

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 2

Form: Chorale Fantasia-Recit (T)-Aria (A)-Recit (B)-Aria (T)-Chorale. The first recit-aria pair deals with heresy relying on reason, the second pair with the lot of the persecuted.

Introduction and updates at melvinunger.com

The archaic style of 2/1 was probably intended to indicate tradition and conservative theology in contrast to Enlightenment philosophy (see, for example, the reference to "foolish reason" substituting for biblical truth in 10/2). Eric Chafe observes that "the message of Cantata 2... is pure "theologia crucis" [theology of the cross], the only true theology according to Luther.... Bach represents the believer's life of tribulation and persecution in the world

J.S. Bach Cantata No. 2 Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein

Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein

Chorus (Chorale Vs. 1 (the hymn is Luther's paraphrase of Ps. 12). Renaissance-like motet style with continuo, the other instruments doubling the voices (in the style of Pachelbel). Medieval cantus firmus in the Phrygian mode. No sinfonia or ritornello. The trombones (sackbuts), alla breve meter, and "white note" notation add to the archaic character. See side note for information on Bach's chorale cantata cycle.

Instrumentation:
Ob I, II
Tbn I, II, III, IV
Vln I, II
Vla
SATB
Continuo

2/1. **Coro.**

1. (Grave $\text{♩} = 58$)

Soprano.

Doubled by Vln I, Trb I.

Alto.

Doubled by Vln II, Ob I, II, Trb II.

Tenore.

Doubled by Vla, Trb III.

Basso.

Doubled by Trb IV.

Cantus firmus is foreshadowed by counterpoint based on first phrase of chorale. Descending 4th

Chorale Phrase 1. Ach Gott, vom Him-mel sieh da-rein und lass dich's doch-
Text painting: Upward leap for "heaven."

Ach Gott, vom Him - mel

Pianoforte.

Grave.

mf

G minor

Descending 4ths from tonic to dominant (and reverse), sometimes with intervening chromatic tones, characterize the counterpoint, to illustrate the text image of looking up to God, and asking him to look down and bestow mercy (see mm. 27-29). The descending 4th is derived directly from the chorale (see "sieh darein").

8.

Ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - - rein, da - rein, -

er - bar - - - men, und lass dich's doch er - - bar - - -

sieh da - rein und - - lass dich's doch - - er - - bar - - -

Harmonic tension is increased by adding chromatic note for "erbarmen" (have mercy).

Text painting: Lamento bass (descending chromatic 4th) for "have mercy."

G minor B dim. 7 C minor

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15. Cantus firmus in long notes in Alto. For Bach's systematic plan for treating the cantus firmus in his first cantatas of the Chorale Cantata Cycle see side note above.

ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein.

Ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein.

men, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein.

men, ach Gott, vom Him - mel, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein.

D7 G minor G minor C minor

Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein.

mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein.

rein, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein.

rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Him - mel sieh da - rein.

D7 G minor Ascending 4th (looking up to God) followed by descending 4th (God looking down). D minor

rein, sieh da - rein, ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh da - rein und rein und lass dich's doch er - bar - da - rein und lass dich's

rein und lass dich's doch er - bar - da - rein und lass dich's

da - rein und lass dich's

D major G minor

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31.

lass dich's doch er - bar - - - - - men, und lass dich's doch er - bar -
men, und lass dich's doch er - bar - - - - - men, und lass dich's doch er - bar -
doch er - - bar - - - - - men, und lass dich's doch er - bar -

G minor A minor D minor

37.

- men, er - bar - - - - -
und lass dich's doch - - - - -
- men, lass dich's doch er - - bar - - - - - men, er - bar -
- - - - - men, und lass dich's doch er - bar -

G minor C minor

43.

- - - - - men, und lass dich's doch er -
er - - bar - - - - - men,
- - - - - men, und lass dich's doch er - bar -
- - - - - men, lass dich's doch er - - bar - - - - - men, er bar -

Chromatic note added.

G minor G major

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Music for first 2 chorale phrases is repeated (compare mm. 3-51).

49. **B**

bar - - - - - men, **Cantus firmus foreshadowed by counterpoint based on 3rd phrase of chorale (same as the first phrase).**

Chorale Phrase 3.

