

All newly composed texts (nos. 1–5) allude to the Gospel reading. With its emphasis on love for God and one's neighbor (expressed in ethical behavior), the cantata has been called pietistic. Noteworthy is the prominence of major keys. On Johann Mattheson's comments of major versus minor, see note.

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 185

Barmherziges Herze der ewigen Liebe

A Didactic Chamber Cantata
on Loving as God Does.

Thematic Material of no. 1

- 1a. Descending line in loure rhythm
 - 1b. Inversion
 2. Wave-like motion of 8ths (bass).
 3. Chorale tune (oboe/trumpet)
 4. "Errege" ("stir up") figure.
- Throughout the movement, the mirror principle is foundational.

185/1. **Duetto** • Prayer: O God of love, kindle a heart of love in me! (185/1).

Soprano

Tenore

Instrumentation:

Clarino (Leipzig version)

Oboe

Vln I, II

Via

SATB

Continuo

The entire
Instrumental
ensemble is
not heard
until no. 3.

Continuo alone plus oboe later on a
chorale tune that also ends the cantata.

The voice imitates the continuo's
opening, probably to suggest
the text's emphasis that God's
love should inspire a similar
reaction in his followers.

The lilting, loure rhythm pictorializes the
prayer to "stir up" love in the singer's heart,
while canonic structure reinforces the idea
that such love is in imitation of God's love. For
Johann Walter's definition of a loure, see note.

Theme 1a begins with
the opening interval of
the chorale tune.

The text alludes to Luke 6:36 (Gospel reading): Be merciful, even as your Father
is merciful. The duet structure and the forestatement by the continuo reflects the
text's emphasis that God's love should inspire a similar reaction in his followers.

(Lento) Editorial realization

F# minor in Chorton (For significance of F# minor,
see side note.)

F# minor

F# minor

Contrary motion captures the
heavenward and earthward
trajectories of the 2 corresponding
texts; their mirror relationship
suggesting the command to reflect
God's love by loving one's neighbor.

For biblical
background,
see note.

The continuo switches to a wave-like stream of 8th-notes (perhaps modelled after the circular figures in Bach's setting of the
same chorale in the *Orgelbüchlein* (BWV 639)—apparently a depiction of the eternal flames of divine love referenced in the text.

Instrumentally rendered chorale
(adapted to 6/4 meter) was given to clarino in the Leipzig version.

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

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10

barm-her-ziges Her-ze der

her-ziges Her-ze der e-wigen Lie-be, er-re-ge, be-we-gemein

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

13

e-wigen Lie-be, er-re-ge, be-we-gemein Her-ze durch dich, er-

Her-ze durch dich, er-re-ge, be-we-ge mein Her-ze durch dich, er- (Choral)

Ich

E(7) A major

16

re-ge, be-we-ge mein Her-ze durch dich, er-re-ge, be-we-gemein

re-ge, be-we-ge mein Her-ze durch dich, er-re-ge mein

bitt, er-hör mein Kla-gen,

A major C# major F# minor G#7 C# minor

19

Her-ze durch dich;

Her-ze durch dich; da-

C# major F# minor F# minor

Rhythmic motion for "er-ge" ("stir up"), "bewege" ("move").

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22

da - mit ich Er - bar - men und
mit ich Er - bar - men und Gü - tigkeit u - be, o - Flam - meder Lie - be, zer -

F# minor F# minor

25

Gü - tigkeit ü - be, o - Flam - meder Lie - be, zer - schmel - ze du mich, zer -
schmel - ze du mich, o Flamme der Liebe, zerschmelze du mich, zer -
ver - leih mir Gnad zu

F# minor F# minor

28

schmelze - du mich, da - mit ich Er - bar - men und Gü - tigkeit ü - be, o -
schmel - ze du mich, da -
die - ser Frist,

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

31

Flam - meder Lie - be, zer - schmel - ze du mich, o Flamme der Liebe, zer -
mit ich Er - bar - men und Gü - tigkeit ü - be, o Flam - meder Lie - be, zer -

