

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 onwards we continue to explore this great treasure of Bach's little-heard music by working numerically through all of the Cantatas, excluding those already included in the first two Volumes of *Soli Deo Gloria* or those Cantatas which are exceptional throughout and which we have presented in our *Bach Collection* in their entirety. The recordings given 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 119 - Chorus 1:** *Preise, Jerusalem, den Herrn, lobe, Zion, deinen Gott! Denn er machet fest die Riegel deiner Tore und segnet deine Kinder drinnen, er schaffet deinen Grenzen Frieden.* Praise, O Jerusalem, the Lord, O Zion laud him as thy God! For He maketh fast the bars across thy doorway and blesseth all thy children therein, He bringeth peace within thy borders.

**Chorus 2:** *Der Herr hat Guts an uns getan, des sind wir alle fröhlich. Er seh die teuren Väter an und halte auf unzählig und späte lange Jahre naus in ihrem Regimente Haus, so wollen wir ihn preisen.* The Lord has achieved good for us, for this we are all rejoicing. May He tend our cherished Elders and keep them for uncounted and long-enduring years on end within their House of Government, and we will gladly praise Him. **Chorale:** *Hilf deinem Volk, Herr Jesu Christ, und segne, was dein Erbteil ist. Wart und pfleg ihr' zu aller Zeit und heb sie hoch in Ewigkeit! Amen.* Help Thy people, Lord Jesus Christ, and bless them as Thine inheritance. Guard and tend them at every hour and raise them up on high forever more! Amen

**2: BWV 122 - Chorus 1:** *Das neugeborne Kindelein, das herzeliebe Jesulein bringt abermal ein neues Jahr der auserwählten Christenschar.* The newly born tiny child, the dearest little Jesus, doth once again renew the year for this the chosen Christian throng.

**3: BWV 123 - Chorus 1:** *Liebster Immanuel, Herzog der Frommen, du, meiner Seelen Heil, komm, komm nur bald! Du hast mir, höchster Schatz, mein Herz genommen, so ganz vor Liebe brennt und nach dir wallt. Nichts kann auf Erden mir liebers werden, als wenn ich meinen Jesum stets behalt.* Dearest Emanuel, Lord of the faithful, Thou Saviour of my soul, come, come now soon! Thou hast, my highest treasure, won my heart over; so much does its love burn and long for Thee. On Earth nothing can be dearer to me than that I may ever hold my Jesus.

**4: BWV 125 - Chorus 1:** *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin in Gottes Willen; getrost ist mir mein Herz und Sinn, sanft und stille; wie Gott mir verheissen hat, der Tod ist mein Schlaf worden.* In peace and joy do I depart, as God doth will it; consoled am I in mind and heart, calm and quiet; as God gave me his promise, my death is altered to sleep. **Chorale:** *Er ist das Heil und selge Licht für die Heiden, zu erleuchten, die dich kennen nicht, und zu weiden er ist deins Volks Israel der Preis, Ehr, Freud und Wonne.* He is that grace and blessed light which the nations shall illumine, all who know Thee not, and shall nurture Israel, thy people, with praise, laud, joy and gladness.

**5: BWV 128 - Chorus 1:** *Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein ich meine Nachfahrt gründe und allen Zweifel, Angst und Pein hiermit stets überwinde; denn weil das Haupt im Himmel ist, wird seine Glieder Jesu Christ zu rechter Zeit nachholen.* On Christ's ascent to Heaven alone I base my journey to Him, and all my doubting, fear and pain thereby will I ever conquer; for if your mind in Heaven dwells, so shall your bones in due time be recovered by Jesus Christ. **Chorale:** *Alsdenn so wirst du mich zu deiner Rechten stellen und mir als deinem Kind ein gnädig Urteil fällen, mich bringen zu der Lust, wo deine Herrlichkeit ich werde schauen an in alle Ewigkeit.* Therefore

then shalt Thou station me upon Thy right hand and render a gracious judgment to me as Thy child, bringing me into that joy where I will hold fast my gaze on Thy majesty for all of eternity.

