

B A C H :

The Orgelbüchlein



Russell Stinson
Lyon College

Oxford University Press
New York Oxford

Chapter 1

THE ORGELBÜCHLEIN PROJECT



HISTORICAL POSITION

To study the *Orgelbüchlein* is to witness a familiar scene in the history of the Western church: an organist compiling organ music for use during worship. In other words, the *Orgelbüchlein* belongs to the tradition of liturgical organ music. The tradition itself is an ancient one, and its repertory is venerable. The repertoire begins in the fourteenth century with the Faenza Codex, the second oldest collection of keyboard music in existence, and has continued unabatedly until the present day.

A pivotal event in this history occurred in 1517, when Martin Luther founded a denomination, commonly known as the Lutheran Church, distinguished by novel ideas about the function of music in worship services. For instance, whereas singing in church had been the sole domain of clerics and choirs, in Luther's church it became the privilege and duty of the entire assembly. Because the new congregational songs, or chorales, often contained ten or more stanzas, they consumed a sizable portion of the liturgy.

The birth of the chorale as a musical genre changed the role of the organist forever; for in the Lutheran church it became his responsibility not only to accompany congregational singing but also to arrange chorales as organ solos. Thus the inception of the chorale spawned a new keyboard genre, the organ chorale, in which a chorale melody is set for organ. In most instances organists improvised on these tunes, but organ adaptations of chorale melodies were often committed to paper as well, to be preserved for future use.

The literature of organ chorales is almost as old as the Reformation itself. From the sixteenth century onward, organ chorales were preserved in both manuscript and print, often in the form of collections designed for year-round use. The compiler of such a collection either composed all the settings himself or mixed his own settings with works by other composers. The order sometimes followed the church year; other times it was entirely random.

By the time of Bach's birth in 1685, the corpus of chorale melodies had grown to gigantic proportions, and one assumes that to maintain some command over this ever-expanding repertory, organists routinely compiled large collections of organ chorales. Of the extant collections from this period, two of the most significant are by organists who worked in Thuringia, the region of Germany where Bach spent approximately his first thirty years: *Choral-Fugen durchs gantze Jahr*, by Johann Pachelbel and *Chorale zum Praeambuliren*, a collection of forty-four fuguetas by Johann Christoph Bach (1642–1703). Both composers were a great influence on the young J. S. Bach, and it is possible that the concept of the *Orgelbüchlein* was inspired by these two collections in particular. Johann Christoph Bach was organist in Eisenach, where J. S. Bach was born and spent his first ten years; it was probably Johann Christoph who introduced Johann Sebastian to the organ. The link between Pachelbel and J. S. Bach involves Bach's older brother, a second Johann Christoph Bach (1671–1721), who was a pupil of Pachelbel and, from 1695 to 1700, Johann Sebastian's keyboard instructor.

THE LAYOUT OF THE AUTOGRAPH

Bach's autograph manuscript of the *Orgelbüchlein*, housed in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin under the shelf number *P 283*, yields secrets about the collection that can be garnered from no other source. Only the autograph, for instance, shows that the surviving music is just a fragment of Bach's original plan. Most of the manuscript's pages contain no music, only chorale titles and blank staves (these "titles" are invariably the first line of the first stanza). Bach entered a total of 164 chorale titles, which constitute a comprehensive Lutheran hymnal.¹ The first sixty are designated for a specific time in the church year—either a season or particular festival—and therefore fall into the category of *de tempore*. They follow the order of the church year. The remaining 104 are *omne tempore* chorales, appropriate for any season. They begin with the articles of the Catechism and then move on to such topics as Christian living, the Bible and the Church, and death. Table 1–1 lists all the chorale titles inscribed by Bach, along with their pagination

and liturgical association (the headings provided in the table under "Liturgical Association" are not found in the autograph). BWV numbers are given for the forty-six chorales that Bach actually set (or began to set, in the case of the fragmentary "O Traurigkeit"). Bach does not appear to have modelled the design of his collection after any particular hymnal of the day. Rather, he seems to have devised his own scheme, based on his acquaintance with various hymnals and his general knowledge of hymnody. Even though Bach left the *Orgelbüchlein* incomplete, it is the closest thing we have to a hymnal of his own fashioning.

TABLE 1–1.

*The Projected Contents of the Orgelbüchlein,
as Displayed in the Autograph Manuscript*

ORDER IN MANUSCRIPT	TITLE	LITURGICAL ASSOCIATION	PAGINATION	BWV NO.
DE TEMPORE				
1	"Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland"	Advent	p. 1	599
2	"Gott, durch deine Güte" or "Gottes Sohn ist kommen"	Advent	pp. 2–3	600
3	"Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottessohn" or "Herr Gott, nun sei gepreiset"	Advent	p. 4	601
4	"Lob sei dem allmächtigen Gott"	Advent	p. 5	602
5	"Puer natus in Bethlehem"	Christmas	pp. 6–7	603
6	"Lob sei Gott in des Himmels Thron"	Christmas	p. 7	not set
7	"Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ"	Christmas	p. 8	604
8	"Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich"	Christmas	p. 9	605
9	"Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her"	Christmas	p. 10	606
10	"Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar"	Christmas	pp. 11–10	607
11	"In dulci jubilo"	Christmas	pp. 12–13	608
12	"Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich"	Christmas	p. 14	609
13	"Jesu, meine Freude"	Christmas	p. 15	610
14	"Christum wir sollen loben schon"	Christmas	p. 16	611
15	"Wir Christenleut"	Christmas	p. 17	612
16	"Helft mir Gotts Güte preisen"	New Year	p. 18	613
17	"Das alte Jahr vergangen ist"	New Year	p. 19	614
18	"In dir ist Freude"	New Year	pp. 20–21	615

19	"Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin" [<i>Nunc dimittis</i>]	Purification (February 2)	p. 22	616
20	"Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf"	Purification (February 2)	pp. 23–23a	617
21	"O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig"	Passiontide	pp. 24–24a	618
22	"Christe, du Lamm Gottes"	Passiontide	p. 25	619
23	"Christus, der uns selig macht"	Passiontide	p. 26	620a/ 620
24	"Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund"	Passiontide	p. 27	621
25	"O Mensch, beweine deine Sünde gross"	Passiontide	pp. 28–29	622
26	"Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ, dass du für uns gestorben bist"	Passiontide	p. 30	623
27	"Hilf Gott, dass mir's gelinge"	Passiontide	pp. 31–30a	624
28	"O Jesu, wie ist dein Gestalt"	Passiontide	p. 32	not set
29	"O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid" [fragment]	Passiontide	p. 33	Anh. 200
30	"Allein nach dir, Herr, allein nach dir, Herr Jesu Christ, verlanget mich"	Passiontide	pp. 34–35	not set
31	"O wir armen Sünder"	Passiontide	p. 36	not set
32	"Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen"	Passiontide	p. 37	not set
33	"Nun gibt mein Jesus gute Nacht"	Passiontide	p. 38	not set
34	"Christ lag in Todesbanden"	Easter	p. 39	625
35	"Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der den Tod überwand"	Easter	p. 40	626
36	"Christ ist erstanden"	Easter	pp. 41–43	627
37	"Erstanden ist der heil'ge Christ"	Easter	p. 44	628
38	"Erschienen ist der herrliche Tag"	Easter	p. 45	629
39	"Heut triumphieret Gottes Sohn"	Easter	pp. 46–47	630
40	"Gen Himmel aufgefahren ist"	Ascension	p. 48	not set
41	"Nun freut euch, Gottes Kinder, all"	Ascension	p. 49	not set
42	"Komm, Heiliger Geist, erfüll die Herzen deiner Gläubigen"	Pentecost	pp. 50–51	not set
43	"Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott"	Pentecost	pp. 52–53	not set
44	"Komm, Gott Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist"	Pentecost	p. 54	631a/ 631
45	"Nun bitten wir den Heil'gen Geist"	Pentecost	p. 55	not set
46	"Spiritus Sancti gratia" or "Des Heil'gen Geistes reiche Gnad"	Pentecost	p. 56	not set

47	"O Heil'ger Geist, du göttlich's Feuer"	Pentecost	p. 57	not set
48	"O Heiliger Geist, o heiliger Gott"	Pentecost	p. 58	not set
49	"Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend"	Pentecost	p. 59	632
50	"Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier"	Pentecost	p. 60	634
51	"Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier" (<i>distinctius</i>)	Pentecost	p. 61	633
52	"Gott der Vater wohn uns bei"	Trinity	pp. 62–63	not set
53	"Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr"	Trinity	p. 64	not set
54	"Der du bist drei in Einigkeit"	Trinity	p. 65	not set
55	"Gelobet sei der Herr, der Gott Israel" [<i>Benedictus</i>]	St. John the Baptist (June 24)	p. 66	not set
56	"Meine Seele erhebt den Herren" [<i>Magnificat</i>]	Visitation (July 2)	p. 67	not set
57	"Herr Gott, dich loben alle wir"	St. Michael and All Angels (Sept. 29)	p. 68	not set
58	"Es stehn vor Gottes Throne"	St. Michael and All Angels (Sept. 29)	p. 69	not set
59	"Herr Gott, dich loben wir" [<i>Te Deum</i>]	St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles (October 28)	pp. 70–71	not set
60	"O Herre Gott, dein göttlich Wort"	Reformation Festival (October 31)	p. 72	not set

OMNE TEMPORE
(CATECHISM)

