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Lutheran Theology as Reflected in the Life and Works of J. S. Bach*

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I

IT is interesting indeed to note that much of the Bach literature published in recent years has made special mention of the profound Lutheran character of Bach's life and work. Gerhard Herz, musicologist of the University of Louisville, wrote in June, 1946:

Bach's personality and creations, which today move us chiefly aesthetically and emotionally, are deeply rooted in the ethos of the Old Lutheran Church . . . The search for Bach's philosophy of life leads to the figure of Christ as understood by the orthodox Lutherans. Bach's art and his religion are but one and the same. Nobody in music perceived and interpreted the sacred and the miraculous more powerfully and more purely than Bach. He 1, pp. 124 and 126.

Hans Preuss of the University of Erlangen wrote in 1935:

So ist auch Bachs Werk abhaengig von einer sehr wesentlichen Seite seines persoentlichen Lebens: das ist seine lutherische Froemigkeit. Seine Werke erwachsen aus seinem Glauben. Pr, pp. 12—13.

In his *J. S. Bach im Wandel der Geschichte*, published in 1947, Friedrich Blume of the University of Kiel in Germany analyzes all the outstanding works on Bach from Forkel (1802) to Terry (1928) and points out that not one of them did justice to Bach for the simple reason that not one understood adequately the spirit of genuine Lutheranism. Albert Schweitzer, despite the many excellencies of his tome on Bach, did not grasp fully the theology

* The present study includes consideration of Bach literature written and received for review purposes during the current memorial year of Bach's death (1750—1950). Although it refers often to literature published previously, this study takes the place of reviews which would be based on literature published recently.—The key to the references in the text is embodied in the bibliography appended to the article.

of Bach because his approach was aesthetic rather than Christian. Blume might have pointed out, too, that Schweitzer's rationalism and his failure to see in Jesus the only-begotten Son of God and the Savior of mankind helped to blind his view and prompted him to regard Bach chiefly as a mystic:

Zuletzt war aber auch das orthodoxe Luthertum nicht die eigentliche Religion des Meisters, sondern die Mystik. Schw, p. 155.

Terry, though regarded as a Bach biographer of the first water, did not understand the Lutheran character of Bach's life and work; the lenses of his Bach-focused glasses were tinged with too many hues of English Anglicanism. Spitta, too, fell short, though he had grown up in a Lutheran parsonage and in surroundings of strict Lutheran orthodoxy similar to those of Bach; however, Spitta must be counted among Bach's hero worshipers, and it did not occur to him, as it did to Schweitzer, that Bach had been subjected to many inner conflicts which invariably vex the typically genuine Lutheran. Nevertheless, ten years after he had completed his monumental work on Bach, Spitta correctly remarked that one must understand the Lutheran background of Bach if one wishes to understand and appreciate his music fully:

Zur richtigen Wuerdigung Bachscher Musik veranlagt ist nur der, welcher mit der Kirche in lebendigerem Zusammenhang steht, mit der Bedeutung ihrer Liturgie, mit der Bibel, mit den Chormelodien und -texten vertraut ist.*

Hans Besch aptly calls attention to the fact that piety and religion are the outstanding qualities of Bach's music and that one cannot analyze them fully by analyzing them from a musical point of view only, since they belong also into the realm of theology:

Die Tatsache, dass Bach Musiker war, ist ergaenzt durch die Tatsache der Froemdigkeit Bachs, die als unbestreitbares Faktum die letzte Eigenart seiner Kunst ausmacht. Das enthebt Bach der ausschliesslichen Sphaere einer rein analytischen Musikwissenschaft und gliedert ihn in eine Theologiegeschichte, die fern einer nur intellektualistischen Betrachtungsweise die gesamte Wirklichkeit des von Froemdigkeit und Glauben erfuellten Lebens ins Auge zu fassen hat. Be 1, pp. 4—5.

* Spitta, Philipp, *Die Passionsmusiken von J. S. Bach und H. Schuetz*, Hamburg, 1893, p. 21.

It is worthy to note that Besch's book is dedicated to the eminent theologian Johannes Ficker, who had assigned to Hans Besch the topic of his dissertation: *Die Froemmigkei J. S. Bachs in der Bachbewegung und -forschung*. Out of this dissertation, written for the theological faculty of the University of Halle, grew Volume I of Besch's *J. S. Bach — Froemmigkei und Glaube*.

Besch's opus is the first volume published since the death of Bach (1750) which seeks to present a thorough study of the theology of Bach's sacred works. Its first edition was published in 1938; the second edition came off the presses of the Baerenreiter Verlag in 1950. Volume II has not been published as yet. Twenty-five years ago the *Evangelische Buchhandlung* of Switzerland published *Johann Sebastian Bach als Saenger und Musiker des Evangeliums und der lutherischen Reformation* by D. Fr. Hashagen, professor of practical theology and official preacher of the University at Rostock. Many have been of the opinion that Hashagen's thesis and its claims were wishful thinking of a naive and ultra-loyal sort. The same applies to Hans Preuss' *Johann Sebastian Bach der Lutheraner*, a pamphlet of thirty pages published in 1935. Happily, however, the tide has begun to turn, also in non-Lutheran circles. At a meeting of musical scholars and research men attended by the writer less than a year ago, several eminent musicologists affiliated with leading universities in the United States admitted that there are certain phases of Bach which they cannot grasp and appreciate only because they have no understanding of Bach's Lutheran theology. In his *J. S. Bach im Wandel der Geschichte*, which is in substance a plea for a theological and Lutheran approach to Bach, Friedrich Blume deprecates the fact that the theologians of the Lutheran Church have neglected the important task of making a careful study of the theology of Bach, whom Archbishop Nathan Soederblom of Uppsala, Sweden, referred to as *the Fifth Evangelist*. We quote Blume in part:

Die theologische Antikritik, vertreten durch Maenner wie Julius Smend und Friedrich Spitta, Georg Rietschel und Max Herold, konnte sich gegen diesen snobistischen Aesthetizismus nicht durchsetzen, weil sie, liberal und sentimental, kompromissgeneigt und in ihren musikalischen Anschauungen antiquiert, wie sie war, im Grunde selbst einem tieferen Bachverstaendnis fernblieb, und

weil sie obendrein da versagte, wo sie haette wirken koennen und muessen, naemlich in der praktischen Durchdringung des Gottesdienstes mit Bachs Musik. Nicht einmal der Versuch einer wissenschaftlichen Bachforschung kam von der theologischen Seite her zustande, und bisher hat die evangelische Kirche diese Ehrendschuld nicht eingeloeset. Wurde das journalistisch-aesthetisierende Bachportraet des ausgehenden 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhunderts immer verschwommener und wurzelloser, so das der Theologie immer farbloser und blasser. Blu 2, p. 32.

Besch claims that Bach, through his sacred choral works, has brought the Gospel to more souls than any other preacher who has ever lived; as a preacher of the Gospel, Bach is not restricted by the limitations of time, generations, and ages. Besch says:

Bach hat mit der Zeit eine Gemeinde um das Evangelium gesammelt, wie sie in diesem Ausmass kein Prediger je gehabt hat. Bach ist ein ueberzeitlicher Verkuender des Evangeliums geworden. Be 1, p. 3.

