



Hermeneutik zu Johann Sebastian Bach



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Hermeneutics of Bach

Research and research results by Christoph Bossert

Feature 10

Personal figures

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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We come to Feature 10 in connection with "Hermeneutics on Bach". Further numbers can now be elucidated as 'personal numbers' in relation to statements of salvation:

– $158 = 79 \times 2 = 22\text{nd prime number} \times 2$ as numerical value for Johann Sebastian Bach

– 14 as the numerical value for B-A-C-H, i.e. $2 + 1 + 3 + 8 = 14$

– 14 as the mirror number of 41; the theological derivation of the number 41 is $40 + 1$. What is the biblical meaning of the number 40?

– Time of hardship: 40 years of the wandering of the people of Israel through the desert

– 40 days of the Flood

– Jesus spends 40 days in the desert and is then tempted by the devil.

This is why the Passiontide is liturgically measured at 40 days. Now comes the "*step beyond*" from the Passion number 40 to the number 41: the resurrection is then the "*step beyond*".

– However, 41 is also the numerical value for J. S. Bach and the mirror number for 14 as $2 + 1 + 3 + 8 = \text{B-A-C-H}$.

It is a remarkable fact, which certainly gave Bach food for thought, that the number 41 is an enormously theologically charged number based on the statement $41 = 40 + 1$ and at the same time offers the possibility of representing his own name as "J. S. Bach" as $9 + 18 + 14 = 41$. However, because 41 is the mirror number of 14, there is a chiasmus between the two numbers:

$$\begin{array}{r} 41 \\ \times \\ 14 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

In addition, the number 14 as a sequence of letters B-A-C-H is also a veritable sequence of tones that appears as a cross figure. Why is b-a-c-h a cross figure?

The minor third *a-c* is crossed by a line , which - starting from *b* - leads to *h*

leads. So the name Bach - musically interpreted - says: You, with the name Bach, are a bearer of the cross of Jesus.

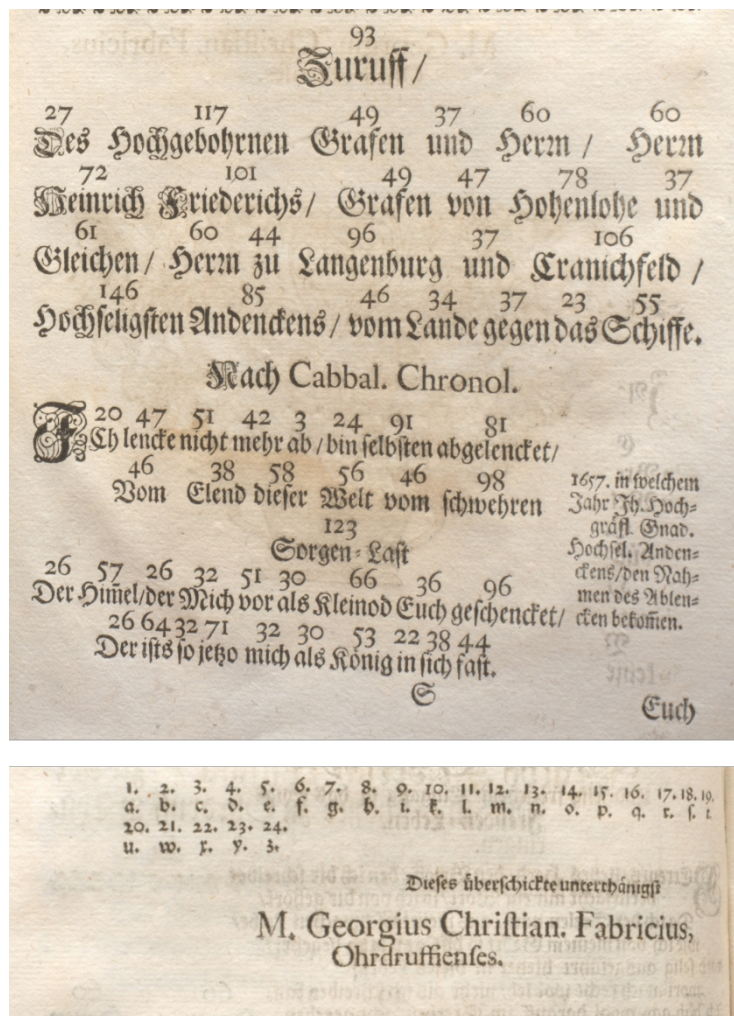
The question is sometimes asked as to which numerical alphabet Bach probably used. Sometimes the answer is also given polemically: We don't even know which numerical alphabet Bach used.¹ I think the sibling nature of 41 and 14 was important to Bach and: You can only arrive at the number 41 for J. S. Bach if you use the corresponding Latin alphabet, which is based on the equation of $I = J$ with a numerical value of 9 and $U = V$ with a numerical value of 20. Only then does $J (9) + S (18) = 27$.