61	"Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot"	Ten Commandments	p. 73	635
62	"Mensch, willst du leben seliglich"	Ten Commandments	p. 74	not set
63	"Herr Gott, erhalt uns für und für"	Ten Commandments	p. 75	not set
64	"Wir glauben all an einen Gott"	Creed	pp. 76–77	not set
65	"Vater unser im Himmelreich"	Lord's Prayer	p. 78	636
66	"Christ, unser Herr, zum Jordan kam"	Holy Baptism	p. 79	not set
67	"Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir" [Psalm 130]	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 80	not set
68	"Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 81	not set
69	"Jesu, der du meine Seele"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 82	not set

70	"Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 83	not set
71	"Ach Gott und Herr"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 84	not set
72	"Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 85	not set
73	"Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 86	not set
74	"Wo soll ich fliehen hin"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 87	not set
75	"Wir haben schwerlich"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 88	not set
76	"Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 89	637
77	"Es ist das Heil uns kommen her"	Confession, Penitence, and Justification	p. 90	638
78	"Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gotteszorn wandt"	Lord's Supper	p. 91	not set
79	"Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet"	Lord's Supper	pp. 92-93	not set
80	"Der Herr ist mein getreuer Hirt" [Psalm 23]	Lord's Supper	p. 94	not set
81	"Jetzt komm ich als ein armer Gast"	Lord's Supper	p. 95	not set
82	"O Jesu, du edle Gabe"	Lord's Supper	p. 96	not set
83	"Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ, dass du das Lämmlein worden bist"	Lord's Supper	p. 97	not set
84	"Ich weiss ein Blümlein hübsch und fein"	Lord's Supper	p. 98	not set
85	"Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein"	Lord's Supper	p. 99	not set
86	"Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren" [Psalm 103]	Lord's Supper	p. 100-1	not set

(END OF CATECHISM)

87	"Wohl dem, der in Gottes Furcht steht" [Psalm 124]	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 102	not set
----	--	----------------------------	--------	---------

88	"Wo Gott zum Haus nicht gibt sein Gunst" [Psalm 127]	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 103	not set
89	"Was mein Gott will, das gescheh allzeit"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 104	not set
90	"Kommt her zu mir, spricht Gottes Sohn"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 105	not set
91	"Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ"	Christian Life and Conduct	pp. 106-7	639
92	"Weltlich Ehr und zeitlich Gut"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 107	not set
93	"Von Gott will ich nicht lassen"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 108	not set
94	"Wer Gott vertraut"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 109	not set
95	"Wie's Gott gefällt, so gefällt mir's auch"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 110	not set
96	"O Gott, du frommer Gott"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 111	not set
97	"In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr" [Psalm 31]	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 112	not set
98	"In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr" (<i>alio modo</i>)	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 113	640
99	"Mag ich Unglück nicht widerstahn"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 114	not set
100	"Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 115	641
101	"An Wasserflüssen Babylon" [Psalm 137]	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 116-17	not set
102	"Warum betrübst du dich, mein Herz"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 118	not set
103	"Frisch auf, mein Seel, verzage nicht"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 119	not set
104	"Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 120	not set
105	"Ach Gott, erhöhr mein Seufzen und Wehklagen"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 121	not set
106	"So wünsch ich nun eine gute Nacht" [Psalm 42]	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 122	not set
107	"Ach lieben Christen, seid getrost"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 123	not set
108	"Wenn dich Unglück tut greifen an"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 124	not set

109	"Keinen hat Gott verlassen"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 125	not set
110	"Gott ist mein Heil, mein Hülff und Trost"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 126	not set
111	"Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan, kein einig Mensch ihn tadeln kann"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 127	not set
112	"Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan, es bleibt gerecht sein Wille"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 128	not set
113	"Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten"	Christian Life and Conduct	p. 129	642
114	"Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein" [Psalm 12]	Psalm Hymns	p. 130	not set
115	"Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl" [Psalm 14]	Psalm Hymns	p. 131	not set
116	"Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" [Psalm 46]	Psalm Hymns	p. 132	not set
117	"Es woll uns Gott genädig sein" [Psalm 67]	Psalm Hymns	p. 133	not set
118	"Wär Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit" [Psalm 124]	Psalm Hymns	p. 134	not set
119	"Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält" [Psalm 124]	Psalm Hymns	p. 135	not set
120	"Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern"	The Word of God and the Christian Church	pp. 136–37	not set
121	"Wie nach einer Wasserquelle" [Psalm 42]	The Word of God and the Christian Church	p. 138	not set
122	"Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort"	The Word of God and the Christian Church	p. 139	not set
123	"Lass mich dein sein und bleiben"	The Word of God and the Christian Church	p. 140	not set
124	"Gib Fried, o frommer, treuer Gott"	The Word of God and the Christian Church	p. 141	not set
125	"Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ"	The Word of God and the Christian Church	p. 142	not set
126	"O grosser Gott von Macht"	The Word of God and the Christian Church	p. 143	not set

127	"Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist"	Death and Dying	p. 144	not set
128	"Herr Jesu Christ, wahr Mensch und Gott"	Death and Dying	p. 145	not set
129	"Mitten wir im Leben sind"	Death and Dying	pp. 146–47	not set
130	"Alle Menschen müssen sterben"	Death and Dying	p. 148	not set
131	"Alle Menschen müssen sterben" (<i>alio modo</i>)	Death and Dying	p. 149	643
132	"Valet will ich dir geben"	Death and Dying	p. 150	not set
133	"Nun lasst uns den Leib begraben"	Death and Dying	p. 151	not set
134	"Christus, der ist mein Leben"	Death and Dying	p. 152	not set
135	"Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, o Herr"	Death and Dying	p. 152–53	not set
136	"Auf meinen lieben Gott"	Death and Dying	p. 154	not set
137	"Herr Jesu Christ, ich weiss gar wohl"	Death and Dying	p. 155	not set
138	"Mach's mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt"	Death and Dying	p. 156	not set
139	"Herr Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht"	Death and Dying	p. 157	not set
140	"Mein Wallfahrt ich vollendet hab"	Death and Dying	p. 158	not set
141	"Gott hat das Evangelium"	Death and Dying	p. 159	not set
142	"Ach Gott, tu dich erbarmen"	Death and Dying	p. 160	not set
143	"Gott des Himmels und der Erden"	Morning	p. 161	not set
144	"Ich dank dir, lieber Herre"	Morning	p. 162	not set
145	"Aus meines Herzens Grunde"	Morning	p. 163	not set
146	"Ich dank dir schon"	Morning	p. 164	not set
147	"Das walt mein Gott"	Morning	p. 165	not set
148	"Christ, der du bist der helle Tag"	Evening	p. 166	not set
149	"Christe, der du bist Tag und Licht"	Evening	p. 167	not set
150	"Werde munter, mein Gemüte"	Evening	p. 168	not set
151	"Nun ruhen alle Wälder"	Evening	p. 169	not set
152	"Dankt dem Herrn, denn er ist sehr freundlich" [Psalm 136]	After Meals	p. 170	not set
153	"Nun lasst uns Gott dem Herren"	After Meals	p. 171	not set
154	"Lobet dem Herren, denn er ist sehr freundlich" [Psalm 147]	After Meals	p. 172	not set
155	"Singen wir aus Herzensgrund"	After Meals	p. 173	not set
156	"Gott Vater, der du deine Sonn"	For Good Weather	p. 174	not set

157	"Jesu, meines Herzens Freud"	APPENDIX	p. 175	not set
158	"Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen"	APPENDIX	p. 176	not set
159	"Ach wie nichtig, ach wie flüchtig"	APPENDIX	p. 177	644
160	"Ach, was ist doch unser Leben"	APPENDIX	p. 178	not set
161	"Allenthalben, wo ich gehe"	APPENDIX	p. 179	not set
162	"Hast du denn, Jesu, dein Angesicht gänzlich verborgen" or "Soll ich denn, Jesu, mein Leben in Trauern beschliessen"	APPENDIX	p. 180	not set
163	"Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig" or "O Jesu, du edle Gabe"	APPENDIX	p. 181	not set
164	"Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele"	APPENDIX	p. 182	not set

Remarkable is the emphasis on early Lutheran hymnody: seventy percent of the proposed chorales date from the sixteenth century, and most of the remainder are from no later than 1650. In fact, Bach includes no fewer than thirty of the thirty-six chorales ascribed to Martin Luther himself.² Of the chorales that were actually set, over half are from the Reformation era. This emphasis on the early Reformation is likewise a feature of the recently unearthed organ chorales attributed to Bach from the so-called Neumeister Collection.³ Bach was probably influenced in this regard by Johann Christoph Olearius, an eminent hymnologist and deacon of the Neue Kirche in Arnstadt at the time Bach served there as organist (1703–7). Olearius published scholarly tracts on many early chorales as well as practical editions of them; it is unlikely that Bach was unaware of Olearius's publications. A further bow to the past is the opening placement of Luther's "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland," traditionally the first chorale in sixteenth-century hymnals. With this chorale at the head of the collection, both the *de tempore* and *omne tempore* sections commence with hymns by Luther, since the *omne tempore* section begins with Luther's "Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot" (no. 61).

The design of the *Orgelbüchlein* is interesting in other respects as well. First, for whatever reasons, there is no section for Epiphany. Noteworthy, too, is the section for psalm hymns (nos. 114–19) and the entry of these hymns in Biblical order. There are exactly three Trinity chorales, exemplifying the composer's well known penchant for numerological—and especially Trinitarian—symbolism. Chorales for miscellaneous needs and occasions are contained in an appendix.

