

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 169

Form: A cantata for solo voice (the voice of faith) plus SATB final chorale.  
Sinfonia - Arioso/Recit - Aria - Recit - Aria - Recit - Chorale.

The cantata is in chiasmic form. Bach often used chiasmic (x-shaped/symmetrical) forms, in which center movements (where the mirror image begins) provide the crux of the matter. There antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). Alfred Dürr writes, "In substance, the text is linked to the first part of the Sunday Gospel. Asked which is the greatest commandment of the Law, Jesus replies, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and will all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment; and the second is alike, namely: you shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Hence movements 2-5 are concerned with the love of God and movements 6-7 with the love of one's neighbour." See "The Cantatas of J. S. Bach," p. 572. The text is indebted to Johann Olearius (1611-1684, whose commentary was in J. S. Bach's personal library. See Martin Petzoldt *Bach Kommentar*, 1:527. (Apparently adapted from a nonextant instrumental work, as was also BWV 1053/1 (concerto for harpsichord).

J.S. Bach

## Cantata No. 169

### Gott soll allein mein Herze haben

#### 1. Sinfonia

169/1. Viol. I

Although the autograph score shows that Bach added the sinfonia after writing the rest of the cantata, its head-motive fortuitously bears a striking resemblance to the beginning of no. 2, whose scalar figure in turn is inverted to become the head motto of no. 3. The sinfonia thus reinforces an inner thematic unity as well as clarifies the chiasmic structure. See Petzoldt 1:528.

Christoph Wolff suggests that the original model for movements 1 and 5 was a keyboard concerto (see note).

For an alternate theory, see note at no. 5

Introduction & updates at [melvinunger.com](http://melvinunger.com).

NBA I/24; BC A143

18. S. after Trinity (BWV 96, 169)

\*1 Corinthians 1:4-9 (Paul's prayer of thanks for the blessings of the Gospel in Corinth)

\*Matthew 22:34-46 (Jesus identifies the greatest commandments and asks the Pharisees whose Son Christ is)

Librettist: Christoph Birkmann (see note).

FP: 20 October 1726 (Leipzig)

St. Thomas) from Leipzig cycle

III (see image & note)

Instrumentation:

Ob d'amore I, II

Taille

Vln I, II

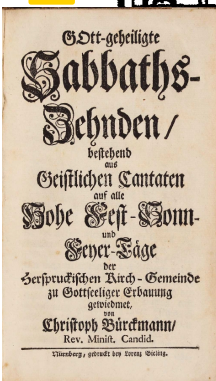
Vla

SATB

Organ obbligato (see note)

Continuo

Eric Chafe suggests that Bach often associates the forms and styles of instrumental music with the "world" (see note).



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16

A major A7 D major (forte)

19

D major D major D7

22

G major A7 D major E7 A major Ob. piano Viol., Va. piano

25

A major B7 E major E7 A major Ob. forte Viol. forte

28

F# minor A major A major A major (forte)

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31

A major A7 D major E7

Detailed description: This system shows measures 31-33 of the keyboard part. The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with eighth notes. Chord labels are placed below the bass line.

34

F# minor E7 F# minor A major A# dim.7

Ob.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 34-36. An oboe (Ob.) part is introduced in measure 35. The keyboard part continues with similar rhythmic patterns. Chord labels are provided for the keyboard accompaniment.

37

F#(7) B minor B minor B minor

Viol., Va. Viol. I

Detailed description: This system includes measures 37-39. It features staves for Violin and Viola (Viol., Va.) and Violin I (Viol. I). The keyboard part continues. Chord labels are placed below the keyboard part.

40

B minor B minor B minor C#7

Detailed description: This system shows measures 40-42. The keyboard part continues with its characteristic rhythmic texture. Chord labels are placed below the bass line.

43

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

Ob., Viol.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 43-45. An oboe and violin (Ob., Viol.) part is introduced in measure 44. The keyboard part continues. Chord labels are placed below the keyboard part.

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46 **D**

Viol., Va.  
Org.

F# minor D major D major

49 *piano* *forte*

D major D7 G major

52

A7 A7 D major D major

55

D major D major

58

D major D7 G major A7 B minor A7

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61

D major      D major      B minor      B minor

Ob., Viol. unis.

64

A7      D major      B7      E minor

Ob. I

67

D# dim.7      E minor      E minor

Ob.

69π

E minor

Ob.

72

E minor      E minor

+Viol.

