

Introduction &amp; updates at melvinunger.com.

Mary and Joseph's flight into Egypt becomes point of departure for a strings-only cantata about the enemies of a Christian.

Martin Petzoldt outlines the symmetrical structure (Bach-Kommentar 2:338)

5. Chorale. God will not go back
6. T aria. God comforts me: storms may rage.
4. T recit. God comforts me: but...
7. B recit. Take comfort in Jesus
3. B arioso. Fear not, I am with you
8. A aria. With tribulation into the kingdom of God
2. A recit. With fear in life here
9. Chorale. My God prepares me.
1. Chorale. My enemies are mighty.

## Cantata No. 153

## Schau, lieber Gott, wie meine Feind

153/1. • Prayer: Behold my foes; without thy help I am ruined! (153/1).

## 1. Choral (Mel. „Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein“)

Soprano +Vln I

Instrumentation:

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo, Organo

This is the first stanza of 10 in the 1646 chorale by David Denicke (1603–1680).

Tenore +Vla



Basso

The incorporation of 3 chorales in the cantata may have been intended to reduce the demands on the choir boys during a very busy performance season (see note). Martin Petzoldt notes that hymnbooks in Saxony (therefore in Leipzig) did not include "Schau lieber Gott" but the chorale was sung by the Lutheran church in Cöthen. See *Bach-Kommentar* 2:339. (Note: In Cöthen, Bach worked at a Calvinist court). However, Eric Chafe sees the chorales as significant components in a 3-part architecture, in which modal, minor, and major harmonic progressions have allegorical meaning. See *Analyzing Bach Cantatas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 111–126. See note for more.

A minor E major G7 A minor A minor D major

Five traditionally identified enemies of Christ: World, Devil, Death, Hell, and Sin.

G major E minor A minor D major C# dim.7 D# dim.7 E major

Chromatic descent for "plunge into disaster."

For biblical background, see note.

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas

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

Eric Chafe suggests that cadences to the apparent dominant can raise questions of meaning. See, for example, *Analyzing Bach Cantatas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. xii–xiii, 188–189, 221.

## 153/2. 2. Recitativo • Prayer for help in face of lions & dragons (153/2).

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 6 mm.

Alto is often the voice of intimate faith.

For biblical background, see note.

1. Alto E D B C F A D# C#

Mein liebster Gott, ach laß dich's doch er.barmen. ach hilf doch. hilf mir

My dearest God, ah, let thyself (please) show-mercy, ah, do-help, help (this)

Secco

E7 A minor F major B7 E minor



3<sup>II</sup> A# F# G

Armen! Ich woh-ne hier bei lauter Löwen und bei Drachen. und die-se wollen mir durch

poor-wretch! I dwell here amidst (many) lions and amidst dragons, and these seek - by

F#7 A# dim.7

The text is reminiscent of biblical passages such as Psalm 57:4: "I lie in the midst of lions that greedily devour the sons of men; their teeth are spears and arrows, their tongues sharp swords" and Psalm 7:2: "Like a lion they rend me, dragging me away, with none to rescue."

6 G#

Wut und Grimmigkeit in kurzer Zeit den Garaus völli-er machen.

(their) rage and ferocity in short (order) (my) final-ruin fully to-complete.

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

Some manuscripts have "Arioso."

## 153/3. 3. Aria • Vox Dei: Fear not, I am with thee: Isaiah 41:10 (153/3).

The ritornello is repeated 6 times as a quasi-ostinato, cadencing in in Em (8), Em (24), Bm (35), DM (43), Em (51), and Em (58). The vocal part is embedded in this ritornello (Vokaleinbau). Without any interludes, the movement is like an arioso.

1. Ritornello based on vocal line. Continuo alone.

B7 E minor E minor

## 7 Basso Line 1 (4x with internal repetitions. Leaps to high notes and syncopations emphasize particular words.)

The dance-like rhythm suggests carefree assurance. The ostinato bass is sometimes veiled, perhaps suggesting God's hidden hand.

