

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas

Form: Chorus - Chorale (S) - Recit (T) - Aria (T) - Aria/Chorale (T) - Chorale.  
The libretto joins verses from Psalm 146 with stanzas of the 1601 chorale "Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ" by Jakob Ebert (1549-1615), ascribed in Bach's day to the Mühlhausen superintendent Ludwig Hembold (1532-1598). Regarding the cantata's symmetrical structure as well as Alfred Dürr's comments on the cantata as a whole, see side note.

## J.S. Bach Cantata No. 143 Lobe den Herrn, meine Seele (I)

Note: Although Psalm 146 begins and ends with "Hallelujah," the librettist omits the word here when setting the first verse of the psalm, waiting until the closing movement (a setting of the underlying chorale's third stanza) to introduce it.

Introduction & updates at [melvinunger.com](http://melvinunger.com).  
NBA I/4; BC V99: probably a spurious work  
New Year/Circumcision and Name of Jesus  
(BWV 143, 190, 41, 16, 171, 248-IV)  
\*Galatians 3:23-29 (Through faith we are heirs of the promise)  
\*Luke 2:21 (Circumcision and naming of Jesus)  
Librettist: Unknown  
FP: Spurious? ca. 1708-1714?? (See notes.)

Instrumentation:  
Corno da caccia I, II, III (unique to Bach)  
Timpani  
Fagotto  
Vln I, II  
Via  
SATB  
Continuo, Violoncello

An apparent lack of invention (see for example, movement no. 1) leads scholars to doubt that the music is by Bach.

Markus Rathey argues that BWV 143 could have been a "lost" cantata from Bach's Mühlhausen days (see note).

**Coro.** • Praise the Lord, O my soul!: Psalm 146:1 (143/1).

143/1. (Tempo giusto ♩ = 72.)

Motto-like movement:  
-Compact  
-Almost continuous B-flat major  
-Three-fold "Lobe" followed by three-fold "den Herrn" (the third one completing the Psalm verse) plus one concluding statement

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

10

be, lo  
thou, praise

be, lo  
thou, praise

be, lo  
thou, praise

be, lo  
thou, praise

13

be, lo  
thou, praise

be, lo  
thou, praise

be, lo  
thou, praise

be, lo  
thou, praise

Corno I

Corno II up 8va

B-flat major

Three-fold "den Herrn" (the last statement completing the Psalm verse) suggests Trinitarian symbolism.

18

be thou, den Herrn, den the Lord, the

be thou, den Herrn, den the Lord, the

be thou, den Herrn, den the Lord, the

be thou, den Herrn, den the Lord, the

A

One complete statement of the psalm verse.

19

Herrn. den Her - ren, mei - ne See - - le. lo - - -  
Lord, to God be praise, - my spir - - it, praise - - -

Herrn, den Her - ren, mei - ne See - - le, lo - - -  
Lord, to God be praise, - my spir - - it, praise - - -

Herrn, den Her - ren, mei - ne See - - le, lo - - -  
Lord, to God be praise, - my spir - - it, praise - - -

Herrn, den Her - ren, mei - ne See - - le, lo - - -  
Lord, to God be praise, - my spir - - it, praise - - -

A

B-flat major

23

be den Herrn,  
thou the Lord,

be den Herrn.  
thou the Lord,

be den Herrn,  
thou the Lord,

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

B-flat major

26

mei - ne See - - le!  
O my spir - - it!

mei - ne See - - le!  
O my spir - - it!

mei - ne See - - le!  
O my spir - - it!

mei - ne See - - le!  
O my spir - - it!

Ritornello

B-flat major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

Corno I takes up the last soprano statement (with a slight modification at the cadence—stating the line as it was in the opening ritornello).

29

B-flat major

32

B-flat major B-flat major

## Choral. (Mel: „Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ“.)

143/2. (Andante ♩ = 66.) (Chorale Verse 1) (See also 67/7, 116/1.) • Christ is our helper; we cry to God in Jesus' name (143/2).

1. Vin

Ritornello

B-flat major

3II

B-flat major B-flat major

6 /16

Soprano.

Stollen 1 & 2 of chorale's bar form.

Double cadence.

Du Frie - de - fürst, Herr Je - su Christ,  
 ein star - ker Noth - hel - fer du bist,  
 Thou Prince of Peace, Lord Je - sus Christ,  
 in life and death our friend in need.

