



Hermeneutik zu Johann Sebastian Bach



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Hermeneutics before Bach

Research and research results by Christoph Bossert

Tabulatur Buch
Darinnen

Daß Vatter unser auff 2,
3 und 4 Stimmen Feature 5

Johann Ulrich Steigleders 40 Variations on *Our Father in the Kingdom of Heaven*
(1627) **Tabulatur Buch / Darinnen / Daß Vatter Unser auff 2, / 3. und 4 Stimmen
componirt, und / vierzig mal varirt würdt**

Is there a connection to Johann Sebastian Bach?

der Musicalischen Ju-
strumenten ordentlich
in appliciren
London

Dr. Joh. Ulrich Steigleder
Organist der Schloßkirche in Nürnberg
Variirt und varirt bey Weyß von Nürnberg
1 6 2

Hermeneutics
instructional video in 12
features
with

Prof. Dr h. c. Christoph Bossert
on the Klais organ (2016) in the Great Hall of the
Würzburg University of Music

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One question remained unanswered in the last feature: Why variation 39? Could the number 39 also communicate something? In terms of architecture, it is evident that this last group of variations places No. 39 in the centre: Three variations before, the three-part metre for variation 39 as the middle, the three parts for the final variation:

- Steigleder calls the final variation "Auff Toccata Manier".
- The first part begins with large chords; the *cantus firmus* is silent for the first time, followed by a fugato as part 2.
- In the second part, I would like to encourage the listener to perceive the *cantus firmus line Der Tag bricht an und zeigt sich* in this section. That would be - in the sense of a new beginning - the function of the number 41, following 40.
- In the third part, the 42nd section is then reaffirmed by the statement *Amen, that is, let it come true* with *cantus firmus* in the bass within six fugal sections.

So now the question about the number 39 in this final group of variations 36 to 40. I would like to understand 39 as YHWH ECHAD. What does that mean? YHWH is the name of God, ECHAD in Hebrew stands for the number one:¹ *One, unique, the highest*. YHWH ECHAD means: "*God, the Most High*". In the Hebrew numerical alphabet, YHWH has the numerical value 26 - every educated person in Steigleder's time knew this, it was part of general education: YHWH as $10 + 5 + 6 + 5 = 26$, plus the word ECHAD - *One, unique, the Most High* with numerical value 13 [$= 1 + 8 + 4$] - gives 39. So where the sole position of this single variation is heard in the three-part metre, the numerical value says: *YHWH ECHAD, God the Most High, the One and Only*.

This should now be the beginning of this feature, in order to then ask the following: If we consider this as a general education in Steigleder's time - imparted by Latin schools, imparted by Latin, Greek and Hebrew lessons in these schools - what was the after-effect? Did later organisers really know about Steigleder's tablature book? Some say it must have been, because if a work was printed - and there weren't many of them - then it was also communicated; then it was recognised.

Now I would like to stretch out a line, as these are all - methodologically speaking - questions that I would like to introduce here: it is the line Steigleder -> Pachelbel -> Johann Christoph Bach in Ohrdruf and -> Johann Sebastian Bach, which I would now like to extend argumentatively:

Johann Pachelbel, originally from Nuremberg, worked in Thuringia - initially in Gotha. He then went to the collegiate church in Stuttgart for two years around 1690 (much later than Steigleder), before moving on to Erfurt in Thuringia. It was not until the end of his life that he was Sebaldus organist in Nuremberg. So there is a period of two years of activity in - if you like - succession to Johann Ulrich Steigleder, who had worked at the collegiate church in Stuttgart two generations earlier. If you now look at

¹ See *Alphabets and numerical values*. Private online presentation, URL: <<https://menora-bibel.jimdofree.com/fakten-zur-bibel/alphabete/>>; for the spelling JHWH, reading from left to right) as Jod-He-Waw-He and ECHAD as Aleph-Chet-Dalet, see tables in the text. The word meaning of the word ECHAD is one, counting the letters results in $1 + 8 + 4 = 13$; $26 + 13 = 39$ results in the praise YHWH ECHAD (see also the comments on the end of variation 1 as an absolutely surprising and extremely short episode of 3/2 as a phenomenon of $2/2 + 3/2 + 3/2 + 2/2$. Interpretation: $2 + 3 = 5 / 3 + 3 = 6 / 3 + 2 = 5 / 2 + 3 + 3 + 2 = 10$).