Taking into consideration the Gospels and Epistles of Holy Writ, some may challenge Besch's remark and insist that the Apostles and Evangelists very likely preached the Gospel to more people than did Bach; Luther, too, might be considered in this connection. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Bach has brought the Gospel to countless thousands who might otherwise never have heard the Gospel and its message of redemption. While it is to be regretted that Bach's sacred choral works have been driven out of the Church by inferior worship practices and unworthy music, while we likewise regret that many identify Bach's choral works with operatic music and the concert stage, the fact remains that the concert stage, too, may be used, if need be and feasible, to bring the Gospel to human souls. No less a person than Friedrich Nietzsche once remarked, in a letter to a friend, that anyone who has neglected and ignored the Gospel of Christ Jesus and who hears Bach's *Passion According to St. Matthew* will have to hear this great work not only as a musical masterpiece, but also as a proclamation of the Gospel. Nietzsche wrote:

In dieser Woche habe ich dreimal die Matthaepassion des goettlichen Bach gehoert, jedesmal mit demselben Gefuehl der unermesslichen Verwunderung. Wer das Christentum voellig verlernt hat, der hoert es hier wirklich wie ein Evangelium; es ist

dies die Musik der Verneinung des Willens, ohne die Erinnerung an die Askesis. Nietzsche, Fr., *Gesammelte Briefe*, 2 Aufl., II, Berlin und Leipzig, 1902, p. 197.

Besch remarks to these words:

. . . nichts kann die eigentuemliche Bedeutung des Musikers Bach deutlicher ans Licht stellen als die Tatsache, dass der, welcher der groesste Kaempfer gegen ein entartetes Christentum werden sollte, vor ihm in Ehrfurcht verstummte. Be 1, p. 1.

In a student publication, the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Raymond Moremen remarks in his article "Bach and the Living Chorale":

Within the past few days a great musician said to me, "What I know of religion, I have learned from my study of Bach." Mo, p. 26.

While numerous other cases are known where people have been won for Christianity and the Lutheran Church through the music of Bach, special attention might be called to William Boepler, at one time a Reformed clergyman and later conductor of the Chicago Bach Chorus, who, while on his deathbed, confided to the Rev. Paul Sauer, founder and president of the Chicago Bach Chorus, that the cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach had made of him a Lutheran and that he wished to die and be buried as a Lutheran. Pastor Sauer delivered the funeral sermon.

While too much *Konzertgeist* is to be noted also among Lutherans in America, it is heartening to hear an occasional voice in the wilderness which calls attention to Bach as a servant of the Word and preacher of the Gospel. In *The Little Bach Book* published by Valparaiso University, Prof. Martin J. Naumann of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ill., makes the following statement in his chapter on "Bach the Preacher":

Bach had something to say by reason of his faith and by reason of his office. He said it in a language that fits the great theme. He preached Christ and Him Crucified. He extolled the Son of God as the Savior of the world. That is why we may call him a preacher. Ni, p. 15.

Likewise significant in this volume are the trenchant words of O. P. Kretzmann, president of Valparaiso University:

Confronted by Bach, the twentieth-century man must be bewil-

dered. The gap between the *Rhapsody in Blue* and the *Mass in B Minor* is too great. But even more tragic is the amazement of the modern mind when it is confronted by Bach, the man of faith. What shall the new pagan do with a man who so magnificently fused high art and high religion? Or how can many modern Christians, accustomed to shoddiness, emotionalism, and subjectivity in their religious life, understand a man who humbly accepts the great objective truths of Christianity and pours them into music which makes them live and breathe and march into the souls of men? That sort of thing is beyond us. We cannot love the music of Bach because we do not share the faith of Bach. In the truest sense of the word his approach is sacramental. He used the mechanics of music—as means to an end. Under his heart and hands they become vehicles of a faith that used them to their highest potentiality. They now spoke of God, of life, of death, of faith, of hope, of atonement, and forgiveness in terms so sure and magnificent that our anxious and questioning age hears only faint and far trumpets from a forgotten country. Ni, pp. 3—4.

II

Bach's antecedents are known to have been loyal members of the Lutheran Church. Veit Bach, a baker and the earliest known Bach, tried for a time to live in Bohemia but returned to Germany to settle at Wechmar in Thuringia, where he might continue his occupation as a miller and live according to his Lutheran convictions without being persecuted by Roman Catholics. Terry states:

His Hungarian exodus is not dated, but it occurred, no doubt, in the reign of the semi-sane Rudolf II (1576—1612), whose Counter-Reformation in Hungary was ruthless and drastic. Te 1, p. 5.

The Bachs were numerous in the days of Johann Sebastian; they formed a closely knit relationship and perpetuated religiously the traditions of their clan. While it is commonly believed that the musical skill of the many Bachs converged in Sebastian and in his music came to its mighty climax, it may likewise be said that the religious convictions and theological understanding of the entire family reached their highest level and profoundest expression in his astounding compositions.

Other influences likewise contributed their share to the theological development of this great master. Bach's Lutheran phi-

losophy of life and worship became established already while he attended the Ohrdruf *Lyceum*, where he was introduced to Leonhart Hutter's *Compendium locorum theologicorum*. Hutter was a sound and solid Lutheran theologian, an ardent admirer of Martin Luther and a staunch defender of the Formula of Concord. His writings, including his *Lutherus redonatus*, were widely read and studied and exerted a great and wholesome influence in integrating Lutheranism in Germany. During the three years he spent in Lueneburg, Hutter's theological literature was again studied. Later, while teaching at the *Thomasschule* in Leipzig, Bach was again exposed to the writings of Hutter, since portions of Hutter's *Compendium* were there read daily in the devotional exercises.

There is not one link in the chain of Hutter's thoughts which is not of decisive significance for the understanding of Bach. . . . Meaning of the new life is, according to Hutter, God's glory as well as the attestation of obedience and gratitude. Be 1, p. 271. Translated by Gerhard Herz, He 1, p. 127.

Bach is known to have been an assiduous reader and student. It is known that his theological acumen was developed also in large part by the books he read. In his library were two complete editions of Luther's works. Chemnitz's *Examen Concilii Tridentini* and three volumes written by Abraham Calov were among his books; his library included likewise H. Mueller's *Lutherus defensus*; Neumeister's *Tisch des Herrn*, which was directed against all unionistic endeavors and attacked the Pope as a plunderer of the Christian Church; likewise the sermons of Johann Tauler, the mystic; August Hermann Francke's *Hauspostille*; Joh. Arndt's *Wabres Christentum*; Stenger's *Grundfeste der Augsbургischen Konfession*; Klingius' *Warnung vor Abfall von der lutherischen Religion*; and A. Pfeiffer's *Anticalvinismus*. Pfeiffer maintains that, in the long run, Reformed theology throws the foundation of Christian faith overboard and hence is corrupt, deserving of condemnation. While Bach was active in Coethen, he lived and functioned in Reformed surroundings. In Coethen he prepared a Note-Book for his second wife and pupil, Anna Magdalena; on its cover he warned his young bride against Calvinism with the words "*anti-Calvinismus, und Christen Schule item anti-Melancholicus*." While Parry regards these words as "playful" and interprets them to be

"a little hit at the unsympathetic attitude of the Pietists towards music" (Pa, p. 139), others call attention to the fact that *Anti-Calvinismus*, *Evangelische Christen Schule*, and *Anti-Melancholicus* are the titles of three theological volumes found in the library of Bach. Johann Sebastian was, of course, thoroughly opposed to the rationalism of Reformed theology and to the legalistically imposed sobriety and simplicity of its music. Herz correctly remarks:

The reformists who regarded art a product of worldliness, if not of the devil—in direct contrast to Luther, to whom music was a God-given gift—admitted only the unadorned chorale to their puritan service. They banished everything else; the polyphonic arrangement of the chorale, its rich orchestration, the cantata form, and any Latin text. In Coethen, Bach had come to know the artistic barrenness of the Calvinistic service. He 1, pp. 131—132.

