

= Lobe den Herrn , meine Seele , BWV 143 =

Lobe den Herrn , meine Seele ( Praise the Lord , my soul ) , BWV 143 , is an early cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . It is not known if he composed the cantata for New Year 's Day in Mühlhausen or Weimar , as the date of composition is unclear .

An unknown librettist drew mainly from Psalm 146 and from Jakob Ebert 's hymn " Du Friedefürst , Herr Jesu Christ " to develop seven movements , supplying only two of the movements himself . The text assembly is similar to Bach 's early cantatas . Bach 's authorship is doubted because the cantata has several features unusual for Bach 's later cantatas : it is the only Bach cantata to combine three corni da caccia with timpani . The cantata is in seven movements which combine the three major text sources : psalm , hymn and contemporary poetry . The opening chorus is based on a psalm verse , followed by the first hymn stanza and another psalm verse as a recitative . An aria on poetry is followed by a third psalm verse as an aria . It is followed by another aria on poetry , which simultaneously quotes the hymn tune instrumentally . The last movement combines elements of a chorale fantasia on the third stanza of the hymn , with vivid counterpoint of " Hallelujah " which closes the psalm .

= = History and text = =

Bach wrote the cantata for New Year 's Day , which is also the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ . The prescribed readings for the day were from the Epistle to the Galatians , " by faith we inherit " ( Galatians 3 : 23 ? 29 ) , and from the Gospel of Luke , the circumcision and naming of Jesus eight days after his birth . However , most of the text for the cantata was taken by the unknown librettist from Psalms 146 , and from Jakob Ebert 's hymn " Du Friedefürst , Herr Jesu Christ " , written in 1601 .

The text is compiled from psalm verses ( verse 1 for movement 1 , verse 5 for movement 3 , and verse 10 for movement 5 ) , and two stanzas from the hymn , the first as movement 2 , the third as the final movement . Only movements 4 and 6 are free poetry , with the hymn tune sounding again instrumentally during movement 6 . Due to its text structure , the Bach scholar Christoph Wolff dates the work to around 1710 .

The oldest ( and also the only ) manuscript was written in 1762 , after Bach 's death . The provenance of the cantata is disputed : some suggest that it may not be a Bach work because of its " unpretentious " nature and the lack of authoritative original music , or perhaps it was a transposition of an earlier work . Alternatively , part of the cantata may have been written by Bach , while other parts ( likely the choruses and the bass aria ) were added or amended by other composers . John Eliot Gardiner , who conducted the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage in 2000 , remarks on the stylistic similarity of the text structure to Bach 's early cantatas written in Mühlhausen . He also sees similar musical expression to the cantata for the inauguration of a new town council there , Gott ist mein König , BWV 71 , written in 1708 . While some musicologists assume that it may have been composed for the same occasion one year later , Gardiner proposes that it could either be a still earlier work , or that it " was , at least in part , an apprentice piece written in Weimar under Bach 's direct tutelage .

Bach 's biographer Philipp Spitta had written that the cantata was first performed on New Year 's Day of 1735 . However , according to more recent research , it was not performed at all that day , but rather Part IV of the Christmas Oratorio .

= = Scoring and structure = =

The cantata is scored festively for three vocal soloists ( soprano ( S ) , tenor ( T ) , and bass ( B ) ) , a four @-@ part choir , and a Baroque instrumental ensemble of three corni da caccia ( Co ) , timpani ( Ti , listed with the winds ) , bassoon ( Fg ) , two violins ( VI ) , viola ( Va ) and basso continuo . It is the only Bach cantata to combine three corni da caccia with timpani .

The cantata is structured in seven movements . It begins with a chorus on a verse from the psalm ,

followed by the first stanza from the hymn , sung by the soprano . Another psalm verse is rendered as a tenor recitative , followed by a tenor aria on free poetry . A third psalm verse is set as a bass aria , answered by another tenor aria on free poetry with an instrumental quotation of the hymn tune . The cantata is closed by a hybrid movement which combines like a chorale fantasia the third stanza of the hymn as cantus firmus with a vivid counterpoint of " Hallelujah " closing the psalm .

In the following table of the movements , the scoring follows the Neue Bach @-@ Ausgabe . The keys and time signatures are taken from Alfred Dürr , using the symbol for common time ( 4 / 4 ) . The continuo , playing throughout , is not shown .

= = Music = =

The opening chorus on the first verse of the psalm , " Lobe den Herrn , meine Seele " ( Praise the Lord , my soul . ) , is quite short , using imitative fanfare figures without much harmonic development . It employs a ritornello theme on the tonic and dominant chords , incorporating a descending @-@ third sequence . The voices sing mostly in homophony .

The soprano chorale , " Du Friedefürst , Herr Jesu Christ " ( O Prince of peace , Lord Jesus Christ ) , is accompanied by a violin obbligato . Although the vocal line is mostly undecorated , it is accompanied by a rhythmically active violin counterpoint following the circle of fifths . The obbligato line reaches a double cadence before the soprano entrance .

The tenor recitative on another verse from the psalm , " Wohl dem , des Hülfe der Gott Jakob ist " ( It is fortunate for him , whose help the God of Jacob is ) , is quite short and is considered unremarkable .

The fourth movement is a tenor aria in free verse , " Tausendfaches Unglück , Schrecken " ( Thousand @-@ fold misfortune , terror ) . The vocal line is " convoluted and angular " , reflecting the themes of misfortune , fear and death . The musicologist Julian Mincham suggests that these themes suggest that Salomon Franck may be the poet , as these were recurrent images in his texts , but also notes a lack of integration atypical of Franck 's oeuvre .

The bass aria on the tenth verse from the psalm , " Der Herr ist König ewiglich " ( The Lord is King eternally ) , employs a triadic motif similar to that of Gott ist mein König , BWV 71 . It is short and has a limited range of tonal development or chromatic variation . The voice is accompanied by the horns and timpani , without strings , illustrating God 's power .

The sixth movement is another tenor aria on free poetry , " Jesu , Retter deiner Herde " ( Jesus , saver of Your flock ) , characterized by the layered scale figuration in the instrumental accompaniment . The voice , bassoon and continuo perform as a trio , while the chorale tune is heard in the violins and organ with the Vox humana stop .

The closing chorus employs the third stanza of the chorale , " Gedenk , Herr , jetzund an dein Amt " ( Think , Lord , at this time on Your office ) , as a cantus firmus in the soprano . It is not composed as the typical four @-@ part setting , but the lower voices sing lively contrasting Alleluia , derived from the psalm .

= = Recordings = =

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Thomanerchor / Neues Bachisches Collegium Musicum . Kantaten Mit Corno da Caccia . Eterna , 1984 .

Monteverdi Choir / English Baroque Soloists . Bach Cantatas vol . 17 . Soli deo Gloria , 2000 .

Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir . J.S. Bach : Complete Cantatas . Antoine Marchand , 2001 .