

WEEK 3 When the Congregation Learned to Sing: German Hymnody in the Wake of the Reformation

Broad characteristics of the early German cantata tradition [contrast to the Italian style]

- *begins in the later part of the seventeenth century [Baroque]
- *mostly sacred, unstaged, liturgical, functional [occasional parodies]
- *Johann Sebastian Bach writes the best German examples from high Baroque [1700-1750]
- *many Bach examples for solo voices, chorus and orchestra [often referred to as **chorale cantata**]
- *many based upon a pre-existent melody [chorale] as a point of musical reference throughout
- *multi-sectional/movements, typically 10-30 minutes in length
- *many Bach examples structured to move from complexity to simplicity (aesthetic to practical)

Christ lag in Todesbanden (Johann Sebastian Bach) BWV 4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLDHk_tLG_w

John Eliot Gardiner and English Baroque Soloists

- *Victimae pascali laudes (sequence)=> Christ lag in Todesbanden (Martin Luther/Johann Walther)=>Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands [Trinity 279]
- *Easter 1707, but we don't know what the original version sounded like; reworked in 1724 and published 1851
- *1724 version scored for four vocal parts and orchestra; extra brass were added for a 1725 performance
- *each verse (7) of the Luther chorale is treated separately [unlike later cantatas] but all based on the chorale
- *unified in tonality [E minor]; a sombre key, but also dramatic in content and text setting

Symmetrical Structure:

Sinfonia [instrumental]

Chorus: Christ lag in Todesbanden [polyphonic]

Duet (S,A) Den Tod niemand zwingen kunnt [with a walking bass]

Aria (T) Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn [trio sonata texture]

Chorus: Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg [polyphonic imitation of chorale]

Aria (B) Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm [a more simple texture contrasting the continuo line]

Duet (S,T) So feiern wir das hohe Fest [trio sonata texture]

Chorus: Wir essen und leben wohl [homophonic with the congregation!]

Sinfonia [akin to an overture]

*Christ lag in Todesbanden
Für unsre Sünd gegeben,
Er ist wieder erstanden
Und hat uns bracht das Leben;
Des wir sollen fröhlich sein,
Gott loben und ihm dankbar sein
Und singen halleluja,
Halleluja!*

*Den Tod niemand zwingen kunnt
Bei allen Menschenkindern,
Das macht' alles unsre Sünd,
Kein Unschuld war zu finden.
Davon kam der Tod so bald
Und nahm über uns Gewalt,
Hielt uns in seinem Reich gefangen.
Halleluja!*

*Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn,
An unser Statt ist kommen
Und hat die Sünde weggetan,
Damit dem Tod genommen
All sein Recht und sein Gewalt,
Da bleibet nichts denn Tods Gestalt,
Den Stach'l hat er verloren.
Halleluja!*

*Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg,
Da Tod und Leben rungen,
Das Leben behielt den Sieg,
Es hat den Tod verschlungen.
Die Schrift hat verkündigt das,
Wie ein Tod den andern fraß,
Ein Spott aus dem Tod ist worden.
Halleluja!*

*Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm,
Davon Gott hat geboten,
Das ist hoch an des Kreuzes Stamm
In heißer Lieb gebraten,
Das Blut zeichnet unsre Tür,
Das hält der Glaub dem Tode für,
Der Würger kann uns nicht mehr schaden.
Halleluja!*

*So feiern wir das hohe Fest
Mit Herzensfreud und Wonne,
Das uns der Herre scheinen läßt,
Er ist selber die Sonne,
Der durch seiner Gnade Glanz
Erleuchtet unsre Herzen ganz,
Der Sünden Nacht ist verschwunden.
Halleluja!*

*Wir essen und leben wohl
In rechten Osterfladen,
Der alte Sauerteig nicht soll
Sein bei dem Wort Gnaden,
Christus will die Koste sein
Und speisen die Seel allein,
Der Glaub will keins andern leben.
Halleluja!*

Christ lay in death's bonds
handed over for our sins,
he is risen again
and has brought us life
For this we should be joyful,
praise God and be thankful to him
and sing alleluia,
Alleluia!

Nobody could overcome death
among all the children of mankind.
Our sin was the cause of all this,
no innocence was to be found.
Therefore death came so quickly
and seized power over us,
held us captive in his kingdom.
Alleluia!

Jesus Christ, God's son,
has come in our place
and has put aside our sins,
and in this way from death has taken
all his rights and his power,
here remains nothing but death's outward form
it has lost its sting.
Alleluia!

It was a strange battle
where death and life struggled.
Life won the victory,
it has swallowed up death
Scripture has proclaimed
how one death ate the other,
death has become a mockery.
Alleluia!

Here is the true Easter lamb
that God has offered
which high on the trunk of the cross
is roasted in burning love,
whose blood marks our doors,
which faith holds in front of death,
the strangler can harm us no more
Alleluia!

Thus we celebrate the high feast
with joy in our hearts and delight
that the Lord lets shine for us,
He is himself the sun
who through the brilliance of his grace
enlightens our hearts completely,
the night of sin has disappeared.
Alleluia!

