Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com. NBA I/14; BC A86

2. Day of Pentecost (BWV 173, 68, 174)

*Acts 10:42-48 (The Holy Spirit descends on the Gentiles at Cornelius's house while Peter preaches)

*John 3:16-21 (God sent his Son so that the world might be saved through him.)

Librettist: Christiane Mariane von Ziegler (Libretto modified). The libretto is one of 9 that Bach used at the end of his chorale cantata cycle (BWV 103, 108, 87, 128, 183, 74, 68, 175 and 176). Only BWV 128 & 68 open with a chorale-based chorus and were later kept in the chorale cantata cycle. For information on von Ziegler,

FP: 21 May 1725 (St. Thomas in the morning & St. Nicholas at afternoon Vespers)

Last changed: 2 December 2025. hurch Cantatas BWV 68 Form: Chorus/fantasia - Aria (S) - RECIT (B) - Aria (B) - Chorus.

The cantata centers on the B recitative. In succh chiastic forms, center movements (where the mirror image begins), antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text).

> For Alfred Dürr's comments regarding the cantata as a whole, see side note. Concerning the first movement, he writes, "In the large-scale opening chorus, Bach adopts the melody by Gottfried Vopelius (1682) that belongs to the hymn, stating it in the soprano (supported by horn) and reshaping it in a remarkably expressive manner, with the result that—particularly to the modern listener who no longer knows the original melody—it hardly seems like a chorale any more. The introduction and episodes for strings, supported by oboes, develop a theme in siciliano rhythm which is independent of the chorale; and even the lower vocal parts—chordal or lightly broken up into polyphony—are largely unrelated to the chorale melody. In this way a cheerfully relaxed and amiably buoyant movement (despite the minor miles in this way a cheerfully relaxed and amiably buoyant movement (despite the minor mode of the chorale melody) emerges that gives expression to our joy over the Pentecost miracle. As a chorale arrangement, it probably belongs among the freest that Bach ever J.S. Bachwrote." See "The Cantatas of J. S. Bach," revised and translated by Richard Jones, p. 361. The chorale stanza is the first of nine in a 1675 Cantata No. 68 Leipziger Gesangbuch" (1682).

Instrumentation: Corno, also Cornetto

Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt

•God sent his Son so all might have eternal life: John 3:16 (rhymed paraphrase & application) (68/1)

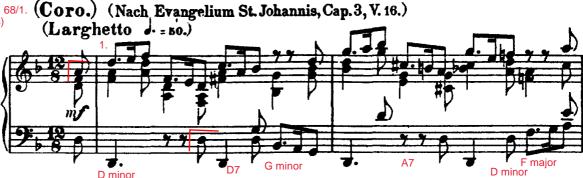
Cantata with Contrasting Moods, some borrowed material.

Oboe I, II Taille Vliolin I, II Viola Violoncello piccolo (see 2 notes) SATB Continuo, Organo

Trombone I, II, III

Pianoforte.

Martin Petzoldt arques that alterations to the text (here from Scripture and in 68/2 from von Ziegler's original words) give the cantata a more subjective cast. See "Bach-Kommentar" 2:1020, 1023.

