Abstract

By looking at Bach's Cantata, "Christ lag in Todesbanden" BWV 4, an outstanding example of church music from the Baroque period, one can better understand the 'Sacred music' of that period. Composed for 'Easter', this Cantata borrowed from 12th century Latin text music and the Gregorian Easter song 'Hallelujah'. This Cantata consists of 8 versus linked in a very intimate relationship, like harmonic and melodic elements. Moreover, each of the composing elements of this Cantata was chosen with a specific purpose in mind. For example, through the 8th versus named 'Chorale', the other 7 versus employ various musical techniques, such as repeating or imitating, and this is what gives the Cantata an extended structure. As with many other Cantatas, this one was composed with a specific event from the religious calendar in mind, and therefore any exaggerations in the ways of expression were removed. Working on this thesis has made me more intensely aware of the importance being a Lutheran played in Bach's life and work.