

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 139

Form: Chorus/Fantasia - Aria (T) - Recit (A) - Aria (B) - Recit (S) - Chorale.

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/26; BC A159

23. S. after Trinity (BWV 163, 139, 52)

*Philippians 3:17-21 (Our citizenship is in heaven.)

*Matthew 22:15-22 (The Pharisees try to trap Jesus with the question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?")

Librettist: Unknown

FP: 12 November 1724 (St. Nicholas). This cantata belongs to Bach's chorale cantata cycle (see note).

The central idea of the cantata is "God as man's friend," derived from the last line of each chorale stanza (see note for chorale text and translation), which itself alludes to biblical passages such as James 2:23 (Abraham identified as a friend of God) and John 15:15 (Jesus calls his disciples friends).

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 139

Wohl dem, der sich auf seinen Gott

(Chorale Verse 1) • God as friend: Relying on him in times of opposition (139/1).

Nº 1. Vers 1. Coro.

(Tempo ordinario ♩ = 72.)

139/1.

Instrumentation:

Tromba

Recorder I, II

Ob I, II

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo

Regarding lost parts and attempted reconstructions, see note.

Form (Rhyme: ABABCC)

Rit (mm. 1-11) EM

Line 1 (11-16) EM-BM

Rit. (16-20) BM-EM

Line 2 (20-25) EM

Rit (25-35) EM

Line 3 (35-40=11-16) EM-BM

Rit. (40-44=16-20) BM-EM

Line 4 (44-49=20-25) EM

Rit (49-53) EM-Cm

Line 5 (53-59) F#m-BM

Rit (59-65) BM-G#m

Line 6 (65-71) G#m-EM

Rit (1-11) EM

The restless countermelody may suggest the enemies of Christ and the believer. Martin Petzoldt notes that tradition named 5 enemies of Christ: world, devil, death, hell, and sin. See *Bach Kommentar* 1:550, 642, 2:915. The opening chorale stanza mentions all of these except death, which appears in the last stanza (movement no. 6).

The opening gesture, derived from the first phrase of the chorale, played by 2 oboes d'amore in parallel 6ths with Vln I, suggests the sweetness of having God for a friend, as referenced in the text.

The four-note diatonic ascending figure permeates the whole movement, suggests lifting one's hope upward to "God as friend" as referenced in the text (see note).

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Stollen 1 of chorale's bar form.

(NB. Der Cantus firmus: „Mach's mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güte“ im Sopran.)

A Soprano. Chorale text line 1. Accompanying voices have thematic material in diminution, treated imitatively.

11

O
R
C

Alto. Wehl dem, der sich

Wohl dem, der sich auf seinen Gott, wohl dem, — der sich auf sei - nen Gott,

Tenore.

Basso. Wohl dem, der sich auf seinen Gott, auf seinen Gott, wohl dem, der

Wohl dem, der

A

Ob d'am I

Ob d'am II

13

E major

E major

auf sei - - - nen Gott.

wohl dem, der sich auf seinen Gott, der sich auf sei - - nen

sich auf seinen Gott, der sich auf sei - nen Gott, der sich auf sei - - nen

sich auf seinen Gott, wohl dem, der sich auf seinen Gott, wohl dem, der sich auf seinen

C#7 F# minor B7 E major F#7 B major

16

Gott

Gott

Gott

Gott Ritornello

Ritornello

Vln I

Ob d'am I

Ob d'am II

B major C#7 F# minor F# minor

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E7 A major B7 E major F#7 B major

B major E major C#7 F# minor

F# minor B7 E major

E major

35 **C** Chorale text line 3 (music of Stollen 1 repeats). Accompanying voices have thematic material in diminution, treated imitatively.

Den mag gleich
Den mag gleich Sün-de, Welt und Tod, den mag gleich Sün-de,
Den mag gleich Sün-de, Welt und Tod, Welt und

E major

E major

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37

Sün - de, Welt und Tod
Welt und Tod, den mag gleich Sünde, Welt und Tod, Sün - de,
Tod, den mag gleich Sünde, Welt und Tod, Sün - de, Welt und Tod, Sün - de,
Den mag gleich Sünde, Welt und Tod, den mag gleich Sünde, Welt und Tod, Sün - de,

= m. 13. = m. 14. = m. 15. Written out version of m. 15.

