

David Schulenberg
The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
Supplement 11.1. Church Pieces and Cantatas: Terminology

After 1750 the expression *cantata* was already sometimes used more or less as we employ it today. Indeed, Neumeister, pastor at Hamburg from 1715 until 1756, had applied the term *Cantate* to the librettos for regular church services that he published during the first decade of the eighteenth century. Bach's friend Ebeling, in a posthumous evaluation of Telemann's music, likewise wrote of "German sacred cantatas."¹ Both writers, however, used the term to refer to the poetry for these sacred compositions, not the actual musical settings. Gottsched, professor of poetry at Leipzig during Emanuel's youth, instead used the term *oratorio* for what we would call a church cantata, and his pupil Scheibe followed him in this.² Telemann likewise called the church pieces of his 1730–31 cycle oratorios, although this was because in these rather special works the vocal soloists represent allegorical figures such as "Contentment," "Gratitude," and so forth.³ The poet Ramler, on the other hand, applied the term *cantata* to his poem on the resurrection (*Die Auferstehung*), whose settings, including those of Bach and Agricola, we call oratorios.

Members of the Bach family seem to have been reluctant to extend the term *cantata* beyond the secular compositions for solo singer and small ensemble to which it had been applied since the seventeenth century. For them as for us, oratorios were larger works involving multiple singers. Only a few compositions by Emanuel are listed in NV as cantatas or oratorios, however. Each is a rather special non-liturgical work of one sort or another that Emanuel seems to have written for concert use or in response to an individual commission. He retained the term *cantata* for his setting of Ramler's *Auferstehung* and for the Passion Cantata, probably because these, unlike the *Israelites*, lack named characters. NV designates *Israelites*, which does include roles and dialog, as an oratorio, along with the two allegorical dramas for the militia. The far greater number of works for church services are mostly described simply as "music" or "pieces" for given occasions, performed by Bach in fulfillment of his responsibilities as director of music in the city's principal churches.

¹ "wir haben nicht wenig berühmte Meister darin gehabt, die deutsche geistliche Cantaten gesetzt haben," extract from his *Versuch einer auserlesenen musikalischen Bibliothek* (July 1770), no. 87 in *Georg Philipp Telemann: Singen ist das Fundament zur Musik*, 294.

² Poetzsch, "Ordentliche Kirchenmusiken, genannt Oratorium," 319, referring to Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Handlexicon oder Kurzgefaßtes Wörterbuch der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste* (Leipzig, 1760), cols. 1210f., and Johann Adolph Scheibe, *Der critische Musikus* (Leipzig, 1745), pp. 187, 189.

³ That is, Vergnüsamkeit and Erkenntlichkeit, two of the four characters in *Vergnügen und Murren*, the "oratorio" for Septuagesimae Sunday (TWV 1:430); see the first page of Zell's text as published at Hamburg in 1735, reproduced in Poetzsch, "Ordentliche Kirchenmusik," 323.