"Shivering" anacrusis for "fürchte" ("to fear").

Here the bass is the vox Dei. Fürch-te dich nicht, ich, ich bin mit dir, fürch

E minor E minor

For biblical background, see note.

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 153

13

te dich nicht, fürch - te dich nicht, fürchte dich nicht, ich,

19

ich bin mit dir, ich bin mit dir, fürchte dich nicht, ich bin mit dir, fürch - te dich

24

nicht, ich bin mit dir. Wei - che nicht, wei - che nicht, ich bin -

30

— dein — Gott, wei - che nicht, weiche nicht, ich bin dein Gott;

36

ich stärke dich, ich hel - fe dir auch durch die rech - te Hand mei - ner -

Annotations:

- Parallel octaves
- Line 2 (2x).
- Line 3 (2x).
- hemiola
- The text is repeated in a higher register.

Chords:

- D7
- G major
- E7
- A minor
- B7
- E minor
- E minor
- A7
- D major
- F#7
- B minor
- B minor
- B minor
- A(7)
- D major
- D major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 153

42

— Gerech-tig-keit, ich stär-ke dich, ich hel-fe-dir auch durch die

D major D major B(7) E minor

48

rech-te Hand mei-ner Gerech-tig-keit.

hemiola mf

E minor E minor

53

E minor E minor

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 6 mm. The cry for help is clothed in tortured harmony, including many diminished 7th chords.

For biblical background, see note.

## 4. Recitativo Tenore

Prayer for help in face of growing threat from foes (153/4).

153/4.

1. Tenore

Du sprichst zwar. lie-ber Gott. zu mei-ner See-len Ruh mir ei-nen

Thou dost-speak indeed, dear God, unto my soul's rest, to-me a

Secco

3

Trost in meinem Leiden zu. Ach. a-ber mei-ne Pla-ge ver-

(word of) comfort in my suffering -- Ah, but my trouble ver-

A# dim.7 E# dim.7 F# major B minor G# dim.7 Highly chromatic. E7



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 153

6 D# G

größert sich von Tag zu Tag, denn meiner Feinde sind so viel, mein Leben ist ihr

increases - from day to day, for my foes are so many, my life is their

D# dim.7 A# dim.7 E minor E minor G minor A7

9 Circular melisma for "Bogen" ("bows"), then fast upward scales in pattering for the drawing of the bow and shooting of arrows.

Ziel, ihr Bogen wird auf mich gespannt, sie richten ihre Pfeile zum Ver-

aim, their bows - are against me drawn, they prepare their arrows for

D minor G7

11<sup>II</sup> (Andante) Chromatic, step-wise descent in continuo and singer's lines for "sterben" ("die").

derben, ich soll von ihren Händen sterben

destruction, I am by their hands to-die;

F# dim.7 D7 G minor E# dim.7 F minor C minor N6 F# dim.7

14 Recit.

ben; Gott! meine Not ist dir bekannt, die ganze Welt wird mir zur Marter-

God! My distress is to-thee known. The whole world becomes for-me a den-of-torture;

C minor G7 C major C# dim.7 D minor F# dim.7

16<sup>II</sup> E-flat F# D G E C# B F A G F E D C B A


This is stanza 5 of 12 in the 1653 chorale "Befiel du deine Wege" by Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676). This is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's form, where antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). Here fear turns to hope.

153/5. **5. Choral** (Mel. „Befieh du deine Wege“) • God's purposes prevail despite opposition of devils (153/5).  
 Soprano 1. "hier" in contemporary hymnals.

The text is reminiscent of a variety of biblical passages that affirm God's victory over the devil (see note).

The change in wording from "hier" ("here") to "dir" ("you") makes the statement forcefully personal.

For biblical background, see note.

 Bach clothes the familiar tune in chromatic harmonies to reflect the concerns expressed in the text.