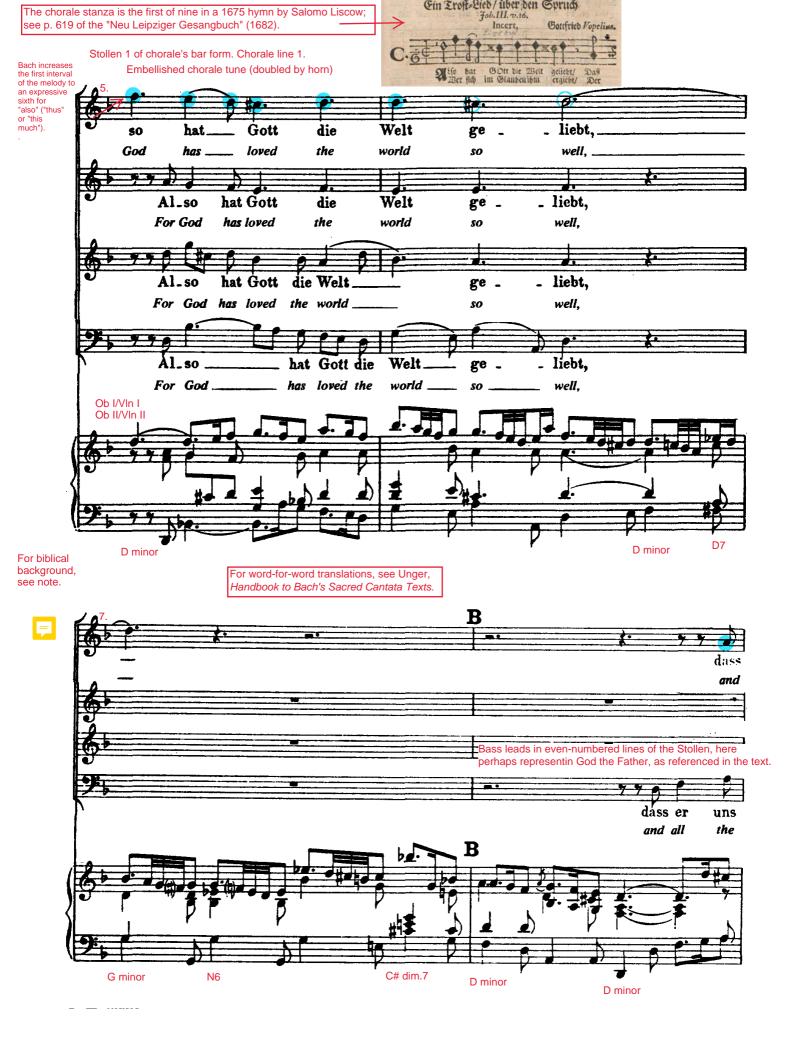


For the significance of D minor, see side note. The tonality and chromatic writing give the movement a bittersweet cast.



The instrumental introduction and interludes are thematically unrelated from the chorale tune. Most of the writing for the lower voices (which is homophonic or lightly imitative) is also unrelated. The siciliano rhythm, often associated with pastoral texts, links this movement to no. 4. While the opening chorus speaks of the Incarnation generally, no. 4 mentions Jesus' birth specifically (which naturally evokes images of shepherds).