6: BWV 130 - Chorus 1: Herr Gott, dich loben alle wir und sollen billig danken dir für dein Geschöpf der Engel schon, Die um dich schweben um deinen Thron. Lord God, we praise Thee every one and shall give willing thanks to Thee for this Thy work of the Angels, which even now flock around Thee at Thy Throne. Chorale: Darum wir billig loben dich und danken dir, Gott, ewiglich, wie auch der lieben Engel Schar dich preisen heut und immerdar. Und bitten dich, wollst allezeit dieselben heissen sein bereit, zu schützen deine kleine Herd, so hält dein göttliches Wort in Wert. For this we give Thee willing praise and give Thee thanks, oh God, for eternity, just as Thine own dear Angel Host lauds Thee today and for evermore. And we ask, should it be Thy wish, to order them to be prepared to shelter this Thy tiny flock, which keeps the value of Thy sacred word.

7: BWV 131 - Chorus 1: Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr, zu dir. Herr, höre meine Stimme, lass deine Ohren merken auf die Stimme meines Flehens? From the depths now do I call Thee, my Lord. Lord, hear my voice's crying, and let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaining. Bass Aria & Chorale - Bass: So du willst, Herr, Sünde zurechen, Herr, wer wird bestehen? If Thou will, Lord, mark what is sinful, but Lord who will abide by it? Choir: Erbarm dich mein in solcher Last, nimm sie aus meinem Herzen, dieweil du sie gebüsst hast am Holz mit Todesschmerzen, Have mercy upon me in such grief, remove it from my bosom, because Thou hast now paid for it on wood with the pains of dying. Bass: Denn bei dir ist die Vergebung, dass man dich fürchte. For with Thee there is forgiveness, that we might fear Thee. Choir: Auf dass ich nicht mit grossem Weh in meinen Sünden untergeh, noch ewiglich verzage. So that I might not die with grievous woe within my sinful state, nor give up hope forever. Chorus 2: Ich harre des Herrn, meine Seele harret, und ich hoffe auf sein Wort. I wait for the Lord, my spirit waiteth, and I put trust in His word. Ch.3:

BWV 131 - Chorus 3: Israel hoffe auf den Herrn; denn bei dem Herrn ist die Gnade und viel Erlösung bei ihm. Und er wird Israel erlösen aus allen seinen Sünden. Israel, trust now in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and much redemption from Him. And He shall deliver Israel from all her transgressions.

8: BWV 133 - Chorus 1: Ich freue mich in dir und heisse dich willkommen, mein liebes Jesulein! Du hast dir vorgenommen, mein Brüderlein zu sein. Ach, wie ein süsser Ton! Wie freundlich sieht er aus, der grosse Gottessohn! I find joy in Thee and bid Thee a hearty welcome, my dearest Jesus-child! Thou hast here undertaken to be my dear brother. Ah, what a pleasing sound! How friendly he appears, this mighty Son of God! Chorale: Wohlan, so will ich mich an dich, o Jesu halten, und sollte gleich die Welt in tausend Stücken spalten. O Jesu, dir, nur dir, dir leb ich ganz allein; auf dich, allein auf dich, O Jesu, schlaf ich ein. Lead on, it is my desire to cling to Thee, O Jesus, even if the world should break into a thousand pieces. O Jesus, Thou, just Thou, Thou alone art my life; in Thee, alone in Thee, my Jesus, will I sleep.

9: BWV 136 - Chorale: Dein Blut, der edle Saft, hat solche Stärk und Kraft, dass auch ein Tröpflein kleine die ganze Welt kann reine, Ja, gar aus Teufels Rachen, frei, los und ledig machen. Thy blood, that rich liquid, hath such great force and strength that even the merest drop can deliver all the world, yea, from the jaws of Satan, setting it free and unencumbered.

10: BWV 139 - Chorus 1: Wohl dem, der sich auf seinen Gott recht kindlich kann verlassen! Den mag gleich Sünde, Welt und Tod und alle Teufel hassen, so bleibt er dennoch wohlvergnügt, wenn er nur Gott zum Freunde kriegt. Blest is he who can abandon himself to his God with childlike trust! For though now every sin, word and death and every demon doth hassle him, yet he will be ever be confident if he but make God his friend. Chorale: Dahero Trotz der Höllen Heer! Trotz auch des Todes Rachen! Trotz aller Welt! Mich kann nicht mehr ihr Pochen traurig machen! Gott is mein Schutz, mein Hilf und Rat; wohl dem, der Gott zum Freunde hat! I therefore scorn the Host of Hell! Scorn also death's yawning jaws! Scorn all the world! No more can its pounding fill me with mourning! God is my shield, my store and help; blest is he who hath found God as a friend!