

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 137

Chorus/fantasia - Aria/chorale (A)—duet (S/B) - Aria/chorale (T) - Chorale.

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/20; BC A124

12. S. after Trinity (BWV 137, 35) Perhaps intended also for Feast of St. John the Baptist (June 24).

*2 Corinthians 3:4–11 (The new covenant shines more brightly than the old)

*Mark 7:31–37 (Jesus heals man who was deaf and mute.)

Librettist: Chorale (Joachim Neander)

FP: 19 August 1725 (St. Nicholas)

This cantata is the first in his 3rd Leipzig cantata cycle. See side note for more.

It is possible that Bach intended this chorale cantata to fill in a liturgical gap in his chorale cantata cycle (Cycle II, see side note). It is noteworthy that Cantata 37 has no recitatives. Like Cantata 107, "Was willst du dich betrüben," from Bach's chorale cantata cycle, Cantata 137 is of the "per omnes versus" type, in which all movements quote hymn strophes verbatim. It was perhaps the first cantata of this type since BWV 4, some 20 years earlier. For others, see note. Bach makes use of all 5 stanzas of the 1679 hymn text by Joachim Neander (ca. 1650–1680). Bach also makes use of the tune (somewhat different in its original forms) in each movement. The form is symmetrical with the middle movement treating the tune in the most individual manner (see side note). Each movement is in triple meter, providing a dance-like character appropriate to the text.

J.S. Bach Cantata No. 137

Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren

Vers 1. Coro. (Chorale Verse. 1) • Praise the Lord, the mighty king, with psaltry & lyre (137/1).

137/1. (Allegro moderato $\text{♩} = 92$.)

Figura corta (see side note).

Concertante interplay among trumpets, oboes, and strings.

Festive Instrumentation:

Tromba I, II, III

Timpani

Ob I, II

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo

Note: no complement of strings

in nos. 2, 3, 4.

Ritornello
(thematically independent)

Dance-like 6/8 meter superimposed on 3/4.

1. C major Ambiguity of meter: Compare 137/2, 20/6, 42/4. D7 G major

5. G major G7 E minor A major D minor E major

8. A minor B major E minor A7

11. D minor G7 C major

14. C major C7 F major G7 C major

17. A (NB. Der Cantus firmus: „Lobe den Herren“ im Sopran.)
Soprano. Chorale Phrase 1 (A-T-B fugato based on thematically independent instrumental theme).

Alto. *Figura corta*

Lo - - be, lo - - be den Herren, den mächtigen Kö-nig der
Praise the, praise the Al-migh-ty, our King and our Rul-er ex-

Tenore.

Lo - - be,
Praise the,

Basso.

C major C major

20.

Eh - - ren, lo - - be, lo - -
alt - - ed, praise the, praise

lo - - be den Herren, den mächtigen Kö-nig der Eh - -
praise the Al-migh-ty, our King and our Rul-er ex-alt - -

Lo - - be, lo - - be den
Praise ye, praise ye Al-

C major D7 G major C major

23.

Lo - be den Her - ren, den mäch - ti - gen
Praise ye Al - migh - ty God, King and our

- be, lo - be den Her - ren, den mächti - gen Kö - nig, den mäch -
the, praise the Al - migh - ty, our King and our Rul - er, our King

ren, lo - be den Her - ren, den mächti - gen Kö - nig, den mäch -
ed, praise the Al - migh - ty, our King and our Rul - er, our King

Herren, den mächtigen König der Eh - ren, lo - be den Her - ren, den mäch -
migh - ty God, King and our Rul - er ex - alt - ed, praise ye Al - migh - ty God, King

C major

26.

