

Form: Chorus/recit (T/B/S) - Aria (T) - Choral (B) - Choral. Bach often used chiastic (x-shaped/symmetrical) forms, in which center movements (where the mirror image begins) often provide the crux of the matter. There antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). See side note for Martin Petzoldt's diagram.

Introduction & updates at [melvinunger.com](http://melvinunger.com).

NBA I/6; BC A35

3. S. after Epiphany (BWV 73, 111, 72, 156)

\*Romans 12:16–21 (Overcoming evil with good)

\*Matthew 8:1–13 (Jesus heals a leper; the centurion from

Capernaum comes to Jesus)

Librettist: Unknown

FP: 23 January 1724 (St. Nicholas; from first Leipzig cantata cycle)

Instrumentation:

Ob I, II

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Corno ossio organo obbligato

(The horn part is difficult for

modern instruments. See note.)

Continuo

Martin Petzoldt suggests that the cantata's structure and choice of soloists allows the 3 characters in the Gospel reading to speak (T = the leper, B = the centurion, S = the centurion's sick servant). See "Bach-Kommentar" 2:467.

(Chorale: see also 156/6)

•God's sovereign will to be trusted even in suffering (73/1).

(Coro) Italianate concerto structure  
73/1. (Allegro moderato ♩ = 88.)

Vln I, II, Vla; no continuo

Oboes play a circling figure in sweet parallel 3rds (for sweetness), derived from the chorale's opening interval, presented sequentially at higher intervals. As an example of "circulatio," the rhetorical figure may represent the circuitous paths of God's will. For more, see side note

Corno plays continuation of the chorale melody.

For Alfred Dürr's comments on the first movement, see side note.

9. Soprano.

(Mel: „Wo Gott, der Herr, nicht bei uns hält.“)

The movement is unified by the pervading 4-note motive ("Herr, wie du wiltt"; i.e., Lord as thou wiltt), harmonized in continually different ways.

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

Stanza 1 of 3 in 1582 hymn by Kaspar Bienenmann (1540–1591).

For biblical background, see notes.

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

12.

schick's mit mir im Le - ben -

schick's mit mir im Le -

schick's mit mir im Le -

schick's mit mir im Le -

The oboes in sweet parallel motion, without continuo (i.e., a bassetto texture) suggest a heavenly perspective (unfathomable to humans), while the horn/string interjections suggest a wordless "Herr, wie du wilt."

Ob I, II

Strings

No continuo-----

B-flat major B-flat major G7 C minor

15.

und im Ster - - - ben!

- ben und im Ster - - - ben!

- ben und im Ster - - - ben!

- ben und im Ster - - - ben!

Alternating chorale statements with recitatives suggests communal vs. individual perspectives.

Ob I, II

Corno, Vln I (up 8va) + strings interject the "Lord, as thou wilt" figure.

No continuo-----

[Herr, wie du wilt]

G minor G minor G minor B-flat major

18.

**Recitativo.** The tenor perhaps represents the leper in the Gospel reading (see above).

**Tenore.**

Ach! a ber ach! wie - viel lässt mich dein Wil - le

Oboes play circling figure in parallel motion (= ornamented response to the 4-note "Herr, wie du wilt" figure).

Corno, Vln I + str.

[Herr, wie du wilt]

C# dim.7 (signals something disturbing to come).

C# dim.7

A troping text is inserted into the chorale as a recitative (but in tempo with oboes playing circular figures and the horn & strings interjecting the 4-note motive).

20. leiden! Mein Leben ist des Unglücks Ziel, da Jammer und Verdruss mich le-bend

Ob I, II

D minor

G7

B dim.7

C7

23. fol-tern muss, und kaum will meine Noth im Sterben von mir scheiden..

Corno, Vln I + str.

Ob I

Ob II

[Herr, wie du willst]

Dim. 7th chord for "foltern" (to torture).

b7

C minor

25. A E dim.7

Text painting: The cantus firmus begins alone for "Allein zu dir..." (To you alone...).

Al-lein zu dir steht mein Be-gier,

Choral parts are largely chordal.

Al-lein zu dir steht mein Be-gier,

Al-lein zu dir steht mein Be-gier,

Al-lein zu dir steht mein Be-gier,

Corno, Vln I + str.

Corno

No continuo-----

E-flat major

E-flat major

B-flat major

B-flat major

28. C minor

Herr, lass mich nicht ver-der-

Herr, lass mich nicht ver-der- ben, nicht ver-der

Herr, lass mich nicht ver-der- ben, nicht ver-der

Herr, lass mich nicht ver-der- ben, nicht ver-der

Corno

B-flat major

G7

C minor

G minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

31. ben! ben! ben! ben!