C#7 F# minor B7 E major F#7

39 ff

Welt und Tod
Welt und Tod
Welt und Tod

Ritornello = m. 16. Ob d'am I = m. 17.
Vln I
Ob d'am II

B major B major C#7 F# minor

42

und
und al.le Teufel has -
und al.le

Accompanying voices have thematic material in diminution, treated imitatively.

D Chorale text line 4.

= m. 18. = m. 19. Ob d'am I = m. 20. Ob d'am II

F# minor B7 E major E major

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45

al - le Teu - fel has - sen, und al - le Teu - fel has - sen, und al - le Teu - fel -
 - sen, und al - le Teu - fel has - sen, und al - le Teu - fel -
 Teu - fel has - sen, und al - le Teu - fel has - sen, und al - le
 und al - le Teu - fel has - sen, und al - le Teu - fel, al - le Teu - fel.

= m. 21. = m. 22. = m. 23.

E major

47 II

has - sen, und al - le Teu - fel has - sen,
 has - sen, und al - le Teu - fel has - sen,
 Teu - fel has - sen, und al - le Teu - fel has - sen,
 has - sen, und al - le Teu - fel has - sen.

= m. 24 with a few changes. Ob d'am II
 Ritornello

E major

B major

E major

F#7

50

Ob d'am II
 Ob d'am I up 8va

B major E major E major G# major C# minor B7 E major

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53

E Chorale text line 5. Accompanying voices have thematic material in diminution, treated imitatively.

Abgesang of chorale's bar form.

so bleibt er den noch wohl ver - gnügt, so bleibt er dennoch wohl vergnügt,
so bleibt er dennoch wohl vergnügt, so bleibt er dennoch
so bleibt er dennoch wohl vergnügt, so bleibt er

C# minor C#7 F# minor B(7) E major

55

er den - - - noch wohl ver - - -
so bleibt er den - - - noch wohl vergnügt, so bleibt er
wohl ver - gnügt, so bleibt er den - - - noch wohl ver - gnügt,
dennoch wohl vergnügt, so bleibt er dennoch wohl vergnügt, so bleibt er den - - -

E major E major

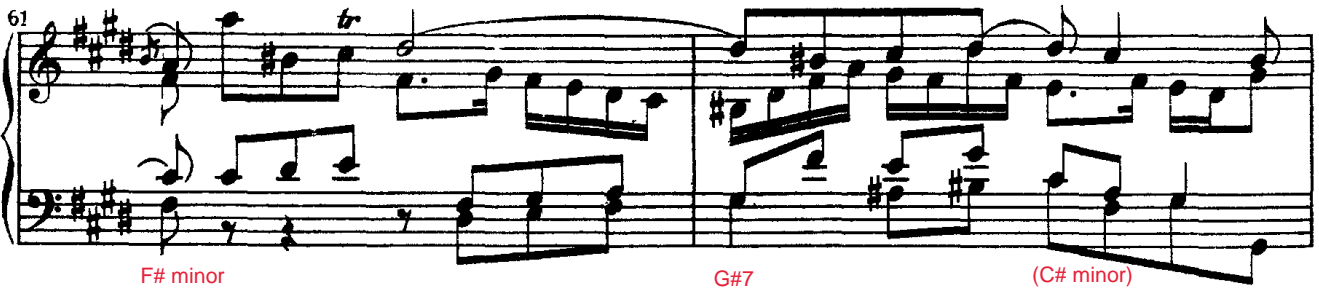
58

gnügt,
dennoch, dennoch bleibt er wohl ver - gnügt,
so bleibt er dennoch wohl vergnügt,
- - - noch wohl ver - gnügt, Ritornello

F#7 B major B major E major C#7 F# minor

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61



F# minor G#7 (C# minor)

