

On the Protestant Roots of Gustav Leonhardt's Performance Style¹

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On 24 January 2012, a memorial was held for Gustav Maria Leonhardt (1928–2012) in Amsterdam's *Westerkerk*. Its content had been carefully prepared by the deceased himself, honed and refined over a period of four years, ever since he had first been diagnosed with lymphatic cancer in 2008. The gathering shocked many of those attending both by the severity of its spoken rhetoric and by its paucity of musical content. The chosen organ preludes and postlude by J. S. Bach were relatively simple, with a limited appeal to sentiment.² The only music during the event proper was the communal singing of a psalm and several chorales. An extensive text, "Reflections Written by Gustav Leonhardt," was read aloud. In it the Enlightenment was excoriated as foolish hubris, human love dismissed as illusory in contrast to the divine, and the freedoms of modern society disparaged as grotesque deviations from God's will. Attendees were invited to submit themselves to the latter.

Those who knew Leonhardt well will not have been surprised by the pious, unsparing tone of the ceremony, nor by the subordinate role music played in it. Leonhardt's faith was of great importance to him, by the end of his life more important than music. As his former student and close friend Alan Curtis wrote:

though Leonhardt was certainly pleased to see and hear the effects of his influence in the field of music and the fine arts, his greatest wish, I would guess, remained unfulfilled. He

¹ This research was originally carried out as a contribution to the research project "Ina Lohr (1903–1983), an Early Music Zealot: Her Influence in Switzerland and the Netherlands." The project was generously supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation. An early version of this paper, "*Faith, Volk, and Bach-trunkenen Theologen*" was read at the 2015 Utrecht Early Music Festival during the STIMU symposium *The Past is a Foreign Country*.

² "Before the service, [Bernard Winsemius] played the Siciliano from the Harpsichord Concerto, BWV 1053 and the Fugue in b minor, BWV 544b. ... The ceremony ended with a reading of the text from the final chorale of Bach's *St. John Passion*, 'Ach Herr, lass dein lieb Engelein,' which was then played on the organ." <http://www.semibrevity.com/2014/01/the-funeral-of-gustav-leonhardt-24-january-2012-a-short-report>.

would have liked to have led others, by his example, to return not only to the art ... of a long-gone age, but also to its religion. In his last years he confessed that he could no longer stomach “Catholic composers,” and in his last days, having expressed the wish that God would find him “not too great a sinner,” he told me that he no longer had any desire to hear music at all.³

In 1995 Leonhardt had given an interview in the formerly Catholic newspaper *De Volkskrant* in which he described himself as Protestant “body and soul,” adding “I don’t care to go too deeply into this, and I wouldn’t persecute them, but banalities play an important role for Catholics, there are many distracting superficialities.”⁴ In a 2008 interview Leonhardt spoke openly about his faith, declaring that the Bible was “everything” to him, “something that stamps all one’s deeds” and affirming that he believed Jesus was “absolutely” his personal savior. He rejected the idea that he could be labeled a Calvinist, implying that obedience to human authority was a quality he associated with Catholicism: “I am not a disciple of a particular person. Roman Catholics follow the Pope and the other leaders, but I do not follow Calvin.”⁵

Yet, despite such clear indications from the man himself, a certain ambiguity is sometimes ascribed not only to his relationship to Catholicism, but also the extent to which his faith influenced his work. Jurjen Vis has raised both points:

Gustav Leonhardt was a pious Protestant and moreover very orthodox. How orthodox, however, must be taken into consideration, for his middle name [Maria] hints at the influence of his Catholic, Austrian mother, who converted to Protestantism because of her marriage. Did two traditions perhaps come together in Leonhardt: on the one hand that of the Protestant, Dutch elite; on the other, that of the more flamboyant Middle-European Catholicism? According to his

³ “Remembering Gustav Leonhardt,” in *Appreciating Gustav Leonhardt* (Western Keyboard Association and Musicources: 2012), unpaginated. <http://erikvisser.com/Programs/Leonhardt%20web.pdf>.

⁴ Cornald Maas, “Ik beweeg niet meer dan mijn vingers,” *De Volkskrant*, 7 April 1995, 2. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/archief/ik-beweeg-niet-meer-dan-mijn-vingers-a396554>.

⁵ Jaco van der Knijff, “Tussenhandelaar in muziek,” Kenniscentrum Gereformeerde Gezindte, Digibron.nl, <https://www.digibron.nl/search/detail/012dbe2c0b478923f40937da/tussenhandelaar-in-muziek>.

children, certainly not. The Dutch, Protestant element was dominant throughout their father's entire life. It would be all too facile to connect Leonhardt's Protestantism with his strictness, or even stiffness, as a musician.⁶

It is the goal of this article to question, and to some extent contradict, Vis' final statement, to trace elements of Leonhardt's musical approach back to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German controversies surrounding the performance of church music and, most particularly, the cantatas of Bach. It will be argued that a clear and easy separation of musical aesthetics from spiritual beliefs was impossible for certain pious German Protestants, leading to a clash between musicological and religious ideals of authenticity.

The article consists of three sections. The first deals extensively with the performative ideologies of what musicologist Alfred Heuß (1877–1934) called the *kirchliche Bachbewegung* (ecclesiastical Bach movement).⁷ This group of enthusiastic, like-minded Protestants sought—in an historical approach to the performance of Bach's liturgical music—a *spiritual* rather than an *aesthetic* authenticity (though the two were not considered incompatible). It was felt that such authenticity, by rejecting the dangerous notion of *L'art pour l'art*, could lead to religious renewal for the German people.

The second section establishes a link between these German theologians and Leonhardt's musical practice. It argues that a group of Dutch Bach cognoscenti and music critics who in 1921 would go on to found the Nederlandse Bachvereniging (Dutch Bach Society), was aware of the *kirchliche Bachbewegung*, and of the tensions surrounding authenticity that plagued the Neue Bachgesellschaft. However, while clearly sympathetic to the *ideals* of the *kirchlichen Bachbewegung*, the leadership of the Nederlandse Bachvereniging never advocated the implementation of its *goals*, which were incompatible with the practices of the Dutch Calvinist church. The Dutch music critic Herman Rutters (1879–1961) united German concepts of performative and spiritual authenticity into a single "Bach-aesthetic," centered on the "spirit" of the work.

The third section examines particular aspects of Leonhardt's thought. The Nederlandse Bachvereniging had a strong influence on the young

⁶ "Gustav Leonhardt: Eerste onder de apostelen van een onbekende Sweelinck," <http://www.jurjenvis.nl/bestanden/gustav-leonhardt-in-memoriam.pdf>.

⁷ For the nomenclature see Alfred Heuß, "Bach's Choral und die Gemeinde," *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 5 (1910): 133.

Leonhardt; he even went so far as to attribute his decision to become a musician to his early contact with the society. Therefore, cognizance of the ideologies presented in the previous sections gives context to some of his more controversial statements and puzzling political positions. The larger goal of this research, however, is not to limit its implications to Leonhardt, for it could be argued that he transmitted some of these ideologies to his many pupils and devotees, who, mistaking them for purely aesthetic rather than spiritually motivated points of view, passed them on in turn to a new generation. It is neither a desire to buoy up Leonhardt's like-minded followers nor to point an unsympathetic finger at his remarkable legacy that motivates this essay, but rather the wish to invite further thought on its implications for the performance practices of the Early Music movement today.

I. Bach in Germany 1900 to 1909

A New Bach Society

On 27 January 1900, the Bachgesellschaft finished the task, begun fifty years earlier, of publishing the complete works of Bach in a "critical and monumental" edition.⁸ On that day and in accordance with its statutes, the society met a final time in order to dissolve itself: its goal had been achieved. The Bachgesellschaft, on the brink of self-dissolution, could look back at a half-century's existence with some satisfaction. It had completed—and not without struggle—*Johann Sebastian Bach's Werke* (now commonly known as the *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe*), an activity that had stimulated interest not only in Bach's music, but in Early Music generally.

Publishing Bach's music, however, was seen as but the first step in a larger plan of disseminating his works. In order to achieve this, the Neue Bachgesellschaft (hereafter NBG) was founded at the same meeting in which the old Bachgesellschaft dissolved itself. The "mission statement" of the new society, published in 1901, ran thus: "The purpose of the new Bachgesellschaft is to ensure that the music of the great German composer J. S. Bach become an invigorating force in the German people, and in countries that are receptive to serious German music."⁹

⁸ K. N., "Die alte und die neue Bachgesellschaft," *Die Grenzboten: Zeitschrift für Politik, Literatur und Kunst* 59 (1900): 535.

⁹ "Der Zweck der neuen Bachgesellschaft ist, den Werken des großen deutschen Tonmeisters Johann Sebastian Bach eine belebende Macht im deutschen Volke und in

The new society planned to organize concerts in biannual Bach festivals, for, as its first president, Hermann Kretzschmar, pointed out, the mere existence of new editions, unaided by performance, could not bring early repertoire back to life: "Like the old editions, so in the foreseeable future the new editions will once more be buried in libraries, if their content is not resurrected in sound."¹⁰

The society was aware that the "monumental" tomes of the *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe*, although they had accomplished their goal of preserving the work "of one of the greatest German musicians ... from the threat of destruction," were scholarly rather than practical editions.¹¹ If Bach's music were actually to be heard by the German people, new performing materials would have to be created. Therefore the NBG undertook a new series of publications, "intended to make inexpensive popular editions of Bach's works (in primitive form or adaptation), as well as enlightening writings on Bach's works, accessible to the members."¹²

Scholarly writings on Bach were published by the society from 1904 onwards in the *Bach Jahrbuch* and performance materials (with emphasis on the church cantatas) also appeared.¹³ The importance of liturgical works as transmitters of Bach's invigorating power was not lost on the clergymen involved in the NBG. For instance, in 1904 Georg Rietschel

den ernster deutscher Musik zugängigen Ländern zu schaffen." *Erstes deutsches Bachfest in Berlin, 21. bis 23. März 1901: Festschrift und Programmbuch* ([Leipzig] : [Breitkopf & Härtel], 1901), 85.

¹⁰ "Wie die alten Drucke, so werden in absehbarer Zeit auch die Neudrucke wieder in Bibliotheken begraben sein, wenn ihr Inhalt nicht klingend aufersteht." Hermann Kretzschmar, "Die Bach-Gesellschaft. Bericht im Auftrage des Directoriums," in *Schlussband*, vol. 46 of *Johann Sebastian Bach's Werke* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, [1900]), lxii.

¹¹ The full sentence runs: "Die Gesamtausgabe hat einen grossen und wichtigen Theil der Werke eines der grössten deutschen Musiker zum ersten Mal in den Druck gebracht und damit, wie wir hoffen, auf immer, jedenfalls aber auf lange Zeit hinaus, vor dem drohenden Untergang gerettet." Kretzschmar, "Die Bach-Gesellschaft," li.

¹² "Die Veröffentlichungen sollen volkstümlich billige Ausgaben von Bachschen Werken in Urgestalt oder Bearbeitung, sowie aufklärende Schriften über Bachsche Werke den Mitglidern zugänglich machen." *Erstes deutsches Bachfest in Berlin*, 86.

¹³ To the 1904 *Festschrift* is appended a catalogue of "Joh. Seb. Bachs Werke im Verlage von Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig: Gesamtausgabe für den praktischen Gebrauch." According to the list published on page 11 of this appendix entitled "Veröffentlichungen der Neuen Bachgesellschaft," an edition of church cantatas arranged by G. Schreck and Ernst Naumann had already appeared in the second *Vereinsjahr*. The history of these publications will not be pursued here. Suffice it to say that religious and aesthetic motivations led to conflict here as elsewhere in the activities of the NBG.