+Vln I  
+Vln II  
+Vla  
+Basso

Und ob gleich al - le Teu - fel dir woll - ten wi - der - stehn,  
 so wird doch oh - ne Zwei - fel Gott nicht zu - rük - ke gehn;  
 Und ob gleich al - le Teu - fel dir woll - ten wi - der - stehn,  
 so wird doch oh - ne Zwei - fel Gott nicht zu - rük - ke gehn;  
 Und ob gleich al - le Teu - fel dir woll - ten wi - der - stehn,  
 so wird doch oh - ne Zwei - fel Gott nicht zu - rük - ke gehn;  
 Und ob gleich al - le Teu - fel dir woll - ten wi - der - stehn,  
 so wird doch oh - ne Zwei - fel Gott nicht zu - rük - ke gehn;

5 E7 A minor (A7) D minor iv6 V E minor A minor E7 A minor  
 Phrygian cadence

was er (sich vor-) ge - nom - men und was er ha - ben will, das  
 was er (sich vor-) ge - nom - men und was er ha - ben will, das  
 was er (sich vor-) ge - nom - men und was er ha - ben will, das  
 was er (sich vor-) ge - nom - men und was er ha - ben will, das

9 G major G7 C major C major F major A major D minor A major D7

muß doch end - lich kom - men zu sei - nem Zweck und Ziel.  
 muß doch end - lich kom - men zu sei - nem Zweck und Ziel.  
 muß doch end - lich kom - men zu sei - nem Zweck und Ziel.  
 muß doch end - lich kom - men zu sei - nem Zweck und Ziel.

G major G major C major D7 G major E7 A minor E major

Eric Chafe suggests that cadences to the apparent dominant can raise questions of meaning. See *Analyzing Bach Cantatas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. xii–xiii, 188–189, 121, 221, etc.

# 6. Aria • Storms defied; God has promised to be with me (153/6).

153/6. 1. Viol. I

Operatic rage  
aria for tenor.

For biblical  
background,  
see note.

Ritornello

Tritone  
"Diabolus in  
musica" (see note)

A minor B7 E minor

2

A7 D minor G7 E minor C major

3π

E7

A minor Unison strings.

5 Tenore

Stürmt nur, stürmt, ihr Trüb - - sals - wet - ter, - - stürmt nur,

Bc.

A minor D# dim.7 B7 E major

Viol. I

Viol. II  
Va.

6π

stürmt, ihr Trüb - - sals - wet - ter, - - stürmt nur, stürmt nur, ihr Trüb - sals.

B7 E minor A7 D minor G7 E minor C major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 153

8

32nd notes depict the "seething torrents."

wet-ter, wallt, ihr Flu - ten, auf mich los, wallt,

Unison in all 5 parts.

E7

9<sup>th</sup>

ihr Flu - ten, auf mich los, stürmt nur, stürmt, ihr Trübsals - wet - ter,

A minor

D major

11

wallt, ihr Flu - ten, auf mich los, stürmt nur, stürmt, ihr Trübsals.

G major

E7

A minor

12<sup>th</sup>

wet-ter, wallt, ihr Flu - ten, auf mich

Unison in all 5 parts.

B7

E minor

E minor

E minor



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 153

14

los!

Ritornello

E minor F#7 B minor E7 A minor

15

D7 B minor G major B7

17

Unison strings

Schlagt, ihr Un-glücks

E minor (C# dim.7)

18

flam men, ü - ber mich zu

32nd notes depict the "flames of misfortune."

Viol. I

C# dim.7 A7 D minor G minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 153

20

8 sam - men, schlagt, ihr Un - glücks - flam -

Viol., Va. Bc.

A7 D minor D minor

21<sup>II</sup>

8 men, ü - bermich zu - sam - men, stört, ihr Fein - de, mei - ne

Bc. Viol., Va. Bc.

C7 F7 D7

23

Word painting: Extended note ending in a fermata for "Ruh" ("rest").

8 Ruh. spricht mir doch Gott tröstlich

Viol. I Viol. II Va.

G minor A7 D minor C# dim.7 D minor

Calmness in the face of the onslaught.

