‘There can be no difference in faith among
certain men but rather a difference in words’:
Mendelssohn’s *Kunstreligion* as a set of
beliefs and an aesthetic language

Sabine Koch

Declaration of Authorship

I have read and understood the regulatory standards for the format and binding of a thesis. Accordingly, I confirm that

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the influence that nineteenth-century tenets of *Kunstreligion* exerted on Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's aesthetic thought. Widely defined as the merging of religious and aesthetic notions in writings about the arts, *Kunstreligion* has frequently been interpreted as a manifestation of spiritual beliefs and a movement with which Mendelssohn was not affiliated. The aim of this thesis is to challenge these claims, and to establish the rootedness of sacralised conceptions of music in non-religious inspirations and particulars of language use. Placing Mendelssohn's fascination with church worship, religious morality as well as the human and the divine in the context of wider philosophies of art and religion, the dissertation explores how the composer availed himself of art-religious vocabulary in his correspondence, examining his use of language both in terms of his own religious upbringing and the intellectual discourse of his age.

Mendelssohn's *Kunstreligion* was very practically oriented. Reflecting his belief that music was a religious language of feelings and proclamation, his performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and subsequent compositions manifested a concern to serve educative purposes related to historicism as well as religious edification and instruction. An analysis of how he viewed these activities in his correspondence reveals that comparisons of concerts with church sermons were not only meant metaphorically but point to objectives that he hoped to accomplish as a man and an artist. His reflections on attributes of the 'human' and the 'divine' elsewhere suggest a belief that artists were blessed by God and that superior works of art were either God's creation or deserved to be described as 'divine' in the sense of 'excellent.' As these overlapping religio-aesthetic concepts and meanings indicate, in Mendelssohn's writings, *Kunstreligion* could be both a form of religion that was associated with Schleiermacher's theology and an eclectic verbal language that was creative, often qualitative, sometimes ironic, and, to that effect, typically Mendelssohnian.

Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	7
 Introducing Nineteenth-Century Kunstreligion	
Chapter 1. Reconstructing Nineteenth-Century <i>Kunstreligion</i>	9
 Part I. Mendelssohn's and his Contemporaries' Aesthetic Concepts of Worship	
Chapter 2. The Protagonists of <i>Kunstreligion</i> as Participants in Church Worship....	75
Chapter 3. Music and Art as Religious Languages	109
 Part II. Moral Aspects of Romantic <i>Kunstreligion</i> Theory	
Chapter 4. <i>Andacht</i> and <i>Ernst</i> as Moral Imperatives of Aesthetic Religiousness....	155
 Part III. The Role of the Divine in Aesthetic Religion	
Chapter 5. Human and Divine Icons in <i>Kunstreligion</i> Theory	197
Chapter 6. Appraisals of the Aesthetically and Religiously Divine in Art	239
 Nineteenth-Century <i>Kunstreligion</i> Revisited	
Epilogue. <i>Kunstreligion</i> as Devotion, Religion and <i>Kunstsinn</i>	281
 Abbreviations.	
Bibliography.....	291
 Appendix 1. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's letters.....	
Appendix 2. <i>Andacht</i> as a mindset, ritual and mode of thinking	293
 Appendix 1. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's letters.....	
Appendix 2. <i>Andacht</i> as a mindset, ritual and mode of thinking	315
 Appendix 2. <i>Andacht</i> as a mindset, ritual and mode of thinking	
367	

List of Figures

Figure 1. Exponents of <i>Kunstreligion</i> (c. 1790-1850)	42
Figure 2. Conceptual elements of <i>Kunstreligion</i> (c. 1790-1850).....	58
Figure 3. Franz Liszt conducting the performance of his new oratorio at Pesth. Engraving after a sketch by M. Bartolomeus de Szekely. Reproduced from <i>The Illustrated London News</i> , vol. 47, no. 1333 (9 September 1865), 252 by permission of the National Library of Scotland.	82
Figure 4. Drechsel, Ursula and Hans Drechsel, photographers. <i>Altes Bach-Denkmal</i> (North Side): Bach's bust. Photograph. 18 August 2013. Archiv U.u.H. Drechsel, Leipzig.	227
Figure 5. Drechsel, Ursula and Hans Drechsel, photographers. <i>Altes Bach-Denkmal</i> (East Side): Organ-playing angel. Photograph. 18 August 2013. Archiv U.u.H. Drechsel, Leipzig.	228
Figure 6. Drechsel, Ursula and Hans Drechsel, photographers. <i>Altes Bach-Denkmal</i> (South Side): Composing angel. Photograph. 18 August 2013. Archiv U.u.H. Drechsel, Leipzig.	228
Figure 7. <i>Altes Bach-Denkmal</i> (West Side): Teaching angel. Photograph. 2013. Photo courtesy of Steffen Hegner.	229
Figure 8. Titian, <i>Assumption of the Virgin</i> . 1516-1518, Oil on wood, 690 x 360 cm. Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, Italy. Available from: ARTstor, http://www.artstor.org (accessed 26 June 2013).	256
Figure 9. J. S. Bach, 'Wir glauben all an einen Gott, Vater,' BWV 740	267
Figure 10. Meanings of <i>Andacht</i>	372

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to various researchers, teachers and colleagues as well as friends and family for their assistance and encouragement during the development of this project. I would like to thank, in particular, my supervisor Elaine Kelly who has given me plenty of advice and inspiration over the past years that helped me to grow as a researcher, teacher and academic. Her critical eye for intellectual currents of thought have made this dissertation much more substantial than originally conceived; her tireless reading of many written pages and her meticulous editing have enabled me to arrive at a much more sophisticated way of dealing with issues touching upon music and thought. Noel O'Regan's encouraging and sympathetic supervision has made the research and writing process even more productive and gratifying. Peter Nelson's and Annette Davison's input at one of the Edinburgh University Music Research Seminars where I presented some early results of my doctoral research have provided much appreciated additional scholarly direction.

Although not directly involved in the dissertation process, Tatjana Boehme-Mehner and Thomas Schinköth deserve special thanks, as they aroused and strengthened my interest and passion for musicology in the first place and accompanied my entry into British academia with much encouragement and active support when I applied for PhD research positions and scholarships. I am also grateful for the help and advice provided by Elizabeth Kramer without whose earlier work on *Kunstreligion* my own research would have been much less fertile and worthwhile. Most valuable information about Mendelssohn's correspondence, intellectual development and social circle as well as his involvement in the Bach Revival from the perspective of German scholarship has been given by Thomas Kauba (with whom I exchanged highly inspiring 'Monatsbriefe' about Mendelssohn via e-mail), Ralf Wehner, Thomas Schmidt, Juliette Appold and Martin Geck. Anglo-American scholars who have assisted me with exploring Mendelssohn's relationship to Friedrich Schleiermacher and Hegel as well as his approach to organ registration include, above all, Larry Todd, Benedict Taylor and Philip Sawyer whose assiduous proofreading and constructive criticism have influenced my writing.

My archival work and search for sources has benefited, in particular, from assistance and materials provided by Peter Ward-Jones (M. Deneke Mendelssohn Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford), Martina Rebmann and Roland Schmidt-Hensel (Mendelssohn Archiv, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz), Christine Böttcher (Music Library, University of Leipzig, Germany), Ursel and Hans Drechsel (Archiv U.u.H.Drechsel) as well as members of staff at the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the University of Edinburgh Library, the music library of the Stadtbibliothek Leipzig and the Mendelssohn House Museum in Leipzig, Germany. My trips to these locations and the completion of my dissertation would not have been possible without the University of Edinburgh, which provided financial assistance towards the costs of archival research, conferences and fees. Financial support from FfWG (Funds for Women Graduates) is also gratefully acknowledged.

I am also indebted to various other individuals who have taken the time to read or discuss my thesis or have helped me in other ways. My personal thanks go to my employer at McAlister Matheson Music, Anne McAlister, and my colleague Julie Aitken who have worked so hard to give me additional time for finishing my thesis. I also cannot thank enough my twin sister Astrid Walther, my brother Christian Koch, my cousin Lydia Steinbach as well as my friends Yvonne Reinwald, Ines Byrne and Marko Antonoff. They have given me much strength and encouragement, especially during essential stages of my dissertation, and provided much valuable information about theological issues, Prussian history, historical sources and word processing. This thesis could also never have been completed without the advice and help of Ljubica Damjanovic, Anna, Nicolas, Elisabeth and Panos Athanasopoulos as well as that of my partner George Athanasopoulos for whose love and caring I am grateful beyond measure. The warmest of thanks go to my parents Bertram and Christine Koch as well as my grandmother Gerda Heinze (†2011) who, despite ill health and advanced age, supported me not only financially but also with never-ending patience and love on my educational way; it is to them that this dissertation is dedicated.

Chapter 1. Reconstructing Nineteenth-Century *Kunstreligion*

I have never heard anything about a religion of art that has dominated peoples and ages [...]. Religion and art stand beside one another like two friendly souls whose inner affinity [...] is [...] still unknown to them. Friendly words and outpourings of the heart always hover on their lips [...] because they are still not able to find the proper manner [...] of their reflection and longing.
(Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 1799)¹

With these regretful and wary words, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) gave the name to an emergent theory that had received poetic formulation in Ludwig Tieck's and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's 1799 miscellany 'Outpourings from the Heart of an Art-Loving Monk' but that had struggled to find concrete shape in the Romantic age. Even today, it is impossible to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of this theory's essence due to its conceptual complexity and multifariousness, and the question continues to arise of how to approach nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion*, how to introduce it. The present study represents a new attempt in this direction, focusing less on Schleiermacher but on one of his late followers who was equally critical and receptive towards art-religious language and tenets: Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Introducing nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion*

Nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion* involved a constellation of ideas that dated back as far as antiquity and arose out of a complex network of literary, philosophical, and aesthetic thought. While many Germans tried to liberate themselves from the religious orthodoxy and dogma of established Church religions, there was also a clear attempt in aesthetics to move away from the hegemonic theories of *Empfindsamkeit*, outdated images of the artist, and views about artistic creation that

¹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1799), 169, trans. as *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, ed. and trans. Richard Crouter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 158.

were considered antiquated. These developments did not progress separately from each other. As contemporary religious thought was tending towards a wider spirituality that detached itself increasingly from positive religion and redefined beliefs advanced by Western European Christianity, perceptions of art changed and came to absorb religious and spiritual views.

This was particularly the case for musicians; rather than exclusively adhering to tenets of faith drawn from the Bible, they openly embraced stimuli from intellectual currents in contemporary literature, philosophy and theology related to mythology, natural or universal religion, Buddhism, religions of humanity and, last but not least, notions of *Kunstreligion*. Expressing individualized spiritual needs, these stimuli came to interact and influence each other, while continuing to co-exist independently. Converted Jewish composers like Mendelssohn, for example, often felt themselves drawn to a universal construct of religion that aimed to reconcile Jewish and Christian doctrines of faith.

Before *Kunstreligion* came to influence the aesthetic writings of musicians as a spiritual ideology and a language, it prevailed in late eighteenth-century German philosophy, literature, theology and music criticism. Often, later authors on music resorted to philosophical and poetic concepts and means of expression forged by earlier writers and developed these further. If this mutual influence between different disciplines is taken into account, *Kunstreligion* may be – most broadly – defined as a diversely-motivated merging of religious, moral, mythological and aesthetic notions. These notions stimulated comparisons of musical listening and performance with religious ritual, as well as depictions of artists as preachers, prophets, priests and gods. Beyond that, they furthered understandings of musical works as divine and of sound as a spiritual essence, the identity and origin of which was conceptualized in religious terms.

Combining versatile perceptions of musicians, music as an art and the musical work, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century thought on *Kunstreligion* was highly intricate and, in its complexity, highly inspiring for those engaging in aesthetic discourse. The more the new religious theory of art spread, the more attractive it became both as a rhetorical device in writings of various kinds and as a

belief system that represented a correlate, supplement or alternative to traditional religion. Whether art-religious conceptions provided a novel and creative vocabulary for these nineteenth-century individuals, however, or whether its articulation in contemporary writings manifested the religious convictions of their authors is a question that still remains to be answered.

The present study aims to explore the question of whether nineteenth-century ideas of *Kunstreligion* were, in fact, religiously motivated or rooted in literary intentions and contemporary aesthetic ideologies. It does so by using Mendelssohn as a case study. The approach taken is twofold. First, the complex etymology and origins of nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion* are reconstructed, and Mendelssohn's views are placed within the broader traditions of its use from the turn of the nineteenth century to the last years of his life. Starting from an analysis of his correspondence as well as of his approaches to composition and conducting, the dissertation establishes the extent as to which he subscribed to central themes and theories of *Kunstreligion*, as they were formulated by his contemporaries. Second, light is thrown on the philosophical, theological and ideological origins of the composer's art-religious conceptions as well as the life events and social conditions that inspired religious imagery in his correspondence. This focus on Mendelssohn's religious upbringing as well as on his professional and social life is inspired by the insight that, if his form of *Kunstreligion* represented a faith, there might be distinctive parallels between his religious and aesthetic beliefs. In this context, an examination of both the literary sources and the people around him who stimulated his written reflections on the arts will help to ascertain the extent to which the composer's aesthetics were influenced by wider philosophies of art and religion.

The evolving history of *Kunstreligion*

Mendelssohn and his contemporaries gave *Kunstreligion* a distinct and markedly complex shape in their writings. However, *Kunstreligion* has existed since ancient times and lives on still, and most scholars are conscious of this historical situation. Barzun's identification of the religion of art as 'a nineteenth-century innovation' is

an exception.² Other authors have traced manifestations of art-religious views in antiquity, the Middle Ages, Renaissance Italy, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France and Germany as well as in the twentieth and current centuries. Jean-Marie Schaeffer, for example, has spotted tendencies towards the sacralisation of poetic art among ancient Greek and Latin authors such as Pindar, Plato and Democritus. According to him, their ideas of the poet as ‘interpreter of the divine word’ (*interprète de la parole divine*) lived on in early Christian and some mediaeval writings. While Schaeffer also focused on the transformation of this view into Renaissance conceptions of poets as individuals inspired by the Muses,³ Jean Gimpel extolled the Italian Renaissance as the hour of birth of the religion of art that he conceives as an obsession with paintings by art collectors that soon turned from a ‘religion of form, of style, of beauty’ into a ‘religion of profit.’⁴

In their proto-religious aversion to art commerce, eighteenth-century intellectuals and men of letters such as Karl Philipp Moritz, Friedrich Schiller and Immanuel Kant represent, in Martha Woodmansee’s view, the earliest writers who gave expression to art-religious ideas.⁵ For Helmut Loos, as for Schaeffer, it was the writings of early romantic poets and thinkers that generated a sacralised ‘myth of music’ (*Mythos Musik*) that maintained its social significance and influenced Western perceptions of the arts into the late twentieth century.⁶ Elizabeth Kramer and Annie Janeiro Randall expanded the period of *Kunstreligion* further into the twenty-first century. Since, according to Randall, ‘cryptoreligious sensibility is so embedded in the Western European art music tradition, so [...] rarely questioned even though it has much to do with [...] how we perform music, and even what we listen to, how we listen to it, and what we derive from it,’ any study exploring the roots and

² Jacques Barzun, ‘Berlioz as man and thinker,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Berlioz*, ed. Peter Bloom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9-19 at 13.

³ Jean-Marie Schaeffer, ‘La religion de l’art: un paradigme philosophique de la modernité,’ *Revue germanique internationale*, vol. 2 (1994), 195-204, at 202.

⁴ Jean Gimpel: *The Cult of Art: Against Art and Artists* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), 37-39.

⁵ Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market: Revealing the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 3, 7, 1-33.

⁶ Helmut Loos, ‘Robert Schumanns kunstreligiöse Sendung,’ in *Robert Schumann Persönlichkeit, Werk und Wirkung; Bericht über die internationale Musikwissenschaftliche Konferenz vom 22. bis 24. April 2010 in Leipzig* (Leipzig: Schroeder, 2011), 354-363, at 355 and Schaeffer, ‘La religion de l’art: un paradigme philosophique de la modernité,’ 206-207.

manifestations of the concept in the nineteenth century brings valuable clarification for a proper understanding of Western art theory as well as artistic and musical culture.⁷

To develop a chronology for the evolution of *Kunstreligion* with demarcations of its date of birth as well as of early, middle and late periods of development is rather difficult, as its history is rather volatile and, according to Lydia Goehr's classification of aesthetic concepts, it is often the case that '[p]rior to the point at which we would say a concept has emerged, it might be that many if not all the threads of what becomes the content of the concept already exist.'⁸ She believes that the emergence of aesthetic concepts involves extensive and complex chain reactions between inter-connected theories, beliefs and principles. Rather than arising out of a common origin, the heterogeneous parts of this chain interweave continuously until a point is reached when all threads become closely tied together. Only then do concepts reach a certain stability and reveal their meaning and regulative power.⁹ These rationales apply perfectly to the *Kunstreligion* of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

While single ideas that form part of *Kunstreligion* can be traced back to centuries preceding romanticism, it is in the writings of nineteenth-century philosophers, theologians, writers, music critics and musicians that all the various conceptual elements that gave meaning to it came together for the first time. It is, indeed, not inappropriate to identify the religion of art that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century as a mass movement and the third decade of the nineteenth century as the point in time at which musicians started to engage critically with art-religious tenets and ideas. According to Violaine Anger and Jean-François Labie, in

⁷ Annie Janeiro Randall, "'And Art Shall Say, 'Let There Be Light'": Religious Imagery and the Nineteenth-Century Musical Imagination,' in *Art and the Religious Impulse*, ed. Eric Michael Mazur (London: Associated University Press, 2002), 84-90, at 85. On a similar note, Kramer emphasizes that *Kunstreligion* has 'influenced [...] our musical life, not to mention how we go about thinking about religion and music today' and its tenets 'can be connected to historical and contemporary practices' which show 'how music as well as religion continue to function as lived realities.' See Elizabeth Kramer, 'The Idea of "Kunstreligion" in German Musical Aesthetics of the Early Nineteenth Century' (unpublished manuscript of revised Ph.D. diss., 2010), 307; henceforth *IKA rev.*

⁸ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 107-108.

⁹ Ibid.

the second half of the eighteenth century composers entered aesthetic debates and, from the nineteenth century onwards, they can also be found ‘in the front line’ in political and spiritual battles of thought that took place in various forms throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁰ When, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, conceptions of *Kunstreligion* by poets and writers became increasingly focused on music as the highest of the arts, musico-religious views reached long-lasting and widespread prominence, as Loos and Eva-Maria von Adam-Schmidmeier have established.¹¹

According to Adolf Nowak, these developments found their beginning in the age of Goethe (1770 to 1830).¹² By contrast, Kramer has focused on a narrower period encompassing the 1790s and the turn of the nineteenth century.¹³ Randall identified Mendelssohn’s direction of the first two full-scale performances of Bach’s *St. Matthew* Passion since the composer’s death on 11 and 21 March 1829 as ‘the germination point for nineteenth-century musicoreligious perspectives on music after which the idea rapidly took root and flourished,’ ignoring earlier manifestations of *Kunstreligion* that were rooted in late eighteenth-century social and spiritual realities.¹⁴ Considering the immediate influence that eighteenth-century aesthetics and enlightenment thinking exerted on perceptions of music as they were formulated by the early romantics and assembled by nineteenth-century reviewers of the Passion performances, however, it seems more accurate to identify the period between the 1750s and 1790s as the period of initiation, the following decades as the years of formulation and elaboration, and the 1830s as the ‘golden age’ of musical *Kunstreligion*.