B7 E major E(7) A major A major

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34

schmelze du mich, o Flamme der Lie-be, zer-schmelze du mich,
 schmel-ze du mich, o Flamme der Lie-be, zer-schmelze du-mich, o
 laß mich doch nicht ver-za-gen;

A major C#7

37

o Flamme, zer-schmel-ze du mich! Barm-her-zi-ges Her-ze-
 Flamme der Lie-be, zer-schmel-ze du mich! Barm-

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

40

der e-wi-gen Lie-be, er-re-ge, be-we-ge mein
 her-zi-ges Her-ze-der e-wi-gen Lie-be, er-re-ge, be-we-ge mein
 den rech-ten Weg, o

Parallel 3rds suggest the sweetness of God's eternal love, as referenced in the text.

E7 A major

43

Her-ze durch dich; da-mit ich Er-bar-men und
 Her-ze durch dich; da-mit ich Er-bar-men und Gü-tig-keit ü-be, da-
 Herr, ich mein,

A major B7 E major F#7 B minor B7

46 Chromaticism for "O flame of love, melt me."

Gü - tig - keit ü - be, und Gü - tig - keit ü - be, o Flam - meder Lie - be, zer -
mit ich Er - barmen und Gü - tig - keit ü - be, und Gü - tig - keit ü - be, zer -
den wol - lest du mir

E# dim.7 F# minor G#7 C# minor F#7 B minor N6

49
schmel - ze du mich, o Flam - me - der Lie - be, o Flamme der Lie - be, zer -
ge - ben, o Flamme der Lie - be, o Flamme der Lie - be, zer - schmel -
Loure-like rhythm. See Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, expanded ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 258, 303.

C# major E major

52
schmel - ze, zer - schmelze - du mich, o Flam - me, zer -
ze, zer - schmel - ze - du mich, o Flam - me der Lie - be, zer -
dir zu

A major F#7 (B minor) C#7 F# minor B7 C major

55
schmel - ze du mich! Barm -
schmel - ze du mich! Barm - her - ziges Her - ze der e - wigen Lie - be, er -
le - ben,

E major E major E7 A major

Here the theme is inverted (i.e., it is the mirror image).

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58

her - zi-ges Her - zeder e - wi-gen Lie-be, barm - her - ziges Her - zeder
 re - ge, be-we-ge mein Her-ze durch dich, er - re - ge, be-we-ge mein
 mein'm Näch - sten nütz zu

A major

61

e - wigen Lie-be, er - re - ge, be-we-ge mein Her - ze durch dich, er -
 Her - ze durch dich, barm - her - ziges Her - zeder e - wi - gen Lie - be,
 sein,

A major F#7

64

re - ge mein Her - ze durch dich, barm - her - zi-ges Her - ze,
 ...be - we - ge... durch dich, barm -

B minor E minor A7 D major A# dim.7 B minor

67

barm - her - zi-ges Her - zeder e - wigen Lie-be, er -
 her - zi-ges Her - ze, barm - her - ziges Her - ze der
 dein Wort zu hal - ten

The tenor begins with the mirror image before the soprano is finished.
 The imitation comes at ever closer intervals.

E# dim.7 F# minor E7 A major C#(7) F# minor

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70

re - ge, be - we - ge mein Her - ze, er - re - ge, be - we - ge mein Her - ze durch dich!
e - wigen Lie - be, er - re - ge, be - we - ge mein Her - ze durch dich!

F#7 B(7) E7 E# dim.7 F# minor F# minor

73



The ritornello reverses the order of the 2 lines (Th.1b, Th.1a).

F# minor F# minor F# minor

Warning: Show mercy so that you receive mercy (185/2).

Text painting: Jagged melody for "hearts turned hard as stone and rock," downwardly flowing melisma for "hearts that melt."

185/2. Recitativo Alto

Martin Petzoldt notes that in Bach's later works, the alto voice represents the voice of faith (personified as Mary in the Christmas Oratorio); at Pentecost, it can also represent the Holy Spirit. See Bach-Kommentar 1:97.