63



C# minor D#7 G# minor

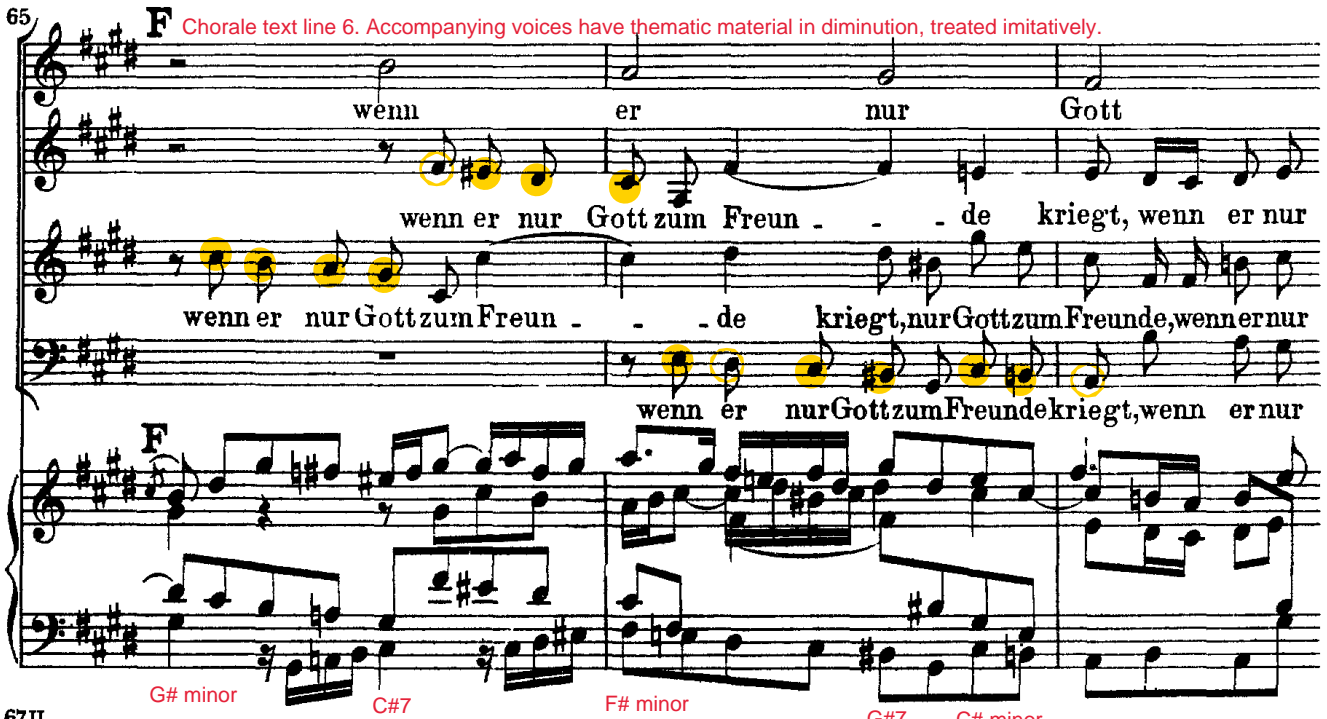
65 **F** Chorale text line 6. Accompanying voices have thematic material in diminution, treated imitatively.

wenn er nur Gott

wenn er nur Gott zum Freun - - - de kriegt, wenn er nur

wenn er nur Gott zum Freun - - - de kriegt, nur Gott zum Freunde, wenn er nur

wenn er nur Gott zum Freunde kriegt, wenn er nur



G# minor C#7 F# minor G#7 C# minor

67 II

zum Freun - - - de kriegt.

Gott zum Freunde kriegt, wenn er nur Gott zum Freunde

Gott zum Freunde kriegt, wenn er nur Gott zum Freunde kriegt, wenn er nur Gott zum Freunde

Gott zum Freunde kriegt, wenn er nur Gott zum Freunde kriegt, zum Freun - de,



E7 A major B7

70

kriegt, wenn er nur Gott zum Freunde kriegt.

kriegt, wenn er nur Gott zum Freunde kriegt.

wenn er nur Gott zum Freunde kriegt.

Ritornello
Ob d'am I
Vln I
Ob d'am II

E major E7 A major E major

Dal Segno. %

One of two obligato parts is lost. The other is for violin. Regarding the reconstruction of lost parts, see note at no. 1.