- men, wie we - nig sind der Heil' - gen dein, ver -

- men, wie

B

R. H.

C major G minor G minor G minor

56.

wie we - nig sind der Heil' - gen

Added chromatic note for lamentation

las - - sen sind wir Ar - - - - - men, ver - lassen sind wir -

we - nig sind der Heil' - gen dein, ver - - las - sen sind wir

G minor

63.

dein, wie we - - nig sind der Heil' - gen dein, der Heil'gen dein, wie

wie (Same melody as Phrase 1.) we - - - - nig

Ar - - - - - men, wie we - nig sind der Heil' -

Text painting: Octave leap upward for "saints."

Ar - - - - - men, ver - lassen sind wir, ver - las - - sen

Chorale Phrase 4 (text overlaps with Phrase 3).

C minor B dim. 7 D7 G minor

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69.

wenig, wie we-nig-sind, wie we-nig sind der Heil'gen dein, der Heil'gen
sind der Heil'-gen dein,
-gen-dein, der Heil'-gen-dein, wie wenig sind der Heil'gen dein,
sind wir Ar-men, wie we-nig sind der Heil'-gen dein, der Heil'gen

C minor D7 G minor D minor D major

76.

dein, wie we-nig sind der Heil'gen dein, ver-las-sen
ver-las-sen sind wir Ar-men, ver-las-sen
dein, ver-las-sen sind wir

Cantus firmus foreshadowed by counterpoint based on 4th phrase of chorale (same tune/music as second phrase).

G minor G minor

82.

sind wir Ar-men, ver-las-sen sind wir Ar-men, ver-las-sen sind wir Ar-men, ver-las-sen sind wir Ar-men

D minor G minor A minor

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88.

- men, ver - las - sen sind wir Ar -

ver - las - sen sind wir

Same melody as Phrase 2.

men, ver lassen sind wir Ar - men, wir Ar -

- men, ver lassen sind wir Ar -

G minor C minor

94.

- men, ver - las - sen sind wir Ar -

Ar - men:

- men, ver lassen sind wir Ar -

men, ver lassen sind wir Ar - men, wir Ar -

G minor G major C major

100.

- men: Dein

Chorale Phrase 5 (beginning of Abgesang in bar form).

- men, wir Ar - men: Cantus firmus foreshadowed by counterpoint based on 5th phrase of chorale.

- men: Dein Wort man nicht lässt ha - ben wahr,

Original chorale text: läßt nicht.

R.H. L.H. R.H.

G minor G minor D minor B-flat major F major

By reversing the words, the metrical accent falls on "nicht" (not).

142.

lo - schen gar, der Glaub' ist auch ver - loschen gar, ver - lo - schen
 ist auch ver - loschen gar, der Glaub' ist auch ver - loschen
 auch ver - loschen gar, der Glaub' ist auch ver - loschen
 auch ver - loschen gar, der Glaub' ist auch ver - loschen

C7 F major F7 B-flat major G minor

147.

gar, der Glaub' ist auch ver - lo - schen gar bei al - len Men - schen - - -
 gar bei al - len Men - schen - - kin - - -
 gar, der Glaub' ist auch ver - lo - schen gar

G minor G7 C minor G minor C major

Chorale Phrase 7. Cantus firmus foreshadowed by counterpoint based on 7th phrase of chorale.

152.

kin - - - dern, bei al - len Men - schen - kin - - -
 dern, bei al - len Menschen - kin - - -
 bei al - len Men - schen - kin - - -

F major D7 G minor

Cantus firmus, Phrase 7. bei al - -

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157. Close imitation

dern, bei al-len Menschen-kin- - - dern, bei al-len Menschen, bei
 len Men - - - schen - - - kin - - - kin - - - dern, bei al-len Menschen-kin- - -
 dern, bei al-len Menschen-kin- - - dern, bei al-len Menschen.

G minor G7 C minor G minor

162.

al - - len Men - schen - kin - - dern, allen Men - - schenkin - dern.
 Menschen-kin - - dern, al - - - len Menschen - kin - - - dern.
 kin - - dern, al-len Menschen-kindern, al - - - len Menschen - kin - - - dern.

D minor D minor D major

2/2. **Recitativo.**

Secco Tenor Recit. (Based on Chorale Vs. 2.) An unusual feature is quoting chorale lines (both text and music) at two points, and in canon with Adagio marking. The rest of the recitative elaborates on the ideas in these two lines.