¹⁰ See Jean-François Labie, Jean-Yves Hameline, Dominique Delesalle and Anne-Françoise Leurquin Labie, *Le visage du Christ dans la musique des XIXe et XXe siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 2005), 15 and Violaine Anger, *Le sens de la musique 1750-1900: Vivaldi, Beethoven, Berlioz, Liszt, Debussy, Stravinsky* (Paris: Éditions Rue d’Ulm, 2005), 20.

¹¹ Loos, ‘Robert Schumanns kunstreligiöse Sendung,’ 355 and Eva-Maria von Adam-Schmidmeier, ‘Priester des Publikums: Felix Mendelssohn im Kontext einer neuen “Kunstreligion,”’ *Musik und Unterricht*, no. 85 (2006), 28-39, at 28 & 30.

¹² See Adolf Nowak, ‘Religiöse Begriffe in der Musikästhetik des 19. Jahrhunderts,’ in *Religiöse Musik in nicht-liturgischen Werke von Beethoven bis Reger*, ed. Walter Wiora, Günther Massenkeil and Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1978), 47-58, at 47.

¹³ Elizabeth A. Kramer, ‘The Idea of “Kunstreligion” in German Musical Aesthetics of the Early Nineteenth Century’ (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2005), 1-2 & 51; henceforth *IKA*.

¹⁴ Randall, ‘Religious Imagery and the Nineteenth-Century Musical Imagination,’ 87.

The emergence of nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion* in response to social and spiritual realities

Randall Collins has established that the existence of intellectual ideas and the ways in which they are spread by like-minded thinkers are determined by political, social and religious conditions.¹⁵ This also applies to *Kunstreligion* as a theory and a mindset entertained by nineteenth-century individuals. As various scholars have emphasized, its rise and the ideological shape that it took in the romantic period were inspired by cultural and economic realities. In their historical overviews, these authors point at earthshaking events in European society and politics that stirred feelings of discontent, frustration and alienation and prompted the intelligentsia to engage in aesthetic and spiritual reflection that embraced tenets of *Kunstreligion*.

In this context, *Kunstreligion* has frequently been understood as an intellectual counter-movement to modernity ('ideological anti-modernism' or *Gegenmoderne*) that had its subtle beginnings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and soon oriented itself towards the gnostic and religious.¹⁶ According to the German literary scholar and writer Dirk von Petersdorff, from whom this terminology is taken, opponents of modernity mobilized theories and topoi of *Kunstreligion* for 'cultural criticism' (*Kulturkritik*), 'social criticism' (*Gesellschaftskritik*), 'utopianism' (*Utopien*) and a 'negation of the world' (*Weltverneinung*).¹⁷ As they attempted to confront social reality and to develop ideas for its reformation, these authors turned *Kunstreligion* into a means to 'oppose' (*bekämpfen*), 'overcome' (*überwinden*) and 'avert' (*bannen*) 'political, social and intellectual modernity' (*die politische, soziale und denkgeschichtliche Moderne*).¹⁸ On a slightly different note, Schaeffer has argued that phenomena of modernity such as political and scientific revolutions brought about an 'experience of existential,

¹⁵ See Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), xviii & 38.

¹⁶ Dirk von Petersdorff, '200 Jahre deutsche Kunstreligion – ein Gang zu den Wurzeln der Moderne; und Gegenmoderne; und zurück,' *Neue Rundschau*, vol. 104, no. 4 (1997), 67-87, at 67-68 & 71-82.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 80, 83, 78 & 81.

social, political, cultural and religious disorientation' (*l'expérience d'une désorientation existentielle, sociale, politique, culturelle et religieuse*) which, in turn, inspired an engagement with everyday social and historical reality on the one hand, and a sacralisation and 'romantic exaltation' (*exaltation romantique*) of art on the other.¹⁹

The French Revolution (with its escalation into the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars) was the most traumatic event that gave rise and impetus to art-religious sentiments. The experience of revolution and war effected ambivalent reactions among nineteenth-century individuals. Even though many Germans entertained revolutionary ideals, they were shocked and aghast at the atrocities caused by the Jacobins, the French National Convention and Napoleon's invading troops. Daniel Chua believes that the apotheosis of instrumental sound into 'some kind of divine utterance' and of absolute music into a 'monument of modernity' and an 'epoch-making event' did not happen accidentally at a time when beliefs in revolutionary ideals of freedom, equality, progress and technology came to falter under the threat of terror and barbarity. The new aesthetic of instrumental music was meant to restore faith in the future and in the teleological process of human history that the bloodshed of the French Revolution had made to seem improbable. Accordingly, "'Art" became a religion of modernity, and absolute music, as the condition to which all art should aspire, was its god.'²⁰

Because in Germany the nineteenth-century emancipation of the middle classes largely progressed peacefully until the 1830s, there was a strong belief that social progress as well as political change could be effected through culture rather than revolution. This conviction seems to have been strengthened by the tragic events

¹⁸ Ibid., 67 & 72.

¹⁹ Schaeffer, 'La religion de l'art: un paradigme philosophique de la modernité,' 203. He mainly refers to poetry but also shortly touches upon music and painting. In this context, *Kunstreligion* may be described as 're-enchantment,' since it reversed earlier processes of 'secular rationalization' and 'intellectualization' that Friedrich Schiller and Max Weber summarized as 'the disenchantment of the world' (*Entzauberung der Welt*) and held responsible for an 'erosion of religious powers' and of 'magical elements of thought.' See Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr), 1986, 1:564 and idem, *Essays in Sociology*, ed. Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 1991), xxiv, 51 & 138-139.

²⁰ Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8-9.

of the French Revolution; it expressed itself in notions of social art and ‘a new, Olympian conception of the artist’ as a social actor and a priest who was sent ‘by a higher lore’ in order to ‘take the reins of human affairs’ and ‘redeem the world.’²¹ According to Benjamin Curtis, during German Romanticism artists were believed to be able ‘to effect social change’ by realising in their art their visions of a different and better world. In this context, their talent ‘to invent a world’ and ‘to give that world form through the [musical, literary or visual] artwork’ came to be viewed ‘as little short of divine’ and as ‘heaven-sent.’²²

Further factors that conditioned the rise of *Kunstreligion* included processes of institutional and intellectual secularization that steered aesthetic and spiritual thought in new directions. Wolf-Daniel Hartwich has established that, in Prussia, state governance, the sciences and the arts had largely emancipated themselves from the institution and religious influence of the church by the nineteenth century.²³ These processes of emancipation took various forms. They consisted in a nationalization of church lands and a reorganization of ecclesiastical institutions by the state that were put into force in the *Reichsdeputationshauptschluss* (‘Final Recess of the Reichsdeputation’) of 1803 and financial reforms initiated by the Prussian Prime Minister Karl August von Hardenberg (1750-1822). They made themselves also felt in mid-eighteenth-century financial politics at German universities that concentrated resources on funding education in the sciences and philosophy rather than in theology or religion.

In musical life processes of secularization articulated themselves as a ‘modern way of thinking about music’ that came to regard ‘sacred music as worthy of performance and preservation, indifferent to the needs of a worship service.’²⁴ As ‘music turned into a medium of religious revelation that it was supposed to effect

²¹ Benjamin Curtis, *Music Makes the Nation: Nationalist Composers and Nation Building in 19th-century Europe* (Amherst, NY: Cambria, 2008), 234-235 and Petersdorff, *200 Jahre Kunstreligion*, 76 & 81. Petersdorff is quoting from the Bildungsroman *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802). See Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. Richard Samuel, Hans-Joachim Mähl and Gerhard Schulz (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1960), 1:202-213, at 207-208.

²² Curtis, *Music Makes the Nation*, 234-235.

²³ Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, ‘Musik und Religion – Richard Wagners Parsifal,’ *Wagnerspectrum*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2009) 185-198, at 185.

²⁴ Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn’s Revival of the St. Matthew Passion* (London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 189.

regardless of theological confessions and dogmas,' composers felt themselves justified to 'subjectively refashion traditional forms of Christian church music.'²⁵ At the same time, politicians, scientists and writers supplied alternative interpretations of human existence that challenged the church's supreme role in shaping personal and collective faith and often relied on secular 'concepts of meaning' (*Sinnangebote*).²⁶

These developments might explain why *Kunstreligion* became so attractive and popular in the nineteenth century. As Kramer points out by reference to Lydia Goehr's research on the work concept, nineteenth-century individuals perceived their own world as being fragmented between 'the divine and the human, the spiritual and the material, the sacred and the secular' as well as 'spiritual and musical experience.'²⁷ *Kunstreligion* as a constellation of ideas that emphasized existing ties between art and spirituality represented for them a means to reconcile these schisms and to achieve the 'spiritual wholeness' for which they yearned so strongly.²⁸ In this context, many writers placed their hopes in music 'as a new sort of "re-ligio" that might bring back together what was perceived as having been separated.'²⁹ For them, music 'exhibit[ed] simultaneously the character of the human and of the divine, of the concrete and of the transcendent,' as it was both a human art and an essence that offered 'a transcendent window onto the divine' or was divine itself.³⁰

Schaeffer has traced similar theories and metaphorical beliefs among early nineteenth-century philosophers and poets. He argues that 'a philosophical, and more broadly an existential crisis' caused by Enlightenment philosophy, Kant's 'deconstruction' (*déconstruction*) of philosophical ontology and rational theology as well as the events of the day strengthened intellectuals' 'obsession with unity'

²⁵ Hartwich, 'Musik und Religion – Richard Wagners Parsifal,' 186: 'Die Kunst und vor allem die Musik wurde zum Medium der religiösen Offenbarung, die sie unabhängig von theologischen Konfessionen und Dogmen vermitteln sollte. Die überlieferten Formen der christlichen Kirchenmusik wurden subjektiv umgestaltet.'

²⁶ Ibid., 185.

²⁷ *IKA rev.*, 6 & 9.

²⁸ Ibid., 9.

²⁹ Ibid., 6 & 28. The term 're-ligio' was coined by Kramer and seems to derive from the Latin verb 'religare,' which means 'bind together.'

³⁰ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 158 and *IKA rev.*, 27.

(*obsession de l'Unité*).³¹ This obsession articulated itself in a longing for an “‘authentic” and neither desecrated nor alienated life’ (*nostalgie d’une vie ‘authentique,’ non désacralisée et non aliénée*) as well as an ‘irrepressible nostalgia for a harmonic and organic (re)integration of all aspects of a reality now experienced as discordant, dispersed and mundane’ (*nostalgie irrépressible d’une (ré)intégration harmonieuse et organique de tous les aspects d’une réalité désormais vécue comme discordante, dispersée et désenchantée*).³² It was ‘deeply philosophical and theological’ (*profondément philosophique et théologique*); in the age of the ‘Romantic revolution’ (*révolution romantique*), the urge to reconnect the various levels of reality (that is those visible to the eye and accessible to reason as well as those hidden to both) manifested itself in a new ‘theological vision of the world’ (*d’une vision théologique du monde*) according to which there was a ‘living and life-giving force’ (*une force vivante et vivifiante*) that formed its soul.³³ Among those intellectuals who felt themselves drawn to a ‘new form of religion’ (*religion d’espèce nouvelle*), which Schaeffer describes as the ‘speculative theory of Art’ (*théorie spéculative de l’Art*), the thought prevailed that the fine arts represented ‘species of divine language’ (*species divina loquendi*) with the capacity to ‘reveal[s] transcendent truths inaccessible to profane cognitive activities’ (*vérités transcendantes, inaccessibles aux activités cognitives profanes*).³⁴

For Celia Applegate, as for Carl Dahlhaus, ‘the romantics’ religious apprehension of art’ was more than speculative, philosophical or metaphoric; it represented ‘a legitimate form of religious awareness’ and a ‘modern piety’ that was ‘less “churched” than traditional piety’ and represented a transformed ‘devotional culture’ that was centred on individual religious experience inside and outside the church.³⁵ It arose in response to an ‘unprecedented state activism in church affairs’

³¹ Schaeffer, ‘La religion de l’art: un paradigme philosophique de la modernité,’ 203, 195 & 198-199.

³² Ibid., 202 & 199.

³³ Ibid., 199.

³⁴ Ibid., 195, 203 & 197. Elsewhere, Schaeffer has summarized the ‘speculative theory of Art’ as the view that ‘art offers a special kind of intuitive, quasi-mystical knowledge’ and that artists are ‘the high-priests of humanity’ as well as ‘creators of works that reveal the invisible essence of the world.’ See Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Art of the Modern Age: Philosophy of Art from Kant to Heidegger*, trans. Steven Rendall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), introduction on front flap.

³⁵ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 177 and Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 95.

that found its peak in Prussia in a series of decrees issued by King Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1817, 1821, 1822 and 1835.³⁶ As Applegate has shown, the merging of the Lutheran Church and the Reformed Church in Prussia and the introduction of a new Union Church liturgy, that these new laws stipulated, demonstrated plainly to everyone that the king considered it his God-given right to determine all aspects of Christian worship.³⁷ Each element of his legislation aroused some form of dissent among his subjects as well as resentment and resistance among free-thinking pastors and theologians. The former felt that the individual parish's right to decide about its own liturgy had been curtailed unfairly, and the latter objected to 'the imposition of the administrative union from above, rather than from within the church.'³⁸

The resistance that the new laws encountered from all sides inspired a fundamental 'transformation in the nature of religious piety' and culture as well as 'controversies over what constituted the Protestant community and how belief enjoined the believer to act.'³⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm III's definition of the outlook of religious faith among his subjects as 'in some sense Christian' inspired i) a widespread 'devotion to art' that combined Christian piety with a 'belief in the transcendent power of music,' ii) an emphasis on the role of the arts in saving religion and morals, and iii) faith in the spiritual immortality of the 'greatest masters.' This new form of piety was rather unorthodox and approached – but still differed from – 'religion of art' that attached absolute importance and value to art.⁴⁰ In response to the King's stipulations as to how church worship should be cultivated and proceed, religious practice was made private and religious ceremony turned into an individualized and 'a more metaphorical experience;' rather than attending church, the individual engaged in private prayer, read the Bible, joined choral societies, attended concerts of religious music, and listened to Bach.⁴¹

³⁶ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 175.

³⁷ This new liturgy was Friedrich Wilhelm III's own invention and combined the orders of service used by German, Swedish, Huguenot and Anglican congregations with modern arrangements of Russian Orthodox Chants from the Middle Ages.

³⁸ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 176.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 176-177.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 181, 184 & 194.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 178 & 177.

In this context, Mendelssohn's revival of the *St Matthew Passion* in the hall of the Berlin *Singakademie* may be considered an important event and an essential stage in the history of piety and the early nineteenth-century development of *Kunstreligion*. For Applegate, it marked the point in time when 'music did become caught up in fundamental changes in the relations among belief, institutions, and society,' and when 'the free-floating of piety to places outside traditional sacred spaces' began.⁴² Beyond that, it both implemented and intensified among music critics and musicians musico-religious ideas of performances as religious ceremonies, of musical works as sermons, and of composers as divine creators. Mendelssohn's 1829 performances of this seminal work have been interpreted as acts of preaching and gestures of reverence for Bach.⁴³ According to Kramer, 'early nineteenth-century evocations' of concerts as 'church services' (*Gottesdienste*) 'came to a head' in reviews of these performances. At the same time, the 1829 concerts generated and strengthened views and general expectations that musical works could and should be 'conducive to spiritual experience' as well as to religious feelings and epiphany. The fact that perceptions of Bach as 'a true, transfigured spirit' became increasingly common subsequent to the performances has to be acknowledged, too.⁴⁴

Nineteenth-century musicians also subscribed to an aesthetic religiosity that, in Labie's terms, 'could be largely outside the sanctuary.'⁴⁵ Several composers of the time seem to have wavered between aesthetic devotion and the 'religion of art.' While Schumann's religious worldview built on a sympathetic knowledge of the Bible, Shakespeare and Goethe, Richard Wagner confessed to 'believe in God,

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ See Adolf Bernhard Marx, 'Zweiter Bericht über die "Passionsmusik nach dem Evangelium Matthäi" von Johann Sebastian Bach,' *BAMZ*, vol. 6, no. 11 (14 March 1829), 79-83, at 82: 'The deepest meaning, the innermost familiarity with the greatest masterpiece, revealed itself in every element of his [Mendelssohn's] perception of the work, in every nuance that He [Bach] had first entered into the score. His [Mendelssohn's] direction was as assured and calm as that one of a Master, at a holy site.' (*Der tiefste Sinn, die innigste Vertrautheit mit dem grössten Werk offenbarte sich in jedem Zuge der Auffassung, in jeder Nuance, die Er erst in die Partitur eingetragen. Seine Leitung war die sichere und ruhige eines Meisters, an heiliger Stätte.*)

⁴⁴ *IKA* rev., 122 and *IKA*, 134-135 & 198.

⁴⁵ Labie, *Le visage du Christ dans la musique des XIXe et XXe siècles*, 8.

Mozart and Beethoven [...], in the Holy Ghost and in the truth of the one and indivisible Art.’⁴⁶

The musical works and writings of contemporary composers give valuable insights into how they positioned themselves in respect of both faiths. As many of them were no longer directly employed by the church from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, their religious compositions became less liturgical and gave expression to personal religious views rather than to ecclesiastical beliefs. Royal patrons no longer set boundaries to their aesthetic and religious sensibilities either; on the contrary, composers moved on to ‘new musical masters’ that Elizabeth Janik identified as ‘the musicians’ artistic conscience and the demands of the market.’⁴⁷

The decision whether to provide “civilized” or “popular” forms of “classical” music’ that were enforced on nineteenth-century composers by the pressures of the market and public demand was not an easy one to make. The correspondence of many musicians and the publications of composer-critics provide information about the balancing acts that they were forced to perform between (in Goehr’s terms) writing music ‘for a small, “educated” public capable of appreciating the highest expressions of musical art’ and providing compositions ‘for a large, unrefined, popular audience.’⁴⁸ While some composers pursued their profession out of commercial and financial interests, others favoured creating autonomous musical works and an enjoyment of *art pour l’art* (‘art for art’s sake’) – activities that became increasingly religiously charged. Wagner, for example, was convinced that any German musician ‘is capable of writing music merely for himself and friend, uncaring if it will ever be executed for a [large] public.’ He ‘loves Music for herself,—not as a means [...] of winning gold and admiration, but because he

⁴⁶ See Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski, *Life of Robert Schumann*, trans. Abby Langdon Alger (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1871), 161. For Wagner’s partly fictional and partly autobiographical creed see idem, ‘Ein Ende in Paris’ (1841), in *Richard Wagner: Dichtungen und Schriften*, ed. Dieter Borchmeyer (Frankfurt on the Main: Insel, 1983), 5:112-137, at 136, trans. as ‘An End in Paris,’ in *Richard Wagner’s Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1898), 7:46-68, at 66.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Janik, *Recomposing German Music: Politics And Musical Tradition in Cold War Berlin* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 30.