Bach did not inscribe all the chorale titles before entering a single work. For instance, the placement of the title "Lob sei Gott in des Himmels Thron" (no. 6) reveals that the title was penned after the music of "Puer natus in Bethlehem" (no. 5). Still, large sections of the manuscript obviously were ruled with staves and supplied with titles before any music was notated. For most of the projected entries, only one page was allotted; for relatively long chorales, two pages. In deciding between one or two pages, Bach was by no means systematic. To cite just one example, he reserved a single page for "Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich" (no. 8), even though it contains about ten more syllables per stanza than "Gott, durch deine Güte" or "In dulci jubilo" (nos. 2 and 11), both of which were given two pages. He was relying on intuition, and a lot of guesswork must have gone into the operation. Bach's tiny script notwithstanding, his notation of a work sometimes exceeded the one-page limit, forcing him to conclude the entry on the facing page ("Puer natus in Bethlehem," "Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar," and "Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ") or on a supplementary paper slip ("Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf," "O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig," and "Hilf Gott, dass mir's gelinge").

The realization that a chorale's length generally determined the number of pages reserved for it leads to an important conclusion about the organ-chorale types Bach had in mind as he laid out the autograph: on the whole, he must have been considering only those types that call for the complete chorale melody. This excludes the chorale fugue and chorale fughetta, based on only a phrase of the melody. Moreover, the one-page limit imposed for most entries, coupled with the extremely small size of the manuscript (6 × 7.5 inches), allowed only those chorale types in which the chorale tune is set just once and in continuous fashion. This excludes the chorale partita, the chorale fantasy, and the chorale motet. Left are only three types in use at the time: the melody chorale, in which the whole chorale tune appears more or less continuously in the soprano voice, with either very brief interludes between phrases or none at all; the ornamental chorale, identical to the melody chorale except that the chorale tune is greatly embellished; and the chorale canon, in which the entire tune is presented continuously by two canonic voices (because the space between the canonic entries is normally no greater than a measure, the chorale canon is essentially the same length as the first two types).

Among the chorales that were set, the only real exceptions to this list are "Christum wir sollen loben schon," in which the chorale tune is stated by the alto, and "In dir ist Freude," a setting that approaches the chorale fantasy, a chorale type characterized by expansive interludes between chorale phrases as well as multiple statements of the phrases themselves. Such a lengthy work

was possible only because Bach had reserved two pages for this relatively long chorale. Had he set the melody "Herr Gott, dich loben wir" (no. 59), and restricted himself to the two pages allocated in the *Orgelbüchlein* manuscript, there would have been a further exception, since at least four pages would have been needed to set this gigantic tune (the longest chorale melody of all?).⁴ Perhaps Bach planned on setting only a portion of the tune here, as he did in his cantatas. The hymn tunes "Allein nach dir" (no. 30) and "Wir glauben" (no. 64) would have been similarly problematic.

In three instances Bach planned on setting the same chorale twice. In the case of "Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier" (nos. 50–51), the title was entered on facing pages; in the case of "In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr" and "Alle Menschen müssen sterben" (nos. 97–98 and 130–31), the title was entered on a first page and the tag *alio modo* ("a different way") on a second. There is one setting each of "In dich" and "Alle Menschen," both notated, inexplicably, on pages with the *alio modo* heading. "Liebster Jesu" was set twice, but the settings are essentially different versions of the same composition.

GENESIS

It was once believed that the *Orgelbüchlein* originated late in Bach's Weimar period (1708–17) or during his years in Cöthen (1717–23). On the title page of the autograph (see Figure 1–3 on p. 32), Bach cites his professional position as Capellmeister at Cöthen. That was evidence enough for Wilhelm Rust, editor of the *Orgelbüchlein* for the Bachgesellschaft, to suppose that the pieces were composed in Cöthen, even though producing organ music was not part of Bach's duties there.⁵ (The explicitly didactic title page gave rise as well to the once popular but now clearly erroneous notion that the *Orgelbüchlein* was conceived as an instructional volume for Bach's eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann.) On the other hand, the famous nineteenth-century Bach biographer, Philipp Spitta, maintained that the actual composition occurred late during Bach's tenure as court organist in Weimar and that only the title page was penned in Cöthen.⁶

About forty years ago, Georg von Dadelsen demonstrated that the vast majority of the works do indeed date from the Weimar period.⁷ For one thing, as Dadelsen observed, there are numerous manuscript copies of *Orgelbüchlein* chorales by Bach's Weimar colleague Johann Gottfried Walther and Weimar pupil Johann Tobias Krebs that were presumably prepared during

Bach's Weimar years—and copied directly from the surviving autograph. Far more telling, though, were two facts uncovered by Dadelsen about the autograph itself. First, the only other Bach autographs bearing the same watermark as the *Orgelbüchlein* date from 1714. Second, of the Bach autographs that can be precisely dated, those whose handwriting most closely resembles that of the *Orgelbüchlein* autograph date from 1713–16. In comparing the *Orgelbüchlein* autograph with these sources, Dadelsen concluded that Bach worked on the manuscript intermittently for a number of years, with some entries originating no later than 1714, others as late as 1715–16. Dadelsen's work effectively disproved Charles Sanford Terry's fanciful, if attractive, theory that the *Orgelbüchlein* was authored late in 1717, while Bach was incarcerated in Weimar after too forcefully demanding his release from Duke Wilhelm Ernst's service.⁸ Handwriting evidence also led Dadelsen somewhat unexpectedly to date the entries of "Helft mir Gotts Güte preisen" and the fragmentary "O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid" to Bach's Leipzig period (1723–50). Furthermore, Dadelsen was the first to show that the works were not entered in the order of their appearance in the autograph and that the autograph contains composing scores as well as fair copies.

Using Dadelsen's findings as a point of departure, Heinz-Harald Löhlein, the editor of the *Orgelbüchlein* for the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe*, has proposed that virtually all the works originated in Weimar during one of three annual cycles—1713–14, 1714–15, and 1715–16—each corresponding to the church year.⁹ According to this chronology, Bach began work on the collection in December 1713 shortly after returning from his audition for the organist post at the Liebfrauenkirche in Halle (Peter Williams's idea that the *Orgelbüchlein* somehow originated in conjunction with this audition is supported only by circumstantial evidence).¹⁰ Löhlein's dating has aroused skepticism simply because a chronology this exact is not possible, given the nature of the evidence. Moreover, the organ at the Weimar court church seems to have been under renovation—and therefore out of commission—from soon after Pentecost 1713 until at least Easter 1714, something Löhlein expressly chooses to ignore. It is hard to believe that the ever-pragmatic Bach, in his capacity as Weimar court organist, would have embarked on a large organ collection without even having a serviceable instrument at hand.

But Löhlein's conclusions about the *order* in which the settings were entered into the autograph are generally quite tenable. These findings have allowed him to observe patterns in how the *Orgelbüchlein* developed stylistically. For example, only in the latest entries does Bach tend to write in more than four parts and place the chorale tune in voices other than the soprano.

Löhlein was able to show as well that the revised versions of two settings, "Christus, der uns selig macht" and "Komm, Gott Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist," which Bach notated in the autograph directly on top of the original versions, date from Leipzig.

More recently, Christoph Wolff has argued that the origins of the collection may be earlier still.¹¹ Citing newly discovered sources unknown to Dadelsen, Wolff maintains that during Bach's first seven years in Weimar his script was extremely stable, and that handwriting evidence is therefore insufficient to assign works to specific years. A biographical factor that Wolff finds chronologically suggestive is Bach's appointment on March 2, 1714, as *Konzertmeister* in Weimar, a position that he added to his continuing duties as court organist. The new post entailed composing church cantatas at the rate of one per month, thus reducing the amount of time at Bach's disposal for writing organ music. To Wolff, this means that Bach did not continue work on the *Orgelbüchlein* beyond March 1714 (except in the case of the Leipzig entries). Wolff also argues that the initial entries in the autograph may have been made as early as 1708–10, when the new court organist would have had an immediate need for a large chorale repertoire. (In this connection, Robert Marshall has recently suggested that the *Orgelbüchlein* was Bach's first systematic attempt toward a "well-regulated church music," the goal that he set for himself in 1708 upon resigning his position as organist in Mühlhausen.)¹² There are no dated autographs from 1708–10 that might support this idea, however (the earliest dated autograph from the Weimar years is from 1713, which poses a fundamental obstacle in assigning any autograph to the early Weimar period). Wolff also voices doubt that the chronological layers detected by Dadelsen and Löhlein can be dated with any degree of precision.

Wolff's point about the uniformity of Bach's script from 1708 to 1715 is well taken. Nonetheless, the present writer has formulated a chronology of the *Orgelbüchlein* by closely comparing the handwriting of the autograph with Bach's script in all manuscripts written before 1718, paying special attention to: the method of sharp cancellation (whether by naturals or flats); the symbols used for half notes and whole notes, soprano clefs, and common-time signatures; the size of the script in general; and, to a lesser extent, the type of pedal cues used (*ped.* versus *p.*) as well as their presence or absence.¹³ This chronology is given in Table 1–2. There is no clear evidence of annual cycles (although they may have existed), but there were apparently general phases of compilation: an early phase from approximately 1708–12; a middle phase that can be broken down into early (1712–13) and late (1715–16) stages, designated in Table 1–2 as "Middle I" and "Middle

II"; and a late phase from approximately 1716–17. The late stage of the middle phase appears to have begun in 1715 rather than 1714 because of the renovation of the Weimar court organ, which seems to have extended well into the spring of 1714; with the organ under repair for the first three or four months of 1714, it seems unlikely that Bach would have composed the Purification and Passiontide chorales BWV 616–19 during that year. The Leipzig entries may not be dated any more specifically than after 1726.

