

Music of Early Lutheran Masters

Der 136. Psalm

Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672)

*Danket dem Herren; denn er ist freundlich, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich.
Danket dem Gott aller Götter, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich.
Danket dem Herrn aller Herren, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich,
der grosse Wunder thut alleine, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich;
der die Himmel ordentlich gemacht hat, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich;
der die Erde aufs Wasser ausgebreitet hat, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich;
der grosse Lichter gemacht hat, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich:
Die Sonn, dem Tage fürzustehen, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich,
den Monden und Sterne, der Nacht fürzustehen, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich;
der Egypten schlug an ihren ersten Geburten, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich
und führet Israel heraus, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich
durch mächtige Hand und ausgerecktem Arm, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich;
Danket dem Gott vom Himmel, denn seine Güte währet ewiglich.*

Give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good, for God's mercy endures forever.
Give thanks to the God of gods, for God's mercy endures forever.
Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for God's mercy endures forever;
who alone does great wonders, for God's mercy endures forever;
who by wisdom made the heavens, for God's mercy endures forever;
who spread out the earth upon the waters, for God's mercy endures forever;
who made the great lights, for God's mercy endures forever;
the sun to govern the day, for God's mercy endures forever;
the moon and the stars to govern the night, for God's mercy endures forever;
who struck down the first-born of Egypt, for God's mercy endures forever;
and brought out Israel from their midst, for God's mercy endures forever;
with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, for God's mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the God of heaven, for God's mercy endures forever.

– Psalm 136: 1-12, 26

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ

Johann Hermann Schein (1586-1630)

*Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ,
daß du Mensch geboren bist
von einer Jungfrau, das ist wahr,
des freuet sich der Engel Schar.
(Kyrieleis!)*

We praise, O Christ, your holy name
Truly human, child you came,
From virgin born; this word is true.
Your angels are rejoicing, too.
(Lord, have mercy!)

– Text: Martin Luther
Tr.: F. Samuel Janzow

Non moriar sed vivam

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

*Non moriar sed vivam,
Et narrabo opera Domini.*

I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the Lord.

– Psalm 118:17

Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist

Johann Walther (1496-1570)

*Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist
um den rechten Glauben allermeist,
daß er uns behüte an unserm Ende,
wenn wir heimfahr'n aus diesem Elende.
Kyrie eleison.*

Now to the Holy Spirit let us pray
For true faith, most needed on our way:
Guide us and defend us when life is ending
And our journey homeward is tending.
Lord have mercy.

– Text: Martin Luther
Tr.: Composite

Christ lag in Todesbanden

Johannes Eccard (1553-1611)

*Christ lag in Todesbanden,
für unsre Sünd' gegeben,
der ist wieder erstanden
und hat uns bracht das Leben.
des wir sollen fröhlich sein,
Gott loben und dankbar sein
und singen: Halleluja!
Halleluja!*

Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands
for our offenses given;
but now at God's right hand he stands
and brings us life from heaven.
therefore let us joyful be
and sing to God right thankfully
loud songs of hallelujah!
Hallelujah!

– Text: Martin Luther
Tr.: Richard Massie

Da pacem Domine in diebus nostris

Melchior Franck (1580-1639)

*Da pacem, Domine, in diebus nostris
Quia non est alius
Qui pugnet pro nobis
Nisi tu Deus noster*

Give peace, O Lord in our time
Because there is no one else
Who fights for us
If not You, Our God.

– Text: Latin hymn, ca. 7th Century

Ich bin die Auferstehung

Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672)

*Ich bin die Auferstehung und das Leben,
Wer an mich glaubet, der wird leben,
Ob er gleich stirbe;
Und wer da lebet und glaubet an mich,
Der wird nimmermehr sterben.*

I am the resurrection and the life
Those who believe in me, even though they die,
they live.
And everyone who lives and believes in me
will never die.

– John 11:25-26 (NRSV)

Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr

Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)

*Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr
Und Dank für sein Gnade,
Darum daß nun und nimmermehr
Uns rühren kann kein Schade.
Ein Wohlgefall'n Gott an uns hat,
Nun ist groß Fried' ohn Unterlass,
All Fehd hat nun ein Ende.*

All glory be to God on high,
Who has the world befriended;
To us no harm shall now come nigh,
The strife at last is ended.
God shows goodwill to one and all,
And peace when troubled sinners call.
Thank God for grace and mercy!