⁴⁸ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 209-210.

worships her as a divine and lovely art that, if he gives himself to her, becomes his one and all.’⁴⁹

Mendelssohn’s affiliations with confessional and aesthetic religion

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy also deserves special attention as an exponent of *Kunstreligion* whose spirituality seems, in certain respects, to be representative of the early nineteenth century and provides us with an understanding of the intellectual outlook of his era while reflecting the idiosyncratic religious and aesthetic views of a German-Jewish musician. His religious beliefs and leanings towards aesthetic religion have received critical attention from scholars since the 1950s, especially since indications of his religious and cultural self-identification are rather ambiguous and rare in his own writings. He engaged in moral, theological as well as religious discourse mainly with his closest friends with whom he shared a common base of understanding and who (in his words) ‘talked the same language.’⁵⁰ His German-Jewish ancestry attracted particular scholarly interest after the fall of the Third Reich when attempts were made to rescue Mendelssohn from almost a century of anti-Semitic attacks that began with Wagner’s denigration of him as a ‘soul-less’ Jew in the pamphlet *Das Judentum in der Musik* (‘Judaism in Music,’ 1850) and culminated in the banning of his music by the Nazi regime.

The first major life-and-works study focusing on Mendelssohn’s religiosity was Eric Werner’s article on the composer for the first edition of *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.⁵¹ It was later extended into a full-length biography that promoted a view of Mendelssohn as a proud Jew and, according to Jeffrey Sposato,

⁴⁹ Richard Wagner, ‘Über deutsches Musikwesen,’ in *Richard Wagner: Dichtungen und Schriften*, 137-171, at 153, trans. as ‘On German Music,’ in *Richard Wagner’s Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1898), 7:84-101, at 85.

⁵⁰ Mendelssohn, letters of 1 December and 26 October 1829 to his family and Julius Schubring, in *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Sämtliche Briefe. Auf Basis der von Rudolf Elvers angelegten Sammlung*, ed. Helmut Loos and Wilhelm Seidel (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2008), 1:466-467, at 467 and 429-431, at 430; henceforth *SB*.

⁵¹ Eric Werner, ‘Mendelssohn, Jakob Ludwig Felix’ in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume, 1st ed. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1961), 9:59-98.

set the model for the ‘postwar Mendelssohn interpretation.’⁵² In view of Werner’s invention and mistranslation of sources as well as factual mistakes, later scholars have set about ‘deconstructing Werner’s scholarly achievement,’ to use Leon Botstein’s terms.⁵³ In the 1990s Mendelssohn’s Jewishness and Lutheranism were re-evaluated in the columns of *The Musical Quarterly* and, at the same time, the composer’s religious affiliations became the subject of larger studies.⁵⁴ The speculative character of previous research, insufficient critical insight into the components of Mendelssohn’s spirituality and tenets of nineteenth-century aesthetic religion, as well as the improved availability of Mendelssohn’s published letters, justify a further corrective look in the present study at the composer’s religiousness and his role in *Kunstreligion*.

As the grandson of the Jewish Enlightenment philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) and the offspring of a family of bankers and financiers of Jewish lineage, Mendelssohn belonged to an ethnic group that faced severe discrimination as well as pressures of social and cultural assimilation in the early nineteenth century. Regulations that deprived non-converted Jews of employment and curtailed their rights of residence and trade were still current in German-speaking lands at that time.⁵⁵ Jewish marginalization on religious and cultural grounds also pervaded German social life; Jews suffered persistent prejudice from various sectors of the society. Even though rationalist-minded intellectuals came to accept them into their social circles, they were still convinced that Germans and Jews were divided by irreconcilable differences in religion. Among the general public there was a general fear and mistrust of Jewish ‘otherness’ that was believed to manifest itself in a divergent cultural identity. While the abandoning of Judaism and

⁵² Idem, *Mendelssohn: A New Image of the Composer and His Age*, trans. Dika Newlin (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963) as well as Jeffrey S. Sposato, *The Price of Assimilation: Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 14.

⁵³ Leon Botstein, ‘Mendelssohn, Werner, and the Jews: A Final Word,’ *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 83, no. 1 (Spring 1999), 45-50, at 48.

⁵⁴ More recently, scholarly discussion has shifted its focus partially from Mendelssohn’s religious self-perception to the reception of the composer as a German and a Jew. See, for example, Colin Eatock, ‘Mendelssohn’s Conversion to Judaism: An English Perspective,’ in *Mendelssohn Perspectives*, ed. Nicole Grimes and Angela R. Mace (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 63-82.

⁵⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm III’s Posen Statutes of 1833, for example, dramatically restricted the rights of Jews resident in the Prussian duchy of Poznan. The edict imposed restrictions on marriage, education

Jewish ritual law in favour of a Christian lifestyle through conversion and baptisms was initially encouraged and welcomed by the broader German populace, such gestures of assimilation by German Jews did nothing to dispel these fears. Mendelssohn's correspondence gives sufficient evidence of the fact that he was the victim of anti-Jewish prejudice at various points in his life,⁵⁶ and that he was well aware that, in spite of his baptism into the Lutheran faith,⁵⁷ many of his personal and professional associates continued to view him unfavourably as Jewish. Derogatory comments about Jews were, in fact, repeatedly discussed by the Mendelssohn family. Zelter's assertion to Goethe about Felix, for example, that 'it would be a truly rare thing' if 'the son of a Jew, but not a Jew [himself] [...] were to become an artist,' inspired ironic wordplay in Mendelssohn's correspondence and aroused his parents' scorn.⁵⁸

A rare example of religious testimony from Mendelssohn can be found in a letter in which he commented on central passages of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's drama *Nathan der Weise* ('Nathan the Wise,' 1779) after attending a stage performance of the play in Düsseldorf in February 1834. Set in twelfth-century Jerusalem, Lessing's dramatic poem addressed questions of the status of the Judaic and Christian religions and pleaded for religious ecumenism and freedom while objecting to religious fanaticism, orthodoxy and confessional absolutism. These contents form central elements of the message of the *Erzählung zum Klosterbruder* ('The Friar's Narrative,' Act IV, scene 7) and the *Ringparabel* ('Ring Parable,' Act III, scene 7) that inspired Mendelssohn's comments about the work as 'a splendid

and trading and granted special privileges and rights only to those possessing excellent skills in the German language, trade and the arts as well as a recognizable German family name.

⁵⁶ In 1832, for example, his nomination to musical director of the Berlin *Singakademie* foundered on the choir's former director Zelter's and the era's widespread and tacit Judeophobia, as Botstein has argued. See Leon Botstein, 'Mendelssohn and the Jews,' *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 82, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 210-219, at 212.

⁵⁷ Mendelssohn was baptized into the Lutheran faith on 21 March 1816 in the Neue Kirche in Berlin and confirmed at the age of 16 in the city's Parochial-Kirche.

⁵⁸ See Carl Friedrich Zelter, letter of 21 October 1821 to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in idem, *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Zelter in den Jahren 1796 to 1832: Dritter Theil, die Jahre 1819 bis 1824*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer (Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1834), 3:205-213, at 212, trans. in Sposato, *Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (2006), 52; Mendelssohn's letter of 28 and 29 December 1833 to Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2010), 3:315-319, at 317; as well as Lea and Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy's letter of 16 and 19 December 1833 to Felix, quoted in *SB* (2010), 3:653.

piece,’ thanks to which he counted himself lucky ‘to know that there is such clearness in the world.’⁵⁹

The Roman Catholic friar Bonafides’s comments about the upbringing of Nathan’s adopted daughter Recha in the fourth act most certainly struck a chord with Mendelssohn. Even though Recha was the baptized child of a Christian mother (a sister of Conrad von Stauffen), Nathan had raised her as a Jew.⁶⁰ Bonafides sees this not as detrimental; as he argues in one scene, ‘if the maid have but grown up before your eyes with a sound frame and pious—she remains still in her maker’s eye the same. For is not Christianity all built on judaism [*sic*]? O, it has often vex’d me, cost me tears, that christians [*sic*] will forget so often that our saviour was a jew [*sic*].’⁶¹ The moral of the Ring Parable is very similar; when asked by the Sultan to point out whether the Judaic, Christian or Islamic religion represented the true faith, Nathan answers with an allegoric tale that, in the past and today, has been understood as a defense of each creed as the ‘incomplete incarnation of a larger truth.’⁶²

Michael Steinberg has interpreted Mendelssohn’s pan-confessional receptiveness towards Christianity, Judaism and other religions, together with his fondness for Protestant music, as indicative of an ‘increasing insistence on a critical and self-forming cultural identity.’⁶³ According to Sposato, the cultural and religious sensibilities that gave shape to this identity revealed Mendelssohn to be, in a paradoxical way, ‘Lutheran, but not Lutheran; Jew, but not a Jew.’⁶⁴ In this context, Mendelssohn’s insistence from 1829 onwards that he should be addressed with the

⁵⁹ Mendelssohn, letter of 19 February 1834 to Lea and Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2010), 3:350-353, at 352, trans. in *Mendelssohn’s letters from 1833 to 1847*, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy, trans. Lady Wallace (London: Spottiswoode & Co., 1864), 26-31, at 31 (where the letter is erroneously dated 28 March 1834).

⁶⁰ In a certain way, Mendelssohn’s situation was almost the opposite. Even though he was born a Jew, he was baptized and raised as a Christian. As Rudolf Elvers has established, there are, in fact, no ecclesiastical and official records to suggest that he ever participated in Jewish religious worship practice or was a member of organisations practising the Judaic faith. See Elvers, ‘Frühe Quellen zur Biographie Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys,’ 18.

⁶¹ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan The Wise: A Dramatic Poem*, trans. William Taylor (London: R. Philips, 1805), 223-224.

⁶² Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 334.

⁶³ Steinberg, ‘Mendelssohn’s Music and German-Jewish Culture,’ 38.

⁶⁴ Jeffrey S. Sposato, ‘The Price of Assimilation: The Oratorios of Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition’ (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, 2000), xii.

full family name against his father's explicit wishes to drop the 'Mendelssohn' in favour of the un-Jewish 'Bartholdy,' has given birth to manifold interpretations of the intention on which this decision was based. As Mendelssohn usually tended to comply with his father's wishes in all decisions, this name policy must have been deliberate. It seems that he wanted to prove that his father was wrong in assuming that 'a Christian Mendelssohn is as impossible as a Jewish Confucius. If your name is Mendelssohn, you are eo ipso [*sic*] a Jew, and that is of no benefit to you, because it is not even true.'⁶⁵ From this angle, Mendelssohn's adherence to the unhyphenated double name seems to have been a concession to his cultural and religious roots while signalling his embrace of Christianity. To go so far as Wulf Konold in suggesting that Mendelssohn's disregard for his father's wishes reflected his pride in his Jewish heritage seems daring, however. After all, the composer generally commented about Jews in a very detached and sometimes rather sardonic way in his letters.⁶⁶

Based on Mendelssohn's correspondence, a new approach to the composer's spiritual leanings might be worthwhile. Previous scholars have resorted to an enumeration and correlation of various professions of faith in order to grasp Mendelssohn's outlook in its complexity. Most noteworthy, in this context, is Steinberg's portrayal of Mendelssohn as a believer in a reconfigured faith reconciling Judaism, Protestantism, and the secular world, and his characterization of the composer's frame of mind as 'a psychological and cultural composite of great complexity' that relies on an 'inner symbiosis of Jewish memory and Protestant

⁶⁵ Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, letter of 8 July 1829 to Felix, quoted in Max F. Schneider, *Mendelssohn oder Bartholdy? Zur Geschichte eines Familiennamens* (Basel: Internationale Felix-Mendelssohn-Gesellschaft, 1962), 20 and trans. in Sposato, *Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (2006), 26. As Abraham implied, due to his father's fame as leading Jewish philosopher, the name 'Mendelssohn' was always associated with Moses Mendelssohn's Judaism and, by dropping the name (which would be interpreted as an abandoning of Judaism), Felix's music would no longer be recognized as being linked to this archaic faith, which would be advantageous for his career. This thought was shared by other family members; Felix's uncle Jacob Salomon (1774–1825) had adopted the surname of the Prussian Baron Friedrich Christian von Bartholdy (who was both a Christian and had owned the Itzig family's dairy farm) several years before converting to Christianity (1805) and entering the diplomatic service (1815).

⁶⁶ See Wulf Konold, *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy und seine Zeit* (Regensburg: Laaber, 1984), 75 and, for a detailed analysis of Mendelssohn's writings about Jews, Wilhelm Seidel, 'Mendelssohn und das Judentum,' *Die Musikforschung*, vol. 64 (2011), 6–23.

culture.’⁶⁷ Since Mendelssohn generally avoided explicit references to ‘Lutheran,’ ‘Judaic,’ and other confessions when he expressed religious thought in his correspondence, however, it seems compelling to depart from earlier attempts to characterize his religious and cultural mindset in terms of confessional labels. Furthermore, in view of his predilection for discussing pan-confessional beliefs, a more general characterization of him as ‘religious’ (*religiös*) and ‘God-believing’ (*gottgläubig*) in the nineteenth-century understanding of these terms seems due. The former attribute described everyone who followed the inner ‘beliefs of his reason’ (*Vorstellungen seiner Vernunft*) and who ‘seeks to do nothing that contradicts his conscience and apprehension of the morality of an act’ (*sich bemühet, nichts wider sein Gewissen, oder wider den Ausspruch der Vernunft von der Moralität einer Handlung zu thun*).⁶⁸ By contrast, anyone ‘who believes in the existence of (a) God’ was called ‘God-believing.’⁶⁹

In this focus on inner faith, morality and Godbelief, Mendelssohn’s ‘religiousness’ shows close parallels to Enlightenment philosophies encompassing religions of reason and feeling, universal or ‘natural’ religion and monotheistic Deism. Common to them all was an emphasis on faith based on inner awareness. Among the rationalists, Moses Mendelssohn and Kant were the most prominent thinkers who emphasized and endorsed the assets of a religion whose adherents did not believe something on someone’s authority (as in historical or institutional religion) but by force of their own reasoning. Moses’ writings took a special place in this context, as he revised earlier philosophical systems to count both Christianity and Judaism among the faiths grounded in reason. In the second part of his monograph *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (‘Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism,’ 1783) he argued that ‘Judaism was not a theocracy based upon strict Mosaic laws but a voluntary association [...] based upon natural

⁶⁷ See Steinberg, ‘Mendelssohn’s Music and German-Jewish Culture,’ 36 & 43.

⁶⁸ ‘Religiös, Gewissenhaft, Religiösus,’ *Grosses vollständiges Universallexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, ed. Paul Daniel Longolius (Halle: Zedler, 1742), 31:441; henceforth *UWK*.

⁶⁹ *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm online*, s.v. ‘Gottgläubig,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG23919> (accessed 9 August 2013); henceforth *DWB*: ‘jünger in weltanschaulichem sinne von dem, der an die existenz (eines) gottes glaubt’

rights and “eternal truths of reason.”⁷⁰ Rousseau, by contrast, favoured a religion that was founded ‘on the unspoiled natural feeling of humans.’⁷¹ This form of inwardly felt religiousness found poetic expression in the fourth book of his pedagogic opus magnum *Émile ou de l'Éducation* (‘Emile or On Education,’ 1762). In the *Profession de foi d'un vicaire savoyard* (‘Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar’), the narrator (a priest who is widely believed to voice Rousseau’s own ideas on religion) confesses: ‘I perceive the deity in all his works, I *feel him within me*, and behold him in every object around me [...].’⁷² (*Italics mine.*)

As a proponent of the religion of reason, Kant was sympathetic to a religion that is not bound to historical contingencies but that begins from a purely ethical standpoint ‘of whose truth everyone can be convinced through his own reason.’⁷³ According to his seminal work *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (‘Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone,’ 1793), this ‘natural’ or universal religion consisted in a ‘pure religious faith’ of a community of people whose members shared the same devotion to a common morality. Under the influence of theological discourse, this pure moral religion was cloaked in a theoretical garment and transformed into the ‘ecclesiastical faith’ of the ‘historical’ or ‘revealed’ religions.⁷⁴ While most of these institutionalized belief systems had steered away from the original faith, Kant was convinced of the existence of a real (or empirical) religion that had maintained close links to this original state of religion. He left unanswered the question of which religion represented this ‘universal religion of mankind,’⁷⁵ while intimating that, even though it did not represent the true religion, Christianity came very close to it:

⁷⁰ See Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem or On Religious Power and Judaism*, ed. Alexander Altmann, trans. Allam Arkush (Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, 1983), 99 & 161 and, for a concise analysis of the text, Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 6-7, at 7.

⁷¹ Karl Vorländer, *Philosophie der Neuzeit*, vol. 2 of *Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1919), 2: 146-151, at 148: ‘Seine [Rousseau’s] Religion ist eben vor allem Natur- und Gefühlsreligion, auf das unverdorbene natürliche Gefühl des Menschen sich gründend [...].’

⁷² Jean-Jaques Rousseau, *Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar* (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2008), 262.

⁷³ Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (1793), trans. as *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore Meyer Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), 144.

⁷⁴ Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 94 & 151.

Christianity possesses the great advantage over Judaism of being represented as coming from the mouth of the first Teacher not as a statutory but as a moral religion, and as thus entering into the closest relation with reason so that, through reason, it was able of itself, without historical learning, to be spread at all times and among all peoples with the greatest trustworthiness.⁷⁶

Central to deism, ‘the view that there is one and only one God who is eternal, is creator of the universe, is omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent and loving’ seems to have had a major impact on Moses Mendelssohn’s vision of a transformed Judaism.⁷⁷ Sympathetic to Christian understandings, he arrived at a conception of God as a deity ‘who reveals his purposes and ethical demands through the natural world and by means of the universal access to reason,’ as Daniel Langton has shown.⁷⁸ In critical engagement with Leibniz’s philosophy, Moses furthermore rejected long-standing notions of God as a severe judge, emphasizing the deity’s power, wisdom, goodness and infinite mercy in his treatise *Causa Dei oder die Rettung der Vorsehung* (‘God on Trial, or Providence Defended,’ 1784).

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy encountered these various strands of thought through his own readings and through his father. His library included various eighteenth and nineteenth-century editions of writings by Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn.⁷⁹ He must have been familiar with his grandfather’s philosophical writings no later than 1840 when he became involved in his cousin’s and uncle’s preparations of a modern edition of Moses Mendelssohn’s collected writings. While he initiated this publication project, Georg Benjamin Mendelssohn Bartholdy took on

⁷⁵ Ibid., 143.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 155.

⁷⁷ This definition of deism is taken from John Jamieson Carswell Smart and John Haldane, *Atheism & Theism: Second Edition* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 8.

⁷⁸ Daniel R. Langton, ‘Felix Mendelssohn’s Oratorio *St Paul* and the Question of Jewish Self-Definition.’ *Journal of Jewish Identities*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2008), 1-15, at 4.