(1842–1914), a theologian who specialized in liturgy, exclaimed “What is the use, if all the treasures were to stay buried, black on white, in stately tomes preserved in public and private libraries, if the life-giving water of this stream [*dieses Bachs*] is not led vibrant into our people, so that everyone can drink refreshment from it?”¹⁴

The 1901 Berlin Bachfest: Caviar for Spoiled Musical Palates

The new society wasted no time in sluicing the German people with the vibrant waters: the first *Bachfest* took place in Berlin from 21–23 March 1901 and the “three largest concert institutions of Berlin, the Philharmonie, the Königliche Hochschule für Musik and the Singakademie” all took part.¹⁵ The festivities consisted of three concerts, a banquet, and an exhibition (displaying “original manuscripts, certificates, paintings, busts, statues, Bach’s harpsichord and so forth”).¹⁶

The concert programs offered examples of Bach’s output in various genres: organ music, concerti, chamber music, secular cantatas, and sacred music on German and Latin texts. The opening concert took place in the *Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche*, with the orchestra and *Philharmonische Chor* conducted by Siegfried Ochs. It presented five church cantatas, including the Reformation cantata *Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild* BWV 79 and *Christ lag in Todes Banden* BWV 4. The second concert took place in the *Singakademie*, with members of the *Königliche akademische Hochschule für Musik* conducted by Joseph Joachim. The program included organ and chamber music, an aria from *Der Streit zwischen Phoebus und Pan* BWV 201, and the motet *Jesu, meine Freude* BWV 227. The final concert—which also took place in the *Singakademie*, with Georg Schumann conducting the *Singakademie* choir—included the *Messe* in A Major BWV 234 and Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 BWV 1050.

These three concerts caused consternation among some audience members. This was not, however, because they were of poor artistic quality. In 1901 the Protestant pastor from Posen, Karl Greulich (1869–1946), gave voice to the offended party in the *Monatsschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst*:

¹⁴ “Ansprache des Geheimen Kirchenrats Professor D. Georg Rietschel in der Motette am 1. Oktober 1904,” *Bach Jahrbuch* 1 (1904): 8, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015007832234;view=1up;seq=5>.

¹⁵ For the complete program see *Erstes deutsches Bachfest in Berlin*, 67–83.

¹⁶ *Erstes deutsches Bachfest in Berlin*, 84.

Each concert was beautiful in its way. We admired excellent conductors, were amazed by the tremendous achievements of choir and orchestra, rejoiced at many excellent instrumental and vocal soloists (though not all!)—in short, we wallowed in delicious aesthetic pleasures, as perhaps can only be offered in such abundance in Berlin. And just so we stood, in the Bach exhibition, before so many and such precious relics of Bach as only Berlin can display. But this Berlin Bach festival achieved nothing that served to advance the cause of allowing those works of Bach that were written for the church service (and that is by far the majority!) to be heard again in the context of a church service, or at least in a form that is not intrinsically embarrassing and disturbing.¹⁷

Greulich was a vocal supporter of the *kirchliche Bachbewegung*, a group of ideologically motivated Bach devotees who sought to return the church cantatas of Bach to the Protestant service. The two most important exponents of this point of view were the Protestant pastors Friedrich Spitta (1852-1924)—brother of Bach biographer Philipp Spitta—and Julius Smend (1857-1930)—father of the theologian and Bach scholar Friedrich Smend. Together, they founded the *Monatsschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst* in which Greulich's review appeared.¹⁸

Having declared his desire for Bach's religious music to be performed in liturgical context, Greulich mentions two particularly "embarrassing and disturbing" moments that occurred during the Berlin Bach celebrations. The first involved the performance of the church cantatas, particularly that of *Christ lag in Todes Banden*.

However, one had to ask oneself why the Philharmonische Chor in particular was given the task of singing a concert in a church consisting entirely of church cantatas? I know myself truly to be free of any confessional partiality, from anything related to "anti-Semitism." But why in particular did this choir, which consists for the most part of non-Christians, have to sing the cantatas? I cannot comprehend how such a choir can accept a text like that of *Christ lag in*

¹⁷ "Das 1. Deutsche Bachfest in Berlin," *Monatsschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst* 6 (1901): 156, https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_gtAqAAAAAYAAJ_2.

¹⁸ For more information see Konrad Klek, *Erlebnis Gottesdienst: Die liturgischen Reformbestrebungen um die Jahrhundertwende unter Führung von Friedrich Spitta und Julius Smend* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

Todesbanden. It simply is not true that for Bach the texts are merely incidental; no, out of the text the music is born. The music is so deeply immersed in the consciousness and experience, in the “atmosphere” of that particular time that it is impossible fully and completely to understand it from an aesthetic viewpoint alone, without taking this “atmosphere” into consideration. He who desires to have the complete Bach must accept his religious *Empfindungswelt* as part of the bargain—surely the blessed Philipp Spitta imprinted this indelibly upon us!—Why could the Singakademie and the Philharmonische Chor not have exchanged programmes? Could not the Singakademie, for the sake of a Bach festival, just for one time let go of its old tradition and sing in a church for once? Or are there no capable church choirs in Berlin? Was it not feasible to use the *Domchor* or one of the larger church choirs in which boys sing? We would have liked to hear Bach cantatas with boys’ voices for once! Perhaps a performance like that, which would naturally have to work with smaller forces, would also have come closer to Bach’s spirit than performances with modern, gigantic choirs, which by their violent means can seduce the choir director to effects that are certainly hardly in accord with Bach’s notions.¹⁹

Greulich here introduces a number of themes that would reappear in successive editions of the *Bach Jahrbuch*—as well as in other musicological publications—demarkating a battleground on which Protestant theologians waged a war against aesthetics. A fundamental precept was their conception of sensual sonic enjoyment as a debasement of Bach’s art. Virtuoso performances, a term which in this period referred not only to technically skilful, but also to artistically refined performances, might please the audience with their interpretations, but this was to do no more than encourage the listener to “wallow in delicious aesthetic pleasures” at the expense of spiritual improvement. Equally important is Greulich’s argument against development in music. He did not believe that Bach’s cantatas could be served by updating them, by placing them in the context of the current aesthetic consensus. Rather, they had to be placed firmly in the “atmosphere” of their own time, which, according to Greulich, was a distinctly religious and specifically Protestant one.

¹⁹ “Das 1. Deutsche Bachfest in Berlin,” 156–57.

By comparing texts by writers associated with the NBG like Pastor Greulich and theologians Smend and Spitta we can—if somewhat gingerly—reconstruct some core principles of the *kirchlichen Bachbewegung*. In order truly to understand Bach's works, and to allow them to exert their full transformative, spiritual power and to “become an invigorating force in the German people,” Bach's church cantatas should be sung (not performed!) by a small, pious Protestant choir including boys, in church, as part of a service. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, some writers proposed that the congregation sing along with the chorales, in accordance with what was believed to be the true Protestant spirit of the works. Here, then, are arguments for historically informed interpretative choices, for authenticity, based on the composer's *spiritual*, rather than aesthetic, intentions.

The second “embarrassing and disturbing” moment that occurred during the Berlin Bach celebrations involved overt approval on the part of the listeners:

Another occurrence, one that deeply offended many people, may not be passed over in silence here. On the second evening, the Hochschulchor sang the motet *Jesu, meine Freude* in the Sing-Akademie. The little choir sang excellently; this was perhaps the best choral accomplishment of the three evenings. But what happened next? After each strophe there arose a thunderous storm of applause! And you, holy Sing-Akademie, you did not crumble at such sacrilege? And no members of the board rose up to forbid such tactlessness in the name of Joh. Seb. Bach? His favourite chorale—written with the heart's-blood of devout longing—degraded into a virtuoso-piece, turned into caviar for spoiled musical palates?? May we be spared such things in future at a Bachfest!²⁰

The 1904 Leipzig Bachfest: a Fest-Gottesdienst in the Thomaskirche

Greulich's earnest call to reform the future programming of the *Bachfest* did not go unheeded. The implementation of some of the goals of the *kirchlichen Bachbewegung* was soon facilitated by changes to the NBG leadership. Ulrich Siegele notes of its board of directors:

At the time of its founding it was made up of, in addition to the treasurer Breitkopf & Härtel, five musicians and, as president, the musicologist Hermann Kretzschmar; in 1904

²⁰ “Das 1. Deutsche Bachfest in Berlin,” 157.

there were three musicians and two theologians. One of them, Georg Rietschel from Leipzig, was now president. The other, Friedrich Spitta from Strasburg, would soon relinquish his place to his friend and colleague Julius Smend, who belonged to the board until his death in 1930 (from 1924 onwards as president). Although finding proof based on sources is no longer possible due to the loss of the files, it is probable that Friedrich Spitta and Julius Smend were the driving forces behind the theologizing of the Neue Bachgesellschaft.²¹

The consequences of the new theological influence were felt in the 1904 *Bachfest* in Leipzig. The first concert, which took place on the afternoon of 1 October, presented organ music and motets by Bach in the *Thomaskirche*: BWV 552, 564, 225, and 226. In the middle of the concert a “liturgical oration” was delivered by Rietschel, who seized the opportunity to criticize a purely aesthetic appreciation of the music:

For centuries this hour, which returns every week and brings listeners together, was not seen as an opportunity for aesthetic pleasure, but rather as a church service, and Bach demands this of us once again today. That which Bach created for congregational worship can only be completely understood when it is played during congregational worship, when one can hear in the tones: “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”²² So we place this Bachfest amongst the blessings of our God, that it may bring much refreshment for the heart and mind, and that it be only for the honor of Him who has given a Bach as a blessing to our people. Amen.²³

²¹ “Zur Zeit der Gründung befinden sich darin, außer dem Schatzmeister Breitkopf & Härtel, fünf Musiker und, als Vorsitzender, der Musikwissenschaftler Hermann Kretzschmar; 1904 sind es drei Musiker und zwei Theologen. Einer von ihnen, Georg Rietschel aus Leipzig, ist nun Vorsitzender. Der andere, Friedrich Spitta aus Straßburg, übergibt seinen Platz bald seinem Freund und Kollengen Julius Smend, der dem Direktorium bis zu seinem Tod 1930, seit 1924 als Vorsizender, angehört. Obwohl der quellenmäßige Nachweis wegen Verlusts der Akten nicht mehr geführt werden kann ist es wahrscheinlich, daß Friedrich Spitta und Julius Smend die treibenden Kräfte für die Theologisierung der Neuen Bachgesellschaft waren.” “Johann Sebastian Bach—Deutschlands größter Kirchenkomponist’: Zur Entstehung und Kritik einer Identifikationsfigur,” in *Gattungen der Musik und ihre Klassiker*, ed. Hermann Danuser (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1988), 68.

²² Book of Exodus 3:5 (King James Version).

²³ “Ansprache des Geheimen Kirchenrats,” 10.

Later that same afternoon there was an orchestral concert in the Gewandhaus, while a chamber music matinee was offered on 2 October. The final concert, presenting organ music and church cantatas, took place on 3 October and was billed as a *Kirchenkonzert in der Thomaskirche*.

The Leipzig event also fulfilled Greulich and Rietschel's wish to bring Bach's message to the people in a living liturgical context. This ideological highpoint occurred on the second day, when the Reformation cantata *Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild* BWV 79, which had opened the Berlin *Bachfest* in 1901, was again performed, this time in the *Thomaskirche* during an historical reconstruction of the service as Bach had known it. The music for this *Fest-Gottesdienst in der Thomaskirche* was provided by a boys' choir, the *Thomanerchor*, conducted by Gustav Scheck. The service opened with an organ Präludium by Pachelbel, followed by liturgical music by Haßler and Altnickol as well as Gregorian chant "in use in Bach's time."²⁴ The first *Bach Jahrbuch*, which appeared in 1904, proudly noted that the sermon, delivered by Smend, "was surrounded by the two halves of the Reformation cantata *Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild*."²⁵ The service, further punctuated by communally sung chorales, ended with Bach's organ Prelude and Fuge in E Minor.

In his sermon, Smend declared that Bach was second only to Luther as a theologian, claimed that the composer had power to preach through his music, and even compared him to an angel sent by God. He punned on the name "Bach," as Rietschel had the previous day:

But here, at the site of his ecclesiastical activity, we give thanks—not for ourselves alone, but at the same time for the large Bach congregation on this and the other side of the ocean, in the name of all those who have ever drawn vitality and comfort, strength and stillness, joy of life and readiness for death, healing and blessing from this unexhausted fountain; for everyone who will be able to say, when his Evening comes: I have lived, for I have drunk from God's stream! [*Ich habe gelebt; den ich habe aus Gottes Bach getrunken!*]²⁶

²⁴ "zu Bachs Zeit in Gebrauch," in *Zweites deutsches Bachfest in Leipzig, 1. bis 3. Oktober 1904, Festschrift und Programmbuch* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1904), [103].

²⁵ J. Smend, "Predigt des Herrn Professor D. J. Smend aus Straßburg in dem Nachmittags-Gottesdienste der Thomaskirche an 2. Oktober 1904," *Bach Jahrbuch* 1 (1904): 13, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015007832234;view=1up;seq=5>.

²⁶ "Predigt des Herrn Professor D. J. Smend," 14.

