

Chapter 6

Ahle's Selection and Use of Texts

Having identified the importance that Ahle seems to place on the texts, we must examine the texts themselves. Ahle uses a variety of sources in Lustgarten II collection, ranging from the most frequently set chorale texts, to rarely set portions of the liturgy.

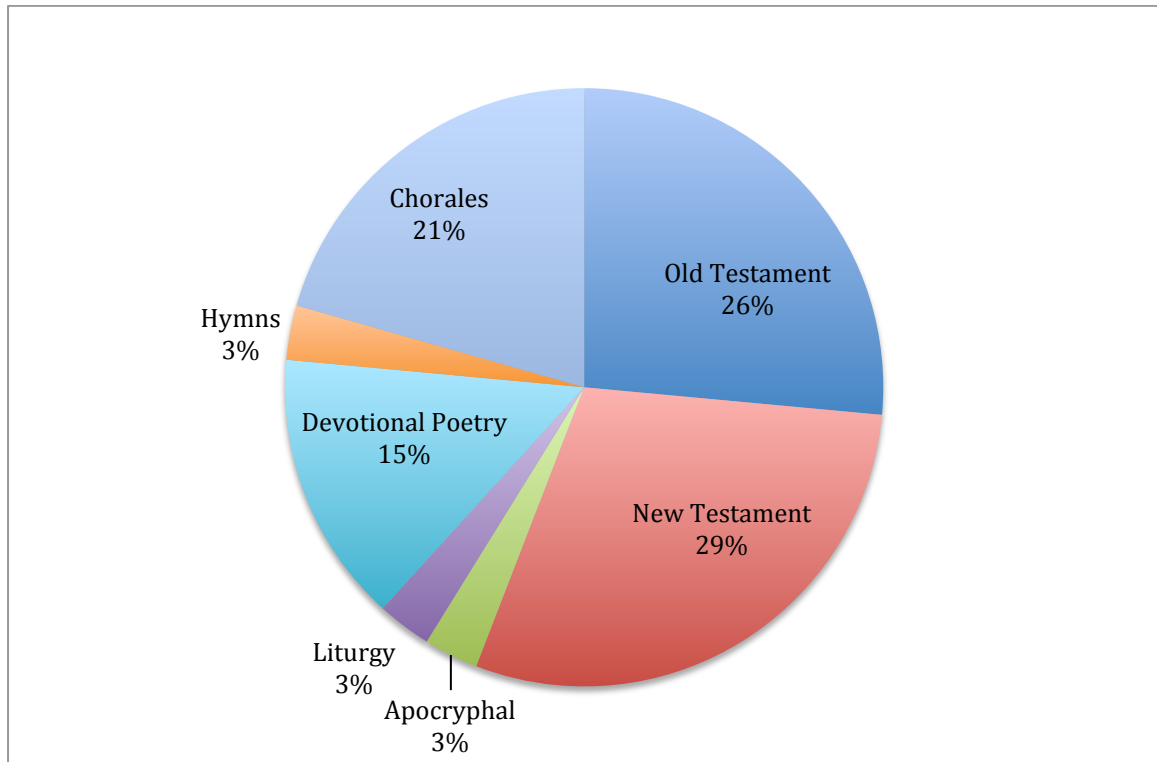


Figure 17 – A visual representation of Ahle's Text Sources in the 1658 Lustgarten Collection.

Just over half of the pieces contain texts drawn from the Bible. These are largely German, with the exception of two of the four Magnificat settings, which are in Latin. The chorale settings are entirely in German, while the singular Hymn setting is in Latin. The settings of devotional poetry are an even mix of German and Latin, and the single setting of part of the Eucharistic Liturgy is in German. That gives us twenty-three pieces in German, and seven in Latin.

While this is simply raw data, when we look in detail at the 30 texts, we find Ahle often setting texts of a highly personal nature. The first three biblical texts in the collection, for instance, are all sacred concertos for one voice and instruments, and all have a first person focus:

- 1. **Mein** Freund ich thue dir nicht unrecht (Matthew 20)
Friend, I am doing you no wrong
- 4. Herr Gott **mein** Heiland (Psalm 88)
*Lord, God of **my** salvation*
- 6. **Ich** freue **mich** im Herren (Isaiah 61:10)
I will greatly rejoice in the Lord

These three pieces of personal devotion begin a theme, which runs throughout the texts of the collection – a focus on the personal relationship with God and Christ. While a variety of Bible and chorale texts can be selected and shaped to fit this idea, it is when looking at the less predictable texts in Ahle’s collection, that we find the strongest displays of personalized devotion. In particular, five pieces in the 1658 collection stand out. While the five pieces do not share a common text source, they do all come from the category of devotional poetry. They are also the five that Rathey marks as “author unknown,”⁶⁷ in his catalog of pieces and their text sources.