No. 2. Aria.
139/2. (Moderato ♩ = so.) (Based on Chorale Verse 2) • God as friend means the foe presents no danger (139/2).

1. Editorial reconstruction/realization. Vln I

mf

A major Bass figure treated as a quasi-ostinato. B7 E major E7

The ritornello is derived from the contrasting material in the aria:
1) steadfast "God is my friend motive"
2) raging 16ths of the enemy
(See side note for comments by Alfred Dürr.)



5

A major B7 E major

9

(Choral.) Editorial addition of chorale phrase.

E major E major (E7) A major B7

13

E major E7 A7 F#7 B minor

17

E7

A major

21

A major

A major

A Tenore. "God is my friend" motive permeates the entire movement, and contrasts with the 16th-note passages representing the raging of the enemy (see note above for comment by Alfred Dürr).

25

Gott ist mein Freund, Gott ist mein Freund; was hilft das

A major

B7

E7

Bass figure treated as a quasi-ostinato.

Word painting: Leaping melismas for "das Toben" ("the raging").

29

To - ben, was hilft das To - ben, so wi - der mich ein Feind er -

Editorial addition of chorale phrase.

A major

A major

A7

D major

32

ho - ben! Gott ist mein Freund, Gott ist mein

F#(7)

B minor

G major

E minor

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Editorial addition of chorale phrase.

36

Freund; was hilft das To - ben, was hilft das To - ben, so

F#7 B minor

Text painting: Line rises to high note for "enemy raised up against me."

39

wider mich ein Feind er - ho - ben! ich bin getrost bei Neid und Hass, ich bin ge -

B minor E# dim.7 F# minor C# minor C# minor

43

trost, ich bin ge - trost, ich bin ge - trost, getrost bei Neid und Hass.

Ritornello C# minor

47

C# minor

50

Gott ist mein Freund, Gott ist mein Freund,

C# minor F#7 B minor E7

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54

Gott ist mein Freund, Gott ist mein Freund; washilft das

A major B7 E7

Text painting: Long, energetic melisma for "das Toben" ("the raging").

Editorial addition of chorale phrase.

58

To - - - - - ben, washilft das

A major A major

61

To - - ben, so wi - der mich ein Feind er - ho - - ben, so

A major F#7

The text's reference to deceitful and envious enemies alludes to the Gospel reading, in which the Pharisees try to trap Jesus. See note.

64

wi - der mich ein Feind er - ho - - ben! ich bin ge - trost bei Neid und

B minor E7 A major

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67

Hass, ich bin ge - trost, ich bin ge - trost, ich bin - ge -

A major

70

trost, getrost bei Neid und Hass.

C

mf Ritornello

A major Up 1 8va (see full score). B7

73

Ja,

B Section.

E major E7 A major A major E# dim.7

76

re - det nur die Wahrheit spär - lich, ja,

Text painting: Speech-like declamation for "speaking the truth rarely."

F# minor F# minor B7

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79

re-det nur die Wahrheit spär-lich, seid immer falsch,

E major E major A# dim.7

82

was thut mir das? seid im-mer falsch, was thut mir das?

A# dim.7 A# dim.7 F#(7)

85

seid immer falsch, seid immer falsch, was thut mir das, seid

B minor B minor

88

Text painting: Neapolitan 6th for "always false." **D**

immer falsch, was thut mir das?

mf Ritornello

N6 F#7 B minor A7 D major

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Text painting: Obligato becomes more energized for reference to scoffers.

92

ihr Spöt - - ter, ihr Spöt - - ter, ihr

E(7) A major B7

95

Spöt - ter seid mir un - ge - fähr - lich, ihr Spöt - - -

E major

Text painting: Long, energetic melisma for "Spötter" ("scoffers").

98

- ter, ihr Spötter, ihr

E major E major

Editorial addition of chorale phrase.

101

Spöt - ter seid mir unge - fähr - lich, ihr Spöt - ter seid mir un - ge -

E major C#7 F# minor

104

fähr - lich, ihr seid mir un - ge - fähr - lich, ihr Spöt -

B7 E major E major

107

- ter, ihr Spöt - - ter, ihr seid mir un - ge - fähr - lich.