Like Greulich—who in 1901 had declared himself both free from prejudice against Jews and at the same time sceptical about performances of Bach’s music by non-Christians—Smend made a show of both his tolerance for other denominations and his conviction about the superiority of German Protestant values:

That today Bach’s works are making their triumphal march throughout the entire world, across national and denominational barriers, makes us joyous and proud; that Paris and Rome bow to him, is as it should be. Moreover, we neither can, nor want, to hinder anyone from taking Bach as they understand and need him, even if it only be—I should not say only!—as a taskmaster for solid work and mental discipline. However, despite this, only the following remains true: no one who does not possess a heartfelt, thankful appreciation of German art and the goods of the German Reformation, for evangelical faith and free, personal Christianity, can attain a glimpse into the depths of this unfathomable soul. That’s why our Bachfest today becomes by itself a celebration of reformation.²⁷

Smend then introduced the themes of aesthetics and socialism, urging his fellow Christians to modify the famous cry *L’art pour l’art*:

And our task is also truly contemporary. Two great ideological currents pass through our present. The one, the aesthetic, is focused on the cultivation of beauty and bravely trusts in the elevating, ennobling, and purifying power of all God-born art. The other, the social, aims for the welfare of the needy, wants to lay the table for the little man and to guard his right to joy and honor. Ye Christians, what a glorious thing, when we see how these two currents seek and find one another! How our heart laughs as the message resounds: away with class-egotism! Art for the people, art for the people!²⁸

For theologians, the “power of all God-born art” carried a potential danger. Greulich condemned the sensual pleasure caused by musical virtuosity. When performed without piety, even Bach’s sacred works could lead away from God. However, perhaps the most dangerous

²⁷ “Predigt des Herrn Professor D. J. Smend,” 13–14.

²⁸ “Predigt des Herrn Professor D. J. Smend,” 17.

consequence of the separation of beauty from religion was the claim that art had entirely superseded the church's function as moral and spiritual lodestone. Paul Zech wrote in 1914:

The image of our times, compared to that of earlier German cultural periods, reveals a characteristic and violent shift in basic principles. Religion—the venerable center that once gathered within it all cultural forces in order thereafter to send them all forth through the individual rays of other cultural forms—has been buried, hidden, crossed by other basic principles. One cannot measure the chasm that separates us in this from earlier times, what a monstrous and frightening road it is that has led us from the rock-solid, simple faith of a Luther and Bach, from the glowing clarity of the last great religious age, to our wavering, unmoored existence. ... The form in which modern humanity has most completely preserved for itself the content of religion is art.²⁹

When placed within this context, Smend's appropriation of the rallying cry of aestheticism gains a heart-felt urgency: "Here, forgive me, in the face of Bach, our slogan cannot be only this: art for the people! but rather, the gospel for the people, faith for the people, especially with and through art!"³⁰ All of which he summarized thus: "More of Bach's spirit and devotion in our people, and over people and country a new morning will dawn."³¹

Berlin versus Leipzig: Palestrina and Liturgical Reform

The vehemence with which Greulich, Smend, and Spitta championed the idea of returning Bach's church music to its original spiritual-

²⁹ "Das Bild unserer Zeit zeigt neben dem früherer deutscher Kulturepochen eine eigentümliche und heftige Verschiebung der Grundlinien. Das ehrwürdige Zentrum, des einst alle Kulturkräfte in sich sammelte, um sie erst alle nachträglich in die einzelnen Strahlen der anderen Kulturerscheinungen auszusenden, die Religion, ist verschüttet, verdeckt, von anderen Grundlinien gequert. Es ist nicht zu bemessen, was für ein Abgrund uns hierin von den früheren Zeiten trennt, welch ungeheurer und unheimlicher Weg es ist, der uns von dem felsenfesten, schlichten Glauben eines Luther und Bach, von der leuchtenden Klarheit der letzten großen religiösen Zeit in unsere schwankende, los gerissene Existenz hinübergeführt hat. ... Die Form, in der die moderne Menschheit den Gehalt der Religion am vollendersten sich gerettet hat, ist die Kunst." "Die Grundbedingung der modernen Lyrik," *Das neue Pathos*, 1 (1913–1914): 2.

³⁰ "Predigt des Herrn Professor D. J. Smend," 16.

³¹ "Predigt des Herrn Professor D. J. Smend," 17.

liturgical context arose, at least in part, from Protestant discomfort at the introduction of Catholic music into the Evangelical service during the nineteenth century.³² This went hand in hand with changes made to the liturgy by two Prussian kings and thus was strongly associated with Berlin; the various reforms of Friedrich Wilhelm III and of his successor Friedrich Wilhelm IV had significant and long-lasting consequences for German Protestant liturgical music.

Christopher Clark traced these royal reforms back to 27 September 1817, when “King Frederick William III of Prussia made known his wish that the two Protestant confessions in his kingdom—the Calvinist and the Lutheran—should henceforth merge to form a single united protestant church.”³³ The King turned his attention to the liturgy. In 1822 an English observer described the ensuing changes:

His Prussian majesty has of late bestowed much time and attention on the union of the Lutheran and Calvinist Churches in his dominions and I understand that a liturgy has been composed for the use of the new so-called Evangelical Church which is to replace them, that the time of the service is not to exceed an hour of which the liturgy is to occupy one half, and the sermon the other; that of the hymns, not above three stanzas are to be sung, but it is so much the habit and the pleasure of the Lutherans, in Silesia especially, to exceed very considerably this last allowance, that it is apprehended that this measure will excite much discontent.³⁴

The communal experience of congregational singing was thus curtailed by Friedrich Wilhelm III’s reforms. During the reign of his successor, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, a cappella choral music in Renaissance style—repertoire associated with the Catholic rather than the Protestant rite—was composed for the service by, amongst others, the founder of the “Berlin School,” Eduard Grell.

Palestrina’s music was also arranged as Protestant church music. A striking example is the German language version of the Mass most closely

³² See James Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination: Interpreting Historicism in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³³ “Confessional Policy and the Limits of State Action: Frederick William III and the Prussian Church Union 1817–40,” *The Historical Journal* 39 (1996): 985.

³⁴ G. H. Rose to marquis of Londonderry, 23 Jan., 1822. Cited in Clark, “Confessional Policy,” 988.

associated with the Counter Reformation, the *Missa Papae Marcelli*, which was adjusted by Grell for the Berlin *Domchor* at the command of the King. Such incongruity has been discussed by James Garratt, who argues that the nineteenth century saw the rise and fall of a Protestant fashion for admiring Catholic “naiveté,” noting the “important shift from the aesthetic Catholicism among Protestants earlier in the century towards the political and cultural hostility towards Catholicism present in Bismark’s *Reich*.”³⁵ Indeed, the rise of the *kirchlichen Bachbewegung* must be understood in the light of what Protestant theologians saw as the galling impropriety of Catholic music being used in the Protestant service. In the *Bach Jahrbuch* of 1904, Greulich fulminated that the music of Palestrina:

not now and never will be fit for the Protestant service, not if one underlays it with ten German texts, or sings it ten times as beautifully as the Berlin *Domchor*. This objective, priestly music, exhaling clouds of incense, has nothing in common with Protestant piety, and all attempts to write music for the Evangelical service in Palestrina style, attempts that began with Grell and which continue today, I consider to be highly deplorable.³⁶

Similarly, in 1901 Spitta noted that the “enthroned liturgist” Friedrich Wilhelm III had reformed the Protestant service to an idealized sixteenth-century form, by creating the so-called “Prussian Agenda.” According to Spitta: “one had taken away from the Protestant service its characteristic qualities and turned it into a poor copy of the Roman mass, far inferior to its model.”³⁷ He complained that: “The decision that the standard form of the Protestant cult may be found in the sixteenth-century Lutheran order of the service led to the disastrous conclusion, extending beyond the bounds of the liturgy into the realm of music, that also the musical style of that period should be the established norm for

³⁵ *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 130.

³⁶ Greulich finds Palestrina’s music, sung not by the congregation but by a church choir, “objective” in a pejorative sense. “Schlußwort der Herrn Pastor Karl Greulich aus Posen,” *Bach Jahrbuch* 1 (1904): 49, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015007832234;view=1up;seq=5>.

³⁷ “Neuere Bewegungen auf dem Gebiete der evangelischen Kirchenmusik,” *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters für 1901* 8 (1901): 24, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044044310407;view=1up;seq=7>.

that which is church music and that which is not.”³⁸ Spitta finished his article by describing the various forms of true Protestant church music:

The framework which encloses an evangelical church celebration is an uncommonly elastic one; it encompasses equally both a simple ceremony—comprised of congregational singing and a sermon—and a majestic festive celebration, one in which the spoken and sung word, congregational song and choral singing, organ-playing and the sound of the instruments in our orchestras are woven together into a hymn to Him of whom the highest Heaven of Heavens cannot conceive; there is room in it both for a simple four-part choral style alternating with the *unisono* of the congregation, as well as the most artful musical representation of the mysteries of faith and the revelations of God in history, whereby those who listen to this sermon in tones merely desire that they not be condemned to silence should their heart overflow.³⁹

It is clear in this context that the removal of the *Bachfest* from Berlin to Leipzig in 1904 had political and theological implications. The Leipzig event promoted the ideals of the *kirchlichen Bachbewegung* not only in its use of a boys' choir to perform *Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild*, but also by encouraging the communal singing of chorales. Both Spitta and Greulich believed, as the latter put it, that “a resurrection of Protestant church music can only come about when we return specifically to its true historical roots: the German chorale and German organ music, in other words, back to Johann Sebastian Bach!”⁴⁰

It is therefore significant that the audience participated actively in the Leipzig performance of *Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild*, by singing along with the chorales. The 1904 *Festschrift* (which served as a program book for the event) contains, inserted into the appropriate places in the cantata's text, chorale melodies in musical notation. Those chorales originally belonging to the cantata are marked “choir and congregation.” However, Smend's sermon was framed by two interpolated chorales, one for the congregation alone (“Wir glauben all an einen Gott”) and one set responsively for choir and congregation (“Herr Gott, dich loben wir!”).

³⁸ “Neuere Bewegungen,” 21.

³⁹ “Neuere Bewegungen,” 27.

⁴⁰ “Bach und der evangelische Gottesdienst. Vortrag des Herrn Pastor Karl Greulich aus Posen,” *Bach Jahrbuch* 1 (1904): 24, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015007832234;view=1up;seq=5>.

The final chorale of the cantata was also immediately followed by one sung by the congregation alone: “Der ewig reiche Gott.”⁴¹

Reexamining the musical content of the *Fest-Gottesdienst in der Thomaskirche* in light of Spitta’s article, one sees that it contained all the elements of the “majestic festive celebration” about which he had waxed lyrical. It even promoted all three possibilities for the singing of chorales: the congregation alone, the choir alone, and their combined efforts in a “simple four-part choral style alternating with the *unisono* of the congregation.” This elaborate service in Leipzig was indeed conceived of as “a celebration of reformation.”⁴²

Trends in Performance: Musicologists and the NGB

One particularly interesting aspect of this struggle over the Prussian Agenda and liturgical music is that the opposing parties justified their positions by making an appeal to differing kinds of authenticity: authenticity of form versus authenticity of content. Where the Prussian Agenda had sought to restore the *Urform* of the Protestant service and chose Palestrina’s music as its logical accompaniment (a devolution in the eyes of Spitta), the *kirchliche Bachbewegung* sought a return to the highpoint of Protestant evolution by reintroducing the Bach cantatas into the service. In order to remain true to the spirit of Bach’s music, the NGB promoted performance practice in close accordance with the composer’s *Empfindungswelt*, for instance when Greulich in 1901 called for a Protestant church choir with boys to replace the interfaith Berlin Philharmonic choir.

For pious NGB members like Greulich, the stakes were high. He was ideologically pro-authenticity because he was convinced that reawakening the non-virtuosic sound-world of Bach’s more religious time would result in a spiritual renewal of the German people. Implicit in this argument is the idea that employing original instruments (less loud, less lush than their modern counterparts) and children’s voices would detract less from the music’s power to preach. For instance, it seems fairly safe to infer that young boys would be less likely to perform with Romantic virtuosity than adult singers. Indeed, Smend scoffed at soloists drawn from the

⁴¹ See *Zweites deutsches Bachfest in Leipzig*, [103]–110.

