

A Cantata-Text Cycle of 1728 from Nuremberg: a Preliminary Report on a Discovery relating to J. S. Bach's so-called 'Third Annual Cantata Cycle'

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A Nuremberg-Student at Leipzig 1724–1727

The third volume of *Bach-Dokumente: Documents regarding the reception history of J.S. Bach 1750–1800*, collated by Hans-Joachim Schulze, was published in 1972. The following sentence appears in the entry on Christoph Birkmann, a student from the independent imperial city of Nuremberg, who lived in Leipzig between December 1724 and September 1727:

Even so, I did not give up music entirely. I diligently followed the great composer Mr **Bach** and his choir, and in winter joined in with the *collegia musica*, and this gave me an opportunity to continue assisting many students with the help of the Italian [*welsch*] language.¹

The document comes from a publication containing a funeral-sermon and Birkmann's biography, which was based on his autobiographical notes dating from circa 1765, when he was a pastor in Nuremberg. He died in 1771.

This article introduces to Bach studies a hitherto-unknown publication by Christoph Birkmann dating from 1728 which has enormous implications for our understanding of the cantatas that Bach performed in Leipzig between 1725 and 1727. In spite of being in Leipzig for as little as two-and-a-half years, the

* This essay is a shortened version of a paper given at a colloquium in honour of Hans-Joachim Schulze's 80th birthday on 3 December 2014 at the Bach-Archiv Leipzig. A far more detailed account is expected to be published in the *Bach-Jahrbuch* 2015. I am very grateful to Ruth Tatlow, Burkhard Schwalbach and Yo Tomita for editing my English, to Chris Abbey, who translated the historical sources, to Andreas Glöckner and Peter Wollny, my colleagues from the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, who gave me the opportunity to discuss problematic areas in this new research on several occasions, and to Nobuaki Ebata and Robin A. Leaver for their invaluable comments on early drafts.

¹ *BDok* III, no. 761. For divergent historical meanings of the German 'Mundart'-term *welsch* see Johann Christoph Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: 1774–86), vol. 4, 169 f.

publications allows us to conclude that Birkmann influenced Bach's work beyond his role as a singer or instrumentalist in Bach's choir. In 1728 the aspiring theologian, who was by then back in Franconia for a year or so, published a cycle of cantata-texts. It is this publication that shows him to have been both a chronicler of Bach's cantata performances in Leipzig between 1725 and 1727, and one of Bach's hitherto unidentified librettists. The printed text allows us to close several gaps in our knowledge of the schedule of Bach's performances during this two-year period. It revives hypotheses of lost cantatas from Bach's so-called 'Third Annual Cycle', and it raises once more the question of Bach's Picander-settings.



Illustration 1: Title page of *Wohlverdientes Ehren=Denkmal*² (Well-deserved memorial), funeral-sermon with biography of C. Birkmann and his wife S. M. Birkmann, Halle 1772 (Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Fam. 920-d/4)

² *Wohlverdientes Ehren=Denkmal bey dem unvermutheten Hingang zweyer nunmehr vollendeten Gerechten, nemlich des HERRN Christoph Birkmanns, treuverdienten Senioris an der St. Egidien=Kirche zu Nürnberg, wie auch verschiedener gelehrten Gesellschaften würdiges Ehrenmitgliedes, und seiner geliebtesten Ehegattin, FRAUEN Sybilla Magdalena, geb. Oehmin, welche im Martio 1771. einander in wenig Tagen zur seligen Ruhe gefolget sind, herausgegeben von M. Stephanus Schultz, Prediger bey St. Ulrich, und Director des Jüdischen Instituti. Halle, gedruckt bey Friedrich Wilhelm Hundt, n. d. [Preface dated 31 January 1772] cited in the following as *Ehren-Denkmal*. (Well-deserved memorial following the unsuspected demise of two now deceased righteous individuals, namely Mr Christoph Birkmann, loyal elder at St Giles' Church in Nuremberg and dignified honorary member of various learned societies, and his beloved spouse, Mrs Sybilla Magdalena, née Oehm, who in March 1771 followed each other within a few days to blessed rest, published by Mr Stephanus Schultz, preacher at St Ulrich's and director of the Jewish Institute. Halle, printed by Friedrich Wilhelm Hundt.) The biography is based on an autobiographical handwritten version, which was shortened in places.*

Birkmann's Biography

Christoph Birkmann was born on 10 January 1703 in Nuremberg. Although poverty-stricken, he enjoyed the blessings of a charitable school-system for the poor, inspired by the Halle Pietism of August Hermann Francke. Birkmann then attended the Latin-school at the Holy-Spirit Infirmary, the 'Spitalists'-School, and he was a member of the pupils' choir at St Giles church. He writes that he had a 'natural flair for singing and the humanities' [*schöne Wissenschaften*], which won him lessons with the then-famous Nuremberg school-cantor Nicolaus Deinl (1665–1725).³ Birkmann began teaching at an early age to help earn his keep. Apparently he was deeply gifted in music and languages, and with the help and support of two notable composers and organists from Nuremberg, a town-musician and several language tutors, he developed these skills over time.

I was keen to use my musical talent and continue what I had learned under Mr Deinl.

Drezel,⁴ **Fischer**⁵ and other respectable composers who had granted me admission showed me what I lacked and introduced me to good musical books although I was unable to make use of them since I knew no Italian or French. **Tonelli**, **Plaz** and **Kleemann** gave me the necessary training in the above-mentioned matters,⁶ after which I tried my hand at composition. Sometimes I submitted my compositions to Mr **Drezel** for assessment.

Mr **Fischer** introduced me to Italian composers and taught me how to imitate them. This enabled me to teach music in detail to others early on and benefited me directly.

My future career became apparent. I wanted to study the humanities, but lacked the funds. I hoped to receive a grant at college and following Whitsun moved to the charming Altdorf in 1723 in order to attend the *Iubilaeum Academicum*. I attended the public and private *collegia*.⁷

³ *Ehren-Denkmal*, 19. Nicolaus Deinl was an organist at the Holy-Spirit-Infirmary from 1694, became *Collega* at Spitalists' School in 1699, and cantor at the same place from 1701.

⁴ Cornelius Heinrich Dretzel (1697–1775) became organist of the Church of Our Lady at Nuremberg in 1712, and in 1719 succeeded Wilhelm Hieronymus Pachelbel at St Giles. According to Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart he was one of Bach's pupils—a claim that is at present insufficiently documented. ('Drexel, ein Schüler des großen Sebastian Bach, und zwar einer seiner besten.' See *BDok III*, no. 903a).

⁵ The *Stadt- und Ratsmusik* Gabriel Fischer (1684–1749) was a sales-agent for Bach's Partitas BWV 826–827 from *Clavier-Übung I*. See *BDok II*, no. 224.

⁶ Francisco Ludovico Tonelli, *Der Wohlinformierte Italiänische Scholär, Welcher, Als ein Teutscher, die Welsche Sprach in kurtzer Zeit zu erlernen sich angelegen seyn lässet ...* (Nuremberg 1723). Tonelli († 1738) was a teacher of Italian since 1720 at Nuremberg, later also at Jena. Georg Philipp Platz, *Sehr leichte neuerfundene Art, die Kinder das Frantzösische A, B, C. buchstabiren und die Ortographie besagter Sprache in kurtzer Zeit zu lehren* (Nuremberg [1720]); *Exercice très utile de la langue françoise* (Nuremberg 1721). It is uncertain whether Birkmann studied with Platz or Tonelli, or only studied their grammar books.. He writes elsewhere that he could not afford private tuition. So far, it has not been possible to ascertain the identity of Kleemann in greater detail. Several organists and cantors of that name are listed in records in Nuremberg, as are practitioners of the visual arts, alongside a tutor for arithmetic, by the name of Johann Kleemann, Professor at Altdorf, *Das große Nürnbergische Rechen=Buch* (Nuremberg and Altdorf, 1715).