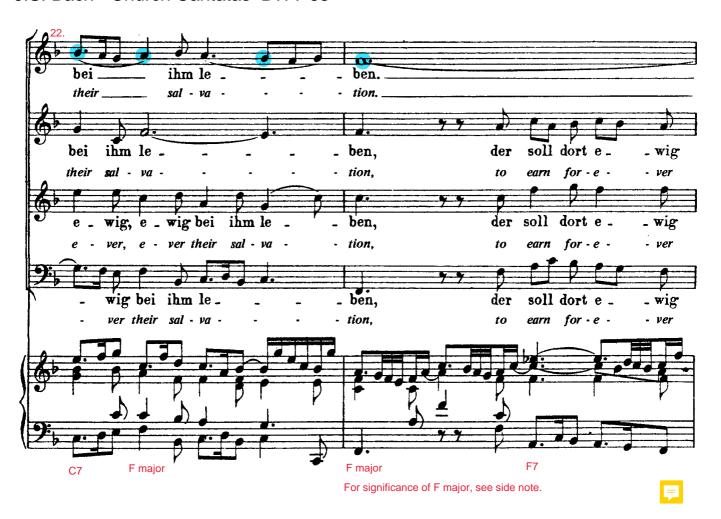
















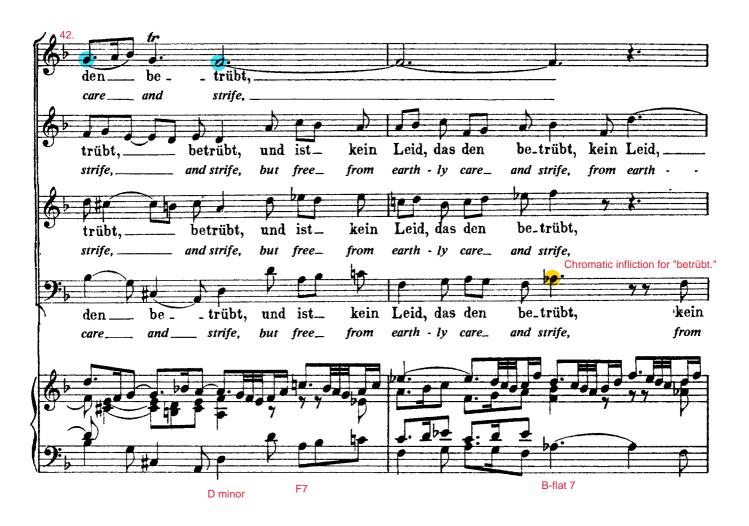






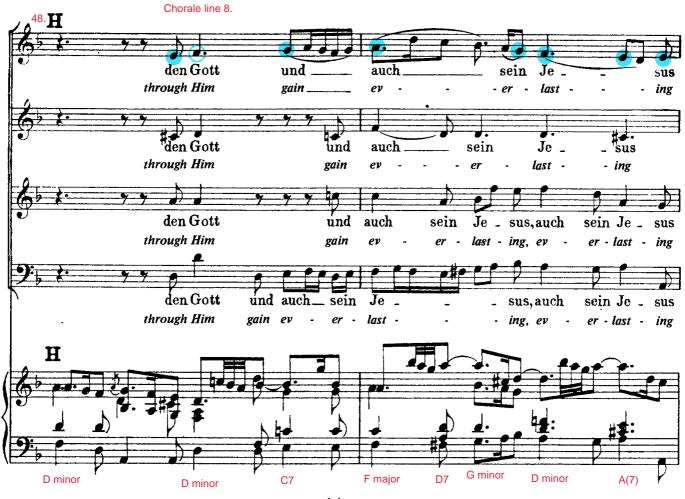








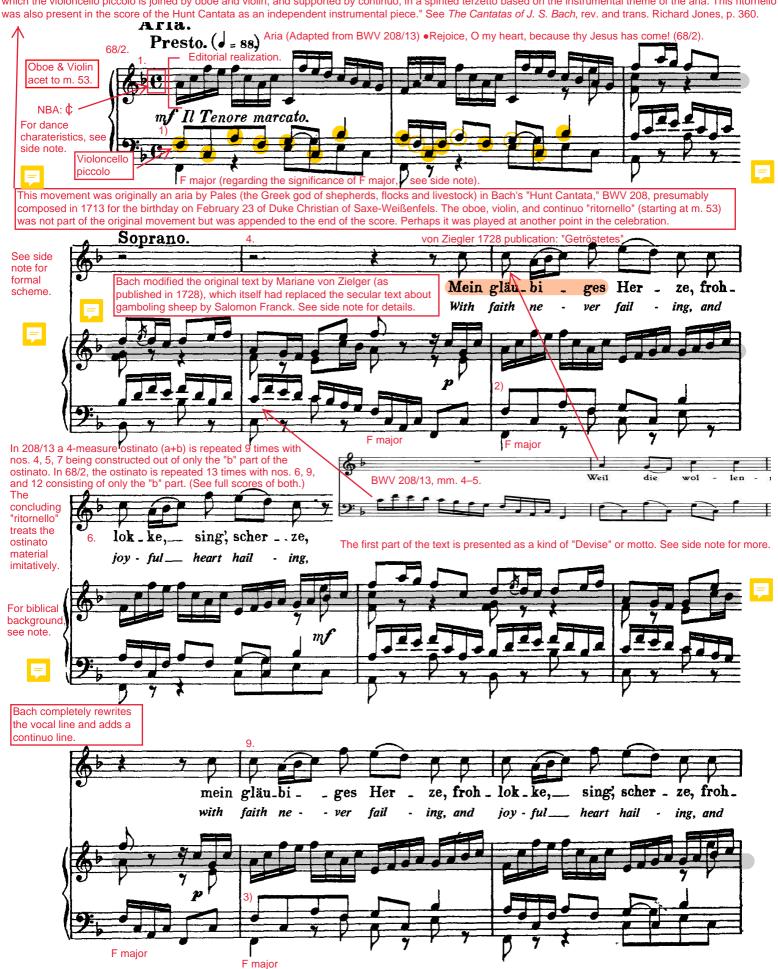








Concerning the adaptation of this aria, Alfred Dürr writes, "The ostinato theme, originally in the continuo, is now entrusted to the violoncello piccolo, and the continuo is given a new bass part made up largely of supporting notes. The most radically altered part, however, is that of the soprano: the original, simple song-like melody turns into an extremely lively part characterized by wide intervallic leaps and embellished by numerous small melismas. Finally, Bach appends to the aria a 'ritornello' which the violoncello piccolo is joined by oboe and violin, and supported by continuo, in a spirited terzetto based on the instrumental theme of the aria. This ritornello was also present in the score of the Hunt Cantata as an independent instrumental piece." See The Cantatas of U.S. Bach rev. and trans. Richard, longs, p. 360.





J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 68 Kla_ Jam - mer, weg Kla will_ euch nur sa _ gen: mein - gen,weg gen,ich sor -- row, out, trou - ble, out, sor row, e - nough_ for the mor - row: that B-flat major F major _ sus ist nah'; - sus is here; Jam - mer, weg Kla - gen, ich trou - ble, out, sor - row, e Je. weg will __ euch nur nough_ for the D minor D minor nah', gen: mein Je sus. ist nah. mein. Je_sus. mor - row: that Je - sus____ is here, that _____ Je · sus____ here. D minor D minor