1. Tenore. **Adagio.** **Recit.**

Sie leh-ren ei-tel fal-sche List, was wider Gott und sei-ne Wahrheit

=Phrase 1 of the chorale verbatim, transposed a 5th "flat-ward."
 See Chafe, "Analyzing Bach Cantatas," 129.

Chromatic Saturation in the vocal part in 12 mm.

Continuo alone

Canon

G major C minor B-flat 7 C minor

Continuo echoes voice with Chorale Phrase 1 (at the 8va), probably representing false teachers leading someone astray.

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Tonal progression continues "flat-ward." See Chafe, "Analyzing Bach Cantatas," 129.

3. E G-flat A

ist; und was der ei - gen Witz er - den - ket, o Jam - mer, der die

E-flat major C7 F minor A dim. 7

5. D-flat Adagio.

Kir - che schmerzlich krän - ket, das muss anstatt der Bi - bel stehn. Der · Ei - ne

Chromatic harmonies for miserable apostasy.

E dim. 7 F7 D7

First 3 notes not part of cantus firmus.

7. Recit. See side note regarding reason vs. faith.

wäh - let dies, der An - dre das, die thö - rich - te Ver - nunft ist ihr Com -

Text painting: harmonic instability to represent divergent heretical views mentioned in the text.

The continuo imitates the voice "flat-ward" 2 fifths (from original). In the context of this recitative, the text of the chorale line perhaps represents the 2 types of false teachers described earlier.

G minor E-flat major C minor A7

9. Allusion to Jesus' words, e.g., Mt. 23:27-28.

pass, sie glei - chen ü - ber - tünch - ten Grä - bern, die, ob sie zwar von aussen

NBA text: denen Toten-

D minor (For significance of D minor representing "poor weak sinner, see side note.) E-flat major

11. B

schön, bloss To - dten - beine in sich fassen und nur Ver - wesung sehen lassen.

NBA text: nur Stank und Moder lauter Unflat

F major F7 F# dim. 7 Text painting: Chromatic chord D7 G7 C# dim. 7 Text painting: Chromatic chord D minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 2 Alto Aria (Based on Chorale Vs. 3.) •Apostasy: Prayer to stop false teachers (as represented by the quoted chorale lines in the previous movement) (2/3).

Jaunty aria in galant, comic opera style, presumably to characterize fashionable heresies. Galant elements: -major home key, -patter declamation, -periodic phrase structure, -triplets (often 3 against 2).

2/3. **Aria.** Solo Violin Obligato
 1. **(Ritornello)** ♩ = 56.

Ritornello

B-flat major
 The movement combines an ostinato bass with soloistic solo violin line.

4.

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

7. **Alto.**

Tilg', o Gott, die Leh - - ren,

p *mf*

B-flat major

10.

13.

tilg', o Gott, die Leh - - ren, so dein Wort ver - keñ - - ren, tilg', o

B-flat major

F major

16.

Gott, die Leh - ren, so dein Wort ver - keh - ren, tilg' o Gott, die Leh -

This system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 16-18. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Gott, die Leh - ren, so dein Wort ver - keh - ren, tilg' o Gott, die Leh -". The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and a more rhythmic bass line.

Chromaticism for "verkehren" (to pervert).

19.

- ren, so - dein Wort ver - keh - ren,

tr

Ritornello

F minor (instead of expected F major) F major

This system covers measures 19-21. The vocal line continues with "- ren, so - dein Wort ver - keh - ren,". A trill (*tr*) is marked above the final note of the vocal phrase. The piano accompaniment includes a section labeled "Ritornello". A red annotation "F minor (instead of expected F major)" points to a chromatic change in the piano part, and another "F major" annotation points to a later section.

22.

This system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 22-24. The vocal line is silent. The piano part continues with intricate sixteenth-note patterns in both hands.

25.

This system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 25-27. The vocal line is silent. The piano part continues with intricate sixteenth-note patterns in both hands.

28.

weh-re doch der Ket - ze-rei, wehre doch der

F major C minor

Text painting: Melismas (the only ones in the aria) for "all spirit hordes."

31.

Ket - ze-rei und al -

G minor

34.

- len Rot-ten - gei - stern, wehre doch der

G minor G minor

37. Harmonic ambiguity for "heresy."

Melisma adopts triplets of the ritornello of the violini part.