TABLE 1–2.

A Proposed Compositional History of the Orgelbüchlein

BWV NO.	TITLE	LITURGICAL SEASON OR FESTIVAL	COMPILATION PHASE	PROPOSED DATE	PROPOSED ENTRY TYPE
601	Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottessohn	Advent	Early	1708–12	fair copy
603	Puer natus in Bethlehem	Christmas	Early	1708–12	composing score
604	Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ	Christmas	Early	1708–12	composing score
605	Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich	Christmas	Early	1708–12	composing score
606	Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her	Christmas	Early	1708–12	revision copy
608	In dulci jubilo	Christmas	Early	1708–12	composing score
609	Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich	Christmas	Early	1708–12	composing score
621	Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund	Passiontide	Early	1708–12	revision copy
622	O Mensch, beweine dein Sünde gross	Passiontide	Early	1708–12	composing score
630	Heut triumphieret Gottes Sohn	Easter	Early	1708–12	revision copy
632	Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend	Pentecost	Early	1708–12	fair copy
635	Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot		Early	1708–12	composing score

636	Vater unser im Himmelreich		Early	1708–12	fair copy
637	Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt		Early	1708–12	composing score
638	Es ist das Heil uns kommen her		Early	1708–12	fair copy
599	Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland	Advent	Middle I	1712–13	composing score
600	Gott, durch deine Güte	Advent	Middle I	1712–13	composing score
602	Lob sei dem allmächtigen Gott	Advent	Middle I	1712–13	composing score
607	Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar	Christmas	Middle I	1712–13	composing score
610	Jesu, meine Freude	Christmas	Middle I	1712–13	fair copy
612	Wir Christenleut	Christmas	Middle I	1712–13	composing score
614	Das alte Jahr vergangen ist	New Year	Middle I	1712–13	revision copy
625	Christ lag in Todesbanden	Easter	Middle I	1712–13	revision copy
626	Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der den Tod überwand	Easter	Middle I	1712–13	revision copy
627	Christ ist erstanden	Easter	Middle I	1712–13	composing score
628	Erstanden ist der heil'ge Christ	Easter	Middle I	1712–13	composing score
629	Erschienen ist der herrliche Tag	Easter	Middle I	1712–13	composing score
631a	Komm, Gott Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist	Pentecost	Middle I	1712–13	composing score
639	Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ		Middle I	1712–13	fair copy
640	In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr		Middle I	1712–13	revision copy
641	Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein		Middle I	1712–13	composing score

642	Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten		Middle I	1712–13	revision copy
643	Alle Menschen müssen sterben		Middle I	1712–13	composing score
644	Ach wie nichtig, ach wie flüchtig		Middle I	1712–13	fair copy
616	Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin	Purification (February 2)	Middle II	1715–16	fair copy
617	Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf	Purification (February 2)	Middle II	1715–16	revision copy
618	O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig	Passiontide	Middle II	1715–16	revision copy
619	Christe, du Lamm Gottes	Passiontide	Middle II	1715–16	revision copy
611	Christum wir sollen loben schon	Christmas	Late	1716–17	revision copy
615	In dir ist Freude	New Year	Late	1716–17	revision copy
620a	Christus, der uns selig macht	Passiontide	Late	1716–17	fair copy
623	Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ, dass du für uns gestorben bist	Passiontide	Late	1716–17	revision copy
624	Hilf Gott, dass mir's gelinge	Passiontide	Late	1716–17	revision copy
634	Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier	Pentecost	Late	1716–17	composing score
633	Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier	Pentecost	Late	1716–17	fair copy
613	Helft mir Gotts Güte preisen	New Year	Leipzig	after 1726	fair copy
620	Christus, der uns selig macht	Passiontide	Leipzig	after 1726	revision copy
631	Komm, Gott Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist	Pentecost	Leipzig	after 1726	revision copy
Anh. 200	O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid [fragment]	Passiontide	Leipzig	after 1726	composing score

Also listed in Table 1–2 under “proposed entry type” are the compositional categories into which the various autograph entries fall. Some are clearly composing scores, which contain numerous formative revisions and have the appearance of first drafts. Others are revision copies, entries in which Bach appears to have been copying from another source while simultaneously making minor compositional revisions. And some are fair copies, which contain no compositional revisions and have a calligraphic appearance.¹⁴ But the distinction among the three types is not cut and dried, and the classifications in the table are therefore by no means absolute. Bach was a remarkably “clean” worker—he is perhaps second only to Mozart in this respect—and on a good day he could compose with remarkable assurance. Hence it is possible that certain entries labelled “revision copy” or “fair copy” may actually be composing scores.

Let us now look more closely at the genesis of the *Orgelbüchlein*, with an eye to Bach’s changing attitude toward musical style. On the basis of handwriting evidence and the assumption that the initial entry was an Advent chorale, the first work entered by Bach into the autograph seems to be “Herr Christ, der ein’ge Gottessohn.” Although a melody chorale, by far the most common chorale type in the *Orgelbüchlein*, this setting is quite uncharacteristic in that it survives in two forms, the well-known version in the autograph and an early version, not precisely datable, from the Neumeister Collection.¹⁵ These dual versions imply that Bach may initially have planned to sketch the pieces elsewhere and then enter them into the autograph (but as far as can be ascertained, most of the works actually set were composed directly into the autograph). Judging from Bach’s working habits as a church composer, this entry was made sometime in Advent, just as all the *de tempore* chorales were probably entered during their respective liturgical seasons.



We also see in “Herr Christ” a veritable model for the so-called *Orgelbüchlein*-type, a type of melody chorale invented by Bach in the *Orgelbüchlein*. As the locution implies, the *Orgelbüchlein*-type is the chorale type that best defines the collection as a stylistic entity, for it is the most common type of melody chorale as well as the most common chorale genre altogether in the collection. The musical traits of the type may be summarized as follows:

- (1) the entire chorale tune is stated once in the soprano, in unadorned fashion, without interludes;
- (2) four-voice texture (except for the addition of voices at the conclusion), with obbligato rather than *ad libitum* pedal, is strictly maintained;

- (3) the alto and tenor are assigned the same motive(s);
- (4) the pedal is either assigned the same motive(s) as the alto and tenor or given its own motive(s).

Most of the works from the early and middle compilation phases either fully exemplify the *Orgelbüchlein*-type or fail to exemplify it only because their bass lines have little motivic material (a number of settings are equipped with a “walking” instead of a motivic bass).

After the opening Advent chorale, Bach next seems to have entered a group of Christmas chorales: “Puer natus in Bethlehem,” “Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ,” “Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich,” “Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her,” “In dulci jubilo,” and “Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich.” With the possible exception of “Vom Himmel hoch,” these works were composed directly into the autograph, and with the exception of the double canon “In dulci jubilo,” they are all melody chorales. “Puer natus,” another unambiguous example of the *Orgelbüchlein*-type, is linked to “Herr Christ, der ein’ge Gottessohn,” since they are among the few settings to employ unnecessary repeats (in “Herr Christ” there is a repeat of the chorale’s *Abgesang*; in “Puer natus” there is a repeat of the entire piece). “Der Tag” and “Vom Himmel hoch” are adjacent in the autograph, have virtually identical handwriting, and contain bass lines that are unusually accompanimental. Not only do these bass lines cadence in every instance with the soprano chorale tune, but they are devoid of motivic content, featuring instead constant eighth-note motion in the manner of a “walking bass” (associated primarily with late Baroque chamber music, a “walking bass” is characterized by steady, stepwise movement in a single note value, usually half as large as that of the main pulse, e.g., an eighth note in common time or a quarter note in $\frac{3}{2}$ time). These two works represent the first of several contiguous entries that may be thought of as “pairs,” since they form a double entry with respect to handwriting, liturgical designation, and musical style. It would follow that they were not only entered in direct succession but probably composed at about the same time as well.

In terms of style, “Lobt Gott” obviously belongs with “Der Tag” and “Vom Himmel hoch,” since it features a walking bass that cadences with the soprano in four of five instances. “Gelobet seist” exemplifies the *Orgelbüchlein*-type, yet its alto and tenor figuration is analogous to that of “Der Tag.” Frequently, one of the voices states a  motive, usually consisting of repeated notes or notes a step apart, while the other voice simultaneously states a  counter-rhythmic motive, usually in stepwise motion. Although

other *Orgelbüchlein* chorales display material of this ilk, none utilize it so extensively. Furthermore, these are the only two melody chorales in the *Orgelbüchlein*, save "Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ," for which the autograph prescribes performance on two manuals (*à 2 Clav.*).

The Passiontide chorales "O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde gross" and "Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund," the Easter chorale "Heut triumphieret Gottes Sohn," and the Pentecost chorale "Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend" conclude the *de tempore* settings from the early compilation phase. "O Mensch" marks the earliest appearance of an ornamental chorale in the *Orgelbüchlein*. "Da Jesus" employs figuration strikingly similar to that of "Vom Himmel hoch," and its syncopated bass line recalls a passage from "Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottessohn" (see m. 3, tenor). "Heut triumphieret" is a further *Orgelbüchlein*-type that had already been composed in a slightly different but not precisely datable version (BWV 630a) by the time Bach entered it into the autograph.