Obs Corno, Vln I, up 8va + strings.

G minor No continuo----- G minor B-flat major

[Herr, wie du wilt]

33. **Recitativo.** Basso. The bass perhaps represents the centurion in the Gospel reading (see above). The bass voice is often the voice of authority and here the text alludes to various biblical passages.

Du bist mein Hel - fer, Trost und Hort, so der Be -

Ob I Ob II

B-flat major C7 F major

[Herr, wie du wilt]

Corno, Vln I + str. interject "Herr, wie du wilt" motive between the singer's phrases.

35. trüb - ten Thrä - nen zäh - let und ih-re Zu - ver-sicht, dass schwa-che

Ob I, II

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

Psalm 18:2: The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock (Luther 1545: Hort), in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (Helfer: also Psalm 40:17); Psalm 56:8: [O Lord,] thou hast kept count of my tossings; put thou my tears in thy bottle! Are they not in thy book? Psalm 71:5: For thou, O Lord, art my hope, my trust (Luther 1545: Zuversicht), O Lord, from my youth. (Also Psalm 61:3, 71:7; 142:5.)

37. Rohr, nicht gar zerbricht; und weil du mich er - wäh - let, so sprich ein

Corno, Vln I + str. Ob I Ob II

E dim.7 F minor G7

[Herr, wie du wilt]

Isaiah 42:3: A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench. (Also Matthew 12:20.)



The end of the chorale alludes to the centurion's statement in the Gospel reading: "Only say the word, and my servant will be healed." (Matthew 8:8). The chorale then alludes to Isaiah 41:10: "Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you (Luther 1545: ich erhalte dich) with my victorious right hand.

39. **B** Abgesang of chorale's bar form.

Er - halt' mich nur in dei - ner

Er - halt' mich nur in dei - ner

Er - halt' mich nur in dei - ner

Word painting: Large leap to highest note for "word of joy."

Trost und Freuden wort! Er - halt' mich nur in dei - ner

**B**

Continuo plays circular material to underscore the text (the heavenly perspective is now brought down to earth).

C minor F7 B-flat major F major C7

42.

Huld, sonst, wie du

Huld, sonst, wie du

Huld, sonst, wie du

Huld, sonst, wie du

Obs

Corno

No continuo

Str.

mf

F major F7 B-flat major C major

44.

willt, gieb mir Ge - duld, denn

willt, gieb mir Ge - duld, denn

willt, gieb mir Ge - duld, denn

willt, gieb mir Ge - duld, denn

Obs

Corno

No continuo

Strings

mf

F major A7 D minor B-flat major

47.

dein Will' ist der be - ste.

dein Will' ist der be - ste.

dein Will' ist der be - ste.

dein Will' ist der be - ste.

Translation:  
Thy will is indeed a sealed book,  
in which human wisdom nought can understand.  
To us, the blessing often seems a curse,  
our discipline, angry punishment.  
That rest which thou hast appointed  
for us one day in the sleep of death,  
seems like an entrance into hell.  
Yet thy Spirit frees us from this error  
and shows us that thy will is healing for us.

No continuo  
Str.

F major G minor G minor G minor

50. **Soprano. Recitativo.** The soprano perhaps represents the centurion's sick servant in the Gospel reading (see above).

Dein Wille zwar ist ein versiegelt Buch, da Menschenweisheit Nichts ver -

[Herr, wie du wilt]

[Herr, wie du wilt]

G minor B-flat major A7

Corno, Vln I C7 (up 8va) + strings.

Ob I Ob II

53.

nimmt. Der Se - gen scheint uns oft ein Fluch, die

[Herr, wie du wilt]

[Herr, wie du wilt]

D minor G# dim.7

Corno, Vln I, up 8va + str.

55.

Züch - tigung ergrimmt Stra - fe, die Ru - he, so du in dem To - des -

[Herr, wie du wilt]

Corno, Vln I + str.

Ob I Ob II

C7

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

57. Descending line for "entrance into hell."

schla - fe uns einst be - stimmt, ein Ein - gang zu der Höl - le. Doch

Corno, Vln I + str. Ob I

[Herr, wie du willst] Ob II

F# dim.7 G minor E-flat 7 C7

59. macht dein Geist uns die - ses Irr - thums frei und zeigt, dass uns dein

Corno, Vln I + str. Ob I & II

[Herr, wie du willst]

F7 B dim. C minor F# dim.7

61. "Heilsam" = healing/wholesome (apparent allusion to the healing of the leper in the Gospel reading).