Kö - nig der Eh - ren,
Rul - er ex - alt - ed,

- ti - gen Kö - nig der Eh - ren,
and our Rul - er ex - alt - ed,

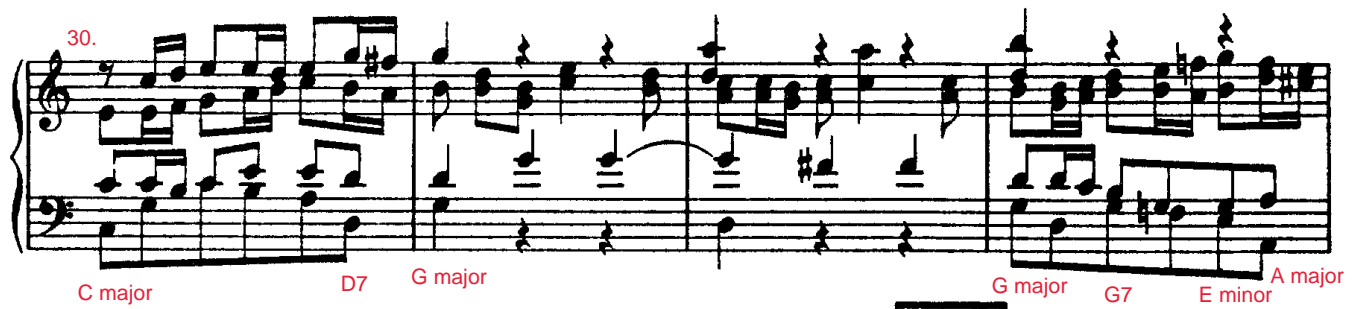
- ti - gen Kö - nig der Eh - ren,
and our Rul - er ex - alt - ed,

- ti - gen Kö - nig der Eh - ren,
and our Rul - er ex - alt - ed,

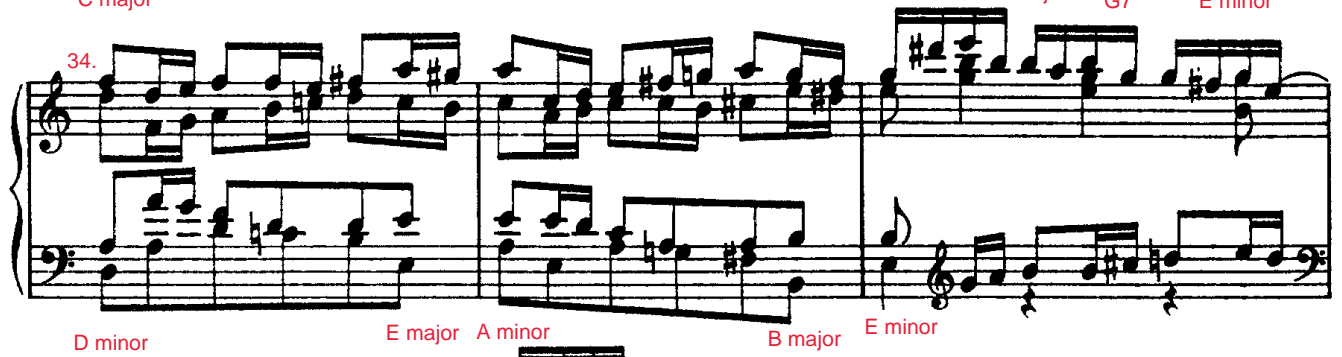
Ritornello

C major

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30. 

C major D7 G major G major G7 E minor A major

34. 