Ihr Herzen, die ihr euch in Stein und Fels verkehret, zer - fließt

pp "Halo" of Strings

A major A# dim.7 F7 B minor E# dim.7

The reference of hearts as hard as stone, appears to allude to Ezekiel 36:26 (see note).

4



und werdet weich; er - wägt, was euch der Heiland leh - ret, übt, übt Barmher - zig.

C#7 F# minor G#7

Recitatives from Bach's Weimar period often flow into arioso sections.

7 a tempo (♩ = 60) (Recit)

keit, und sucht noch auf der Er - den dem Va - ter gleich zu wer - den. Ach greifet

Vln I

Quasi-imitation by inversion in the strings reflect the text's reference to earthly emulation of God the Father, who is equal to the Son (represented by a chorale snippet).

Chorale citation: Herr Je - su Christ

C# minor F# minor G#7 C# minor C# minor A# dim.7

iv6 (Phrygian) V

10

nicht, durch das verbotne Richten, dem Allerhöchsten ins Ge-richt, sonst wird sein Eifer euch zer-

B7 E minor F#7 E# dim.7 C#7

13

Text painting: The line softens and moves to the major mode for the admonition to forgive.

nichten. Ver - gebt, so wird euch auch ver - geben; gebt, gebt in die-sem

F major B minor B7 E major E7

16

The text alludes also to Matthew 6:19-20 [Christ]: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Leben; macht euch ein Ca-pi - tal, das dort ein-mal Gott wiederzahlt mit reichen In-te -

B7

19

(Arioso ♩ = 66)

Text painting: The reference to Jesus' words in the Gospel reading (Luke 6:38, "For the measure you give will be the measure you get back") is depicted with imitation between singer and continuo, which is repeated in inversion.

ressen. Denn wie ihr messt, wird man euch wieder mes-

E major B7 E major

22

Repetition by inversion.

- sen, denn wie ihr messt, wird man euch wieder mes-

E major E major

Word painting: "Broadly encompassing melisma for "messen" ("to measure").

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25

- sen, wird man euch wie-der mes-sen.

E major

27

E major

E major

Aria • Sow plentifully in this age to gather a rich harvest (185/3).

A walking tempo and the sound of the oboe suggest a pastoral scene: the sower walks his field, shaking out the seed as he goes. The figura corta appears to represent the sower's shaking motions, and later his joy in the eternal harvest referenced in the text. See note for more.

85/3. Adagio (♩ = 58)

1. Ob/Vln I

Tutti

Ritornello derived from vocal line.

Figura corta (see note)

The entire instrumental ensemble is heard for the first time.

A major

Walking bass descends the full octave, depicting .

A major

3(34)

B7

E major

For biblical background, see note.

5(36)

E major

F#7

B minor

E7

A major

7(38)

A major

The text alludes to the Gospel reading. Luke 6:38: Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back. (Also Matthew 7:2.)

9(40) **Alto**

Sei — bemüht in — die — ser Zeit,

p *mf*

A major A major

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.

11

sei — bemüht in — die — ser Zeit, See — le, — reich — lich aus — zu —

p

A major A major B7

13

streu —

Text painting: A long "shaking" melisma depicts the scattering of seed, as referenced in the text.

Ob

E major E major

15

— en, reich — lich aus — — zu — streu — en,

Ob/Vln I

Tutti

mf

E major

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17

soll die Ern te dich er

P

E major E7 A major

19

Text painting: Energetic melisma for "to gladden."

freu en in der rei chen E wig

Ob/Vln I

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

21

Word painting: Sustained tone merging into a sequential coloratura for "eternity."

keit, in der rei chen E

Ob/Vln I

Tutti

F# minor

23

- wigkeit,

Ob/Vln I

Tutti

F# minor F# minor

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25

wo, wer Gu - tes aus - ge - sä - et, fröh - lich

p

B# dim.7 C# minor B7 E7 A major

27

nach den Gar - ben ge - het, wo, wer Gu - tes aus - ge - sä - et, fröh -

Ob

A major

29

lich nach den Garben ge - het, fröh - lich

Ob/Vln I

Tutti

A major

31

nach den Gar - ben. nach den Gar - ben ge - het.