Secco E major Da Capo. E major

Nº 3. Recitativo.

139/3. 1. **Alto.** •Christ's children sent among wolves as he too was (139/3).

Alfred Dürr notes that this recitative is an insertion that links to the day's Gospel reading (see note).

Alto is often the voice of the believing soul.

Der Hei - land sen - det ja die Sei - nen recht mitten in der Wöl - fe

C# major E# dim.7

The reference to wolves alludes to Jesus' earlier words (see side note, citing Matthew 10:16) as well as to the Gospel reading, in which the Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus by asking whether he approved paying the Roman tax (see note at no. 2). In his commentary on the day's Gospel, Johann Olearius (whose biblical commentary was in Bach's personal library) noted the similarity between the Roman tax and the Turkish tax of his own day (cited in Martin Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 1:643).

3

Wuth. Um ihn hat sich der Bösen Rotte, zum Schaden und zum Spotte, mit List gestellt: doch

F# minor B# dim.7 C# minor

6

da sein Mund so weisen Ausspruch thut, so schützt er mich auch vor der Welt.

F#7 B minor E# dim.7 F# minor

No 4. Aria. 139/4.

(Poc' allegro ♩ = 72.) (Based on Chorale Verse 3) • God as friend in times of adversity (139/4).

Rondo Form (Rhyme: ABBACC)
 Note: Line 3 ("Plötzlich...") changes from iambic to dactylic meter.
 Measure numbers do not reflect cadences that overlap formal divisions.
 Rit (mm. 1-12) C meter, (poc' allegro), F#m
 Text lines 1-2 (13-26) F#m-C#M
 Line 3 (27-36) 6/8 meter, vivace, C#M-AM
 Rit (37-39) C meter, (poc' allegro), AM
 Lines 4-6 (40-45) C meter, andante, AM-Bm
 Rit (46-50) C meter, vivace, Bm
 Lines 4-6 (51-57) C meter, andante, Bm-C#m
 Rit (58-69) C meter, vivace (poc' allegro?), F#m
 Lines 1-2 (70-83), F#m-C#M
 Line 3 (84-88) 6/8 meter, vivace, C#M-DM
 Lines 1-2 (89-92) C meter, poc' allegro, DM-F#M
 Line 3 (93-102) 6/8 meter, vivace, F#M-F#m
 Rit (103-106) C meter, poc' allegro, F#m



In this aria, unity of affect gives way to the differentiated portrayal of 3 literary images:
 1) the strikes of misfortune
 2) sudden intervention of the divine hand
 3) comforting light
 These different images prompt changes of tempo and meter.

1. Vln

Ritornello *mf*
 Ob d'am I, II

F# minor C#7 F# major F#7 B major B7

Bass line = "das Unglück schlägt" ("misfortune strikes").

Although the dotted rhythm might suggest a French overture, the application here appears different.

E major E7 A major A7 E dim.7

Alternating notes between unison oboes d'amore and continuo bass play descending chromatic fourth, traditional symbol of lament to flatward harmonic progression.

5

C#7 F#7

7

B minor G#7 C# major C#7

9

F# minor F# minor

11

F# minor

The vagaries of misfortune "hitting from all sides referenced in the text is reflected in frequent harmonic instability, particularly cadences in on a major chord followed immediately by alteration of the chord to a dominant seventh, leading to modulation flatward in the circle of fifths.

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Text painting: Swirling 16th notes in the violin with a jerking rhythm in voice and continuo in a fast tempo depict the misfortune like a heavy chain striking the speaker and wringing itself around him, as referenced in the text.

13 **A Basso.**

Das Unglück schlägt auf al - len Sei - - - ten

p

Editorial realization (see full score).