D minor E major A minor B major E minor

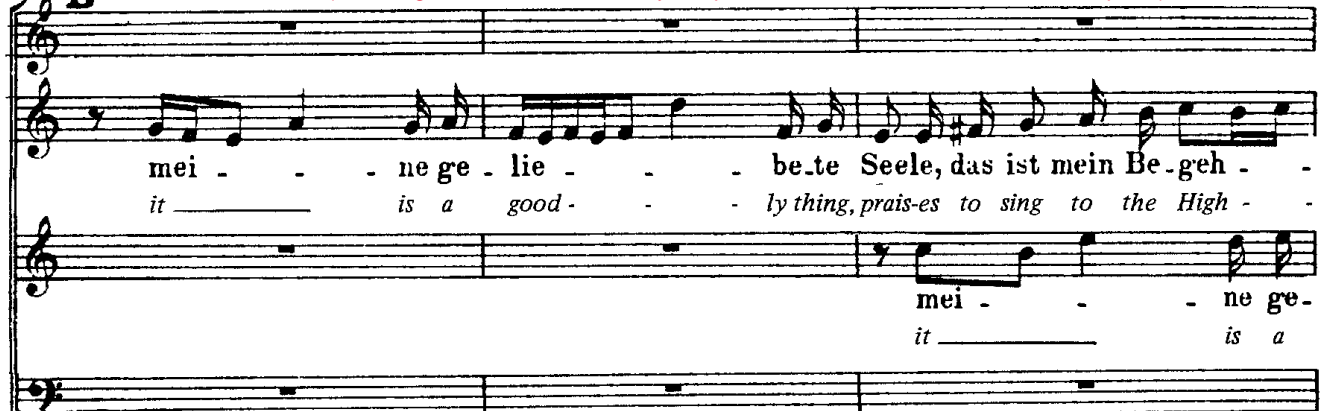
37. 

A7 D minor G7

40. 


C major C major C7 F major G7 C major

B 44. Chorale Phrase 2 (A-T-B fugato based on thematically independent instrumental theme; the music repeats).



mei - - ne ge - lie - - be-te Seele, das ist mein Be-geh - -
it _____ is a good - - ly thing, prais-es to sing to the High - -

mei - - ne ge-
it _____ is a

B = m. 17. = m. 18. = m. 19. 

C major

47.

ren, mei-ne See-le, mei-ne See-est, to the High-est, to the High-lie-be-te Seele, das ist mein Be-geh-good-ly thing, praises to sing to the High-meine ge-lie-be-te it is a good-ly thing,

= m. 20 = m. 21. = m. 22.

C major D7 G major C major

50.

mei-ne ge-lie-be-te it is a good-ly thing, -le, mei-ne See-le, das ist mein Be-est, to the High-est, to sing to the ren, ge-lie-be-te Seele, das ist mein Be-est, to sing to the High-est, to sing to the See-le, das ist mein Be-geh-ren, mei-ne ge-lie-be-te prais-es to sing to the High-est, prais-es to sing to the

= m. 23. = m. 24.

C major

52.

See - le, das ist mein Be - geh -
 prais - es to sing to the High -

gehren, das ist mein Be - geh - ren, das ist mein Begeh -
 High-est, to sing to the High - est, to sing to the High -

gehren, das ist mein Be - geh - ren, das ist mein Begeh -
 High-est, to sing to the High - est, to sing to the High -

See - le, das ist mein Be - geh - ren, mein Be - geh -
 High-est, to sing to the High - est, to the High -

= m. 25. = m. 26. = m. 27.

55.

ren.
est.

ren.
est.

ren.
est.

ren.
est.

Ritornello

Trp I & II

C major

C major

58.

E7

61. Chorale Phrase 3 (Homophony).

Kom - met zu Hauf,
Strike strong the strings,

Kom - met zu Hauf,
Strike strong the strings,

Kom - met zu Hauf,
Strike strong the strings,

Kom - met zu Hauf,
Strike strong the strings,

Ritornello

A minor

G7

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64. Chorale Phrase 4 (Homophony).

NBA: wach

Psal - ter und Har - fen, **wacht** auf!
Psal - ter and harp to His praise,

Psal - ter und Har - fen, wacht auf!
Psal - ter and harp to His praise,

Psal - ter und Har - fen, wacht auf!
Psal - ter and harp to His praise,

Psal - ter und Har - fen, wacht auf!
Psal - ter and harp to His praise,

Ritornello

C major D7 G major

68. G major B7 E minor

72. Trp I & II E minor B major B minor E7

75. A minor D7 G major

78. G major G7 C major G major D7

D 81. Chorale Phrase 5 (T-A-B fugato based on thematically independent instrumental theme, music of the two Stollen is refashioned).

las - set die
mu - sic and

las - set die Mu - sicam hö - ren, lasset die Mu - sicam
mu - sic and songs of Thanks-giv - ing, mu - sic and songs of Thanks-

G major G7 C major C7

84.