Wil - le heil - sam sei. — Corno, Vln I + str. Ritornello Ob I & II

Ob II No continuo

G minor [Herr, wie du willst] G minor

64. C

Herr, wie du willst, Herr, wie du

Herr, wie du willst, Herr, wie du

Herr, wie du willst, Herr, wie du

Herr, wie du willst, Herr, wie du

Obs

[Herr, wie du willst] No continuo

Corno, Vln I, up 8va + Str

G minor B-flat major B-flat major B-flat major [Herr, wie du willst]

The repeated text was added to the libretto by Bach.

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

66.

willt,  
willt,  
willt,  
willt,

Obs

+Corno

No continuo-----

C minor  
E-flat major

C minor D7 G minor

69.

[in Le - - - ben und in Ster - - - - - ben]

G minor C7 F major G7 C minor G minor G7 C minor

71.

Herr, wie du willst!

Herr, wie du willst!

Herr, wie du willst!

Herr, wie du willst!

G minor

G major (ends positively).

Martin Petzoldt observes that the third choral interjection is sung quite atonally in the middle of the unresolved part of the cadence, leaving the impression of a questioning character. See *Bach-Kommentar* 2:479. It is as if the voices are affirming something that they do not understand.



This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the motto, 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.

Da capo aria 73/2. **Aria.** •Prayer: Pour Spirit of joy into my despairing heart (73/2).

1. (Lento  $\text{♩} = 66.$ ) Oboe

Oboe & Continuo

Ritornello is derived from opening vocal phrases (1.5 + 1.5 + 1 mm.)

E-flat major  
(This is the only movement in a major key.)

3.

For biblical background, see note.

B-flat major F7

Text painting: Descending lines for "Ah, sink (i.e., pour) the Spirit of joy into my heart."

5. **Tenore.**

Ach, sen - ke - doch den Geist der Freu - den, den Geist der -

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

E-flat major F7

A descending contour (for "pour your Spirit down into my heart") is counterbalanced by an ascending sequence for growing joy.

8.

Freu - - - - - dendem Her - zen ein!

B-flat major

B-flat major

B-flat major

C7

Ritornello (in free inversion)

10.

F minor G7 C minor

C minor

C7 F minor

B-flat 7 E-flat major

Dürr writes, "In the course of the movement the initial motive and its inversion alternate on several occasions. Its frequent modifications are, in the middle section, linked with a shaking figure which represents the word 'wanken' ('waver')." See Dürr/Jones, 203. The opening text paraphrases Psalm 51:12: "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit" (Luther 1545: freudige Geist).

13.

Ach, sen - ke doch den Geist der Freu - den, den Geist der

E-flat 7 A-flat major A-flat major B-flat 7

Konrad Küster argues that, by giving the melodic leadership role to the oboe from m. 7 on, Bach provided a prime example of the fact that he was not merely inserting the vocal line into an instrumental movement but that he conceived it as a model movement in which he could assign its components freely to the participating voices. See Konrad Küster, "Johann Sebastian Bach," 226, cited in Petzoldt, "Bach-Kommentar" 2:470.

16.

Freu - den dem Her - zen ein, den Geist der

E-flat major E-flat major

Text painting: Lengthy melismas for "Geist der Freuden" (Spirit of joy).

18.

Freu - den, ach, sen - ke doch den Geist der

E-flat major

21.

Freu - dendem Her - zen ein, dem Her - zen

E-flat major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

23. **ein!**

**Ritornello**

*mf*

E-flat major

26. **B Section**

Es will\_\_ oft bei\_\_ mir geist - lich

The "joy motive" moves to the bass.

E-flat major G7 C minor E-flat major

29. **Word painting: Melisma for joy.**

Dim. 7th leap down for "spiritually sick."

Kran - ken die Freu - dig - keit **Dramatic break** und Hoff - - - - - nung

C minor C minor

32. **Descending chromatic tetrachord, traditional symbol of lament, for "Zaghaft" (faint-hearted). The syncopation and fermata are further expressions of wavering ("wanken").**

wan - ken und zag - - - - - haft sein,

C minor F# dim.7 G minor A7 D minor G(7) C minor 6 D7

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

34.

The reference to being "spiritually sick" is reminiscent of the leper in the Gospel reading, here chromatically inflected.

es will oft bei mir geist-lich Kran-

G minor G minor

36.

Word-painting: Melisma for "joy."

ken die Freu- digkeit und Hoff-nung

B-flat major F(7)

38.