"Herr Jesu Christ" is a close stylistic match to the Catechism chorale "Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot," also from the early compilation phase. They are the only melody chorales in the collection whose bass lines are clearly derived from the chorale melody, except for the Leipzig entry "Helft mir Gotts Güte preisen." In "Herr Jesu Christ," the bass imitates the soprano for the first three phrases; in "Dies sind," the bass appropriates the opening phrase of the chorale tune as an ostinato of sorts.

Of the remaining *omne tempore* chorales from the early compilation phase, "Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt" and "Es ist das Heil uns kommen her" are back-to-back entries that form a unit on the basis of their handwriting, liturgical designation, and musical style. They are Catechism chorales of a specific type ("Confession, Penitence, and Justification") and perhaps even comprise a unique "antecedent-consequent" pair in which "Es ist das Heil" serves as an "exuberant, assertive answer to the problem of Adam's fall."¹⁶ Moreover, they are both melody chorales whose bass lines cadence exclusively with the soprano. (The lines themselves, though, are rather different: "Durch Adams Fall" has a motivic bass, "Es ist das Heil" a walking bass.) "Es ist das Heil" also survives in an early version (BWV 638a) that is not precisely datable. The final chorale in this group, "Vater unser im Himmelreich," is a further *Orgelbüchlein*-type.

The early stage of the middle compilation phase ("Middle I") encompasses works whose stylistic orientation is analogous to the early compilation phase, with the important difference that the bass lines of the melody chorales are almost exclusively motivic (there is only one walking bass out

of fifteen pieces, compared to four out of thirteen pieces in the early compilation phase). The Advent chorale "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland" exemplifies the *Orgelbüchlein*-type, except for its free voice leading. "Gott, durch deine Güte," a further Advent chorale, stylistically parallels the early Christmas chorale "In dulci jubilo." In both works the chorale tune is set as a canon at the octave between soprano and tenor, and in that order, with the tenor line played on the pedals; the chorale tunes themselves open with essentially the same melodic contour; the canonic voices are exactly a measure apart; and the same time signature ($\frac{3}{2}$) is used.

The Advent chorale "Lob sei dem allmächtigen Gott" and the Christmas chorales "Jesu, meine Freude" and "Wir Christenleut" represent the *Orgelbüchlein*-type. The Christmas chorale "Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar," a further melody chorale, is stylistically redolent of the two early Christmas chorales "Der Tag" and "Vom Himmel hoch," since it contains a textbook walking bass that cadences throughout with the soprano. Bach returned to the ornamental chorale with the New Year chorale "Das alte Jahr vergangen ist."

The Middle I phase continues with five immediately adjacent Easter chorales, "Christ lag in Todesbanden," "Jesus Christus, unser Heiland," "Christ ist erstanden," "Erstanden ist der heil'ge Christ," and "Erschienen ist der herrliche Tag." The first four reflect the *Orgelbüchlein*-type. With its three verses, "Christ ist erstanden" may be viewed as a group of three such settings. In each verse, somewhat monotonously, Bach assigns the chorale tune to the soprano instead of varying the voice register from verse to verse. The contrast between this rigidity and the relatively free treatment of chorale melodies in later entries is remarkable. In "Erschienen ist," the chorale melody is presented as a canon at the octave between the soprano and bass, in the manner of "Gott, durch deine Güte" and "In dulci jubilo." But in those two works only one manual is used, as opposed to two in "Erschienen ist," with the *dux* of the canon assigned its own manual. This disposition not only allows the canon to be heard more clearly but creates a more variegated organ sonority as well. The latter trait may also be interpreted as a technical means by which Bach freed up the overall style of the *Orgelbüchlein*, since of the six canons from the middle and late compilation phases, four are prescribed for two manuals. The Pentecost chorale "Komm, Gott Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist" (BWV 631a), an additional *Orgelbüchlein*-type, concludes the *de tempore* settings from the early stage of the middle compilation phase. Bach later reworked this setting to form a more extended chorale (BWV 667) for the "Great Eighteen" Chorales.

Turning to the *omne tempore* chorales from the Middle I compilation phase, "Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ" is a unique three-voice setting that

may well be some sort of transcription (the version of this work contained in the Neumeister Collection appears to be a corruption rather than an authentic variant version).¹⁷ "In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr;" "Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten," "Alle Menschen müssen sterben," and "Ach wie nichtig, ach wie flüchtig" are all specimens of the *Orgelbüchlein*-type. "Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein" is the third and final ornamental chorale in the collection (Bach later recast this work as a chorale motet; see "Vor deinen Thron tret ich" from the "Great Eighteen" Chorales.)

It is only with the late stage of the middle compilation phase ("Middle II") that Bach begins to look beyond the compact design of the melody chorale and toward more sophisticated compositional techniques. The relative complexity of the works from this point on seems to have precluded composing them directly into the autograph, which seems to have been Bach's method for most of the earlier entries.

The side-by-side Purification chorales "Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin" and "Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf" constitute a pair on the basis of their handwriting and liturgical designation (were these pieces perhaps written for the same worship service?). Stylistically, though, they are quite dissimilar. Whereas "Mit Fried und Freud" is a straightforward *Orgelbüchlein*-type, "Herr Gott" displays traits that are both unusual and progressive. Cast in four-part texture, its bass and tenor are given their own motives to spin out, while the alto is strictly harmonic filler, welded to the rhythm of the soprano chorale tune. The lower two parts furnish interludes between the chorale phrases, foreshadowing the late entry "In dir ist Freude." Furthermore, only in the late entry "Hilf Gott, dass mir's gelinge" is hand-crossing utilized so extensively.

The immediately adjacent Passiontide chorales "O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig" and "Christe, du Lamm Gottes" also comprise a pair, on the basis of their handwriting, liturgical designation, and style. In both works the chorale tune is set canonically, but, unlike previously cited canons, at the relatively difficult interval of the fifth. "Christe, du Lamm Gottes," furthermore, is in five voices instead of four, and both works contain introductory passagework. In only two other chorales from the *Orgelbüchlein* is the opening note of the chorale tune not sounded on the first beat: "Durch Adams Fall," whose prefatory material is rather slight; and "Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf," an additional work, just discussed, from the late stage of the middle compilation phase.

The features that distinguish "Herr Gott," "O Lamm Gottes," and "Christe, du Lamm Gottes" are among those that define the works of the late compilation phase as a stylistic phase—and one far removed from the more

straightforward melody chorales of the earlier phases. To begin with the Christmas chorale "Christum wir sollen loben schon," here we have the only work in the *Orgelbüchlein*, except for the canonic setting "O Lamm Gottes," where the entire chorale tune is assigned exclusively to a voice (alto) other than the soprano. This piece also contains such progressive traits as chromatic embellishment of the chorale tune, exceedingly wide spacing between voices, and the use of double pedal at the conclusion as a means of thickening the texture (the only instance of this technique in the collection).

The New Year chorale "In dir ist Freude," on the other hand, is the only *Orgelbüchlein* chorale that could be thought of as a fantasia. The chorale tune is stated in its entirety by the soprano, but the individual phrases are fragmented, ornamented, and repeated; there are flashy interludes between phrases; and the chorale tune appears in other voices as well. The part writing is extremely free, often encompassing five voices, and the spacing between voices is unusually wide, as in "Christum wir sollen loben schon." This is a virtuoso showpiece, a setting much more akin to Bach's large organ chorales from the "Great Eighteen" Chorales and *Clavierübung* III (1739) than to other settings from the *Orgelbüchlein*.

The Passiontide chorales "Christus, der uns selig macht" (BWV 620a) and "Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ," conversely, show Bach reverting to earlier models. In "Christus," the chorale tune is set as a canon at the octave between the soprano and bass, in four-voice texture; "Wir danken dir" is an *Orgelbüchlein*-type. But in the next entry, the Passiontide chorale "Hilf Gott, dass mir's gelinge," there is again experimentation with new techniques. This piece begins with a canon on the chorale tune at the fifth between the soprano and alto, in four-voice texture, but for the fifth and sixth phrases the canon is at the fourth. There is no other work in the collection that employs this canonic interval.

The inclination toward canonic writing is also seen in the two Pentecost chorales on "Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier," which, as mentioned earlier, are different versions of the same piece. Bach first penned the composing score BWV 634 and then on the facing page the fair copy BWV 633. As in "Hilf Gott," the chorale tune is stated as a canon at the fifth between the upper two parts. Five voices are maintained from beginning to end, allowing for extraordinarily rich harmonic writing.

In the late compilation phase, then, we see Bach exploring new, more intricate compositional possibilities. He shows a pronounced interest in canon, especially at the fifth between the upper two voices; he often opts for textures thicker than four parts; and he tends to place the chorale melody in voices

other than the soprano (largely a by-product of the canonic writing).¹⁸ It is no exaggeration to say that there is more stylistic diversity within these six works than in the nearly forty entered earlier! Without these six works, it would have been disingenuous of Bach to claim, as he does on the title page of the autograph, that the *Orgelbüchlein* shows how to set a chorale “in all kinds of ways.”

