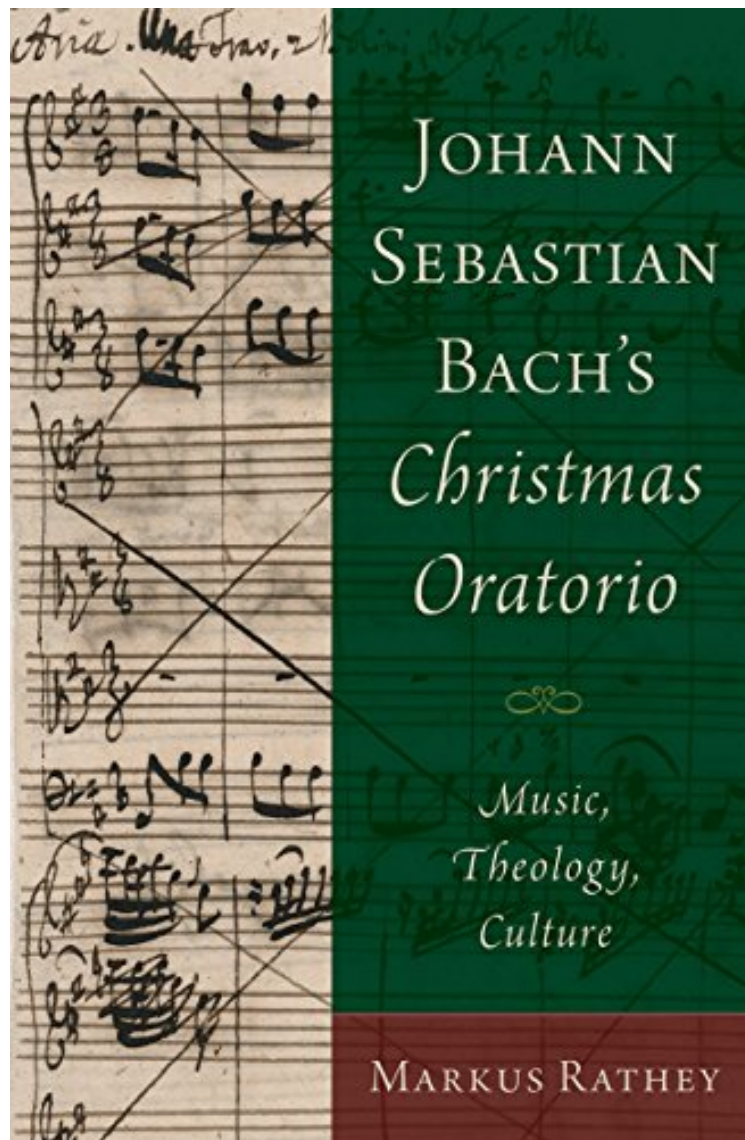


# Johann Sebastian Bach's Christmas Oratorio: Music, Theology, Culture

Markus Rathey

DOC | \*audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#597772 in eBooks 2016-08-04 2016-08-04 File Name: B01J86AUXS | File size: 46.Mb

**Markus Rathey : Johann Sebastian Bach's Christmas Oratorio: Music, Theology, Culture** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Johann Sebastian Bach's Christmas Oratorio: Music, Theology, Culture:

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy AnonAOK0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Bach Christmas Oratorio: Major StudyBy William L. HoffmanMarcus Ratheyr's new study of Bach's Christmas Oratorio: Music, Theology and Culture (Oxford University Press, 2016), is an exhaustive,