B-flat major B-flat major B-flat major G7 C minor F7 B-flat major G7

Allusion to Isaiah 9:6: To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Luther 1545: Friedefürst)." Allusion to John 14:13-14 [Jesus]: Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it. (Also John 16:23-24.)

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

9/19 1.

wahr'r Mensch und wah - rer Gott,  
 im Le - ben und im  
*true God but yet a man,*  
*since ev - er time be -*

C minor F7 B-flat major B-flat major

11/21 2.

Tod;  
*gan;*

Ritornello

B-flat major D7 G minor G7 C minor C minor C7

13II 14/24

Abgesang drum wir al - lein im Na - men dein  
*with loud ac - claim and in Thy Name*

F major F major F7 B-flat major D7 G minor

16/26

zu dei - nem Va -  
*we ask Thy Fa -*

G minor B-flat major F major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

18II 19/29

ter schrei - en.  
- ther's bless - ing.

*Ritornello*

B-flat major B-flat major

21 /31

B-flat major

23 /33

B-flat major

25 /35

B-flat major B-flat major

*Secco*  
143/3. **Recitativo.** •Happy is he whose help is God of Jacob: Psalm 146:5 (143/3).  
1. **Tenore.**

Wohl dem, dess Hil - fe der Gott Ja - kobs ist,  
Blest he, who for his help hath Ja - cob's God,

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

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

3

dess Hoffnung auf den Herrn, sei-nen Gott, ste-het.  
 whose hope is in the Lord and on God rest-eth.

B dim. C minor C minor

## Aria.

143/4. (Adagio  $\text{♩} = 56.$ )

• National misfortune strikes other lands but not ours (143/4).

Form (Rhyme ABABCC)  
 Rit (mm. 1-5) Cm  
 Lines 1-2 (5-7) Cm-Gm  
 Rit (7-9) Cm  
 Lines 3-4 (9-16) E M-Gm  
 Rit (16-20) Gm  
 Lines 5-6 (20-28) E M-Gm-Cm  
 Rit (28-32) Cm-CM

Vin I plays an obligato of wide-ranging triplets with lower strings punctuating as if representing the unpredictability to be expected in the trudging passage of time. Chromatic harmonies depict "Tausendfaches Unglück, Schrecken, Trübsal, Angst und schneller Tod (thousandfold misfortune, terror, tribulation, fear, and sudden death)." Toward the end, 2 cadences on C major suggest hope among the vagaries of life.

1. Ritornello Strings

*mf*

C minor B dim.7 C7 F minor B dim.7 F# dim.7

The movement is inventive enough to be considered Bach-like.

3.

G major C minor F minor 7 G7 A-flat major C minor

5. Tenore. Lines 1-2.

Tau-send-fa-ches Un-glück, Schrecken, Trübsal, Angst und schneller  
 Thou-sand-fold on o-ther-na-tions com-eth fear and sud-den

C minor B dim.7 C7 F minor B dim.7 F# dim.7

7. Tod, death,

*mf* Ritornello

G major C minor A-flat major C minor

The text turns to the various misfortunes that can strike a land (including invading nations and privation) but in hopes that the New Year will bring blessing.

Note: Movements 4 and 6 have the same poetic structure: rhyme scheme ABABCC in trochaic meter with line lengths 8.7.8.7.7.7, and they both refer to the new year. They may originate from a preexisting poem. See Martin Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 2:329-330, quoting Konrad Küster.



Line 3-4 (with line 4 repeated, emphasizing "Sorgen" ("sorrows" or "cares").

NBA: sonst noch mehr

9

Convoluted, angular melody depicts the various misfortunes listed.

Völ - ker, die das Land be - dek - ken, Sor - gen und sonst mehr noch  
 ev - ry - where are la - men - ta - tions, sor - rows which none com - fort -

*p*

C minor E-flat major B-flat major B-flat major E7 A-flat major B-flat 7

11

Noth, Sor - gen und sonst mehr noch Noth. Sor -  
 eth, sor - rows which none com - fort - eth, sor -

E-flat major E-flat major C7

13

- - gen, Sor - - - - gen, Sor - gen und sonst mehr noch  
 - - rows, sor - - - - rows, sor - rows which none com - fort -

F minor D7 G minor C minor G minor

15

Noth, - - - - sonst mehr noch Noth  
 eth, - - - - none com - fort - eth.

Ritornello

C# dim.7 G minor G minor

In contrast to the difficulties experienced by "other lands," the poet expects a "Year of Blessing," a hopeful expectation that is musically emphasized with 2 fermatas. The phrase apparently alludes to Isaiah 61:1-2: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor... (See also Jesus' reference to this passage in Luke 4:16-21.)