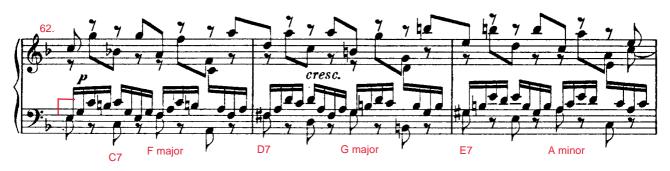
This movement was originally an aria by Pales (the Greek god of shepherds, flocks and livestock) in Bach's "Hunt Cantata," BWV 208, presumably composed in 1713 for the birthday on February 23 of Duke Christian of Saxe-Weißenfels. The "ritornello" starting here was not part of the original movement but was appended to the end of the score. Perhaps it was played at another point in the celebration. See Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, rev. and trans. Richard Jones, p. 804.

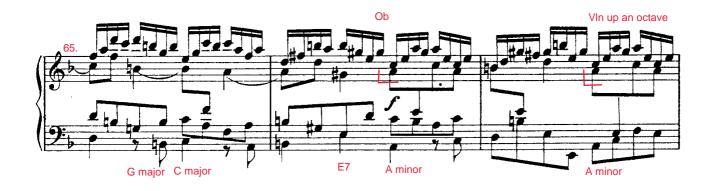


The reason for Bach's decision to append this imitative trio (with thematic material based on the original bass ostinato) may lie in the prescribed biblical readings for the day. The Gospel reading (God sent his Son to give eternal life to all who believe) is taken from the longer account of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, in which Jesus asserts that one must be born "of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). All three members of the Trinity are mentioned. Somewhat similarly, the Epistle of the day speaks of the interrelationship among God the Father, Son, and Spirit. Thus, the trio may represent the Trinity.