$J (9) + S (18)$, i.e. $27 + \text{B-A-C-H} (14)$, i.e. $27 + 14$, becomes 41. This is only possible in this - incidentally very common - system. I therefore de nce the question of which numerical alphabet Bach probably used is thus clearly answered.²

1 Experience from various personal discussions during presentations.

2 In an Ohrdruf Epicedium (†1699), the year 1657 is interwoven with numerical letters indicating the numerical alphabet used; cf: Andrea Dubrauszky, *Johann Sebastian Bachs Ohrdruffer Schulzeit (1695-1700) in Dokumenten des Hohenlohe-Zentralarchivs Neuenstein* (publication 2024).

[Note: Epicedium with numerical alphabet of the Ohrdruffer Magister Georg Christian Fabricius.



In:^{HZAN} GA 90 No. 62* (1699), Funeral pamphlet of Count Heinrich Friedrich von Hohenlohe-Langenburg, [The pupil Johann Sebastian Bach sang at his memorial service in Ohrdruff].

I will now move on to examples of the number 158 as well as 41 and 14. The number 158 is already known from Feature 9, namely the discussion of the seven toccatas. The number 158 is complementary to the numerical finding 176×2

$$+ 119 \times 4 + \text{the 22nd prime number (Pz)}. 22\text{nd Pz} \times 8 = 79 \times 8 = 158 \times 4.$$

The three toccatas in D minor, E minor and G minor belong to the 158×4 finding as the second, middle and second-last of the seven toccatas. The fact that these three toccatas have the semantics of Bach's name with the number 158 is further food for thought.

In the music books of my youth³ I was still allowed to read that Bach's little organ book chorale *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen seyn* contains 158 coloured notes. I would be delighted if this could still be read in today's music books. One could also learn there that this chorale later became Bach's death chorale and that Bach de-coloured this *cantus firmus* there and gave it 41 notes. To honour this, I would like to play the coloured version briefly:

3 I remember one of them being called "Das Musikwerk".

NB 1



The *decolourisation* as Bach's death chorale still has 41 notes.

An important reference for 41 in relation to 14 is *ClavierÜbung I* with 41 bars compared to *ClavierÜbung II* with 14 bars. As a consequence, the 14th chorale prelude from *ClavierÜbung II I* has a special significance, because bar 41 there is the architectural centre of *ClavierÜbung III*.⁴ This particular bar 41 of this 14th chorale prelude, i.e. of piece 15 of the entire order, has a moving line in the pedal only here, while all other bars before and after have only quaver passages: In harmony, this bar is highly remarkable:

NB 2



This is bar 41 in the transition to bar 42 of the entire work *ClavierÜbung III*. The bass line shows the diatonic variant of b-a-c-b.


Now for exam H gives the numerical value 14. The Fuga in A minor from the *Well-Tempered Clavier I* has been mentioned many times (see Feature 6). The Soggetto is divided into 14 + 3 + 14 notes; the break occurs after 14 + 3 notes; after a pause, a further 14 notes follow until the end. A total of 14 + 3 + 14 notes are heard. The theme itself is repeated 14 times in the *rectus* and 14 times in the *inverse*. In reality, however, we have to say that an additional theme appearance is evoked in the mind, in which the tenth *inverse appearance*, i.e. the 22nd theme appearance, becomes an *inverse of the inverse* in the mind. This results in a further, mentally imagined theme appearance in a singular way, so that 14 + 14 appearances result in reality, but 14 + 14 + 1 appearances in the imagination.