Mu - sicam hö - ren, las - set die Mu - sicam hö - ren, die Mu - sicam
songs of Thanks-giv - ing, mu - sic and songs of Thanks-giv - ing, and songs of Thanks-

hö - ren, las - set die Mu - sicam hö - ren, die Mu - sicam
giv - ing, mu - sic and songs of Thanks-giv - ing, and songs of Thanks-

las - set die Mu - sicam hö - ren, die Mu - sicam
mu - sic and songs of Thanks-giv - ing, and songs of Thanks-


F major G7 C major

87. 

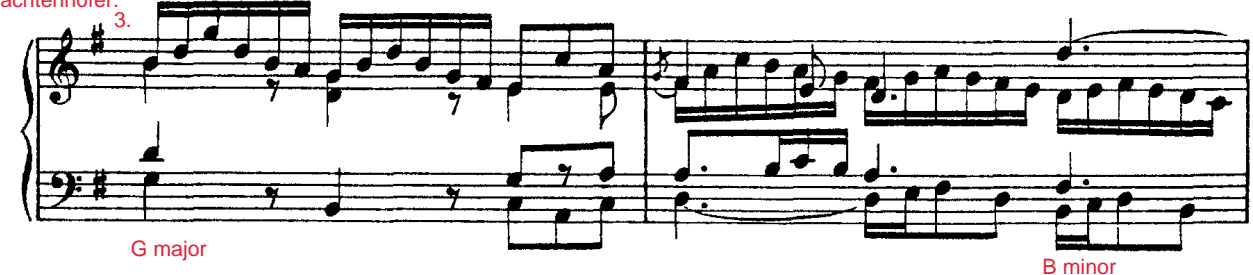
Trio (like its counterpart in the chiasmic structure).
Instrumentation: A, solo violin, continuo.

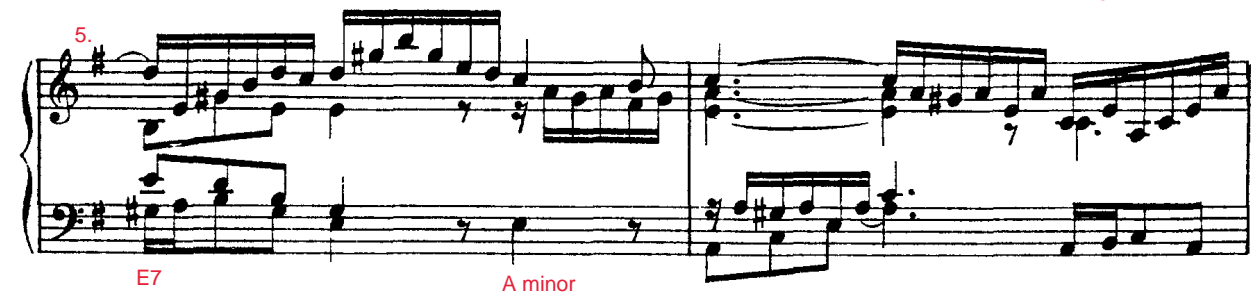
Vers 2. Aria. (Chorale Vs. 2)
137/2. (Andante con moto $\text{♩} = 66$)
•Praise the Lord who bears you on eagles' wings (137/2).
6/8 meter is superimposed on 9/8.

Text painting: The solo violin's arpeggios suggest the sweep of an eagle's wings, bearing its young, as referenced in the text. The compound meter reinforces the effect. Bach later reworked this aria for organ, BWV 650, the last of the 6 Schübler Chorales. There it is associated (only) with the 1667 Advent hymn text, "Kommst du nun, Jesu, vom Himmel herunter auf Erden" by Kaspar Friedrich Nachtenhöfer.

C major
Dal Segno. 

1. 

3. 

5. 

7. 

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9.

C major D7

11.

G major C# dim.7 D7 G major

13. **Alto.** Chorale melody embellished.

G major

15.

D7

17.