If we imagine that such a work was printed, then it was certainly available in the music library of the collegiate church in Stuttgart. It would then be hard to imagine that Johann Pachelbel would not have reached for this volume. So if he knew and studied Steigleder's works - it was also important as a textbook - then it would also be conceivable that there was possibly an oral tradition, based on the fact that Steigleder communicated with professors at the University of Tübingen about this printing and they suggested that he actually undertake this printing of the Lord's Prayer tablature book.² So there could also have been an oral tradition. According to this tradition, it could have been enough to say: "This work by Steigleder is composed in chalice form". In that case, a Pachelbel would have been able to extract this form from the music at any time - according to the analysis I have presented.

I would now like to show a clear connection between Steigleder's spectacular Variation 36 and Pachelbel's Praeludium in D minor. The last group begins with *Variatio 36*. The chorale itself is conducted in octaves - Steigleder writes: *As if in a congregation all the lower and somewhat higher voices are heard*. Two imitative voices then counterpoint this octave movement. It is precisely from this variation, which is spectacular in itself, that there is a bridge - in my opinion - to Pachelbel's Praeludium in D minor. I would now like to demonstrate this bridge. Steigleder writes the following octave movement:

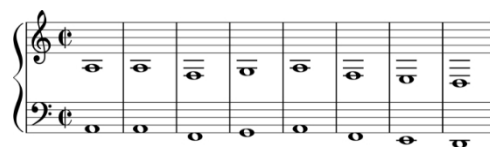


Fig. 1: Johann Ulrich Steigleder, *TB, Variatio 36*, KB I.

Interestingly, these two outside voices are now added:



Fig. 2: Johann Ulrich Steigleder, *TB, Variatio 36*, KB II.

Later these become imitative and Steigleder writes *3rd vel 4th Vocum*, three or four voices. This movement reads:



Fig. 3: Johann Ulrich Steigleder, *TB, Variatio 36*, KB III.

Now my thesis: Pachelbel's Praeludium in D minor is his only prelude with solo pedal. It is precisely the pedal that is presented through octave registration, for example, as a sound structure in this way:

² See Steigleder's preface to the *Ricercar Tabulatura* (1624), line 17: [...] *alls so bissweilen mich gute freunt* [...].



Fig. 4: Johann Pachelbel, Praeludium in D minor for organ, KB I and II.

The pedal solo is followed by two voices that imitate it:



It would therefore be the same movement pattern as we find in Steigleder, it would also be the same time signature, it would also be the same key. Pachelbel then transposes the progression to a and arrives at the following progression: we hear the pedal solo in a very dominant pitch (KB as in fig. 4).

I now come to the conclusion of this part of Pachelbel's composition:



Fig. 5: Johann Pachelbel, Praeludium in D minor for organ, KB III and IV.

Now compare Steigleder's ending of variation 36:



Fig. 6: Johann Ulrich Steigleder, TB, Variatio 36, conclusion.

And listen again to Pachelbel (KB as fig. 5, m. 30 ff.) So far the possible connection between Steigleder and Pachelbel has been shown.³

The Bach family was closely linked to Pachelbel. Pachelbel even took over the godparenthood for a baptised child, and Johann Christoph Bach in particular was a pupil of Pachelbel when Pachelbel was in Erfurt. At the time he was a pupil of Pachelbel, Johann Christoph Bach was organist in Ohrdruf. However, Ohrdruf is singularly located in the biography of Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach was an orphan when he was ten years old and was then taken into the care of his brother Johann Christoph Bach. The first biography of Bach, written by Nikolaus Forkel in 1802, tells us the following:

³ It is absolutely obvious that the sequence of organ dots on *d* and *a* and the pedal solos in Bach's Toccata in F major BWV 540 in the keys of F major and C major become the archetype, which is why we may now be able to infer two - or even three - links in a chain: Steigleder -> Pachelbel / Pachelbel -> J. S. Bach or even: Steigleder -> Pachelbel -> J. S. Bach.