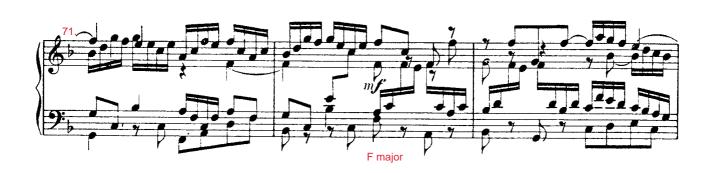














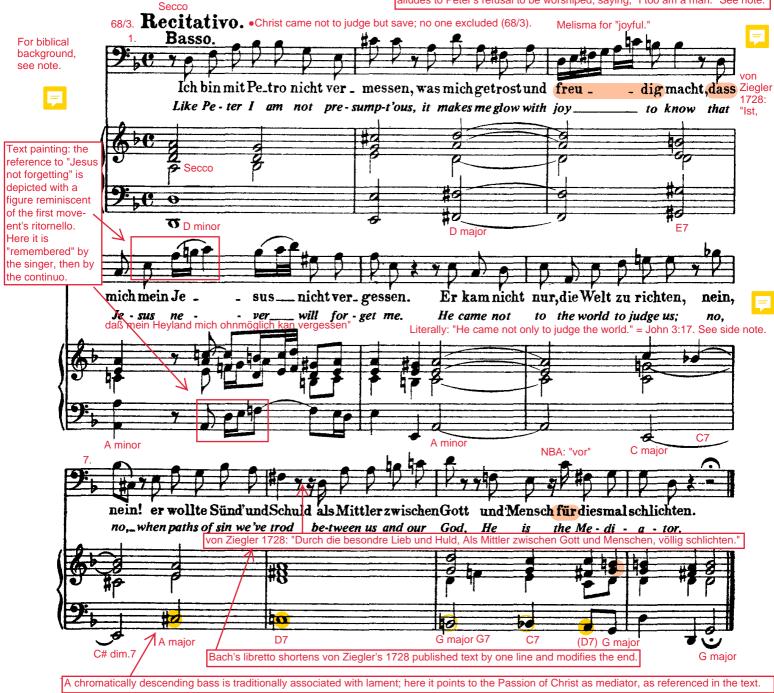


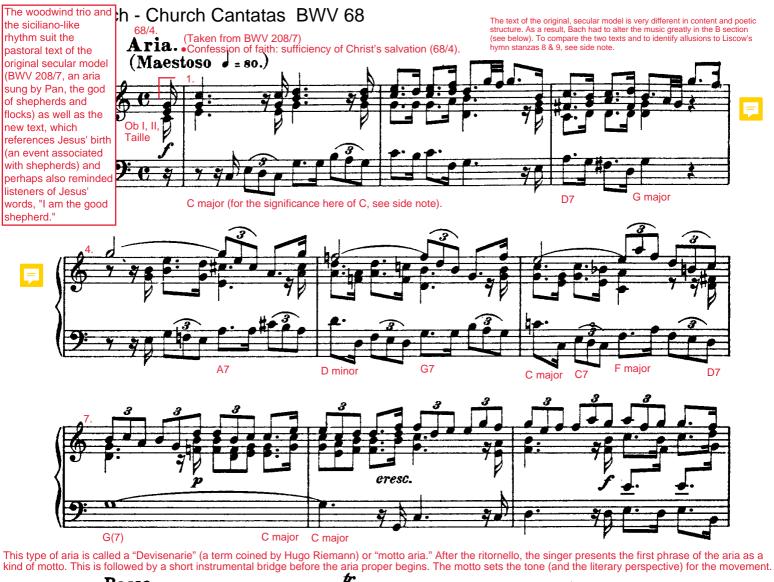
Martin Petzoldt notes that the third movement alludes to the seventh stanza of Liscow's hymn. See "Bach-Kommentar" 2:1020.

Liscow hymn, stanza 7: Erschrecket mich auch das Gericht. Vor welchen ich nicht kan bestehen, Weil mein Gewissen selber spricht: Ich soll hin zum Verdamten gehen. Doch wird mein Jesus mich nicht richten, Sein Blut wird meine Sünde schlichten. Und ist kein Leid, das mich betrübt, Den Gott und auch sein Jesus liebt ("Neu Leipziger Gesangbuch," 1682, p. 622.