⁷ 'Mein musicalisch Talent wollte auch gern anwenden, und fortsetzen, was ich bey Herrn **Deinl** gelernt hatte. **Drezel**, **Fischer** und andere wackere Meister, die mir den Zutritt verstatteten,

Birkmann continued to pursue music vigorously at Altdorf University, situated in the immediate vicinity of Nuremberg:

A special liking for mathematics drove me to *Magister Kelsch*,⁸ who also was a musician. We practised composing and tried out *collegia musica*, and through this drive I quickly reached the point where I composed two pieces of music for the annual inauguration of the *Rectoris Magnifici* and performed them to applause.⁹

Birkmann was, however, 'still not sure whether I should major in music or concentrate on my books'.¹⁰

The prospect of earning a living by teaching in the relatively larger and more expansive city of Leipzig, where commerce and learning were predominant, caused him to leave Altdorf after just a year, as he had had to survive there without any kind of income. Birkmann arrived in Leipzig on the 'Friday before Advent', 1 December 1724. And, excluding two absences, he stayed there until the beginning of September 1727.¹¹ In Leipzig he attended lectures in law and theology, but just as in Altdorf, he seems to have been specially interested in mathematics, and particularly drawn to the research of a young professor named Christian August Hausen (1693–1743). Birkmann and professor Hausen co-authored a mathematical disputation, which they published in Leipzig in the summer of 1726: *De motu solis circa propriam axem* (The motion of the sun around its own axis). It was a study of the spherical geometry about the sun's rotation, measured by means of sunspots, which was Hausen's area of expertise. Hausen encouraged Birkmann to pursue a career as a mathematician, and introduced him

zeigten mir, was mir noch fehlte, und machten mir gute musicalische Bücher bekant, die ich aber ohne Kenntniß der italiänischen und französischen Sprache nicht wohl nutzen konnte. **Tonelli, Plaz** und **Kleemann** gaben mir in genannten Sachen die nöthige Unterweisung, worauf mich an die Composition wagte, und meine Aufsätze Herrn **Drezel** zur Prüfung unterweilen mitbrachte. Bey Herrn **Fischer** lernte ich noch mehr welsche Meister kennen und nachahmen, dadurch wurde gar zeitig in den Stand gesetzt, andere in der Musik gründlich zu unterweisen und daraus Nutzen zu ziehen. Nun stunde an, welche Lebensart ich einschlagen sollte. Ich hatte Lust, die schönen Wissenschaften zu studieren, aber keine Mittel. Ich hoffte auf der hohen Schule ein Subsidium zu erlangen, und bezog das liebe **Altdorf** A. 1723. nach dem Pfingstfeiertagen, um das *Iubilaeum Academicum* mit begehen zu können. Ich besuchte die *Collegia publica* und *privata*.¹² *Ehren-Denkmal*, 20 f. (original emphases). The handwritten version includes the following addendum: '... but then I fell into oblivion in Nuremberg. However, I had placed my trust in God and resolved to live on the 80 f[lorin] I had scantily saved for as long as it would last.' (D-Nst, Will III.88.2°, fol. 4r).

⁸ Michael Kelsch (1693–1742), Mathematician at the University of Altdorf and musician.

⁹ 'Eine besondere Neigung zur Mathematik trieb mich zu M[agister]. **Kelsch**, der auch ein Musicus war. Wir übten uns in der Composition, stellten *Collegia musica* an, und durch solchen Trieb kam in kurzen so weit, daß bey jährlicher Veränderung des *Rectoris Magnifici* zwo vollständige Musiken componirte und mit Beyfall aufführte.' *Ehren-Denkmal*, 21.

¹⁰ '... noch nicht gewiß, ob daraus mein Hauptstudium machen, oder mich stärker an die Bücher halten sollte.' *Ehren-Denkmal*, 21.

¹¹ He enrolled on 23 December 1724. Cf. Georg Erler, *Die jüngere Matrikel der Universität Leipzig, 1559–1809 als Personen- und Ortsregister bearbeitet und durch Nachträge aus den Promotionslisten ergänzt*, vol. 3: Die Immatrikulationen vom Wintersemester 1709 bis zum Sommersemester 1809 (Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1909), 197. He was listed as 'Kirckmann' here).

to eminent mathematicians and astronomers at the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin and at the *Königliches Cabinet der mathematischen und physikalischen Instrumente* (Royal Chamber of Mathematical and Physical Devices) in Dresden.

It was only gradually that Birkmann began to focus seriously on theology. It is likely that Johann Abraham Birnbaum contributed significantly to this change of mind. Birnbaum was a rhetorician, a friend of Bach, and Birkmann both stayed with him and attended his private *collegia*

Because I spent some time in the house of *Magister Birnbaum*,¹² I made use of this excellent weekly opportunity to practice eloquence and the defence of various propositions, for I was often required to extemporize. From then on, I studied theology seriously, attended lectures by *Pfeiffer*,¹³ *Carpzov*,¹⁴ *Bernd*,¹⁵ *Siber*¹⁶ and other famous teachers at both pulpits, and even tried preaching a few times. However, I postponed the rest of my training until a more convenient time and found guidance in *Hoffmann's* and *Tellers'* sacred exegesis and disposition of sacred texts because I could enjoy both as desired.¹⁷

¹² Johann Abraham Birnbaum (1702–1748), *Magister* of rhetoric at Leipzig University from 1721. He was a member of the *Vertraute Deutsche Redner-Gesellschaft* (founded by J. C. Gottsched) at Leipzig.

¹³ Johann Gottlob Pfeiffer (1667–1740). In he became 1707 professor of oriental languages and of the Talmud, in 1723 *Professor ordinarius* of theology and licentiate, and in 1724 doctor of theology. Pfeiffer is also believed to have been a composer in his spare time. I wish to express my gratitude at this point to Martin Petzoldt (†), whom I was fortunate to be able to consult on questions relating to Birkmann's teachers in theology; concerning biographies of most theologians mentioned here. See Martin Petzoldt, 'Johann Sebastian Bach in theologischer Interaktion: Persönlichkeiten in seinem beruflichen Umfeld', in Christoph Wolff (ed.), *Über Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke: Aspekte musikalischer Biographie: Johann Sebastian Bach im Zentrum* [Festschrift Hans-Joachim Schulze zum 65. Geburtstag] (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 133–59.

¹⁴ Johann Gottlob Carpzov (1697–1767). In 1714 he became licentiate and *Archidiaconus* (senior deacon) at St. Thomas, in 1719 *Professor ordinarius* of Hebraic, and in 1724 he was awarded a doctorate. He was godfather to two of J. S. and A. M. Bach's children, Ernestus Andreas, 30 October 1727 and Christiana Benedicta, 1 January 1730.

¹⁵ Adam Bernd (1676–1748). In 1711 he became senior catechist at St. Peter's Church, in 1728 he was suspended after publishing a controversial theological paper. He authored a widely-read autobiography, published in 1738.

¹⁶ Urban Gottfried Sieber (1669–1741). In 1711 he became deacon and in 1714 preacher for prayer services at St. Thomas; in 1714 he gained a licentiate of theology, and in 1715 first chair-holder of a professorial lectureship of Ecclesiastical History (*Kirchen-Altertümer*). Sieber baptised three children by J. S. and A. M. Bach.

¹⁷ 'Weil bey M[agister]. **Birnbaum** einige Zeit im Hause war, bediente mich der schönen Gelegenheit, die sich wöchentlich in Red=Uebungen und Vertheidigung vermischter Sätze darbot, da es mich denn öfters traf, daß *ex tempore* peroriren musste. Von dem an, trieb die Theologie mit Ernst, hörte **Pfeiffern**, **Carpzoven**, **Bernd**, **Sibern** und andere berühmte Lehrer auf beeden Cathedern, versuchte auch ein paarmal zu predigen, stellte aber die fernere Uebung bis auf bequemere Zeit aus, und ließ mir in *Exegesi sacra et dispositione textuum sacrorum Hoffmans* und *Tellers* Anleitung gefallen, weil beyde nach Wunsch geniessen konnte.' *Ehren-Denkmal*, 22. Romanus Teller the Younger (1703–1750), 1721 magister of philosophy, 1723 *Baccalaureus* of theology and catechist at St. Peter's, 1726 Saturday-Precacher at St. Thomas; later numerous posts. Who is meant here with 'Hoffmann' has, presently, to remain an open question. Of the same age as Teller, and consequently a candidate for

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At the beginning of September 1727, Christoph Birkmann then returned to Altdorf in order to complete his theological studies and to prepare seriously for what appears to have been a promised position in the church in Franconia. From 1728 onwards, he became a private tutor (*Informator*) for an aristocratic family living in Hersbruck near Nuremberg. Occasionally he preached in Hersbruck as a substitute. He also preached in Nuremberg in 1731, where he was asked by a senior pastor to give private instruction to the families of patricians.¹⁹

He was ordained at Altdorf in 1732 and took up his first ecclesiastical position in Nuremberg.²⁰ In his spare time he wrote edifying and pedagogical literature of a theological nature. He was also an active collector of historical and geographical research materials. For example, he helped the Altdorf historian Georg Andreas Will (1727–1798) to compile biographies of notable Nurembergers for a *Gelehrten-Lexicon*. Birkmann's eldest daughter, Margaretha Barbara²¹ (1734–1801), was his assistant, although she was also an author in her own right and translated texts from French, which in 1758 earned her the title of a *poeta laureata*.²² Both father and daughter were members of the Ducal *Teutsche Gesellschaft*, based at Helmstedt.

predominantly private colloquia would be Carl Gottlob Hof(f)mann (1703–1774), 1725 magister of the liberal arts and *Baccalaureus* of medicine, preacher at prayer services at the university church (later preacher at Sunday-prayers at St. Nicolai; professor at Wittenberg, where he was also a *Superintendent*). Birkmann also lived in the same building as Hoffmann, which may explain the phrase 'nach Wunsch geniessen' (enjoy as I so wished).