Continuo alone for reference to God speaking a comforting word.

25

8 zu: ich bin dein Hort und Er - ret - ter, ich bin

Viol. I

D minor C# dim.7 A major D minor

Trio texture.

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 153

26<sup>II</sup>

dein Hort und Er-ret-ter, — ich bin dein Hort, dein Hort und Er-

E7 A minor A minor B7 E minor

Word painting: The most frenetic melisma is reserved for the Savior (the divine counterpart to the devilish storms).

28

ret-ter, ich bin dein Hort und Er-ret

A7 D minor G7 E minor C major

29<sup>II</sup>

ter, und Erret-

E7 A minor

31

ter. Ritornello

A minor B7 E minor

Dal Segno

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantata

Secco

## 7. Recitativo

153/7.

1. Basso

•Sufferings of Christchild gives us courage (153/7).

The reference to cross-bearing recalls Jesus' words (Mark 8:34): If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Also Matthew 10:38, 6:24, Luke 9:23.)

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 10 mm.

For biblical background, see note.



Getrost, mein Herz, er - dul - de dei - nen Schmerz, laß dich dein

Courage! My heart, endure thy pain, Let thee thy

Secco

Continuo bass up 8va (see full score).

C major (for significance, see note).

C7 F7

3 Kreuz nicht un - terdrücken! Gott wird dich schon zu rechter Zeit er - quicken; muß

cross not crush! God will thee indeed at-the proper time refresh; must

G# dim.7 A minor D7 G major G major

6 doch sein lie - ber Sohn, dein Je - sus, in noch zar - ten Jah - ren viel

indeed his dear Son, thy Jesus, in yet tender years, much

E major E7 A7

The reference here is to the day's Gospel: the account of Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt (see note on biblical background).

8 größ - re Not er - fah - ren, da ihm der Wü - te - rich He - ro - des die

greater affliction experience, when him the tyrant Herod the

A# dim.7 F#7 A# dim.7 C aug6

10 äü - Ber - ste Ge - fahr des To - des mit mör - de - ri - schen Fäu - sten droht! Kaum

gravest peril of death with murderous fists threatens! Scarce

F major B7 E major F# minor

The reference to "murderous fists" is reminiscent of the Passion account and also a statement by the Apostle Paul (see note).





12

kömmt er auf die Er-den, so muß er schon ein Flücht - ling wer-den!  
comes he to - earth, then must he already a fugitive become!

D# dim.7 E minor

14

Wohl-an, mit Je-su trö-ste dich und glau-be fe-stiglich: den-An-  
Come-then, with Jesus comfort thyself and believe steadfastly: to-those

E minor C(7) F major G7

"Andante" is Bach's marking. The arioso relates to the Epistle reading of the day (see note).



16

dante

je-nigen, die hier mit Chri-sto lei - den, will er das Him-mel-  
who here with Christ suffer, would he the kingdom-of-heaven

C major B-flat major F major G7 A minor

Arioso duet between singer and continuo.

Imitation between singer and continuo reflects the "Imitatio Christi" referenced in the text.

8va up in original.

18<sup>n</sup>

reich be-schei - den.  
apportion.

G7 C major C major

# 153/8. 8. Aria •Suffering ends in heaven where it changes to rapture (153/8).

1. Viol. I Ritornello A (Antecedent).

Form (Rhyme: ABABCC)  
Repeated Antecedent Binary Form  
Ritornello A (Antecedent: mm.1-12) GM  
Lines 1-3/Rit A (13-24) GM-DM  
Rit B (Consequent: 25-48) DM-GM  
Lines 1-3/Rit B' (49-60) DM-Am  
Line 4/Rit B' (2x: 61-70) Am-DM  
Lines 5-6/Imitative accomp. (71-89) GM  
Rit B (89-106) GM

Strings Ritornello derived from vocal theme.

G major A7 D major D major E7 A minor A minor

Minuet (perhaps from a pre-existing instrumental work or a parody of a movement from a secular work).

hemiola

A minor D7 G major B minor A7 D major D major D7

For biblical background, see note.