17

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

19

Lines 5-6.

se - hen an - - -  
Day by\_ day\_

F# dim.7 G minor G minor E-flat (7) A-flat major

21

- dre Län - der zwar, se - hen an - dre Län - der zwar, a - ber  
their woes in - crease, day by day\_ their woes in - crease, we a -

B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat 7 A-flat major A-flat major G7

23

wir ein Se - gensjahr, ein Se - gens - jahr, se - hen an - dre Län - der  
lone are\_ blest\_ with peace, are\_ blest with peace, day by\_ day their woes in - -

Ritornello

C minor (G major) C minor

Fermata suggests hopeful anticipation for a "Year of Blessing."

25

zwar, a - ber wir ein Se - gens - jahr, ein Se - gensjahr, ein Se - gens -  
crease, we a - lone are - blest with - peace, are blest with peace, are blest with -

C minor G major C major F minor

27

jahr, a - ber wir ein Se - gens - jahr.  
peace, we a - lone are - blest with - peace.

D-flat major G7 C minor C minor

Ritornello

Two cadences on C major suggest hope among the vagaries of life.

Fermata suggests hopeful anticipation for a "Year of Blessing."

29

C7 F minor B dim.7 F# dim.7 G major

30<sup>II</sup>

A-flat major C minor C major

Alfred Dürr notes the "scoring of three horns and timpani, [recalls] 'Durch mächtige Kraft' from BWV 71, the Mülhhausen council election cantata of 1708 (which, however, has trumpets instead of horns), especially since the [triadic] figure "der Herr is König (ewiglich)," which recurs several times (bb. 10, 27 and 29), resembles the setting of the opening words of that work, 'Gott ist mein König.' See Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 161–162. The energetic continuo bass is doubled by the bassoon (with a few departures).

143/5. (Allegro  $\text{♩} = 100$ .) • God of Zion is king forever: Psalm 146:10 (143/5).

Corno I, II, III, Timp

The movement has a limited harmonic vocabulary.

The repetitive character of the 16th-note run (and its frequent recurrence) point to the closing words "für und für" ("for ever and ever").

B-flat major

4. **Basso.**

Fanfare motive.

Der Herr ist Kö- - - - - nig, The Lord is reign- - - - - ing,

Melisma on "König" is ("king") taken from the continuo line.

Corno I

Corno II

The bass is usually the voice of authority. Here he proclaims the Lord's majesty with a fanfare-like motive. 3 horns (unique in Bach) and timpani underscore the royal majesty of the Lord.

B-flat major

B-flat major

Corno I, imitated by Corno II, then Corno III

der Herr ist König e- - - - - the Lord is reign-ing ev-

Word painting: Sustained note followed by long melisma for "ewiglich" ("eternally").

B-flat major

B-flat major

Continuo

B-flat major

C major

F major

F major

- wig-lich, Corno I, II, III, Timp - er - more,

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20

dein Gott, Zi - - - - - ou,  
thy God, Zi - - - - - on,

Continuo

F(7) B-flat major

24

für — und für, — — — — —  
ev - - - - - ry - where, — — — — —

der Herr ist König  
the Lord is reign-ing

Fanfare motive in G minor

Corno I, II, III,  
Timp

Bsn

Continuo

D major G minor G minor

28

e - wiglich, — — — — —  
ev - - - - - er - more, — — — — —

der Herr ist König  
the Lord is reign-ing

Fanfare motive in F major.

e - - - - -

Corno I, II

Corno I echoed by  
Corno II, then  
III

F major B-flat major B-flat 7

32

- wiglich, — — — — —  
- er - more, — — — — —

dein Gott, Zi - - - - -  
thy God, Zi - - - - -

Continuo

E-flat major F7 B-flat major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

36

hemiola

- on, für und für, für und  
- on, ev 'ry - where, ev 'ry

B-flat major

40

Text painting: Long final note for "für und für" ("for ever and ever").

für.  
where.

Corno I, II, III, Timp

B-flat major

B-flat major

44

+ Bsn

B-flat major

47

B-flat major

B-flat major

## (Aria.)

143/6. (Lento  $\text{♩} = 60$ ) • New Year's prayer for protection and blessing (143/6).

1.

*p* Cont. Bsn Cont Bsn Cont 8va up Bsn

G minor (For significance see note.)