"He now found himself so orphaned that he had to take refuge with an older brother, Johann Christoph, who was an organist in Ohrdruf. He received his first piano lessons from him. His inclination and ability for music must already have been very great at this time, because the few pieces his brother gave him to learn were so soon under his control that he began to look for more difficult pieces with great desire. The most famous piano composers of that time were Froberger, Fischer, Johann Casp. Kerl, Pachelbel, Buxtehude, Bruhns, Böhm etc."⁴

Now we realise that there are other names of famous organ composers from the time before Johann Sebastian Bach, but they are not mentioned. So what about Steigleder, Muffat or the Italians Vivaldi, Corelli or the French Grigny, Couperin and others? Forkel does not mention this, and so unfortunately we have no evidence that Bach may have known Steigleder's work. But we do have one incredibly strong piece of evidence: firstly, we have the evidence that Pachelbel was in Stuttgart for two years as Steigleder's successor, if you like. Pachelbel was the teacher of organists in Thuringia and among these pupils was Johann Christoph Bach. Johann Sebastian Bach was then Johann Christoph Bach's pupil again; this gives Johann Sebastian Bach a direct link to the Pachelbel school.

And now I would like to venture another steep thesis, based on the question of whether this could also be evidence of the connection between Steigleder and Bach, namely the parallel between Steigleder's *Our Father Variations* as a chalice form and Bach's *The Art of Fugue*?

I would like to compare the following similarities (see Fig. 7): Steigleder composes *The Lord's Prayer*, Bach *The Art of Fugue*. In Steigleder's work there is a supporting *cantus firmus* 'Our Father in Heavenly Kingdom', in Bach's *Art of Fugue* there is a supporting main soprano. There is an absence of the *cantus firmus* in Steigleder's piece 40 in parts one and two. In Bach's *Art of Fugue* there is the absence of the main obbligato in the last piece, bars 1 to 238, namely until before the last piece is broken off. Once again: in Steigleder's last piece [Auff Toccata Manier] the *cantus firmus* is absent in parts 1 and 2, and in Bach's *Art of Fugue* the main obbligato is also absent in the last piece until the break. In Steigleder there is a single piece - No. 39 - in three-stage metre; in Bach's *Art of Fugue* there is only one *con- trapunctus* - namely 12a and 12b - in three-stage metre.⁵ Both works have the same basic key - D Dorian / D minor - and both works were published in print, one in 1627, the other after Bach's death in 1751. Both works are a contrapuntal teaching work; in Steigleder's work the reference to the Last Supper chalice is obvious and so I also come to the conclusion that Bach's *Art of Fugue* is based on very specific themes as formulations - for example [sung] *Would this not be a culprit* in connection with Bach's setting of the Passion story as the St John Passion. So I come to the conclusion that Bach's *Art of Fugue* circles around the *Passio* Jesu and thus correlates the Last Supper chalice and the Passion of Jesus again:

Johann Ulrich Steigleder Our Father Variations	Johann Sebastian Bach <i>The art of the fugue</i>
A supporting cantus firmus (<i>Our Father in the Kingdom of Heaven</i>)	A supporting main ghetto
Absence of the C. f. in the last piece no. 40 in part 1 and 2	Absence of the main ghetto in the last piece, Bar 1 to 238
A piece in triple metre (No. 39)	A <i>contrapunctus</i> in triple metre (12a with <i>Evolutio</i> as 12b
Root key d-Dorian	Key signature D minor

⁴ Johann Nicolaus Forkel: *On Johann Sebastian Bach's life, art and works of art*, Leipzig 1802, p. 20.

⁵ Canon II is in 9/16, but is not entitled '*Contrapunctus*' but '*Canon*'

Counterpoint textbook	Counterpoint textbook
Published in print in 1627	Published in print in 1751
<i>Reference to the communion chalice</i>	<i>Reference to the Passio of Jesus</i> (see in Cp 8, Sog. II and in Cp 11, Sog. III as a reference to Bach's St John Passion: <i>If this were not a culprit</i>)

Fig. 7: J. U. Steigleder, *TB* (1627) vs. J. S. Bach, *Art of the Fugue*.

The following short features are about connections from the perspective of Johann Sebastian Bach to the time before him, which is now the 17th century. The names Frescobaldi, Fischer, Pachelbel and Buxtehude are important to me.

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