

The Liturgical Year

(*Der Jahrkreis*)

by Hugo Distler

Opus 5

"A collection of 52 two- and three- part sacred compositions
for the use of church, school, and amateur choruses"

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C. J. Pearson, Editor

Der Jahrkreis was dedicated to Axel Werner Kühl,
Pastor at St. Jakobi church, Lübeck,
"with special lasting memories of joint efforts."

Vorwort

Der "Jahrkreis", eine Sammlung von 52 zwei- und dreistimmigen geistlichen Chormusiken, ist aus kirchenamtlicher Praxis heraus entstanden und hofft, allgemeinem Bedürfnis nach leichter, gottesdienstlicher de-tempore-Musik zu entsprechen. Die zahllosen kleinen gemischten "freiwilligen" Kirchenchöre sowie die in vielen Gegenden vor allem Norddeutschlands noch üblichen Kinderchöre sind es, denen diese Sammlung dienen will.

Bei den gemischtstimmigen Sätzen bewegt sich die Männerstimme—die der deutlichen Unterscheidbarkeit wegen durchweg im Baßschlüssel notiert ist—stets in so bescheidenen Stimmgrenzen, daß—etwa bei Stimmenmangel—der Chorleiter sehr wohl allein zu den zwei Kinderstimmen die dritte Stimme zu singen in der Lage ist. (Die Mehrzahl dieser Sätze habe ich selbst in dieser, gewiß auch in beschränkten Verhältnissen zu ermöglichenden Besetzung ausgeführt.) Es ist jedoch nicht gesagt, daß nicht viele der Motetten auch stärkere Besetzung gestatten, manche infolge ihrer technisch und musikalisch anspruchsvollen Fassung sogar erforderlich erscheinen lassen wie etwa fast alle freien Motetten. Durch entsprechende Transposition, die bei jedem Satz gestattet und in vielen Fällen bei der Einordnung der Motette in den Rahmen des Gottesdienstes erforderlich sein mag, werden die meisten der im Original als für gleiche Stimmen notierten Sätze gemischtstimmig, und umgekehrt. Die Unterlegung der Texte und die Einordnung der Choräle ins Kirchenjahr ist in vielen Fällen nicht anders denn als persönlicher Vorschlag des Herausgebers zu betrachten; es ist selbstverständlich möglich, den Weisen auch andere Texte als die angegebenen unterzulegen, sofern sie dem Charakter des betreffenden Satzes nicht widersprechen. Es ist nicht notwendig, jeweils die ganze Motette in all ihren Verstexten und verschiedenen Sätzen durchzuführen; die in der Regel beträchtliche Anzahl der angeführten Verse dient in den meisten Fällen nur zur Auswahl. Man beschränke sich anfangs etwa auf die Ausführung nur der leichtesten Sätze, wobei zu bemerken ist, daß die zweistimmigen Sätze nicht auch immer die am einfachsten auszuführenden sind. Aus praktischen Gründen unterlegte ich den an zweiter Stelle stehenden zweistimmigen Bearbeitungen stets auch den Text des zweiten Verses des betreffenden Chorales: der Wechsel von dreistimmiger Fassung (erster Vers), zweistimmigem Satz (zweiter Vers) und rondoartiger Wiederholung der ersten dreistimmigen Fassung (als letzter, dritter Vers) ergibt eine einheitliche, künstlerisch voll befriedigende Formung größeren Ausmaßes. (Wird nur die zweistimmige Bearbeitung des Chorals gesungen, ist selbstverständlich mit