⁴² Indeed, Rietschel admitted that the event was meant to serve as a catalyst to discussion concerning the viability of returning Bach’s church cantatas to the service. See “Der Gottesdienst des zweiten Bachfestes am Sonntag, den 2. Oktober,” in *Zweites deutsches Bachfest in Leipzig, 1. bis 3. Oktober 1904, Festschrift und Programmbuch* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1904), 73.

midst of church choirs who were “tainted with the odium of tiresome concert virtuosi.”⁴³ Greulich, in the *Bach Jahrbuch* of 1904, continued his crusade for authenticity, decrying Bach’s sacred music being performed in concert halls, where it had the effect of “smooth, beautiful lies.” He further contrasted the “vanity of conductors and virtuosi” and their “all-too-humanness” to the “quiet, pure, holy fire that glows in these works,” and asked “Where are the original instruments, the oboes d’amore and da caccia, the violas d’amore, the trumpets in C and D?”⁴⁴

It was not only the theologians who sought authenticity. In the same *Bach Jahrbuch*, musicologist Aloys Obrist remarked upon the satisfying effect of hearing, during the Leipzig *Bachfest*, Bach’s music sung not by female sopranos and altos, but by boys. This was, Obrist claimed, what Bach had intended and it had an “extraordinarily different” and better effect. Obrist further lamented the generally poor quality of German boy choirs in comparison to their English counterparts and urged his compatriots to increase the quantity and improve the quality of German *Knabenchöre*, “particularly also with a view to the energetic promotion of Bach’s smaller choral works,” by which he almost certainly refers to the church cantatas.⁴⁵

The highly influential musicologist Arnold Schering (1877–1941), in an extensive article entitled “Verschwundene Traditionen des Bachzeitalters,” also published in the 1904 *Bach Jahrbuch*, joined his voice to Greulich’s urgent call. Schering advocated performing Bach’s music in historically informed fashion, “*Stilgetreu*.” He stressed that one must take into account the original venue for which the piece was composed, eighteenth-century basso continuo and ornamentation practices, and original instruments (including the now-discredited “Bach bow”).

His article includes a remarkable passage that argues against the performance of Bach on the modern piano. Just as Greulich rejected the too artistic, too beautiful performances at the 1901 Berlin *Bachfest*, so Schering warned against the subtle possibilities the piano offered to the performer:

⁴³ *Der Evangelische Gottesdienst: Eine Liturgik nach evangelischen Grundsätzen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1904), 180, https://books.google.com/books/about/Der_evangelische_Gottesdienst.html?id=iFYrAAAAYAAJ.

⁴⁴ “Bach und der evangelische Gottesdienst,” 30.

⁴⁵ See “Verhandlungen,” *Bach Jahrbuch* 1 (1904): 40, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015007832234;view=1up;seq=5>.

what justifies us to perform Bach entirely like one of ours? I am mainly thinking of his keyboard and violin music. The answer lies in the unalterable fact that we can no longer perform the bona fide Bach everywhere, because we do not have the old instruments. We refashion Bach for our instruments and deprive him of authenticity equal in amount to the subjectivity with which we can inject him. Whoever plays the *Well-Tempered Clavier* on a modern piano has every right to make full use of the effects of this instrument, that is to say to act as a modern pianist. Every tradition is therewith annulled. In the place of the modest requirements of a “cantabile” style—neither faltering nor angular—now a number of newer, more “pianistic” demands arise: vividly clear sound production, careful dynamic nuances and sensible phrasing, to which is added the choice of a rational use of the pedal and fingerings. It is from the combination of such postulates, which could equally serve the performance of the most recent keyboard music, that the ideal modern Bach interpretation of course is created, which, after all this, we must concede, is very different from that of the age of the clavichord and harpsichord. One only needs once to have the C major or the B-flat minor prelude played first on harpsichord and then on a piano by Blüthner in order to recognize how different the effects are. Those whose ears are not used to the intimate charms of the harpsichord will find the original version rather bland. The sound of the modern piano, rich in overtones—which responds to the lightest touch and which can be painted many colors with the help of the pedal, in turn often misleads one to attribute a certain poetry to older music that it essentially does not possess. Particularly with Bach, one gladly allows oneself to be carried away and to luxuriate in the flood of piano sound, and one speaks of the sublime and of grandeur, when the instrument—in transcriptions!—trembles beneath thunderous passages and masses of chords.⁴⁶

Schering closes with a stern aphorism: “to charge these modern piano effects to Bach’s account, is wrong.”⁴⁷

Schering preferred Bach to be performed on old keyboard instruments rather than the modern piano not because they were

⁴⁶ “Verschwundene Traditionen des Bachzeitalters,” *Bach Jahrbuch* 1 (1904): 111–12, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015007832234;view=1up;seq=5>.

⁴⁷ “Verschwundene Traditionen,” 112.

intrinsically more beautiful—though he does posit that the harpsichord has “intimate charms” for those accustomed to it—but because he believed that they, by their nature, circumscribed the amount of subjectivity the performer could “inject” into the music. His description of the trembling piano is striking given that two piano virtuosi famous for their Bach transcriptions, Eugen d’Albert and Ferruccio Busoni, were at that time *Mitglieder des Ausschusses* of the NBG.⁴⁸ Shering here is questioning the activities associated with celebrated members of the society through the vehicle of its own journal. Thus, in 1904, musicologists and ecclesiastics promoted a common goal in the *Bach Jahrbuch*: to reduce the amount of subjectivity in performance by encouraging the use of authentic instruments and style.

The 1909 Dessau Deutsche evangelische Kirchengesangvereinstag

On 18-19 October 1909, the *Deutsche evangelische Kirchengesangverein*, an organization of Protestant church choirs, met at Dessau, an event that was “attended by a large number of theologians and representatives of the art of church music.”⁴⁹ Smend was present and greetings were sent from Spitta, Rietschel, and Greulich.⁵⁰ The *Kirchengesangverein* had already for some time been an important ally of the NBG, having “participated in the founding of the society in 1900. Since that time, there has been good cooperation, often supported by shared personnel, between the executive board of the association and the leadership of the NBG.”⁵¹ More specifically, Christhard Marenholz has noted that the *Kirchengesangverein* “was influenced, as far as theology is concerned, by the Reform efforts of Fr. Spitta and Julius Smend.”⁵²

⁴⁸ See *Zweites deutsches Bachfest in Leipzig*, [85].

⁴⁹ Arnold Schering, “Zu den Beschlüssen des Dessauer Kirchengesangvereinstages,” *Bach Jahrbuch* 6 (1909): 144, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015040460472;view=1up;seq=5>.

⁵⁰ See *Der zweiundzwanzigste deutsche evangelische Kirchengesangvereinstag zu Dessauer am 18. und 19. Oktober 1909* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1909), 12–13.

⁵¹ “fällt auch die Mitwirkung des Verbandes bei der Gründung der Neuen Bachgesellschaft im Jahre 1900. Seit dieser Zeit besteht zwischen dem Vorstand des Verbandes und der Leitung der Gesellschaft eine gute, oft durch Personalunion unterstützte Zusammenarbeit.” Christhard Marenholz, *75 Jahre Verband Evangelischer Kirchenhöre Deutschlands: Festansprache auf der 63. Zentralratstagung des Verbandes am 22 September 1958 in Bielefeld* (Kassel [u.a.]: Bärenreiter-Verlag, [1959]), 7.

⁵² “unter dem Einfluß der Reformbestrebungen von Fr. Spitta und Julius Smend.” *75 Jahre Verband*, 8.

It was not, however, these theologians, but rather musicologist Rudolf Wustmann (1872–1916) who would further the goals of the *kirchlichen Bachbewegung* in Dessau in 1909, when the representatives of the *Kirchengesangverein* accepted five propositions that he put forward. According to Wustmann, the *Kirchengesangverein*:

1. desires a publication of Sebastian Bach's church cantata texts with linguistic, hymnological, liturgical, and musical commentaries,
2. recommends, where historical and practical conditions allow, the organic introduction of Bach's chorale cantatas in reduced form into Sunday and festive services that contain a sermon: simple chorale movements, all of the recitatives unshortened, and all of the arias shortened,
3. warns against overly dramatic performances aiming at superfluous imagery-painting [*Bildeindrücke*], of Bach's music in the service,
4. approves, for practical and historical reasons, the thoughtful singing of the congregation along with the final chorales of the cantatas, as well as with the simple chorale movements of the large Passions,
5. requests the representatives of the better-off church congregations, especially in the cities, to provide the necessary funds for the performance of Bach's cantatas in the service.⁵³

The struggle for Bach here takes a radical turn: if the liturgy could not be changed to accommodate Bach, then Bach's works would be adjusted instead. The proposed "reduced form" entailed significant changes to Bach's score. The cantata's opening movements were to be replaced by a communally sung chorale. Furthermore, of the da capo arias only the "A" section would be sung, not merely to shorten their length in order to accommodate the sermon, but also because of all the movements in a cantata it was the arias that would most remind the congregation of the theater or the concert hall. Smend, who was present and vocal at the *Kirchengesangvereinstage*, felt that this undesirable effect would be mitigated "if [the singers] be pious," while a certain Haase, the representative from Cöthen, felt that "one must also educate those listeners who turn their heads towards the soloists."⁵⁴

⁵³ Cited in Schering, "Zu den Beschlüssen," [144]–45.

⁵⁴ "wenn wir fromme sänger haben." *Kirchengesangvereinstag zu Dessau*, 58. "Man müsse auch die Zuhörer erzieh[e]n, die nach den Solisten die Köpfe umdrehen." *Kirchengesangvereinstag zu Dessau*, 59 and Schering, "Zu den Beschlüssen," 146.

Several musicologists protested Wustmann's propositions. For example, Alfred Heuß responded with searing sarcasm, railing against the "*Bach-trunkenen Theologen*."⁵⁵ Heuß made much of the fact that a new phrase had been added to the mission statement of the NBG in 1906, so that it thereafter read [italics editorial]:

The purpose of the new Bachgesellschaft is to ensure that the music of the great German composer J. S. Bach become an invigorating force within the German people, and in countries that are receptive to serious German music, *and especially to make his church works available for the service*.⁵⁶

Heuß is most heated when discussing Wustmann's belief that the congregation in Bach's time sang along with the cantata's chorales. It was Wustmann's personal experience of the cantatas, both as a listener and a participant, that formed his "proof" that Bach intended the congregation to sing along. He described his "more objective experience that the final chorale of the cantata, when not sung by a very large choir, dwindles significantly against all that went before; and the subjective need, at the end of a communally experienced Bach cantata, to sing and say Ja and Amen."⁵⁷ This outraged Heuß, who could not accept that Wustmann's poor reasoning had been swallowed whole by the *Kirchengesangvereinstag*, something Heuß feared would have serious consequences:

One should know that, as today the *evangelische Kirchengesangverein* comprises about 2,200 local church choirs and 70-80,000 singers, [Wustmann] has been given the means to turn adopted principles into acts of broad and comprehensive dimensions. Therefore, scholarship has an even greater responsibility to dismiss, with the utmost determination, such baseless claims.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ See "Bach's Choral und die Gemeinde," 140, 133. For Wustmann's refutation of Heuß see "Konnte Bach's Gemeinde bei seinen einfachen Choralen mitsingen?," *Bach Jahrbuch* 6 (1909): [102]–24.

⁵⁶ "Bach's Choral und die Gemeinde," 133–34.

⁵⁷ *Kirchengesangvereinstag zu Dessau*, 52. Cited in Heuß, "Bach's Choral und die Gemeinde," 137.

⁵⁸ "Bach's Choral und die Gemeinde," 137. See also Schering, "Zu den Beschlüssen." Similar sentiments had been voiced as early as 1904. See "Verhandlung," *Bach Jahrbuch* 1 (1904): 41–43.

It is remarkable that the *kirchliche Bachbewegung*, which sought to restore spiritual authenticity to Bach's music, would be so impelled by its religious zeal as to violate the works of the very composer it had vowed to cultivate and promote. The underlying conflict, however, is clear: according to the *Bach-trunkenen Theologen*, Bach's musical sermons could not be properly delivered without the appropriate religious conviction. Ultimately, this made them willing to compromise the work itself in order to make it meet their spiritual needs.

II Bach in the Netherlands 1910 to 1926

To what extent were Dutch Bach-lovers aware of the spiritual and musicological storms raging across their eastern borders, and were Dutch musicians influenced by the ideologies of the *kirchlichen Bachbewegung* and the NBG? Did anti-Catholic sentiment play as great a role in the Netherlands as it did in Germany? In order to provide answers to these questions, the focus here shifts to five Dutchmen associated with the foundation of the Nederlandse Bachvereniging (hereafter NBV): journalists W. N. F. Sibmacher Zijnen (1859–1926) and Herman Rutters (1879–1961), theologians J. H. Gunning Wzn. (1859–1951) and Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890–1950), and conductor Anton van der Horst (1899–1965). The NBV, and van der Horst (1899–1965) in particular, had a lasting influence on the work of Leonhardt in the late twentieth century.

