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NBA I/19; BC A116

9. S. after Trinity (BWV 105, 94, 168)

*1 Corinthians 10:6–13 (Consider and avoid the sins of the Israelites in the wilderness)

*Luke 16:1–9 (Parable of the dishonest steward)

Librettist: Salomon Franck (see note)

FP: 29 July 1725 (Leipzig: St. Thomas). This cantata is the first surviving work from Bach's third cycle (see notes). No Bach cantatas from the previous 8 weeks survive (between BWV 176 and BWV 168).

Instrumentation:

Ob d'amore I, II

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo

Ritornello (the triplets are later associated with "Donnerwort," the thunderous word to give account).

The modest scale of this cantata may be due to the pressure of writing the looming large-scale cantata BWV 205 (see note).

The libretto follows Jesus' parable in the Gospel reading closely, beginning with the rich man's command to his steward, "Give account!" (see note) in a dramatic aria.

Stark Cantata About Final Accounting.

Alfred Dürr writes, "In the course of the [opening] movement, the continuo triplets prove to be the true thematic kernel: they are heard on unison strings at the end of the ritornello; they are taken up by the voice in the form of a coloratura on 'Donnerwort' ('thunder-word'); and they often occur elsewhere in the continuo part without their choral superstructure. In the principal section, Bach constructs large expanses of the voice part by means of vocal insertion within partial restatements of the ritornello. The middle section, accompanied only by continuo, is more freely structured, but the almost incessant triplet figuration of the continuo links it with the thematic substance of the ritornello. The movement concludes with an abridged da capo." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 476.

Cantata No. 168

Tue Rechnung! Donnerwort

Aria. • Luke 16:2. Stewardship: Frightening command to give account (168/1).

168/1. (Maestoso $\text{♩} = 100$.)

1. No oboes

Strings

B minor (Constant alternation of tonic and dominant...)

As revealed by the vocal entry, the rumbling triplets are associated with "Donnerwort" ("thunderous word"), while the dotted figures provide a shaking response to its substance: "Tue Rechnung" ("give account"). The text is reminiscent of John 12: 28–29: "A voice came from heaven... The crowd standing by heard it and said that it had thundered." The shaking motive is presented sequentially 3 times (each time down a step).

2

E7 A major A7 D major 7

Form (Rhyme: ABBACCA)
Ritornello (mm. 1–8, ending unison) Bm
Lines 1–2 (9–21) Bm-AM
Lines 3–4 (21–26) AM-F#m
Rit unison (26) F#m
Lines 5–6 (27–38) Bm-Bm
Line 7(=1) (39–43) Bm
Ritornello (dal segno) Bm

3II

E minor 6 F# minor 7

5

F#7 B minor

6II

B minor B minor

8 **Basso.** Lines 1-2.

Bass is usually the voice of authority. Here the command to give account is heard as the vox Dei, represented by the rich man in Jesus' parable. The entry is preceded by unison rumbling of thunder (cf. m. 26).

Thu - e Rech - nung! thu - e

Voice and continuo alone...

B minor B minor B minor

Text painting: The 2 themes are split so that they do not synchronize, perhaps illustrating the text's reference to the thunderous voice splitting the rocks. See notes by Julian Mincham at <https://www.jsbachcantatas.com/documents/chapter-2-bwv-168-l/>, accessed 20 April 2024.

9 II

Rech - nung! thu - e Rech - nung! Don -

For biblical background, see note.



11

- nerwort, Don - - nerwort, Don -

E7 A major A7 D major 7

12 II

- nerwort, das die Fel - sen selbst zer -

Violin takes up the triplets...

F#7

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14

spal - tet, thu_e Rech - nung! Don -

B minor

15II

- nerwort, thu_e Rech - nung! Don - - nerwort, thu_e

mf *p* *mf*

E7 A major D7

17

Rech - nung! Don - - nerwort, Don -

p *mf* *p*

A# dim.7 F#7 B minor A7

18II

- nerwort, das die Felsen selbst zerspal -

p

D major B7 E major C#7 F# minor

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20 Lines 3-4.

- tet, das die Felsen selbst zer-spal - tet, Wort,

B7 E major E7 A major 7

21 ^{ff} Text painting: "Blood running cold" is represented by a chromatic twist followed by a low static note.

wovon mein Blut er - kal -

Vln I

C#7

23 Dramatic pause.

- tet, thu - e Rechnung! See - le, fort, See - le,

E# dim.7 F# minor F# minor E7 A7 D major F#7

24 ^{ff}

fort, thu - e Rech - nung! fort, fort, See - - - le,

B minor C#7 F# minor F# minor

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Middle Section (Lines 5-6) is characterized by lyrical vocal line accompanied by the threatening continuo bass.