– Text: Nikolaus Decius

Tr.: Catherine Winkworth

INTERMISSION

BWV #80 - Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

1. CORO

*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott,
Ein gute Wehr und Waffen;
Er hilft uns frei aus aller Not,
Die uns itzt hat betroffen.
Der alte böse Feind,
Mit Ernst ers itzt meint
Groß Macht und viel List
Sein grausam Rüstung ist,
Auf Erd ist nicht seinsgleichen*

2. ARIA

*Alles, was von Gott geboren,
Ist zum Siegen auserkoren.
Mit unser Macht ist nights getan,
Wir sind gar bald verloren.
Es streit for uns der rechte Mann,
Den Gott selbst hat erkoren.*

*Wer bei Christi Blutpanier
In der Taufe Treu geschworen,
Siegt im Geist für und für.
Fragst du, were er ist?
Er heißt Jesus Christ,
Der Herre Zebaoth,
Und ist kein andrer Gott,
Das Feld muss er behalten.*

*Alles, was von Gott geboren,
Ist zum Siegen auserkoren.*

1. CHORUS

A mighty fortress is our God,
a sword and shield victorious;
he breaks the cruel oppressor's rod
and wins salvation glorious.
The old satanic foe,
has sworn to work us woe!
With craft and dreadful might
he arms himself to fight.
On earth he has no equal.

2. ARIA

All that which of God is fathered
Is for victory intended.
With our own might is nothing done,
We face so soon destruction.
He strives for us, the righteous man,
Whom God himself hath chosen.

Who hath Christ's own bloodstained flag
In baptism sworn allegiance
Wins in spirit evermore.
Ask thou who he is?
His name: Jesus Christ,
The Lord of Sabaoth,
There is no other god,
The field is his forever.

All that which of God is fathered
Is for victory intended.

3. RECITATIVO

*Erwäge doch, Kind Gottes, die so große Liebe,
Da Jesus sich
Mit seinem Blute dir verschriebe,
Womit er dich
Zum Kriege wider Satans Heer
 und wider Welt, und Sünde
Geworben hat!
Gib nicht in deiner Seele
Dem Satan und den Lastern statt!
Lass nicht dein Herz,
Den Himmel Gottes auf der Erden,
Zur Wüste werden!
Bereue deine Schuld mit Schmerz,
Dass Christi Geist mit dir sich fest verbinde!*

4. ARIA

*Komm in mein Herzenshaus,
Herr Jesu, mein Verlangen!
 Treib Welt und Satan aus
 Und lass dein Bild in mir erneuert prangen!
 Weg, schnöder Sündengraus!*

5. CHORAL

*Und wenn die Welt voll Teufel wär
Und wollten uns verschlingen,
So fürchten wir uns nicht so sehr,
Es soll uns doch gelingen.
Der Fürst dieser Welt,
Wie saur er sich stellt,
Tut er uns doch nicht,
Das macht, er ist gericht',
Ein Wörtlein kann ihn fällen.*

3. RECITATIVE

Consider well, O child of God, this love so mighty,
Which Jesus hath
In his own blood for thee now written;
By which he
For war opposing Satan's host,
 opposing world and error,
Enlisted thee!
Yield not within thy spirit
To Satan and his viciousness!
Let not thy heart,
Which is on earth God's heav'nly kingdom,
Become a wasteland!
Confess thy guilt with grief and pain,
That Christ's own soul to thine be firm united!

4. ARIA

Come in my heart's abode,
Lord Jesus, my desiring!
 Drive world and Satan out,
 And let thine image find in me new glory!
 Hence, prideful cloud of sin!

5. CHORALE

Though hordes of devils fill the land
all threat'ning to devour us,
we tremble not, unmoved we stand;
they cannot overpower us.
Let this world's tyrant rage;
in battle we'll engage!
His might is doomed to fail;
God's judgment must prevail!
One little word subdues him.

6. RECITATIVO

*So stehe dann
bei Christi blutgefärbten Fahne,
O Seele, fest
Und glaube, dass dein Haupt dich nicht verlässt,
Ja, daß sein Sieg
Auch dir den Weg zu deiner Krone bahne!
Tritt freudig an den Krieg!
Wirst du nur Gottes Wort
So hören als bewahren,
So wird der Feind gezwungen auszufahren,
Dein Heiland bleibt dein Heil,
Dein Heiland bleibt dein Hort!*

7. DUETTO

*Wie selig sind doch die,
die Gott im Munde tragen,
Doch selger ist das Herz,
das ihn im Glauben trägt!
Es bleibt unbesiegt
und kann die Feinde schlagen
Und wird zuletzt gekrönt,
wenn es den Tod erlegt.*

8. CHORAL

*Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn
Und kein' Dank dazu haben.
Er ist bei uns wohl auf dem Plan
Mit seinem Geist und Gaben.
Nehmen sie uns den Leib,
Gut, Ehr, Kind und Weib,
Lass fahren dahin,
Sie habens kein' Gewinn;
Das Reich muss uns doch bleiben.*

6. RECITATIVE

So stand then
Under Christ's own bloodstained flag and banner,
O spirit, firm,
And trust that this thy head betrays thee not,
His victory
E'en thee the way to gain thy crown prepareth!
March gladly on to war!
If thou but God's own word
Obey as well as hearken,
Then shall the foe be forced to leave the battle;
Thy Savior is thy shield.
Thy Savior remains thy refuge.