⁷⁹ Mendelssohn possessed the following editions: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Sämmtliche Schriften. Neue rechtmässige Ausg.*, 13 vols., ed. Karl Lachmann (Berlin: Voß’sche Buchhandlung, 1838-1840); idem, *Nathan der Weise: Ein dramatisches Gedicht, in fünf Aufzügen* (Berlin: C. F. Voss, 1779) and later editions; Moses Mendelssohn, *Sämmtliche Werke: Ausgabe in einem Bande als National-Denkmal* (Vienna: Mich. Schmidl’s sel. Witwe und Ig. Klang, 1838); five volumes of idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Georg Benjamin Mendelssohn, 7 vols. (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1843-1845) as well as idem, *Philosophische Schriften*, 2 vols. (Berlin: C.F. Voss, 1761) and many later editions. See Peter Ward-Jones, ‘The Library of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy’, in *Festschrift Rudolf Elvers zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Ernst Hertrich and Hans Schneider (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1985), 294-295, 300 & 307; henceforth *LOF*.

the responsibilities of editor and Joseph contributed a biographical sketch of Abraham Mendelssohn. The collected edition appeared in the 1840s in seven volumes.⁸⁰ By that time, Felix was also intimately familiar with Kant's writings. As Sposato has pointed out, most converts from Judaism felt themselves drawn to Kant's philosophical thought.⁸¹ According to him, Jewish parents of Christian children like Abraham 'often abandoned the law of Judaism for more rationalist philosophies, such as Kant's "universal religion"' and passed on their knowledge and beliefs to the next generation.⁸² If Felix was acquainted with Rousseau's *Émile*, then he had learned about it from his father. Abraham may have become familiar with the work as a child through religious tutelage from the Austrian-Jewish educator and writer Herz Homberg, who derived his guiding principles of teaching from the treatise.⁸³ He also may have come across it during meetings of the *Gesellschaft der Freunde* ('Society of Friends') of which he had been a member since 1792. This association of liberal-minded Jews was meant to spread enlightenment ideals in Berlin's Jewish Community.

As Abraham's and Felix's letters attest, enlightenment philosophy of religion had a huge impact on Mendelssohn's upbringing and religious values. Abraham expressed his belief in religion as a faith based on the 'inner promptings of the voice of conscience as expressed in the feelings of the "heart" and confirmed by the "voice of reason"' shortly after Fanny's confirmation in May 1820; his words seem reminiscent of Kant's thoughts on Christianity as a proto-universal religion:

I know that there exists *in me and in you* and in all human beings an everlasting inclination towards all that is good, true and right, and a conscience which warns and guides us when we go astray. I know it, I believe it, I live in this faith, and this is my religion... The *outward* form of religion your teacher has given you is historical, and changeable like all human

⁸⁰ See the previous footnote for further bibliographic details.

⁸¹ Jeffrey S. Sposato, 'The [Self-] Identification of Mendelssohn as Jew,' 209.

⁸² Idem, 'The Price of Assimilation: The Oratorios of Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition' (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, 2000), 27.

⁸³ According to Fanny's husband, the painter Sebastian Hensel, Abraham and his siblings had been tutored by Homberg. See Sebastian Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family (1729-1847): From Letters and Journals*, trans. Carl Klingemann (known to British scholars as Karl Klingemann), 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882), 1:24. For information about Homberg's relation to Rousseau see Dirk Sadowski, *Haskala und Lebenswelt: Herz Homberg und die Jüdischen Deutschen Schulen in Galizien 1782-1806* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 53.

ordinances. Some thousands of years ago the Jewish form was the reigning one, then the heathen form, and now it is the Christian [...].⁸⁴ (Italics mine.)

A congruent conviction of a form of spirituality shared by adherents of different denominations and persuasions also seems to be at the root of Felix Mendelssohn's discussions of religion and art with his life-long friend, the Protestant pastor and theologian Karl Julius Schubring (1806-1889). When discussing these 'higher areas' (*höheren Rücksichten*) of human thought with others, Mendelssohn was certain that '[t]here can be no difference in faith among certain men but rather a difference in words.'⁸⁵ His preference for inner faith (which he saw embodied most by the Protestant, as opposed to the Catholic belief) is articulated in a letter about the Corpus Christi festivities in Munich that he had attended on 10 June 1830. He perceived the processions as 'empty' ritual and the bearing and appearance of the participating clerics as hypocritical. Ultimately, he failed to see any meaning in the whole affair, especially since 'I have got plenty of Protestantism *in me* that will last for the time being.'⁸⁶ (Italics mine.)

Mendelssohn also shared his father's religious and middle-class concern for a morality that was commonly accepted in human society and embedded in the Christian religion.⁸⁷ Abraham's predilection for a Kantian universal ethic comes to the fore further on in his letter to Fanny of May 1820. It seems inseparably linked with ideals of religious tolerance as well as family loyalty and cohesion that were of huge importance to the Mendelssohns; as Todd has highlighted, they 'were no

⁸⁴ Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, letter of 1820 to Fanny Mendelssohn, quoted in Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family*, 1:79-80, at 79. For a detailed interpretation of this letter see John E. Toews, 'Memory and Gender in the Remaking of Fanny Mendelssohn's Musical Identity: The Chorale in "Das Jahr,"' *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 77, no. 4 (1993), 727-74, at 731.

⁸⁵ Mendelssohn, letter of 26 October 1829 to Julius Schubring in Berlin, in *SB* (2008), 1:429-431, at 430-431.

⁸⁶ Idem, letter of 15 June 1830 to Rebecka Mendelssohn Bartholdy in Berlin, in *SB* (2008), 1:550-553, at 551.

⁸⁷ As Peter Gay has established, an apprehensive concern for 'moral imperatives' and 'religious traditions' as warrants of respectability and social acceptance was widespread among nineteenth-century bourgeois families – especially in the face of 'material progress,' political and technological change as well as a perceived general decline of morals. See Peter Gay, *Education of the Senses*, vol. 1 of *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 459, 59, 444 & 434.

strangers to questions of religious tolerance, outside as well as inside the family,’⁸⁸ and John Toew’s observation that ‘family loyalty [...] within a family clan that included (confessionally speaking) Jews, Protestants, and Catholics demanded a downplaying of confessional differences’ proves also to be true.⁸⁹ Most certainly, Felix and the rest of the family felt themselves just as drawn as Fanny to assimilate ‘an ethos of confessional tolerance and reconciliation,’⁹⁰ as they witnessed how the orthodox Judaism of Bella Salomon (the grandmother on Felix’s and Fanny’s mother’s side) stood firm against conversions to Catholicism and Protestantism by Dorothea Veit Schlegel (their favourite aunt), Jacob Bartholdy (their mother’s brother) and other family members. The words that Abraham wrote two years before his own conversion to the Christian faith may attest to this fact:

We have educated you and your brothers and sister in the Christian faith, because it is the creed of most civilized people, and contains nothing that can lead you away from what is good, and much that guides you to love, obedience, tolerance, and resignation. [...] By pronouncing your confession of faith you have fulfilled the claims of society on you, and obtained the name of a Christian. Now be what your duty as a human being demands of you, true, faithful, good; obedient and devoted till death to your mother, and I may also say to your father, unremittingly attentive to the voice of your conscience [...].⁹¹

Abraham’s notions of moral duties and Christianity as an ethical religion received favourable attention in Felix’s correspondence in written allusions to ‘ideas [...] of a common philanthropy, of disbelief in hell, devil and condemnation and the destruction of selfishness [...] which we entertain by nature and can be found in Christianity’ and his assertion that differences in theological doctrines did not matter to him since the only thing that counts is moral action.⁹²

⁸⁸ R. Larry Todd, ‘On Mendelssohn’s sacred music, real and imaginary,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, ed. Peter Mercer-Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 167-188, at 168.

⁸⁹ Toews, ‘Memory and Gender in the Remaking of Fanny Mendelssohn’s Musical Identity,’ 730.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, letter of 1820 to Fanny Mendelssohn, trans. in Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family*, 1:80

⁹² Mendelssohn, letter of 14 January 1832 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:461-463, at 462. See also idem, letter of 26 October 1829 to Julius Schubring, in *SB* (2008), 1:429-431, at 431: ‘I feel about art the same way as I do about religion [...]. Whenever I know that my friend understands my words (which, in all cases, have a meaning different from that in the dictionary), then I can talk to him about

Comments about a belief in an existent God being at the core of any religion can be found in Abraham's letters, too. Once more, it is Fanny to whom he explained, 'What is God? Is He a part of ourselves, and does He continue to live after the other part has ceased to be? And where? And how? All this I do not know, and therefore I have never taught you anything about it.'⁹³ Elsewhere, he communicated to her his conviction that, even though the nature of the divine being was not to be grasped, '[t]here are in all religions only one God, one virtue, one truth, one happiness.'⁹⁴ In response to his father's spiritual upbringing, Felix's correspondence abounds in invocations, praises, appeals, expressions of gratitude and faith towards a higher entity that is referred to as 'God' (*Gott*), 'the benevolent Lord' (*der wohlthätige Gott*), 'the good Lord' (*der liebe [Herr] Gott*), 'gracious heaven' (*der gütige Himmel*) or simply 'heaven' (*Himmel*), following concepts of God articulated in the New Testament and wider understandings of the divine. Often used in poetic writings, the figurative designation of God as 'heaven,' for example, is reminiscent of biblical portrayals of Him as the highest creature creating and inhabiting heaven that were accepted both by Christians and Jews.⁹⁵ Other writings by Felix suggest that he was early on convinced that there was one God who was 'a loving father' to mankind to whose 'divine will' any human had to submit. Jesus Christ 'came down to earth [...] in order to accomplish the reconciliation of mankind with God' as God's 'only begotten Son.' He was 'directly furnished by God with divine strength' and 'of pure virtue,' which 'all people should aspire to, even if they can never realise these virtues as Christ possessed them.'⁹⁶ As this shows, Mendelssohn saw a clear

it, where not, I do not *speak* but refer here to what I am *doing* instead, just as in music where I rely on my score when talking to strangers.' (Italics mine.)

⁹³ Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, letter of 1820 to Fanny Mendelssohn, quoted in Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family*, 1:79. This series of rhetorical questions is, in fact, introduced by the enquiry 'Does God exist?,' which Abraham seems to have answered to himself with yes – his correspondence of the late 1820s with Felix abounds in expressions articulating his faith in divine providence and gratitude towards God as well as appeals for divine protection.

⁹⁴ Idem, letter of 5 April 1819 to Fanny Mendelssohn, quoted in Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family*, 1:77.

⁹⁵ DWB, s.v. 'Himmel,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GH08466> (accessed 11 August 2013) and 'Der Himmel,' *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart*, ed. Johann Christoph Adelung, Dietrich Wilhelm Soltau and Franz Xaver Schönberger (Vienna: B. Ph. Bauer, 1811), 2: 1173-1174; henceforth *GKW*.

⁹⁶ See Mendelssohn's 'Confirmation Confession' (1825), trans. in Clive Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 93-101, at 93-94 & 99.

hierarchy between humans (obedient mankind) and the divine (God and Christ possessing divine will, power and virtue) as well as the earthly and the heavenly.

As will be shown in more detail in chapters two to six, these central elements of faith associated with Christian and universal religions also had a major impact on the formation and shape of Felix's aesthetic beliefs. His aesthetic thought seems indicative of both a devotion to art and a critical adherence to the religion of art that invalidates recent claims by Loos that, 'as a personality and a composer,' Mendelssohn 'was never affiliated with musical *Kunstreligion*' (*so war Mendelssohn als Persönlichkeit und als Komponist niemals dem Bereich der musikalischen Kunstreligion zuzuschlagen*).⁹⁷ From 1832, at the latest, the composer's writings on music reveal him to be 'not an unconditional supporter of musical *Kunstreligion*' (*kein bedingungsloser Anhänger der musikalischen Kunstreligion*) but 'an artist with a unique personality and outlook' (*ein Künstler ganz eigener Prägung*), to quote from an earlier study by Loos that provided a more accurate summary of Mendelssohn's art-religiousness.⁹⁸ Mendelssohn seems to have considered himself a musician whose responsibility as a Christian consisted in bringing music to bear in society as an art that could create an atmosphere conducive to religious dispositions and instruction. At the same time, he seems to have entertained an almost religious respect for his art and devoted all his energies to it throughout his youth and his professional life. This unwavering commitment is directly reflected in his correspondence. As Wilhelm Seidel has ascertained, there is hardly any piece of writing among the composer's letters to his family and friends in which Mendelssohn does not express his thought on music.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Helmut Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' in *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest*, vol. 1, no. 2 (April - June 2010), 65-85, at 84. Loos's study, from which these words are taken, represents the first and only detailed academic work to address Mendelssohn's affiliations with *Kunstreligion*. Unfortunately, Loos's evaluation of the composer's leanings towards aesthetic religion suffers from a one-sided limitation of *Kunstreligion* to a 'metaphysical idealization' (*metaphysische Überhöhung*) and apotheosis of Beethoven as well as a primary analytical focus on letters dating from November 1816 to June 1830 (those of later years are being dealt with in only two sentences).

⁹⁸ Idem, 'Mendelssohns künstlerische Entwicklung Berlin – London – Düsseldorf' ('Einleitung in Band 3' of March 2010), in *SB* (2010), 3:7-22, at 22.

⁹⁹ Wilhelm Seidel, 'Einleitung in die Gesamtausgabe,' in *SB* (2008), 1:7-30, at 8: 'Es gibt kaum einen Familien- oder Freundesbrief, in dem Mendelssohn nicht darauf zu sprechen kommt.'

Mendelssohn seized on ideas of major writers on *Kunstreligion* when he formulated his own thoughts on art. He owed his knowledge of art-religious points of view and terminologies to his large social circle and his own erudition. From his youth, he came in close contact with Berlin's cultural élite at his father's soirées at the Mendelssohn family home, and throughout his life he stayed in touch with numerous artists, writers, clerics and theologians. As one of the best-read composers of European musical history,¹⁰⁰ he was familiar with the literature of the nineteenth and earlier centuries. Since Peter Ward Jones has published details about publications that are known to have been in Mendelssohn's possession and that are listed in the inventories of books that the composer compiled in 1835 and 1844, we are able to ascertain his grasp of art-religious theories and writings.¹⁰¹ Relevant authors whom Mendelssohn knew personally and from his reading include, in this context, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, Ludwig Tieck, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schlegel, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Adolf Bernhard Marx.

Mendelssohn might have gained knowledge of writings on *Kunstreligion* by the Berlin and Jena Romantics through his aunt Brendel Veit. Her second husband Friedrich Schlegel associated with Tieck and Wackenroder in Berlin between 1797 and 1799 when they first met, and he stayed in touch with Tieck also after relocating to Jena.¹⁰² There, the couple joined social gatherings at Friedrich's brother's house that were also attended by Novalis and other men of letters. Mendelssohn's familiarity with Schleiermacher's art-religious writings is usually dated from the 1820s.¹⁰³ At that time, both the composer and the theologian were members of the Berlin *Singakademie*. Mendelssohn was an alto in the choir in the 1820s, whereas Schleiermacher was a lifelong member of the *Singakademie* and sang tenor.

¹⁰⁰ This conception of the composer follows Benedict Taylor's portrayal of Mendelssohn as 'probably the most deeply cultured and widely read composer in history. See Benedict Taylor, 'Musical History and Self-Consciousness in Mendelssohn's Octet, Op. 20,' *19th-Century Music*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Autumn 2008), 131-159, at 134.

¹⁰¹ See *LOF*, 289-328.

¹⁰² Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 20-21.

¹⁰³ See, for example, Sposato, *Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (2006), 48-49, and Juliette Appold, 'Felix Mendelssohn's Theological Friendship with Schleiermacher,' *Lutheran Forum*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Summer 2008), 29-34, at 32.

Goethe early on became a grandfather figure and ‘major spiritual mentor’ to Mendelssohn.¹⁰⁴ His influence on the composer’s aesthetic and philosophical views seems to have equalled the religious impact of the reformed pastor Friedrich Philipp Wilmsen (1770–1838) who had confirmed Mendelssohn in 1825.¹⁰⁵ Mendelssohn was introduced to Goethe in Weimar in November 1821 by his own composition teacher Carl Friedrich Zelter but had already devoured writings by the poet earlier that year. He frequently referred to and quoted from works such as Goethe’s autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (‘Poetry and Truth,’ 1811–1814), the travel narrative *Italienische Reise* (‘Italian Journey,’ 1816–1829) and the poem *Aussöhnung* (‘Reconciliation,’ 1823) in his letters, and possessed a complete edition of Goethe’s writings.¹⁰⁶

The importance of Hegel’s thoughts – and of his philosophy in general – for Mendelssohn’s aesthetic views remains unclear even today. Certainly, Mendelssohn knew the philosopher personally from an early age. Hegel was an old friend of the Mendelssohns. He attended the *Sonntagsmusiken* (‘Sunday Musicales’) in the garden room of the family house in the Leipziger Straße in Berlin in the 1820s and paid regular visits. Mendelssohn possessed collected editions of the philosopher’s writings which had appeared in print in the 1830s and 1840s.¹⁰⁷ He also attended Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics at the University of Berlin during the winter of 1828–1829. According to Hans-Günter Klein and Rudolf Elvers, his notes from these lectures have survived in private hands. In spite of concerted efforts by various scholars, however, these documents have not been recovered; as a result, it is

¹⁰⁴ Taylor, ‘Musical History and Self-Consciousness in Mendelssohn’s Octet, Op. 20,’ 153–154.

¹⁰⁵ Mendelssohn’s reference to Wilmsen as his ‘spiritual adviser’ is corroborated in Julius Schubring, ‘Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy,’ *Daheim*, vol. 2 (1866), 373–376, at 373, trans. as ‘Reminiscences of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy,’ in *Mendelssohn and His World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 221–236, at 227.

¹⁰⁶ For references to each of these works see, among others, in this order: Mendelssohn, letters of 10 November 1821, 8 November 1830 and 15 September 1830 to his family and Julius Schubring, in *SB* (2008), 1:76–78, at 77, *SB* (2009), 2:126–129, at 128 and *ibid.*, 82–84, at 84 & 600. Mendelssohn’s possession of *Goethe’s Werke: Vollständige Ausgabe letzter Hand*, 60 vols. (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung, 1827–1842) is corroborated in *LOF*, 294.