D7 G major G major G7

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19.

C major

21.

L.H.

C# dim.7 D7 G major

23.

der on dich ea - auf gle's A pin - de - lers ions He

G major

The reference to God bearing up his children like an eagle alludes to biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 32:11: Like an eagle that...flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions. (Also Exodus 19:4, Isaiah 40:28-31.)

25.

Fit - ti - gen si - cher ge -
leads us for our pre - ser -

27.

füh - ret,
va - tion.

D7 G major G major

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29.

31.

33.

35.

37.

39.

der
Our

dich
Cham

er
pion

hält, *Word painting: Extended note for "erhält" (to preserve or sustain).*

He,

L.H.

A minor

E7

A minor

D# dim.7

B7

N6

E minor

B7

E minor

A# dim.7

B7

E minor

E minor

C major

A minor

D7

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41.

wie es dir sel ber ge
ev - er He harks to our

G major G major

43.

fällt;
plea;

mf

A7

45.

D major

47.

D major

49.

G# dim.7 A7 D major D7 G major

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51. hast du nicht die - ses ver -
praise Him in deep ad - o -

53. spü - ret?
ra - tion.

G major E minor B7 E minor D7 G major

p *mf*

7 7

Dal Segno.

Vers 3. Duetto.

137/3. (Moderato ♩ = 84.)

(Chorale Verse 3)

•Praise the Lord who fashions you, covers with wings (137/3).

Dal Segno.

1. Ob I

mf Ritornello (ornamented bass opening).

Ob II (canonic)

E minor A major (B7)

E7

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

9. Soprano. Chorale Text Line 1 (imitative)

Head motive is derived from the chorale tune, now in minor.

Basso.

Lo - be den Her - ren, der künstlich und fein dich be -
Praise the Al - might - y who fair in His im - age - did -

Lo - be den Her - ren, der künstlich und fein dich be - rei - tet,
Praise the Al - might - y who fair in His im - age did make us,

p Obs tacet.

Ob I Ob II

E minor B minor A minor D# dim.7 B(7)

This is the central movement in a symmetrical (chiastic) form. See side note for more.
Instrumentation: S, B, 2 oboes, continuo.
The music is more complex, suggesting "künstlich" ("artful"), as referenced in the text.

Stollen 1 of chorale's bar form.

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Text painting: Melismas with figura corta for "lobe" (to praise).
For figura corta, see note at no. 1).

14.

rei - tet, lo - be den Herrn, lo - be den
make us, praise ye the Lord, praise ye the

lo - be den Herrn, lo - be den Herrn, lo
praise ye the Lord, praise ye the Lord, praise

Obs tacet.

E minor D7 G major B7

Continuo
has material
derived from the
ritornello.

18.

Herrn, lo - be den Herrn, lo - be den Herrn, der künst - lich und fein
Lord, praise ye the Lord, praise ye the Lord, who fair in His im -

- be den Herrn, der künstlich und
ye - the - Lord, who fair in His

E minor E minor D7 G major

22.

dich be - rei - tet, age did make us,
fein dich be - rei - tet, im - age did make us,

Ob I
mf Ritornello
Ob II

B major E minor E7

26.

A major E minor D(7) G major G7 C major



30. Chorale Text Line 2.

Stollen 2 of chorale's bar form (reprise of the first Stollen with order of entries reversed and key transposed).

der dir Ge - sundheit ver - lie - hen, dich freundlich ge -
who gave us health, He our friend who will nev - er for -

der dir Ge - sund - heit ver - liehen, dich freund -
who gave us health, He our friend who will nev -

Ob I

E minor E minor B minor B7 E minor

Text painting: Long melismas with figura corta for "geleitet" (to lead or guide).

35.

lei - - tet, dich freundlich ge - lei - - -
sake us, will nev - er for - sake

- lich ge - lei - - tet, dich freundlich ge - lei - -
- er for - sake us, will nev - er for - sake

Ob II

Obs tacet.

F#7 B minor E minor A7

39.