F# minor F# major F7 B major B7

15

um mich ein cent - - - nerschwe - res Band,

E major E7 A major A7 D major E# dim.7

17

um mich ein cent - nerschwe - res Band;

F# minor C#7

19

das Un - glücks schlägt auf al - len

F# minor F# minor

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21

Sei - ten, das Unglücks schlägt auf al - len Sei - - ten um mich

F# major F#7 B major B7 E major E7 A major A7

23

- ein cent - ner - schwe - - res, ein cent - nerschwe - res

D major E# dim.7 C#7 F# minor

25

Band, um mich ein - cent - ner - schwe - - res

C# pedal F# minor F# minor

Text painting: The sudden change referenced in the text is marked by a change from iambic to dactylic meter. Bach correspondingly changes to 6/8 meter, triadic melody, and a vivace tempo.

27 **B Vivace.** (♩ = 72.)

Band. Doch plötzlich erschei - net die hel - fen - de Hand, doch

Ob d'amore I, II Yet suddenly appears the helping hand

Vln (up 8va) F# minor B minor

Harmonic progression flatward in the circle of fifths.

30

plötzlich erschei - net die hel - fen - de Hand, die hel -

E major A major D major

33

fende

E major F# minor D major E major A major

37 (Poc' allegro. Tempo I.)

Hand! Vin

Ob d'am I, II

Ritornello

A major A7 D major

Continuo down 8va (see full score).

Syncopations appear to underscore misfortune's assault.

38 II

40 C Andante. (♩ = 60.) Text painting: Playful, cantabile melody in casual tempo with continuo alone for "Comfort's light appears to me from afar."

Mir scheint des Trostes Licht von wei -

(Choral.) Continuo alone: All else, including addition of the chorale, is editorial.

A major C#7 F# minor F#7 B minor

NBA: weiten

42

tem; da lern' ich, da lern' ich,

A7 F#7 B minor A7

44

da lern' ich erst, dass Gott al-lein der Men-schen be-ster Freund muss

B minor F#7 B minor

Vivace. (♩ = 88.)

46

sein.

B minor B minor

48 II

E7 F#7 B minor

D Andante. (♩ = 60.)

Text painting: Playful, cantabile melody in casual tempo with continuo alone for "Comfort's light appears to me from afar."

51

Mir scheint des Trostes Licht von wei-

Continuo alone: All else, including addition of the chorale, is editorial.

B minor C#7

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53 NBA: weiten
tem; da lern' ich, da lern'

F# minor G#7 C# minor B# dim.7 C# minor

55 ich erst.dass Gott al.lein der Menschen be.sterFreund muss sein.

G#7 C# minor C# minor

Vivace.
E (Poc' allegro. Tempo I.)

58 *mf*

F# minor F# major F#7 B major B7

60

E major E7 A major A7 D major E# dim.7

62

C#7 F# minor F#7

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64

B minor G#7 E# dim.7 C#7

Musical score for measures 64-65, featuring treble and bass staves with piano accompaniment. Chords are indicated below the bass staff.

66

F# minor F# minor

Musical score for measures 66-67, featuring treble and bass staves with piano accompaniment. Chords are indicated below the bass staff.

68

Musical score for measures 68-69, featuring treble and bass staves with piano accompaniment. A fermata is present over the final note of measure 69.

70

F

Das Unglück schlägt auf al - len Sei - ten

p

F# minor F# major F#7 B minor B7

Musical score for measures 70-71, including a vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. Chords are indicated below the bass staff.

72

um mich ein cent - - - - nerschwe - res Band,

E major E7 A major A7 D major E# dim.7

Musical score for measures 72-73, including a vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. Chords are indicated below the bass staff.

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74

um mich ein cent - nerschwe - res Band;

F# minor
C#7

76

das Un - glück schlägt auf al - len

F# minor F# minor

78

Sei - ten, das Unglück schlägt auf al - len Sei - - - ten um mich

F# major F#7 B major B7 E major E7 A major A7

80

ein cent - ner - schwe - - - res, ein cent - nerschweres

D major E# dim.7 F# minor

82

Band, um mich ein cent-ner-schwe-res

C#(7) F# minor F# minor
C# pedal

Text painting: The sudden change referenced in the text is marked by a change from iambic to dactylic meter. Bach correspondingly changes to 6/8 meter, triadic melody, and a vivace tempo.

84 **G Vivace. (Tempo II.)**

Band. = m. 27. Doch plötz-lich er-schei-net die = m. 28.