Even if the judgment frightens me, Before which I cannot stand. Since my conscience itself says: I shall go to the condemned. Yet my Jesus will not judge me, His blood shall mediate my sin. And there is no sorrow that grieves me Whom God loves, and also his Jesus.

This is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's chiastic form, where antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). Divine judgment is averted through the mediation of Christ. The phrase "I am not presumptuous with Peter" may allude to Peter's predilection for presumptuous statements (see note). On the other hand, it could be understood to mean that Peter rejected presumptuousness, thus alluding to the day's Epistle, in which Peter realizes that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not for Jewish believers alone, a truth confirmed by the Spirit "falling on Peter's listeners." Some writers think the text alludes to Peter's refusal to be worshiped, saying, "I too am a man." See note.











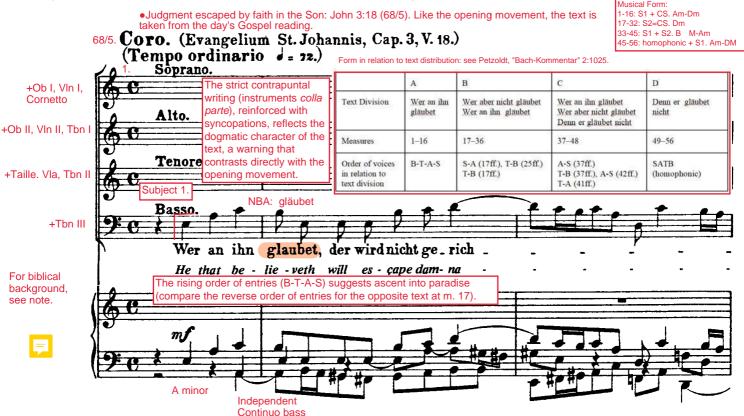








Alfred Dürr writes, "The work concludes with a motet-like chorus in which the voices are reinforced not only by the strings and oboes used beforehand but also by a choir of trombones, with the cornett as their treble instrument. It takes the form of a double fugue, opening with the first subject [S1] on 'Wer an ihn gläubet, der wird nicht gerichtet', after which, sixteen bars later, we hear the former countersubject [CS] as an independent second subject [S2] to the words 'wer aber nicht gläubet, der ist schon gerichtet'; the two subjects are then combined. Finally, in the last bars of the movement, the first subject is sung to a new text, 'denn er gläubet nicht an den Namen des eingebornen Sohnes Gottes'. Like many early cantatas or cantata movements by Bach, the chorus ends piano, according to Bach's explicit instruction." See "The Cantatas of J. S. Bach," revised and translated by Richard Jones, 361–62.













Countersubject becomes Subject 2 for the opposite sentiment, reflected in the reverse order of entries (S-A-T-B suggests descent into perdition).















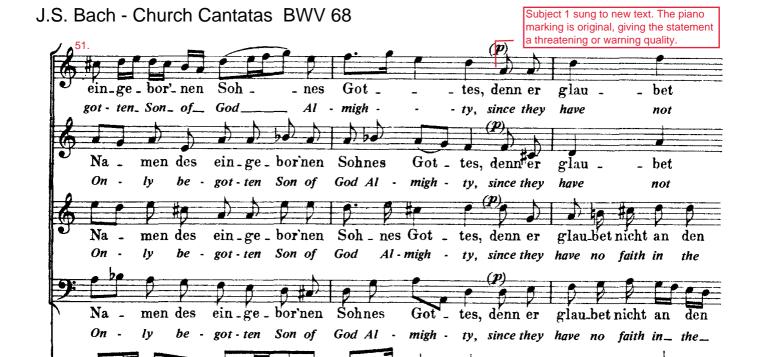












Helmuth Rilling notes, "In comparing the opening line of the soprano from the first movement with this final phrase, there are evident similarities. Bach the theologian says in his music that while the statement 'one who does not believe will be judged' is harsh, he reminds us that there remains the hope of the opening chorus 'God so loved the world.' See *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 3 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2001), p. 197.

D minor

A7

D minor