A Dutchman at the Bachfest

In 1910, Sibmacher Zijnen, music critic for the important Protestant Amsterdam newspaper the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, travelled to Duisburg in order to attend the fifth NBG *Bachfest*. Although his name does not appear on NBG membership lists before 1914, Sibmacher Zijnen demonstrated in his reviews that he was well aware of the disputes surrounding the *kirchliche Bachbewegung*:

The conflict of opinions, unavoidable where there is life, centers—in the *Neue Bachgesellschaft* and in general amongst Bach-votaries—not only around the “conception,” the more dramatic or more lyrical conception of the Passions, around the manner of performing the cantatas and the changes made to the texts: there is not only a struggle between the “musicians” and the “theologians,” but there is also an

historical question concerning whether or not to use old or reconstructed instruments.⁵⁹

He then draws his readers' attention to a dissertation written on the subject by a Dutch theologian named S. H. N. Gorter (1885–1967). Sibmacher Zijnen's choice to introduce his readers to the dissertation in a newspaper review, rather than in an essay in a music journal, suggests that he felt the topic important enough to deserve the widest possible audience. Gorter describes the German struggle to reintroduce Bach into the service in great detail and is clearly in sympathy with the theologians. He also takes stock of contemporary attitudes toward music in Dutch Protestant churches, before concluding that in the Netherlands "one cannot at present think of Bach."⁶⁰ This was due to the severity of Dutch Calvinist restrictions on the use of music in the service and the concomitant difficulty of creating church choirs in Holland capable of singing Bach's music.

Calvinist distrust of music was longstanding. As Harry Boonstra noted, "The National Synod at Dordt (1618–1619) consolidated and codified the liturgy for all the Dutch churches. Here one finds the sermon as the center piece of the liturgy, *lectio continua* reading of Scripture, an emphasis on psalm singing, with the addition of the New Testament canticles, communion every other month, a minimal observance of the liturgical year, and a prohibition on organ playing during the worship service."⁶¹ Although by the nineteenth century many churches accepted the communal singing of chorales in addition to psalms, elaborate music had no place in Dutch Calvinist services. The Dutch reaction to the *kirchliche Bachbewegung* must therefore be placed in the context of a strong Calvinist distrust of music's power to distract from the sermon.

Gorter's thesis clearly described the continuing struggles within the NBG—struggles which the young theologian feared would result in schism—and this made Sibmacher Zijnen apprehensive about attending the public debates that took place during the NBG members' meeting in

⁵⁹ "Het Bachfest te Duisburg," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 23 June 1910, 6. All of the Dutch newspapers cited in this article can be found here: <https://www.delpher.nl>.

⁶⁰ "Aan Bach zou voorlopig niet gedacht kunnen worden." *Job. Seb. Bach en de protestantsche eeredienst: Seminarisch proefschrift ter voldoening aan art. 18 van het reglement voor het college van curatoren der kweekschool van de Algemeene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit opgesteld door S. H. N. Gorter* (Amsterdam: 1910), 45.

⁶¹ "Liturgy and Worship in Dutch Reformed Churches," *Reformed Worship—Classical and Contemporary* 48 (1994): 92.

Duisburg during the 1910 *Bachfest*. However, he was relieved to find that no break within the society was imminent. Sibmacher Zijnen's description of the meeting sheds light on concepts of performative authenticity being promoted in the NBG at this time. He describes a lively discussion concerning the use of the harpsichord, with Wanda Landowska and Greulich arguing for its use. Sibmacher Zijnen's testimony shows he was well aware of the goals of the *kirchlichen Bachbewegung*:

The liturgical men, who recently ensured that the additional phrase "to make the church works serviceable for the service" was appended to the statutes, were the most prominent: a pastor speaks as a rule more easily than a musician; but the musicians put up a fight. A snide remark from one side was answered with a snide remark from the other side. However, no one conceived of the battle as being too tragic!⁶²

Sibmacher Zijnen, again inspired by Gorter's thesis, cited Schopenhauer in order to express the overwhelming feelings he experienced during the Duisburg *Bachfest*, which he favourably compared to his recent, fraught encounters with contemporary music:

In the three or four days full of Bach, I felt the truth of what I believe Schopenhauer said about listening to great, polyphonic, beautiful music: he called it a spiritual bath that washes away all that is impure, small, and evil, and raises up each individual as high as the reciprocity of his mind allows. After the impressions made by the searching and striving of modern composers, ... Bach's music was awesome, all-encompassing, eternally remaining. Here was security. The rock that challenges time. The womb of peace and safety.⁶³

Herman Rutters and the Aesthetics of Bach's "Spirit"

In October of 1915 the *Algemeen Handelsblad* announced that Sibmacher Zijnen would leave his post as music critic. His successor, Herman Rutters, was a man renowned for his enormous energy, integrity, and conviction.⁶⁴ He was also deeply religious, seeing "in Luther's reformation an evolutionary struggle, where the Catholic sees

⁶² "Het Bach-feest," 6.

⁶³ "Bach-feest," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 8 June 1910.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, H. J. M. Muller, "Herman Rutters tachtig jaar," *De Telegraaf*, 22 December 1959, 9.

a revolution.”⁶⁵ Rutters, who remained at the newspaper until 1945, felt it his sacred duty to improve the taste of the public by shepherding them away from poor compositions made palatable by tasteless and vain virtuosic performances, toward great compositions performed with egoless objectivity, and especially toward the works of Bach. He was a fearless reformer, eager to defend the “inviolability of the work” and to attack the wayward wilfulness of even the most lauded conductors [*Pultvirtuose*] and performers. Music was “not merely a profession” for Rutters, “but, on the contrary, the sense and meaning of his life,” and he served its cause with a missionary zeal.⁶⁶ His influence on taste in the Netherlands during the first half of the twentieth century should not be underestimated: “his word enjoyed an unusual authority in Dutch music circles,” he was involved in the governing bodies of many music societies, was editor of a number of influential music journals, was an advisor to the *Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep* (Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation), published numerous books and articles on music, and frequently gave public lectures. These activities “were recognized by the government by the bestowal of a knighthood in the Order of Orange Nassau.”⁶⁷ Rutters strongly opposed the idea that music was mere entertainment, and his strict, musicological approach went hand in hand with a drive to reform performance practice: “Despite his strongly emotional nature, he has always resisted the passive experience of music as mere sensation, as a flattering of the senses. ... He was the first to uphold systematically that Early Music must be performed with stylistic purity, and to search indefatigably for the norms that at any rate guarantee a stylistically true performance.”⁶⁸

Rutters explicitly refers to the NBG in the articles and reviews he wrote early in his career at the *Algemeen Handelsblad*. Two particularly extensive essays on the performance of Bach’s music, published within the space of two weeks in 1917, will be examined here, as they demonstrate that Rutters was influenced by both the theological and musicological wings of the NBG, and that he united their views in a “spirit”-oriented aesthetic.

⁶⁵ *Dagblad van het Zuiden*, 13 December 1941.

⁶⁶ H. J. M. Muller, “Herman Rutters Overleden,” *De Telegraaf*, 18 April 1961, 9.

⁶⁷ Muller, “Herman Rutters Overleden,” 9.

⁶⁸ L. H., “Herman Rutters gaat rusten: Criticus, die school heeft gemaakt,” *De Tijd*, 22 January 1949, 3. Also see: Jed Wentz, “H. R. and the Formation of an Early Music aesthetic in the Netherlands (1916–1921),” <http://www.rimab.ch/content/research-projects/project-ina-lohr-1/papers-from-the-project-ina-lohr/h-r-and-the-formation-of-an-early-music-aesthetic-in-the-netherlands-1916-1921>.

In the first article, the 1917 “Bachproblemen” (Bach problems), Rutters noted that great advances had been made in the understanding of Bach’s art since Mendelssohn’s 1829 *St. Matthew Passion* revival and that these advances had created “Bach problems” for contemporary Dutch performance practice. Rutters notes “It is therefore all the more curious that we in the Netherlands, where to some extent Bach veneration is also cultivated, in general have no notion of the modern Bach problems, indeed that we are no further *in casu* Bach than Germany [was] at the time of the Bach ‘discovery’ [i.e. Mendelssohn’s 1829 performance].”⁶⁹

Rutters’ argument was that Mendelssohn understood and performed the *St. Matthew Passion* in the spirit of the nineteenth-century oratorio. This was a barb that Rutters repeatedly aimed at Willem Mengelberg’s yearly performances of the work on Palm Sunday in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, performances in which the work was cut, re-orchestrated, and presented as sacred rather than liturgical music. Rutters posits that the musicological discoveries of the intervening years made the continuation of such an approach untenable: “Mendelssohn cannot be blamed for this. ... We now know better.”⁷⁰

Rutters then gets to the heart of the matter:

How must we reproduce Bach’s art purely now, without a unity of church and state, without a meaningful liturgy, without an artistically inclined court life? Here is the essence of most of the Bach problems. ... Even if a historical-formal reconstruction would be folly—we must strive for a form other than the one in which Bach’s music is offered here. For this form corrodes the spirit of that music, completely muddies its innermost intentions.⁷¹

Rutters’ reference to the eighteenth-century social, religious, and political context of church music is reminiscent of Greulich’s insistence on taking the “atmosphere” as well as Bach’s “religious *Empfindungswelt*” into account. Like Greulich, Rutters rejects the performance of Bach’s music by massed forces; just as Mengelberg’s huge choir and orchestra muddy the polyphonic texture of Bach’s music, so too they sully Bach’s performative and spiritual intentions. Rutters thus promoted a modern

⁶⁹ “Muziekkroniek: Bachproblemen,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 March 1917, 5.

⁷⁰ “Muziekkroniek: Bachproblemen,” 5.

⁷¹ “Muziekkroniek: Bachproblemen,” 5.

Bach aesthetic based on both musicology and theology, one that incorporated both Greulich's thunder and Schering's science (though he found thunder irresistible as well):

It is bad enough that one must tear the cantatas out of their liturgical context, but that is simply the way things now are. However, the displacement from the church, with its very special atmosphere and its own very characteristic acoustic, to a space that only came into being in the spirit of the modern, profane, massive music practice, with its unsanctified, businesslike commitment to facilitating virtuosic vanity; the reproduction of those works in an instrumentation that not only turns the sound proportions upside down, but that also crushes the intimate spirit of the music through massive sound production and mercilessly rips the fine polyphonic textures to shreds, that makes a caricature of the properties of tutti-soli like a funhouse mirror distorts the image of man, that causes simple solo obbligato parts to evolve into pseudo-virtuosic solos—that form, after everything that modern Bach-aesthetics has taught and revealed, is impossible to sustain any longer. And then I do not even speak of the fact that Bach's choral works, as far as the high vocal parts are concerned (soprano and alto) were performed by boys, were conceived of for boys.⁷²

The second Rutters article appeared in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* on 7 April 1917. It is a review of the final concert in a "Bach-Cyclus" that violinist Alexander Schmuller presented in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. In it Rutters refers to his previous "Bachproblemen" article, indicating that he conceived of the two publications as complementary. In the former, Rutters concentrated mainly on the performance of Bach's liturgical music. In the second article, entitled "Schmuller's Bachcyclus—De waarde van Bachtradities voor de Bachvertolking" (Schmuller's Bach cycle—The Value of Bach Traditions for the Performance of Bach), he concentrated mainly on instrumental music. Rutters relied heavily on Schering's article "Verschwundene Traditionen des Bachzeitalters" (discussed above), which had appeared in the 1904 *Bach Jahrbuch*; for instance, he encouraged violinists to use "a bow of convexly arched wood and loose, non-mechanically tightened hair," as Schering had done before

⁷² "Muziekkroniek: Bachproblemen," 6.

him.⁷³ The review demonstrates that, for Rutters, the contextualization of Bach's music created new aesthetic criteria. He asserted that "the longing to resurrect old traditions is not a craving for archaism, it is simply a demand to give to the works that which they deserve."⁷⁴ Rutters posits that the "spirit" of Bach's instrumental music is close to eighteenth-century instruments and performance practices. Therefore Schmuller's use of a modern bow made an aesthetic appreciation of his performance impossible for the reviewer: "with all respect for the virtuosity, endurance, and concentrated memory of our violinist: he who has ears for beauty of sound, who understands the soul of Bach's music—for him those interpretations were sometimes demonstrations of the un-aesthetic."⁷⁵ Rutters acknowledged his debt to the NBG: "It is especially thanks to the efforts of the 'Neue Bach-Gesellschaft' that we have now become much wiser in all those respects."⁷⁶ He capped his critique with what amounts to a prophecy of the rise of original instruments much later in the century: "In principle there is no less difference between the violin-playing of Bach's time and that of today, than between the harpsichord and concert grand."⁷⁷

Birth of a Dutch Bach Society

On 14 September 1921 the *Algemeen Handelsblad* printed the following press release:

We have learned that the establishment of a Bach society is soon to be expected here in this country. The goal of this society is to execute more intensively, and to make more generally known here, the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. In the first place through performances, whereby one will strive—also through the use of more intimate forces—to make the spirit of the music speak as purely as possible. ... A choir will be formed especially. Johann Schoonderbeek has been asked to take the artistic direction upon himself; he has already declared himself prepared to do so.⁷⁸

⁷³ "Muziekkroniek: Schmuller's Bachcyclus—De waarde van Bachtradities voor de Bachvertolking," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 07 April 1917, 10. See also Schering, "Verschwundene Traditionen," 113.