- 3. Cupio dissolvi
- 5. Ach meiner wo bin ich
- 7. O Herr Jesu mein Heiland
- 10. O Domine Jesu Christe
- 27. Ich habs gewagt und zugesagt

The pieces contain a variety of phrases which are more personal and mystical than I expected to find in Lutheran German music of the seventeenth century – these texts seemed much more at home in the Catholic canon. For example:

⁶⁷ Rathey, 574-576 “Autor unbekannt.”

Where my love will never fall into tepidity, my joy will never be decreased, groans will not be heard, pain will not be felt, sadness will not be seen, joy will always be there. There is the highest and most proper security, security in the calm, calm in the delight, the delights of happiness. (Cupio Dissolvi, mm. 32-51)

Lord Jesus Christ, thou most sweetest Saviour, I come to thee, I confess all my misconduct, and I do not conceal my sin. (O Herr Jesu mein Heiland, mm. 99 – 115)

O Lord Jesus Christ, we worship you, wounded on the cross...I pray and ask that your wounds are the healing of my soul. (O Domine Jesu Christe)

Musicologist Mary Frandsen, however, discusses the trend of German protestants using these texts – they start showing up in collections as early as the 1620s.⁶⁸ Frandsen writes: “the prominence of devotional texts in the Lutheran Repertoire of the latter half of the seventeenth century...reflects the integration of two separate worlds, those of private, individual devotion and of public, corporate worship.”⁶⁹ This is what we see in Ahle’s 1658 *Lustgarten* collection – a set of thirty pieces for both private devotional use, and liturgical worship. Frandsen describes this phase as “new piety” – writers drawing inspiration from Medieval Latin devotional poetry (meaning these writings are descended from Catholic theology), occasionally adapting it to suit Lutheran Theology, and sometimes simply translating it to German.⁷⁰ Composers then took these texts, sometimes combining or truncating them, and wrote music for educated Lutherans of the later seventeenth century that contained a “mystically influenced, personalized devotion to Christ.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Mary Frandsen, *Crossing Confessional Boundaries: The Patronage of Italian Sacred Music in Seventeenth Century Dresden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 117.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 118.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 120.

⁷¹ Ibid, 171.

In a way, the five of Ahle's pieces mentioned above exhibit various ideas in Frandsen's analysis. "O Domine Jesu Christe" is a setting of one of the so-called Seven Prayers of St. Gregory. The popular story involves them being gradually developed between St. Gregory, who died in 604, and Pope Paul II, who died in 1471. Bonnie Blackburn cites more recent scholarship, suggesting that the prayers were around as early as the ninth century⁷² - but regardless, they would be ancient prayers by 1658, and clearly historically linked to the Catholic Church. But the personal nature of the prayer would have made it appealing to Lutherans searching for extreme acts of devotion.

Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) published a popular book in 1606, *Meditationes Sacrae*, which, according to Frandsen, draws on the medieval works of Augustine of Hippo (d. 430), Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109), and Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153).⁷³ Ahle uses sections of this text in "Cupio dissolvi," an extremely personal devotional song, for only voice and continuo, which begins "I want to be dissolved and be with you, my Jesus, I want to see the place in which the Lord has prepared our eternal home."⁷⁴ Philip Kegel (d. 1611) published his devotional texts in German in 1593 (*Zwölf geistliche Andachten*), and this popular book was continually reprinted, as late as 1693.⁷⁵ Ahle adapted Kegel's texts twice – most successfully in a dialogue between soprano and bass, where the soprano sings Kegel's text searching for the Lord, and the bass responds with verses from Jeremiah and Isaiah, personifying Jesus.

⁷² Bonnie Blackburn, "For Whom do the Singers Sing?" in *Early Music* Volume 25, No. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 593-609.

⁷³ Frandsen, 133.

⁷⁴ Cupio dissolvi, mm. 1-6 – "Cupio dissolvi, et esse tecum Jesu mi, desidero videre locum illum Domine, in quo aeternam mihi praeparasti mansionem."