dem Text des ersten Verses zu beginnen.) Um möglichste Freizügigkeit bei der Wiedergabe zu gewährleisten, wurde—mit Ausnahme der freien Motetten—fast auf jegliche Tempo und Dynamik betreffende Angabe verzichtet; für das Zeitmaß der Choral motetten ist das übliche Choraltempo Maßstab—jedenfalls hüte man sich in allen Fällen vor zu langsamer Temponahme. Bei Taktwechsel bleibt in der Regel ♩ = ♩, sofern nicht anders angegeben. Im Te-deum kann die einstimmige Vershälfte entweder solo oder vom Chor, auch (transponiert, als Männerstimme) von Geistlichen responsorisch gesungen werden; das gleiche gilt von dem Passionsgesang "Bei stiller Nacht" und ähnlichen Sätzen, wo entweder Chor und Chor, oder Chor und Solostimme alternieren. Auch solistische Wiedergabe ganzer Motetten ist in den meisten Fällen möglich. Die Unterstützung der Vokalstimme durch geeignete Instrumente (chorisch oder solistisch), bzw. deren selbständige Ausführung von ganzen Sätzen oder einzelnen Stimmen ist zu empfehlen, sofern der betreffende Satz nicht zu unmittelbar aus dem jeweiligen Wortrhythmus gestaltet erscheint. Manche der gleichstimmigen und, durch entsprechende Transposition, auch gemischtstimmigen Bearbeitungen, sind auch zur Ausführung durch Männerchor geeignet. Bei selbständiger Textunterlegung dürfen keine rhythmischen Veränderungen vorgenommen werden. Das Singen zweier, sich auf gleicher Tonhöhe befindenden Noten zu ein und derselben Silbe erfordert stets, zwecks rhythmischer Verdeutlichung der zweiten Note, eine (möglichst kurze) Atemzäsur. Durch sinnvolle Kombinierung mehrerer Motetten untereinander lassen sich vollständige Zyklen von Choral messen bilden.

Lübeck, im April 1933, Hugo Distler

Foreword to *Der Jahrkreis* by Hugo Distler

Der Jahrkreis ["The Cycle of the Year"], a collection of 52 two-and three-part sacred pieces for chorus, came into being through my work as a church musician as an effort to meet the general need for simple, contemporary music for worship. It is intended to serve the countless small, mixed, volunteer church choirs as well as the children's choirs still common in many regions, particularly in northern Germany.

In the settings for mixed chorus, the men's part, notated throughout in the bass clef for clarity, is always given a modest range. This offers the conductor the opportunity to sing it himself along with the two children's parts if sufficient voices are lacking. (The majority of these settings have been worked out in this way so as to facilitate performance with limited forces.)

This does not mean that only a few of the motets also permit the use of larger forces. On the contrary, some of them, like nearly all freely composed motets, have technical and musical challenges that appear to require a fuller ensemble. Through appropriate transposition, which is permitted with each setting and in many cases may be necessary to allow the motet to fit into the worship framework, most of the settings notated for equal voices can be made suitable for mixed voices and *vice versa*.

The underlayment of texts and the working of the chorales into the liturgical year is in many cases just the personal recommendation of the editor; it is possible, of course, to set the tunes to texts other than those given, insofar as they do not contradict the character of the setting in question. It is not necessary to perform the entire motet each time, with all its verses and various settings; in most cases, the considerable number of verses provided here is intended as a basis for selection.

One could always begin by performing the simplest settings. It should be noted, however, that the two-part settings are not always the easiest. For practical reasons I have always composed the two-part settings, which are placed in the second position, to the text of the second verse of the chorale in question: The change from the three-part version (first verse), to a two-part setting (second verse), and the rondo-like return to the original, three-part version (as a final, third, verse), yields a unified, artistically satisfying form of larger scale. (When only the two-part settings of the chorales are to be sung, one must obviously begin with the text of the first verse.)

In order to guarantee the most freedom possible in performance, I have almost entirely avoided the use of any tempo or dynamic markings, except in the case of the free motets. The tempo of the chorale motets should be the customary tempo of the chorale. Take care, however, to avoid tempos that are too slow. When the time signature changes hold to the rule ♩ = ♩ unless otherwise indicated.

In the “Te Deum” the half of the verse written for a single voice part may be sung by a soloist, by the choir, or as a clerical responsory (transposed for male voice). The same holds for the Passion hymn "In Dark of Night" and similar settings, where either choir and choir or choir and solo voice alternate. Solo performance of whole motets is also possible in most cases.

The author suggests that appropriate instruments be considered to double the voices (either selected parts or *in toto*). Instruments might be used as well to replace individual voices or to play the entire setting as an instrumental piece. Such use of instruments is advisable, of course, only if the setting in question seems not too directly shaped by the rhythm of the words. Some of the equal-voice and, through appropriate transposition, mixed-voice settings are also suitable for performance by male choirs.

Where textual underlay is self explanatory, rhythms should not be altered. The singing of two notes of the same pitch on the same syllable is sometimes necessary and always requires a very slight break after the first to clarify the second.

One can create complete cycles of chorale-based masses through the thoughtful combination of several appropriate motets.