7. DUET

How blessed though are those who God
hold in their voices,
More blessed still the heart which him
in faith doth hold!
Unconquered it abides,
can deal the foe destruction,
And shall at last be crowned when
it shall death defeat.

8. CHORALE

God's word forever shall abide,
no thanks to foes, who fear it;
for God himself fights by our side
with weapons of the Spirit.
Were they to take our house,
goods, honor, child, or spouse,
though life be wrenched away,
they cannot win the day.
The Kingdom's ours forever.

#1, 2, 5, 8 Martin Luther

#2, 3, 4, 6, 7 Attributed to Salomo Franck (1715)

Translation: #1, 5 and 8 – William Reynolds;

#2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 – Z. Philip Ambrose.

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Der 136. Psalm

Heinrich Schütz (1585 – 1672)

Heinrich Schütz's world of music expanded during his first trip to Venice (1609-1613) to study with the renowned Giovanni Gabrieli. There he probably frequented the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, a center for German merchants and musicians. The famed Saint Mark's Cathedral boasted huge spaces that had generated a polychoral style, reflected here in a double chorus and double *capella* of ensembles plus continuous bass. The first *capella* declaims the psalm's refrain ("For God's mercy endures forever") while a chorus announces each psalm verse. Schütz later expands the refrain's sonority in response to the verses, sung in varied registers and textures by a chorus. The final, extensive verse ("Give thanks to the God of heaven . . .") summarizes the entire psalm, splendidly tossing phrases among all ensembles of voices and instruments. Such music both fills the echoing spaces of a great cathedral and envelops the worshiper with the praises of God.

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ

Johann Hermann Schein (1586 – 1630)

Already in 1690, W. K. Printz's *Historische Beschreibung (Historic Portrayal)* identified three great S's in German music (Samuel Scheidt, Heinrich Schütz, and Johann Hermann Schein). All three were noted for combining styles of the 16th century with expressive new conventions of 17th century Baroque music. Schein's hymn setting is a clear example. The first stanza dates back to the 14th century, additional stanzas were added by Martin Luther, and the melody also emerged during the Reformation. The "*Kyrieleis*" marks this as a religious hymn of popular origin. Schein offered this composition in the *Opella nova (New Little Handbook)* of 1618, where he mentioned innovative features such as the "General-Bass." Thus we hear two upper voices paraphrasing the hymn tune, a third voice singing the unadorned hymn, and instruments continuously providing the "General-Bass." All voices flow into the final phrase, together uttering an angelic jubilation at the birth of the Savior.

Non moriar sed vivam

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

We usually credit thirty-seven hymns (text or tunes or both) to Martin Luther. Moreover, he also composed this brief polyphonic motet. In 1530 Luther was forced to bide his time in the Coburg castle as his colleagues defended the reforming movement at Augsburg before the imperial authorities. This depressed Luther, causing him to sing a Latin antiphon based on Psalm 4:8. He then wrote to Ludwig Senfl, a prominent composer, asking for a composition on this biblical text. Instead, Senfl composed music for another of Luther's favorite verses, Psalm 118:17. Luther wrote this same verse, with melody, on the walls of his Coburg study room. His affection for this text apparently led him to make his own setting, heard today. The main melody (*cantus firmus*), the eighth psalm tone, is sung in longer notes by the tenors. This brief composition shows clearly that Luther was truly a master of music.

Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist

Johann Walter (1496 – 1570)

Johann Walter, along with fellow musician Conrad Rupsch, helped Martin Luther to modify the music of the Latin liturgy to fit the German version for use in churches. In addition Walter gave the Reformation many choral works such as this motet based on a familiar hymn. The first stanza, heard in this setting, dates back to medieval times; but Luther liked it so much he added three more stanzas for use in the churches. The hymn could be sung either after the Epistle reading, as an introit, with the sermon, at communion, or at funerals. It was published in the *Geystliche Gesangk Buchleyn* (1524). In this singing of Walter's five-voiced motet only the first stanza is heard. Three voices (soprano plus the two lowest parts) elaborate the hymn tune as two inner voices (*altus* and *tenor* or instrument) sing the tune completely as a double *cantus firmus* in somewhat longer notes.