- - - - - tet, dich
us, nev -

- - - - - tet, freund -
us, nev -

D major F#7 B minor B minor

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43. freund - lich ge - lei - tet; us; er will - for - sake us; - lich ge - lei - tet; us; - er for - sake

Ob I
Ob II

mf Ritornello

A7 D major F#7 B minor

47. E major F#7 B minor A(7) D major D7

51. Chorale Text Line 3.
The text is the *Abgesang* of the chorale's bar form but the music is mostly a slightly varied restatement of the *Stollen* music, preceded by chromatic measures in canon, painting the words "in how much distress" (unrelated to chorale melody).

in wie - viel to our - dire - in wie - viel Noth, to our - dire - need,

Ob I

G major A# dim.7 B minor B minor (B7) E minor E7

55. Chromaticism for "Not" (distress).

Noth, in wie - viel Noth need, to our - dire - need

Ob II

A minor A(7) D minor D7 G minor G7 C major C7

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59. Chorale Text Line 4.

Chorale Text Line 5.

hat nicht der gnä - di - ge Gott ü - ber dir Flü - gel ge -
 gra - cious God ev - er gives heed, un - der His wings will He

hat nicht der gnä - di - ge Gott ü - ber dir
 gra - cious God ev - er gives heed, un - der His

Obs tacet.

Ob II

F major D minor D7 G major A7 D minor

63.

brei - tet, der gnä - di - ge Gott über dir Flü - gel ge -
 take us, God ev - er gives heed, un - der His wings will He

Flü - gel ge - brei - tet, der gnä - di - ge Gott
 wings will He take us, God ev - er gives heed,

Ob I

E(7) A minor G7

67.

Text painting: Held note with accompanying long melisma for "gebreitet" (spread [wings over you]).

brei - tet, ü - ber
 take us, un - der

über dir Flü - gel ge - brei - tet, über dir
 un - der His wings will He take us, un - der His

Obs tacet.

C major E7 A minor A minor

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71.

dir Flü - gel ge - brei - tet;
His wings will He take us;

Flü - gel ge-brei - tet;
wings will He take us;

mf Ritornello

Ob I
Ob II

75.

A7 D major E7 A minor G(7) C major C7

79.

Abgesang repeated but now now the voices begin simultaneously, in unison. The oboes play more continuously than in the *Stollen* of the chorale, creating a pervading quintet texture, which serves to emphasize the *Abgesang*. The ascending chromatic 4th simultaneously expresses "Not" ("distress") and praise.

in wie - viel Noth, wie - viel
to our dire need, our dire

in wie - viel Noth,
to our dire need,

Chromaticism for "Not" (distress), here ascending chromatic 4th.

F major G# dim.7 A minor A minor D minor D(7)

83.

Noth, wie - viel Noth, wie - viel Noth
need, our dire need, our dire need

in wie - viel Noth, wie - viel
to our dire need, our dire

Ob I
Ob II

G major E(7) A minor B7 E minor A(7)

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87. Chorale Text Line 4. Chorale Text Line 5.

hat nicht der gnä - di - ge
gra - cious God ev - er gives

Noth, wie - viel Noth — hat nicht der gnä - di - ge Gott ü - ber
need, our dire need — gra - cious God ev - er gives heed, un - der —

Ob I Ob II

D major B(7) E minor F#7 B major E minor E7

92.

Gott ü - ber dir — Flü - gel ge - brei - tet, der gü - ti - ge
heed, un - der His — wings - will He take — us, He ev - er gives

dir Flü - gel ge - brei - tet, der gü - ti - ge Gott —
His wings will He take — us, He ev - er gives heed, —

Ob I Ob II Ob I Ob II

A minor B(7) E minor

96.

Gott — dir Flügel gebrei -
heed, — to - Him will He take —

— dir Flügel gebrei — Text painting: Held note with accompanying long melisma with figura corta for "gebreitet" (spread [wings over you]).
— to - Him will He take —

Ob II

D7 G major B7 E minor

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100.

- tet, ü-ber dir Flü - gel ge-brei - tet!
us, un-der His wings will He take us.