26

fort! The instruments play ritornello theme beginning in unison, emphasizing the threat and finality of judgment. Ach, ach, du

Ritornello begins unison.

p

F# minor B(7)

27II

musst Gott wieder - ge - ben sei - ne Gü - ter, Leib und

E minor A7 D major

29

Le - ben, du' musst Gott wie - der - ge - ben sei - ne

D major D major D7

30II

Gü - ter, Leib und Le - ben, ach, du musst Gott wie - der -

G major G major B7

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32

ge - ben - sei - ne Gü - ter, Leib und Le - ben. Thu - e

E minor E minor E minor

33II

Rech - nung! thu - e Rech - nung!

E minor A7 D major D7

35

thu - e Rech - nung! Don - ner - wort, ach, du

Voice and continuo alone...

G major 7 B7

36II

musst Gott wie - der - ge - ben sei - ne Gü - ter, Leib und

E minor F#7 B minor B7 E minor

38

Le - ben, thu - e Rech - nung! thu - e Rech - nung! Don -

mf *p*

F#7 B minor B minor

39II

- nerwort, Don -

B minor E7 A major A7

41

- nerwort, Don - - nerwort, thu - e

D major 7

42II

Rech - nung! Donner - wort!

f Ritornello

F#7 B minor B minor

Dal Segno.

The recitative explores the theme of the Gospel reading with references to Luke 16:1–2 [Jesus]: "...There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. And he called him and said to him, "What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account (Luther 1545: "tu Rechnung") of your stewardship (Luther 1545: "Haushalten")..."

168/2. **Recitativo.** • Stewardship: Everything is a divine gift; unfaithfulness brings fear of judgment (168/2).

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 12 mm.

The sustaining oboes d'amore suggest weeping, reminiscent of Jesus' words as he was led to the cross, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.'" (See Luke 23:28–30, to which mm. 16–22 allude).

1. **Tei** **C#** **re.** **A** **D#** **E** **F#** **B#** **G#**

Self-Address

Oboe d'amore I, II

Es ist nur frem-des Gut, was ich in die-sem Le-ben
It is but third-party property, whatever I in this life

"Fremdes Gut" could literally be translated "foreign property," hence Bach's "foreign" chord.

F# minor B# dim.7 G# major

3 **A#** **B**

ha-be; Geist, Le-ben, Muth und Blut und Amt und Stand ist meines Got-tes
have; spirit, life, courage and blood, and office and station is my God's

C# minor F#7

For more biblical background, see note.

6 **B** **B7** **E**

Ga-be; es ist mir zum Ver-wal-ten und treu-lich da-mit Haus zu
gift; it is to-me for administration and faithfully therewith to-administer

B major B7 E major

8 **D** **G**

halten von hohen Hnden anver-traut. Ach, aber ach! mir graut, wenn ich in mein Ge-wissen
by lofty hands entrusted. Ah, but ah, I dread, when I into my conscience

E7 A major A# dim.7 E# dim.7 C#7

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11

ge-he und mei-ne Rechnungen so voll De-fek-te se-he: ich ha-be Tag und
 delve and my accounts so full-of defects see; I have day and

(von Lük-ken)

F# minor N6 G# dim.7 A minor

13II

Nacht die Gü-ter, die mir Gott ver-lie-hen, kalt - sin-nig durch-gebracht!
 night, the possessions, which to-me God has-lent, indifferently squandered!

The oboes d'amore play sighing duples to express the lament of the text.

C# dim.7 D minor N6 D minor

The change in address from self-exhortation to prayer is signaled with a change to major.

16.

Wie kann ich dir, ge-rechter Gott ent-fliehen? Ich ru-fe fle-hent-
 (How can I from-thee, righteous God, escape? I call imploringly,

Prayer

D minor D major D7 B7 G# dim.7

Allusion to Psalm 139:7: [O Lord,] whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

18II

lich: ihr Ber-ge, fallt. ihr Hü-gel, dek-ke-t mich vor Got-tes Zorn-ge-
 Ye mountains, fall, ye hills, cover me from God's wrathful

Arioso conclusion...

Descending arpeggios to depict collapsing mountains sought for refuge, as referenced in the text.

A minor A7 A# dim.7 F#7 B7

Compare the closing aria of St. John Passion, part 1 ("Ach mein Sinn"), where the remorseful singer similarly wishes for the mountains to cover him (see mm. 50–59). For biblical origins, see note.

21

rich-te und vor dem Blitz von sei-nem An-ge-sich-te.
 judgment and from the lightning of his countenance.

Ascending & descending/jagged arpeggios to depict the flashing lightning of God's wrath referenced in the text.

C#7 F# minor C# minor G#7 C# minor

In his aria, the tenor insists that all indebtedness must one day be accounted for (unlike the debts administered by the manipulating steward in the Gospel reading). The text employs financial terms: "Kapital" (principal), "Interessen" ("interest"), and "Schulden" ("debts").