Ket - ze-rei, wehre doch der Ket - ze - rei und al - len Rot - ten -

G minor

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40. Harmonic ambiguity for heresy: mm. 40-41.

gei - stern, wehre doch der Ket - ze - rei und al - len - Rot - - ten - gei -

43.

stern;

Ritornello

G minor

46.

denn sie spre -

G minor

49.

- chen oh - ne - Scheu, denn sie spre - - - chen oh - ne - Scheu:

F major

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The vocal line has several "false starts," as if there is opposition to completing the entire chorale cantus firmus.

Text painting: Tritone leap for "Trotz" (defiance).

52.

Trotz dem, Trotz dem, Trotz dem, **Trotz**, der uns will

G minor D minor

Bach incorporates the melody of the last chorale phrase, perhaps because the text has similar words, though essentially opposite in meaning: Poetic text: "[We say.] 'Defiance to him who would master us!'" Chorale text: ["They say, 'Who is there who can master us?'"

55.

Chorale Melodic Phrase 7.

mei - - stern, **Trotz** dem, der uns will

D minor

Note: The original chorale text of line 4: "Spricht: Trotz, wer wills unser wehren?"
Original chorale text of line 7: "Wer ist, der uns soll meistern?"

58.

Text painting: Tritone leap for "Trotz" (defiance).

mei - - stern, **Trotz**, **Trotz** dem, der uns will mei - -

D minor

61.

Opening section returns in modified form.

stern! Tilg', o Gott, die Leh - ren, tilg', o Gott, die

B-flat major

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65.

Harmonic instability in mm. 66–69 to depict "Wort verkehren" (pervert the Word).

Leh - ren, so dein Wort ver - keh - ren, tilg', o Gott, die Leh - ren, so dein

C minor
E-flat major

G minor F major

68.

Wort ver - keh - ren, tilg', o Gott, die Leh -

B-flat major

E-flat major

70.

Chromatic D-flat for "pervert."

- ren, so dein Wort ver - keh - ren!

B-flat major (B-flat minor?) B-flat major

Dal Segno.

2/4. Recitativo

1. Basso.

Chromatic Saturation in the vocal part in 12 mm.

Die Armen sind verstört, ihr seufzend Ach, ihr ängstlich Klagen bei soviel Kreuz und

Chorale text verbatim from Stanza 4. Text painting: Chromatic harmonies and tritone leaps in Continuo for misery of the poor.

E-flat major E-flat 7 D-flat dim. 7 with pedal. A dim. 7 F7 A dim. 7

4.

Noth, wodurch die Fein-de fromme Seelen pla-gen, dringt in das Gna-den-ohr des

Strings accelerate from half notes to quarters, and then to eighths (at the beginning of the arioso).

B-flat minor Tritone E dim.7 Tritone C minor

6.

Al-ler-höchsten ein; darum spricht Gott: Ich muss ihr Hel-fer sein, ich

Arioso.

Voice of God' statements begin with pickups of ascending 4ths or 5ths.

D-flat major B dim.7 C minor B-flat major

Text painting: Rising lines probably to depict lifting up the poor and suffering ones; falling lines for God reaching down to help.

9.

hab' ihr Flehn er-hört, der Hil-fe Morgen-roth, der reinen Wahrheit hel-ler Sonnen-

Chorale text verbatim.

G minor G7

12.

schein soll sie mit eurer Kraft, die Trost und Leben schafft, er-quickern und erfreuen.

C major C7 F major

15.

Ich will mich ihrer Nother-barmen, mein heüsam Wort soll sein die Kraft der Ar - - - men.

F7 D7 G minor G minor

Chorale text verbatim.

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Tenor Ritornello (Da Capo) Aria (Based on Chorale Vs. 5)

2/5. **Aria.** •Affliction purifies the Christian; be patient! (2/5).

Musical elements of the Movement:
-flickering figure for "fire" (rather than figura corta)
-contrary motion to symbolize "cross." (See Chafe, "Analyzing Bach Cantatas," 131.)

Ob I, II, Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Continuo

1. (Moderato $\text{♩} = 72$)

Ritornello *mf*

G minor This is a "Devisenarie" or "motto aria" (see above). The motto sets the tone and perspective for the movement.

5.

-Flickering figure for "fire" (rather than interpreted as a figura corta)
-Contrary motion to create "chi" figure, symbolizing the "cross."