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75 **F**

Musical score for measures 75-76. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex texture with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and a more rhythmic bass line. Chord annotations in red are: E minor, F#7, B7, E7, and A major.

Ob., Viol., Va.

77II

Musical score for measures 77-79. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part continues with intricate sixteenth-note patterns. Chord annotations in red are: C#7, F# minor, D7, and G major. Instrumentation labels include Ob., Viol., Va., Viol. I, and Ob. I.

80

Musical score for measures 80-82. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a steady sixteenth-note accompaniment. Chord annotations in red are: G major and G major.

83

Musical score for measures 83-85. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a steady sixteenth-note accompaniment. Chord annotations in red are: G major, G major, and E minor. The word *forte* is written in the piano part. Instrumentation labels include Ob. and Org.

85II

Musical score for measures 85-88. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a steady sixteenth-note accompaniment. Chord annotations in red are: D# dim.7, E minor, A# dim.7, F# major, and B minor. Instrumentation labels include Viol. Va. and Ob., Viol.

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88

Musical score for measures 88-92. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex texture with many sixteenth notes. Chords are indicated below the piano part.

B7 E7 A major B7 E minor F#7

90II

Musical score for measures 90-92. This system includes a vocal line, a piano accompaniment, and parts for Organ (Org.) and Violin (Viol.). The piano part continues with intricate sixteenth-note patterns.

B minor B minor

93

Musical score for measures 93-95. This system includes a vocal line, a piano accompaniment, and parts for Organ (Org.) and Violin (Viol.). A 'G' chord symbol is placed above the vocal line in measure 94.

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

95II

Musical score for measures 95-97. This system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part continues with its characteristic sixteenth-note texture.

F#7 D# dim.7 B7 E minor

98

Musical score for measures 98-102. This system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part continues with its characteristic sixteenth-note texture.

C# dim.7 A7 D major F#7 B minor B minor B minor

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101

F#7 B minor B minor B7 E minor B minor

Viol. I, Ob. I

103<sup>II</sup>

B minor B minor

106

B minor D7 G major

Viol. I, Ob. I

108

F#7 B minor

+ Viol. II

110

B minor B minor B minor Da Capo B minor

F# pedal...

Although the autograph score shows that Bach added the sinfonia after writing the rest of the cantata, its head-motive bears a striking resemblance to the



beginning of no. 2, whose scalar figure in turn appears as an inverted device (motto) in no. 3. Furthermore, as Alfred Dürr writes, "The librettist ingeniously links the introductory arioso-cum-recitative, no. 2, with the aria that follows [no. 3] by prefacing each part of the bipartite recitative with a line of text from the aria. Each portion of the recitative text thus forms an interpretation of the motto that precedes it, and it also ends with the opening line of the aria." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 572.

169/2.

## 2. Arioso

• Loving God alone despite the world's wooing (169/2).

Rondo-like form

The interpolation of 3 contrasting arioso sections (which anticipate the words of the following aria but go beyond the libretto's structure) points to Bach's desire to create a quasi-dialogue. See David Schulenberg in *J. S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, ed. Malcolm Boyd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 202.

Ritornello  
Continuo alone

D major D7 G major A7 D major D major

Alt The first line of text is the same as that of the devise (motto) from no. 3, mm. 9–10, with the scalar figure inverted.

Gott soll al - lein mein Her - ze ha - ben, al - lein, Gott soll al - lein mein Her - ze ha - ben.  
God's self a - lone my heart pos - sess - eth a - lone, God's self a - lone my heart pos - sess - eth.

Text painting: Rest follows "God...alone."

[Ritornello]

D major D7 G major A7 D major

17 (Recit.) The recitative interprets the previous line (= line 1 of no. 3).

Zwar merk ich an der Welt, die ih - ren Kot un - schätz - bar  
In vein the world a - round, would in its serv - ice have me  
Indeed, observe I of the world, which its dirt - ice as-priceless

Text painting: Descending line for "ihren Kot" (i.e., the mud/dirt of the world"), followed by rising line for "unschätzbar hält" ("considers it to be priceless").