The continuo and bassoon alternate with a descending quasi-ostinato figure, while upper strings play an untexted chorale tune in unison. Martin Petzoldt suggests that the alternation represents the juxtaposition of the passage of earthly time and God's eternal action. See *Bach Kommentar* 2:332.



The composer embeds a B-flat major chorale to provide an additional hermeneutical layer is a technique characteristic of Bach. The bassoon echoes the continuo's descending five-note quasi-ostinato, adding a rustic tone appropriate for addressing Jesus as Savior of his flock.

**3 Tenore.**

Je - su, Ret - ter dei - ner Her - de, blei - be fer - ner un - ser Hort. blei - be  
 Je - sus, Sa - viour of Thy peo - ple, be the guard - ian of us - all, be - the -

Cont

G minor G minor F7 B-flat major B-flat major

Martin Petzoldt argues that the third stanza of the chorale is implied here. The stanza emphasizes Christ as the Prince of Peace—an important consideration for the anticipated new year. The stanza is then sung in the following movement. See *Bach Kommentar* 2:331–332.

**6.** Energetic melisma for "Retter" ("rescuer/savior").

fer - ner un - ser Hort, Je - su, Ret - - - - - ter dei - ner  
 guard - ian - of us - all, Je - sus, Sa - - - - - viour of - Thy

Choral. (Mel: „Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ.“)

Ge - - - - - denk, Herr, - - - - - jetzt - - - - - und

Strings unison chorale.

D7 G minor G minor G minor G7

Her - de, blei - be - fer - ner un - ser Hort, un - ser Hort, Je - su, Ret - ter - dei - ner  
 peo - ple, be - the guard - ian - of - us - all, of us - all, Je - sus, Sa - viour - of Thy

an dein Amt,

C minor F# dim.7 D major N6 F major

**10||**

Her - de, blei - - - - - be - - - - - fer - ner un - ser  
 peo - ple, be - - - - - the guard - ian - of us

Long melisma with intermittent held notes for "bleibe" ("remain").

daß du ein Friedv - - - - - fürst

B-flat major B-flat major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

13

Hort, *all* bist, dass dies *through this*

B-flat major G minor G minor

15 II

Jahr unglücklich wer-de. glück-lich wer-de, dass dies Jahr uns *und*  
*year pre-serve us safe-ly, keep us safe-ly, through this year pre-*

G minor F7 B-flat major G minor G minor

18

glücklich werde, glücklich werde, dass dies Jahr unglücklich werde, hal-te, hal-  
*serve us safe-ly, keep us safe-ly through this year pre-serve us safe-ly, watch us, watch*

*h*ilf *u*ns *g*nä-dig *a*l-le

F7 B-flat major G7 C minor F7

21

*Even longer melisma with intermittent held notes for "keep watch," intimating the length of the coming year.*

*s*amt *j*etzt *u*nd *z*u

B-flat major B-flat major



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24

- - - te Wacht an je - dem Ort. hal - te Wacht an je - dem Ort. Führt, o  
 us well, lest ill - be - fall; watch us - well, lest - ill be - fall; guard Thy

die - - ser Frist.

D7 G minor D minor A7 D minor

26 II

Je - su, dei - ne Schar, führ', Je - su, dei - ne) Schar -  
 peo - ple, be - Thou near, O Je - sus, be Thou near -

Laß uns hin -

Long, ascending melisma of wide range for "deine Schar" ("thy throng"), suggesting the year-long duration of the requested blessing.

C7 F major F major F7

29

bis zu je - nem neu - en  
 all throughout this com - ing -

fort dein gött - - lich Wort

"Bis zu jenem neuen Jahr" "until the next new year" is repeated 7 times. Since 7 symbolically represents completion, the prayer is that Christ will watch over the nation completely. Martin Petzoldt suggests that it also points to the Mosaic "Year of Jubilee." See Petzoldt, Bach Kommentar 2:332.

B-flat major D7 G minor G7 C minor

32

Jahr, bis zu jenem neu - en Jahr, zu je - - nem neu - en Jahr, zu je - - nem neu - en  
 year, all throughout this com - ing year, throughout this com - ing - year, throughout this - com - ing -

im Fried noch län - - ger

F# dim.7 D7 G minor F7 B-flat major

High note emphasizes the distance to the following year.

35

Jahr zu je - - nem neuen Jahr, bis zu je-nem neu - en Jahr, zu je-nem neu-en  
 year, throughout this com-ing year, all throughout this com - ing year, through-out this com-ing-

schal - - - - - len.