⁷⁵ Libraries hold copies from 23 different printing years between 1593 and 1693.

Figure 18 - "Ach meiner wo bin ich" (No. 5, Lustgarten II), mm. 31 – 48.

Cantus:

Ach meiner, O Jesu!

Will du den immerdar über mich zürnen?

Laß dich doch versöhnen. Sei mir doch
gnädig und erbare dich meiner, O Jesu!

O mine, O Jesus!

Will you be forever angry with me?

*Let me repent. Be merciful with me,
and have mercy on me, O Jesus.*

(Kegel, 1593)

Bassus:

Ich bin barmherzig.

Ich will nicht ewiglich zürnen.

Allein erkenne deine Missethat.

I am merciful.

I will not forever be angry.

Only acknowledge your guilt.

(Jeremiah 3:12-13)

The last use of devotional poetry is slightly more unusual. The text "Ich hab's gewagt" first appears in 1601, as the third piece in Hassler's *Lustgarten neuer deutscher Gesäng*, published in Nürnberg.⁷⁶ While the authorship of the

⁷⁶ Hans Leo Hassler, *Lustgarten Neuer Teutscher Gesäng* (Nürnberg: Paul Kauffmann, 1601), no. 3.

texts in the Lustgarten is unknown, Kerala Snyder suggests that we can presume Hassler wrote them himself, as he did with his previous (1596) collection, *Neue teutsche Gesang*.⁷⁷

<p>Ich hab's gewagt und zugesagt / ehlich mit ihr zu leben / Der lieb Gott woll durch seine Gnad / uns Glück und Segen geben.</p>	<p><i>I have dared and promised, to live in marriage with her; May dear God, by his grace, give us happiness and blessings.</i></p>
<p>Auf dass wir beid in Lieb und Leid treulich beisammen halten / was im Ehestand uns kommt zu Hand den lieb'n Gott lassen walten.</p>	<p><i>As we in both love and sorrow, remain faithfully together, what in marriage comes to happen to us, let dear God rule.</i>⁷⁸</p>

While the text is not as mystically devotional as some of the other texts we've seen, it's still quite personal – seemingly composed more for a marriage ceremony than a Eucharistic or Vespers service. It still maintains ties to the personal – the text is not about blessing a marriage, it's about blessing **my** marriage.

When placed beside these five, and after the opening first person texts, more and more of the collection is placed in new context. The most atypical example of this is “Unser Herr Jesus Christus” (No. 15), which warrants discussion here. A setting of the Words of Institution, the piece is an anomaly⁷⁹ – a text which, while necessary for the Eucharist, would never be sung, and especially not with figural music. Perhaps this is the most extreme example of Ahle writing music for personal use, the piece would never be used liturgically, but uses a text central enough to the Lutheran (and Christian) doctrine to be

⁷⁷ Kerala J. Snyder, “Text and Tone in Hassler’s German Songs,” in *Musical Humanism and Its Legacy* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992), 253-278.

⁷⁸ I am indebted to Dr. David Gramit for his help here, and elsewhere, with the translations of seventeenth century German.

⁷⁹ RISM only lists three other settings of this text before the 1660’s - Schütz, Petri, and Scandello.

included in Luther's *Kleine Katechismus*. What this exhibits, then, is that the purpose of Ahle's collection was twofold – certainly it was a collection of music for use in liturgical worship, but also contained pieces which one would sing for their own expression of personal piety.

In order to heighten the personal aspects of his pieces, Ahle frequently combines texts in dialog form (as in “Ach meiner,” above). Ahle's four part dialogue, “Was werden wir essen” (No. 8) is a particularly effective example. The tenor begins with questions from Matthew 6:31⁸⁰:

What will we drink, what will we eat, what will we wear?

The alto and bass join with verses from Psalm 37, in a seeming attempt to sooth a rather frantic, questioning tenor:

*Trust in the Lord, and do good (vs. 3)
I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous
forsaken, or the children begging bread (vs. 25)*

Finally, Ahle uses the chorale text (and melody) of “Warum betrübst du dich mein Herz” in the cantus part, to assist the straying spirits in finding their faith. The four parts close with a largely homophonic rendering of the chorale.

Even in larger scale pieces, Ahle selects passages from the Song of Solomon and the Book of Lamentations filled with strong imagery, and sets them in ways that pay more attention to the overall affect of the verses, than the specific words of the individual texts. Again, these display an interest in the personal – while not set in a monodic fashion, the texts speak of individual devotion:

⁸⁰ While this passage in Matthew 6 is Jesus teaching his disciples *not* to ask these questions, Ahle has set them in the tenor as a demonstration of a misguided soul.