Oboes tacet. Ob I

E minor D7 G major B major E minor

Vers 4. Aria. (Chorale Verse. 4)

137/4. • Praise the Lord who has poured blessings on us (137/4).

1. (Tempo giusto ♩ = 72.)

Dal Segno.

Trio (like its counterpart in the chiasmic structure, though trumpet only enters later with cantus firmus).

Instrumentation: T, trumpet, continuo. Right hand here is editorial realization.

A minor setting with chorale in C major.

The continuo line (ascending & descending scales followed by descending, triadic figura corta, treated like an ostinato) appears to be prompted by the text's reference to God pouring cascading streams of love.

4.

Continuo alone. Figural corta

A minor See full score for correct octave.

G major G(7) C major E(7) A minor

7. Tenore.

Bach perhaps wrote a quasi-ostinato bass to suggest the text's reference to repeated remembrance.

Alfred Dürr writes, "The fourth verse is also set in the minor mode, but it has a special harmonic charm, for the chorale melody, played on trumpet (or [in a later version] oboe) alongside the singing of the tenor, with continuo accompaniment, is in the relative major C. Still more often than in the preceding duet, allusions to the chorale melody are woven into the voice part. A notable feature of the text is the metrically altered, energetic 'Denke dran', as opposed to Neander's 'Denke daran'." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, revised and translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 506.

10.

Her - ren, lo - be den
Lord God, praise ye the

A minor

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13.

Her - ren, der dei - nen Stand sicht -

Lord God, who hath so man - i :

D7 G major G(7) C major

Word painting: "Blessed" is emphasized with a held note (accompanied by descending scale in the continuo) followed by melisma in the voice and figura corta in the continuo, while the trumpet plays the first phrase of the chorale cantus firmus.

16.

- - bar ge - seg -

- - fest ly - - blessed

Choral.

Trp

Lo - be den

E7 A minor G7 C major

19.

Her - ren, der dei - nen Stand sicht - bar ge -

C major D7 G major G(7) C major

In the *Stollen*, the trumpet or (in a later version) an oboe begins the chorale phrase after the tenor has sung most of it (during a melisma), then ends with the tenor on the final word.

22.

ge - seg - net, seg - net, net,

C major C major E(7)

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25.

der aus dem Him - mel, der aus dem
who from His Heav - en, who from His

A minor

28.

Word painting: Scalar melismas for "streams" and "showered."

Him - mel, aus dem Him - mel mit Strö -
Heav - en, - from His - Heav - en with show -

A minor D7 G major C major

31.

- men der Lie - be - ge - reg -
- ers of love has pos - sessed

E7 A minor G7

34.

Der aus dem Him - mel mit Strö - men der
- - - - -

C major D7 G major G(7) C major

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37. Strö - men der Lie - bo ge - reg - net;

Lie - be ge - reg - net;

mf

C major

Tenor enters alone on metrically altered text of the Abgesang for greater emphasis (original is "denke daran"). The dramatic cessation of the continuo emphasizes the imperative to ponder.

40. den - ke d'ran, was der All -
pon - der thus how Might - y

Abgesang of chorale's bar form.

A7 D minor

C major The trumpet enters with the cantus firmus in its original form (4 syllables) while the singer repeats the imperative "think on this" (related to the imperative in the closing chorale, no. 5, "forget not").

44. mäch - ti - ge karn, den - ke d'ran, den -
God - aid - eth Den - ke dar - an pon -

E7 A major A7 D minor G7

47. - ke, den - ke d'ran, den - ke, den -
- der, pon - der Was der Äll - mäch - ti - ge

C major E7 A minor G7 C major

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Word painting: Energetic melisma for "the Almighty."

50.

ke dran, was der All - mäch -
kann, der thus, how Might - y God

D7 G major G7

53.

ti - ge, was der All - mäch - ti - ge kann,
aid - eth, how Might - y God aid - eth us,

C major D7 G major G major

56.