Word painting: Long, swirling melisma (derived from the opening motto of the aria) to depict "wanken" (waver)

wan-

B-flat major B-flat 7 G7 C minor

40.

ken und zag- haft sein.

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

*mf*

La Capo dal Segno.



### 73/3. Recitativo. • Human will perverse: it vacillates & rejects dying (73/3).

This is the only movement where human will is the subject.

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 5 mm. for human perversity. See side note for more.

**Basso.**

1. Ach, un-ser Wil-le bleibt ver-kehrt, bald trot-zig, bald ver-

The text alludes to Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt (Luther 1545: trotzig und verzagt); who can understand it?" Bach sets it in a highly chromatic manner.

Text painting: A leap up for "defiant," a drop down for "despondent."

Secco

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

Voice & continuo sing span of dim. 7th in opposite directions.

For biblical background, see note.

3. zagt, des Ster-bens will er nie ge-den-ken! Al-lein ein Christ, in

B dim.7 E B-flat D-flat A-flat x6

C minor G major E dim.7 F minor F7 D7

6. Got-tes Geist ge-lehrt, lernt sich in Got-tes Wil-len sen-ken und sagt:

G minor B-flat (7) G7 C minor

**Attacca.**

### 73/4. Aria. • God's sovereign will accepted; acceptance of death (73/4).

Form (Strophic with rhyme scheme ABBA):  
Motto—instrumental episode a  
Verse 1 (head-motive—sigh motives)  
Instrumental episode a1  
Verse 2 (varied head-motive—descending melodic lines)  
Instrumental episode b  
Verse 3 (varied head-motive—pizzicato: "funeral bells")  
Instrumental episode c (bells motive)  
Coda 'Herr, so du willst' (varied head-motive)  
Instrumental postlude a1  
(See Dürr/Jones, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 203). For more, see side note.

Since the aria provides the actual prayer referenced in the recitativo, it begins without instrumental introduction. Like movement 1, it is unified by the motto "Lord as thou wilt." However, while the motto was musically inflexible in movement 1, it is malleable here, perhaps suggesting flexibility with regards to God's will. In its initial form, the motive is identical to the opening of "Bist du bei mir," a song by Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, which Anna Magdalena Bach copied in her 1725 Notebook.

1. Herr, so du willst,

Vln I Vln II

mf Vla

Here the bass identifies with the vox Christi.

C minor

For biblical background, see note.

5. Herr, so du willst,

hemiola

Vln II

G7 C minor C minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

9.

Herr, so du willst, Vln I (8va down) Herr, so du willst, Vln I [Herr, so do willst]

C minor C7 F major F7 B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major F7

13.

so presst, ihr To - des - Schmer - zen, die Seuf - zer aus dem Herzen,

Text painting: Sighing motives with throbbing chords to suggest resignation and melancholy.

B-flat major E-flat major B-flat major C7 F minor G7 D7

18.

wenn mein Gebet nur vor dir gilt.

The harmonic progression for this text could be from the Romantic period.

G minor G minor E-flat major D(7) G7 E-flat major

23.

Herr, so du

Stanza 2.

hemiola

R.H.

C minor 6 (F# dim.7) D7 G minor G minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

27.

willt, Herr, so du willt, Herr, so du

Vln I Vln II

C7 F minor B dim.7 G7 C minor

Text painting: Descending lines with chromatic harmonies for "Then lay down my members in dust and ashes."

31.

willt, so le - ge mei - ne Glied - er in Staub - und A - sche

D7 G minor F7 F7

Throbbing chords suggest resignation and melancholy.

Text painting: Large upward leap followed by chromatic line for "this highly corrupted image of sin."

35.

nie - der. dies höchst ver - derb - te Sün - den - bild.

B-flat minor E-flat minor G-flat major C-flat major A dim.7 F major B-flat minor B-flat major (B-flat pedal...)

Vln I Vln II (up 8va) *mf* *cresc.*

Descent to the remote key of B-flat minor for "lay my members down in dust and ashes."

As if in response to the image of corrupted human nature, the strings play upwardly struggling sighing figures in imitation (leaps of 4ths and tritones). See Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar* 2:472.

40.

Stanza 3.

hemiola

Herr, so du willt, Herr, so du

Vln I

A dim.7 B-flat major E-flat (7) A-flat major A-flat 7

Throbbing chords suggest resignation and melancholy.

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

Text painting: Strings imitate the "Leichenglocken" (funeral bells, i.e., deathknell) mentioned in the text with oscillating 8th notes played pizzicato.

For more on "Leichenglocken" and related concepts, see side note



45.

willt, Herr, so du willt, so schlagt, ihr Lei - chenglok -

pizzicato strings

Vln II

*p staccato*  
pizzicato

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

50.