Gurlitt calls attention to the influence exerted upon Bach by the eighty-three theological volumes found in his library:

Aus Bachs umfangreicher Buecherei von ueber achtzig fleissig benutzten theologischen Werken, von denen ein Viertel auf Luther selbst, drei Viertel auf dogmatisch-polemische und praktisch-erbauliche Literatur von Fuehrern der lutherischen Orthodoxie und nur sechs auf Mystiker und Pietisten entfallen, geht deutlich hervor, in welchem Umfang und in welcher Richtung Bach sich nach Verlassen der Schule durch Selbststudium der theologischen Fach- und Kampfliteratur fortgebildet hat. Es ist dieselbe altlutherische Kampfesstimmung und Streitbarkeit,—mit der er seine Kinder in Koethen, obwohl sein Landesherr kalvinistischen Bekenntnisses war, nicht in die oeffentliche reformierte, sondern in die lutherische Schule schickte. Gu, pp. 47-48.

The very fact that Bach possessed two *Gesamtausgaben* of Luther's works indicates his high regard for the great Reformer. In his article *Luther and Bach*, published in the *Lutheran Quarterly*, Friedrich Smend goes so far as to say:

Bach can be understood only in the closest relationship to Luther. In the sphere of church music he advanced Luther's work to the supreme heights of art. . . . Luther and Bach sought to serve Him alone who is the Christ-Incarnate, Crucified, Risen from the dead. Sm 2, p. 410.

Related thoughts are expressed by Heinrich Schmid:

. . . in seinem Glaubensdenken wusste er, warum er sich ganz

und gar an Luthers trotzige Kraft hielt. Wie Luther, so fuerchtete auch er sich, sein Leben auf irgend etwas Menschliches zu gruenden, und sei es das eigene Herz; auch ihm galt, dass quaderfest unser Heil begruendet ist und stehen gelassen werden muss da, wo allein etwas feststehen kann, naemlich in dem, was Gott selbst schafft. Darum liebte er alles, von dem es nicht mit menschlicher, sondern mit goettlicher Autoritaet hiess: "Es stehet geschrieben." Darum waren ihm die Chorale so lieb und wert, insbesondere die alten, jetzt vielfach verschollenen, darum der Katechismus Luthers. . . . So wurde er mit seiner Kunst geradezu ein maechtiger Ausleger des Evangeliums von der allein wirkenden Gnade, des nicht von Menschen, sondern einzig von Gott gewirkten Heiles. Schm, p. 21.

Hashagen says:

Auf Grund seiner christlichen Erziehung durch Gottes Wort und den lutherischen Katechismus, auf Grund einer Autoritaet, deren goettlichem Ursprung und unbedingter Gewissheit, unbegrenzter Verpflichtungskraft er nie widersteht, ist Bach von Gottes Gnade, was er ist. . . . In der ihm eigentuemlichen Erfassung des Erbes der Reformation, dann in der ihm eigentuemlichen Durchdringung desselben mit seiner Musik steht Bach in einer genialen Urspruenglichkeit und Groesse vor uns, der niemand an die Seite treten kann. Ha, pp. 150—151.

In other words, says Hashagen, the very elements which made Luther great made also J. S. Bach great. Bach wrote his music with all the talents God had given him; he sought not the approval of men, was not given to vanity, but put himself entirely at the disposal of his God, come what may. His church music was not understood and appreciated fully in his own day, nor for more than a century later, but the day has now come that it is serving its purpose best. Bach's work was done in the spirit manifested by Luther when he said at Worms: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me, Amen." Gurlitt says very strikingly:

Und dieser gewaltige Geisteskampf der lutherischen Orthodoxie um die reine Lehre und das echte Bekenntnis, der dem Bachschen Geschlecht seit dem Stammvater Veit Bach im Blute lag, bedeutete auf musikalischem Gebiet den Grosskampf um die Sicherung und den Ausbau echter Kirchenmusik, gegen die Musikfeindschaft der Aufklaerung, gegen die Trennung von Kirche und Musik, auch von Schule und Musik, wie sie auf kalvinischem Boden im "Kirchen-

Konzert," auf pietistischem Boden in der Haus- und "Kaemmerlein-Musik" sich ausgebildet hatte. Gu, p. 49.

Stressing once more the relationship between Luther and Bach, we quote Preuss:

Die Summa von allem ist: Bachs Glaube war Luthers Glaube und so ward auch sein Werk ein Lutherwerk. Pr, p. 30.

It is well known that Luther did not reject what he could use from the past. Some regard Luther as a mediaevalist of a high order. In the very first chapter of his volume on Bach, Albert Schweitzer maintains that Bach is an end, not a beginning; nothing begins with him, but everything leads up to him. Terry expresses a like opinion when he maintains:

It has been truly said that by whatever path we explore the music of the Middle Ages we are led inevitably to Bach. — Perhaps his obstinate mediaevalism is in nothing else so apparent as in the fact that to him, as to the generation that begat him, music was primarily the apparatus of religion, in his own words, "a harmonious euphony to the glory of God." Even the simple finger exercises he wrote for his children were headed with the ascription "In nomine Jesu," to indicate that already, on the mere threshold of their art, they stood on holy ground. We view him, consequently, as the last heroic figure of the fervent Age of Faith. Te 2, p. 113.

Comparing the effects of Beethoven's music with those of Bach's, Wilhelm Schaefer made the following significant remarks in an address he delivered at the 21st annual Bach festival, conducted in Bremen in 1934:

Eine solch Wirkung kann die Bachsche Musik nie haben, weil sie nicht aus dem Ich des Menschengestes kommt und darum auch nicht dieses Ich in uns aufruft; weil sie nicht Menschengesprache ist, "zu sagen, was ich leide," sondern Musik zu Ehren des Schoepfers, weil ihr Musikant nicht ichtrotzig, sondern gottglaebig, keine "Persoenlichkeit," sondern Geschoepf, weil er mit einem Wort noch ein mittelalterlicher, kein moderner Mensch ist. . . . Das Stichwort fuer den mittelalterlichen Menschen lautet: Gott; das Stichwort fuer den modernen Menschen lautet: Ich. Scha, pp. 10 and 12.