⁷⁴ "Muziekkroniek: Schmuller's Bachcyclus," 10.

⁷⁵ "Muziekkroniek: Schmuller's Bachcyclus," 10.

⁷⁶ "Muziekkroniek: Schmuller's Bachcyclus," 10.

⁷⁷ "Muziekkroniek: Schmuller's Bachcyclus," 10.

⁷⁸ "Een Bachvereniging," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 14 September 1921, 2.

This text, almost certainly by Rutters, announces the founding of the Nederlandse Bachvereniging (NBV). It is important to note that both Sibmacher Zijnen and Rutters were involved with the NBV from the outset; the former was a member of the original auxiliary committee, while the latter was a founding and honorary life-long member.

J. H. Gunning Wzn., a theologian from a famous Dutch family of theologians, was the first president of the NBV, a position he held from 1921 to 1948. He was also an early member of the NBG. Gunning's name appears on all of the early membership lists published in the program books of the *Bachfest* events, starting in 1907. In 1905, an advertisement in a Dutch newspaper already mentions him as collecting money for the NBG.⁷⁹

In 1926 Gunning published an extended essay entitled "Bach's muziek in onzen tijd" (Bach's Music in Our Time), in which he described the genesis of the NBV:

Several years ago the Nederlandse Bachvereniging was founded on the initiative of a number of Bach votaries, with the avowed goal of making Bach, the whole and true Bach, better known to the Dutch public by means of performances that would display as far as possible the characteristics of what our eastern neighbors attempt to indicate by the beautiful word "*stilgerecht*" [style-righteous]. They found the well-known musician from Naarden, Johan Schoonderbeek, prepared to act as their conductor. A choir was formed under his leadership that consisted of known male and female singers, and genteel, musically developed, and dedicated dilettantes, who, after a strict examination, were accepted by Schoonderbeek himself and whom he rehearses weekly and who all are animated by *one* spirit, and who already feel themselves to be a kind of religious community, which is why they gladly give themselves the title "Bach-congregation."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ See *Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant*, 28 February 1905.

⁸⁰ "De Nederlandsche Bachvereniging is eenige jaren geleden gesticht op initiatief van eenige Bachvereerders, met het uitgesproken doel om Bach, den Schoonderbeek bereid als haar dirigent op te treden. Onder zijn leiding werd een koor gevormd, bestaande uit bekende zangers en zangeressen en beschaafde, muzikaal ontwikkelde en toegewijde dilettanten, die door den heer Schoonderbeek zelf na strenge keuring zijn aangenomen en wekelijks door hem geoefend worden, en die allen van één geest bezielde zijn en zich voelen al seen soort religieuze gemeenschap, weshalve zij zich gaarne als 'Bachgemeente' betitelen." *Bach's muziek in onzen tijd* (s.l.: Nederlandse Bachvereniging, [1926]), 8–9.

The influence of the NBG can be felt in this passage; indeed, the reference to “our eastern neighbors” surely must indicate the *Stilgetreu* of the German Bach society. There were, however, ideological differences. The NBG was of course founded as a mixed, rather than an all-male choir and was neither a musicological nor an editorial society, but rather was created solely to promote the performance of Bach’s music.

Gunning leaves no doubt as to the piety of the undertaking. If he never goes so far as explicitly to say that the goal is the spiritual renewal of the Dutch people, this idea is implicit in the following passage, which posits Bach’s popularity as proof of his spiritual efficacy. It clearly echoes the sermon (discussed above) that Smend delivered in “celebration of reformation” during the Leipzig *Bachfest* in 1904. Gunning first paints a moral portrait of the composer:

Which are then the dominant features of this portrait [of Bach], and which meaning do they give to Bach’s music for our time? Without a doubt, his deep religiosity, his fervent piety must be mentioned here in the first place. This piety has a strongly personal and yet generally human character; it is solidly Protestant and yet—in the best meaning of the word—Catholic; it is strictly dogmatic and yet supra-confessional; it is fundamentally German and yet of all nations and tongues. That is why it triumphantly conquers all confessional, national, and geographic limitations and divisions, and in this respect the *St. Matthew Passion* (which is performed alike in Catholic Cologne and in Protestant Leipzig; alike in Rome and Barcelona and in Berlin and Breslau; alike in Paris and London and in Amsterdam and Stockholm) is the most typical representative of Bach’s music. There is no second example of so general a reception of a musical work and there is no question that this is due at least as much to its religious as to its musical qualities. It would be difficult to present better evidence of our time’s intense need for religion. Doubtless, art can become a surrogate, and then a very dangerous surrogate, for religion, but Bach’s music is no surrogate, for in Bach’s music piety is always number one and musical expression number two.⁸¹

⁸¹ “Welke zijn de overheersende hoofdtrekken van dat beeld en welke beteekenis geven zij aan Bach’s muziek voor onzen tijd? Ongetwijfeld moet hier in de eerste plaats genoemd worden zijn diepe religiositeit, zijn innige vroomheid. Deze vroomheid draagt een sterk persoonlijk en toch weer algemeen menschelijk karakter, zij is stevig

Gunning makes clear that the NBV, like the theological wing of the NBG, rejected any attempts to make even the greatest music into “a very dangerous surrogate” for religion. The motivation of the NBV was not to promote aesthetic appreciation in the spirit of *L'art pour l'art*, but rather to propagate religious truths. This goal extended beyond the category of liturgical music:

That is why [Bach's] music also preaches to us the important lesson that the slogan “L'art pour l'art” is a false slogan. Art is always handmaiden and that is her highest title of honour; for she serves, that is the most exalted of all. She is man's eagle pinion, which elevates him from the earthly quagmire to the luminous heights of eternal beauty, clarity, and purity. That's why all true art is religious, but the most religious is undoubtedly music and the most religious music is undoubtedly that of Bach.⁸²

Gunning's sentiments were shared by his successor as president of the NBV, theologian Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950). Van der Leeuw had already worked with Rutters in the 1920s as contributor to the

protestantsch en toch in den besten zin des woords katholiek, zij is streng dogmatisch en toch supraconfessioneel, zij is oerduitsch en toch van alle natiën en tongen. Vandaar dat zij zegevierend alle confessioneele, nationale en geographische beperkingen en afscheidingen overwint en in dit opzicht althans is inderdaad de Matthaëuspassion, die evengoed in het katholieke Keulen wordt uitgevoerd als in het protestantsche Leipzig, evengoed te Rome en te Barcelona als te Berlijn en te Breslau, evengoed te Parijs en Londen als te Amsterdam en Stockholm, de meeste typische vertegenwoordigster van de muziek van Bach. Er is geen tweede voorbeeld van een zoo algemeene receptie van een muziekwerk en het is aan geen twijfel onderhevig, dat dit minstens evenzeer aan zijn religieus als aan zijn muzikaal gehalte te danken is. Beter bewijs van de innige behoefte van onzen tijd aan religie is moeilijk te geven. Ongetwijfeld, de kunst kan een surrogaat, en dan een zeer gevaarlijk surrogaat, worden voor de religie, maar Bach's muziek is geen surrogaat, want in Bach's muziek is de vroomheid altijd no. één en de muzikale expressie no. 2.” *Bach's muziek*, 26-27.

⁸² “Daarom predikt deze muziek ons ook de groote les, dat de leuze ‘l'art pour l'art’ een valsche leuze is. De kunst is altijd dienaar en dat is haar hoogste eertitel, want wat zij dient, dat is het allerhoogste wat er bestaat. Zij is voor den mensch de adelaarswiek, die hem uit het aardsche moeras opvoert tot de lichte hoogten der eeuwige schoonheid, klaarheid en reinheid. Daarom is alle echte kunst religieus, maar de meest religieuze is ongetwijfeld de muziek en de meest religieuze muziek is ongetwijfeld die van Bach.” *Bach's muziek*, 27. According to Gunning, the only musician to rival Bach as a religious composer was Palestrina. The Dutch, in whose services the role of music was limited to simple communal singing, did not feel threatened by Palestrina's music in the same way their German counterparts did.

journal *Muziek en religie* [*Music and Religion*]. He joined the NBV board in 1933, the year he published his most important book, *Phänomenologie der Religion*, and became president of the society in 1948, a post he held until his death in 1950.

Long before this, however, as a young man, van der Leeuw already associated music with the divine, and clothed his references to it in a radiant Christian mysticism. He confided to his diary on 19 July 1911:

Music is one of the most expressive and intense forms of religion. It shows to man his own soul, but in a higher light, in a divine light, it is the great purification It opens golden gates, where we may catch a glimpse of the glorious city. And we feel these gates are not entered without a pure soul. We must first be good to become musical; we must have love to love music. Music is the form of religion where a mediator is not wanted. Man cannot mount the scale into Heaven, he can never see the face of God, even when he may peep through the golden gates in the glorious city. There's a [C]ross waiting.⁸³

In 1932 he published *Wegen en grenzen: studie over de verhouding tussen religie en kunst* [*Paths and Boundaries: A Study of the Relationship between Religion and Art*], which subsequently went through several revised editions and was republished as recently as 2006. Here he wrote that:

Music is never the servant of religion: it is the servant of God. And it does not fulfill its duty by singing psalms continually, but by being music, only music, and again music. "Religious" music in the true, deep sense is not only the music of Bach and Palestrina, but also a symphony of Beethoven, an opera of Mozart, a waltz of Strauss. All music that is absolute music, without additions, without anything counterfeit, is the servant of God; just as pure painting is, whether it treats religious subjects or not; and as true architecture is, apart from the churches it builds; and as true science is, even when

⁸³ Remarkably, van der Leeuw wrote this passage in English. Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Universiteitsbibliotheek, UBG003, 5a Dagboeknotities I (13 juni 1911–1924, September 1911), 9 juli.

it has little to do with theology, but busies itself with gases, stars, or languages.⁸⁴

If music is the servant of God, then the musician should be a servant of music, and not fall into the vanity of subjective feelings or egotistical virtuosity. Objectivity was a prized mode of musical expression for van der Leeuw, and he believed that Bach was its greatest exponent: “The most beautiful example of the expression of the holy through objectivity is the way Bach, in the passions and cantatas, continually sublimates the subjective sufferings and joys of the faithful into a suprapersonal expression of faith.”⁸⁵

Following such thinking, it becomes clear that the personalization of the music that Bach intentionally had made suprapersonal would be an act of ego on the part of the performer. For van der Leeuw, music making was an act of service. It was in subservience that aesthetics and religion met. In a passage following on the heels of a discussion of *L'art pour l'art*, he noted: “He who serves beauty serves God, at least if he serves faithfully. There is only one form of service.”⁸⁶

This notion of the piety of selfless service was shared by Anton van der Horst, who became the conductor of the NBV in 1931. Van der Horst's influence on the young Leonhardt is explored in the following section. It was the former's performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* that inspired the latter to become a musician, and indeed van der Horst was eager to serve that work in particular. In a letter to van der Leeuw dated 15 June 1936, van der Horst describes his examination of the autograph score of the *St. Matthew Passion* and the consequences that had for his performance, noting “My desire is to perform the [St.] M[atthew] P[assion] by serving it, while listening to God's will, to which Bach also was listening when he gave the piece form. Naturally, I have also studied the form received by Bach and I have done what was possible to follow his indications.”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2006), 269-70.