Ob/Vln I

mf

A major

Dal Segno

Secco

Recitativo

185/4,

1. Basso

•Blindness to own faults; splinter in neighbor's eye (185/4).

The bass is often the voice of authority. Here the bass singer rebukes his listeners with various biblical allusions.

For biblical background, see note.



Die Ei-gen lie-be schmei-chelt sich. Be-stre-be dich, erst

Word painting: Embellishment on "schmeichelt" ("flatter/caress")

Secco

A major

A7

D major

E7

3

dei-nen Bal-ken aus-zu-zie-hen, dann magst du dich um Splitter auch be-

A# dim.7 F#7

5

mühen, die in des Nächsten Augen sein. Ist gleich dein Nächster nicht vollkommen

E# dim.7 F# major B minor C#7

8

rein, so wis-se, dass du auch kein En-gel. Ver-bess're dei-ne Mängel!

F# minor B7 E major G# major

11

Wie kann ein Blinder mit dem andern doch recht und richtig wandern? Wie, fallen

C# minor F#7 B minor E# dim.7 C# major F# major

The text alludes to the Gospel reading. Luke 6:39: [Jesus] also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?" (Also Matthew 15:14.)

14

sie zu ih-rem Lei-de nicht in die Gru-ben al-le bei-de?

A# dim.7 B minor E minor iv6 F# major V
(Phrygian cadence often used for questions)

Aria • Mark of Christian is non-judging generosity (185/5).

185/5. 1. **Vivace** (♩ = 86)

Ritornello derived from vocal line, treated as a quasi-ostinato.

Continuo only...

Form (Rhyme: AbbcddaA)
Ritornello (mm. 1-5) B minor
Lines 1+2-3+1 (5-12) B minor
Lines 1+ 4-5+1 (13-17) DM
Rit (18-21) DM-F#m
Lines 1+6-7+1 (22-26) DM-Em
Lines 1+2-7+1 (27-35) Em-F#m
Lines 8+1 (2x with repetitions: 36-43) Bm
Rit (43-47) Bm

Possible chorale citation

Bsn, Cello Violone Continuo B minor

Herr Je - su (Christ)

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.

Text painting: Descending continuo line depicts "falling into a ditch," as referenced in the text.

Form (Rhyme: AbbcddaA)
Ritornello (mm. 1-5) B minor
Lines 1+2-3+1 (5-12) B minor
Lines 1+ 4-5+1 (13-17) DM
Rit (18-21) DM-F#m
Lines 1+6-7+1 (22-26) DM-Em
Lines 1+2-7+1 (27-35) Em-F#m
Lines 8+1 (2x with repetitions: 36-43) Bm
Rit (43-47) Bm

Note: In the Leipzig version, the bass line is doubled by the strings one octave above.

There are 2 musical ideas:
A) 5-note motto: "Mark of a Christian"
B) 4-mm. striding line: Elucidations
Imitation between singer and continuo depicts the relationship between Jesus and his followers (imitatio Christi).

4 **Basso**

Motto

The bass is often the voice of authority. Here he instructs in emphatic rhythms.

Lines 1+2-3+1.

Das ist der Chri-sten Kunst,

Patter diction suggests the operatic style.

For biblical background, see note.

F#7 B minor B minor GM A7 DM Bm F#7 B minor

The continuo begins with the motto but continues with the second line.

7

Unity is achieved with the motto appearing at the beginning and end of each couplet (the "mark of the Christian").

das ist der Chri - sten Kunst: nur Gott und sich er -

Canon between continuo and singer depicts the *imitatio Christi*.

B minor B7

9ii

ken - nen, - von wahrer Lie-be bren-nen: - das ist, das ist der Christen

Motto inverted

E minor F#7 B minor A7 D major

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12

Lines 1+4-5+1.