Christ lag in Todesbanden

Johannes Eccard (1553 – 1611)

The youthful Johannes Eccard sang and studied with the masterful Orlando di Lasso in Munich, then spent his later career at aristocratic court chapels in Königsberg and Berlin, where he died. This work is taken from his *Geistliche Lieder* of 1597 that set the path toward later hymn settings. It has been said of this music that "Bach's chorales are unthinkable without it." "*Christ lag in Todenbanden*" was one of Luther's most enduring hymns and was actually based on medieval hymns dating back to the 11th century. In this work we hear the melody clearly stated in the upper voice. The hymn tune employs a "bar form," implying a repeat of the first phrases. Eccard actually doubles all this again to extend the first part of the music. Throughout this hymn setting Eccard accompanies the melody with free, independent movement of the lower voices even into the final joyful "Alleluia's."

Da pacem Domine in diebus nostris

Melchior Franck (1580 – 1639)

Melchior Franck was music master (*Hofkapellmeister*) at the court of Coburg (where Luther was sequestered in 1530) and, like many of his fellow musicians, composed secular songs, dances, and sacred music. Some scholars rank him along with Hans Leo Hassler and Michael Praetorius as one of the greatest composers of his forward-looking generation. This text probably originated in the sixth or seventh century as an antiphon. In 1279 Pope Nicholas III had it sung at mass before the *Agnus Dei*, and in later centuries it was offered during daily prayer. The text was adapted by Martin Luther and is sung still today with a plainsong melody. In this choral work, Franck offers us the Latin text, probably based on Psalm 122:7, set for a double choir. In a world torn apart by political strife, fear, and wars this prayer speaks for us now as much it did for medieval Christians.

Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr

Michael Praetorius (1571 – 1621)

This text and tune by Nikolaus Decius (1485–1550) have been widely used in place of the Hymn of Praise ("Gloria in excelsis") in the liturgy of Lutheran churches. This musical setting for double choir was published in the third volume of *Musae Siniae*, a nine-volume collection by one of the greatest Lutheran musicians prior to J. S. Bach. Here Michael Praetorius demonstrates an interest in the polychoral style that had developed in Italy. Two voice parts from two separate choirs open in canonic dialog, then are answered by the full double choir, and conclude with a playing of motives back and forth. The second line of the hymn is given similar treatment, but this time opening in the lower voices. Each remaining line of the hymn likewise offers a new musical idea in contrasting choirs. The work then concludes with a longer, fuller development of the very last phrase.

Ich bin die Auferstehung

Heinrich Schütz (1585 – 1672)

German schools of the 17th and 18th centuries down to the time of Bach taught music as a “grammatical” subject. Such music was understood as a form of rhetoric and was taught in textbooks often titled *Musica Poetica*. Schütz’s music exemplifies this practice masterfully and is still studied for its rhetorical value. Figures of speech identified in the study of rhetoric or poetry (still taught today) also had comparable musical versions. This motet for double chorus can thus be understood as a series of such grammatical figures. The rising eighth-note figure on “Auferstehung” (“resurrection”) constitutes such a musical “figure of speech.” The occasional significant cadences, the measure-long silence before “*Wer an mich glaubet*” (“Whoever believes in me”), and occasional shifts from alternating choirs to full double ensemble are further examples. Viewed this way, music proclaims the Word of God just as it might be proclaimed in sermon or lectionary reading.

Cantata 80, “Ein feste Burg”

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

Cantata 80 originated on the Third Sunday in Lent (*Oculi*) while Bach served in the court at Weimar. In the late 1720’s and again in 1744-1747 it was revised for Leipzig’s Reformation observances. The massive first movement launches the choir and string instruments in a fugal motet based on the elaborated hymn tune. Meanwhile the hymn melody sounds as a long-note canon between high and low instruments. The second movement, a chorale aria, opens with strings energetically reminding us of the battle waged in Christian life. Meanwhile the bass sings an Italian aria, defiantly asserting confidence in God’s election and baptism into the Blood of Christ. The soprano presents the second stanza of the ornamented chorale tune, partnered by the even more florid oboe. Next occurs a *recitativo* in which this battle is further explained, ending with an arioso encouragement to combat Satan and unite with the Spirit of Christ. There follows a much gentler soprano aria, accompanied by a bass melody playing in varied ritornello fashion. A dance-like gigue theme dominates the following fifth movement, which counterbalances the first movement in weight but is very different in character. Voices offer the third hymn stanza in a long-note *cantus firmus*. The trumpet parts were added by Bach’s son, Wilhelm Friedemann. Another brief *recitativo* leads to a lovely alto-tenor duet introduced by the oboe and violin playing in imitation. The four successive sections offer a motet-like form that meditates on Christian existence. The cantata then concludes with the fourth hymn stanza.