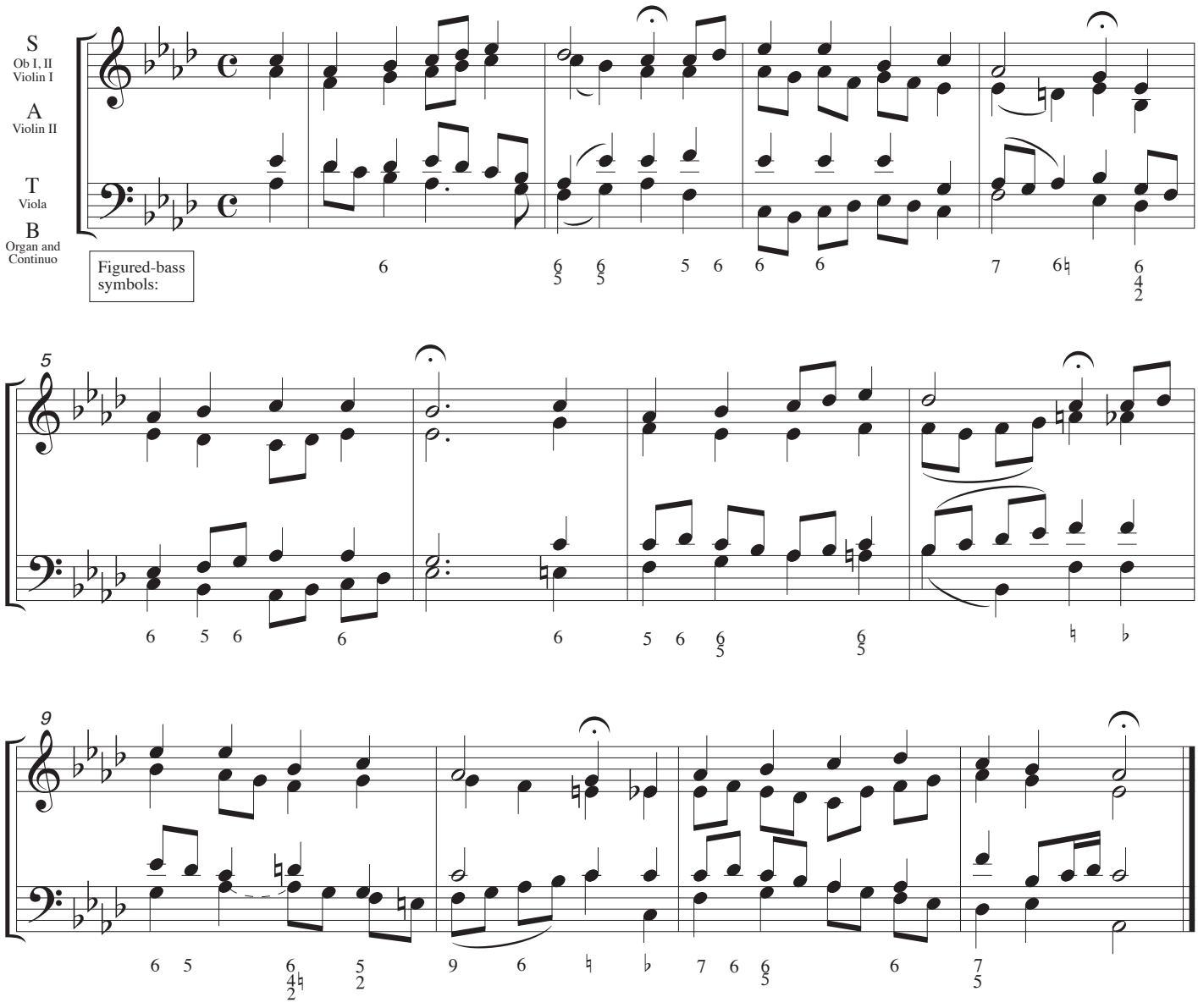
The Chorale Style

J.S. Bach (1685-1750) composed over 400 *chorales* – four-voice hymn settings for the Protestant church congregation of his time. The *chorale harmonization* below is presented in *reduced score format*; i.e., the four-part harmony is presented on a grand staff with stem directions indicating the individual voices. Instrumental doublings are also indicated. The top voice, called the Soprano (S), functions as the melody. The lowest voice, called the Bass (B), functions as the foundation of the harmony. The inner voices, called the Alto (A) and Tenor (T) respectively, are restricted in their motions so as not to eclipse the outer voices (S & B). This type of *SATB texture* has served as a model for four-part writing in Western art music since the *common-practice period* (ca. 1650-1900).

J.S. BACH, Chorale, "Ich bin's ich sollte bussen," from *St. Matthew Passion*, BWV 244 (1727), SATB reduced score



Ich bin's, ich sollte büßen,
An Händen und an Füßen
Gebunden in der Höll.
Die Geißeln und die Banden
Und was du ausgestanden,
Das hat verdienet meine Seel.