We eat and live well
on the right Easter cakes,
the old sour-dough should not
be with the word grace,
Christ will be our food
and alone feed the soul,
faith will live in no other way.
Alleluia!

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ (Johann Sebastian Bach), BWV 91

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5ejYj69LpY>

Philippe Herreweghe and the Collegium Vocale Gent

- *Grates nunc omnes [11th c. Latin sequence]=>Lobet sistu Jesu Crist [late 14th c. Leis; notice how all stanzas of the Bach cantata conclude with the traditional acclamation Kyrieleis]=>Gelobet seist du [Martin Luther]=>Trinity 219
- *Christmas 1724, and reused by Bach in the 1730s and 1740s; often referred to as the “Christmas Cantata;” published 1875
- *scored for SATB, a four-part choir, two horns, timpani, three oboes, strings and continuo
- *tonal variety, but G major (pastoral) often associated with the Christmas season
- * the approach to texts predicts the changes that take place in Bach cantatas from 1723 onwards with the increasing use of poetic texts (interpolation) in addition to the chorale texts; here, the author of the added texts (non-bold) is not known, but the cantata opens and closes with Luther’s texts, and features recitative and aria techniques for text setting

Balanced Structure:

Chorus: *Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ* (G major, polyphonic)

Recitativo and Chorale (soprano): *Der Glanz der höchsten Herrlichkeit* (E minor)

Aria (tenor): *Gott, dem der Erden Kreis zu klein* (A minor)

Recitativo (bass): *O Christenheit!* (G major to C major)

Aria (soprano, alto): *Die Armut, so Gott auf sich nimmt* (E minor)

Chorus: *Das hat er alles uns getan* (G major, homophonic with congregation)

- *as was common practice, Bach reused this chorale in other works: *Sehet, welch eine Liebe hat uns der Vater erzeiget*, BWV 64 (written for the Third Day of Christmas 1723), the final two stanzas in his *Christmas Oratorio* (1734). BWV 314, and a Chorale Prelude for Organ BWV 604

1. CHOR

**Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ,
daß du Mensch geboren bist
von einer Jungfrau, das ist wahr,
des freuet sich der Engel Schar.
Kyrie eleis!**

**Praised be you, Jesus Christ,
that you were born human
of a virgin, this is true,
for this the angelic throng rejoices.
Lord have mercy!**

2. REZITATIV; CHORALE (Sopran)

Der Glanz der höchsten Herrlichkeit,
das Ebenbild von Gottes Wesen,
hat in bestimmter Zeit
sich einen Wohnplatz auserlesen.
**Des ewgen Vaters einigs Kind,
das ewge Licht von Licht geboren,
itzt man in der Krippe findt.**
O Menschen, schauet an,
was hier der Liebe Kraft getan!
In unser armes Fleisch und Blut,
(und war denn dieses nicht verflucht,
verdamm't, verloren?)
verkleidet sich das ewge Gut.
So wird es ja zum Segen auserkoren.

The radiance of highest splendor,
the likeness of God's being,
has, at this specified moment,
selected a dwelling place.
**The child, one with the eternal Father,
the eternal light born of light,
is now to be found in a manger.**
O humanity, behold,
what the power of love has done here!
In our feeble flesh and blood,
(and was this not already cursed,
damned and lost?)
this eternal good clothes itself.
So yes it is preordained for blessing.

3. ARIA (Tenor)

Gott, dem der Erden Kreis zu klein,
den weder Welt noch Himmel fassen,
will in der engen Krippe sein.
Erscheinet uns dies ewge Licht,
so wird hinfüro Gott uns nicht
als dieses Lichtes Kinder hassen.

God, to whom the earth's sphere is so small,
whom neither world nor sky can fathom,
will be in a narrow manger.
This eternal light appears before us
so henceforth God will not
spurn us, as children of this light.

4. REZITATIV (Baß)

O Christenheit, wohlan, so mache dich bereit,
bei dir den Schöpfer zu empfangen!
Der große Gottessohn
kömmt als ein Gast zu dir gegangen.
Ach, laß dein Herz durch diese Liebe rühren;
er kömmt zu dir, um dich vor seinen Thron
durch dieses Jammertal zu führen.

O Christendom, well then, thus prepare yourself
to receive the creator yourself.
The mighty Son of God
arrives before you as guest.
Oh, let your heart be stirred by this love;
he comes to you, to lead you through
this vale of tears unto his throne.

5. ARIA (Sopran, Alt)

Die Armut, so Gott auf sich nimmt,
hat uns ein ewig Heil bestimmt,
den Überfluß an Himmelsschätzen.
Sein menschlich Wesen machet euch
den Engels Herrlichkeiten gleich,
euch zu der Engel Chor zu setzen.

The poverty, which God takes upon himself,
has ascertained us eternal salvation,
a profusion of heavenly treasures.
His mortal being makes you
equal in splendor to the angels,
placing you midst the angelic chorus.

6. CHORAL

**Das hat er alles uns getan,
sein groß Lieb zu zeigen an;
des freu sich alle Christenheit
und dank ihm des in Ewigkeit.
Kyrie eleis!**

**All this has he done for us
to reveal his great love;
at this all Christendom rejoice
and thank him in eternity.
Lord have mercy!**