Der dir mit Lie - be be -

G major

For the significance Bach's seems to have attached to the ascending diatonic fourth, see side note.

The trumpet again anticipates the singer's line, the imitative here writing suggesting the text ("who meets you with love").

59.

der dir mit Lie - be be - geg -
geg net. has pos sessed

E7 A minor A7 G7 D minor

Bach's decision to continue the tenor line beyond the end of the cantus firmus in the trumpet, moving from C major to D minor, appears to have symbolic significance. See side note.

Regarding the significance of C major and D minor, see side note.

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62.

C major E7 A minor

64.

A minor

66.

net, der dir mit
us, think how His

E7 A major A7 D minor

69.

Lie be, mit love has, His Lie be be geg net. love has pos sessed us.

E7 A minor A minor

mf

Dal Segno.

137/5. **Vers 5. Choral.** (Mel.: „Lobe den Herren“.) (Verse 5)

•Praise the Lord: all that is in me; that hath breath (137/5).

Soprano.

+Ob I, II
+Vln I

1. 
 Lo-be den Her-ren, was in mir ist, lo-be den Na-men!
 Al-les, was O-dem hat, lo-be mit A-bra-ham's Sa-men!
 Praise ye Al-might-y God, rev-er-ent bow ye be-fore Him!
 All breath-ing crea-tures for grace and for mer-cy im-plore Him!

The expanded texture (8 parts if one counts timpani) answers the call of the first movement to praise God with instruments. Bach later reused this reinforced chorale in the wedding cantata, BWV 120a, "Herr Gott, Beherrscher aller Dinge," there in the still higher key of D.

In this context, "Abraham's seed" alludes to biblical passages such as Galatians 3:16, 29: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring... which is Christ... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

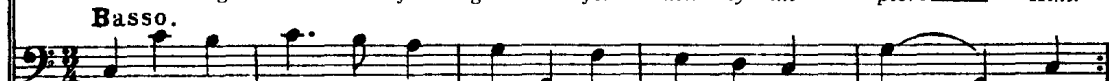
+Vln II


 Lo-be den Her-ren, was in mir ist, lo-be den Na-men!
 Al-les, was O-dem hat, lo-be mit A-bra-ham's Sa-men!
 Praise ye Al-might-y God, rev-er-ent bow ye be-fore Him!
 All breath-ing crea-tures for grace and for mer-cy im-plore Him!

+Vla


 Lo-be den Her-ren, was in mir ist, lo-be den Na-men!
 Al-les, was O-dem hat, lo-be mit A-bra-ham's Sa-men!
 Praise ye Al-might-y God, rev-er-ent bow ye be-fore Him!
 All breath-ing crea-tures for grace and for mer-cy im-plore Him!

Basso.


 Lo-be den Her-ren, was in mir ist, lo-be den Na-men!
 Al-les, was O-dem hat, lo-be mit A-bra-ham's Sa-men!
 Praise ye Al-might-y God, rev-er-ent bow ye be-fore Him!
 All breath-ing crea-tures for grace and for mer-cy im-plore Him!

Trp I, II, III
Timp



11.

C major

(D7) G major

G7

C major

C major

Er ist dein Licht, Seele, ver-giss es ja nicht; Lobende, schliesse mit A-men!
 He is the Light, come all ye faith-ful, u-nite, wor-ship Him, praise and a-dore Him!

Er ist dein Licht, Seele, ver-giss es ja nicht; Lobende, schliesse mit A-men!
 He is the Light, come all ye faith-ful, u-nite, wor-ship Him, praise and a-dore Him!

Er ist dein Licht, Seele, ver-giss es ja nicht; Lobende, schliesse mit A-men!
 He is the Light, come all ye faith-ful, u-nite, wor-ship Him, praise and a-dore Him!

Erist dein Licht, Seele, ver-giss es ja nicht; Lobende, schliesse mit A-men!
 He is the Light, come all ye faith-ful, u-nite, wor-ship Him, praise and a-dore Him!

C major

A7

D minor

A minor

G7

C major

G major

G7

C major

C major