

When Bach took over the St. Thomas Cantorate in the spring of 1723 as the leading musician of the foremost Cantorate in Protestant Germany, he achieved at long last the opportunity to realize his artistic aspirations: "the ultimate goal of a regulated church music," which he had described in 1708 to the Mühlhausen Town Council and which he had attempted to pursue, on a more restricted level, at the Weimar Court. Bach at once embarked on a program to provide a piece of concerted music - a Cantata - for every Sunday and Feast Day of the ecclesiastical year, except for the Lenten weeks preceding Christmas and Easter, when concerted music was suspended.

The Cantata supplied the principal music piece in the liturgy of the main service, and as such it highlighted and then interpreted a passage from the biblical text for the day. Thus all of Bach's Leipzig Cantata texts follow a standard pattern firmly grounded in the two-fold structure of a Lutheran sermon: *explicatio* and *applicatio*, biblical text and theological instruction, followed by practical and moral advice. The Cantata ordinarily opens with a Chorus using a Biblical dictum, normally a passage from the prescribed Gospel lesson that serves as a point of departure. Bach made a particular point of reflecting the mood of the text in his music. The Cantata usually concludes with a Chorale in the form of a hymn stanza.

Bach's own Bible was well used and frequently annotated in the margin. At the end of his Cantata scores he would write "Fine. S.D.G" (*Soli Deo Gloria*). Though formally employed by the City Council and responsible to his Choir and Congregation, the ultimate dedication of Bach's choral writing - indeed possibly all of his music - was "to the Glory of God Alone". We have used this as our title in these *Soli Deo Gloria* compilations from the two hundred or so known Cantatas. In the first two volumes (BACH 733 & 734) we offered a selection of some of Bach's finest opening Choruses conducted by Karl Richter. From Volume 3 through to Volume 10 we further explore this little-known treasure of some of Bach's greatest music by working numerically through all of the Cantatas, excepting those already included in the first two Volumes of *Soli Deo Gloria* or those Cantatas which are exceptional throughout and which we have already presented in their entirety. The recordings heard here were made over a number of years at the annual Greifswald Bach Festival by the East German Radio of the former D.D.R.

1: BWV 2 - Chorus 1: *Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein und lass dich's doch erbarmen! Wie wenig sind der Heiligen dein, verlassen sind wir Armen; dein Wort man nicht lässt haben wahr, der Glaub ist auch verloschen gar bei allen Menschenkindern.* Oh God, from Heaven look down on us and grant us yet thy mercy! How few are found thy Saints to be, forsaken are we wretches; Thy word is not upheld as true, and faith is also now quite dead among all of Mankind's children.

2: BWV 3 - Chorus 1: *Ach Gott, wie manches Herzelein begegnet mir zu dieser Zeit! Der schmale Weg ist trübsalvoll, den ich zum Himmel wandern soll.* Ah God, how oft a heartfelt grief confronts me within these days! The narrow path is sorrow-filled on which I to Heaven must travel.

3: BWV 5 - Chorus 1: *Wo soll ich fliehen hin, weil ich beschweret bin mit viel und grossen Sünden? Wo soll ich Rettung finden? Wenn alle Welt herkäme, mein Angst sie nicht wegnähme.*

Where shall I find refuge, for I am burdened with many great sins? Where shall I find my salvation? Were all the world gathered here, my fear would still not be overcome.

4: BWV 7 - Chorus 1: *Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam, nach seines Vaters Willen, von Sankt Johans die Taufe nahm, sein Werk und Amt zu erfüllen; da wollt er stiften uns ein Bad, zu waschen uns von Sünden, ersäufen auch den bitterm Tod durch sein selbst Blut und Wunden; es galt ein neues Leben.* Christ our Lord to Jordan came, fulfilling his Father's will, and he took baptism from Saint John, to accomplish his work and duty; here he would provide us with a bath to wash clean our errors, as well as to drown our bitter death in his own blood and anguish; in order to give us a newly restored life. **Chorale:** *Das Aug allein das Wasser sieht, wie Menschen Wasser griessen, der Glaub allein die Kraft versteht des Blutes Jesu Christi, und ist für ihm ein rote Flut von Christi Blut gefärbet, die allen Schaden heilet gut von Adam her geerbet, auch von uns selbst begangen.*

The eye alone sees the water, as men do pour out the water, but faith alone perceives the power that Christ Jesus' blood has given; and for this there is a sea colored red of Christ's own blood, which well heals all transgressions Adam has bequeathed to us and which we ourselves have committed.

5: BWV 8 - Chorus 1: *Liebster Gott, wann werd ich sterben? Meine Zeit läuft immer hin, und des alten Adams Erben, unter denen ich auch bin, haben dies zum Vaterteil, dass sie eine kleine Weil, Arm und elend sein auf Erden und dann selber Erde werden.* Dearest God, when will my death be? My days run ever on, and from the heirs of old Adam have I as this for a legacy, that they for a while, poor and wretched, inhabit this Earth and then are finally with earth united.

Chorale: *Herrscher über Tod und Leben, mach einmal mein Ende gut, lehre mich den Geist aufgeben mit recht wohlgefasstem Mut. Hilf, dass ich ein ehrlich Grab neben frommen Christen hab, und auch endlich in der Erde nimmermehr zuschanden werde!* Ruler over death and living, let at last my end be good; teach me how to yield my spirit with a firm and sure courage. Help me earn an honest grave next to godly Christian men, and at last covered with earth may I never again suffer ruin.