¹⁰⁷ Mendelssohn was in the possession of the following editions: 17 volumes of G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe durch einen Verein von Freunden des Verewigten*, 18 vols., ed. D. Ph. Marheineke, D. J. Schulze, D. Ed. Gans, D. Lp. v. Henning, D. H. Hotho, D. C. L. Michelet, D. F. Forster (Berlin: von Duncker und Humblot, 1832–40) as well as the ‘2nd edition of some vols. begun in 1841.’ See *LOF*, 295.

impossible to clarify the extent of Mendelssohn's knowledge of Hegel's aesthetics.¹⁰⁸ Comments in his letters are limited to critical and ironic remarks about Hegel's 'end of art' thesis and his conception of the 'world spirit' (*Weltgeist*).¹⁰⁹ In light of this lack of documentary evidence, it is feasible to concur with Taylor who states that 'the two do have a great deal in common, though this may be as much through common affinities in outlook and mutual interests as from the direct influence of Hegel on the younger composer.'¹¹⁰

Mendelssohn's friendship with the music critic A. B. Marx is well documented. They had been friends since the early 1820s, and Marx's influence on Mendelssohn's musical views in the following decade seems to have been enormous. He stimulated the composer's views about the representational potential of instrumental music to express non-musical ideas and assisted him with revising his early works, including the overture to *Ein Sommernachtstraum* ('A Midsummer Night's Dream,' op. 21, 1826). According to the librettist and baritone Eduard Devrient (1801-1877), he 'gained an ascendancy over Felix such as no one ever exercised over him.'¹¹¹ It is very likely that he passed on his fondness for E. T. A. Hoffmann's fantastic tales and music criticism to Mendelssohn.¹¹² Even though Mendelssohn repeatedly expressed his distaste for theoretical writings about music,¹¹³ he might have read Marx's and Hoffmann's essays and reviews during periods of indisposition and sickness. According to Robert Schumann's *Reminiscences*, Mendelssohn 'rarely read musical journals' but was eager 'to have

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Hans-Günter Klein, 'Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy als Student an der Berliner Universität,' in *Mendelssohn-Studien*, ed. C. Lowenthal-Hensel (Berlin: Drucker & Humblot, 2009), 16:101-124 as well as email correspondence with Martin Schmidt (February 2012).

¹⁰⁹ Mendelssohn, letters of 27 August 1831 and 11 April 1834 to Wilhelm Taubert and Rebecka Lejeune Dirichlet, in *SB* (2009), 2:365-367, at 367, and *SB* (2010), 3:393-394, at 394. The former is trans. in *Felix Mendelssohn, Letters*, ed. G. Selden-Goth (London: Paul Elek, 1946), 163-167, at 166; henceforth *FML*.

¹¹⁰ Taylor, 'Musical History and Self-Consciousness in Mendelssohn's Octet, Op. 20,' 153.

¹¹¹ Eduard Devrient, *My Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and His Letters to Me*, trans. Natalia Macfarren (New York: Vienna House, 1972), 35.

¹¹² See Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 127 and Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 79, where Garratt has analysed critical views on church music by Mendelssohn that echo Hoffmann's criticism of Cherubini's Mass in F.

¹¹³ When he was asked to assume editorship of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1835, he refused, emphasizing that it was his principle to apply himself to the composition and performance of 'practical music' (*practische Musik*) and not to write publicly about it. See Mendelssohn, letter of 6 February 1835 to Breitkopf & Härtel, in *SB* (2011), 4:161-162.

them brought to his room when he was unwell,’ and then he ‘devoured whole volumes all at once.’¹¹⁴ In the later 1830s, the relationship between Mendelssohn and Marx deteriorated, due to aesthetic and theological disagreements about their respective oratorios about St. Paul (Felix’s Op. 36, completed on 18 April 1836) and Moses (Marx’s Op. 10, completed in 1839) for which they had exchanged librettos.¹¹⁵ The final rift came in April 1840 when Mendelssohn declined to perform Marx’s oratorio in Leipzig. By that time, Marx’s major influence on *Kunstreligion* theory had waned, as the following historical overview of art-religious authors will show.

Nineteenth-century exponents of *Kunstreligion* theory

As different as scholars’ chronologies for the evolution of *Kunstreligion* are, so too are the opinions about which writers are to be considered the main exponents of nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion*. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Moritz, Kant, Johann Gottfried Herder, Wackenroder and Tieck have widely been accepted as those who laid the aesthetic foundations that nineteenth-century art religion would be based upon, as their writings gave impetus to an aesthetic idealism according to which any music could act as ‘a vehicle of spiritual transcendence’ rather than being merely ‘sensually pleasing and agreeable.’¹¹⁶ In this context, Wackenroder and Tieck may be deemed the founding fathers of musical *Kunstreligion*, as they articulated their aesthetic and spiritual thoughts with a particular focus on music. In doing so, they engaged with central works of the philosophers just mentioned – Herder’s late writings on music of the 1790s seem to have caught their imagination in particular.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Robert Schumann, *Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy vom Jahre 1835 bis zu seinem Tode* (1835), quoted in *Musik-Konzepte* Heft 14/15, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1980), 99-122, at 106: ‘Musikalische Zeitungen las er selten – am liebsten ließ er sie sich holen, wenn er unwohl war [...]; dann las er sie gleich Jahrgangweise.’

¹¹⁵ Mendelssohn’s favouring of ‘artistic creation’ over ‘dry, obtuse theorizing’ also contributed to the downfall of his friendship with Marx at that time. See Taylor, ‘Musical History and Self-Consciousness in Mendelssohn’s Octet, Op. 20,’ 152.

¹¹⁶ Randall, ‘Religious Imagery and the Nineteenth-Century Musical Imagination,’ 88.

¹¹⁷ See *IKA*, 69.

Next to Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis and Schleiermacher followed suit and brought the term *Kunstreligion* into use.¹¹⁸

Hegel's and E. T. A. Hoffmann's views about art and religion have to be seen as critical responses to the writings of Schleiermacher, Herder and the early romantics.¹¹⁹ By contrast, the writings of the philosopher Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger and Goethe were conceived without positive recourse to contemporary philosophical thought on *Kunstreligion*. While Wackenroder's and Tieck's literary works were generally received with much enthusiasm by the following generation of writers drawn to *Kunstreligion*, Goethe was rather critical of, and amused by, their views. In several writings he responded to theories of *Kunstreligion* and early romantic art-religious thought with biting irony. Sympathetic reflections on art, religion, God and nature are prevalent throughout his oeuvre nonetheless, and his views on religion and aesthetics turned from youthful idealism for the divine, and subsequent objective detachment from it, towards nature mysticism in the last two decades of his life. His early essays and poetry of the 1770s and his late autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811-1814) reflect an aesthetic sensibility towards art and nature that seems reminiscent of religious reverence and embraced art-religious conceptions of divine genius and creation.

Hoffmann heralded a new era in the development of religious theories of art. Thanks to his reviews and essays for the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, musical *Kunstreligion* ceased to be the exclusive domain of poets, philosophers and theologians and became a fixed topos of music journalism and criticism. In the 1820s and 1830s, music critics and theorists such as A. B. Marx, Franz Joseph Fröhlich and Gottfried Weber defined its shape. As Kramer has established, they thereby relied on

¹¹⁸ Schleiermacher coined the term 'Kunstreligion' in the third part of his treatise *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* ('On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers,' 1799). Afterwards, references to the term became increasingly rare; they can be found in Novalis's *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800* ('Fragments and Studies,' 1799-1800) as well as in Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* ('Phenomenology of Spirit,' 1807) and the first edition of the philosopher's *Enzyklopädie des philosophischen Wissens* ('Encyclopedia of Philosophical Knowledge,' 1817). Even though Friedrich Schlegel never used the term, he alluded to central art-religious ideas – like many writers after him.

¹¹⁹ IKA, 76.

‘Hoffmann’s and Hegel’s perspectives and insights of the first two decades of the nineteenth century.’¹²⁰

Among composers, it was particularly those born around 1810 who articulated art-religious thought in writing. Worthy of mention, in this context, are, to quote Randall, ‘the religion-saturated writings of Wagner, Liszt, and Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn,’ as well as Schumann’s public and private writings that were penned between the mid-1820s and mid-century.¹²¹ In Christian Hermann Weisse’s philosophical writings the development of *Kunstreligion* in the first half of the nineteenth century, as represented in Figure 1, comes full circle – his views remained closely connected to earlier ones in many respects, as he built on the writings by late eighteenth-century authors such as Lessing, Moritz, and Kant.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 53.

¹²¹ Randall, ‘Religious Imagery and the Nineteenth-Century Musical Imagination,’ 85.

Figure 1. Exponents of *Kunstreligion* (c. 1790-1850)

Most musicologists delving into *Kunstreligion* theory have explored the writings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors and musicians.¹²² From the late 1970s onwards, scholars such as Carl Dahlhaus, Friedhelm Krummacher and Lydia Goehr started to publish on *Kunstreligion* and related subject matter, and the 1990s marked the beginning of a new scientific verve for the topic in musicological research. Kramer's overview of exponents of *Kunstreligion* is particularly compelling.¹²³ She traces the conceptual meanings of art-religious theories as they were articulated in the writings of numerous philosophers, theologians and music critics. In addition, she touches upon related notions by composers such as Beethoven, Mozart, Fanny Hensel, Mendelssohn and Wagner that can be found in their correspondence and critical writings. In doing so, she is the first and only scholar to provide a comprehensive overview of how ideas of *Kunstreligion* developed from one generation of its exponents to the next.

Within this field of study, there was, in the beginning, a clear focus on Wagner's musical and literary oeuvre. This interest in Wagner was inspired by the large body of his writings that touch upon the relationship between art and religion,¹²⁴ and, together with his musical works, 'manifest' musico-religious ideas 'most effectively and powerfully.'¹²⁵ It was further stimulated by insights articulated by Stefan Kunze and Heinz von Loesch that a considerable amount of thoughts bearing on romantic art theory 'emerge from "Kunstreligion"' (*aus der Sphäre der*

¹²² *Kunstreligion* has been the subject of scholarly research in other disciplines, too. A concise overview of how the relationship between art and religion has been approached in archaeology, art history, theology, religious studies, philology, architecture, theatre sciences and aesthetics can be found in Thomas Lentjes, 'Art and Religion: Academic Disciplines,' in *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski and Eberhard Jüngel (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1:400-401.

¹²³ This overview can be found in the first chapter of her dissertation. See *IKA*, 51-91.

¹²⁴ See, for example, Udo Bermbach, "'Ästhetische Weltordnung" – zum Verhältnis von Politik, Kunst und Kunstreligion bei Richard Wagner,' in *Gott und Götze in der Literatur der Moderne*, ed. Reto Sorg and Stefan Bodo Würffel (Munich: Fink, 1999), 221-234, at 221: 'wer die großen Schriften liest [...] wird sehr schnell bemerken, daß [...] es [...] zentral um das Verhältnis von Politik und Kunst einerseits, von Kunst und Kunstreligion andererseits [geht].'

¹²⁵ Stefan Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners: Voraussetzungen und Folgerungen* (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1982), 8: 'Der religiöse Anspruch, der in verschiedenen Bereichen der Kunst und der Kunsttheorie erhoben wurde, fand in den Ideen und im [musikalischen] Werk Wagners seine vielleicht wirksamste, machtvollste Manifestation.'

‘*Kunstreligion*’ hervorgehen), that Wagner’s thoughts on art ‘mirror the art theory of a whole epoch’ (*in dem sich die Kunsttheorie einer ganzen Epoche spiegelt*),¹²⁶ and that, in turn, ‘[n]othing seems to have influenced the late nineteenth-century thinking about the relationship between art and religion as much as Richard Wagner’s oeuvre,’ as far as both its contents and reception are concerned.¹²⁷

Unfortunately, recent Wagner studies fail to do justice to the broad phenomenon of *Kunstreligion*, as they generally focus on a selective range of conceptual elements that constitute early nineteenth-century aesthetic religion. Usually, they revolve around ideas that Wagner ‘radicalized’ (*radikalisiert*) in his writings of the 1840s and formulated more poignantly (*zuspitzen*) and explicitly subsequently.¹²⁸ These include, among others, notions of composers and their works as being divine (as formulated in the German musician’s creed in the novella *Ein Ende in Paris* 1841),¹²⁹ Wagner’s self-identification as Beethoven’s ‘disciple and apostle’ (in the novella *Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven*, 1840),¹³⁰ perceptions of Beethoven as a saint, revealer and redeemer, as well as ideas about music performances as *Gottesdienste* (in the *Beethoven* essay dating from 1870 and Wagner’s late manifesto *Religion und Kunst* of 1880).¹³¹ Beyond that, Wagner is widely credited with reaffirming perceptions of art as resembling, saving and replacing religion, and with elaborating most explicitly upon notions of ‘true art’ being identical or ‘at one with true religion’ (in the appendix to *Kunst und Religion*, 1880).¹³²

¹²⁶ Ibid., 8 & 3.

¹²⁷ Heinz von Loesch, ‘Kunst als Religion und Religion als Kunst. Zur Kunst- und Religionsphilosophie Richard Wagners,’ in *Musik und Religion*, ed. Helga de la Motte-Haber (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1995), 115-136, at 117: ‘Nichts scheint das Denken über das Verhältnis von Kunst und Religion im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert so geprägt zu haben wie das Schaffen Richard Wagners: sein theoretisches wie sein praktisches, das Werk wie seine Wirkung.’

¹²⁸ Hartwich, ‘Musik und Religion - Richard Wagners Parsifal,’ 186 and Loesch, ‘Zur Kunst- und Religionsphilosophie Richard Wagners,’ 117 & 119.

¹²⁹ For an analysis of this text see *IKA rev.*, 33.

¹³⁰ Nicholas Vazsonyi, ‘Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Wagner - Kunstreligion und ihre Vermarktung,’ *Wagnerspectrum*, ed. Udo Bermbach et al., vol. 5, no. 2 (2009), 199-218, at 209.

¹³¹ For secondary literature discussing the religious imagery of these texts see Loesch, ‘Zur Kunst- und Religionsphilosophie Richard Wagners,’ 120; *IKA rev.*, 50; and Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners*, 162 & 167.

¹³² See Loesch, ‘Zur Kunst- und Religionsphilosophie Richard Wagners,’ 118; Bermbach, ‘Zum Verhältnis von Politik, Kunst und Kunstreligion bei Richard Wagner,’ 222-223 and 228-230; as well as Richard Wagner, ‘Kunst und Religion,’ quoted in idem, *Bayreuth, späte weltanschauliche*

As far as Wagner's musical works are concerned, there seems to be general agreement with Loesch's assertion that they are at least as crucial as the composer's writings in changing how the relationship between art and religion was defined, as Wagner knew more than anyone else how to create a religious aura in music.¹³³ In this context, many authors have attempted to trace what Loesch describes as 'religious moments of action, topoi and cultic associations' (*religiöser Handlungsmomente, Topoi und kultischer Assoziationen*) in the plot, music, title and text of Wagner's *Parsifal*.¹³⁴ For Hartwich, the religious symbolism of the work gives evidence of the fact that it was 'conceived as a kind of re-invention of Christianity' and 'represents the late flowering of the Romantic era's "religion of art."' ¹³⁵ The question as to why Wagner called the piece a *Bühnenweihfestspiel* (a festival play for the consecration of a stage) is considered, too. As highlighted by Hartwich, the term refers back to ancient mystery cults and their practices of initiating their members into religious symbols while emphasizing the fictional role that the cultic actions have in the plot – after all, the work represents not 'genuine cult' (*wirklichen Kult*) but 'a play on stage' (*ein Spiel auf der Bühne*) and 'a celebration of art' (*ein Fest der Kunst*).¹³⁶ From this point of view, 'Wagner's *Parsifal* [...] bears on religious cult and yet is aesthetic cult itself [...] in a temporally and spatially defined area,' possessing 'its own "tempus" and temple.'¹³⁷ Furthermore it was conceived as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the future that was meant to accomplish tasks of 'capturing the totality, the whole, the absolute' (*die Erfassung*

Schriften, ed. Dieter Borchmeyer, vol. 10 of *Richard Wagner: Dichtungen und Schriften* (Frankfurt on the Main: Insel, 1983), 117-163, at 161; and, for a short analysis, Loesch, 'Zur Kunst- und Religionsphilosophie Richard Wagners,' 119-120.

¹³³ Loesch, 'Zur Kunst- und Religionsphilosophie Richard Wagners,' 126-127.

¹³⁴ Such analyses can be found in *ibid.*, 129-136 (the quotation is on p. 129); Hartwich, 'Musik und Religion - Richard Wagners *Parsifal*,' 192-197; Bermbach, 'Zum Verhältnis von Politik, Kunst und Kunstreligion bei Richard Wagner,' 230-231; and Adolf Nowak, 'Wagners *Parsifal* und die Idee der Kunstreligion,' in *Richard Wagner: Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1971), 161-174, at 169-174 in particular.

¹³⁵ Hartwich, 'Musik und Religion - Richard Wagners *Parsifal*,' 197.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹³⁷ Nowak, 'Wagners *Parsifal* und die Idee der Kunstreligion,' 167: 'Wagners *Parsifal* [...] berührt den religiösen Kult und ist doch selbst schon ästhetischer Kult, als "Bühnenweihfestspiel" im zeitlich und räumlich abgegrenzten Bezirk, also mit eigenem tempus und templum.'

der Totalität, des Ganzen, des Absoluten) and embracing all facets of life and nature that were formerly fulfilled by religion.¹³⁸

Musicological research on Wagner has set the model for more recent studies that explore musicians' attitudes towards *Kunstreligion*. Even though, during the last fifteen years, interest has shifted to other nineteenth-century composers, musicologists have continued to single out components of aesthetic religiousness for exploration. The overall tendency to give consideration both to the writings and musical works of distinguished composers is usually retained, too. As scholarly research on Fanny Hensel's life and works took off in the 1990s,¹³⁹ scholars like Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen became interested in the extent to which her compositions and musical activities may be interpreted as art-religious gestures of reverence that were inspired by idolizations of Bach and stimulated by understandings of music performances as religious celebration.¹⁴⁰

Hinrichsen's arguments are convincing but unfortunately rather speculative, since he assumes artistic intentions on Fanny's part without providing any substantiating documentary evidence from her letters. He argues that Fanny's approach to Bach's oeuvre as a composer resembled a believer's ardour for religious epiphany and elevation – it gave impetus to 'intentions of proclamation' (*Verkündigungsanliegen*) that she supposedly associated with Bach's music but hoped to achieve in compositions 'of an entirely private and domestic nature' (*ganz privat-familiärer Natur*), to quote Hinrichsen.¹⁴¹ In this sense, her adoption of Bach's

¹³⁸ Loesch, 'Zur Kunst- und Religionsphilosophie Richard Wagners,' 122, where the author provides an interpretation of the central argument of Wagner's fragment 'Das Künstlertum der Zukunft' (1849), quoted in idem, *Dichtungen und Schriften* (1983), 5:242-261, at 261.

¹³⁹ The 1990s saw the publication of Fanny's musical scores and of the first authoritative in-depth biography of the composer: Françoise Tillard, *Fanny Hensel née Mendelssohn Bartholdy* (Paris: P. Belfond, 1992).

¹⁴⁰ Hinrichsen, 'Choralidiom und Kunstreligion. Fanny Hensels Bach,' in *Fanny Hensel, geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Komponieren zwischen Geselligkeitsideal und romantischer Musikästhetik*, ed. Beatrix Borchard (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999), 216-222, at 218, 219 & 221. Hinrichsen is certain that Fanny's 'deep familiarity with Bach's compositional legacy,' that she owed to A. B. Marx, Carl Friedrich Zelter and her father, entailed a 'moral obligation' to engage in manifold activities commemorating Bach. These included, above all, giving technical and moral support to her brother's preparation of the revival of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in March 1829. See *ibid.*, 216-217.