⁸⁵ *Sacred and Profane Beauty*, 238.

⁸⁶ *Sacred and Profane Beauty*, 277.

⁸⁷ “Mijn wensch is de M. P. dienende uit te voeren, al luisterende naar de wil van God, waarnaar ook Bach luisterde toen hij het werk in vorm bracht. Naatuurlijk heb ik daarnaast studie gemaakt van de door Bach ontvangen vorm en heb ik gedaan wat mogelijk was om zijn aanwijzingen op te volgen.” Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, UBG003, 3 br – Hilversum 1936–1941, 15 Juni 1936.

Gustav Leonhardt, Protestant in "Body and Soul"

Having examined religiously motivated ideologies of performance promoted by the NBG and the NBV, it is time to return to the work of Leonhardt, in order to place it in its Protestant context.⁸⁸ This article began with a description of the memorial service in the *Westerkerk* in 2012, and returns to it now in closing. That entire event, but most particularly the funeral oration, was a sharp, carefully conceived critique of contemporary society, and especially of the surrounding worldly bustle of cosmopolitan, atheistic, Enlightened Amsterdam. The man so many associated with the revival of authentic performances of Bach's sacred cantatas chose not to comfort his bereaved friends and admirers with the musical solace such works can provide; those who may have hoped to hear the *Actus tragicus* were treated instead to the communal singing of psalms and chorales. This rigor reflects Leonhardt's affinity with Calvinist worship. Jurjen Vis stated that: 'It would be all too facile to connect Leonhardt's Protestantism with his strictness, or even stiffness, as a musician.'⁸⁹ As it is the avowed goal of this article to question Vis' assertion, it is worth sketching Leonhardt's close connections to the NBV, which we have seen was itself influenced by the Protestant ideologies of the NBG.

Leonhardt's father, George, was deeply involved in the NBV, having played the flute in at least one performance of sacred music by Bach in Naarden before joining the board of directors in 1938. As a member of the board, George Leonhardt would have been in contact with Herman Rutters, J. H. Gunning Wzn., Gerardus van der Leeuw, and Anton van der Horst. He had a particularly close association with the latter; indeed, George stood at van der Horst's side when van der Leeuw conferred upon the conductor an honorary doctorate in theology for his performances of Bach.⁹⁰ Van der Horst was music theory teacher to two of the Leonhardt children, Gustav and his sister Trudelies, and during the war years van der Horst gave a series of public lectures on music in the Leonhardt family home in Laren. Such close NBV contacts in turn ensured that the young Gustav had access to Bach's music through the sound of NBV performances and to NBV musical ideologies through the theoretical teachings of its conductor. As one interviewer wrote in 1992, "Gustav's

⁸⁸ For an earlier treatment of this topic, see Jed Wentz, "Gustav Leonhardt, the Naarden Circle and Early Music's Reformation," *Early Music* 42 (2014): 3–12.

⁸⁹ "Gustav Leonhardt: Eerste onder de apostelen."

⁹⁰ See Wentz, "Gustav Leonhardt," 9.

theory lessons with Dr. Anton van der Horst, conductor of the Netherlands Bach Society, were, he still feels, of greatest value. They served to deepen his particular love for and understanding of the music of J. S. Bach.”⁹¹ In 1980, Leonhardt himself used a religiously tinted verb, stating that by the time he first heard a performance by Willem Mengelberg of the *St. Matthew Passion* at the Concertgebouw “I was already so converted that I found it disgusting.”⁹² One therefore could posit that the spiritual motivations and abstract societal ideologies promoted by the NBV (and before them by the NBG) have manifested themselves to some extent in our current approach to Early Music through the medium of Leonhardt’s influential style and charismatic persona; or, more specifically, that Protestant distrust of perceived Counter-Reformation sensuality has played a stronger role in the creation of our Early Music aesthetic than many are aware of today.

After all, it was the outrage felt by some Dutch Protestants when confronted with Mengelberg’s performances of Bach’s music that led to the founding of the NBV in the first place. Mengelberg was consistently accused, by Rutters and other critics, of performing in too sensual and virtuosic a fashion. For instance, one writer noted in 1916 that:

[for some people] Mengelberg is too exuberant. It is possible that his Catholicism has contributed to a development of his musical nature in the direction of the lyric-dramatic, which so permeates his conceptions that, according to the judgement of some, he overly relaxes Beethoven’s quality of the musically epic and overly dramatizes the mature spirit of a Bach.⁹³

Similarly, the Dutch harpsichordist Jaap Spigt, who performed in the boy’s choir of the *St. Matthew Passion* under Mengelberg, described the difference between the “Catholic” and “Calvinist” approaches to Bach:

⁹¹ Howard Schott, “‘Ein Vollkommene Music-Meister’: Howard Schott Hails the Multi-Faceted Achievement of Gustav Leonhardt,” *The Musical Times* 133 (1992): 514.

⁹² For a full discussion see Wentz, “Gustav Leonhardt.”

⁹³ “Mengelberg is hun te uitbundig. Mogelijk heeft zijn katholicisme het zijne bijgedragen tot een ontwikkeling zijner muzikale natuur in de lyrisch-dramatische richting, welke zijn opvattingen dermate doordringt, dat hij, naar sommiger oordeel bijv. de muzikale epiek van Beethoven te veel versoepelt en de bezonken geest van een Bach te zeer dramatiseert.” H. L. Berckenhoff, *Kunstwerken en kunstenaars (muziek)* (Amsterdam: Den Dégel, [1916]), 10.

First there was Mengelberg with those enormous expressive moments, and then came van der Horst who really turned the faucet from hot to cold. Mengelberg was extremely Catholic ... and people left weeping. With van der Horst everything was austere, but he was a typical Calvinist, for him the most important thing was the text as it stood. Very little happened, it was very straightforward, but at that time people thought it was wonderful.⁹⁴

The idea that Catholic performers were of necessity overtly expressive, however, lacks nuance. For instance, in 1900 the Catholic conductor and composer Anton Averkamp condemned virtuosity with all the fire of a Greulich or a Rutters:

The insertion of finesse into the performance for the sake of finesse alone is quite surely to be condemned. May we always keep ourselves far from such “pretty-singing,” which occasions the encouragement of abominable virtuosity. The work of art must always be viewed as the main thing; and all performative nuances, be they dynamic or rhythmic, must arise from the work itself, and in order to place the work in the most beautiful light.⁹⁵

Yet some Dutch Protestants continued to associate dramatic and expressive excesses with an ego-driven Catholic taste, in contrast to the sobriety that typified their own. In 1948, the year that he became president of the NBV, van der Leeuw wrote: “Indeed, the Roman church as we know it is not the church of Dominicus or Franciscus, not

⁹⁴ “Eerst had je Mengelberg met die enorme toestanden en toen kwam Van der Horst die echt de kraan van heet op koud heeft gezet. Mengelberg was heel erg rooms [...] en de mensen gingen huilend weg. Bij van der Horst was het allemaal heel erg strak, maar hij was een typische Calvinist, voor hem was vooral de tekst zoals die er stond van belang. Er gebeurde heel weinig, het ging gewoon recht toe recht aan, maar men vond het in die tijd prachtig.” Quoted in Jolande van der Klis, *Oude muziek in Nederland: het verhaal van de pioniers 1900–1975* (Utrecht: Stichting Organisatie Oude Muziek, 1991), 44.

⁹⁵ “Zeer beslist af te keuren is het finesse in de voordracht te leggen, alleen om die finesse. Zulk mooi-zingerij, die aanleiding geeft het verfoeilijke virtuosendom in de hand te werken, blijve steeds verre van ons. Het kunstwerk moet steeds beschouwd worden als hoofdzaak en alle voordrachts-nuances zoowel op dynamisch als rhythmisch gebied moeten ontstaan uit het werk zelf en om het werk in het schoonste licht te plaatsen.” Quoted in van der Klis, *Oude muziek*, 32. For a detailed exploration of the topic see Petra van Langen, *Muziek en religie: Katholieke musici en de confessionalisering van het Nederlandse muziekleven, 1850–1948* (s.l.: Verloren, 2014).

even unqualifiedly that of Thomas and Scholasticism, but that of the baroque and the Jesuits. The ‘typically Catholic’ style that we all know, both from teaching and experience, from theology and lifestyle, first arose in opposition to the Reformation.”⁹⁶ He went on to comfort his fellow Protestants that there is “little to regret” in comparing the “merely superficially religious” Catholic art of the baroque and rococo with Dutch paintings of interior scenes, still lifes, and landscapes. The implication is that the peaceful simplicity of the latter is more deeply spiritual than the sensual showiness of the former.

One cannot help but remember Leonhardt’s remark, quoted in the introduction: “I don’t care to go too deeply into this, and I wouldn’t persecute them, but banalities play an important role for Catholics, there are many distracting superficialities.”⁹⁷ In a later interview Leonhardt returned to the theme of persecution, now placing it in the context of the social phenomenon of *verzuiling* (socio-religious compartmentalization, or “pillarization”):

There used to be many more small pillars; everything existed in parallel, each had his own religion. It was like that for centuries. I am always a bit proud that the Roman Catholics were never persecuted in our country, even if they were a minority. Pillars are still keeping things together. Look at the Bible belt: it forms a power base in The Netherlands. But here in Amsterdam you see that society has fallen apart. Everyone does what he thinks is right. ... a multicultural society is of course not a community. It is an accumulation of peoples and cultures at cross-purposes.⁹⁸

Leonhardt’s criticism of modern, “Enlightened” society can be understood in the context of this pillarization, a phenomenon that typified Dutch society from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1960s. Pillarization ensured the cohabitation of minority groups in non-violent non-contiguity. It protected those within the pillar from discrimination,

⁹⁶ “Inderdaad: de roomse kerk, zoals wij die kennen, is de kerk, niet van Dominicus of Franciscus, zelfs niet zonder meer van Thomas en de scholastiek, maar van het Barok en de Jezuïeten. Het ‘typisch-roomse,’ dat wij allen kennen, zowel uit leer als uit leven, uit theologie als uit levensstijl, is eerst tegenover de Reformatie gegroeid.” “Het cultureel aspect van de confessionele splitsing in de Kerk van Christus,” *Wending: Rooms-Katholicisme*, 20, no. 11 (January 1948): 650.

⁹⁷ Maas, “Ik beweeg niet meer.”

⁹⁸ van der Knijf, “Tussenhandelaar in muziek.”

while simultaneously serving as a tool to discriminate against those outside of it. The imagery commonly associated with pillarization is that of a national temple, whose pillars of segregated believers (whether the belief be religious or political) supported the overarching tympanum of the Dutch government. Those closest to the base of each pillar lived lives dictated by their particular life-philosophy, be it Catholic, Protestant, or Socialist; an individual's choice of doctors, schools, shops, universities, newspapers, magazines, and radio broadcasting were all strictly predetermined. For the common man, pillarization resulted in a life led almost exclusively in Catholic, Protestant, or Socialist environments. On the other hand, the upper classes, closer to the tympanum, enjoyed greater freedom to mingle; for, after all, the government could only function if there were contact between the groups.⁹⁹

Leonhardt would have experienced pillarization first hand growing up as a minority Protestant in the Dutch town of Laren, which had (and still has) a marked Catholic character.¹⁰⁰ It is remarkable that the young Leonhardt, with a mother who had converted from Catholicism and the middle name Maria, should have grown up in such an environment. Given this complex relationship to Catholicism, it is worth reexamining Leonhardt's early biography in order to consider how his self-identification as a Protestant, his sense of identity as a Dutchman, and his love of Bach may all have developed simultaneously.

The family was officially Dutch Reformed, but his parents did not regularly attend church. In sharp contrast, however, to this somewhat Laodicean parental stance, the young Gustav attended his confirmation classes "with exceptional interest."¹⁰¹ At some point in the 1930s his parents purchased a harpsichord for their domestic music making, because they "felt that the music of Bach, Handel, and Telemann should

⁹⁹ Cross-confessional relationships between Dutch Catholic and Protestant musicians did exist, but cannot be discussed here. They make sense when placed in the context of pillarization: those outside the pillar were free to follow their beliefs, no matter how "inferior" or "misguided," as long as they formed no threat to the functioning of the other pillars.

¹⁰⁰ As recently as 2017 a local politician got himself into hot water, during a debate about opening shops for business on Sunday, by declaring "Laren is een katholiek dorp, op zondagochtend rust en ga je niet shoppen, bladblazen of grasmaaien," (Laren is a Catholic village, on Sunday morning [you] rest and you don't go shopping, blow leaves or mow lawns) which he was later forced to modify: "Een van origien katholiek dorp" (originally a Catholic village.) <http://www.larensbehoud.nl/laren-in-het-nieuws/respecteer-rust-in-katholiek-dorp-32382.html>.