Aria.

168/3. (M) Ob d'amore I, II unison

•Stewardship: All my debts are engraved in God's book (168/3).

The ritornello is related to the vocal opening. The leap illustrates the extent of the debt while 16th-note figures suggest an accountant scribbling meticulously (see more at mm. 77–86). The triple meter and periodic structure suggest a dance, as if the accountant is gleeful.

Ritornello

mf

F# minor E7 A major C#(7)

For biblical background, see note.



6

hemiola

F# minor iv6 Phrygian cadence V F# minor G#7

11

C# minor F#(7) B minor

16

B minor C#7 F# minor

20

F# minor hemiola F# minor

Tenore.

A wide-ranging opening motive illustrates the words "all debts" (e.g., mm. 77–86).

25

NBA: meine

(Al - le Schul - den, die ich ha - be, al - le) Ca - pi - tal und In - ter - es - sen mei - ner Schul - den

(E7) A major C#7

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31

gross und — klein müs-sen einst ver-rech-net-sein,

F# minor F# minor G#7 C# minor C# minor

hemiola

37

(al-le Schul-den, die ich ha-be, al-le Schul-den,
Ca-pi-tal und In-ter-es-sen, Ca-pi-tal und

F#7 B minor E major A major

43

die ich ha-be, al-le) In-ter-es-sen mei-ner Schul-den gross und klein

A major (B7) E major E major

hemiola

49

müs-sen einst ver-rech-net-sein.

G#7 C# minor C# minor

Motive ascending sequentially suggests growing tension/anxiety.

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54

G#7

60

G#7

G#7 C# minor

C# minor

Word painting: Wide-ranging melisma for "Alles" ("everything").

65

(Was Al - - - - - hier un - be -

les, was ich

p R.H.

E7

A major

71

zahlt ge - blie - ben,) ist in Got - tes Buch ge - schrie - ben

schul - dig blie - ben,

A# dim.7

F#7

B minor

A7

D major

Text painting: The indelible record (as if engraved with steel and diamond) is depicted with inflexible notes against "scribbling" eighth notes.

77

als mit Stahl und De - mant - stein,

hemiola

A# dim.7

F#7

B minor iv6

V

F#7

B major

B7

Phrygian cadence, often used for questions.

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83

als mit Stahl und De-mant.

E minor F#7 B minor

38

stein; (was hier un-be-zahlt ge-bie-ben,) Al-les, was ich schuldig blie-ben, ist in

B minor A7 D major F#7

94

Got-tes Buch ge-schrie-ben als mit Stahl und De-mant.

F#7 B minor B7 E minor C#7 F# major

100

stein.

Ritornello *mf* B7 E minor A7

B minor

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106

(Was hier Al - les,

hemiola

p

D major C#7 C#7 F# minor C#7
iv6 V Phrygian cadence

112

un - be - zahlt ge - blie - ben,) was - ich schul - dig blie - ben, ist in Got - tes Buch - ge -

F# minor B7 E minor F#7 B minor C#7 F# minor

118

schrie - ben als mit Stahl und De - mant - stein,

hemiola

F# minor

123

als mit Stahl und De - mant - stein.

hemiola

mf

F# minor F# minor F# minor

Dal Segno.

Recitativo. • Judgment not feared if Christ is guarantor of debts (168/4).

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 12 mm.

For biblical background, see note.



168/4. 1. **Basso** C# E F# D A C B G#

Jedoch, erschrocknes Herz, leb' und ver-za-ge nicht, tritt freudig vor Ge-
 Yet, frightened heart, live and despair not, step joyfully before-the

richt! und ü-ber-führt dich dein Ge-wis-sen, du wer-dest hier ver-stummen
 judgment! and if-convicts thee thy conscience, that-thou wilt here have-to fall-silent,

müs-sen, so schau' den Bür-gen an, der al-le Schul-den ab-ge-
 then behold thy guarantor, who all debts has-laid-aside,

than: es ist be-zahlt und völ-lig ab-ge-führt; was du, o Mensch, in
 it is paid-up and fully discharged, what thou, O man, in-(the)

(bis auf den letz-ten Rest;)
 (fully discharged, what thou, O man, in-(the))

F# major B minor (D7) B7 E major

A major A7 D major D7

B7 D# dim.7

E minor A# dim.7 B minor (C#7)

Possible intentional cross figure.

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11

Rechnung schuldig blieben, des Lammes Blut, o grosses Lieben! hat dei.ne Schuld durch.
 account indebted remained, the Lamb's blood, O great love, hath thy debt canceled.