¹⁸ 'Dabey ließ ich doch die Musik nicht ganz liegen, sondern hielt mich fleißig zu dem grossen Meister, Herrn Director **Bach** und seinem Chor, besuchte auch im Winter die *Collegia musica*, und erlangte hiedurch Gelegenheit, etlichen Studiosis mit Hülfe der welschen Sprache weiter zu helfen.' *Ehren-Denkmal*, 22 f.

¹⁹ *Ehren-Denkmal*, p. 24.

²⁰ At first he was a pastor for members of the military (*Miliz*), for the prison- and workhouse and pastor at the *Infections-Haus* or *Pestilentiarium* at Nuremberg.

²¹ Birkmann's first wife, Sophia Magdalena née Bickelmann († 1733), died several months after the wedding. He had seven children with his second wife, Sybilla Magdalena née Oehm († 1771), all save the eldest, died before reaching adulthood.

²² John Flood, *Poets Laureate in the Holy Roman Empire: A Bio-bibliographical Handbook*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), vol. 1, 129.



Illustration 2: Portrait of the pastor Christoph Birkmann with his motto from 2. Corinthians 6:4 ('But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God') engraving by Georg Lichtensteger, 1759 (privately owned).

The Nuremberg cantata-cycle of 1728

When Birkmann left Leipzig at the beginning of September 1727, he had decided to become a theologian. It looks from various documents as though his mathematical and musical ambitions were put behind him for pragmatic reasons. As early as autumn 1728 he had published a collection of cantata-texts: *Gott-geheilgte Sabbaths-Zehnden* (God-devoted Sunday Tithes).²³ This collection comprises 71 cantata texts for the entire liturgical year, including all holidays and feast days in honour of the Virgin Mary (Purification, Annunciation, Visitation), the saints (Michael, John) and the apostles (Andrew, Thomas, Matthias, James the Lesser and Philip, Peter and Paul, James the Greater, Bartholomew, Matthew, Jude and Simon), all of which used *Figuralmusik* used in Franconia. Minor saints' days were not celebrated in the Leipzig churches in Bach's time, at least not with *Figuralmusik*.²⁴



Illustration 3: Christoph Birkmann, *Gott-geheilgte Sabbaths-Zehnden*, title-page (Nuremberg [1728])

²³ *Gott-geheilgte Sabbaths-Zehnden/ bestehend aus Geistlichen Cantaten auf alle Hohe Fest- Sonn- und Feyer-Tage der Herspruckischen Kirch-Gemeinde zu Gottseeliger Erbauung gewiedmet, von Christoph Birkmann/ Rev. Minist. Candid. Nürnberg, gedruckt bey Lorenz Bieling, n. d. [Preface 26 October 1728].*

²⁴ In addition, Nuremberg cantata cycles differ in other details from the Leipzig's practice as follows: 1) In Advent, a cantata was performed every Sunday instead of only on the 1st Sunday; 2) For the high feasts, two instead of three cantatas were performed, and 3) A cantata was included for Palm Sunday.

Birkmann organised the texts for the liturgical year of 1728/29 and, as his lengthy preface indicates, he intended them for performances at Hersbruck.

Figuralmusik from the Leipzig principal churches can be detected in the collection, which is probably not surprising in the view of the chronological proximity between the publication date of the collection and Birkmann's stay in Leipzig. As many as 30 librettos relate to performances at Leipzig's principal churches, and of these at least 21 are known to be texts for Bach Cantatas. Birkmann also includes a complete libretto for a substantial Passion for Good Friday. This corresponds to Bach's Leipzig St. John Passion from 1725.

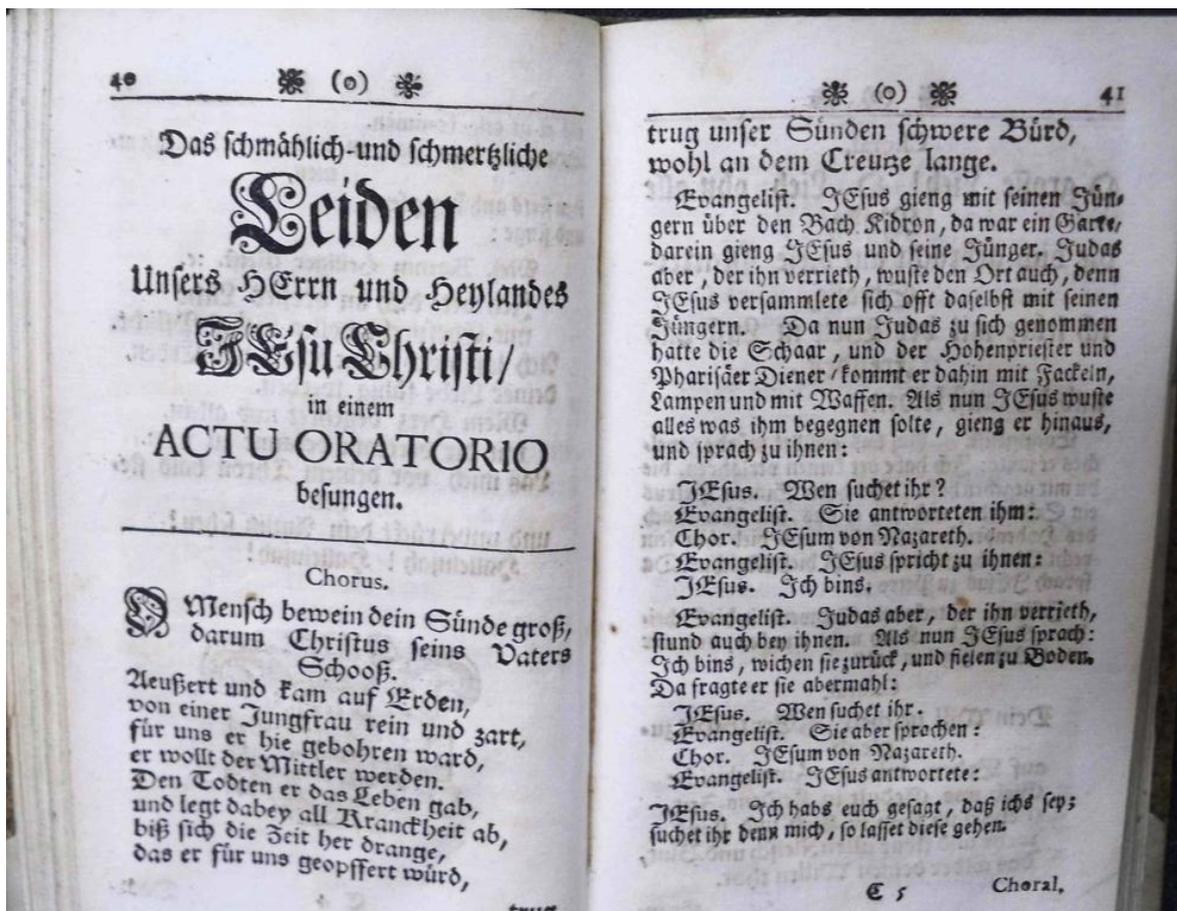


Illustration 4: Christoph Birkmann, *GOTT-geheiligte Sabbaths-Zehnden* (Nuremberg [1728], 40 f.) St John Passion *Das schmähhlich- und schmerzliche Leiden Unsers HERRn und Heylandes Jesu Christi* (The shameful and painful suffering of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ)

The importance of Birkmann's *Sabbaths-Zehnden* now becomes apparent: it is the earliest and most detailed contemporary documentation of the sacred music written by Bach in his early years in Leipzig.²⁵

²⁵ In addition, this confirms Alfred Dürr's chronology of Cantatas ('Zur Chronologie der Leipziger Vokalwerke J. S. Bachs', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 44 (1957), 77–95; a revised and updated version is published by Bärenreiter in 1976). For details of the chronology see also the very conveniently organised *Kalendarium zur Lebensgeschichte Johann Sebastian Bachs*, extended new edition, ed. Andreas Glöckner (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, and Stuttgart: Carus, 2008).

