drops out for only these 4 measures (otherwise it doubles Vln I). Its silence weakens the laughter of the instruments.

D7 G minor (A major) D minor A7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 166

51

als man am Morgen nicht ge-dacht, als man am Mor-gen nicht ge-

than one in-the-morning - had-thought.

(sich) (sich)

B-flat major G minor D minor E7 A minor

54

dacht, denn es kann leicht auf

+Oboe

The repetition is more intense, with surprising harmonic progressions.

A minor G7 A7 D minor

57

Er - den vor A-bend an - ders wer - den, als man am

D minor F# dim.7 D7 G minor G minor

60

Mor-gen nicht ge-dacht, als man am Mor-gen nicht ge - dacht.

(sich) (sich)

Harmony goes in an unexpected direction.

F major C7 F minor (G7) C minor C minor Da Capo.

This is the first stanza of the 1686 chorale by Ämilie Juliane, Countess of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt (1637–1706), see note. Alfred Dürr writes, "After [the] dance-like aria, the solemnity of the concluding chorale, with its prayer 'Just make my end be good' is all the more striking." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, p. 317. Bach sets the chorale very simply. The tune was one of Bach's favorites (see note).

Choral. (Mel.: „Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten“.)

(6) **Soprano.** (See also 27/1.) • Death comes at any time, only God knows how soon (166/6).

+Ob Wer weiss, wie na - he mir mein En - de, hin geht die Zeit, her kommt der Tod.
Vln I Ach, wie geschwinde und be - hen - de kann kommen mei - ne To - des - noth!

Alto.
+Vln II Wer weiss, wie na - he mir mein En - de, hin geht die Zeit, her kommt der Tod.
 Ach, wie geschwinde und be - hen - de kann kommen mei - ne To - des - noth!

Tenore.
+Vla Wer weiss, wie na - he mir mein En - de, hin geht die Zeit, her kommt der Tod.
 Ach, wie geschwinde und be - hen - de kann kommen mei - ne To - des - noth!

Basso.
 Wer weiss, wie na - he mir mein En - de, hin geht die Zeit, her kommt der Tod.
 Ach, wie geschwinde und be - hen - de kann kommen mei - ne To - des - noth!

G minor D minor F7 B-flat major D major G minor
 D major

Bach sets the text in utmost simplicity. For example, there are almost no passing tones until the tenor moves to the major modenat the final cadence.

For biblical background, see note.

11

Mein Gott, ich bitt' durch Chri - sti Blut: mach's nur mit mei - nem En - de gut!

Mein Gott, ich bitt' durch Chri - sti Blut: mach's nur mit mei - nem En - de gut!

Mein Gott, ich bitt' durch Chri - sti Blut: mach's nur mit mei - nem En - de gut!

Mein Gott, ich bitt' durch Chri - sti Blut: mach's nur mit mei - nem En - de gut!

F major G minor B-flat major (D7) G minor G major