Spitta called special attention to the fact that Bach was more than a child of his times and pointed out that the *Mass in B Minor*

was certainly not written in the spirit of the eras of Pietism and Rationalism, in both of which Bach lived. As is well known, both of these eras advocated and introduced principles and beliefs which were radically different from those of the Reformation era. Spitta says:

An der H moll-Messe wird offenbar, wie unermesslich viel weiter und tiefer Bachs kirchliches Empfinden war, als das seiner Zeit. In ihm lebte der Geist des Reformationszeitalters mit all seiner Streiftreue und Gefuehlsinnigkeit, aber auch mit seiner ganzen umfassenden Kraft. Sp II, p. 525.

Gerhard Herz remarks:

Bach was no musician for future generations. His mission was rather to safeguard the heritage of the past and to preserve traditions which his contemporaries attempted to undermine. He 1, p. 124.

In his discussion of *J. S. Bach, Charakter und Lebensgang*, K. Storck attempted to set forth that Bach was above all theological confessionalism. Among others, he made the following remarks:

So treu und fromm Bach seinem protestantischen Glauben anhing, fuer die konfessionellen Haendel, fuer die dogmatischen Streitereien . . . hatte er keinen Sinn. . . . In ihm leben nur die positiven Kraefte des Religioesen. Eben darum wollte er von den Pietisten nichts wissen. Zur Verinnerlichung des religioesen Lebens, zur Befreiung vom Buchstaben, brauchte er keine Sekte. Ihre Unfreudigkeit dem Leben gegenueber musste ihn gerade abstossen. — Quoted by Besch, Be 1, p. 182.

With these words Storck clearly tries to separate Bach not only from Pietism, but likewise from Lutheran orthodoxy and, in so doing, affiliates him with the Middle Ages rather than with the militant era of the Reformation. Besch is of the opinion that Storck permitted his wishful thinking to become father to his thoughts and thus complicated the problem further rather than helped solve it.

Da Storck den Gedanken einer ueberkonfessionellen Froemmigkeit bei Bach vertrat, schliesst sich hier der Kreis: wo man Bach kirchenhistorisch im einzelnen nicht einzugliedern vermochte, entging man oft nicht der Versuchung, den Gedanken seiner Konfessionellen Verwurzelung ganz oder zum Teil aufzuheben.

. . . Nicht ueberall werden diese Scheidungen reinlich vollzogen. Die Uebergaenge sind mannigfache; aber die Akzente fallen verschieden. Spitta sieht Bach im Zusammenhang mit einer Stroomung, die jenseits von Orthodoxie und Pietismus sich gehalten hat. Auch Storck trennt Bach von beiden. . . . Waehrend aber Spitta nun Bach in einem anderen, tieferen kirchenhistorischen Zusammenhang sieht, loest Storck ihn aus jeder uebergeordneten Bindung; denn die "positiven Kraefte des Religioesen" sind immer Kennwort der freien, individuell bedingten Religiositaet. . . . Solange keine tieferen Beweise fuer die Freiheit Bachs von Kirche und Theologie seiner Zeit vorliegen, solange der Wunsch Vater des Gedankens ist, vermehren derartige Aeusserungen nur die Problematik. Be 1, p. 183.

We again quote Herz:

None of the attempts to see Bach's religion in another light than the orthodox Lutheran can be supported theologically. From Spitta to Terry, Bach biographers have shown convincingly that Bach does not transgress the realm of the confessional church.

In fact, Bach is the one composer whose music is a perfect mirror of Lutheran theology. Culminating and summarizing two hundred years of orthodox Lutheranism, Bach was able to explore, deepen and illuminate its full theological and musical meaning without producing a conflict with its basic concept. Even the polemic vein in Bach's character corresponds to the nature of Luther and the church militant. Bach liked to fight. Particularly, any encroachment upon church music and the cantor's old prerogatives aroused his pugnacious spirit. But the obstacles which orthodox consistories placed in his way were petty rather than matters of basic religious disagreement. Bach usually came out of these fights victorious. The musical heir of the Reformation showed by his actions and his music that he was a worthy representative of the *church militant* and the *church triumphant*. He 1, pp. 129—130. Based on Be 1, p. 174.

In fact, the more his contemporaries moved away from Lutheran orthodoxy the more Bach withdrew from them, until, towards the end of his life, he buried himself quite stoically and completely in Lutheran studies and their revelation in terms of music. His *Schuebler Chorales*, his late chorale variations upon the Christmas hymn *Vom Himmel hoch da komm ich her*, and particularly the third part of his *Clavieruebung* of 1739 represent fervent musical affirmations of the Lutheran creed. The latter work . . . actually

symbolizes the doctrines of Lutheran Christianity in the form of a complete representation of the service. He 1, p. 132

In his discussion of Bach's motette *Jesu, meine Freude*, which is based on a grand and popular hymn, in which, however, the germs of subjective and sentimental pietistic hymnody may easily be found, Spitta aptly calls attention to Bach's use of Bible passages within the motette; already the textual content of the motette, prepared and compiled in this case by Bach himself, helps reveal to us Bach's theological acumen; it shows how Bach sought to counter-balance the subjective and sentimental character of the hymn text with virile and objective passages from the Bible, and we see here, too, how highly melodic music is complemented by vigorous thematic music. We have in this motette an excellent revelation of Bach's sense of balance, symmetry, beauty, and form as expressed in the music as well as in the text. Spitta's conclusion is worth noting:

So erscheint in dem grossartigen Werke der Kern des Protestantischen Christentumes verkoerpert. Die Lehre Luthers in ihrer ganzen Strenge und Reinheit bringt Bach mit der Macht innerster Ueberzeugung zum Ausdruck. Aber er verbindet mit der dogmatischen Bestimmtheit und Schaerfe die innerste persoенliche Hingabe an Christus. Wie sich in ihm die kirchlichen Parteien seiner Zeit, Orthodoxie und Pietismus, aufheben, tritt aus keinem andern seiner Werke praegnanter hervor. Sp II, p. 432.

III

The extent to which the pietistic spirit and tendencies of his day affected J. S. Bach no longer vexes scholars of today as it did those of former generations. Practically all reputable scholars admit that Bach himself was by no means a pietist; his entire life proves this, particularly his experiences in Muehlhausen, where he could not agree theologically with his pietistically imbued pastor, Johann Adolph Frohne, but admired and enjoyed the personal friendship of Frohne's opponent, Pastor Georg Christian Eilmar, who also served as sponsor for Bach's first-born child. Spitta's claim, stated in the last sentence of the quotation given above, that in Bach both pietism and orthodoxy exclude each other, no longer meets with widespread approval. Spitta is correct, however, when he

insists that only a non-pietist could have expressed pietistic thought and sentiment as purely as they were expressed by Bach.

Wenn das Schoene, Gute und Wahre, was der Pietismus enthielt, eben in jener Zeit vielleicht grade in Bachs Musik am reinsten sich gestaltete, so konnte es nur dadurch geschehen, dass ihr Schoepfer ihm nicht angehoerte. Sp I, p. 364.

