

**When The Congregation Learned to Sing: German Hymnody in the Wake of the
Reformation**
Colin Holman and Clint Shaffer

Week #4 (October 1)

O Jesus Christ, All Praise to Thee [handout]

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]=>*Lovet sistu Jesu Crist* [late 14th c. *Leis*; notice how all stanzas of the Bach cantata conclude with the traditional acclamation *Kyrieleis*]=>*Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ* [Martin Luther] => *All Praise to Thee, Eternal Lord* (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!**

1. 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,
verdammnt, 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. ARIA (Sopran, Alt)

Die Armut, so Gott auf sich nimmt,
hat uns ein ewig Heil bestimmt,
den Überfluß an Himmelschätzen.
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.

5. 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!**

Luther's methods and sources:

1. Reworkings of liturgical sources / Direct use of existing texts and tunes

→ e.g., *Ein Kindelein so löblich* (one verse from *Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich*)

2. Adoption of popular forms and melodies (ballads and bar form)

→ e.g., *Ein neues Lied wir heben an / A New Song Now Shall Be Begun* (~August 1523) – Luther's response to the execution of Jan van Essen and Hendrik Voes in Brussels in July, 1523

3. Metrical psalms: psalms as congregational hymns

Song texts and early collections

- The *Achtliederbuch*; Jobst Gutknecht, Nuremberg, 1524 – 8 hymns, half by Luther
- The Erfurt *Enchiridia*; Mattes Maler and Johannes Loersfeld (25 hymns, 18 by Luther; 16 tunes, 1524); Erfurt, 1524

→ Elisabeth Cruciger's hymn with staying power: *Herr Christ, der einig Gottes Sohn / The Only Son from Heaven* (1524) [handout]

- The *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn* aka *Chorgesangbuch*; Josef Klug, Lucas Cranach, Christian Döring, Wittenberg, 1524 (43 songs)

→ Luther's preface

- *Geistliche lieder auff's neu gebessert zu Wittenberg* [aka *Das Klug'sche Gesangbuch*]; Josef Klug, Wittenberg, 1529/1533 (50 songs)

Promoting congregational singing (and not overtaxing the congregation!)

Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice, / with exultation springing, / and with united heart and voice / and holy rapture singing, / Proclaim the wonders God hath done, / How his right arm the vict'ry won; / Right dearly it hath cost him.

(*Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein*, Luther, 1524)

From depths of woe I raise to Thee / the voice of lamentation / Lord, turn a gracious ear to me / and hear my supplication: / if thou iniquities dost mark, / our secret sins and misdeeds dark, O who shall stand before thee?

(*Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu dir*, Luther, 1524)

Salvation unto us has come, / by God's free grace and favor; / good works vannot avert our doom, / they help and save us never. / Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone, / Who did for all the world atone; / He is our one Redeemer

(*Es ist das Heil uns kommen her*, Paul Speratus, 1524)

O Jesus Christ, All Praise to Thee

136

L M with Alleluia

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ

Latin, 11th cent.

German, 1370, st. 1; M. Luther, 1483-1546, sts. 2-7

Tr. A. T. Russell, 1806-74

GELOBET SEIST DU, JESU CHRIST

German melody, 15th cent.

1. O Je - sus Christ, all praise to Thee, Thou who art pleased a
2. Th'e - ter - nal Fa - ther's on - ly Son Now takes a man - ger
3. He whom the world can - not en - close In Mar - y's bos - om
4. Th'e - ter - nal Light to us de - scends, Its bright - ness to the

Man to be; To dwell with men Thou dost not scorn, And
for His throne: The ev - er - last - ing fount of good, As -
doth re - pose; To be a lit - tle Child He deigns Who
earth it lends, And pure - ly shines up - on our night, To

an - gels shout to see Thee born, Al - le - lu - ia.
sumes our mor - tal flesh and blood. Al - le - lu - ia.
all things by Him - self sus - tains. Al - le - lu - ia.
make us chil - dren of the light. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

5. The only Son, true God confessed,
To His own world now comes a Guest;
And through this vale of tears our Guide,
Doth in His heav'n our home provide.
Alleluia.

6. In poorest guise to us He came,
Himself He bears our sin and shame,
That, as His heirs in heav'n above,
We may with angels share His love.
Alleluia.

7. His love to show, surpassing thought!
God's Son this wondrous work hath wrought;
Then let us all unite to raise
Our song of glad, unceasing praise.
Alleluia.