The relatively small number of works entered during the late compilation phase implies that Bach was losing interest in the *Orgelbüchlein* project, probably because of the monotony of writing so many pieces of the same type. He may simply have overestimated his ability to avoid repetition within the strictly defined type of the melody chorale or to work within the special confines of the preplanned manuscript. In addition, Bach’s worsening job situation in Weimar offered him little incentive to finish the *Orgelbüchlein*. On December 1, 1716, Johann Samuel Drese died, leaving vacant the position of Capellmeister. As Konzertmeister, Bach was next in rank and surely felt entitled to the top spot. When the post went instead to Drese’s son, a mediocre musician at best, Bach probably took it as a personal insult. This nepotism apparently so disgusted him that he abruptly ceased his cycle of monthly church cantatas for the Weimar court, a project that had been under way for almost three years. The *Orgelbüchlein*, in many ways a counterpart to the cantata cycle, may have been curtailed for the same reason.

For all intents and purposes, Bach’s compositional work on the *Orgelbüchlein* was finished by 1717. Late that year he began his duties as Capellmeister at Cöthen, where he was required to supply music for secular occasions; composing organ music was not in his job description. He did see fit at this time, though, to pen the title page of the autograph, which reveals the pedagogical aims behind the collection (see Figure 1–3). One assumes Bach took this step on behalf of his private pupils.

Bach’s next and final position was in the city of Leipzig, where he served as Cantor at St. Thomas and municipal director of music from 1723 until his death in 1750. Here he was not expected to supply any organ music either. Still, for reasons we may never know, he momentarily resumed compositional work on the *Orgelbüchlein* during this period. He entered into the autograph two new works, the New Year chorale “Helft mir Gotts Güte preisen” and the fragmentary Passiontide chorale “O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid,” and revised two existing ones, “Christus, der uns selig macht” and “Komm, Gott Schöpfer” (BWV 620 and 631). These portions of the autograph are easily distinguishable from all others because of their black ink (all the other portions are in brown ink).¹⁹ That the same ink was used for the new works and the revisions suggests that all the Leipzig entries originated at about the same time, possibly during the winter and spring (New Year–Pentecost) of the same year.

This black ink also appears to some degree in “Christe, du Lamm Gottes,” a piece notated on the recto side of the folio containing “Christus, der uns selig macht.” Bach used the black ink to notate brackets in measures 8, 9, and 10 that clarify how the voices are to be distributed between the hands; to complete one such bracket in measure 5; and to draw a diagonal line between the first and second bass notes in measure 5, thereby clarifying the voice leading. All these symbols can be interpreted as performance instructions, suggesting that Bach intended to perform the work himself in Leipzig or to teach it to one of his students there.

The only complete and entirely new work from the Leipzig layer, “Helft mir Gotts Güte preisen,” is, significantly, a melody chorale. Bach had reserved only a single page for this title, which meant that his choice of chorale types was limited, but not just to the melody chorale (the ornamental chorale, chorale canon, or chorale fughetta would also have been possible). Thus it is tempting to believe that Bach’s choice here of the *Orgelbüchlein*’s most representative type was made out of concern for the collection as a unified entity. Along with the small setting of “Vater unser im Himmelreich” from *Clavierübung* III, “Helft mir” is Bach’s last extant melody chorale.

PURPOSE

The *Orgelbüchlein* is simultaneously a compositional treatise, a collection of liturgical organ music, an organ method, and a theological statement. These four identities are so closely intertwined that it is hard to know where one leaves off and another begins.

In terms of composition, the *Orgelbüchlein* may be thought of as an exercise book that allowed Bach to hone his skills as a composer of organ chorales, particularly with respect to the melody chorale, chorale canon, and ornamental chorale. Its significance for Bach as a composer, however, extends well beyond this realm. To begin with, the *Orgelbüchlein* is part of a large body of organ music written by Bach in Weimar, where, according to the obituary of 1754, he authored most of his organ works.²⁰ The *Orgelbüchlein* is also the first work in which Bach reveals a systematic and “encyclopedic” approach to composition. It gives us our first glimpse of Bach’s tendency to write numerous examples of a particular genre within a relatively short period—and to achieve within these narrow confines an incredible level of diversity and individualization. This procedure would lead to such works as the *Inventions* and *Sinfonias*, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the French and English

Suites, the Sonatas and Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin, the Suites for Unaccompanied Cello, the Leipzig "chorale cantatas," the Six Harpsichord Partitas, the *Art of Fugue*, the *Goldberg Variations* (and the *Goldberg Canons*, BWV 1087), and the *Musical Offering*.

But the *Orgelbüchlein* is also a very pragmatic work, intended to furnish an organist with music for a worship service. Perhaps more than any other Bach keyboard collection, it is *Gebrauchsmusik*. The various ways in which Bach may have utilized the *Orgelbüchlein* need to be understood within the context of religious life at the Weimar court. The court's ruler, Duke Wilhelm Ernst, was a devout if not fanatical orthodox Lutheran. This was, after all, a man who took as his motto "Alles mit Gott" and who preached a sermon at the age of seven.²¹ Childless and separated from his wife, Wilhelm's passion was religion, and he demanded a deeply pious lifestyle from those who served him. This meant regular church attendance and strict adherence to the orthodox Lutheran liturgy, not to mention a curfew at eight o'clock in the winter and nine in the summer. The Duke also insisted that all youth in his realm be given a thorough grounding in the Catechism, and he reinstated the Confirmation rite. Anyone so steeped in orthodox Lutheranism would have appreciated the predilection for early Lutheran hymnody that so characterizes the *Orgelbüchlein*, and one cannot rule out the possibility that the Duke was partially responsible for this feature. At all events, the Duke clearly appreciated Bach's organ playing, and his support most probably spurred in Bach "the desire to try every possible artistry in his treatment of the organ," as the abovementioned obituary put it.

It is safe to say that of all the activities at the court of Wilhelm Ernst, none were more important than those related to the chapel, nicknamed the *Himmelsburg*, or "castle of heaven." Exactly what the chapel activities constituted, though, is unclear (far more is known about liturgical custom in such German cities as Leipzig and Halle). For example, the role played by the congregation and choir in hymn singing is uncertain, and next to nothing is known about the congregation's size or makeup. The chapel's hymnal, the *Weimar Gesangbuch*, has survived, but it is representative of Lutheran ritual in general, and sheds no light on the local liturgy of the Weimar court. Although the hymnal is arranged according to the church year, it follows a somewhat different order than the *Orgelbüchlein*; like most hymnals of this era, it contains no music, only texts.

We may surmise from standard Lutheran practice of the time that Bach regularly played the following types of services: the *Hauptgottesdienst* held on the mornings of the Sundays and festivals of the church year; the vigil services that preceded the festivals; the *Vespergottesdienst* held on Sunday

afternoon; and daily prayer and preaching services. Bach would also have been expected to play occasional wedding and funeral services.

The different types of services demanded different types of chorales. The *Hauptgottesdienst*, for example, required *de tempore* chorales, while *omne tempore* chorales were appropriate for Vespers. The principal hymn of any *Hauptgottesdienst* was the *de tempore* gradual hymn, sung between the Epistle and Gospel reading. Therefore, any of the first sixty chorale titles inscribed by Bach into the autograph of the *Orgelbüchlein* could have been used as a gradual hymn. In compiling the collection, Bach was surely aware of the primacy of *de tempore* chorales. Of the sixty *de tempore* chorale titles entered, thirty-five were set; of the 104 *omne tempore* titles, only ten were set. (Albert Schweitzer's view that Bach set only those chorales offering good possibilities for text painting is clearly untenable.) Bach seems to have placed particular emphasis on Christmas and Easter, the two main festivals of the year: of the eleven Christmas chorale titles entered into the manuscript, ten were set; all six of the Easter titles were set. These statistics, of course, constitute further evidence of the *Orgelbüchlein*'s function as liturgical organ music.

In view of these numbers, it is hard to explain why Bach set only three of the nine chorales planned for Pentecost, another major festival of the church year. That one of the Pentecost chorales set is "Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend," however, is entirely expected. Not only was this hymn sung in various churches (including the Weimar court chapel?) during the *Hauptgottesdienst* on most Sundays of the year, which would have made an organ setting of it unusually practical, but its first three stanzas are said to be by Wilhelm Ernst's grandfather, Wilhelm II of Weimar, which would have granted the chorale special significance at the court, even if sung there only at Pentecost.

It would have been customary for an organist at this time to employ organ chorales in a variety of ways, primarily in conjunction with congregational hymns, whether as preludes, interludes, or actual accompaniments. The *Orgelbüchlein* chorales could have fulfilled these functions, including the last one, for of all the chorale types, the melody chorale is undoubtedly the best suited to the actual accompaniment of a congregational hymn: the chorale tune is placed in the most audible part of the texture and is stated without embellishment and without interludes between phrases—just like church hymns today. One factor, however, that speaks against hymn accompaniment is the range of the chorales, for most of them go as high as e", which today would be considered a very high range for congregational singing. (Unfortunately, the pitch of the organ at the Weimar court chapel—a critical issue in this regard—is unknown.)

We may marvel at how anyone was able to play from such minuscule script, but there can be no question that the surviving autograph is the same

source Bach himself performed from at the organ of the Weimar court chapel. With its organ registration indications, tempo inscriptions, brackets indicating how the voices are to be distributed between the hands and feet, pedal cues, and articulation markings, the manuscript seems earmarked as a performer's score. Moreover, all the two-page chorales are laid out in such a way as to avoid page turns, also a convenience to the player.