Alfred Dürr writes, "It is in binary dance form: each section is first stated by the instruments alone, after which the voice part is incorporated in its slightly expanded reprise. Only towards the end of the second reprise ... [m. 71] does a new 'allegro' theme enter, forming a spirited conclusion to the vocal part of the aria. Thereafter, the instruments take up the interrupted reprise once more, bringing it to an end in the form of a postlude." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, p. 166.

Soll ich — mei-nen Le - bens-lauf un - ter Kreuz und

Arch-shaped melody depicts "mein Lebenslauf" ("course of my life").

G major A7 D major D major E7 A minor G# dim.7 A minor

Trüb - sal füh - ren, hört — es doch im Him - mel — auf.

hemiola

E major A minor D7 G major B minor A7 D major D major

Ritornello B (Consequent).

D major D7 G major B(7) D# dim.7 E minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 153

31

E minor E minor E minor G major E7 A minor

37

D7 G major G major A7 D major D pedal... G major D7 G major

43

hemiola

48

Lines 1-3/Ritornello B'

Soll\_ich mei - nen Le - bens - lauf

G major D major D7 G major B(7)

53

un - ter Kreuz und Trüb - sal - füh - ren, hört es -

E minor D# dim.7 E minor E minor E7 A minor

58

Line 4/Ritornello B" imitative.

doch im Him - mel auf Da ist lauter Ju - bi -

A minor D7 G major

64

lie - ren, da ist lau - ter Ju - bi - lie - ren,

G7 C major C major A minor A minor D7

69

The voice stops again.

Allegro

Lines 5-6/Imitative accompaniment on new theme.

Word painting: At the reference to sorrow transforming into (exchanged for) joy, the poetic meter changes from trochaic to amphibrachic. The tempo changes to allegro, a new musical theme is introduced, and a "reversing" motive is used for "verwechselt" ("exchanges/transforms").

The instruments stop again.

da - selbst ver - wechselt mein Je - sus das Lei - den mit

G major D major G major G major F#(7)

75

Long melisma with "contemplative" pauses for "ewigen Freude" ("eternal joy").

se - li - ger Won - ne, mit e - wi - gen Freu -

B minor E7 A minor D7 G major



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 153

80

A7 D major D7 G major

85

den. hemiola Ritornello B. G major G major

90

Parallel 3rds suggest sweetness.

G major G7 C major E7 A minor D7 G major

96

G major A7 D major G major D7 G major

101

A7 D7 G major hemiola G major

•Prayer: Help me to live faithfully until I reach heaven (153/9).

153/9.

## 9. Choral (Mel. „Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid“)

**1. Soprano**

+Vln I

1. Drum will ich, weil ich le - be noch, das Kreuz dir fröh-lich tragen nach;

**Alto**

+Vln II

2. Hilf mir mein Sach recht grei-fen an, daß ich mein' Lauf voll - en - den - kann,

**Tenore**

+Vla

3. Er-halt mein Herz im Glau-ben rein, so leb und sterb ich dir al - lein;

**Basso**

1. Drum will ich, weil ich le - be noch, das Kreuz dir fröh-lich tragen nach;

Bach sets the chorale in triple meter, continuing the joyful mood of the previous minuet (by contrast, compare BWV 58/5 and BWV 3/1&6).

For biblical background, see note.

C major D(7) G major D major G major G major G major

The chorale is replete with allusions to various biblical passages and themes (see note on biblical background).

9

mein Gott, mach mich dar - zu - be - reit, es dient zum Be - sten al - le - zeit!

helf mir auch zwin-gen Fleisch und Blut, für Sünd und Schanden mich be - hüt!

Je - su, mein Trost, hör mein - Be - gier, o mein Hei - land, wär ich bei dir!

mein Gott, mach mich dar - zu - be - reit, es dient zum Be - sten al - le - zeit!

E major A minor A7 D minor C major G major C major D7 G major C major