Kunst. Das ist der Chri - sten Kunst: nicht un - zu - lās - sig

mf *p*

D major E7 A(7) D major D7

15

richten, noch fremdes Thun ver - nichten: das ist das ist der Christen Kunst.

mf

G major C#7 F# minor F# minor

18

Ritornello

F#7 B minor C#7 F# minor

21

Lines 1+6-7+1.

Das ist der Chri - sten Kunst: des Nächsten nicht ver -

p

F# minor A major D major

23II

ges - sen, - mit rei - chem Ma - sse mes - sen: - das ist, das ist der Christen

tr

B7 E minor

26

Lines 1+2-7+1 (previous lines are recapitulated).

Kunst. Das ist der Chri - sten

mf *p* *D7*

E minor E minor

28

Kunst: nur Gott und sich er - ken - nen, — von wah - rer Lie - be

G major

30

bren - nen, — nicht un - zu - läss - ig rich - ten, — noch frem - des Thun ver -

E minor F# major B minor

32

nich - ten, — des Näch - sten nicht ver - ges - sen, — mit rei - chem Ma - sse

B minor

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Lines 8+1 (2x with repetitions).

34

mes. sen: das ist der Christen Kunst, der Christen Kunst, das

B minor B minor

mf

36II

macht bei Gott und Menschen Gunst, das macht bei Gott und Menschen Gunst, das ist, das ist der

B minor A7 D major

p

39

Christen Kunst, das ist der Christen Kunst, das macht bei Gott und Menschen Gunst, das

F#(7) B minor B7 E minor F#(7)

41II

macht bei Gott und Menschen Gunst, das ist der Christen Kunst.

Ritornello B minor B minor

mf

44

B7 Em F#7 B minor B minor

185/6. Choral (Mel.: „Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ“)

(5) Soprano 1.

The chorale serves as catechismal response. Martin Petzoldt notes that it does not refer specifically to the Gospel reading yet summarizes the literary thread. See Bach-Kommentar 1:98.

+Bsn
 Cello
 Violone
 Continuo

For biblical background, see note.

+Ob Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Je - su - Christ, ich bitt': er - hör' mein Kla - gen, }
 ver - leih' mir Gnad' zu - die - ser - Frist, lass mich doch nicht ver - za - gen; }

Alto
 +Vln II Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Je - su Christ, ich bitt': er - hör' mein Kla - gen, }
 ver - leih' mir Gnad' zu - die - ser - Frist, lass mich doch nicht ver - za - gen; }

Tenore
 +Vla Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Je - su Christ, ich bitt': er - hör' mein Kla - gen, }
 ver - leih' mir Gnad' zu - die - ser - Frist, lass mich doch nicht ver - za - gen; }

Basso
 Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Je - su Christ, ich bitt': er - hör' mein Kla - gen, }
 ver - leih' mir Gnad' zu - die - ser - Frist, lass mich doch nicht ver - za - gen; }

Descant: Vln I

F# minor

F# minor E7 A major

F#7 B minor

F# minor

9. den rech - ten Weg, o - Herr, ich mein', den wol - lest du mir ge - ben, dir zu
 den rech - ten Weg, o - Herr, ich mein', den wol - lest du mir ge - ben, dir zu
 den rech - ten Weg, o - Herr, ich mein', den wol - lest du mir ge - ben, dir zu
 den rech - ten Weg, o - Herr, ich mein', den wol - lest du mir ge - ben, dir zu

A major

A major

F# minor

F#m B7 EM

13 le - - ben, mein'm Nächsten nütz zu sein, dein Wort zu hal - ten e - - ben.
 le - - ben, mein'm Nächsten nütz zu sein, dein Wort zu hal - ten e - - ben.
 le - - ben, mein'm Nächsten nütz zu sein, dein Wort zu hal - ten e - - ben.
 le - - ben, mein'm Nächsten nütz zu sein, dein Wort zu hal - ten e - - ben.

E major E7 A major

A# dim.7

B minor

A major

C#7 F# minor

F# major

A surprising cadential diminished 7th chord suggests that serving one's neighbor is not assured.