1724

Title / Annotations ²⁶	Published libretto	Occasion ²⁷	Performance in Leipzig
<i>Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ</i> BWV 91		1 Christmas	25 Dec 1724 (or repeat perf.)
<i>Christum wir sollen loben schon</i> BWV 121		2 Christmas	26 Dec 1724 (or repeat perf.)

1725

<i>Jesu, nun sei gepreiset</i> BWV 41		New Year	1 Jan 1725 (or repeat perf.)
Johannes-Passion (<i>O Mensch, beweine</i>) BWV 245, 2 nd version		Good Friday	30 Mar 1725
<i>Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden</i> BWV 6		Easter Monday	2 Apr 1725 (or repeat perf.)
<i>Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ</i> unknown text-setting ²⁸	J. Agricola 1529?/31 (Chorale)	3 S after Trinity	17 Jun 1725
<i>Gelobet sei der Herr, der Gott Israel</i> unknown text-setting	Erdmann Neumeister 1711 ²⁹	St John's Day ³⁰	24 Jun 1725
<i>Der Segen des Herrn machet reich ohne Mühe</i> (selection of 4 movements only) ³¹ unknown text-setting	Neumeister 1711	5 S after Trinity	1 Jul 1725
<i>Meine Seele erhebet den Herrn</i> unknown text-setting ³²	Maria Aurora von Königsmarck ³³	Visitation	2 Jul 1725
<i>Wer sich rächet, an dem wird sich der Herr wieder rächen</i> unknown text-setting	Neumeister 1711	6 S after Trinity	8 Jul 1725
<i>Ihr, die ihr euch von Christo nennet</i> BWV 164	Salomo Franck 1715 ³⁴	13 S after Trinity	26 Aug 1725

²⁶ Annotations according to Birkmann's use of previously published librettos, and references to Bach's settings.

²⁷ For the sake of economy, the following abbreviations are used (only in Tables): S = Sunday, e.g. 3 S = the 3rd Sunday; 1 Christmas = the 1st day of Christmas, etc.

²⁸ Text identical with chorale cantata BWV 177 of 1732.

²⁹ Erdmann Neumeister, *Geistliches Singen und Spielen/ Das ist: Ein Jahrgang von Texten/Welche dem Dreyeinigen GOTT zu Ehren bey öffentlicher Kirchen=Versammlung in Eisenach musicalisch aufgeführt werden von Georg. Philip. Telemann, F. S. Capellmeister und Secr.*, (Gotha 1711).

³⁰ It is also the 4th Sunday after Trinity in 1725.

³¹ Alongside several movements from BWV 88 for the same Sunday in 1726.

³² Two settings (by Reinhard Keiser and Johann Mattheson) are hitherto known.

³³ *Das MAGNIFICAT Oder Der Lob=Gesang Mariä/ Mit Zweyen Chören. Gesetzt von MATTHESON. Hamburg, gedruckt bey seel. Thomas von Wierings Erben/ bey der Börse im güldnen A,B,C., n. d. [c.1716] (Exemplar A-Wgm, 16261/Textbücher), with printed entry on fol. 1v: 'Die nachdrücklich=schöne Poesie dieser Pieçe hat man einer hohen Dame zu dancken/ welche sich dariñ/ auch ohne genandt zu werden/ kennen lassen wird'. Georg Christian Lehms (*Teutschlands galante Poetinnen mit ihren sinnreichen und netten Proben*, Frankfurt am Main: Hocker, 1714-15) mentions Königsmarck as the librettist and names Keiser as the first composer to set the music for this Magnificat paraphrase. See Michael Maul, 'Überlegungen zu einer Magnificat-Paraphrase und dem Leiter der Leipziger Kantatenaufführungen im Sommer 1725', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 82 (2006), 109-25; cf. Steffen Voss, 'Did Bach perform sacred music by Johann Mattheson in Leipzig?', *Bach Notes: The Newsletter of the American Bach Society*, 3 (Spring 2005), 1-5.*

1726

<i>Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot</i> BWV 39 (part 2, nos. 4–7)	Meiningen 1704/1719 ³⁵	1 S after Trinity	23 Jun 1726
<i>Siehe ich will viel Fischer aussenden</i> BWV 88 (nos. 6–7 only) ³⁶	Meiningen 1704/1719	5 S after Trinity	21 Jul 1726
<i>Es wartet alles auf dich</i> BWV 187	Meiningen 1704/1719	7 S after Trinity	4 Aug 1726
<i>Es ist dir gesagt, Mensch, was gut ist</i> BWV 45 (no. 5 only)	Meiningen 1704/1719	8 S after Trinity	11 Aug 1726
<i>Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben</i> BWV 102 (nos. 4–6 only)	Meiningen 1704/1719	10 S after Trinity	25 Aug 1726
J. Ludwig Bach, <i>Durch sein Erkenntnis</i> JLB 15	Meiningen 1704/1719	11 S after Trinity	1 Sep 1726
<i>Geist und Seele wird verwirret</i> BWV 35	G. C. Lehms 1711	12 S after Trinity	8 Sep 1726
<i>Wer Dank opfert, der preiset mich</i> BWV 17	Meiningen 1704/1719	14 S after Trinity	22 Sep 1726
<i>Es erhub sich ein Streit</i> BWV 19	Reworking / arrangement after Picander 1725 ³⁷	Michaelmas ³⁸	29 Sep 1726
<i>Gott soll allein mein Herze haben</i> BWV 169		18 S after Trinity	20 Oct 1726
<i>Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen</i> BWV 56		19 S after Trinity	27 Oct 1726
<i>Ich geh und suche mit Verlangen</i> BWV 49		20 S after Trinity	3 Nov 1726
<i>Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan</i> BWV 98		21 S after Trinity	10 Nov 1726
<i>Ich armer Mensch, ich Sündenknecht</i> BWV 55		22 S after Trinity	17 Nov 1726
<i>Falsche Welt, dir trau ich nicht</i> BWV 52		23 S after Trinity	24 Nov 1726

³⁴ Salomo Franck, *Evangelisches Andachts=Opffer Auf des Durchlauchtigsten Fürsten und Herrn Wilhelm Ernstens (...) Christ=Fürstl. Anordnung/ in geistlichen CANTATEN welche auf die ordentliche Sonn= und Fest=Tage in der F. S. ges. Hof=Capelle zur Wilhelmsburg A. 1715. zu musiciren angezündet von Salomon Francken ...* (Weimar [1715]).

³⁵ 1) *Sonn= und Fest=Andachten Über die ordentlichen Evangelia Aus gewissen Biblischen Texten Alten und Neuen Testaments Und In der Hoch=Fürstl. Sachs. Meining. Hof=Capell Der Heil. Dreyfaltigkeit Deroselben zu Ehren abgesungen* (Meiningen 1704).

2) *Sonntags- Und Fest-Andachten Über Die ordentliche EVANGELIA, Auß Gewissen Biblischen Texten Alten und Neuen Testaments/ In der Hoch-Fürstl. Sachsen-Coburg Meinungisch. Hof-Capelle zur Heiligen Dreyfaltigkeit Deroselben zu Ehren abgesungen. Dritte Auflage. Gedruckt im Jahr 1719.*

³⁶ Alongside movements selected from 'Der Segen des Herrn machet reich ohne Mühe', for the same Sunday 1725.

³⁷ Christian Friedrich Henrici, *Sammlung Erbaulicher Gedancken über und auf die gewöhnlichen Sonn- und Festtage* (Leipzig 1725).

³⁸ It is also the 15th Sunday after Trinity in 1726.