Lübeck, April, 1933, Hugo Distler

Translated by Dr. Gordon Paine, July 15, 2017

Editor's Note

As Distler states and scholarship verifies, these settings were produced for practical liturgical use in the St. Jakobi church in Lübeck early in Distler's career in church music. One suspects that the available singers were both well-trained and musically competent. Many of the settings are of moderate difficulty, although their rewards are great in performance. One also suspects, however, that the music on the page presented to the St. Jakobi singers did not conform, in most cases, to that published by Bärenreiter. It would take musicians of exceptional skill or super-thorough drill to be able to deal successfully with multiple verses with embedded short repetitions at various points and in various parts when frequently the verses are simply displayed as text following the music. In short, the original edition, in the case of the hymns with many verses, was not particularly useful. This was the initial motivation for the current version of the work. While the underlayment of many verses in some of the motets in this version still leads to a difficult read for the singers, we hope that it will be found more practical and that it will lead to actual performances of these beautiful settings.

A major consideration in the versification of these translations is the matter of rhyme. The vast majority of the hymn text which Distler chose were written in the 16th century, several as translations of earlier work, often in Latin. The Reformation-era writers obviously felt that rhyme, or near-rhyme, was required if these hymns were to enter common usage, as was their hope and their reason for writing them and finding tunes for them. I have tried to honor their judgement by retaining their rhyme schemes wherever I can. The results are always imperfect, as are all translations. Some are hopeless, as in No. 50.

Der Jahrkreis was produced in an era of *Gebrauchsmusik*. It is to that movement that I attribute the final sentence of Distler's Foreword. Certainly these settings were used by Distler in Lübeck. Whether they can be assembled, like a child's construction toy, by altering keys and selecting verses to create, in effect, a cantata with a single theme can only be conjectured. Lots of work would certainly be required. On the other hand, in today's church music environment, the availability of short pieces with a variety of texts seems useful, especially when large forces are not required.

Another word about the translations may be in order. I have tried to retain the phrase-by-phrase literal sense of the original texts, which is not generally wise in translation. This is because very often the musical phrases and the poetic lines are conceived as coterminous, and altering this would not serve the music well. In addition, the religious metaphors and phrases, even words, are often familiar in both languages, and deserve to be retained wherever possible. Moreover, in cases where the texts are biblical rather than poetic I have attempted to use words drawn from familiar (not necessarily contemporary) English translations as much as possible. Rhyme schemes could not be maintained all of the time, but rhythmical stress was rigidly maintained. You will note immediately that the rhythmic emphasis of the text does not always match the musical emphasis that is indicated

by the bar lines. This is also true of the original settings; although I have not found a case in which at least one part did not retain the rhythmic emphasis indicated by the bar lines.

Concerning notation, Distler's resistance to "the tyranny of the bar line" led him to ignore, or rather to vary, the rhythmic pulse found in different parts. In three cases (Nos. 1, 10, and 33) different bar lines and time signatures appear in different parts at some points. More commonly, the music proceeds in spite of the bar lines. These complications are indicated here, but bar lines are the same in all parts. Note values are unchanged, of course. Also, some of the music is unbarred, as well, but not unrhythmical, as rhythmic hints are sometimes provided by the composer when the music is unbarred (e.g., note the swells and breaths in No. 35). Breath marks are provided religiously by the composer (and are retained by the editor), many in the midst of slurs. When original texts are rhymed, note values are retained here. When the original text is prose, most often biblical, some accommodations in the slurring and note values could not be avoided if the familiar wording was to be retained.

Dynamic and tempo indications are generally omitted "to guarantee the maximum freedom in performance." (All tempo and dynamics marks that do appear are Distler's.) Distler's comment that with chorale settings "the usual chorale tempo" applies may not be particularly helpful today. The tempo and accents of speech should provide reliable guidance, however. Our sense that early twentieth-century German chorale singing might be considered slow today is mitigated by Distler's warning to avoid tempos that are too slow. As for dynamics, most of the settings have no dynamic indications. Many of these pieces are so short and strophic that there is little time for significant dynamic interest beyond that made obvious by the text. The repetition of swells at particular places in every one of nine verses of a single setting would be strange indeed. The instrumental pieces are thoroughly marked as to dynamics and articulation. One wonders whether Distler would have repeated these without variation either. Probably not.