6: BWV 9 - Chorus 1: *Es ist das Heil uns kommen her von Gnad und lauter Güte. Die Werk, die helfen nimmermehr, sie mögen nicht behüten. Der Glaub sieht Jesum Christum an, der hat g'nug für uns all getan, er ist der Mittler worden. Now to us is come salvation by grace and purest favour. Our works offer us help no more, they cannot give protection. Our faith shall Jesus Christ behold, who has done enough for us all, as he is our intercessor.*

7: BWV 10 - Chorus 1: *Meine Seel erhebt den Herren, und mein Geist freuet sich Gottes, meines Heilandes; den er hat seine elende Magd angesehen. Siehe, von nun an werden mich selig preisen alle Kindeskind. My soul exalts the Lord, and my heart finds gladness in God, in God my Saviour; for He hath now regarded this His lowly handmaiden. See, from henceforth shall all men praise me, all childrenkind. Alto-Tenor Duet: Er denket der Barmherzigkeit und hilft seinem Diener Israel auf. Mindful of His mercy, He doth give help to His servant Israel. Chorale : Lob und Preis sei Gott dem Vater und dem Sohn und dem Heiligen Geiste, wie es war im Anfang, jetzt und immerdar und von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit, Amen. Laud and praise be to God the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning and ever shall be, from evermore to evermore. Amen.*

8: BWV 11 - Chorus 1: *Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen, Preiset ihn in seinen Ehren, Rühmet ihn in seiner Pracht; Sucht sein Lob recht zu vergleichen, wenn ihr mit gesamten Chören Ihm ein Lied zu Ehren macht! Laud be to God in all His kingdom, praise to Him in all His honours, in his splendour tell His fame; strive to honour His glory when ye with assembled choirs make a song to praise His name! Chorale: Nun lieget alles unter dir, dich selbst nur ausgenommen; die Engel müssen für und für dir aufzuwarten kommen. Die Fürsten stehn auf auf der Bahn und sind dir willig untertan; Luft, Wasser, Feuer, Erden muss dir zu Dienste werden. Now lies all beneath Thy feet, Thyself the one exception; the Angels must for evermore gather to wait upon Thee. The Princes stand, too, on the way and are Thy willing servants now; air, water, earth and fire must offer Thee their service.*

9: BWV 14 - Chorus 1: *Wär Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit, so soll Israel sagen, wär Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit, wir hätten müssen verzagen, die so ein armes Häuflein sind, veracht' von so viel Menschenkind, die an uns setzen alle. Were God not with us all this time, let Israel now say it: were God not with us all this time, we would surely have lost courage, for such a tiny band as we are, despised by so much of Mankind, they all forever oppose us. Chorale: Gott Lob und Dank, der nicht zugab, dass ihr Schlund uns möcht fangen. Wie ein Vogel des Stricks kömmt ab, ist unsre Seel entgangen; Strick ist entzwei, und wir sind frei; Des Herren Name steht uns bei, des Gottes Himmels und Erden. To God be praise and thanks, He did not let their savage jaws devour us. As a bird from its snare is freed, so is our soul delivered: the snare is rent in twain, and we are free; the Lord's own name doth stand with us, the God of Earth and of Heaven.*

10: BWV 16 - Chorus 1: *Herr Gott, dich loben wir, Herr Gott, wir danken dir. Dich, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit, ehret die Welt weit und breit. Lord God, we give Thee praise, Lord God, we give Thee thanks. Thee, God Father eternal, all the world lauds far and wide. Chorale: All solch dein Güt wir preisen, Vater ins Himmel Thron, Die du uns tust beweisen durch Christum, deinen Sohn, und bitten ferner dich, gib uns ein friedlich Jahre, vor allem Leid bewahre und nähr uns mildiglich. We praise all this Thy kindness, our Father on Heaven's Throne, which unto us Thou showest through Christ, who is Thy Son, and beg Thee now as well to make our year be peaceful, guard us from every woe, and nourish us with grace.*

11: BWV 17 - Chorus 1: *Wer Dank opfert, der preiset mich, und das ist der Weg, dass ich ihm zeige das Heil Gottes. Who giveth thanks, he praiseth me, and this is the way, that I shall show to him God's power.*

12: BWV 19 - Chorus 1: *Es erhub sich ein Streit! Die resend Schlange, der höllische Drache, stürmt wider den Himmel mit wütender Rache. Aber Michael bezwingt, und die Schar, die ihn umringt, stürzt des Satans Grausamkeit. There arose a great strife! The furious serpent, the dragon infernal, now storms against Heaven with passionate vengeance. Saint Michael wins the day, and the Host which follows him strikes down Satan's cruel might.*

13: BWV 20 - Chorus 1: *O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort, O Schwert, das durch die Seele bohrt, O Anfang sonder Ende! O Ewigkeit, Zeit ohne Ziel, ich weiss vor grosser Traurigkeit nicht, wo ich mich hinwende. Mein ganz erschrocken Herz erbebt, Dass mir die Zung am Gaumen klebt.*

Eternity, thou thunderous word, O sword that through the soul doth bore, beginning with no ending! Eternity, time lacking time, I know now faced with deepest grief, not where to seek my refuge. So much my frightened heart doth quake, that to my gums my tongue is stuck. *Chorale.*