1727

<i>Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid</i> BWV 58		S after New Year	5 Jan 1727
<i>Ich habe genug</i> ³⁹ BWV 82		Purification	2 Feb 1727

The discovery of Birkmann's printed annual cycle suggests two likely new entries for the schedule of Bach's performances in Leipzig during the 'Birkmann-period' 1725–1727. Two cantatas, for which performances can, so far, only be confirmed at Weimar are now also likely to have been re-performed at Leipzig then.⁴⁰ The pieces in question are two musical settings of texts by Salomo Franck:

Title	Published libretto	Occasion	Performance in Leipzig
<i>Komm, du süße Todesstunde</i> BWV 161	Franck 1715	16 S after Trinity (Weimar 1715/16)	Presumed re-perf. on 16 Sep 1725
<i>Tritt auf die Glaubensbahn</i> BWV 152	Franck 1715	S after Christmas (Weimar 1714)	Presumed re-perf. on 29 Dec 1726

As the list above shows, at least 18 of the 30 cantata texts in the *Sabbaths-Zehnden* were not written by Birkmann.⁴¹ These texts were published before Birkmann arrived in Leipzig, originating from cycles that were printed earlier, such as by Salomo Franck or Georg Christian Lehms, or originating from cycles belonging to the Meiningen annual cycles, first published in 1704.⁴² There are also five further cycles from which Bach borrowed texts. This raises the question of whether Birkmann's 1728 Nuremberg print actually documents cantatas that are now lost from this Leipzig period. Two texts by Picander (1728), one by Franck (1715), as well as two that belong to the Meiningen annual cycles belong in this category.

Picander 1728/1732

Welt, behalte du das Deine

1st Sunday after Easter (Quasimodogeniti)

Picander 1728/1732

Ich kann mich besser nicht versorgen

2nd Sunday after Easter (Misericordias Domini)

³⁹ Birkmann gives the modern form 'genug'.

⁴⁰ On account of missing original performance parts.

⁴¹ An additional case, the cantata *Liebster Gott, vergißt du mich* (BWV Anh. I 209, lost), is discussed on p. 23 below.

⁴² Most librettos in the *Sabbaths-Zehnden* follow strictly the original wording of Bach's settings. Where corresponding volumes of *Texte zur Leipziger Kirchen-Music* are extant (e.g. the Post Trinity cantatas from 1725, see Wolf Hohohm, 'Neue "Texte zur Leipziger Kirchen-Music"', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 59 (1973), 5–32), they correspond exactly to these versions, printed at Leipzig. In cases where discrepancies exist between Bach's text-setting and printed cantata-cycles by the authors of the text, we see that Birkmann obviously does not follow the printed cycle; moreover, he did not know or possess the printed cycles at all. A reliable source of Birkmann's library is its register, published in Nuremberg as a sales catalogue *Bibliotheca Birckmanniana* after his death in 1772.

Meiningen 1704/1719
Ich tue Barmherzigkeit an vielen Tausenden
 4th Sunday after Trinity

Meiningen 1704/1719
Machet euch Freunde mit dem ungerechten Mammon
 9th Sunday after Trinity

Franck 1715
Seht, so ist die falsche Welt
 17th Sunday after Trinity

The pair of Picander texts listed above is particularly interesting because it has been assumed until now that Bach set these texts after Picander had published them in 1728 (preface: 24 June). With this new evidence it seems more likely that Picander wrote several individual cantatas (that Bach may have set) before publishing his 1728 cycle. This discovery has potentially great significance for the dating of Bach's extant Picander-settings because the majority of Bach's text-settings from Picander's *Cantaten auf die Sonn- und Festtage durch das gantze Jahr* (Leipzig 1728)⁴³ are not transmitted in autograph sources nor in Bach's original performing parts.⁴⁴ At the very least, the corresponding Sundays fill gaps in Bach's performance schedule.

Another special case is Birkmann's reuse of the cantata *Liebster Gott, vergißt du mich* (BWV Anh. I 209), a setting taken from Georg Christian Lehms's cycle *Gottgefälliges Kirchen-Opffer* (1711) and allocated by Lehms to the 7th Sunday after Trinity.⁴⁵ In a modified version, the text already formed part of a cantata, written for a ceremony in honour of the deceased Count Johann Christoph von Ponickau (1652–1726), and performed on 6 February 1727 at Pomßen near Leipzig.⁴⁶ Birkmann, however, used the original version of the Lehms text and allocated it

⁴³ It was reprinted in the third part of *Picanders Ernst-schertzhafte und satyrische Gedichte* (Leipzig: Boetius, 1732). The 1728 edition was long considered lost, but a copy was found in St Petersburg. For details, see Tatiana Shabalina's articles 'Recent Discoveries in St Petersburg and their Meaning for the Understanding of Bach's Cantatas', *Understanding Bach*, 4 (2009), 77–99 at 87 ff. and "'Texte zur Music" in Sankt Petersburg – Weitere Funde', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 95 (2009), 11–48 at 20 ff.

⁴⁴ Possible pre-datings of settings from Picander 1728 are: 1) 1st day of Christmas 1726 (?): *Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe*, BWV 197a (fragment from autograph score survives, dating uncertain); 2) New Year 1727 (?): *Gott wie dein Name*, BWV 171 (autograph score survives, dating uncertain); 3) Last Sunday before Lent (Estomihi) 1727 (?): *Sehet, wir gehn hinauf gen Jerusalem*, BWV 159 (transmitted in later copies only); 4) Easter Tuesday 1727 (?): *Ich lebe, mein Herze, zu deinem Ergötzen*, BWV 145 (transmitted in later copies only).

⁴⁵ Georg Christian Lehms, *Gottgefälliges Kirchen-Opffer/ in einem gantzen Jahr=Gange Andächtiger Betrachtungen/ über die gewöhnlichen Sonn= und Festtags=Texte/ GOTT zu Ehren/ und der Darmstättischen Schloß=Capelle/ zu seiner Früh- und Mittags=Erbauung* (Darmstadt [1711]).

⁴⁶ Cf. Klaus Hofmann, 'Bachs Kantate "Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn" BWV 157: Überlegungen zu Entstehung, Bestimmung und originaler Werkgestalt', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 68 (1982), 51–80.

to the 15th Sunday after Trinity. In view of the current gap⁴⁷ in the chronology of Bach's Leipzig cantatas it seems likely that this cantata—in an unknown composition using the original version of the Lehms text—was also performed at Leipzig's principal churches, most likely in the year of 1725. Whether this occurred on the 7th or the 15th after Trinity cannot be answered at present, although the 15th Sunday after Trinity seems more probable, as Birkmann generally allocated reused texts to the same Sundays as were performed in Leipzig.

A Student as Bach's librettist

Arguably the most important aspect for Bach studies in the discovery of the Birkmann 1728 book, is the existence of eight solo or dialogue cantata librettos, because Birkmann can be identified as their author with a high degree of probability. It is striking that the texts form a group of stylistically homogenous works, which was expanded by two further works that seem to continue the series after New Year in 1727.

Title	Occasion	Performance in Leipzig	Setting
<i>Gott soll allein mein Herze haben</i> BWV 169	18 S after Trinity	20 Oct 1726	Solo
<i>Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen</i> BWV 56	19 S after Trinity	27 Oct 1726	Solo
<i>Ich geh und suche mit Verlangen</i> BWV 49	20 S after Trinity	3 Nov 1726	Dialogue
<i>Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan</i> BWV 98	21 S after Trinity	10 Nov 1726	4 Soli
<i>Ich armer Mensch, ich Sündenknecht</i> BWV 55	22 S after Trinity	17 Nov 1726	Solo
<i>Falsche Welt, dir trau ich nicht</i> BWV 52	23 S after Trinity	24 Nov 1726	Solo
<i>Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid</i> BWV 58	S after New Year	5 Jan 1727	Dialogue
<i>Ich habe genug</i> BWV 82	Purification	2 Feb 1727	Solo

Until now no author has been identified for any of these eight texts from 1726/27. By contrast, it has long been established that passages from extant librettos (Helbig, Neumeister, Picander 1725) were copied and reworked in the preceding settings from the post trinity-period of 1726.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ For the dates in question, see for example Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: the Learned Musician*, updated edn. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 281 ff.

