

COLORADO BACH ENSEMBLE

An Aesthetic-Theological Reflection on Cantata 10,
“*Meine Seel erhebt den Herren*”
(My Soul Magnifies the Lord, BWV 10)
Cantata for the Ascension of Mary

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1. Chorus

**My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God,
my Savior;
for he has regarded his lowly handmaid.
Behold, from now on all generations will
call me blessed.**

2. Aria S

Lord, you who are strong and mighty,
God, whose name is holy,
how wonderful are your deeds!
You have looked upon wretched me,
You have done so much for me,
that I cannot count or tell it all.

3. Recitative T

The goodness and love of the Highest
is renewed every morning
and endures for ever and ever
with them, who from here
look for his help
and trust him in true fear.
He also uses force with his arm
against those, who are neither cold nor warm
in faith and in love;
who are naked, bare, and blind,
who are full of pride and arrogance,
will be scattered like straw by his hand.

4. Aria B

The mighty God casts from their thrones,
down into the sulfurous pit;
the humble God means to exalt,
so that they are as the stars in heaven.
The rich God leaves bare and empty,
the hungry he fills with gifts,
so that, from the sea of his grace
they might always have their fill of riches.

**5. Duet (with instr. Chorale) A T
He remembers his mercy
and helps his servant Israel.**

1. Choral

**Meine Seel erhebt den Herren,
Und mein Geist freut sich Gottes,
meines Heilandes;
Denn er hat seine elende Magd angesehen.
Siehe, von nun an werden mich selig
preisen alle Kindskind.**

2. Arie S

Herr, der du stark und mächtig bist,
Gott, dessen Name heilig ist,
Wie wunderbar sind deine Werke!
Du siehest mich Elenden an,
Du hast an mir so viel getan,
Daß ich nicht alles zähl und merke.

3. Rezitativ T

Des Höchsten Güt und Treu
Wird alle Morgen neu
Und währet immer für und für
Bei denen, die allhier
Auf seine Hilfe schau
Und ihm in wahrer Furcht vertraun.
Hingegen übt er auch Gewalt Mit seinem Arm
An denen, welche weder kalt noch warm
Im Glauben und im Lieben sein;
Die nacket, bloß und blind,
Die voller Stolz und Hoffart sind,
Will seine Hand wie Spreu zerstreun.

4. Arie B

Gewaltige stößt Gott vom Stuhl
Hinunter in den Schwefelpfuhl;
Die Niedern pflegt Gott zu erhöhen,
Daß sie wie Stern am Himmel stehen.
Die Reichen läßt Gott bloß und leer,
Die Hungrigen füllt er mit Gaben,
Daß sie auf seinem Gnadenmeer
Stets Reichtum und die Fülle haben.

**5. Duett (mit instr. Choral) A T
Er denket der Barmherzigkeit
Und hilft seinem Diener Israel auf.**

Our cantata was composed in 1724 for the Lutheran Feast of the “Ascension” of Mary, that is, for the visitation (German *Heimsuchung*) of Mary by the angel Gabriel who announced to her that she would become pregnant with Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, even though she was a virgin. The event is recorded in the Gospel of Luke 1:26–38. The words of the cantata, however, are based on the so-called Magnificat, the first word in the Latin translation of Mary’s song of praise recorded in Luke 1:46–55, which she proclaimed shortly after this event, upon meeting her older relative Elizabeth, to whose husband Zechariah the same angel Gabriel had revealed six months earlier that she would give birth to a child, later known as John the Baptist, who would prepare for Jesus’s ministry. It is this text, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), that is assigned as the Gospel reading in the Lutheran liturgy for this feast of Mary on that day, the 2nd of July, 1724.

The Lutheran feast should not be confused with the Roman Catholic feast of the “Assumption of Mary,” which commemorates Mary’s miraculous ascension into heaven at the end of her life on earth, a tradition not mentioned in the Bible.