“Surge propera amica mea” (No. 26)

*Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.
O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the covert of the cliff,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.*

(Song of Solomon 2: 10b-12a, 13b-14)

“Tota pulchra es” (No. 18)

*You are altogether beautiful, my love;
there is no flaw in you.
You have ravished my heart, my sister,
my bride,
you have ravished my heart with a
glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.
How beautiful you are, my love,
how very beautiful!
Your eyes are doves, your hair is like a
flock of goats, your teeth are like a flock
of shorn ewes,
Your lips are like a crimson thread,
and your mouth is lovely.
Your cheeks are like halves of a
pomegranate, your neck is like the
tower of David.*

(Song of Solomon 4: 1-4, 7, 9, alt.)⁸¹

In “Surge propera,” for example, he sets “sonet vox tua in auribus meis/let me hear your voice” three times, each with growing intensity, creating a rhetorical approach to the text, as opposed to a more literal text painting approach. The next phrase, repeated four times, continually moves the harmony further and further from where it began on the text “vox enim tua dulcis/for your voice is sweet.” Another rhetorical approach is found in “Tota pulchra es” – similar to the techniques Isabella van Elferen identifies in the Schütz motet “O quam tu pulchra es” (SWV 265).⁸² Though less frequently than Schütz, Ahle repeats the opening phrase as a refrain four times throughout the piece, which van Elferen

⁸¹ Translations drawn from NRSV.

⁸² Isabella van Elferen, *Mystical Love in the German Baroque* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 234-6.

suggests, “intensifies the rhetorical effect of the biblical enumeration of the physical attributes of the beloved.”⁸³

The other question that arises when examining these biblical texts is that of language. While it may be unsurprising that Ahle sets so many texts from Luther’s Bible, the appearance of seven Latin texts (including the two above) in a collection from the heart of Thuringia might seem odd. However, we must look at the context for this music before deciding what language might be “appropriate.” Musicologist Robin Leaver traces the use of music in Lutheran services in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by studying church orders and service descriptions published as early as 1523 to as late as 1682.⁸⁴ While Luther did have the professed goal of a mass entirely in German, he also believed it important that the young boys were well versed in the Latin Bible – a vespers service in the school would have included psalms, hymns, and a Latin Magnificat.⁸⁵ Leaver works through time, pointing out Lucas Lossius’ 1553 *Psalmodia*, published in Nuremburg, a collection of Lutheran Latin chants, which had multiple reprints.⁸⁶

In particular, a copy of this hymnal survives in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin (originally in use in Halle, at the end of the sixteenth century), complete with a handwritten description of current practices. Leaver draws attention to multiple places in this service order which involve the choir replacing previous elements with motets, or chorale-based motets and speculates Schütz’s *Psalmen*

⁸³ Ibid, 235.

⁸⁴ Robin Leaver, “Lutheran Vespers as a Context for Music,” in *Church, Stage, and Studio: Music and Its Contexts in Seventeenth-Century Germany*, ed. Paul Walker (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990), 143-161.

⁸⁵ Leaver, 147. Leaver has drawn this idea from Luther’s 1526 *Deutsche Messe*.

⁸⁶ As I will discuss below, this hymnal is likely the source for both text and melody of Ahle’s “O Lux Beata Trinitas.”

Davids (1619) and Hammerschmidt's *Musicalische Andachten* (1639-53) as being composed for this purpose, as well as chorale settings by Hassler, Franck, Praetorius, and Schein.⁸⁷ I would propose that Ahle's Lustgarten series falls into the same category – containing both figural motets as well as chorale settings using familiar melodies, in a mix of Latin and German. Certainly the four Magnificat settings, part of the liturgy that Leaver indicates was sung in Latin as late as 1682⁸⁸, would be liturgically appropriate.

And while the canticle settings may be easy to place in the liturgy, where do they fit in the collection? Ahle has clearly placed an emphasis on the Magnificat – four settings appear in the collection of only thirty pieces – and no other texts are duplicated within. These settings are the pinnacles of personal devotion, though – the Song of Mary, exclaiming her devotion to Elizabeth. In this way, they are a perfect centerpieces to the collection – a liturgical moment of personal spirituality.

⁸⁷ Leaver, 154.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 156.