9. **Tenore.**

Durch Feu - er wird das Sil - ber rein, Ritornello

Biblical Allusion: E.g., 1 Peter 1:6-7.

p

G minor

13.

durch Feu - - er

p

G minor

16.

wird das Sil - ber rein, durch Kreuz das Wort be - währt er.

Modulation to C minor for image of "purifying" by means of fire and cross-bearing.

19.

fun - den, durch Feu - er wird das Sil - ber rein, durch Kreuz das

G major B-flat major C minor

22.

Wort be - währt er - fun - den, durch Kreuz das Wort bewährt erfun -

B dim.7 B dim.7 B dim.7 C minor C minor

25.

den, durch Feu - er wird das Sil - ber

C minor G minor

28.

rein, durch Feu - er

G minor G minor

31.

wird das Sil - ber rein, durch Kreuz das Wort bewährt erfun -

Text painting: Descending chromatic tetrachord (traditional symbol of lament) for "cross."

34.

den, durch Kreuz das Wort bewährt erfun - den:

Ritornello

G minor

37.

40.

44.

Contrasting B Section is more chromatic to emphasize patient endurance of suffering ("Kreuz und Noth").

drum soll ein Christ zu allen Stunden in Kreuz und

Continuo accompaniment only, this keyboard realization is editorial.

G minor

B-flat major

C minor

Rhetorical emphasis on "all" with high note.

47.

Noth ge-duldig sein, drum soll ein Christ zu al - - len Stun-den in

F7 B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major F7

Text painting: Harmonic ambiguity and chromaticism for "Kreuz" und "Noth" (mm. 50-52), appoggiaturas to emphasize "Kreuz" and "Noth."

50.

Kreuz und Noth, in Kreuz und Noth, in Kreuz und Noth ge -

A-flat major F major B-flat major E-flat minor

53.

dul - - dig sein, drum soll ein

Strings re-enter. Strings tacet; Continuo alone.

E-flat major C minor C minor

56.

Christ zu al - - len Stun - den in Kreuz und Noth ge-dul - - dig

Strings re-enter.

G7 C minor C# dim.7 D minor G# dim.7

59.

sein, drum soll ein Christ zu al - len Stun - den in Kreuz und

A major D minor C# dim.7 D minor

62. **Adagio.** Text painting: Adagio for "patient endurance."

Noth ge - dul - dig sein, in Kreuz und Nothge - dul - dig sein.

Biblical Allusion, e.g., James 1:2-4: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

D minor D major Da Capo.

2/6. **Choral.** Chorale (Vs. 6)
 •Prayer: Let not evil infiltrate us (2/6).

Soprano. 1.

Das wollst du, Gott, be - wah - ren rein vor dem ar - gen Ge - schlech - te,
 und lass uns dir be - foh - len sein, dass sich's in uns nicht flech - te;

Alto.

Das wollst du, Gott, be - wah - ren rein vor dem ar - gen Ge - schlech - te,
 und lass uns dir be - foh - len sein, dass sich's in uns nicht flech - te;

Tenore.

Das wollst du, Gott, be - wah - ren rein vor dem ar - gen Ge - schlech - te,
 und lass uns dir be - foh - len sein, dass sich's in uns nicht flech - te;

Basso.

Das wollst du, Gott, be - wah - ren rein vor dem ar - gen Ge - schlech - te,
 und lass uns dir be - foh - len sein, dass sich's in uns nicht flech - te;

Text painting: Chromatic harmony for "evil generation."

G minor D major C# dim.7 G minor G minor
 A-flat major

Abgesang of bar form has continuous 8th-note movement.

5.

der gott-los' Hauf' sich um - her find't, wo sol - che lo - se

der gott-los' Hauf' sich um - her find't, wo sol - che lo - se

der gott-los' Hauf' sich um - her find't, wo sol - che lo - se

der gott-los' Hauf' sich um - her find't, wo sol - che lo - se

Text painting: Chromatic harmonic progression for godless ones.

D minor A major E-flat major F major
B-flat major

8.

Leu - te sind in dei - nem Volk er - - ha - - - ben.

Leu - te sind in dei - nem Volk er - - ha - - - ben.

Leu - te sind in dei - nem Volk er - - ha - - - ben.

Leu - te sind in dei - nem Volk er - - ha - - - ben.

G minor C minor A7 D major