¹⁰¹ van der Knijf, "Gustav Leonhardt."

not be played on the piano.”¹⁰² It seems likely that this purchase was at least partly inspired by George Leonhardt’s early contact with the NBV. Together with his father, the young Gustav attended NBV performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*, a work that was central to the evolving faith of both men.¹⁰³

During the war these performances under the baton of van der Horst became an important source of comfort to the Dutch, particularly as the Concertgebouw was now haunted by the specter of Mengelberg’s cordial relations with the German occupiers. As Geert Oost, in his biography of van der Horst has noted: “For van der Horst—and for many others as well—the only possibility of getting through the war was to draw strength from music. ‘Now I cannot possibly survive without the *St. Matthew Passion*’ was the statement of one faithful attendee of the Naarden performance, after his son had been executed.”¹⁰⁴ Whatever influence the war may have had on Gustav’s own sense of Dutch identity, he himself believed it to have stimulated his family’s piety: “After the war my parents *did* go to church. Why? Probably because of the horror of the war.”¹⁰⁵

Although the family enjoyed wealth and social status, there was still much to fear from the Germans: “everything stopped, including school. Actually, my brother and I should have gone to work in Germany, but we didn’t want to. That meant that we could no longer go out on the street. We spent entire days at home There was always someone sitting on a chair by the window, on the lookout.”¹⁰⁶ Thus it was that Leonhardt decided to become a professional keyboard-player; unable to leave the house for fear of being coerced to work for the Nazis, he devoted his time to the harpsichord, and to one composer in particular: “At that time I worshipped Bach. . . . Yes, I really was a young fanatic.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² van der Knijf, “Gustav Leonhardt.”

¹⁰³ See Wentz, “Gustav Leonhardt,” 10.

¹⁰⁴ “De enige mogelijkheid de oorlog door te komen, was voor Van der Horst – en voor velen met hem – kracht putten uit muziek. ‘Nú kan ik onmogelijk zonder Mattheus Passion,’ was een uitspraak van een trouwe bezoeker van de uitvoering in Naarden nadat zijn zoon was gefusilleerd.” *Anthón van der Horst 1899–1965: Leven en werk* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Canaletto 1992), 32.

¹⁰⁵ “Na de oorlog gingen mijn ouders wél naar de kerk. Waarom? Waarschijnlijk vanwege de ellende van de oorlog.” van der Knijf, “Gustav Leonhardt.”

¹⁰⁶ van der Knijf, “Gustav Leonhardt.”

¹⁰⁷ “In die tijd dweeptte ik met Bach. . . . Ja, ik was echt een dwepertia.” van der Knijf, “Gustav Leonhardt.”

This quality of fanaticism was still apparent when Leonhardt arrived in Basel in 1947 to study at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. Having survived the horrors of the Dutch Famine of 1944 to 1945, he arrived in Basel wearing his father's hand-me-down clothes. He described his arrival: "You leave a poor country ruined by war and you arrive in a land where nothing is ruined. A land of milk and honey."¹⁰⁸ He spent the first six months there in the home of a fellow Schola student, Christopher Schmidt (b. 1927), and the two became fast friends. (Schmidt's recollections of the period are the basis of what follows here.)¹⁰⁹ Leonhardt's devotion to Bach, his superb training in theory and harmony, which Schmidt attributed to his studies with van der Horst, and his passion for seventeenth-century Dutch art made a deep impression. Schmidt noted that Leonhardt's Basel days were "not about developing skills: he had brought those with him."¹¹⁰ Indeed, at the first student recital of the year the nineteen-year-old Dutchman astounded fellow students and faculty alike by his masterly performance of the complete *Goldberg Variations*. Bach's music was at the heart of his studies; he played the complete keyboard works for his teacher Edward Müller, and his master's thesis, entitled "Teilstudie von Bach's rhythmischer Notation," (Study of a Subset of Bach's Rhythmical Notation) entailed an examination of the composer's entire *oeuvre*.¹¹¹

This young Leonhardt, fanatical about Bach, was far from the reserved and distant *eminence grise* of more recent recollection. Schmidt remembered: "his mood, both in music-making and in daily companionship, tended towards the cheerful. His Dutch feeling of *gezelligheid* (conviviality) was liberating for myself and for the others living and studying in Basel."¹¹² Schmidt also remembers this young Gustav as charming and elegant in his manner, with a wry sense of humor, but also as easily wounded and prone to blush, all of which he summarized as "Distanz mit Sensibilität." Schmidt describes days of cozy intimacy in which Leonhardt opened up a new world, introducing him to the beauties of seventeenth-century Dutch by reading Vondel's

¹⁰⁸ van der Knijf, "Gustav Leonhardt."

¹⁰⁹ Anne Smith and Jed Wentz, interview with Christopher Schmidt on 12 May 2012, Baden, Switzerland.

¹¹⁰ "Gustav Leonhardt's Student Years in Basel," in *Much of What We Do is Pure Hypothesis: Gustav Leonhardt and His Early Music* (Utrecht Early Music Festival: 2012), 11, <http://jedwentz.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Much-of-what-we-do-is-pure-hypothesis.pdf>

¹¹¹ See Anne Smith and Jed Wentz, "Gustav Maria Leonhardt in Basel: Portrait of a Young Harpsichordist," *Basler Jahrbuch für Historische Musikpraxis* 34 (2010): 229-44.

¹¹² "Gustav Leonhardt's Student Years," 9.

Ovidius' Herscheppinge (*Ovid's Metamorphoses*) out loud. They sang and played together, music by Dufay on gamba and recorder and the Bach sonatas for harpsichord and violin. Once they warmed themselves at a bitterly cold start to Basel's traditional *Fasnacht* by sipping Dutch *jenever*. Yet, even at this age, there were barriers. The two students, together with Ina Lohr, a pious Protestant Dutchwoman who was teaching at the Schola, visited many churches in the area in order to sing chorales during the service, but Leonhardt "was a bit of a Calvinist" so they never discussed church matters. An unspoken agreement forbade the friends from touching on topics like religion or politics, for fear that Leonhardt's conservative stance might clash with that of Schmidt.

It was in Basel that Leonhardt began seriously to study the music of Catholic composers. First came Frescobaldi, followed by the French *clavecinists*. This music started Leonhardt on a new performative path, according to Schmidt, one that would eventually lead to the highly characteristic, mature harpsichord style of his later years. Indeed, despite his remark to Alan Curtis at the end of his life that he could no longer "stomach" Catholic composers, his final recital, performed in Paris on 12 December 2011, contained works by D'Anglebert and Duphly.

This new appreciation for Catholic composers, however, did not soften Leonhardt's core beliefs about music, which were well in tune with those of a Greulich or a Rutters. The late-Romantic style, with its massive symphonic repertoire and its performer-oriented approach, was anathema to him. In 1949 Schmidt went to Holland with Leonhardt to spend a week at his family's home in Laren. According to Schmidt, father and son shared two qualities in particular: obstinacy and an "unbelievable sense of humor." Leonhardt, however, could not embrace the Romantic side of his father's musical taste; the son was "polemical" in his opposition to contemporary musical life. He took a "fanatical" position concerning how things should sound and in this he was "utterly extreme"; "he could not enjoy the famous musicians of the day, he could not *stand* them." He hated the performances of Furtwängler and Casals; indeed, the "broad landscapes" conjured up by the former's performances of Beethoven made Gustav "spit." George Leonhardt, on the other hand, was so enthusiastic an admirer of Gustav Mahler that he named his son after the composer. So while Schmidt and George went together to the Concertgebouw to hear a rehearsal of Mahler's music, Gustav stayed at home: "he did not like these giant symphonies."

He was in everything entirely reliant on his own feeling for beauty and truth, both in and outside of music. His great love of early Dutch art, for example, was a defining feature of his youthful personality. Schmidt noted that this trip to Laren made: “an unbelievable impression, because I noticed that he did not live in a world chosen by his parents or forefathers; rather, he lived and experienced himself, at twenty years of age, as a Dutchman of the seventeenth century; that was his world. I had the feeling that he was so strong that he needed no one, no companion [*Nebenperson*]; and I have never met anyone else who had this so markedly.” This paints the portrait of a young man motivated by the greatest inner conviction, one who rejected the Romanticism associated with his first name (Gustav) and the Catholicism associated with his middle name (Maria), in order to find his identity outside of the norms of his time and beyond the aesthetics of his household.

What Vis has called performative “strictness,” therefore, can indeed be related to Leonhardt’s Protestant beliefs. In the elaborate speech he gave on the occasion of receiving the Erasmus Prize in 1980 (for his recordings of Bach cantatas), Leonhardt claimed that the musician serves his fellow men by primarily serving the music. To do otherwise is vain. “The artist, creative or performative, in my opinion can therefore never have contact with his fellow man through his art. He chooses an *object* instead of a subject for the sublimation of his humanity.”¹¹³ However, though this echoes van der Leeuw, and reflects van der Horst’s eagerness to serve the work, it seems improbable that Leonhardt was indoctrinated by the NBV, was “converted” unwittingly. Schmidt made clear that, in Basel at least, “whatever fit him, whatever he could use, he absorbed; that which lay beside his path was refused, often with a vehemence that I could not understand.”¹¹⁴ If he later denied being a follower of Calvin because “Roman Catholics follow the Pope and the other leaders,” then surely his independent Protestant conviction would not have allowed him, even as a young man, blindly to follow van der Horst. Rather, as both men were of pious Protestant faith, an exchange of musical ideas in sympathy with their spiritual convictions seems probable. Yet it is important to realize that for many, then as now, the “strictness,” “stiffness,” and “severity” of

¹¹³ “De kunstenaar, scheppend of uitvoerend, kan naar mijn mening dan ook met zijn kunst nooit contact met de medemens hebben. Hij kiest een *object* in plaats van een subject voor de sublimatie van zijn menselijkheid.” “Dankrede Gustav Leonhardt,” *Praemium Erasmianum MCMLXXX*, 41.

¹¹⁴ “Gustav Leonhardt’s Student Years,” 9.

Leonhardt's style, as well as his fanaticism, were the essence of what made his performances so compelling.¹¹⁵ As Schmidt put it, with Leonhardt one had to develop a new kind of listening, at a deeper level, for the subtleties. "In the rigidity of his performance there was eternal life."

All of this raises the question: if Leonhardt transmitted some of the principles—through a highly personal style and sound—shared by the NBG and the NBV to his many students, to what extent have today's Early Music performers mistaken the echoes of a late nineteenth-century movement toward liturgical reformation for a purely aesthetic revolution? Of course, Leonhardt, important as he was, did not single-handedly create the dominant Early Music sound we know today. However, it does seem plausible that certain aspects of our current "authentic" performance practice can be traced back from Leonhardt to his Naarden forebears, and from them yet further back to those who, envious of the dangerous beauty of Palestrina, grew tipsy just sipping *aus Gottesbach*.

Abstract

Keyboardist and conductor Gustav Maria Leonhardt was arguably one of the most influential figures in the late twentieth-century Early Music movement. Through his numerous recordings and extensive teaching he transmitted an aesthetic for the performance of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music that still influences the reception and production of Early Music today. This article argues that aspects of that aesthetic can be traced to Protestant ideologies of Bach performance prevalent in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century as promoted by certain members of the *Neue Bachgesellschaft*. The ardent attempts of these theologians and musicologists to return J. S. Bach's church cantatas to the Evangelical service in Germany (here referred to as the *kirchliche Bachbewegung*) were linked to ideals of a performance style free from ego and virtuosity. It was believed that by performing the cantatas in a pious spirit, returning them to the service in acts of selfless devotion, the dangerous doctrine of *l'art pour l'art* could be repudiated. Musicians would then bring spiritual renewal to the German people through Bach's art. These ideals of performance were taken over and adjusted to the Dutch Calvinist situation by members of the *Nederlandse Bachvereniging* (Netherlands Bach Society). Leonhardt himself attributed his decision to become a musician to his youthful association with this society. However, rather than ascribing Leonhardt's absorption of key principles

¹¹⁵ See Wentz, "Gustav Leonhardt," 11.

of performance to some form of religious indoctrination, it is argued here that his fervent personal Protestant faith formed him to a manner of thinking much in sympathy with the ideals of the Nederlandse Bachvereniging.