No discussion of the *Orgelbüchlein*'s function as liturgical repertory would be complete without some mention of the organ at the Weimar court church. Originally built in 1658 by Ludwig Compenius, the organ was rebuilt in 1707–8 by J. Conrad Weishaupt and in 1713–14 by Heinrich Nicolaus Trebs. Although the instrument has not survived, we have a reasonably accurate idea of its specifications, at least as of 1737 (see Figure 1–1).²²

FIGURE 1–1.

Specifications of the Compenius-Weishaupt-Trebs Organ in the Weimar court chapel, as described in 1737

OBER CLAVIER, CD-c'''	UNTER CLAVIER, CD-c'''	PEDAL, C-c'
1. Principal 8', tin*	1. Principal 8', tin	1. Gross Untersatz 32', wood
2. Quintadena 16', metal*	2. Viol di Gamba 8', metal	2. Sub-Bass 16', wood
3. Gemshorn 8', metal*	3. Gedackt 8', metal*	3. Posaun-Bass 16', wood*
4. Grobgedackt 8', metal	4. Trompete 8', metal*	4. Violon-Bass 16', wood
5. Quintadena 4', metal	5. klein Gedackt 4', metal	5. Principal-Bass 8', metal
6. Octava 4', metal	6. Octava 4', metal	6. Trompeta-Bass 8', metal
7. Mixtur 6 ranks, metal	7. Wald-Flöthe 2', metal*	7. Cornett-Bass 4', metal
8. Cymbel 3 ranks, metal*	8. Sesquialtera 4 ranks "in Octava, aus 3 und 2 Fuss"	
9. A Glockenspiel "und Spiel-Register dazu" ("with stop knob")		

ACCESSORIES

Tremulant for the Hauptwerk
Tremulant for the Unterwerk
Hauptwerk to Pedal coupler
Manual coupler
Cymbel Stern

* From the Compenius organ of 1658.

The instrument was fairly modest in size, with two manuals; its stoplist typifies Thuringian organ building in the early eighteenth century.²³ First and foremost, more than half the stops are eight-foot registers or lower, which would have created an unusually "grave" sonority dominated by fundamental organ tone (writers of the time described this type of organ sound as *gravitatisch*). Specifically Thuringian are the manual string stops—Gemshorn 8' and Viol di Gamba 8'—the pedal Posaun-Bass 16' and Violon-Bass 16', and the Glockenspiel. The instrument's tuning most likely reflected the growing trend in the early eighteenth century toward equal temperament, especially since the leading proponent of well-tempered tuning at the turn of the century, Andreas Werckmeister, was a major influence on both of the principal organists in Weimar: Bach clearly relied on Werckmeister's *Orgelprobe* in testing organs;²⁴ and Johann Gottfried Walther, organist at the town church, was a pupil of Werckmeister. At any rate, certain *Orgelbüchlein* chorales, most notably "O Mensch" and "Ich ruf zu dir," in the keys of E-flat major and F minor, are incompatible with the meantone tunings used in the seventeenth century.

Easily the most remarkable feature of this organ, though, was its placement in a cupola-shaped, balustraded gallery located at the very top of the building, roughly fifty to sixty feet above ground level, and with an opening at its base of only about nine feet by twelve feet. Both the gallery, nicknamed the *Weg zum Himmel*, or "way to heaven," and the organ itself are visible in the famous painting by Christian Richter of the chapel's interior, ca. 1660 (see Figure 1–2).²⁵ With the organ separated from the congregation in this way, and with its music filtered down into the rest of the room through such a small orifice, questions have been raised about the degree to which the congregation could hear the instrument and, consequently, how well it could have accompanied congregational singing.

The title page of the autograph, given in Figure 1–3, shows that Bach also thought of the *Orgelbüchlein* as a didactic collection with specific aims. It reads as follows:

Orgel-Büchlein / Worinne einem anfahenden Organisten / Anleitung gegeben wird, auff allerhand / Arth einen Choral durchzuführen, an- / bey auch sich im Pedal studio zu habi- / litiren, indem in solchen darinne / befindlichen Choralen das Pedal / gantz obligat tractiret wird. / Dem Höchsten Gott allein' zu Ehren, / Dem Nechsten, draus sich zu belehren. / Autore / Joanne Sebast. Bach / p. t. Capellae Magistri / S.[erenissimi] P.[rincipis] R.[egnantis] Anhaltini- / Cotheniensis.²⁶

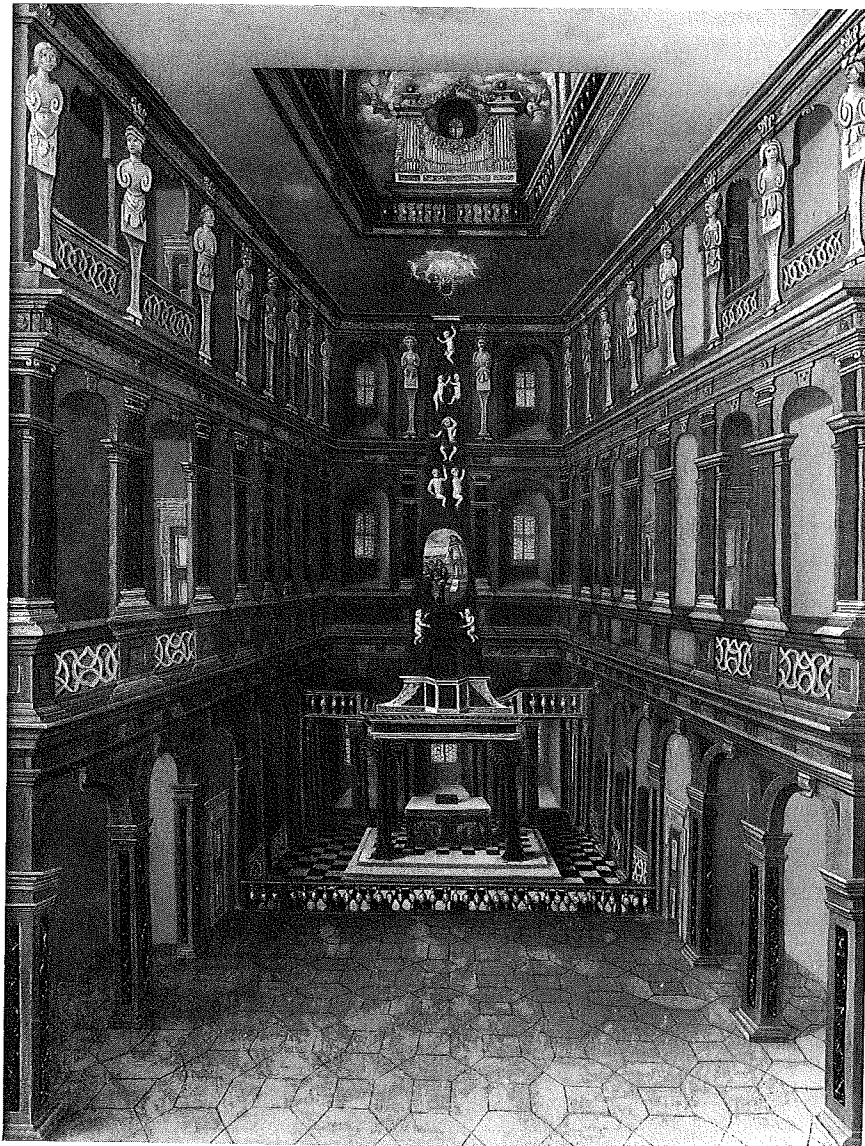


Figure 1–2. Interior of the Weimar court chapel, painting by Christian Richter, ca. 1660 (Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar)

Little Organ Book, in which guidance is given to a beginning organist in how to set a chorale in all kinds of ways, and at the same time to become practiced in the study of pedalling, since in the chorales found therein the pedal is treated completely obbligate. For the highest God alone in his honor; for my neighbor, that he may instruct himself from it. Composed by Johann Sebastian Bach, p. t. [*pleno titulo*, “with full title”?] Capellmeister to the Serene Reigning Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen.²⁷

That the wording may not be entirely original is suggested first of all by the word *anfahenden* (“beginning”) in the second line. By Bach’s time, the verb *anfahen* (“to begin”) had been replaced in colloquial German by *anfangen*, the former being retained only in poetry.²⁸ Compared with the rest of the phraseology, the word sounds both precious and antiquated, and there is good evidence that it may be borrowed from a sixteenth-century source, namely, Elias Nikolaus Ammerbach’s *Orgel oder Instrument Tabulatur*. The first edition of Ammerbach’s collection, issued in 1571, is subtitled: *Ein nützliches Büchlein, in welchem notwendige erklerung der Orgel oder Instrument Tabulatur . . . zubefinden . . . der Jugend und anfahenden dieser Kunst zum besten in Druck vorfertiget . . .* (“A useful little book, in which is to be found a necessary explanation of organ or instrument tablature, issued in print for the benefit of young people and of beginners in this art”). Its subtitle aside, Ammerbach’s publication is of special significance to Bach and to the *Orgelbüchlein* in particular, for Bach appears to have owned no fewer than three copies of the first edition, and the volume represents the first extant collection of organ chorales. Bach surely recognized the historical importance of Ammerbach’s collection—and hence the historical position of the *Orgelbüchlein*—and it is conceivable that he chose to express his indebtedness to the organ-chorale tradition by appropriating not only the general scheme and tone of Ammerbach’s wording but certain key words as well. In addition to *anfahenden*, one of these words may be *Büchlein*, even though this term was commonly used to designate any collection of music (for example, Bach also employs it in the *Clavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach*, a keyboard manual for his eldest son).