Keyboard reductions for a few settings are included as examples. The vast increase of paper required to include these for all prohibits it.

--- C. J. Pearson, May 31, 2016

The Liturgical Year

Contents

	Advent	15	O Man, by Your Great Sin Distressed <i>O Mensch, bewein dein' Sünde groß</i>
1	O Savior, Tear the Heavens Wide <i>O Heiland, rei die Himmel auf</i>		
2	As Mary Through the Brambles Passed <i>Maria durch ein' Dornwald ging</i>	16	God So Loved the World <i>Also hat Gott die Welt geliebet</i>
3	Come Now, O Nations' Savior <i>Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland</i>		
4	A Ship Is Coming <i>Es kommt ein Schiff, geladen</i>	17	Glorious the Day That Now Comes 'Round <i>Erschienen ist der herrlich' Tag</i>
5	Prepare Your Hearts, O Children <i>Mit Ernst, o Menschenkinder</i>		Ritornello for three instruments
6	Throw Wide the Gates <i>Macht hoch die Tr</i>	18	In Quiet Joy Mit Freuden zart
7	Now Let Us Praise Christ, Our Lord <i>Christum wir sollen loben schon</i>	19	The Lord Is Risen from the Dead <i>Erstanden ist der Herre Christ</i>
8	Thanks to God Throughout the World <i>Gott sei Dank durch alle Welt</i>	20	Ascension Today We All Remember Well <i>Auf diesen Tag bedenken wir</i>
	Christmas	21	Christ Rose to Heaven <i>Christ fuhr gen Himmel</i>
9	Glory to God in the Highest <i>Ehre sei Gott in der Hhe</i>	22	Now to the Holy Spirit <i>Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist</i>
10	Praise God, Ye Christians, All as One <i>Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich</i>		Ritornello for three instruments
	Epiphany	23	Pentecost Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, God <i>Komm, heiliger Geist, o Schpfer du</i>
11	How Brightly Shines Our Morning Star <i>Wie schn leucht't uns der Morgenstern</i>	24	A New Commandment I Give to You <i>Ein neu Gebot gebe ich euch</i>
	Ritornello for three instruments	25	O God, We Praise Thee <i>Herr Gott, dich loben wir (Te Deum)</i>
	Passiontide		Trinity Sunday
12	A Little Lamb Bears All the Guilt <i>Ein Lmmlein geht und trgt die Schuld</i>	26	Unto God on High Be Praise <i>Allein Gott in der Hh sei Ehr</i>
13	In Dark of Night <i>Bei stiller Nacht</i>	27	We Believe in God <i>Wir glauben an Gott, den Vater (Credo)</i>
14	Jesus, to Your Passion's Hour <i>Jesu, deine Passion</i>		

	Feast of the Reformation				Maundy Thursday
28	May God's Will Ever Come to Pass <i>Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh allzeit</i>		41	Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior <i>Jesus Christus, unser Heiland</i>	
			42	We Travel in the Name of God <i>In Gottes Namen fahren wir</i>	
29	O God, Look Down from Heaven Far <i>Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein</i>		43	To Build a House God Favors Not <i>Wo Gott zu Haus nit gibt sein' Gunst</i>	
30	Awake in Splendor Glorious <i>Wach auf, mein's Herzens Schöne</i>				Matins
31	God Is Our Confidence and Strength <i>Gott ist unsre Zuversicht</i>		44	The Sun Is Shining, Clear and Bright <i>Die helle Sonn' leucht't jetzt herfür</i>	
32	Lord, Let Us to Your Word Be True <i>Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort</i>		45	Arise, O Dearest Children Mine <i>Steht auf, ihr lieben Kinderlein</i>	
33	Salvation Now Has Come to Us <i>Es ist das Heil uns kommen her</i>				Vespers
	All Saints Day		46	The Blessed Sun Has Now Gone Down <i>Hinunter ist der Sonne Schein</i>	
34	Come All and Join Me in This Plan <i>Wohlauf mit mir auf diesen Plan</i>		47	Christ, You Are the Light of Day <i>Christ, der du bist der helle Tag</i>	
35	Blessed Are the Dead <i>Selig sind die Toten</i>		48	O Lord, Give Us Our Daily Bread <i>Bescher uns, Herr, das täglich Brot</i>	
36	Man That Is Born of a Woman <i>Der Mensch, vom Weibe geboren, lebt kurze Zeit</i>				Prayers
	Day of Atonement		49	Our Heavenly Father, All Unseen <i>Vaterunser</i>	
37	In Want and Fear I Cry to You <i>Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir</i>		50	Lord, Grant Us What You Will <i>Herr, schicke, was du wilt</i>	
38	Kyrie, God, Father Eternal <i>Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit</i>		51	O Grant Us Peace, Most Gracious One <i>Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich</i>	
39	As the Hart Crieth for Streams of Water <i>Wie der Hirsch schreiet nach frischem Wasser</i>		52	Amen <i>Das Amen</i>	
40	Awake, Awake <i>Wach auf, wach auf</i>				