⁴⁸ Robin A. Leaver, 'Oper in der Kirche: Bach und der Kantatenstreit im frühen 18. Jahrhundert', *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 99 (2013), 171 f. Leaver draws attention to motivic allusions in Bach's aria 'Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen' to Gottfried Ephraim Scheibel's aria 'Schlummert ein, ihr Augenlider' (no. 5 in the cantata *Licht des Lebens, leuchte mir*—also a cantata for the Marian holiday, Feast of the Purification—from the cycle *Poetische Andachten*, Leipzig/Breslau 1725). The borrowings/quotations by Picander (BWV 19), Neumeister (BWV 27) and Helbig (BWV

This now raises two questions: Firstly, how do these pieces of poetry which are, in all probability, Birkmann's work, differ from extant texts by other authors and, secondly, is it possible—or at all conceivable—to identify characteristic markers of style in the *Sabbaths-Zehnden* that are shared between the eight works in question. A few observations on the formal design in Birkmann's collection may be useful here to help clarify some of these issues.

Statistically speaking the standard form in the 71 cantatas in the *Sabbaths-Zehnden* is predominantly for works with five or six movements: in 30 cases these begin with a *dictum*, in 18 cases they begin with an aria, in 15 cases they begin with a chorale and in 6 cases they begin with a recitative. In two cantatas the opening movement was designed in a mixed form (chorale/aria, see BWV 58, and aria/recitative, see BWV 169). In most cases—i.e. for 60 cantatas and the passion—the work ends with a chorale. Given that the alternation between recitatives and arias is primarily a style-historical norm, and also standard in the *Sabbaths-Zehnden*, the most important question about form appears to be whether a cantata begins with a biblical word, or with original poetry. The group with an introductory *dictum* in the *Sabbaths-Zehnden* should, for the purposes of stylistic investigation, be left to one side because its cantatas frequently also have numerous borrowings from other cycles. There is a distinctive group of 19 cantatas that begin with an original poetic text. This group includes the aforementioned eight solo- and dialogue cantatas, from late 1726 to early 1727. A further shared feature is that the literary voice that speaks/sings is a subjective 'I'. This correspondence in the narrative reflects a shift in the text, which moves from stereotypical theological content towards events within the Soul. This is typical of Pietist thinking, and quite a rarity in cantata texts used by Bach. We encounter 'I'-Cantatas in cycles by Lehms, Franck and Picander,⁴⁹ but there is a fine distinction between the surroundings of the 'I' in these poetic cycles and those by Birkmann. For example the 'I' can address an external, idealised interlocutor (i.e. 'God') as in the Weimar cantatas by Salomo Franck (especially in the arias 'Ich wollte dir, o Gott, das Herze gerne geben' from BWV 163 and 'Hilf, Jesu, daß ich auch dich bekenne' in BWV 147); alternatively, it may also speak objectively about, or of itself, as in Picander's text 'Ich fürchte mich vor tausend Feinden nicht' (BWV 149), or in Lehms's 'Geist und Seele sind verwirret, ... ich wundre mich' (BWV 35). By contrast, Birkmann's 'I' reflects on itself subjectively. It is always talking to itself.

This inner self-talk can also be of a conversational nature, when two 'souls' speak to each other in a dialogue. Alternatively, the procedure can be developed into a dialogue between a 'faithful soul' and Jesus. In Birkmann's cycle we encounter this concept in the two groups of cantatas mentioned above. The first, which is the Trinity group from 1726, has already been highlighted. Scheduled

47) in the cantatas for the Trinity-period of 1726 mentioned also by Leaver are hitherto well reported.

⁴⁹ See Michael Märker, *Die protestantische Dialogkomposition in Deutschland zwischen Heinrich Schütz und Johann Sebastian Bach: Eine stilkritische Studie*, Kirchenmusikalische Studien, 2 (Köln: Studio, 1995), 105–49. The publication describes different types of musico-spiritual dialogues.

between the 18th and 23rd Sundays after Trinity, these 'I'-Cantatas are placed as a concluding group in the liturgical year of 1725/26.⁵⁰

In view of this stylistic classification, and the direct succession of the cantatas, it seems safe to say that we are presented here with newly-written poetry that was created by a single author. This observation is confirmed by various scholarly readings of the texts that belong to this 1726 Trinity group. Alfred Dürr, for example, attests to the 'exceptional proximity' of the six librettos to the content of Gospel readings on the Sundays in question, which implies indirectly that they are the work of one author.⁵¹ This corresponds, incidentally, to a remark by Birkmann, which may well be taken literally (even though it may appear on first reading to be unremarkable). In the preface of the *Sabbaths-Zehnden*, he writes that he preferred speaking 'with Scripture', than to speaking with 'pretentious poetic sentiment'.⁵²

Four further librettos, in addition to the two works that are safely attributed to Bach (emphasis in bold print), belong to a second group of *Sabbaths-Zehnden*, scheduled for Epiphany in 1727.

Title	Occasion	Setting
<i>Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid</i> BWV 58	S after New Year	Dialogue
<i>Verschmähe nicht das schlechte Lied</i>	Epiphany	Dialogue
<i>Ich bin betrübt; Ach, wenn ich dich</i>	1 S after Epiphany	Dialogue
<i>Ihr Sorgen, lasset mich zufrieden</i>	2 S after Epiphany	Solo
<i>Ich will, so, wie mein liebster Gott</i>	3 S after Epiphany	Solo
<i>Ich habe genug</i> BWV 82	Purification (also 4 S after Epiphany in 1727)	Solo

There is much to suggest here that at the beginning of 1727 Bach continued the series of solo cantatas he had begun at the end of the Trinity term in 1726. That is, Bach seems to have been able to present sophisticated, and almost exclusively soloistic *Figuralmusik* at Leipzig's principal churches, possibly owing to the participation of skilled students such as Birkmann. Indeed, he could evidently rely on experienced hands from among his students to provide the necessary, contrasting instrumental forces.

Could it be more than a coincidence that Georg Philipp Telemann published the first part of his cycle of solo-cantatas in his *Harmonischer Gottesdienst* at nearly the same time? Again, the six cantatas of the Epiphany group 1727 are soloistic conceptions in all of their movements, and place a dialogue between *Anima* and

⁵⁰ BWV 98, with its solos for soprano, alto, tenor and bass, seems to differ from this group. But it actually blends in well with the stylistic environment outlined above, on account of its personal, soloistic character in arias, such as, 'Hört, ihr Augen, auf zu weinen! Trag ich doch mit Geduld mein schweres Joch'. Here too, we listen to a self-talk, even though four voices participate successively.

⁵¹ Alfred Dürr, *Johann Sebastian Bach. Die Kantaten*, 9th edn. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2005), 636 and 646. For English, Cf. Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach. With their Librettos in German-English Parallel Text*, rev. and trans. Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 572 and 582.

⁵² Preface, *Sabbaths-Zehnden*, 8-9.

Vox Christi, or a consistent 'I' at the centre of each work – a direct continuation of the Trinity group of 1726.⁵³ Both series hold a particular position among the entire body of texts in *Sabbaths-Zehnden*. The next three consecutive cantatas following the 4th Sunday after Epiphany (which could not have been intended for Leipzig performances in 1727, as these Sundays did not occur in the church calendar during Birkmann's stay) again have the 'normal form' mentioned above with a *dictum* as their first movement. Obviously Birkmann wrote these cantata texts sometime after leaving Leipzig. And from this we can assume that he preferred the traditional cantata form with a *dictum*.

The evidence above puts beyond any doubt that Christoph Birkmann was more than just a collector of texts written by others. He was a poet in his own right. Using his biography and an illustration, I would now like to substantiate the hypothesis that this student of Bach was indeed an author of cantata-texts. If we can show that the text for *Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen* (BWV 56) points clearly to Birkmann as author, then by analogy we can surmise that his authorship also applies to the entire body of texts of introspective 'I' cantatas. Details in Birkmann's biography add such weight to the case for his authorship of the text of BWV 56, that one may even read it as a personal expression of his stay in Leipzig.

The motif of the cross-staff highlights a connection between Birkmann's strong mathematical and geographical⁵⁴ interests, and his theological ambitions, which developed during this time. But what exactly is the titular cross-staff? According to conventional readings, it is believed to be a symbol of Christ's cross, similar also to Bach's habit of spelling the word as *Xstab*, with the Greek letter X for *Christus* in the autograph score. In theological Bach studies, this reading has attracted several interpretations, and the terminology has become closely linked with the theologians Heinrich Müller and Johann Olearius.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ferdinand Zander noted a (textually-motivic and stylistic) kinship between BWV 58 and the Cross-staff Cantata already in 1968. See Ferdinand Zander, 'Die Dichter der Kantatentexte Johann Sebastian Bachs: Untersuchungen zu ihrer Bestimmung', *Bach-Jahrbuch* 54 (1968), 57 f.