¹⁴¹ These aims of proclamation found most fervent expression in Fanny's cantata *Lobgesang* (that was composed in 1831 to commemorate the birth of her son Felix Ludwig Sebastian) and her piano cycle *Das Jahr* (1841). See *ibid.*, 217-219.

chorale idiom is to be understood as a concession both to ‘traditional genre aesthetics’ (*tradierte Gattungsästhetik*) and ‘the nineteenth-century notion of art as *Kunstreligion*’ (*der für das 19. Jahrhundert signifikanten Vorstellung der Kunst als Kunstreligion*).¹⁴²

If one takes into account how much Liszt’s compositions, writings and life were steeped in religion, it seems surprising that, so far, there exists only one study that touches upon his religious and aesthetic mindsets in the context of *Kunstreligion*. Marion Saxer’s perceptive study of Liszt examines the extent to which his oeuvre and biography were influenced by an ‘idea of the artist as a priest of the Herzensreligion of art’ (*Vorstellung vom Künstler als einem Priester der Herzensreligion der Kunst*);¹⁴³ she points out that realignments in Liszt’s creative output can be directly attributed to changes in his religious worldview and lifestyle. Non-liturgical religious works of Liszt’s years as a virtuoso pianist in Paris (1830–1835) are to be seen in the context of his fraternisation with the Saint-Simonists and of his writings about ‘tone poets’ as ‘human creators, [...] evangelists and priests of an irredeemable religion, constantly increasing in mystery and incessantly penetrating every heart.’¹⁴⁴ The calm character and melody of the ‘Andante religioso’ in the *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (1833–1834), for example, articulate musically the ‘yearning for “supernatural ideas” of religion’ (*das Streben nach den ‘überirdischen Ideen’ der Religion*) that are addressed in Lamartine’s poem of the same title, since Liszt was adamant in complying with the ‘religious and social mission of the artist’ (*religiösen und sozialen Mission des Künstlers*).¹⁴⁵ He identified this mission as the creation of music that is ‘religious in essence’ (*essentiellement religieuse*) as well as ‘devotional, strong, [...] at once dramatic and

¹⁴² Ibid., 217 and 221.

¹⁴³ Marion Saxer, ‘Nicht-liturgisch gebundene religiöse Musik: Franz Liszt und Anton Bruckner,’ in *Musik und Religion*, ed. Helga de la Motte-Haber, 2nd ed. (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 2003), 155–185, at 164.

¹⁴⁴ Franz Liszt, ‘Zur Stellung der Künstler’ (1835), in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. La Mara [Marie Lipsius] and Lina Ramann (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1881), 2:5, trans. in Ludwig Nohl, *Life of Liszt*, trans. George P. Upton (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1902), 112.

¹⁴⁵ Saxer, ‘Nicht-liturgisch gebundene religiöse Musik,’ 167 & 164 and Franz Liszt, ‘Über zukünftige Kirchenmusik. Ein Fragment’ (1834), in: idem, *Gesammelte Schriften* (1881), 2:53.

sacred, [...] ceremonial and serious, [...] translucent and emotional.’¹⁴⁶ In this sense, his turn towards composing oratorios and his decision to perform them in monastic frock after moving to Rome and entering the lower orders in the early 1860s reflect a strengthened sense of mission.¹⁴⁷

The question of how Schumann positioned himself in relation to *Kunstreligion* in his compositions and writings has recently been explored by Loos in two separate studies.¹⁴⁸ Loos’s research is seminal in establishing how conceptions of aesthetic religion affected Schumann’s *oeuvre*, his style of composing and, what Loos calls, the ‘art-religious orientation’ (*kunstreligiöse Ausrichtung*) of his musical works.¹⁴⁹ Beyond that, it provides revealing insights into ‘Schumann’s comments about music as *Kunstreligion*’ (*Bemerkungen Schumanns zur Musik als Kunstreligion*).¹⁵⁰

As Loos has established from Schumann’s letters and compositions, the composer’s eclectic religiosity and understandings of religious music inspired an aim to create musical works that could serve functions of pan-confessional proclamation and were meant ‘not for the prayer room – but for more cheerful people’ (*nicht für den Beetsaal – sondern für heitere Menschen*), to quote Schumann himself.¹⁵¹ Accordingly, Schumann’s ‘secular oratorios’ (*weltliche Oratorien*) *Das Paradies und die Peri* (op. 50, 1853) and *Scenen aus Goethes Faust* (Woo3, 1844–53) as well as later liturgical compositions that he created during his tenure as municipal director of concerts and church music in Düsseldorf, are marked by a fruitful combination of

¹⁴⁶ Saxer, ‘Nicht-liturgisch gebundene religiöse Musik,’ 166-167 and Franz Liszt, ‘[No title],’ *Gazette Musicale de Paris*, vol. 2, no. 35 (30 August 1835), 292, as partly trans. in Edward Schaefer, *Catholic Music Through the Ages: Balancing the Needs of a Worshipping Church* (Chicago, Mundelein, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2008), 107.

¹⁴⁷ See Saxer, ‘Nicht-liturgisch gebundene religiöse Musik,’ 161 & 174-175. Saxer also detects religious topoi and elements of church music in Liszt’s symphonic poems of the Weimar period (1848-1858). See *ibid.*, 171 & 173.

¹⁴⁸ See Helmut Loos, ‘Robert Schumann und die geistliche Musik,’ in *Musik im Raum der Kirche. Fragen und Perspektiven; ein ökumenisches Handbuch zur Kirchenmusik*, ed. Winfried Böning (Stuttgart: Carus-Verlag and Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2007), 112-119 and *idem*, ‘Robert Schumanns kunstreligiöse Sendung,’ 354-363.

¹⁴⁹ Loos, ‘Robert Schumann und die geistliche Musik,’ 112.

¹⁵⁰ *Idem*, ‘Robert Schumanns kunstreligiöse Sendung,’ 356.

¹⁵¹ See *idem*, ‘Robert Schumann und die geistliche Musik,’ 113 & 117; Robert Schumann, letter of 5 May 1843 to C. Koßmaly, quoted in *ibid.*, 113 as well as *idem*, *Tagebücher, Band I, 1827-1838*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEZB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 243, where the composer described himself as ‘religious without religion’ (*religiös [...] ohne Religion*).

‘art and religion’ (*Kunst und Religion verschmelzen*) as far as their musical structures and spiritual topoi are concerned. According to Loos, the devices used in these works manifest ‘the high art of the individual artist’ (*die hohe Kunst des einzelnen Künstlers*, to use Schumann’s terms) and an eclectic adherence to conventions of church compositions while expressing an ‘early romantic longing for the infinite [...] which belongs to the religious sphere’ (*frühromantische Sehnsucht nach dem Unendlichen, ein Gefühl, das in der religiösen Sphäre angesiedelt ist*).¹⁵² Through critical evaluation of the composer’s correspondence, Loos furthermore establishes that this interpretation of Schumann’s musical works is congruent with the composer’s self-declared aspirations to compose music that was ‘suitable for use in the *Gottesdienst* and in concerts’ (*zum Gottesdienst wie zum Concert-Gebrauch geeignet*).¹⁵³

Elsewhere, Loos has focused on further aspects of *Kunstreligion*, exploring both the construct of music as otherworldly revelation and the perception of composers as godly manifestations on earth, divine creators and priests.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, the moral implications of music as *Kunstreligion* are analysed. According to Loos, *Kunstreligion* in its backwards orientation towards ancient and eighteenth-century thought steered art-religious conceptions of art and artists also towards ethical issues. The ancient belief that the arts would improve human morals, which had survived in German fables and narratives, accrued religious aspirations in the nineteenth century. At that time, early romantic writers advanced views of the arts as vehicles of religious and moral education.¹⁵⁵

Loos’s analysis of Schumann’s diaries, anthology *Dichtergarten für Musik* (‘Poet’s Garden of Music,’ 1852-1854) and last treatise *Neue Bahnen* (‘New Paths,’ 1853) reveal that the composer was affected by this intellectual shift. As Schumann

¹⁵² See Loos, ‘Robert Schumann und die geistliche Musik,’ 116, 118-119, 136 and Robert Schumann, ‘Neue Oratorien. Ferdinand Hiller, die Zerstörung Jerusalems,’ *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1 January 1841), 2-4, at 2; henceforth *NZfM*.

¹⁵³ See Loos, ‘Robert Schumann und die geistliche Musik,’ 118, 117, 116, 119 and Robert Schumann, letter of 10 December 1852 to the publisher B. Schotts Söhne (Mainz), quoted in *ibid.*, 118.

¹⁵⁴ See Loos, ‘Robert Schumanns kunstreligiöse Sendung,’ 355-357 & 363.

¹⁵⁵ According to Loos, this shift towards the religious was initiated in the eighteenth century when theories of morals received fresh impetus in intellectual discourse that emphasized the necessity of spiritual education for perfecting one’s personality and humanity. See *ibid.*, 354-355.

was himself convinced that music refined and purified the hearts of its listeners, he shared the common belief that musicians should act as guiding figures in human society upholding moral integrity and values.¹⁵⁶ This thought informed his conception of ‘the clear-sighted thinker and connoisseur of man’ (*dem tiefer blickenden Denker und Kenner der Menschheit*) who ranks among the ‘superhumans’ (*Uebersmenschen*) and ‘leaders of mankind’ (*Führer der Menschheit*).¹⁵⁷

Adam-Schmidmeier’s inter-disciplinary exploration of ‘Felix Mendelssohn in the context of a new “Kunstreligion”’ provides a short analysis of how early nineteenth-century composition and literary notions of *Kunstreligion* may have been inter-related.¹⁵⁸ Her deliberations about early nineteenth-century composers focus particularly on Mendelssohn and consist mainly of analyses of the ‘realisation of the new ideal [of *Kunstreligion*],’ (*Realisierung des neuen Kunstideals*) in musical works such as his Symphony-Cantata *Lobgesang* (‘Hymn of Praise,’ op. 52, 1840) and his compositions for organ and piano.¹⁵⁹ In this regard, her study redresses the dearth of earlier research. As was indicated earlier in this chapter, previous explorations of Mendelssohn’s aesthetic religion by Loos, Randall and Kramer have either focused on his writings or revolved around his role as a stimulator of art-religious thought rather than as a contributor to *Kunstreligion* theory.¹⁶⁰

Adam-Schmidmeier does not concern herself with the impact that Mendelssohn’s musical activities as a conductor had in furthering musico-religious ideas. She argues that the major aesthetic concepts of *Kunstreligion* were mainly formulated by writers, philosophers and theologians, whereas musicians merely responded to or engaged with them in journalism and composition.¹⁶¹ Accordingly,

¹⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 356.

¹⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, 363 and Robert Schumann, ‘Niels W. Gade,’ in *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker* (Leipzig: G. Wigand, 1875), 360.

¹⁵⁸ Adam-Schmidmeier, ‘Felix Mendelssohn im Kontext einer neuen “Kunstreligion,”’ 28-39. She seems to define this new *Kunstreligion* as a sacralisation of art, since her overview of art-religious thought revolves around early Romantic literary theory that ‘imparted sacred dignity to art.’ See *ibid.*, 30: *Während die literarische Frühromantik der Kunst an sich eine sakrale Würde zuspricht [...]*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶⁰ As outlined previously, Kramer and Randall have focused on Mendelssohn’s 1829 performances of Bach, in this context.

¹⁶¹ Adam-Schmidmeier, ‘Felix Mendelssohn im Kontext einer neuen “Kunstreligion,”’ 30 & 33.

composers are of interest to her mainly in so far as which musical means they used in their works ‘in order to create a religious sphere in a secular context’ and evoke religious moods in the listener.¹⁶² Mendelssohn receives particular attention since his art-religious approach to composition seems directly inspired by decisive points in his religious life (*die religiösen ‘Weichenstellungen’ in Mendelssohns Leben*).¹⁶³ As Adam-Schmidmeier points out, his Jewish family background and Christian upbringing as well as his contact with the Nazarenes and exposure to religious paintings by Italian Renaissance masters account for his elevated aesthetic and religious standards of composition and the religious bent of his musical works.¹⁶⁴

Adam-Schmidmeier provides welcome insights into the meanings and implications of *Kunstreligion* both as a ‘new ideal of art’ (*Kunstideal*) and a ‘mindset according to which art was stylized into [a surrogate] religion’ (*Geisteshaltung, in der die Kunst zur Religion stilisiert wird*) among musicians and writers.¹⁶⁵ Her predominant focus on Mendelssohn’s musical rather than written output, however, is questionable.¹⁶⁶ Strictly speaking, any attempt to deduce art-religious aims from a composer’s musical works is always subjective and speculative to a certain extent. Even though many nineteenth-century composers only left sparse explanatory remarks about their overarching aesthetic beliefs and aims as well as intentions that motivated certain compositional decisions, an exploration of their writings always produces invaluable leads. This insight inspires the thorough examination and comparison of musical and textual sources in the present study. Since Mendelssohn’s professional activities as a conductor, performer and musical adviser throw revealing light on his aesthetic and musico-religious intentions too, these spheres of his

¹⁶² Ibid., 32 & 31.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 32.

¹⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 32-34 & 37.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 28 & 30.

¹⁶⁶ Adam-Schmidmeier’s approach has also been adopted by other musicologists. Since clues about Mendelssohn’s own religious values and beliefs in his correspondence are sparse and the publication of his letters proceeded slowly in previous decades, some scholars have analysed alternative sources. Sharing Michael Steinberg’s thought that, ‘[s]ince there is so much cultural and personal engagement evident in the music, we should look there for guidance to significant issues involving the man’s mind,’ they detected covert religious references in the composer’s style of composition as well as the libretti and plots of his musical works that, in their view, reflected and transmitted Mendelssohn’s religious and cultural identity. See Michael P. Steinberg, ‘Mendelssohn’s Music and German-Jewish Culture: An Intervention,’ *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 83, no. 1 (Spring 1999), 31-33, at 32.

creative output are no longer ignored either. Since Adam-Schmidmeier's and Loos's limitation of art-religious thought to sacralizations of musical works and musicians does not do full justice to the conceptual complexity of nineteenth-century religious art theory, a more comprehensive and systematic look at the semantics of *Kunstreligion* seems imperative and follows anon.

Defining the Indefinable: the semantics of *Kunstreligion* visualized and systematized

According to Reinhard Koselleck, the terminologies of language are to be understood as 'factors and indicators of historical movement' (*Faktoren und [...] Indikatoren geschichtlicher Bewegung*).¹⁶⁷ His assertion that political and social terms mirror shifts in human and intellectual history and, at the same time, condition its development, also applies to the religious vocabulary of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion*: it reflects paradigm shifts in religious history that were stimulated by changing spiritual ideologies and processes of secularization and, for some nineteenth-century writers, it turned into a new form of secularized religion. Following this rationale, the terminological and ideological facets of Mendelssohn's and his contemporaries' *Kunstreligion* may be best understood if they are seen to be based on three central intellectual, spiritual and conceptual shifts that occurred between 1750 and 1850; Figure 2 sets them out and shows their impact on nineteenth-century musical aesthetics.

In the introduction of his encyclopaedia *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* ('Basic Concepts in History: A Historical Dictionary of Political and Social Language in Germany,' 1972), Koselleck calls this period a 'saddle period' or 'watershed age' (*Sattelzeit*), as it was marked by a transition from the old to the modern world that articulated itself in intellectual paradigm shifts and a far-reaching transformation of the meanings

¹⁶⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, 'Einleitung,' in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), 1:XIII-XXVII, at XIII.

associated with existing terms.¹⁶⁸ He explains that this era saw the emergence of new concepts and the revival of premodern ones, the traditional semantics of which were complemented by new meanings more compatible with modern times.¹⁶⁹ Among the traditional concepts was that of the *Gottesdienst* ('worship'), modern understandings of which as an external practice, inner mindset and spiritual experience encountered in the church and the concert hall reflected the combined influence of Lutheran, Reformed and Pietist theologies on *Kunstreligion*.¹⁷⁰

As ideas of *Gottesdienst* became subject to the first conceptual shift that would affect nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion* theory, the newly coined semantics of worship stimulated wider usages of the terms that described its practices, purposes and participants in aesthetic texts. For example, the term *Predigt* ('church sermon') was now also used in order to describe concerts and musical works, as they were believed to accommodate purposes of religious proclamation, revelation, conversion, emotional and spiritual edification as well as moral instruction. Similarly, the noun *Gemeinde* ('congregation') was no longer employed in order to designate only those attending Mass or other services, but also to describe concert audiences, whose attitudes and behaviour seemed highly reminiscent of practices of *Andacht* ('meditation' or 'prayer') that normally were practised or experienced in church. As it was thanks to the interpretative insight of conductors and the creative thought of composers that musical works could be brought to the attention of audiences, they came to be described as *Prediger* ('preachers').

Religious conceptions of musical works, listeners and composers also tended towards ethical and moral planes. This conceptual shift was influenced by the persistent popularity of philosophies of universal religion and the discourse on questions of bourgeois identity, values and virtues that accompanied the rise of civil society during the eighteenth century and that generated ideals of how human character should be constituted and could be brought to perfection during the late Enlightenment. Such concerns spawned a fervent interest in ancient myths and fables

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., XV.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. According to Koselleck, the century between 1750 and 1850 should be understood as a transitional phase between a premodern and a modern period.

that spoke of the cathartic and proselytizing effects of the arts. By the 1740s, these fictional tales of the past were valued as narratives giving guidance on ethical principles that were believed to complement and even replace Christian moral doctrines. Carried further into the nineteenth century, moral considerations stimulated notions of music as an essence with ‘humanizing effect,’ inspired by the ancient and Enlightenment notion that the exposure to and preoccupation with art ‘tempers morality and teaches us to be human.’¹⁷¹

In alignment with these conceptions, listeners who were affected by the sound and beauty of musical works were frequently compared to converts. By contrast, the romantic image of the composer was either that of a saint or that of a ‘guiding figure for society’ (*gesellschaftliche Leitfigur*) and an ‘extraordinary human whom is conceded a divine position as a “leader of mankind” in concerns of humanity and morality’ (*Ausnahmemenschen, dem als Führer der Menschheit [...] im Sinne von Humanität und Moralität eine göttliche Stellung eingeräumt wird*), to use Loos’s terms.¹⁷² With this role came great responsibility; Hegel, for example, alluded to manifold requirements for artists to represent the religious consciousness or *Zeitgeist* of their era in their works, to excel in conscientiousness towards the contents and forms of their art and to conform to values of authenticity, veracity, faithfulness and earnestness when creating works of art.¹⁷³

The third conceptual shift in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century terminology and intellectual history went beyond the religious and moral to embrace notions of God and the divine. Here the terminological and ideological change consisted of a dissolution of concepts of ‘God’ (*Gott*) into ideas of the ‘godhead’ or ‘divinity’ (*Gottheit*) as well as the ‘divine’ (*Göttliche*), the ‘heavenly’ (*Himmlische*), ‘infinite’

¹⁷⁰ These theologies shared an emphasis on inward piety, inner intuition and feeling, steering concepts of *Kunstreligion* towards *Gefühlsreligion* (the religion of feeling) and romantic mysticism.

