

= Barmherziges Herze der ewigen Liebe , BWV 185 =

Barmherziges Herze der ewigen Liebe (Merciful heart of eternal love) , BWV 185 , is a church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed it in Weimar for the fourth Sunday after Trinity and first performed it on 14 July 1715 .

Bach composed the cantata as concertmaster in Weimar , responsible for one church cantata per month . The text was written by the court poet Salomon Franck for the occasion and published in 1715 . He included as the closing choral the first stanza of Johannes Agricola 's hymn " Ich ruf zu dir , Herr Jesus Christ " . The cantata is structured in six movements begins with a duet , followed by a sequence of alternating arias and recitatives and closed by a four @-@ part chorale . It is scored for a small ensemble of four vocal parts , oboe , strings and continuo .

Bach led the first performance in the court chapel of Schloss Weimar on 14 July 1715 . He performed the cantata again , with small instrumental revisions , at the beginning of his tenure as Thomaskantor in Leipzig , coupled with the new cantata Ein ungefärbt Gemüte , BWV 24 .

= = History and words = =

On 2 March 1714 Bach was appointed concertmaster of the Weimar court capelle of the co @-@ reigning dukes Wilhelm Ernst and Ernst August of Saxe @-@ Weimar . As concertmaster , he assumed the principal responsibility for composing new works , specifically cantatas for the Schlosskirche (palace church) , on a monthly schedule . He wrote this cantata for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity .

The prescribed readings for the Sunday were from the Epistle to the Romans , " For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God " (Romans 8 : 18 ? 23) , and from the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Luke : the injunctions to " be merciful " , " judge not " (Luke 6 : 36 ? 42) . The cantata text was written by the court poet Salomon Franck for the occasion and published in 1715 in Evangelisches Andachts @-@ Opffer . Franck stayed close to the theme of the gospel , recalling the injunctions and the parables of the mote and the beam and the blind leading the blind . The last aria summarizes the admonitions as " Das ist der Christen Kunst " (This is the Christians ' art) . The cantata is closed by the first stanza of Johannes Agricola 's hymn " Ich ruf zu dir , Herr Jesus Christ " (1531) . Albert Schweitzer criticized the libretto as " bland , lesson @-@ like " .

Bach first performed the cantata on 14 July 1715 . He dated it himself " 1715 " . When Bach performed the cantata again in Leipzig on 20 June 1723 , he transposed it from F @-@ sharp minor to G minor and made changes to the instrumentation . In that service , his fourth in Leipzig , he performed it together with a new cantata Ein ungefärbt Gemüte , BWV 24 , after he had started his tenure as cantor with cantatas in two parts , Die Elenden sollen essen , BWV 75 , and Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes , BWV 76 . He treated the same chorale in the chorale cantata Ich ruf zu dir , Herr Jesu Christ , BWV 177 , for the same occasion in 1724 . Bach revived the cantata once more in 1746 or 1747 .

= = Scoring and structure = =

The cantata is structured in six movements , beginning with a duet , followed by a series of alternating recitatives and arias and concluded by a chorale . Similar to several other cantatas on words by Franck , it is scored for a small ensemble : four vocal soloists (soprano (S) , alto (A) , tenor (T) and bass (B)) , oboe (Ob) , two violins (VI) , viola (Va) , and basso continuo (Bc) including bassoon (Fg) . A choir is only needed for the chorale , if at all . The score , partly an autograph , is titled " Concerto . / Dominica post Trinit : / Brmhertziges Hertze der ewigen Liebe. ect . / â 5 Strom . 4 Voci / Tromba / 1 Hautb 2 Violini . 1 Viola . / Violoncello / è Fagotto . S. A. T. è Baßo con Cont . / di JSbach . / 1715 " , while " tromba " (trumpet) is struck in the cover of the set of parts .

In Leipzig the oboe was replaced by a clarino (trumpet) for the instrumental cantus firmus of the

chorale in movement 1 . The duration is given as 16 minutes .

In the following table of the movements , the scoring and keys are given for the version performed in Weimar in 1714 . The keys and time signatures are taken from Alfred Dürr , using the symbol for common time (4 / 4) . The instruments are shown separately for winds and strings , while the continuo , playing throughout , is not shown .

= = Music = =

= = = 1 = = =

The opening movement is a duet of soprano and tenor , " Barmherziges Herze der ewigen Liebe " (Compassionate heart of eternal love) . It is in two ways connected to the chorale which closes the work . The melody is played line by line as a cantus firmus by the oboe , embellished and in a dancing 6 / 4 time instead of 4 / 4 . The first interval in the voices and the continuo is the same as in the chorale . The countersubject is the inversion of the theme , in German " Spiegelung " (reflection in a mirror) . It reflects the theme as human mercy should reflect divine mercy . John Eliot Gardiner , who conducted the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage with the Monteverdi Choir in 2000 , comments in his diary of the project : " Cast as a siciliano for soprano and tenor with cello continuo , there is a warm glow to this opening duet , with trills on each of the main beats to signify the flickering flame of love , and a plea to ' come melt my heart ' . Agricola 's chorale tune [...] is meanwhile intoned by a clarino hovering above the two amorous vocal lines .

= = = 2 = = =

The alto recitative , " Ihr Herzen , die ihr euch in Stein und Fels verkehret " (You hearts , which have changed yourselves into rocks and stones) , is first accompanied by the strings , but ends as an arioso with continuo .

= = = 3 = = =

The alto aria , " Sei bemüht in dieser Zeit " (Be inspired at the present time) shows the richest instrumentation , with figurative oboe solos .

= = = 4 = = =

The bass recitative " Die Eigenliebe schmeichelt sich ! " (Self @-@ love flatters itself !) is accompanied only by the continuo .

= = = 5 = = =

The text of the bass aria with continuo , " Das ist der Christen Kunst " (This is the Christian 's art) , summarizes all injunctions in one long sentence , but Bach splits it in parts , all introduced by the keywords " Das ist der Christen Kunst " . The bass as the vox Christi (voice of Christ) delivers the " sermon " . In Leipzig , the continuo of cello and bass in octaves was doubled by the strings , another octave higher . Gardiner admires Bach 's treatment as a " gentle , parodistic way he portrays the rhetorical displays of a pompous preacher " .

= = = 6 = = =

The closing chorale , " Ich ruf zu dir , Herr Jesu Christ " (I call to You , Lord Jesus Christ) , summarizes the topic of the cantata to love and serve the neighbour .

It is illuminated by a " soaring " violin as a fifth part , similar to the treatment in the cantata for

Pentecost the previous year , Erschallet , ihr Lieder , BWV 172 .

= = = Reception = = =

The musicologist Isoyama summarizes : " ... we are bound to admire the emotional wealth with which Bach 's music infuses the poetry . In that it gives living reality to a potentially dry text , this work may be numbered among Bach 's masterpieces " .

= = Recordings = =

The sortable listing is taken from the selection provided by Aryeh Oron on the Bach @-@ Cantatas website . The type of choir and orchestra is roughly shown as a large group by red background , and as an ensemble with period instruments in historically informed performance by green background .