⁵⁴ At present, this can only be gleaned from the handwritten version of the autobiography, which contains the following: 'I have, since 1741, served Weigel senior, dealer in arts, as well as historical items, genealogical and geographical records, and have contributed several articles to Köhler's Instructions in ancient and medieval geography, which was newly edited in 1745.' ('Seit 1741 habe der ältern Weigel[schen]. Kunsthandl[ung]. so wohl in *historicis*, *genealogicis*, und *geographicis* gedienet, auch die A. 1745 neu *edirte* Köhlerische Anleitung zur alten und mitlern Geographie, mit sehr vielen Articeln vermehrt.' (D-Nst, Will III.88.2°, fol. 11v). The mentioned publication appears to refer to: Johann David Köhler, *Kurtze und gründliche Anleitung Zu der Alten und Mittlern Geographie ...* (Nuremberg 1745), which was published by Johann Christoph Weigel the Elder (and his heirs).

⁵⁵ Heinrich Müller, *Evangelische Schluß=Kette Und Kraft=Kern Oder Gründliche Auslegung der gewöhnlichen Sonntags=Evangelien* (Frankfurt a. M. 1672), 1111 f.; and also Renate Steiger, *Gnadengegenwart: Johann Sebastian Bach im Kontext lutherischer Orthodoxie und Frömmigkeit*, *Doctrina et Pietas: Zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung: Texte und Untersuchungen*, II/2 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002), 103; Johannes Olearius, *Biblische Erklärung: Darinnen nechst dem allgemeinen Haupt-Schlüssel der gantzen heiligen Schrift ... zu finden*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Tarnov, 1678), 459 quoted from Martin Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar: Theologisch-musikwissenschaftliche Kommentierung der geistlichen Vokalwerke Johann Sebastian Bachs, vol. 1: Die geistlichen Kantaten des 1. bis 27. Trinity-Sonntages*, Schriftenreihe der internationalen Bachakademie Stuttgart, 14/1 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2004), 553 f.

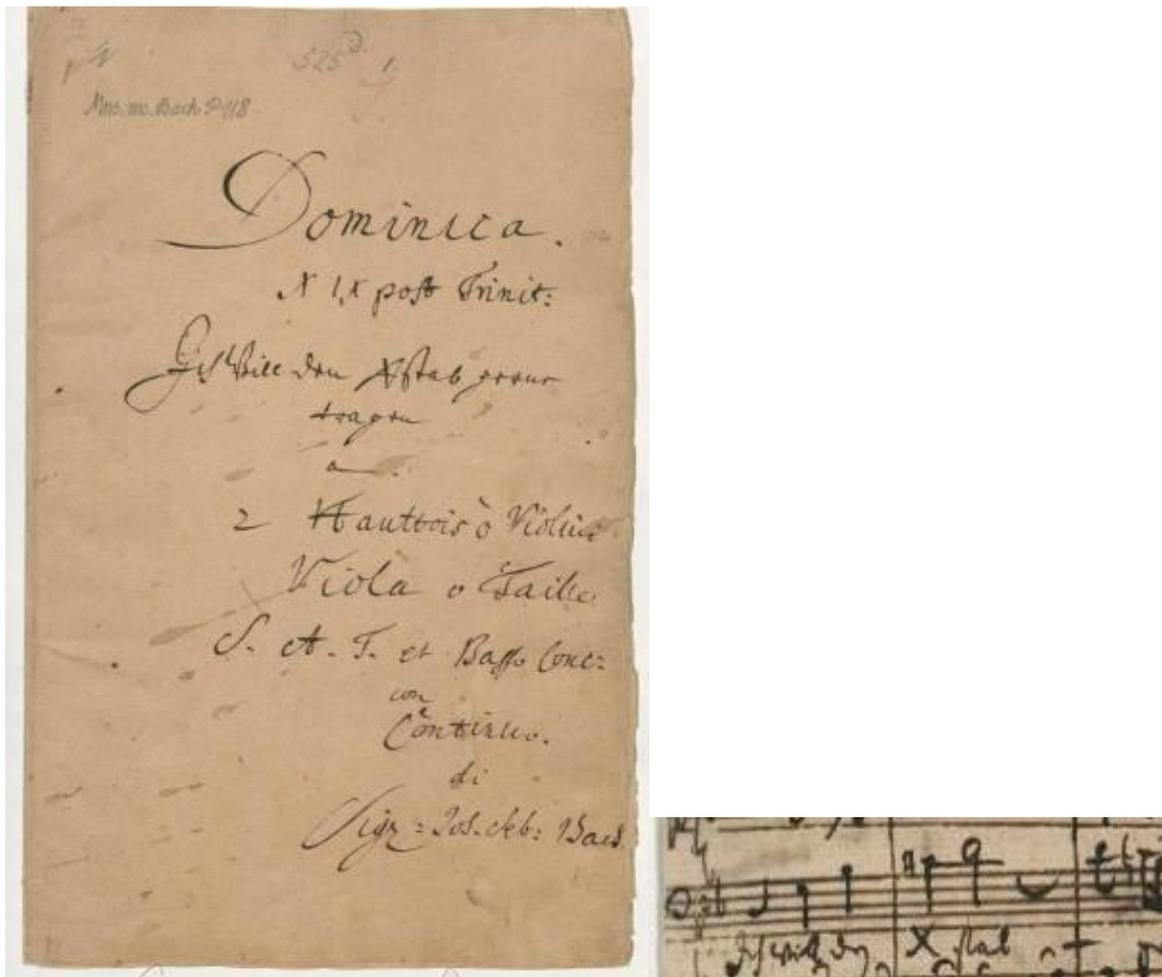


Illustration 5: Autograph score of *Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen*, BWV 56 (title page written by Bach's copyist C. G. Meißner and close-up of the bass motif) D-B, Mus. ms. Bach P 118

But already in 1985, the Bach anniversary year, Gustav Adolf Theill pointed out a further symbolic dimension. He explained that the cross-staff was a nautical device used to determine distances and positional co-ordinates. It was a precursor of the sextant, which was not invented until about 1730.⁵⁶ Theill linked the description of a cross-staff with Bach's succession of notes in the bass motif of the first movement.

Looking more specifically at the possible significance of the cross-staff, the object is a measuring device for trigonometrical angles that facilitates the calculation of geographical lengths and distances, and had been known since medieval times. For centuries, it was used also in astronomy, known as 'Jacob's staff'.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Gustav Adolph Theill, 'Neues zur Kreuzstabkantate', *Musik & Kirche*, 55/5 (1985), 226–30.

⁵⁷ 'The same is needed by mariners at sea, to determine the height of the sun and the stars.' ('Es brauchen dasselbe die Schiffer zur See, die Höhe der Sonne und der Sterne zu messen.'), *Vollständiges Mathematischen Lexicon, Darinnen alle Kunst=Wörter und Sachen, Welche In der erwegenden und ausübenden Mathesi vorzukommen pflegen, deutlich erklärt ...*, Erster Theil (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1747), cols. 683 f. Further names used for the cross-staff are, among others, *Crux geometrica*, *Baculus astronomicus* and *Radius astronomicus*.



Illustration 6: Illustration of cross-staff or 'Jacob's staff' (Peter Appian, *Introductio geographica*, 1523)

In his academic disputation dated 26 August 1726, Birkmann had dealt extensively with trigonometrical calculations requiring the use of cross-staffs/Jacob's staffs. Only a few weeks separate this date from the conception of the cantata text, the first performance of which can be determined precisely to 27 October of that same year.

A further excerpt from Birkmann's autobiography reads:

Professor **Hausen** would have liked me to turn my attention to mathematics and been present at his observations, but when I disclosed my poor financial circumstances to him, he ceased pressing me. Nevertheless, he still persuaded me to write a thesis *de motu solis circa propriam axem*⁵⁸ [the motion of the sun around its own axis], which I defended under him.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Theoria motus solis circa propriam axem, quam disputationem pro loco in amplissima facultate philosophica obtinendo...* (Leipzig: Schniebes, 1726), with dedications to pastors from Nuremberg.