F# major F#7 A# dim.7

19

hält, weil sie so freund - lich mit mir tut, sie woll - te gern al -  
bound and friend - ly doth my love in - vite, sup - pos - ing that its  
holds,

B major B7 E major

21

lein das Lieb - ste mei - ner See - le sein. Doch nein! -  
wiles the feal - ty of my heart be - guiles. Not so! -

E7 A major A7

The second half of the movement repeats the motto text and adds text line and following aria section (mm. 22–33) has the same text as the A section of the following aria. The "highest good" ("das höchste Gut") suggests "summum bonum," a term that originated with the Roman philosopher Cicero but was related to earlier discussions of "the good life" by Greek philosophers. Christian philosopher-theologians since Augustine saw its origin in God, which Bach stresses by repeating "in ihm" ("in him") three times.

23. (Arioso)

Gott soll al - lein mein Her - ze ha - ben: ich find in ihm,  
 God's self a - lone my heart pos - sess - eth; I find in Him,

[Ritornello material]

D major D7 G major A7 D major

29

ich find in ihm, ich find in ihm das höch - ste  
 I find in Him, I find in Him my sur - est

E7 F# minor E7 A major

34. (Recit.) The recitative interprets the previous text line.

Gut. Wir se - hen zwar auf Er - den hier und da ein Bäch - lein  
 stay Man's earth - ly lot en - joy - eth, here and there, a ti - ny  
 NBA: dar

A major B major B7

36

der Zu - frie - den - heit, das von des Höch - sten Gü - te quil - let;  
 rill of hap - pi - ness that from God's gra - cious boun - ty flow - eth.

E minor A# dim.7 B minor

Text painting: Rising streams of notes for "God is the fount from which blessings flow."

38

Gott a - ber ist der Quell, mit Strö - . . . men an - ge - fül - let, da  
 But God Him - self's the Source and Fount whence man's soul draw - eth re -

D major D7 G major

40

schöpft ich, was mich allezeit kann satt-sam und wahr-haf-tig la-ben.  
fresh-ing draughts of bless-ed-ness, and him to life and wealth re-stor-eth.

A7 F#7

42 **B (Arioso)** The movement ends with a three-fold statement of the motto text with internal repetitions of "allein" ([God] "alone").

Gott soll allein, Gott soll allein, Gott soll allein.  
God's self alone, God's self alone, God's self alone.

[Ritornello material]

B minor A7 D major B7 E minor E minor C major

47

lein, allein, mein Her-ze ha-ben, Gott soll allein, allein  
lone, a-lone, my heart pos-sess-eth, God's self alone, alone,  
lone, alone, lone, lone, lone, lone, lone, lone, lone, lone.

D7 G major G major A7 D major

52

mein Her-ze ha-ben. Gott soll allein mein Her-ze ha-ben.  
my heart pos-sess-eth. God's self alone my heart pos-sess-eth.

(Recit.) (tr)

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

Regarding the turn to minor, see note.

169/3. **3. Aria** • Loving God alone; he is the highest worth (169/3).

Virtuosic organ obbligato

1. Ritornello

D major D major

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3

D major E major A major

4II

A major A7 (B7) E minor E minor

6

A# dim.7 F#7 B minor D major

7II

D major D major

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) 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.

9

Gott soll al-lein mein Her - ze ha - ben,  
 God's love a-lone my heart pos-sess-eth,

The organ obligato responds to the voice, filling out the entire compass as if representing the fullness of the heart.

The motto's scalar figure is a free inversion of the opening motive of no. 2.

D major

11II

D major

13

Gott soll al-lein mein Her-ze ha-ben, ich  
 God's love a-lone my heart pos-sess-eth, I

D major

Martin Petzoldt notes that the librettist's use of "das höchste Gut" (i.e., the "summum bonum") uses language of Natural Theology. See *Bach Kommentar* 1:528–529.

15.

find in ihm das höch-ste Gut, das höch-ste  
 find in Him my sur-est stay, my sur-est

E7 A major

Text painting: Ascending scales for "the highest good."

17

Gut, ich find in ihm das höch-ste, das höch-ste  
 stay, I find in Him my sur-est, my sur-est

A major

19

**B**

Gut; Gott soll al-  
 stay. God's love a-

A major

21

lein mein Her - ze ha - ben, Gott soll al -  
lone my heart pos - sess - eth, God's love a -

F#(7) B minor B minor D7

23

lein mein Her - ze ha - ben, Gott soll al -  
lone my heart pos - sess - eth, God's love a -

G major D major D major

25

lein mein Her - ze ha - ben, ich find in  
lone my heart pos - sess - eth, I find in

D major D7 G major E minor

27

ihm das höch - ste, das höch - ste Gut, ich find in ihm das -  
Him my sur - est my sur - est stay, I find in Him my -

A7 D major

29 **C**

höch - ste, das höch - ste Gut.  
 sur - est, my sur - est stay.