Schweitzer, too, stressed that Bach was thoroughly unsympathetic towards pietism and definitely on the side of orthodox Lutheranism.

Der Pietismus war ihm als separatistische Neuerung unsympathisch. Hingegen fand er sich in kerniger Streitsucht und Rechthaberei mit den Vertretern der Orthodoxie zusammen. Schw, p. 154.

It is well to bear in mind that already in the early years of Bach's career as a composer and church musician, Pietism was beginning to wane in Germany. The Pietists, like the Puritans and Calvinists, were hostile to every type of artistic and involved music. Bach could not agree with pietistic ideas and principles, already because the Pietists rejected the oft-quoted words of Luther:

I am not of the opinion that because of the Gospel all arts should be rejected violently and vanish, as is desired by the heterodox, but I desire that all arts, particularly music, be employed in the service of Him who has given and created them. I pray, therefore, that every pious Christian would approve of what I have said and, if God has endowed him with the necessary talents and ability, help further the cause. St. Louis edition of Luther's Works, Vol. X:1422 ff. Transl. by W. E. B.

Bach shared the spirit of Luther and was undoubtedly willing to regard the Pietists as a "heterodox" group, already because their approach to the arts separated them from true Lutheranism. However, in some respects Bach, like every other normal human being, was affected by the spirit and expression of his time and for this reason occasionally redeemed the time by using certain expressions and voicing certain sentiments typical of his time. Gerhard Herz says:

Still less reconcilable to Bach was the general attitude of the Pietists towards church music. It explains more convincingly than anything else we have shown why Bach must have felt bound to defend Luther's church and its music.—The Pietists were fundamentally opposed to any kind of art in worship, especially to the

"concerted" style of cantatas and Passions which Bach created out of his innermost religious and artistic conviction. Pietism "wishes the service to be adorned only with simple congregational hymns. So every cantor necessarily hated the pietists, and Bach took it particularly ill of them that they dragged his religious and artistic ideals in the dust." (Schweitzer, p. 169.)

... the fervor of the Pietists frequently inspired Bach to equally fervent religious and musical emotions which have sometimes, though wrongly, been interpreted as Pietistic. That such misinterpretations have occurred is the more astonishing as we note that none of Bach's text writers was, nor could have been a Pietist because the Pietists looked upon the form of the church cantata as a "sinful abomination." In fact, Erdmann Neumeister (1671 to 1756), who created this new cantata type by recasting his Sunday sermons into poetic verse form, was one of the most ardent champions of the orthodoxy and one of the most violent opponents of Pietism. Not even in the case of Neumeister's pupil, Salomo Franck, who has frequently been considered a Pietist because of the lyrical and ecstatic sentiments of his texts, can we rightly speak of Pietism. Not only was Franck a close friend of Olearius, the orthodox superintendent at Arnstadt, but he also enjoyed the confidence of the orthodox court of Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Sachsen-Weimar. But above all, his cantata texts, sentimental as many may be, were written in the poetic manner of Erdmann Neumeister and opposed by the Pietists. He 1, p. 135.

The following statements from Max Dehnert's *Das Weltbild Johann Sebastian Bachs* help illustrate why Bach could not have been both a Pietist and an orthodox Lutheran:

Orthodoxie und Pietismus waren keine neue Lehren, hinter denen die befeuernde Kraft eines Reformators stand, es waren Richtungen. In der einen herrscht der Verstand vor [*sic!*], in der anderen das Gemuet. Der Pietismus sprach etwas aus, was mehr war als eine Meinung, es war eine Erkenntnis, die in den Bezirken des religioesen Glaubens immer Geltung gehabt hat und haben wird, naemlich, dass das persoenliche Verhaeltnis zu Gott wichtiger sei als der Wortlaut der Dogmen. . . . Beide Richtungen, Orthodoxie und Pietismus, hatten eine ganz verschiedene Einstellung zur Kirchenmusik. Die Orthodoxie nahm den Standpunkt Luthers ein: man kann einen Herrn und Schoepfer auch mit Pauken, Trompeten, Schalmeyen und im Gesang loben. Fuer die Pietisten war die Musik eine Weltkunst, und die voellige Hingabe

an sie kam der Suende gleich. Bach musste also schon als Fachmann auf der anderen Seite stehen. . . . Bachs Kunst steht auf unverrueckbaren, fest untermauerten Plattformen. De, pp. 26—27.

We again quote Gerhard Herz, this time from his *Johann Sebastian Bach im Zeitalter des Rationalismus und der Frueromantik*, an excellent volume and study:

Er [Bach] wollte gar nicht anders sein als seine Vorfahren im Dienste der Kirche. Er war wirklich derart fromm, ihm war die alte Religion Luthers so gut und heilig, dass der Pietismus fuer ihn kein ernsthaftes Problem werden konnte. Diese Gesinnungsfestigkeit spiegelt sich auch in seinem Leben und seinem Kunstschaffen getreulich wider. . . . Zwar hat Bach am Pietismus nicht vorbeisehen koennen; irgendwie musste er zu ihm Stellung nehmen; und er hat sich auch in seiner mittleren Lebenszeit stellenweise von ihm inspirieren, niemals aber in seiner grundsuetzlichen altorthodoxen Haltung durch ihn erschuettern lassen. He 2, pp. 2 and 3.

Heinrich Schmid strikingly remarks:

Ewigkeitsluft ueber den Passionen, den Kantaten, den Motetten und der ganzen Instrumentalmusik! Dieses Wehen der Ewigkeit kann auch nicht verdorben werden durch den Zeitstaub, der den Werken anhaftet, naemlich durch die vielfach kuemmerlichen, schwuelstigen und unwuerdigen Worte, deren sich die Bachsche Musik bedienen musste, . . . Wenn Bach einem wirklichen Dichter begegnet waere? Schm, p. 33.

While it would not be difficult to quote many others, including men like Besch, Gurlitt, Hashagen, Terry, and Wolfrum in this connection, may it suffice to quote two very eminent Lutheran theologians, Walter Caspari and Adolf Koeberle, both of whom had a profound understanding of Bach's theology and philosophy; while Besch, though excellent otherwise, seems a bit indecisive in his conclusions regarding the fusion of orthodoxy and pietism in Bach (cf. Be 1, p. 186), Caspari as well as Koeberle, likewise, for all of that, Hashagen, Gurlitt, and Schmid (cf. above), stated and also solved the problem simply and without going into detail. Caspari was a theologian of the 19th century (b. 1847), Koeberle is a contemporary of our own day. Caspari says:

Die Kunstgeschichte macht nicht sklavisch die Perioden der Geistesgeschichte mit. J. S. Bach ist allerdings majestaetisch wie

die Orthodoxie seiner Zeit; aber er ist mehr; er ist elementar- und lebensvoll, siegreich wie die Reformation selbst; er ist der Kuenstler dieser Bewegung und ihr unmittelbar anzugliedern. Sein Erscheinen verzogerte sich um zweihundert Jahre; dies ist seiner Musik zum Vorteil gewesen. Die Musik hat wirklich erst noch zweihundert Jahre weiterkommen muessen, bis sie die Kunstmittel fuer einen solchen Genius parat hatte. Allein wenn das Zeitalter der Reformation in Bach auch noch einmal aufgewallt ist, seither ist es sicherlich zu Ende. — Quoted in Be 1, p. 185.