⁵⁹ 'Herr Professor **Hausen** hätte gerne gesehen, wenn meine Zeit auf die Mathematik gewendet, und seinen Beobachtungen ordentlich beygewohnt hätte: als ich ihm aber meine schlechten [finanziellen] Umstände entdeckte, drang er nicht weiter in mich, überredete mich aber gleichwol, daß eine *Dissertation de motu solis circa propriam axem*, unter ihm vertheidigte.' *Ehrendenkmal*, 22.

If one reads this text in light of Birkmann's biography, one can appreciate an additional interpretative dimension that would have been known only to a small circle of his trusted acquaintances at the time. Both planes are interconnected in a particular situation: Birkmann found himself torn between different fields of academic study. Indeed, this subtle interweaving of distinct levels of meaning is characteristic of the high poetic quality of his texts, that has been noticed by many scholars.

Before I conclude, the libretto of a St. John Passion positioned in the *Sabbaths-Zehnden* immediately before the Easter cantatas ought to be mentioned. The passion text has a German title not transmitted by any other historical source: *Das schmähhlich- und schmerzliche Leiden Unsers HErrn und Heylandes Jesu Christi* (The shameful and painful suffering of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ), with its addendum 'sung as a dramatic oratorio'. It corresponds to the version of the St. John Passion that Bach performed on Good Friday, 1725. Consequently, the question arises, whether Birkmann may have worked for Bach as a librettist already in 1725 and whether he, therefore, also authored the following three aria texts, which do not feature in the 1724 version but were added when Bach revised the work a year later:

'Himmel reiße, Welt erbebe' (BWV 245/11⁺)

'Zerschmettert mich, ihr Felsen und ihr Hügel' (BWV 245/13^{II})

'Ach, windet euch nicht so, geplagte Seelen' (BWV 245/19^{II})

Until now Bach scholars have not found a satisfactory answer to the question why there was a theologically conceptual reconfiguration of the St. John Passion just one year after its first performance.⁶⁰ Considering Birkmann as a possible author of the added material may well yield new insights. The three arias clearly show the marks of Birkmann's writing style; for example in their 'I'-centred subjectivity and hidden, mathematical connotations.⁶¹ Further, the new movements included in this 1725 version show a modern outlook in their adoption of subject ideas from the early-modern philosophy – an enlightened idealism, which in theology manifests itself as Pietism.⁶² The problematic nature of sin is shifted into a personalised soul (as in 'O Mensch, beweine dein Sünde groß', the opening chorus of the 1725 version), while its final chorale, 'Christe, du Lamm Gottes, der du trägst die Sünd der Welt, erbarm dich unser' is both a crowning conclusion and framework that supports this line of argument. Events

⁶⁰ Cf. the résumé of the current state of research in: Richard Douglas Jones, *The Creative Development of Johann Sebastian Bach*, vol. 2: 1717–1750 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 157–161.

⁶¹ For results in this regard see the announcement in the opening footnote on p. 9.

⁶² Birkmann's theological stance, his allegiance to Pietism reveals itself in all its sharpness only in later writings (for example in the collection *Bündlein der Lebendigen/ oder frommer Knechte und Kinder Gottes letzte Reden vor ihren [sic] Ubergang aus der Zeit in die selige Ewigkeit auf redlicher Seelen Verlangen sorgfältig gesammelt und mitgetheilet von C. B. D. E.* (Nuremberg 1744–1748) and also in his letters. During his time at Leipzig, it is still comparatively moderate, perhaps owing to the varied theological stances of teaching staff at the university and Leipzig pastors (Birkmann gives numerous names in his autobiography).

that bring about salvation are not yet complete, or are only positively accessible to mankind in hindsight, a point illustrated by the opening chorus of the 1724 version, 'Herr, unser Herrscher, dessen Ruhm in allen Landen herrlich ist'. On the contrary, salvation needs to be grasped anew by Man, time and again.

With regard to the two series of cantata librettos for 1726 and 1727, it seems reasonable to assume that the remarkably productive collaboration between Bach and Birkmann did not immediately lead to the production of complete cantatas. It is conceivable that Birkmann prepared librettos for Bach before the autumn of 1726. It is significant that the year 1726 and a large part of Bach's so-called 'Third Annual Cycle' have been described as textually and formally heterogeneous, not only as a whole—especially compared to the cycle of chorale-cantatas for 1724/25—but also that it was shaped by the greatest variety of literary voices. And that it was only from the 18th Sunday after Trinity in 1726, that Bach appears to have realised a new concept, by introducing liturgical music in solo- or dialogue-form, with sophisticated instrumental arrangements (for example, with obbligato organ).

It is also conceivable that Johann Abraham Birnbaum (1702–1748) may have played a greater part than thus far recognised. The nature of his relationship with Bach in his early years at Leipzig—a long time before the conflict with Johann Adolph Scheibe in 1737—has remained unclear until now. Birkmann's autobiography, specifically the passage which highlights the significance of the lecturer in rhetoric for Birkmann's decision in favour of theology,⁶³ poses two questions when seen in light of the 1724 and 1725 versions of the St. John.⁶⁴ Who might have been a discussion partner in Leipzig for Bach in questions such as how to position his first passions theologically and musically? The fact, that Birnbaum exposed himself to the stressful literary exchanges with Scheibe in 1737 indicates the existence of a close relationship with Bach. And this leads to the question of whether the lecturer of rhetoric had been a trusted friend to Bach over a longer period, and including discussions relating to conceptual issues in music.

Several scenarios are conceivable: Bach may have been introduced to musically inclined students via Birnbaum's *collegium*; or the other way around, Birnbaum may, perhaps, have recommended a rhetorically-gifted poet-theologian to Bach,

⁶³ See p. 13 above.

⁶⁴ A further biographical article about Birkmann contains a more precise remark: 'Since Magister Birnbaum had opened a college for debate and practical oration, and in the latter received good applause for his various speeches, he persuaded the hard-working members of his household to make theology their main occupation.' ('Da M. Birnbaum ein *Collegium disputatorium* und *oratorio-practicum* eröffnete, und er im letztern, verschiedene Reden, mit guten Beyfall abgelegt, so überredete er seinen fleissigen Haußgenossen, die Theologie zum Haupt=Werk zu machen.') Andreas Würfel, *Diptycha Ecclesiae Egidianae das ist: Verzeichniß und Lebensbeschreibungen er Herren Prediger, Herren Seniorum und Herren Diaconorum, welche seit der gesegneten Reformation biß hieher an der Kirche zu St. Egidien in Nürnberg gedienet, nebst einer Beschreibung der alten und neuen Kirche ...* (Nuremberg 1757), article 'Christoph Birkmann' [by Georg Andreas Will], 116 f. On Leipzig's customary private *collegia* that were institutionally distinct from the university (and often exercises for disputations and frequently organised by young university teachers) see Ewald Horn, *Die Disputationen und Promotionen an den Deutschen Universitäten vornemlich seit dem 16. Jahrhundert*, Beihefte zum Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen, 11 (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1893), 38 ff.

who already knew him as a member of a *collegium musicum*.⁶⁵ In the end, neither Birnbaum nor other students of his collegium can be excluded as Bach's librettists. It is appropriate to discuss Birnbaum's role as *spiritus rector* for gifted students and for Bach. The suspected 'triangle' of Bach-Birkmann-Birnbaum can, possibly, also shed new light on Bach's relationship to university-based and academic circles, which may well have been closer than thus far shown.

Regardless of the many as yet unanswered questions, Christoph Birkmann turns out to be a figure who belonged to Leipzig's academic sphere, and, thanks to the discovery of his 1728 *Sabbaths-Zehnden* we can now see that his importance for Bach far exceeded that of a mere delivery-man for poetic texts. To date, this makes him the only one of all Bach's librettists whose biography overlaps significantly with Bach's activities. Evidently, Birkmann had received a comprehensive musical education from notable Nuremberg musicians; he had played in Leipzig's *collegia musica* and he was active as a composer in his own right. This opens up numerous possibilities for further research into Birkmann, and the related areas of Bach's relationships to musicians from Nuremberg.

⁶⁵ See Birkmann's autobiographical account on pp.10, 13-14 above. On the subject of Birkmann's role in Leipzig's *collegia musica* and his alleged students and friends, I point towards future publications.