30<sup>II</sup>

32

33<sup>II</sup> **B Section.** **D**

Er **liebt** mich in  
 In want and need

Alliteration: "liebt" — "leben": both words receive melismas.

35

der bö - sen Zeit und will mich in der Se - lig -  
 He's - by my side; in heaven a - bove He - will pro -

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





44

Gü-tern sei - nes Hau - ses la - ben, mit Gü - tern  
*boun-ty that my soul de - sir - eth, the boun - ty*

E7 C#7 F# minor F# major F#7

46

sei - nes Hau - ses la - ben.  
*that my soul de - sir - eth.*

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

This is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's chiasmic form, where antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). Here God's love is said to close hell but open heaven (mm. 5–6). The line is similar to that in the penultimate movement of the St. John Passion: "Das Grab...macht mir den Himmel auf und schließt die Hölle zu" ("The grave opens heaven to me and closes hell." See also the last line of 96/2.

Seco 4. Recitativo • Love of God fully satisfies, closes hell & opens heaven to us (169/4).

169/4.

1. Alt

D B G E A C F#

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 9 mm.

Was ist die Lie-be Got-tes? Des Gei-stes Ruh, der Sin-nen Lust-ge-nieß, der  
*What ist God's love pro-vid-eth? Man's peace of mind, the heart's full hap-pi-ness, the*

Bc. Continuo alone

G major G major

4

See - le Pa - ra - dies. Sie schließt die Höl - le zu, den Him - mel a - ber auf. Sie  
*soul's ec - stat - ic bliss! By it hell's power's con - fined and heaven is o - pened wide. As*  
*It closes hell... but opens heaven (see above).*

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

7

ist E-li-as'Wa-gen, da wer-den wir in Him-mel'hauf in A-brams Schoß ge-tra-gen.  
*once of old E-li-jah, by it one day to heaven we'll ride and find there rest for ev-er.*

E major E7 A major D# dim.7 F# minor F# minor

Unusual Form (Rhyme: AbcabAcB)  
 Ritornello (mm. 1-6) Bm  
 Lines 1-5 (7-14) Bm-F#m  
 Rit (15-20) F#m  
 Lines 6-8 (21-26) F#m-F#m  
 Lines 2, 8-7-8, 2, 1 (27-39) Bm  
 Ritornello (39-45) Bm

169/5. (Apparently adapted from a nonextant instrumental work, as was also BWV 1053/2 (concerto for harpsichord).  
 •Love of God practiced; love of world put to death (169/5).

**5. Aria**

Viol. I, II  
 Va.  
 Org. obl.  
 Bc.

No oboes.  
 Ritornello

B minor A# dim.7 B minor B7 E minor C#7

In the concerto, BWV 1053, the movement is called a siciliano. A lament for the death of the world and its loves, it is reminiscent Peter's aria "Erbarme dich" (no. 39) in the St. Matthew Passion. See note for more.

For an alternate theory suggesting that the vocal version predated any instrumental version, see Konrad Küster, ed., *Bach Handbuch* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), pp. 327-328. See note for more.

F# major D# dim.7 B7 E minor N6 A# dim.7 B minor

7 **Alt** The aria paraphrases 1 John 2:15-17 (see note).

Lines 1-5. **Stirb** in mir, stirb in mir, Welt und al - le  
*Die in me, die in me, earth and all thy*

Organ obbligato in duet with singer.

B minor B minor D major A7

9II **dei - ne** Lie - be, stirb in mir, daß die Brust sich auf  
*glit - t'ring beau - ty! Die in me, all my heart here be -*

B-flat major G# dim.7 A7 D minor D major B minor E7 C#7

Text painting: Chromatic inflection to D minor fits the text "die in me."

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12

Er - den für und für in der Lie - - - be Got - tes ü - - -  
*low till I - pass thence, shall to God - - - ful - fil its du - - -*

F# minor N6 C# major C#7 F#7 B minor E# dim.7

*tr*

14

bel - - - ty!

Ritornello  
Viol.  
Va.

F# minor F# minor F# minor (F# pedal...)

**B**

16

E# dim.7 F# minor F#7 B minor G#7 C# major C# minor A# dim.7

19

Lines 6-8.

Stirb in mir, -  
 Dead to me, -  
 Org.