We quote from Koeberle's recent article "J. S. Bach's christliche Sendung":

Zu den schmerzlichsten Zerstoerungen unserer Zeit gehoert die Aufspaltung von Seele und Geist. Was Gott in seiner Schoepfung wundersam zusammengefuegt und fuer einander bestimmt hat, Herz und Gehirn, Gemuet und Intellekt, Waerme und Schaerfe, dass sie sich wechselseitig durchdringen, einander dienen und beschenken, das ist heute in verhaengnisvoller Weise auseinandergebrochen und hat zu ungesunden, krebsartigen Wucherungen auf beiden Seiten gefuehrt. Dieser Entartungsprozess seigt sich sowohl in der modernen Theologie wie in der modernen Kunst. Verstaendnislos verdammen sich heute gegenseitig Orthodoxie und Enthusiasmus. Die Dogmatik wird immer trockener und begrifflicher, immer lehrhafter und immer langweiliger. Sie ist nicht mehr durchtraenkt von Andacht, Froemdigkeit und Herzenswaerme. Daneben aber erhitzt sich ein religioeser Enthusiasmus, der zu seinem eigenen Schaden alles verachtet, was mit Theologie, Bekenntnis, Lehre und Tradition zusammenhaengt. Ko, p. 31

Bach often referred to death, and many of his thoughts were eschatological in character and expression. Some have linked this up with the sentimental pietistic tendencies of Bach's day; however, a careful examination of Bach's expressions regarding death and eschatology will reveal that his outlook was by no means gloomy and morbid. Here, too, a more careful examination will remind one of Luther, whose life maxim was: *Non moriar, sed vivam*. A study of the chorales of the Lutheran Church written and sung between the days of Luther and the days of Bach proves clearly that, in the vast majority, attention is called to the hour of death in at least one or two stanzas, usually at the close of the hymn. As with Luther, so was death for Bach the climax of life, the

departure for a better and happier world. The ring of victory is heard when Bach sings of death. Occasionally, as in

Liebster Herr Jesu, wo bleibst Du so lange?
Komm doch, mir wird hier auf Erden so bange,

one senses sentimentality of a pietistic nature, but this is no more than the *Zeistaub* Heinrich Schmid referred to. Bach's better known

Komm, suesser Tod,
Komm, sel'ge Ruh.
Komm, fuehre mich in Friede,
Weil ich der Welt bin muede;
Ach, komm, ich wart auf dich.
Komm bald und fuehre mich,
Drueck mir die Augen zu.
Komm, sel'ge Ruh.

may hardly be said to be nauseatingly sentimental, especially when, in the second stanza, we read

Ich will nun Jesum sehen
Und bei den Engeln stehen.
Es ist nunmehr vollbracht.
Drum, Welt, zu guter Nacht.

Many a pastor has heard people express similar sentiments while on their sickbed or deathbed, and without showing a great deal of emotion. What more effective way could Bach have found to close his *Passion According to St. John* than with the well-known words he chose from Martin Schalling's chorale text "Herzlich lieb hab' ich dich, O Herr":

Lord, let at last Thine angels come,
To Abram's bosom bear me home,
That I may die unfearing;
And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep
Until Thy reappearing.
And then from death awaken me
That these mine eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, Thy glorious face,
My Savior and my Fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer attend,
And I will praise Thee without end.

(Translation by Catherine Winkworth)

Bach's cantata *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit* is saturated with a thoroughly evangelical spirit, though based throughout on the subject of death. The cantata is, in fact, a notable triumph of the Gospel over the Law. This cantata astounds us with its clear insight and deep understanding, particularly since Bach wrote it when he was still in his rather early twenties; as far as scholars have been able to ascertain, Bach not only wrote the music, but also served as his own librettist. The cantata offers clear proof, both in the music and in the text, of Bach's remarkable theological acumen.

We quote from Hans Besch's article *Bach und die letzten Dinge*:

Er war nicht nur religiös wie Beethoven oder — recht verstanden — naiv gläubig wie Bruckner. Die ungeheure Kraft seines theologischen Denkens — Schweitzer spricht von der Urkraft des Denkens bei Bach, die tiefer erschüttert als das Denken Kants oder Hegels — erfüllt den gesamten Raum seines musikalischen Wirkens. Darum ergluehen alle Bezirke der angeblich so starren Glaubenslehre seiner Zeit, welche Bach musikalisch erreichte, unterschiedslos in dem gleichen Feuer. — Als unverlierbarer Besitz hat das Wissen um die letzten Dinge Bach durch das Leben begleitet. Nicht nur die Kantaten auf die letzten Sonntage des Kirchenjahrs beweisen es. . . . Vielmehr durchzieht der Gedanke an Tod, Ewigkeit und Gericht das gesamte Schaffen Bachs. . . . Keiner der Musiker hat die *ars moriendi* in so ergreifender Weise zum Ausdruck gebracht. . . . Bachs Todessehnsucht aber war realistisch — sie lebte auf dem Grund einer bestimmten Wirklichkeit, welche Besitz ist. Seine Sehnsucht nach dem Ewigen war von der Art Augustins, der sagt: "Seit ich von dieser Speise gekostet, hungere und duerste ich nach Dir." — Das, wonach Bach sich sehnt, ist schon da: er erlebt im Glauben die bedraengende, erloesende Wirklichkeit des Ewigen, das ihn vollkommen frei macht zum Leben in dieser Welt. Dieses Leben aus Gott ist so sehr die Quelle, aus der Bach lebt, steht fuer ihn so im Vordergrund, dass man sagen kann: *Die letzten Dinge, das sind fuer Bach die ersten Dinge*. Be 3, pp. 22—23.

IV

It is known that Bach prefaced all his works with the words: *Jesu Juva* (Jesus, help). His prayer was not denied him, and the forty-six large volumes which contain his many compositions show most conclusively that his prayers for help were heard. Bach was

not a formalist; his prayers came from the heart and were more than empty formulas. Schweitzer calls attention to this fact:

Das *S. D. G.*: *Soli Deo Gloria* — und *J. J.*: *Jesu, juva*, womit er seine Partitur zierte, ist fuer ihn keine Formel, sondern das Bekenntnis, das durch sein ganzes Schaffen hindurchgeht. Musik ist fuer ihn Gottesdienst. Bachs Kuenstlertum und Persoenlichkeit ruhen auf seiner Froemdigkeit. Schw, p. 152.