- ken, so schlagt, ihr Lei - chenglok - ken, ich fol - ge un - er - schrok - ken, mein Jam -

hemiola

Strings play eighth notes on the downbeats... (here is an editorial continuo realization).

The bass line of pulsing quater notes, descending chromatically suggests resigned and calm descent in death, as referenced in the text.

A-flat 7 D-flat major E-flat 7 (A-flat 7)  
B-flat minor 7

55.

- mer ist nun mehr ge - stillt. Herr, so du

The strings resume imitation of funeral bells. Martin Petzoldt notes that the striking of the hour also represents the hour of God's help as experienced by the centurion's servant in the Gospel reading (Luther 1545: "Und sein Knecht ward gesund zu derselbigen Stunde" [And his servant was healed at that very hour]). See Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar* 2:473.

Continuo alone

After quiet acceptance, doubt returns in a loud, solitary cry to twisting harmonies.

(D-flat major) (E-flat 7) A-flat major A-flat 7 D-flat major A-flat major (E-flat 7) A-flat major  
B-flat minor Motive as at the beginning.

60.

willt, Herr, so du willt, Herr, so du

Vlns play "Herr, so du wilt" figure in imitation.

Vln II Vln I

Vln II (up 8va)

B-flat 7 C minor G7 C minor



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

64.

willt, Herr, so du willst, Herr, so du willst,

Continuo alone... *p*

B dim. 7 C minor

68.

— Herr, so du willst.

[Herr, so du willst]

Vln II Vln I

*mf*

G7 C minor C minor A-flat major G7 G minor 7 C7 A-flat major

harmonic ambiguity...

72.

[Herr, so du willst]

Vln II

F minor G7 C minor C minor

hemiola

Compare Bach's elaborate setting of this tune in BWV 11/9.

## 73/5. Choral. (Mel.: „Von Gott will ich nicht lassen“)

Soprano. 1.

+Corno, Ob I, Vln I

Das ist des Vaters Will - le, der uns er - schaf - fen

Alto.

+Ob II, Vln II

Das ist des Vaters Will - le, der uns er - schaf - fen

Tenore.

+Vla

Das ist des Vaters Will - le, der uns er - schaf - fen

Basso.

Das ist des Vaters Will - le, der uns er - schaf - fen

B-flat major

Martin Petzoldt suggests that the Trinitarian text of the chorale functions as a catechismal statement and mirrors the 3-part structure of the opening chorus (3 recitative insertions trope the chorale text of no. 1). The 3 persons of the Trinity are mentioned with their individual roles in the outward workings of the Trinity: the will of the Father as creator, the fullness of goodness and grace in the Son, and the governance of humans by faith. All of these aspects are reflected in the previous movements, making this chorale stanza an apt choice for the conclusion. See "Bach-Kommentar" 2:466, 473.

For biblical background, see note.

For the significance of C, see side note.

The surprising movement to B-flat for "Father's will" reminds the listener that God's will can be surprising.

•God's will is to extend grace to us in Christ (73/5). Ninth and final stanza of "Von Gott will ich nicht lassen," a 1563 hymn by Ludwig Helmbold (1532–1598).

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 73

4.

hat; sein Sohn hat Gut's die Fül - le er - wor - ben uns aus Gnad; auch

hat; sein Sohn hat Gut's die Fül - le er - wor - ben uns aus Gnad; auch

hat; sein Sohn hat Gut's die Fül - le er - wor - ben uns aus Gnad; auch

hat; sein Sohn hat Gut's die Fül - le er - wor - ben uns aus Gnad; auch

C minor C minor B-flat major D major E-flat major A-flat major G7 C minor

9.

Gott, der heil' - ge Geist, im Glau - ben uns re - gie - - ret, zum

Gott, der heil' - ge Geist, im Glau - ben uns re - gie - - ret, zum

Gott, der heil' - ge Geist, im Glau - ben uns re - gie - - ret, zum

Gott, der heil' - ge Geist, im Glau - ben uns re - gie - - ret, zum

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

13.

Reich des Him - mels füh - - ret: ihm sei Lob, Ehr' und Preis.

Reich des Him - mels füh - - ret: ihm sei Lob, Ehr' und Preis.

Reich des Him - mels füh - - ret: ihm sei Lob, Ehr' und Preis.

Reich des Him - mels füh - - ret: ihm sei Lob, Ehr' und Preis.

E-flat major F# dim.7 G minor B-flat 7 E-flat major C minor G major C major (ends positively).