¹⁷¹ This notion goes back to Ovid’s ‘Epistulae ex Ponto Liber’ and was often quoted in eighteenth-century texts – see, for example, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, ‘Von dem Einflusse der schönen Wissenschaften auf das Herz und die Sitten: Eine Rede, bey dem Antritte der Profession’ (1744), in *Sammlung vermischter Schriften von C. F. Gellert: Zweyter Theil* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1760), 186–206, at 205. A concise summary of eighteenth-century moral thought inspired by ancient notions of art can be found in Loos, ‘Robert Schumanns kunstreligiöse Sendung,’ 354–355.

¹⁷² Loos, ‘Robert Schumanns kunstreligiöse Sendung,’ 356 & 363.

¹⁷³ Hegel set forth these moral requirements in his lectures on aesthetics. They are analysed in chapter four.

(*Unendliche*), ‘absolute’ (*Absolute*), ‘ineffable’ (*Unaussprechliche*), ‘universal’ (*Universelle*) and ‘transcendent’ (*Transzendente*).¹⁷⁴ The new and invariably broad conceptions of the divine were developed by theologians and religious philosophers, and were seized upon by writers on the arts. Among them were the theologian Leberecht de Witte who defined ‘the divine and eternal’ (*das Göttliche und Ewige*) as ‘the eternal truths of religion’ (*die ewigen Wahrheiten der Religion*), and Richard Wagner who admitted to Cosima in his last years of life that he ‘could not imagine God,’ but ‘only the divine.’¹⁷⁵

Nineteenth-century views of the divine were strongly influenced by the general intellectual climate that was congenial to interest in ancient and mediaeval mythology and theology as well as in Pythagorean and Platonic music theory. Revived in the writings of Hegel and the Schlegel brothers, these schools of thought gave rise to religions of humanity and appeals for a ‘New Mythology’ (*Neue Mythologie*) which came to influence concepts of *Kunstreligion*.¹⁷⁶ Writers who were drawn to art religion often found inspiration in ancient and mediaeval conceptions of ‘cosmic’ and ‘angelic’ music as well as in tales of how the Olympian deities, muses and angels had invented or conveyed the arts to mankind. Stimulated by the past, they promoted views on music as a transcendent essence consisting of perpetually moving spiritual sound material that makes audible, manifests, and originates from, the divine and heavenly. Views about artists as prophets or priests serving God, or turning into deities demanding the respect and awe of listeners and spectators as mortal votaries, were stimulated by ancient concepts of the ‘divine possessor’ and ‘the possessed one,’ depictions of artists as such in subsequent centuries, and Christian notions of divine power and wisdom.

¹⁷⁴ This chain of ideas extends Heinz von Loesch’s historical outline of changing conceptions of God in Loesch, ‘Zur Kunst- und Religionsphilosophie Richard Wagners,’ 119.

¹⁷⁵ See Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, *Die neue Kirche oder Verstand und Glaube im Bunde* (Berlin: Nauck, 1815), 66 and Martin Gregor-Dellin, *Richard Wagner: Sein Leben, Sein Werk, Sein Jahrhundert* (Munich: Piper, 1980), 743, trans. in Georges Liebert, *Nietzsche and Music*, trans. David Pellhauer and Graham Parkes (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 120.

¹⁷⁶ On early nineteenth-century appeals by Friedrich Schlegel and other early romantics to create a new mythology and therewith a new religion see Manfred Engel, ‘Neue Mythologie in der deutschen und englischen Frühromantik: William Blakes “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” und Novalis’ “Klingsohr-Märchen,” in *Arcadia*, vol. 26, no. 3, 225–245.

The way in which new conceptions of the *Gottesdienst*, morality and the divine gave impetus to notions of *Kunstreligion* can be illustrated by means of several interpretative models. These models were developed by earlier scholars who conceive *Kunstreligion* as a constellation of manifold conceptual elements.¹⁷⁷ Kramer's assertion that *Kunstreligion* is to be understood 'in light of a wider matrix of ideas about listening, the concert, the composer, and the work,' and Kunze's conception of it as a generic term for 'ideas that revolve around the sacralization of art and the artist' (*Ideen, die um die Sakralisierung der Kunst und des Künstlers kreisen*) provide a particularly sound basis for disentangling the manifold meanings of art-religious allegories, similes, metaphors and statements used by nineteenth-century authors.¹⁷⁸ As performers and conductors also figured in the religious guise of prophets, priests and gods in musico-religious writings, it is more accurate to refer to the more general term 'musician' rather than 'composer' when exploring the impact of *Kunstreligion* on aesthetic conceptions of music.¹⁷⁹ In the interest of completeness, notions of music as a spiritual essence with divine qualities should not be neglected either.

The fact that ideas of *Kunstreligion* were far from forming a closed system – first ascertained by Kunze – has to be acknowledged, too.¹⁸⁰ The conceptual constitution and development of the nineteenth-century religion of art can be imagined as 'a perpetual circular motion that is kept in motion by a few central ideas'

¹⁷⁷ Kramer's conception of *Kunstreligion* as 'a constellation of ideas about the audience, composer, and work of music' seems to be inspired by Chua. Chua, in turn, takes his understanding of the 'constellation,' as which he defines the nineteenth-century religion of art, from Walter Benjamin. Accordingly, he identifies *Kunstreligion* as the opposite to 'a single, stable concept' since 'its meaning is situated in an ever-changing constellation of elements.' See *IKA*, 20 and Chua, *Absolute Music*, xi.

¹⁷⁸ See *IKA*, 7 and Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners*, 161.

¹⁷⁹ The term 'musician' is used here in its nineteenth-century sense to encompass all the individuals involved in the composition and performance of the musical work. This usage follows nineteenth-century definitions of the word as '[s]omeone who knows the art of music,' 'more specifically [...] someone, whose profession consists in composing or performing music.' See 'Musicien', *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1835), 2:247.

¹⁸⁰ See Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners*, 167, where *Kunstreligion* is treated as 'anything else than a closed system' (*alles andere als ein geschlossenes System*). Kramer describes *Kunstreligion* as an open concept, following Goehr's understandings of the term that, partly, resort to notions by Nietzsche and Friedrich Waismann. An open concept, in this sense, possesses 'not one meaning but a whole synthesis of "meanings,"' which accounts for the possibility that, at one point or another, we may encounter applications of the concept and examples of its use 'which would lead us

(*einer steten Kreisbewegung, die von einigen wenigen zentralen Ideen in Gang gehalten wird*); these ideas intertwine, interact and blend together in intricate ways, which explains why ‘one encounters the same or similar thoughts over and over again’ (*man aber immer wieder auf die gleichen oder auf verwandte Gedanken stößt*) in writings of one and the same author and of consecutive generations of writers seeking to give their own interpretation to conceptions of musicians, musical listening and music as an essence and product.¹⁸¹ The repetitions in content in chapters two to six of this study may be attributed to this fact.

Figure 2 aims to represent schematically all the aforementioned premises and definitions of *Kunstreligion* as a ‘circular set of problems’ and a ‘historically changing complex of ideas’ that ‘over and over again revolves around the same subject area.’¹⁸² Circular arrows reflect the pervasive influence of central spiritual ideas (as represented in the text field at the top) on art-religious conceptions of music, audiences and musicians. At the same time, they draw attention to the fact established by Kramer that, throughout the early nineteenth-century development of *Kunstreligion*, anyone writing about it ‘drew on the ideas of contemporaries [as well as earlier writers], reformulating the concept according to his own perspectives on art, spirituality and their relationship.’¹⁸³

to modify [or extend] our definition’ of it. *IKA*, 5; and Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 90.

¹⁸¹ Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners*, 3.

¹⁸² Among the authors mentioned, it was Kunze who writes about *Kunstreligion* as a *Problemkreis*. The formulation *historisch sich verändernder Gedankenkomplex* was coined by Dahlhaus in order to summarize Wagner’s conception of musical drama. It was taken over by Bermbach who aims to draw attention to the fact that Wagner’s thinking about art *immer wieder um denselben Themenbereich kreist* that is summarised in the title of his book chapter. See *ibid.*, 78; Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption des musikalischen Dramas* (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1971), 100; and Bermbach, ‘Zum Verhältnis von Politik, Kunst und Kunstreligion bei Richard Wagner,’ 221.

¹⁸³ *IKA*, 5.

Figure 2. Conceptual elements of *Kunstreligion* (c. 1790-1850)

***Kunstreligion* as a religion and a language**

How nineteenth-century individuals defined the multifarious relationships between art and religion has guided musicological approaches to the nineteenth-century religion of art from Adorno's 1945 essay 'Theses upon Art and Religion Today' to the present day.¹⁸⁴ Even recent studies emphasize that a proper understanding of *Kunstreligion* as an idea or concept should be based on a discussion of 'interrelationships' between art and spirituality that are encoded in the 'linguistic properties of the word aggregate' *Kunstreligion*.¹⁸⁵ The correlations between art and religion that scholars have focused upon follow four central trains of romantic thought according to which art served religion, was similar to religion, was itself a religion, or had the potential to become one and supplant traditional religion. Guided by these assumptions, the following approaches to music prevailed in the early nineteenth century: music was believed to articulate and express spiritual and transcendent ideas; the way in which it was performed and received was seen as following processes of religious ceremony and experience; and the adoration that music commanded and received seemed equivalent to a religious belief system that, in some cases, supplanted other spiritualities.

Dahlhaus's, Kunze's and Kramer's reasonings that romantic *Kunstreligion* represents 'a historically legitimate manifestation of religious consciousness,' a 'substitute for religion' and 'an alternative to other types of religion' have found much resonance among musicologists.¹⁸⁶ These scholars' reliance on verbatim quotations and translations of documentary evidence to back up interpretations of aesthetic religion as a form of faith has resulted in the emergence of Tieck and Hegel as the key figures in the current discourse on *Kunstreligion*. Tieck's assertion that 'music [*die Tonkunst*] is certainly the ultimate secret of faith, the mystery, the completely revealed religion' is among the nineteenth-century testimonies that have

¹⁸⁴ Like many other writers before him, Adorno does not use the term *Kunstreligion* but writes about it implicitly by reference to 'the exalted unity of art and religion.' See T. W. Adorno, 'Theses upon Art and Religion Today,' *Kenyon Review*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1945), 677-682, at 677.

¹⁸⁵ *IKA*, 9-10.

been quoted most often in this context.¹⁸⁷ Due to the intricate nature of Hegel's views about the relationship between art and religion and his complex views on artists' spiritual roles and responsibilities, his writings have usually been subjected to close scrutiny, too.

This primary focus on *Kunstreligion* as a form of spirituality explains why articulations of its theories and concepts that lack any religious intention and merely reflect nineteenth-century use of language as well as conventions and habits of writing have as yet found so little consideration in musicology. Kramer's remarks in this direction are limited to the observation that *Kunstreligion* articulated itself in 'analogies, similes, metaphors, and statements' and rose to prominence in response to 'the language and themes of *Empfindsamkeit*.'¹⁸⁸ On a different note, Kunze draws attention to the detrimental effect of *Kunstreligion* in giving rise to 'formulations that turned into platitudes and thereby suffered alarming profanation' (*Bezeichnungen, die später zu Gemeinplätzen werden und erst damit ihre abschreckende Profanation erfahren haben*).¹⁸⁹ Loos, finally, observes that *Kunstreligion* served Schumann as a language providing him with means of 'allegory, metaphor, oxymoron and riddle' (*Gleichnis, Metapher, Oxymoron und Rätsel*) for 'poetic ornamentation' (*Einkleidung*), 'meditative contemplation' (*Einkehr*) and 'mystification' (*Legendenbildung*), by which he hoped to get and give a clear understanding of the compositional means and ineffable qualities of musical works.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Loos remains convinced that *Kunstreligion* represents a true manifestation of conviction

¹⁸⁶ See, in this order, Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 85; Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners*, 161 and *IKA*, 1.

¹⁸⁷ This quotation can be found, among others, in Adam-Schmidmeier, 'Felix Mendelssohn im Kontext einer neuen "Kunstreligion,"' 35; Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 89-90; idem, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1980), 78; Helmut Loos, 'Der Komponist als Gott musikalischer Kunstreligion: Die Sakralisierung der Tonkunst,' in *Musik im Raum der Kirche: Fragen und Perspektiven; ein ökumenisches Handbuch zur Kirchenmusik*, ed. Winfried Böning (Stuttgart: Carus-Verlag and Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2007), 98-139, at 99; *IKA*, 61-62; Friedhelm Krummacher, 'Kunstreligion und religiöse Musik: Zur ästhetischen Problematik geistlicher Musik im 19. Jahrhundert,' *Die Musikforschung*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1979), 365-393, at 370-371; and Wilhelm Seidel, 'Absolute Musik und Kunstreligion um 1800,' in *Musik und Religion*, ed. Helga de la Motte-Haber (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1995), 91-114, at 105. It comes from Tieck's essay 'Symphonien' ('Symphonies,' 1799), in Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Silvio Vietta and Richard Littlejohns (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1991), 1:240-246, at 241; henceforth WSWB, and is trans. in Chua, *Absolute Music*, 176.

¹⁸⁸ *IKA* rev., 10 & 138.

¹⁸⁹ Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners*, 79.

that rests on religious and moral idolizations of musicians, on faith in the expressive potential of music and revelatory capacities of harmony as well as on an adherence to the religion of feelings.¹⁹¹ In his concluding remarks, he insists on the fact that, ‘just like any other form of religious conviction, *Kunstreligion* relies [...] on faith [...]’.¹⁹²

Advances towards a more critical and differentiated understanding of *Kunstreligion* as a religious outlook and a distinct variety or manifestation of poetic and written language, on which the present study builds, have been made by scholars from other disciplines, most notably from literary criticism and linguistics. In the aforementioned study of art-religious thought in modernity by Petersdorff, *Kunstreligion* features both as ‘an esoteric language variety’ (*esoterischen Sondersprache*) and a ‘doctrine of faith’ (*Glaubenslehre*).¹⁹³ According to him, as an ‘aesthetic language’ (*Kunstsprache*), *Kunstreligion* represented a kind of ‘refuge’ (*Refugium*) from the social realities of the everyday world.¹⁹⁴ While, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it still showed traces of colloquial language, it increasingly freed itself from everyday-parlance, developing into a secret language that was meant to enable communication between those who have been initiated into the tenets of *Kunstreligion*.¹⁹⁵

As Petersdorff has shown, the imagery and elements of speech that formed the vocabulary of *Kunstreligion* were the product of a long process during which ‘[t]he language of transcendence, as employed from Pre-Socratic times onwards until pietism, is absorbed, liberated, transformed – and distorted as well’ in a process of secularization.¹⁹⁶ In this sense, *Kunstreligion* is to be understood as a ‘secularized product’ (*Säkularisat*) that relied on ‘a transformation of religious energies’ (*Transformation religiöser Energien*) and on what Gottfried Benn (1886-1956)

¹⁹⁰ Loos, ‘Robert Schumanns kunstreligiöse Sendung,’ 361-362.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 355-358.

¹⁹² Ibid., ‘Kunstreligion beruht wie jede religiöse Überzeugung nicht auf nachprüfbarem Wissen, sondern auf Glauben.’

¹⁹³ Petersdorff, ‘200 Jahre deutsche Kunstreligion,’ 80 & 72.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 80-81.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 72 & 81.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 82: ‘Die Sprache der Transzendenz, von den Vorsokratikern bis zum Pietismus, wird aufgesogen, befreit, verwandelt – aber auch entsteht.’

called a ‘fanaticism for transcendence.’¹⁹⁷ By the end of the eighteenth century, both processes had given birth to a ‘conglomerate of arguments, allegories and feelings’ (*Gemisch von Argumenten, Metaphern und Gefühlen*) as well as to ‘figures of thought that would become fixed later on and finally diminish’ (*Gedankenfiguren, die später starr werden und verkümmern*).¹⁹⁸ Decisively shaped by the early romantics, the language of *Kunstreligion* has been marked ever since by highly subjective and, occasionally, ironic ‘forms of speech’ that were deemed apt to ‘articulate a nostalgia for a restoration of pre-modern experiences of unity and stability, to express a longing for art carrying a similar obligatory character that had distinguished religion in pre-modern times.’¹⁹⁹

One rare allowance for the fact that art-religious thought has been reflected in formulations of language without any deliberate or conscious religious or spiritual intention by the author was made by the Germanist Albrecht Schöne in his monograph *Säkularisation als sprachbildende Kraft* (‘Secularization as language-forming force,’ 1958). According to him, modern writers’ use of vocabulary or imagery that had religious or biblical origins did not necessarily arise from religious intentions. Similarities with the language used in the Bible, the hymn book, the liturgy, and other theological writings were the outcome of a process of ‘linguistic secularization’ (*sprachliche Säkularisation*) that originated with Luther. During this process, religious ‘terms and phrases, forms, figures [of speech], images and themes’ (*Worte und Wendungen, sprachliche Formen, Figuren, Bilder, Motive*) were transferred ‘from a sacred into a worldly register of language (*aus dem religiösen Sprachbereich [...] ins Säkulare*).’²⁰⁰

This change in language was caused and accommodated by a move away from the church (*Entkirchlichung*), a general loss of faith in the eighteenth century as

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Petersdorff is quoting from Gottfried Benn, ‘Fanatismus zur Transzendenz,’ in idem, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 4:235.

¹⁹⁸ Petersdorff, ‘200 Jahre deutsche Kunstreligion,’ 77 & 72.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 82: ‘Die neu gefundenen Sprachformen wurden zu Mitteln – um das Verlangen nach einer Wiederherstellung vormoderner Stabilitätserfahrungen sagbar zu machen, die Sehnsucht nach einer Verbindlichkeit von Kunst auszudrücken, die jener der Religion in der vormodernen Ordnung entsprechen sollte.’

²⁰⁰ Albrecht Schöne, *Säkularisation als sprachbildende Kraft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 26.

well as by human linguistic creativity (*die menschliche Fähigkeit zur sprachlichen Gestaltung, zur Dichtkunst*).²⁰¹ Its outcome was a partly unconscious ‘sacralization of the worldly sphere’ (*Sakralisierung der weltlichen Sphäre*),²⁰² during which ‘a particular piece of language gets into a different [secular] environment and adopts changed connotations.’²⁰³ During this process, the original but now ‘estranged spiritual substance’ (*entfremdete geistliche Substanz*) of a term or phrase is ‘preserved in secularity’ (*in der Säkularität bewahrt*).²⁰⁴ According to Schöne, in some cases this use of rhetorical phenomena of secularization for purposes of sacralisation was deliberate and reflected the writer’s religious leanings. In others, these secularized formulations entered texts against the author’s intention, and either arose from ‘the “free” poetic creation process’ (*dem ‘freien’ dichterischen Schöpfungsprozeß entspringen*) or were based on ‘general human ways of thinking, ways of perception [and] language options’ (*allgemeinen menschlichen Denkrichtungen, Vorstellungsweisen, Sprachmöglichkeiten*).²⁰⁵

The literary scholar Nicholas Vazsonyi goes even one step further, as he allows for the possibility of an instrumentalization of the vocabulary of *Kunstreligion* for ulterior motives. He argues that art-religious texts from the nineteenth century should not be read as confessions of faith and manifestos of conviction. Wagner, for example, used the rhetoric of *Kunstreligion* as a ‘vehicle for self-representation in line with the music market’ (*Vehikel zu einer marktgerechten Selbstdarstellung*), an instrument of self-marketing, and ‘a marketing strategy to promote’ his career ‘while claiming his artistic disinterestedness.’²⁰⁶ According to Vazsonyi, Wagner applied ‘the established notion of “Kunstreligion”’ to ‘his own person’ in order to construct his own public image as ‘Beethoven’s chosen and sole heir’ and a ‘representative of an ideal art’ (*Repräsentant einer idealen Kunst*) who ranked ‘among the sacred.’²⁰⁷

²⁰¹ Ibid., 31.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 22: ‘so wird dabei jedesmal (und zumeist ohne Wissen um seinen Ursprung) ein bestimmtes Sprachstück aus jenem Bereich, in dem es geprägt und in einen festen Zusammenhang geordnet wurde, in einen anderen Sprachraum versetzt, in dem es unter eine veränderte Umgebung und gewandelte Sinnbezüge gerät [...]’