source-based examination of what has emerged as a major masterpiece, shedding its earliest historical reception in the 19th century as a light, inconsequential work of self-plagiarism and idolatrous contrivance. The chapter titles hint at the breadth and depth of this odyssey: "Redefining Christmas," "Layers of Time: The Theology of the Christmas Oratorio," "Bach's Oratorio Concept," "Planning the Oratorio," and the six parts: Part 1, Nativity, "Dichotomies"; Part 2, Annunciation to Shepherds, "Mundane and Celestial Harmonies"; Part 3, Shepherds' Adoration, "Inward Mobility"; Circumcision Naming, "What's in a Name?"; Part 5, Magi Journey, "Paths of Enlightenment"; (Part 6), and Part 6, Magi Adoration, "The Bridegroom and the Enemy." Rathey's latest book follows on the heels of his *Bach's Major Vocal Works: Music, Drama, Liturgy* (Yale University Press, 2016), with its Chapter 3, "From Love Song to Lullaby: The Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248." His new monograph is an exemplar for an individual study of Bach's major vocal works and hopefully will lead to other studies of the Passions, groups of cantatas for seasons and special uses, and the other oratorios, as well as the instrumental music (Peter Williams emphasizes the keyboard music in his new *Bach: A Musical Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2016)). The cultural and religious climate of Bach's time and his oratorio are the basic subject of Rathey's study, examining various German sources, particularly before Bach's time. Of central interest, and an extension of his previous book, is the theme of the heart, found in graphic and devotional literature, with an emphasis on love songs and duets. His theological studies focus on the unio mystica of the human heart in the "The Duty in Life" concept of the meaning of the Christmas feast with its related "Doctrine of Faith" and "Consolation of Faith" as "Christ comes as a child to make mankind children of God," relates Rathey (Ibid.: 9). Rathey also conducts a philological study of the textual and musical influences found often in this extensive parody work. Musically, in "Redefining Christmas," Rathey examines the traditions that were most directly influential on Bach (see above, "Leipzig Cantors Knupper, Scheller"). In the chapter, "Layers of Time: The Theology of the Christmas Oratorio," examined is the "The Threefold Meaning of Christmas," that is the three modes of Christ's coming, into the flesh, into our hearts, and at the final judgement. These are found in the prayer books and libretti of Bach contemporary poets (and pastors) Neumeister (see above, "Anonymous Christmas Cantata 142," and Benjamin Schmolck (Stouml;zel's librettist; see above, "Stouml;zel, Mid-1730s Music"). The oratorio libretto, possibly by Picander, "has three gravitational centers: the historical event of the birth of Jesus, the existential meaning on this coming expressed in the image of Christ's indwelling in the believer's heart, and the return of Christ at the end of Time" [the eschatology], says Rathey (Ibid.: 61). At the same time, in order to engage the congregation, Bach set plain chorales with elaborate instrumental support, a chorale chorus, and three dialogues with troped poetic materials as love duets, emphasizing Christmas hymns of Martin Luther, Johann Rist, and Paul Gerhardt, moving from traditional to pietist-flavored stanzas. In the chapter "Bach's Oratorio Concept," Rathey studies contemporary models and the influence of poetic Passion texts of Stouml;zel (see above) and Johann Adolph Hasse at the Dresden court, both performed on Good Friday 1734. No examples of other composers so-called "Christmas Oratorios" are cited, except for Carl Heinrich Graun's poetic work with chorales (Ibid.: 80f), "Mache dich auf, werde Licht," and no date but similar in structure and gallant style to his poetic Passion setting, "Der Tod Jesu" (The Death of Jesus). Almost no information is found on the works of Johann Mattheson, "Die Heilsame Geburt" (1715) and "Das grouml;szlige Kind" (1720), Telemann's "O Jesu parvule," TVWV 1:797; and Georg Gebel's "Jauchzet, ihr Himmel! Erfreue dich Erde!" of 1748. 8 These works are designed in cantata style while Bach's contemporaries also composed numerous cantatas for Christmas Season services.-----This discussion of Bach's Christmas Oratorio will continue a year from now [December 2017] on the BCML during consideration of Bach's Christological cycle, taking up the remainder of Rathey book, dealing with the chapters "Planning the Oratorio," and the six chapters on each part, as well as the extensive dance element in the work, and other resources.

In the last decades of the 17th century, the feast of Christmas in Lutheran Germany underwent a major transformation when theologians and local governments waged an early modern "war on Christmas," discouraging riotous pageants and carnivalesque rituals in favor of more personal and internalized expressions of piety. Christmas rituals, such as the "Heilig Christ" plays and the rocking of the child (Kindelwiegen) were abolished, and Christian devotion focused increasingly on the metaphor of a birth of Christ in the human heart. John Sebastian Bach's Christmas Oratorio, composed in 1734, both reflects this new piety and conveys the composer's experience living through this tumult during his own childhood and early career. Markus Rathey's book is the first thorough study of this popular masterpiece in English. While giving a comprehensive overview of the Christmas Oratorio as a whole, the book focuses on two themes in particular: the cultural and theological understanding of Christmas in Bach's time and the compositional process that led Bach from the earliest concepts to the completed piece. The cultural and religious context of the oratorio provides the backdrop for Rathey's detailed analysis of the composition, in which he explores Bach's compositional practices, for example, his reuse and parodies of movements that had originally been composed

for secular cantatas. The book analyzes Bach's original score and sheds new light on the way Bach wrote the piece, how he shaped musical themes, and how he revised his initial ideas into the final composition.

"a masterful holistic study that includes both in-depth musical analyses and in-depth investigations of the environment in which the oratorio was created... This important study is a must for students of music and will also be helpful for the study of German theological and cultural history." D. Arnold in *Choice* "A noted Bach scholar, Markus Rathey (Yale) presents a masterful holistic study that includes both in-depth musical analyses and in-depth investigations of the environment in which the oratorio was created. Rathey carefully explains Bach's considerable use of the parody technique, in which he reworked music he had written for earlier cantatas. Offering a detailed study of many contemporaneous writings about the role of Christmas in the Lutheran theology and culture of Bach's world, the book provides crucial understanding of Bach's musical and spiritual interpretations of the text. This important study is a must for students of music and will also be helpful for the study of German theological and cultural history." -- *Choice* From the Back Cover "A seldom seen--and marvelously successful--integration of cultural, theological, musical, and paleographical research. No Bach lover should be without this magisterial yet broadly accessible book." --Michael Marissen, author of *Bach God* "This is a major achievement by a leading Bach scholar--a work of impressive erudition. Rathey's study moves seamlessly from minute philological details to broad contextual issues. Its profound and skilled engagement with historical theology is especially important. But the book is so full of ideas that it will undoubtedly provide much food for thought for many years to come." --Stephen A. Crist, Emory University About the Author Markus Rathey is Professor of Music History at Yale University. His research focuses on music in the second half of the 17th century, Johann Sebastian Bach, and the Bach family. His books include a study on C.P.E. Bach's political compositions and an introduction to J.S. Bach's major vocal works. He is president of the American Bach Society and associate editor of the *Yale Journal of Music and Religion*.