It has been claimed that pedagogical application was not part of the *Orgelbüchlein*’s original purpose. After all, only the title page reveals didactic intent, and it was penned after most of the works had been composed. Yet, despite the fact that the *Orgelbüchlein* is hardly a graded organ primer, who is to say that Bach did not have pedagogy in mind from the outset? He was already an established private instructor by the time he arrived in Weimar in

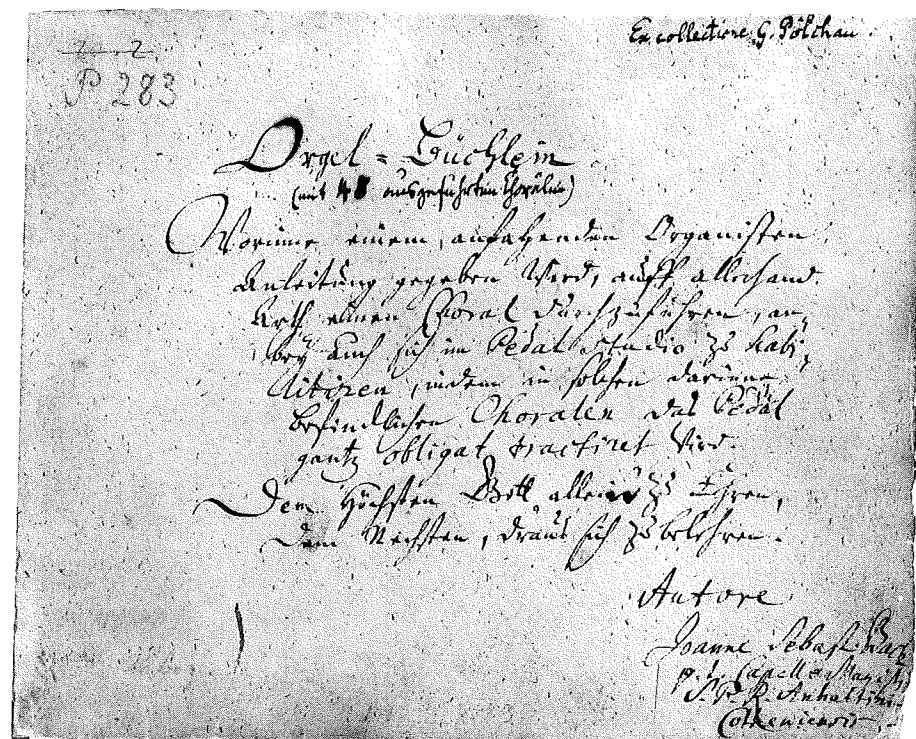


Figure 1-3. Title page of the autograph of the *Orgelbüchlein* (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung, Mus. ms. Bach P 283, fol. 1r)

1708, and his teacher's instinct may have been almost as inceptive a force as that of composer or organist.

At any rate, Bach appears to have used the *Orgelbüchlein* as teaching repertory as early as his Weimar period: numerous copies of *Orgelbüchlein* chorales by Bach's Weimar pupil J. T. Krebs have survived. And after Bach left Weimar, his last organ post, the *Orgelbüchlein* seems to have served him primarily as teaching repertory. He apparently had organ pupils in Cöthen who he felt could benefit from the collection, and it appears to have served him as pedagogical material for the remainder of his life. (The particular pupils who appear to have studied the *Orgelbüchlein* with Bach himself will be cited in the final chapter.)

It is in Cöthen that we gain our first in-depth look at Bach as a pedagogue, for it was there that he produced his first explicitly didactic works—all of them keyboard collections—such as the *Inventions* and *Sinfonias* and Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. The transformation of the *Orgel-*

büchlein's function from service music to pedagogical material, then, must be viewed against the background of Bach's general inclination towards pedagogy at this time. A most telling comparison is provided by the *Inventions* and *Sinfonias*, whose autograph title page expresses strikingly similar didactic goals to that of the *Orgelbüchlein*, using much of the same terminology (*Anleitung*, *obligaten*, *durchzuführen*) and phraseology as well:

Upright instruction wherein the lovers of the clavier, and especially those desirous of learning, are shown a clear way not alone (1) to learn to play clearly in two voices, but also, after further progress, (2) to deal correctly and well with three *obligato* parts; furthermore, at the same time not alone to have good *inventiones* [ideas], but to develop the same well, and above all to arrive at a singing style in playing and at the same time to acquire a strong foretaste of composition.²⁹

In both the *Orgelbüchlein* and the *Inventions* and *Sinfonias*, the pupil is to be taught how to compose works of a particular type and, simultaneously, to master aspects of keyboard technique.

The user of the *Orgelbüchlein* is promised two benefits: to become proficient on the pedals and to learn to compose organ chorales "in all kinds of ways." Because the overwhelming majority of *Orgelbüchlein* chorales are of one type (the melody chorale), perhaps this tag (*auff allerhand Arth*) actually refers to different ways of composing within one type rather than in different types. After all, one of the most important compositional lessons to be learned from the collection is that by varying accompanimental figuration,³⁰ individualization is possible, even within a narrowly defined type like the melody chorale.

By "obligato" pedal, Bach means that in every one of the *Orgelbüchlein* chorales at least one voice *must* be taken throughout by the feet. This feature may be thought of as a Bachian trademark, since the uncompromising use of pedal distinguishes Bach's organ works as a whole from those of his predecessors and contemporaries. In the context of the organ chorale, it may also have represented an innovation even for Bach, since in many of his earlier organ chorales, such as those from the Neumeister Collection, the pedal is treated in an *ad libitum* manner—these works may be played for the most part on manuals alone or with very little pedal.

But the pedagogical value of the collection is far more comprehensive than what the title page implies. First of all, in addition to learning how to play bass parts on the pedalboard, users of the *Orgelbüchlein* are taught the

coordination of hands and feet, arguably the most crucial organ technique of all. They also learn the critical difference between playing on the same manual and on two different manuals. In more general terms, they learn to negotiate a wide range of figuration and textures, to play in over ten major and minor keys, and to handle such matters as phrasing, articulation, registration, and sensitivity to the melody and text of a hymn. In short, they attain the basics of organ playing.

The *Orgelbüchlein*'s highest purpose, however, like that of Bach's music in general, is of a religious nature: service to God and the edification of humankind. It is summed up by the rhyming couplet—essentially a dedication—that concludes the title, and that bears repeating here: *Dem höchsten Gott allein' zu Ehren, Dem Nächsten, draus sich zu belehren* (which Hans David and Arthur Mendel poetically translated as "In Praise of the Almighty's Will, And for my Neighbor's Greater Skill").³¹ Like other previously discussed portions, this couplet, too, may have been borrowed from an item in Bach's personal library, the *Gesangbüchlein* of Michael Weisse, published in 1531, which ends with the couplet: *Gott allein zu lob und ehr / Und seinn auserwelten zur leer* ("For the praise and honor of God alone, and for the edification of his chosen ones").³² Not only do Bach and Weisse express the same message, but they also use the same phraseology and rhyme scheme ("ehr" and "lehr"). And in addition to being a hymnal, Weisse's collection, like Ammerbach's *Tabulatur*, also parallels the *Orgelbüchlein* in its use of the term "Büchlein."

Any connection to Weisse, however, is of secondary significance compared to the couplet's apparent biblical derivation, which would seem to reveal its true meaning. The scriptural source in question is one that has always occupied an important position in Christian liturgy. Known as Christ's "Summary of the Law," it reads: "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37–40). Basically an extension of his more common slogan *Soli Deo Gloria* ("To God Alone the Glory"), Bach's little couplet proclaims that his music has both a divine and worldly purpose, in accordance with Jesus' teachings. Ultimately, then, the *Orgelbüchlein* may be understood as its composer's response to the New Testament.

Chapter 2

COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS



BACKGROUND

The term "compositional process," coined some twenty years ago by Robert Marshall in his pioneering study *The Compositional Process of J. S. Bach*, refers to the manner in which a composition evolves from its original conception to its final, definitive form. Put another way, it involves the means by which a composer produces a finished work. To the extent possible, the researcher imaginatively "becomes" the composer in hopes of explaining the work's genesis—how it was formed "in the beginning." Only through the intensive study of autograph sources, either sketches or compositional drafts, can this line of inquiry be fully realized.

Compositional process in Bach's instrumental music is perforce a little-explored phenomenon. While numerous composing scores (as well as sketches) for his vocal music have survived, few such sources for the instrumental works are extant. Furthermore, there are relatively few extant composing scores of any kind by Bach from the first thirty-five years of his life. Thus the autograph of the *Orgelbüchlein*, which contains not one but evidently over twenty composing scores, is a potentially rich fount of information about Bach's compositional methods.

Specifically, this source offers a rare opportunity to investigate Bach's compositional process in the domain of the organ chorale. His essays in this genre comprise over two-thirds of his approximately 300 organ works, a sizable portion of his compositional output. Yet, excluding the *Orgelbüchlein*,