I now come to piece 20 of *ClavierÜbung III*, the manualitre arrangement of *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*, which is in F sharp Phrygian. It is quite obvious that Bach performs each chorale line here in 14 bars. As there are seven chorale lines of 14 bars each, there are 98 bars. This is followed by a *coda* of four bars. As this piece ends in a six-part chord in F sharp major and as the construct of the explanation of the keys reaches its breaking point right there (see note 4), I would like to go into this piece 20 *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* in fis-phrygian in more detail.

4 Proof: Vision of unity - the 'eleison' call in the organ mass by Johann Sebastian Bach, Stuttgart, *Stunde der Kirchenmusik* 1985, programme editor: Elsie Pfitzer. In it: Christoph Bossert: *Polarity and Unity*, p. 14- 20; see also programme book ION 1985.

The third "great challenge" deals with this breaking point in the explanation of the key. Overall, I would like to apostrophise my theory of Bach by condensing it into five "great challenges". You are also welcome to see another feature on this.

Piece 20 *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* ends with a remarkable final figure in a six-part chord in F sharp major. As already mentioned, each chorale line is performed in 14 bars. When we have passed through 7×14 bars by bar 98, we encounter a coda of a further four bars. The following line leads to this coda:

NB 3a  If I were to add only a single note (*eis*), it would be the signature 1720 that I have mentioned as the musical form that is found in total measure 1720 of the Well-Tempered *Clavier* I in bar 62 of the Fuga in A minor:



The music that accompanies here (**NB 3a**), as well as the text of the seventh line of the chorale from stanza 1, reads as follows: *Who can, Lord, abide with thee?*



Now there are further circumstances. This ending is musically almost identical to the ending of Bach's death chorale *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen seyn* or *Vor deinen Thron tret' ich hiermit*, which I would like to show briefly.



What else is there to say about the number 14?

Certainly much more than the examples I am about to present.

Let's move on to the *art of the fugue*. It contains 14 different fugues. 13 of them are completed, but the final piece, the 14th Fuga *à tre Soggetti*, is unfinished - or as I like to say - left open .⁵

⁵ *Contrapunctus* 1-11 is joined by *Contrapuncti* 12 a/b and 13 a/b, the four *canons*, *Contrapunctus* 13 c/d and the fragment fugue. *Contrapunctus* 1-11, 12, 13 and the fragment fugue result in $13 + 1 = 14$ fugues.

In this 14th fuga, the b-a-c-b is heard in literal form as Soggetto III.



There is much more to add here. I would like to point out the first printing of the *Art of Fugue and the special position of the piece entitled Contrap.*⁶ and the special position of the piece entitled *Contrap.* 14. According to musicologists, this piece is the early version of *Contrapunctus* 10, because bars 23-120 of *Contrapunctus* 10 coincide exactly with this piece entitled *Contrap.* Musicologists have therefore argued that this strange early version apparently got lost in the first print and that the credibility of the first print should therefore be called into question. This has led to extensive debates that can be viewed over the past 100 years.

This piece *Contrap.* has 98 bars or 14×14 half-bars. It is noticeable that the development of the seven chorale lines of the chorale prelude *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* from *ClavierÜbung III* has exactly the same number of bars, and it is also noticeable that the conclusion of this chorale prelude no. 20 has very striking similarities with Bach's death chorale, as it is also set down in the first edition - at least that gives food for thought.

I personally derive one of a total of three final expressions of the *art of the fugue* from a synopsis of *Contrapunctus* 10, in the transition from bar 22 to 23, with the piece 14 "*Contrap.*" from bar 1 and the open *Contrapunctus* at the point where the B-A-C-H theme is then performed for the last time. In addition, there are further features, in particular the fifth "*great challenge*". So much for examples of the numbers 158, 41 and 14.