F# minor G#7

13^{II}

stri.chen und dich mit Gott ver.gli.chen. Es ist be.zahlt, du bist quit.
 and thee with God reconciled. It is paid, thou art acquitted! (er -)

C# minor C# minor

16

löst.) tirt. In.dessen, weil du weisst, dass du Haushal.ter sei'st, so sei be.müht und un.ver.
 solves.) tirt. In.dessen, weil du weisst, dass du Haushal.ter sei'st, so sei be.müht und un.ver.

E major A major (D# dim,7)

19

gessen, den Mammon klüglich anzu.wenden, den Armen wohlzu.thun, so wirst du, wenn sich
 (this) mammon prudently to-employ, the poor to-do-good, thus wilt thou, when -

B7 E minor F# major A# dim.7 B minor

The text alludes to Jesus' parable in the Gospel reading (see note). Martin Petzoldt notes that the dishonest steward (who forgave others' debts) stands in contrast to the unforgiving servant of Matthew 18, (featured in the reading for the 22nd Sunday after Trinity). See Bach-Kommentar 1:214.

22

Zeit und Le.ben en.den, in Him.mels Hüt - ten si.cher ruh'n.
 time and life end, in heaven's tents securely rest.

D major D7 G major G7 C major G major G major

The singers' self-exhortation to "tear the chain of mammon" (i.e., to break free from the grip of one's wealth so that one can expect eternal reward) alludes to the Gospel reading and other biblical passages (see note). The chain is depicted musically with canonic construction between singers, its tearing by a quasi-ostinato bass line. Martin Petzoldt suggests that the canonic construction may suggest the invariable eternal consequence of generous stewardship. See *Bach-Kommentar* 1: 214.

Duetto. (Andante $\text{♩} = 104$.) • Stewardship: Wealth used to ensure heavenly treasure (168/5).
168/5.

Ritornello derived from vocal line.

Continuo alone, descending one octave with a series of 7-6 suspensions (realized here by the editor)...

For biblical background, see note.

E minor Quasi-ostinato bass that appears to depict the tearing/rattling of the chain referenced in the text.

Text painting: A jagged, slinging motive depicts "zerreiß" ("tear") followed by convoluted, interlocking vocal melismas and rattling ostinato bass for "Kette" ("chain").

Alto.

hemiola

Herz, zer-reiss'— des Mam-mons Ket-

Right hand editorial throughout...

E minor E minor

The ostinato appears in various keys/versions with chromatic inflection to reflect the changing sentiments of the text.

Soprano.

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (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.

Herz, zer-reiss'—

-te, Herz, zer-reiss'

E minor E minor A# dim. B minor

des Mam-mons Ket-

des Mammons Ket-

B minor B minor

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13

Chain of suspensions... hemiola

- te, Hän - de, streu - et -

- te, Hän - de, streu -

E minor G major G major G major

16

Gu - tes aus! For the reference to using wealth to sow good, the music modulates to G major. See note for significance.

et - Gu - tes aus!

G major G major

19

Ma - chet sanft mein

hemiola

G major G major G major D# dim.7

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22

Ma - chet sanft mein Ster - be - bet - te, mein

Ster - be - bet - te, mein Ster - be - bet - te, mein

E minor G# dim.7 A minor

25

Ster - be - bet - te, bau - et mir -

Word painting: Chromatically descending lines for "deathbed."

hemiola

Ster - be - bet - te, bau - et mir -

A minor G minor F major A7 D minor G# dim.7

28

— ein fe - stes Haus,

hemiola

— ein fe - stes Haus,

mf

E7 A minor

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31

das im Him - mel

hemiola

p

A minor A minor A minor G7 C major

Word painting: Sustained notes for "[ewig] bleibet" ([eternally] "remains") and continuo switches briefly to flowing 16ths.

34

e - wig, e - wig blei - - - - - bet,

das im Him - mel e - wig, e - wig

C major D7 G major G major A7 D major

37

das im Him - mel e - wig blei - bet, wenn der Er - den

blei - - - - - bet, e - - - - -

D major D7 G major

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Word painting: Convoluted melisma for "zerstäubet" ("turns to dust").

40

Gut zer - stäu -

- wig, das im Himmel e - - wig blei - bet,

G major G major B major

43

wenn der Er - den Gut zer - stäu -

E minor E minor

46

hemiola - bet, wenn, wenn der Er - den Gut zer - stäu - bet.

hemiola

- bet, wenn der Er - den Gut zer - stäu - bet.

E minor E minor E minor

49

hemiola

E minor E minor E minor

168/6. **Choral.** (Mel.: „Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut“.) (See also 113–8.) • Prayer: Strengthen, heal, wash me; take me home (168/6).

+Ob d'am I, II
Vln I

+Vln II

+Vla

For biblical
background,
see note.



9. B minor A# dim.7 B minor B minor A major D major B minor F# minor

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

E7 A7 B minor A7 D major F#7 B minor F#7 B major

22