1. O Savior, Tear the Heavens Wide

O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf

Köln, 1621

Advent

Hugo Distler

*) $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{6}{4}$

Sop. 1

1. O Sav - ior, tear the hea -
 3. O earth, break out in ev' -
 5. O bright - est Sun, O sweet -

*) $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

Sop. 2

1. O Sav - ior, tear the hea - - vens
 3. O earth, break out in ev' - - - ry
 5. O bright - est Sun, O sweet - est

Alto

1. O Sav - ior, tear the hea - vens wide!
 3. O earth, break out in ev' - ry vale
 5. O bright - est Sun, O sweet - est Star,

5 $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{6}{4}$

- vens wide! come down from hea - ven to a -
 - - ry vale a car - pet green on hill and
 - est Star, we long to see You from a -

$\frac{6}{4}$

wide! come down from hea - ven to a -
 vale a car - pet green on hill and
 Star, we long to see You from a -

come down from hea - ven to a - bide!
 a car - pet green on hill and dale,
 we long to see You from a - far!

*) With just a few of these settings the notation indicates the polyrhythmic independence of the individual voices. (H.D.)

[These parts have been rebarred for simplicity and the polyrhythms indicated by brackets. Ed.]

1. O Savior, Tear the Heavens Wide

10 $\frac{5}{4}$

bide! The gates of hea - ven tear a - way; break
dale, O earth, the sweet - est flower bring forth. O
far! O Sun, as - cend! With - out Your light we

bide! The gates of hea - ven tear a - way; break
dale, O earth, the sweet - est flower bring forth. O
far! O Sun, as - cend! With - out Your light we

The gates of hea - ven tear a - way; break
O earth, the sweet - est flower bring forth. O
O Sun, as - cend! With - out Your light we

14 $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

down where locks and bars hold sway!
Sav - ior, from the earth spring forth!
all a - bide in dark - est night.

down where locks and bars hold sway! 2. O God,
Sav - ior, from the earth spring forth! 4. Where are
all a - bide in dark - est night. 6. On earth

down where locks and bars hold sway! 2. O God, in
Sav - ior, from the earth spring forth! 4. Where are You,
all a - bide in dark - est night. 6. On earth we

18 $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{6}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

2. O God, in heav'n - ly dew pour down,
4. Where are You, Com - fort - er div - ine,
6. On earth we suf - fer pain and strife,

— in heav'n - ly dew pour down, in dew, O
— You, Com - fort - er div - ine, to whom all
— we suf - fer pain and strife, and death ap -

heav'n - ly dew pour down, in dew, O Sav - ior
Com - fort - er di - vine, to whom all earth its
suf - fer pain and strife, and death ap - pears the

23

6/4

in dew, O Sav - ior to us flow! O clouds, let
to whom all earth its hopes in - cline? O come, come
and death ap - pears the goal of life: but come and

Sav - ior to us flow! O clouds, let
earth its hopes in - cline? O come, come
pears the goal of life: but come and

to us flow! O clouds, let
hopes in - cline? O come, come
goal of life: but come and

27

5/4

2/4

fall and bring in rain a
down from hea - - - ven's hall and
lead us by the hand from

fall and bring in rain a
down from hea - - - ven's hall and
lead us by the hand from

fall and bring in rain a
down from hea - ven's hall and
lead us by the hand from

30

5/4

3/4

King o'er Ja - - - cob's house to reign!
com - fort us who on You call!
weep - ing to Your heav'n - ly land!

King o'er Ja - - - cob's house to reign!
com - fort us who on You call!
weep - ing to Your heav'n - ly land!

King o'er Ja - - - cob's house to reign!
com - fort us who on You call!
weep - ing to Your heav'n - ly land!