A *Jesu juva* was sent to heaven by Bach on many an occasion also because of the trying hardships and adversities he was obliged to endure throughout his life. His *Jesu juva* was often tantamount to the cry uttered by the disciples of Jesus during the storm on the Sea of Galilee: "Lord, save us; we perish." We might recall that he became an orphan at the age of ten, was obliged to leave his brother's home and venture forth into the world alone at the age of fifteen, was slighted and ignored shamefully on two occasions by Duke Wilhelm Ernst, with whom he got along very well otherwise and whom he had served faithfully and successfully for a number of years, was accused of being obstinate and was put into a cell when he asked to be relieved of his duties in Weimar to take up professional duties elsewhere; two years after his arrival in Coethen, upon his return from an official trip to Carlsbad together with Prince Leopold, he was informed that his wife had been buried during his absence; in Leipzig, where he labored for twenty-seven long years, his genius was neither appreciated nor recognized; when his monumental *Passion According to St. Matthew* was presented for the first time, one person present in the audience rose to exclaim: "God help us! 'tis surely an opera-comedy"; in Leipzig he chafed under a young rector twenty-two years his junior, a nasty person, who derived great satisfaction from countermanding and irritating Bach and who would interrupt pupils while they practiced and say: "So, you intend to be a beer fiddler"; in Leipzig he had to put up with ill-behaved and unappreciative students (not including his private pupils!) who, like the people of Leipzig, had very little understanding of Bach's genius, his theological acumen, and his musical art. It was in Leipzig, too, that Bach had serious difficulties with Johann Adolph Scheibe, a pedantic and frustrated music critic, who was very much under the spell of the destructive spirit of the era of Rationalism and who, in 1729,

wanted the position at St. Thomas which was given to Bach instead. Bach and his family were required to live in quarters which were so congested that it is believed that the defective physiques and unhealthy bodies of no fewer than eight children of his second marriage may have been due to this congestion; a number of his children died in infancy, and one was feeble-minded. In 1749 Bach became ill, and blindness soon deprived him of his sight; already a year before his death, while he suffered from broken health, steps were actually taken to appoint his successor, and after his death, Maria Magdalena, his second wife, was obliged to live in abject poverty until her death.

Oddly enough, though well acquainted with the facts of Bach's life, art, and spirituality, Spitta says:

Sein ganzes Wesen ruhte auf einer Froemdigkeit, die nicht in inneren Kaempfen errungen, sondern angeboren und natuerlich war. Sp II, p. 747.

It has not occurred to Schweitzer either that Bach, like every thinking and consecrated Christian, had his inner struggles and that his *Jesu juvas* were loud *Kyries* sent to the throne of God. Friedrich Blume calls attention to this fact in his *J. S. Bach im Wandel der Geschichte*:

Hatte Spitta den vermeintlichen Widerspruch von Leben und Schaffen nicht auszugleichen vermocht, so ueberbrueckte ihn Schweitzer mit der Auffassung, dass dieser Loewe sich im Schaffen zum frommen Klausner bewandelt und in der Einsiedelei seine Kraftnatur in musikalische Bilder ergossen habe. "Seine Musik ist ein Phaenomen des Unbegreiflich-Realen, wie die Welt ueberhaupt." — Auch ihm [Schweitzer] ist Bachs Froemdigkeit noch unkompliziert, unproblematisch, auch ihm noch Bach der Genius, der aus den Fesseln seiner Zeit hinausstrebt, ein Adler im Kaefig. Blu 2, pp. 34-35.

That Bach was afflicted with severe inner struggles may be concluded easily from Hans Besch's article "Johann Sebastian Bach — Citizen of Two Worlds" which appeared in the May, 1950, issue of the *Lutheran Quarterly*. Without going into detail, C. Hubert H. Parry shows that he is aware of the influence exerted upon Bach by his inner struggles when he says:

The true conviction is the personal conviction, not the accep-

tance of the conventions of the complaisant majority; and those who have to find their way alone in tears and anguish, and hammer out their own salvation unaided, attain more frequently to the highest artistic achievement than those whose path is smoothed for them by favourable opportunities. . . . When the scope is great, the individuality is generally due to the unity and consistency of the man's character, and the persistence of firmness and conviction. . . . Men only express themselves heroically when noble disinterestedness is frankly appreciated; they only express the fervour and ardour of religion when religion is a deeply rooted reality, not of forms and ceremonies, but of the spirit. Pa, pp. 2—4.

Bach's theology can hardly be understood fully and well unless one is aware of Bach's knowledge of his own utter unworthiness. This applies also to his music, since his music and theology constitute a closely knit unit. The problems posed by Bach's inner struggles in their relationship to his music have thus far been neglected and must serve as the basis for much further study and research. Until this has been done, as is stated also by Blume in his *J. S. Bach im Wandel der Geschichte*, our understanding of Bach's theology and art will continue to be inadequate and extremely limited. Preuss' statement is, we believe, remarkable:

Nicht der Wandelnde, Heilende, Lehrende, sondern vor allem der Gekreuzigte ist ihm [Bach] Christus. Er hat sein Groesstes und Tiefstes am Gekreuzigten ausgesprochen. — Aber *darin sind sich Duerer, Luther und Bach eins, dass sie im Leid nicht aufgehen, sondern immer zuletzt den Sieger am Kreuze anbeten.* Pr, p. 19.

Scholars who, like Albert Schweitzer, are rationalistically inclined will hardly be well qualified to study this problem and arrive at satisfactory conclusions. To the rationalist, Bach will always be largely a mystic endowed with a complex personality and spirit.

V

Rationalism was largely responsible for the fact that Bach's music suffered gross neglect for almost a hundred years after his death. To the rationalists the compositions of Bach were the music of an old foggy; this attitude was shared also by Bach's sons, though they were aware of his superb abilities. Bach's theology was appreciated even less than his music during the era of Enlightenment. It could

hardly be otherwise. We again quote from Heinrich Schmid's simple and short treatise:

Aber die eigentliche Ursache des Versinkens Bachs lag viel tiefer. Ziemlich genau in der Zeit, da Bach starb, ereignete sich naemlich eine Zeitenwende, die dem Jahrhundert eine andere Gestalt und einen anderen Geist gab. Im doppelten Sinn. Herder, Goethe, Schiller und ihr Gefolge erklommen die ragenden Gipfel eines edlen Humanismus und Idealismus. Es waren erhabene Hoehen. Aber es waren nicht mehr die Berge, zu denen Bach seine Augen aufgehoben hatte sein Leben lang und auf denen das Kreuz von Golgotha stand. — Das hat tiefer und verheerender auf die Geschichte unseres Volkes und des ganzen Abendlandes eingewirkt als alle Kriege, der Dreissigjaehrige eingeschlossen. . . . Alles hallte wider vom Preis der menschlichen Wuerde, Groesse, Guete und Kraft. — Man merkte nicht, dass die Menschheit ihren Wesensgrund verloren hatte; man erkannte nicht . . . was ein ehrlicher, unbestochener Blick ins eigene Herz schrecklich genug zeigt: dass es ein armes Ding um das menschliche Wesen ist, und dass es verschmachten und verwesen muss, wenn es aus sich selbst leben will ohne die Quelle alles Lebens, ohne Gott. Schm, p. 29.

Goethe's reactions to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach may be regarded as a typical, though complimentary, expression of the era of Enlightenment:

I said to myself, it is as if the eternal harmony were conversing within itself, as it may have done in the bosom of God just before the creation of the world. So likewise did it move in my inmost soul, and it seemed as if I neither possessed nor needed ears, nor any other sense — least of all, the eyes. Dam, p. 369.