F#7 B minor G major E# dim.7 F# minor F# minor D major F# minor

22

stirb in mir, Hof - - fart, Reichtum,  
 dead to me, all that's not of

F# minor D7 G major B# dim.7 G7

Word painting: Rising scale & chord progression for pride/haughtiness.

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24II

Au-gen-lust, ihr ver-worf - nen Flei - sches-trie - be,  
*God a part, car-nal, vain, im-pure, and pet-ty!*

C# minor A# dim.7 D major B minor F# minor iv6 V Phrygian cadence F# major

Opening text returns but without line 1 "Stirb in mir" ("die in me").

27

Lines 2, 8-7-8, 2, 1.

Welt und al - le dei-ne Lie - be, Welt  
*Earth and all thy glit-tring beau-ty, earth*

Organ with "Stirb in mir" theme...

B minor B minor B minor

29

D Line 8.

— und al - le dei-ne Lie - be, ihr ver-worf - nen Flei - sches - trie - be,  
 — and all thy glit-tring beau - ty! Car - nal, vain, im - pure, and pet - ty!

F#7 B7 G#7 C# major E minor 6 A# dim.7

Text painting: Twisting chromatic line for "verworfenen Fleischestriebe" ("warped/reprobate impulses of the flesh").

31

Lines 7-8.

Hof - fart, Reich - tum, Au - gen - lust, ihr ver - worf - nen Flei - sches -  
*All that's not of God a part, car-nal, vain, im-pure and*

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

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33

Line 2.

trie - pet - be, Welt und ty, earth and

A# dim.7 F#7 B minor E7 A minor D7 G major

35

Line 1.

al - le dei - ne Lie - - - be! Stirb in mir, in mir, in mir,  
all thy glit - t'ring beau - - - ty! Die in me, in me, in me,

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

Organ and voice in unison.

37

stirb in mir, stirb in mir,  
die in me, die in me,

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

39

E

mir! me! Ritornello

B minor B minor B7 E minor C#7

42

F# major F# minor D# dim.7 B7 E minor C major A# dim.7 B minor

No. 6 captures the essence of the "double commandment" quoted by Jesus in the Gospel reading (Matthew 22:37-39) "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (See Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18; also the parallel gospel account, where Jesus asks a religious lawyer, "What is written in the law?") See Luke 10:26-27.

## 6. Recitativo

•Loving one's neighbor required of those who love God (169/6).

169/6.

1. Alt

Doch meint es auch da - bei mit eu-rem Näch-sten treu, denn so steht  
*And show your neigh-bour too, a love that's fast and true. For thus 'tis*

A major A7 D major

3II

in der Schrift ge - schrie - ben: du sollst Gott und den Näch - sten lie - ben.  
*writ - ten in the scrip - ture: "Thou shalt love both thy God and neigh - bour."*

B minor E7 A major B7 A major A major E major

(See also 197/5.) •Loving one's neighbor: Prayer for divine help (169/7). This is the third of four stanzas in the 1524 chorale "Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist" by Martin Luther (1483-1546). The chorale serves as catechismal response, addressing God as love personified.

## 169/7. 7. Choral

1.

Sopr. Du sü - ße Lie - be, schenk uns dei - ne Gunst, laß uns emp - fin -  
*O sweet - est Love, un - to us grant al - way a mind ful - filled*

Alt Du sü - ße Lie - be, schenk uns dei - ne Gunst, laß uns emp - fin -  
*O sweet - est Love, un - to us grant al - way a mind ful - filled*

Ten. Du sü - ße Lie - be, schenk uns dei - ne Gunst, laß uns emp - fin -  
*O sweet - est Love, un - to us grant al - way a mind ful - filled*

Baß Du sü - ße Lie - be, schenk uns dei - ne Gunst, laß uns emp - fin -  
*O sweet - est Love, un - to us grant al - way a mind ful - filled*

Tutti

A major A major A major A major

5

den der Lie-be Brunst, daß wir uns von Her-zen ein-an-der lie-ben  
with thy char-i-ty! That each may his neigh-bour hold as his broth-er.

A major C# major F# minor D major E7 A major

Text painting: For the words "And continue of one mind in peace" Bach uncouples the voices from one another until agreement at the cadence.

10

und in Frie-den auf ei-nem Sinn blei-ben. Ky-rie e-leis...  
in one mind and heart for ev-er dwell - ing. We be-seech Thee, Lord!

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

NBA: Kyrie eleis