C# major F# minor

86

hel-fen-de Hand, doch plötzlich erschei-net die hel-fen-de Hand!

E major A major

89 **Poco' allegro. (Tempo I.)**

Das Un-glück schlägt auf al-len Sei-ten

D major F#7 B minor G#7

91

um mich ein cent - nerschwe - res Band.

C# major C#7 F# minor

Text painting: The sudden change referenced in the text is marked by a change from iambic to dactylic meter. Bach correspondingly changes to 6/8 meter, triadic melody and a vivace tempo.

H Vivace. (Tempo II.)

93

Doch plötz - lich er - schei - net die hel - fen - de Hand, doch

F# major B minor E7

A long melisma underscores the "helping" hand of God.

96

plötz - lich er - schei - net die hel - fende Hand die hel -

A major C#7 F# minor

99

F# minor

Poc' allegro. (Tempo I.)

102

- fen - de Hand!

mf Ritornello

F# minor

104

F# minor F# minor F# minor

Martin Petzoldt argues that, in adapting ideas from the chorale's 4th stanza, the librettist modified the pietistic theology of the chorale to a more traditional Lutheran understanding of sin (see note here and note at no. 6).

Nº 5. Recitativo. (Based on Chorale Verse 4) • Sin's burden is greatest foe; removed by the Savior (139/5).
139/5. 1. Soprano.

Ja, trag'ich gleich den grössten Feind in mir, (die schwere Last der Sünden. mein Heiland lässt mich Ruhe finden. Ich ge-be Gott, was Gottes ist. das In-ner-ste der Seelen, Will er sie nun er-wählen, so weicht der Sünden Schuld, so fällt des Satans List.

G#7 B# dim.7 C#7 E# dim.7 F#7

A "halo" of sustaining strings underscores the comforting inner rest provided by the Savior ("God as friend") despite an inner enemy of sin and Satan's cunning.

The text references the Gospel reading of the day (Matthew 22:21), Jesus saying, "Render...to God the things that are God's."

4

Heiland lässt mich Ruhe finden. Ich ge-be Gott, was Gottes ist. das In-ner-ste der Seelen, Will er sie nun er-wählen, so weicht der Sünden Schuld, so fällt des Satans List.

B major B major E(7)

7

Seelen, Will er sie nun er-wählen, so weicht der Sünden Schuld, so fällt des Satans List.

C#7 F#7 B7 E major E major

(Verse 5) • God as friend allows me to defy all foes (139/6).

Nº 6. Vers 5. Choral. (Mel.: „Mach's mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt'“) = 1628 tune by Johann Hermann Schein (1586–1630).

(5) 139/6.

Soprano. 1.
+Trp, Rec I, II
all'ottava,
Ob I, II

Da - he - ro Trotz der Höl - len Heer! Trotz auch des To - des Ra - chen!
Trotz al - ler Welt! mich kann nicht mehr ihr Pochen trau - rig ma - chen!

Alto.
+Vln II

Da - he - ro Trotz der Höl - len Heer! Trotz auch des To - des Ra - chen!
Trotz al - ler Welt! mich kann nicht mehr ihr Pochen trau - rig ma - chen!

Tenore.
+Vla

Da - he - ro Trotz der Höl - len Heer! Trotz auch des To - des Ra - chen!
Trotz al - ler Welt! mich kann nicht mehr ihr Pochen trau - rig ma - chen!

Basso.

Da - he - ro Trotz der Höl - len Heer! Trotz auch des To - des Ra - chen!
Trotz al - ler Welt! mich kann nicht mehr ihr Pochen trau - rig ma - chen!

E major B major F# major (B7) E major B major

9

Gott ist mein Schutz, mein' Hilf' und Rath: Wohl dem, der Gott zum Freunde hat.

Gott ist mein Schutz, mein' Hilf' und Rath: Wohl dem, der Gott zum Freunde hat.

Gott ist mein Schutz, mein' Hilf' und Rath: Wohl dem, der Gott zum Freunde hat.

Gott ist mein Schutz, mein' Hilf' und Rath: Wohl dem, der Gott zum Freunde hat.

Johann Christoph Rube

E major E7 A major C#7 F# minor B major G# minor N6 E major E major