It would be difficult to imagine a Martin Luther expressing such reactions, even to Bach's absolute music written for some musical instrument. Again, Heinrich Schmid says:

Goethe wurde geboren als Bach starb; es musste genuegen, dass Goethe dem grossen Meister uebers Grab hinweg huldigte, wie er ihn eben verstehen konnte; naecher haetten sie sich auch im Leben nicht kommen koennen, denn ihre Welten beruehrten einander kaum. Aber mit einem Dichter begab sich die glueckhafte Begegnung; wo Bach seine Kunst einem Paul-Gerhardtschen Choral verleiht, da weht reine Ewigkeitsluft. Schm, 33.

Rationalism does not understand why Bach should insist on writing his compositions *In nomine Jesu*, why he should address a *Jesu juva* to his Savior before beginning to write another composition, and finally, why he should append *S. D. G. — Soli Deo Gloria* — to his compositions, or dedicate his *Little Organ Book*:

Dem Hoechsten Gott allein zu Ehren,
Dem Naechsten, draus sich zu belehren.

Such sentiments are foreign to an era which sublimates man and his reason at the expense of his Savior and Christian faith.

At this time, while approaching the close of the present discussion, we offer in rather free translation the sentiments expressed by D. Fr. Hashagen:

Had Bach studied theology at a theological school, at which German university could he, in his day, have found a professor of theology who would have been able to impart to him a more thorough and rich training than what he had acquired through experience and diligent self-instruction? Bach did not acquire his attitude and high regard for the well-ordered and objective liturgical service of worship through an intellectual type of instruction offered by human instructors. We stress that not only his intelligence, but also his entire life, character, and personality were saturated and actuated by the Confessions and treasures of his Church, particularly through her liturgy, which is based on the words of Holy Writ. We get this impression repeatedly as we examine his life and his work; these inexhaustible treasures of the Church enabled him to enjoy performing his sublime task and thus making available to the Church her own great treasures through the medium of his great art. Ha, pp. 147—148. Tr. by W. E. B.

Hans Preuss, too, points to the wholesome influence which was exerted upon Bach by the liturgies of his Church:

Bachs lutherische Kirchlichkeit zeigt sich grundlegend darin, dass seine Kunst aus dem lutherischen Gottesdienst herauswaechst. Sie ist auf dem lutherischen Choral aufgebaut und musikalisch auf der Orgel. Pr, p. 16.

We quote also Terry and Herz:

From his childhood he [Bach] is rarely without the hymnbook in his hand. . . . At Leipzig, in the select library that filled his shelves, no volume was so well thumbed as Paul Wagner's pon-

derous hymnbook. . . . Bach and the Lutheran hymnbook are inseparables. Te 2, pp. 113-15.

While the Pietists were principally responsible for this dilution of the old chorale, it must be admitted that the orthodox Baroque hymn poets too helped pave the way for this new subjective and sentimentalized chorale style. On the other hand, it can again be shown to what little extent Bach participated in this trend of his time. No composer alive employed as many of the old Lutheran chorales as did Bach. "Of the five generations of German history between 1520 and 1680, represented in Bach's cantatas by their chorales, the first generation contributed most, with Luther himself leading the rest of the writers" (R. Wustmann, quoted by Besch in *op. cit.*, 258 f.). He 1, p. 137.

Bach used no fewer than twenty of Martin Luther's chorales in his compositions. Therefore also through his liturgical approach and hymnological interests did Bach show clearly that he was at variance with Pietism and Rationalism, neither of which was interested in liturgics or in the best representatives of Lutheran hymnody.

Pietism as well as Rationalism was uninterested in the past and in the traditions of the past and thereby exhibited the spirit of sectarianism. In addition, both introduced into the Lutheran Church new and unfortunate traditions and practices which afflict the Church to the present day. Prior to the days of Bach, the Church did not think of her great traditions as mere traditions, certainly not as outmoded and antiquated practices. The Church lived and thrived in her worship practices, which she regarded as a priceless and glorious heritage she was permitted to share with those who had been members of former generations. This heritage was based on the Word of God and was an expression of Christian doctrine. Many refer to the era which preceded the era of Pietism as the era of dead orthodoxy; however, such a designation is questionable as well as unfair. The 16th, 17th, and first half of the 18th century produced great theological literature of the Lutheran Church; these centuries were likewise the golden age of Lutheran church music. The golden age terminated in Bach, and all that preceded Bach helped pave the way for him. A dead era cannot be fruitful, nor can a dead era produce much music that is filled with the type of warmth that is found in a normal live body. Herz rightly says:

... there existed more genuine sentiment and life in the orthodox camp than the Pietists were ready to admit. He 1, p. 135.

The orthodoxy of Johann Sebastian Bach was certainly neither cold nor dead. On the contrary, it teemed with spiritual life, it proclaimed aloud to all men Jesus Christ and Him Crucified, and it pointed to the mansions on high into which the souls of God's children enter in the hour of death and which their glorified bodies will inhabit in all eternity. Bach is indeed an eloquent preacher of the Gospel. Like the Gospel, his music is rank foolishness to many people; but it is not rank foolishness to those who heed its message. Some may not understand Bach's musical language, but if they believe the Gospel, at least the texts will mean much to them. They fail to understand the music because they have conditioned their ears to the musical slang of other types which make no attempt to bespeak the native beauty of the Gospel as did the music of Bach. The problem is not merely a cultural or a musical problem; it is likewise, and just as forcefully, a spiritual problem, a problem of worship, a problem of theology. The world may enjoy Bach for aesthetic reasons only. For that reason Bach's days are likely numbered among the children of the world, for if the Gospel is foolishness to them, then, in the end, Bach's proclamation of this Gospel, the "new song," will be but foolishness to them. Bach's music must be sung and played as an expression of faith if it is to be performed in keeping with the spirit and wishes of Bach; it must be heard as an expression of faith if it is to do good to the soul. We quote from *Das unsichtbare Reich* by Oskar Loerke:

Bachs Religion ist eine Religion des Heiligen Geistes. . . . Das Feuer erfuehlt sie wie ein Meer, Bach erkennt: dieser Geist ist heilig. Um diesen Satz auszusprechen, brauchte er all die Hunderte der Werke, die sein Leben ausmachen. Lo, p. 37.

We again quote Besch:

Ein Traditions-Christentum im Sinn des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts gab es zu seiner [Bachs] Zeit noch nicht. Dies beginnt erst nach 1750 sich mehr und mehr zu entwickeln. Die Substanz des christlichen Glaubens ist ihm selber noch vollkommen bewusst gewesen. Und wenn man unter Theologie verstehen kann, dass der christliche Glaube sich seiner selbst bewusst wird, so muss man sagen, dass Bach ein Theologe war. Be 3, p. 22.

In closing, we quote Hugo Leichtentritt, who says:

In his cantatas, his Passion music, and his chorale preludes for the organ he [Bach] interprets the meaning of the Holy Scriptures and the Christian creed with a fervor, persuasiveness, penetration, and vast imaginative power never again exhibited by religious music. His religious music has, indeed, much similarity to a profound sermon of a great preacher. Le, p. 147.

St. Louis, Mo.

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