6 This work is commonly known as the "*Art of the Fugue*". The title "*The Art of the Fugue*" is documented by the signature #D-B Mus.ms. Bach P 200 [scribe: J. S. Bach, endpapers and title: J. C. Altnickol]. The following numerical finding is remarkable: the $(4+9+5=18)$ art $(10+20+13+18+19=80)$ of the $(4+5+17=26)$ fuga $(6+20+7+1=34)$, i.e. $18+80+26+34 = 158$.

Sheet music examples (Retrieved: 21/02/2024)

Tobi's sheet music archive

Sheet music by Johann Sebastian Bach:

The Well-Tempered Clavier I, Fuga in A minor: BWV 865

URL: <<https://tobis-notenarchiv.de/wp/bach-archiv/instrumentalwerke/werke-fuer-klavier/das-Wohltemperirte-piano-part-1/>>

Orgelbüchlein, Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen seyn BWV 681

URL: <<https://tobis-notenarchiv.de/wp/bach-archiv/instrumentalwerke/orgelwerke/orgelbuechlein/>>

Before thy throne I come BWV 668

URL: <https://www.tobis-notenarchiv.de/bach/09-Organwerke/16-Leipziger_Chorale/BWV_0668a.pdf>

ClavierÜbung III, Our Father in the Kingdom of Heaven BWV 682

URL: <https://www.tobis-notenarchiv.de/bach/09-Organwerke/17-Clavieruebung_III/BWV_0682.pdf>

Art of the Fugue BWV 1080, *Unfinished Contrapunctus*

URL: <<https://tobis-notenarchiv.de/wp/bach-archiv/instrumentalwerke/die-kunst-der-fuge/>>

Berlin State Library PK, Music Department

Johann Sebastian Bach: *The Art of the Fuga*, older versions.

Owner: Berlin State Library - Prussian Cultural Heritage, Music Department,

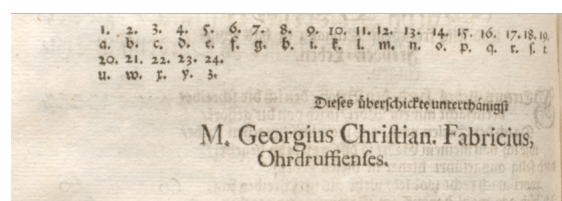
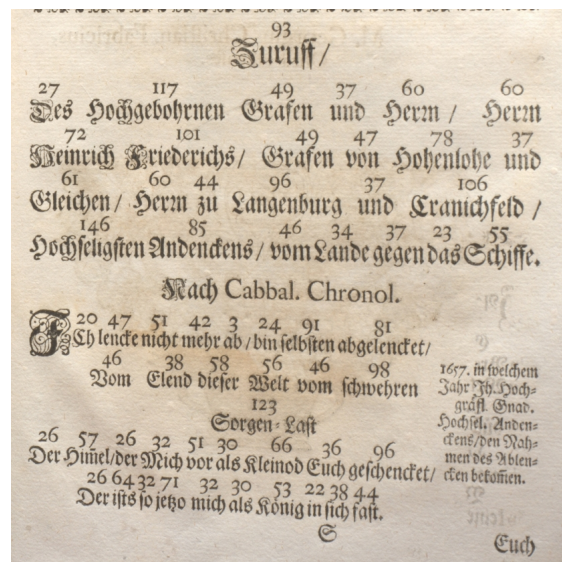
Signature: #D-B Mus.ms. Bach P 200 [scribe: J. S. Bach, endpapers and title: J. C. Altnickol]. URL:

<<https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN86332598X>> and

<https://www.bach-digital.de/rsc/viewer/BachDigitalSource_derivate_00003090/db_bachp0200_page001.jpg>

Hohenlohe Central Archive Neuenstein

HZAN GA 90 No. 62* (1699), printed mourning pamphlet of Count Heinrich Friedrich von Hohenlohe-Langenburg, S. 69-70.



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