G minor G minor

35

Jahr.  
year.

G minor G minor

**Coro.** (Chorale Verse 3) • Prayer that Christ act as Prince of Peace for us (143-7).

143/7. (Poco allegro ♩ = 72.)

Corno I, II

1.

Str

B-flat major

The closing chorus employs a limited harmonic vocabulary.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

4/25

**Soprano.**  
**Alto.**  
**Tenore.**  
**Basso.**

Alfred Dürr writes, "In the closing chorus, no. 7, verse 3 of the same chorale is sung by the soprano, while alto, tenor, and bass form a lively contrapuntal texture to the word 'Alleluia,' surrounded and accompanied by instrumental figures. The instruments, however, neither participate in the substance of the chorale melody nor develop their own themes—a mode of composition that Bach scarcely used any more after 1714." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 162. It is noteworthy that the word "Halleluja" begins and ends Psalm 146 in Luther's translation. Thus the librettist joins two of the text sources (Psalm 146 and chorale).

Halle.lu - ja,  
Hal - le - lu - ja,  
Halle.lu - ja,  
Hal - le - lu - ja,  
Halle . lu -  
Hal - le - lu -

Strings  
Corno up 8va

tr  
mf  
hemiola

B-flat major B-flat major

8/29

Hal . le - lu - ja, Hal . le - lu - ja, Hal . le - lu -  
Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

Hal . le - lu - ja, Hal . le - lu - ja, Hal . le - lu -  
Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

ja, Hal . le - lu - ja. Hal . le - lu -  
ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

Corni tacet.

B-flat major

Lines 1, 3.

Choral. (Mel: „Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ“)

NBA: jetzund

11/32

Stollen of chorale's bar form.

Ge - denk' Herr Je - su,  
 und hilf uns gnä - dig  
 Be - think Thee, Je - sus,  
 and to Thy peo - ple,

ja. Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
 ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

ja. Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
 ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

ja. Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
 ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

B-flat major

B-flat major

G7

14/35

an dein Amt,  
 al - le - samt  
 of Thy charge,  
 far and wide,

ja. Hal - le - lu - ja,  
 ja, Hal - le - lu - ja,

ja, Hal - le - lu - ja,  
 ja, Hal - le - lu - ja,

ja. Hal - le - lu - ja,  
 ja, Hal - le - lu - ja,

Corno I, II, III, Timp

Strings

Corno I, II

C minor

F7

B-flat major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

18 /39

Lines 2, 4. NBA: jetztund

dass du ein Fried - fürst  
**jetzt** und zu die - ser  
 the Prince of Peace Thou  
 Thy sav - ing Grace im -

Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
 Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
 Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
 Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

Strings

B-flat major

(21) /42

1. 2.  
 bist. art. Frist; part;  
 ja, ja,  
 ja, ja,  
 ja, ja,  
 ja, ja,  
 ja, ja,  
 ja, ja,  
 ja, ja,

Corno I, II, III, Timp  
 Corno I, II, III, Timp  
 Corno I up 8va

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

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

23 /44

**A**

Lines 5-6.

Abgesang

lass uns hin - fort dein  
so may we hear Thy

Hal - le - lu - ja,  
Hal - le - lu - ja,

Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

Strings

Corno I, II, III, Timp

hemiola

*mf*

C(7)

F major

F major

B-flat major

27 /48

Line 7.

gött - lich Wort in  
Ho - ly word in

ja, Hal - le - lu -  
ja, Hal - le - lu -

ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal -  
ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal -

Corno I

Corno II up 8va

Strings

Corno I

Corno II

Strings

hemiola

D major

G minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 143

NBA: schallen

31/52

Fried' noch län - ger hö - - - -  
 songs of peace re - sound -

Halle - lu - ja. Halle - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
 Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

ja, Halle - lu - ja, Halle - lu - ja,  
 ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja,

le - lu - ja. Hal - le - lu - ja, Halle - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -  
 le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu -

Continuo

34/55

G minor F7 B-flat major

- - - - - ren.  
 - - - - - ing.

ja. Halle - lu - ja. Hal - le - lu - ja.  
 ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja!

Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja.  
 Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja!

ja. Halle - lu - ja. Hal - le - lu - ja.  
 ja, Hal - le - lu - ja, Hal - le - lu - ja!

Corno I, II, III, Timp

B-flat major

B-flat major

38/59

hemiola

B-flat major

B-flat major

B-flat major