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 26.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 36, 32 & 35.

²⁰⁶ Vazsonyi, ‘Kunstreligion und ihre Vermarktung,’ 210 & 218.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 218, 201 & 211.

In Wagner's public writings, *Kunstreligion* manifests itself as 'a unique combination of fiction, journalism, and autobiography' that was meant to justify his own aesthetic decisions and to promote his own direction in composing.²⁰⁸ The art-religious thought, imagery and allegoric symbolism that Wagner used in his self-portrayals, in this context, included conceptions of a poor martyr, disciple and apostle that revealed him to be both a musician belonging to a "divine succession" of German composers, culminating with Ludwig van Beethoven,' and an artist who 'will one day deserve equal worship and adoration' (*eine ähnliche Verehrung und Anbetung wie Beethoven verdienen wird*).²⁰⁹

The present study acknowledges and challenges these earlier musicological, literary and linguistic approaches to *Kunstreligion* as a religion and a language. Its critical line of enquiry is inspired by the fact that the relationship between art and religion that may have influenced the contents and language of nineteenth-century texts is often vague, and that religious motivations were not always the primary impetus for writing. Most often, an author's written testimony emanates from a variety of inspirations and intentions. Where obvious parallels between aesthetic and religious beliefs can be spotted, and any trace of irony is absent that would undermine the veracity of the source, an author's written elaborations may, indeed, be based on genuine faith. An exploration of etymological developments and nineteenth-century styles of writing helps to decide whether the religious bent of an author's terminology was subconscious or creative, that is, steeped in standardized language or the product of his own poetic skill and aspirations. Thereby, one might establish uses of *Kunstreligion* vocabulary as a purely rhetorical device, if not a specialized language, the application of which was occasionally inspired by ulterior motives unrelated to religion and art. All this is to be examined in each individual case and to be substantiated by documentary evidence.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 218.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 210.

Approaches towards *Kunstreligion*: relevant methods, terms and contents

The interpretation of *Kunstreligion* as a backward-looking nineteenth-century phenomenon, a constellation of ideas defined by contemporary writers, as well as a religious mindset and language in the secondary literature reviewed so far, offers valuable departure points from which the research strategies and questions of the present study are derived. Chua's compilation of 'fragmentary chapters' highlighting the single conceptual elements that gave 'ever-changing' meaning to absolute music, first of all, has inspired an exploration of *Kunstreligion* in three parts that discuss ideas of worship, morality and the divine as the central ideological components that gave shape to it in the nineteenth century.²¹⁰ Kunze's insight that 'the religious theory of art was conceived in terms of aphorisms' has given impetus to the decision to trace the appearance, development and semantics of Mendelssohn's and his contemporaries' key concepts of *Kunstreligion* in separate chapters under subheadings that summarize the core ideas of their writings.²¹¹

As nineteenth-century texts provide multi-faceted opinions about *Kunstreligion*, they have been scrutinized, following Foucault's method of tracing 'discursive formations.'²¹² Accordingly, comparative analyses of the 'field of objects' that nineteenth-century authors focused upon, of formulations, the 'alphabet of notions,' 'the system of permanent and coherent concepts,' 'the identity and persistence of themes' and the stylistic 'manner of statement[s]' are undertaken.²¹³ The approach adopted for the analysis of Mendelssohn's writings seeks inspiration in German historicist methods of source criticism that were formulated by key figures like Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884) and that remain in use and high esteem even today. Accordingly, the chapters that follow put central focus on issues such as '[w]hat general coloring' the respective 'source-document received from the circle of ideas prevalent at the time and place of its origin' and '[w]hat individual complexion

²¹⁰ Chua, *Absolute Music*, xi.

²¹¹ See Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners*, 167 for his comments about 'die Theorie der Kunstreligion, [...] die in ihren besten Stücken nur aphoristisch gedacht wurde.'

²¹² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), 31-39.

the author himself has in virtue of his culture, his character, some special tendency, or the like.²¹⁴ Beyond that, special emphasis is placed on how the writings of others influenced Mendelssohn's own way of thinking about *Kunstreligion*. Considering his wide network of contacts and reading, the selection of authors and sources discussed, in this context, cannot be exhaustive. As it is impossible to cover everything that Mendelssohn read in a whole lifetime, one might plead in terms used by W. K. C. Guthrie, who was similarly faced with a huge number of sources for the third volume of his *History of Greek Philosophy* (1971) dealing with Socrates:

The enormous bulk of [...] literature means that my own reading in it has been [...] selective [...]. I have tried to make the selection representative [...], but it is probably inevitable that some of my readers will look in vain for their favourite items. I hope however that I have made myself sufficiently familiar with the [...] evidence to be entitled to views of my own, and it would not be safe to assume that the omission of a writer or a theory is necessarily due to ignorance.²¹⁵

In cases where an influence on Mendelssohn by a prominent writer, theory or text seems apparent, the decision was taken not to provide evidence of his familiarity with the writings of others from his letters and private library of books – after all, the composer was affected by the *Zeitgeist* of his age as much as anyone else, and he also took up thoughts that ‘were in the air’ (*in der Luft lagen*), that belonged to ‘aesthetic common knowledge’ (*ästhetischen Allgemeingut*) and sometimes descended into ‘platitudes’ (*Allgemeinplatz*), to use Kunze's terms.²¹⁶

Since Mendelssohn is not known to have left any public writings that touch upon musical aesthetics, his correspondence with relatives, associates and friends has been subjected to close scrutiny.²¹⁷ These and other primary sources have been translated into English, using nineteenth-century and diachronic dictionaries as well

²¹³ Ibid., 37, 34, 35 & 33.

²¹⁴ Johann Gustav Droysen, *Grundriss der Historik* (1868), trans. as *Outline of the Principles of History*, trans. Elisha Benjamin Andrews (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1893), 25.

²¹⁵ W. K. C. Guthrie, *Socrates* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), 3-4.

²¹⁶ Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners*, 3.

²¹⁷ This study is mainly based on the new German critical edition of Mendelssohn's complete letters (referred to as *SB* elsewhere) that has been underway for the last ten years. Eight of the twelve planned volumes have been published so far.

as available translations that are indicated in the footnotes.²¹⁸ Relevant passages of the composer's original letters that have been translated by the author of this study are cited in chronological order in appendix 1. Taking into account observations by Miriam Dobson that letters from the past 'all have a reader (or readers) in mind' when 'using terms and concepts that prevail in a given culture,' and that we can only 'glimpse into the author's worldview through a close reading of the text,'²¹⁹ a critical approach towards Mendelssohn's correspondence has been adopted. The method that comes to bear on the sources is oriented towards Maynard Solomon's 'skeptical readings' of Beethoven's letters, diary and conversation books in his 2004 essay about 'Beethoven's Aesthetic Evolution.'²²⁰ Through a critical and comprehensive evaluation of Beethoven's writings, Solomon aims to reconstruct the development of his aesthetic views while being sensitive to the fact that the 'ideas, phrases, and fragments' detected in them were inconsistent and 'sometimes appealed to him as much for their sheer rhetoric as for their specific content.'²²¹ Furthermore, he establishes that some quotations raise doubts as to 'whether they are to be read as expressions of faith or primarily as conventional utterances intended to impress his correspondents with his devotion to high ideals in art.'²²²

In order to verify whether such observations also apply to Mendelssohn, his relationships with his addressees are explored in their influence on his style of writing, the contents of his letters, and the language that he used. Events in his professional and private life that affected his writings are not ignored either, as they

²¹⁸ As there is still a lack of a complete critical scholarly edition of Mendelssohn's letters in the English language, his correspondence has been translated in critical engagement with existing nineteenth- and twentieth-century publications, which include: *Felix Mendelssohn, Letters*, ed. G. Selden-Goth (London: Paul Elek, 1946); *Letters from Italy and Switzerland by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, trans. Lady Wallace (Philadelphia: Frederick Leypoldt, 1863), henceforth *LIS*; *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, From 1833 to 1847*, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy, trans. Lady Wallace (London: Spottiswoode & Co., 1864), henceforth *ML*; *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn to Ignaz and Charlotte Moscheles* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1888); and *Felix Mendelssohn: A Life in Letters*, ed. Rudolf Elvers and trans. Craig Tomlinson (London: Cassell Publishers, 1986). Where no source of translation is given in the footnotes, the translation is my own.

²¹⁹ Miriam Dobson, 'Varieties of primary sources and their interpretation: Letters,' in *Reading primary sources*, 57-73, at 69, 66 & 65.

²²⁰ Maynard Solomon, 'Reason and Imagination: Beethoven's Aesthetic Evolution,' in *Historical Musicology: Sources, Methods, Interpretations*, ed. Stephen A. Christ, Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Robert Lewis Marshall (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 188-203, at 188.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

also help to understand Mendelssohn's subtle, implicit and sometimes polemic, ironic and playful allusions to art-religious notions.²²³

The fact ascertained by Kunze that a composer's theoretical reflections about art as well as his biography and artistic practice can be closely interlinked, has also been taken into account.²²⁴ Even though Mendelssohn was less concerned with a 'propagation, apologia and explanation of his creative and artistic intentions' than Wagner and other composer-writers on music,²²⁵ it is apparent that he frequently accompanied or followed his words with actions. His partly satirical writings about performances as sermons in the early 1830s analysed in chapter two, for example, have to be read against the background of his contemporaneous concert activities that reflect a missionary zeal to promote a knowledge and appreciation of Bach's works. In this sense, Mendelssohn's professional engagements help to interpret his writings correctly while allowing conclusions about his musico-religious convictions. Guided by this insight, the question of how his approach to conducting and composition put into practice his aesthetic theories will be addressed briefly.²²⁶ The analyses in chapter three of selected compositions that Mendelssohn wrote or conducted, in this context, follow lines of enquiry outlined by Nowak that explore whether a composer has created his work out of 'religious earnestness' or conviction (*aus religiösem Ernst*) and whether the respective composition has a spiritual effect (*religiöse Wirkung*) or features 'religious themes in the text' and 'musical means of expression' (*religiöse Motive seines Textes und entsprechende sogenannte 'Ausdrucksmittel'*).²²⁷

In order to distinguish between religious, unintentional and creative applications of theories and concepts of *Kunstreligion* in Mendelssohn's letters,

²²³ Seidel has already drawn attention to the fact that Mendelssohn's meanings varied from letter to letter and depended on his addressees. See Seidel, 'Einleitung in die Gesamtausgabe,' in *SB* (2008), 1:7, and idem, 'Einleitung in Band 1,' in *ibid.*, 31-53, at 45-46: 'Mendelssohn sought at an early age to be obliging to his addressees. He used to gear the subject, style and language toward them.' (*Mendelssohn bemühte sich schon in jungen Jahren, auf die Adressaten einzugehen. Er stimmte Gegenstand, Stil und Sprache auf sie ab.*)

²²⁴ See Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners*, 3.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ In order to avoid speculation about Mendelssohn's intentions of composition and performance, of which other scholars have been accused of earlier on in this chapter, much care will be taken to back up findings and interpretations with documentary evidence written by Mendelssohn, his next of kin and members of his larger social circle.

²²⁷ Nowak, 'Religiöse Begriffe in der Musikästhetik des 19. Jahrhunderts,' 161.

textual approaches are applied that have been outlined by Schöne. After all, Schöne's comments about modern language use seem to apply perfectly to Mendelssohn's style of writing where formulations pointing towards secularization and sacralization seem often inspired by linguistic creativity. Even though religious imagery and terminologies can be traced, much of what Mendelssohn has put down in writing hints less at spiritual concerns and more at sheer joy in using language, as he seems to have taken pleasure in a rather challenging and witty style of writing. In many letters he digresses into humour or irony and indulges in caricatures and mocking expressions. He frequently constructed his letters to include refrain-like twists as well as puns and quotations from unidentified literary sources that reflect both his extraordinary learning and scholarship and his fondness for exchanging intellectual thoughts with the addressees of his letters.²²⁸ His use of allusive and associative language that occasionally plays with religious and non-religious meanings and connotations of terms makes his written style even more challenging.

An orientation towards Schöne's exploration of methods of poetic secularization among German-speaking writers will help to uncover Mendelssohn's meanings and intentions. Accordingly, documents 'in large numbers' will be quoted and paraphrased in the chapters that follow; this is indispensable for enabling the reader to understand the details of language and re-examine how the results of the analysis were reached. Furthermore, particulars of Mendelssohn's 'religious attitudes' (*religiöse Einstellungen*) and upbringing, his worldview as well as his language preferences, erudition and literary interests will be touched upon.²²⁹ Schöne's reliance on lexicology for the exegesis of formulations is also taken into account when exploring religious connotations of terms and phrases – after all, this field of research throws revealing light on the fact that

[d]ue to their origin in the religious area of language, in which they were coined and in whose high-tension field of forces they were charged with meaning and impact, the transposed forms and structures cling to functional forces that can also become effective in the new [language] constellation within the work of art [or piece of writing] in highly significant ways. [...]

²²⁸ See Wilhelm Seidel, 'Einleitung in Band 4,' in *SB* (2011), 4:7-30, at 28.

²²⁹ Schöne, *Säkularisation als sprachbildende Kraft*, 36, 32 & 34.

the old bond and determination is so powerful that it remains valid [...] even if this may happen in mysterious and unknown ways.²³⁰

Accordingly, diachronic and nineteenth-century dictionaries are consulted that (in Goehr's terms) help to 'identify the initial, unstable, and then the regulative uses of a concept' and detail figurative meanings of originally theological vocabulary that make apparent that not everything which sounds religious in Mendelssohn's aesthetic writings is meant to be religious.²³¹ Furthermore, attention is paid both to how word semantics 'have evolved over time' and reflect 'different and often competing connotations a term can carry at any given historical moment,' following methodologies suggested by Dobson, Bernd Ziemann and Koselleck.²³² As it is impossible to infer what Mendelssohn meant by certain words without collating his letters and interpreting his terms in light of formulations that come before or after them in the text, textual comparisons are made, too.

In order to clarify the meanings and connotations of central concepts and terms in this study, a preliminary overview of the terminologies that figure prominently in the following chapters seems worthwhile, at this juncture. This study explores nineteenth-century 'aesthetics.' This term, and the derived adjective 'aesthetic' are used in wider senses outlined by Dahlhaus. For him, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century aesthetic thought represents 'a vaporous, farflung quintessence of problems and points of view' that encompasses a 'metaphysics of "the beautiful in music"' as well as theories of 'making and producing,' of 'craftsmanship' and of 'esthetic judgement and its philosophical basis.'²³³ References to anything 'romantic'

²³⁰ Ibid., 33: 'Denn von ihrem Ursprungsort, von dem religiösen Sprachbereich her, in dem sie geprägt und in dessen hochgespanntem Kraftfeld sie mit Bedeutungs- und Wirkungsenergien aufgeladen wurden, haften den transponierten Formen und Strukturen Funktionskräfte an, die auch in der veränderten Konstellation innerhalb des Kunstwerkes auf höchst bedeutsame Weise wirksam werden können. [...] die alte Bindung und Bestimmung ist so mächtig, daß sie [...] erhalten bleibt, mag das auch auf verborgene Weise geschehen.'

²³¹ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 109.

²³² See Benjamin Ziemann and Miriam Dobson, 'Introduction,' in *Reading primary sources: the interpretation of texts from nineteenth- and twentieth-century history*, ed. idem (London: Routledge, 2008), 1-18, at 6, and Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 77, where the author emphasizes that 'the use of language by the author, his contemporaries, and the generation preceding him, with whom he shared a specific linguistic community' must be considered.

²³³ Carl Dahlhaus, *Aesthetics of Music*, trans. William W. Austin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-3.

in this dissertation follow commonly accepted understandings of ‘Romanticism’ as a term describing developments during the first half of the nineteenth century. The fact that the conceptual origins of the Romantic movement are to be found in eighteenth-century philosophy and literature and that its tenets were to influence developments after 1850 is acknowledged, too.

Terms that are related both to aesthetic theory and religious fields of reference include, most obviously, the adjectives ‘religious’ and ‘spiritual.’ The latter attribute is a neologism of the twentieth century and characterizes pan-denominational religious modes of thought as well as individuals who believe in something but do not feel drawn towards specific confessional doctrines of faith in today’s understanding. Guided by diachronic and nineteenth-century dictionaries which reveal that the nineteenth-century designation ‘religious’ conforms with present-day characterizations of someone as ‘spiritual,’ both adjectives are used synonymously. The same applies to expressions such as *Kunstreligion*, ‘aesthetic religion,’ ‘aesthetic’ or ‘art religiousness,’ ‘religious theory of art,’ ‘art religion’ and ‘the religion of art’ as well as derived adjectives such as ‘art-religious,’ ‘religio-aesthetic’ and ‘musico-religious,’ which are used interchangeably in what follows. In view of the ambiguity of the German term *Andacht*, the religious and secular semantics of which require more detailed analysis, its usages and meanings have been summarized separately. Since the multifarious translations of the noun as ‘devotion,’ ‘contemplation’ and ‘piety’ take these complex semantics into account further on in this study, readers are advised to have a look at appendix one beforehand.

Concepts of *Andacht* will also play a prominent role in the following chapters, each one of which throws revealing light on the three central ideological components that constitute nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion* theory. Chapters two and three familiarize the reader with Mendelssohn’s and his contemporaries’ ways of thinking religiously about aesthetic matters in allusion to concepts of worship. As will be shown, ideas formerly associated with the Christian church service entered nineteenth-century writings about sacred and secular music early on, inspired by the common belief that worship takes place wherever religious attitudes of prayer and preaching can be observed. In the process, ideas of ‘devotion’ (*Andacht*),

‘edification’ (*Erbauung*), religious instruction and conversion received new meanings.

Chapter two argues that E. T. A. Hoffmann’s and Wackenroder’s new conceptions of aesthetic contemplation as consisting of modes of *Andacht* were not purely theoretical and, in the observation of their contemporaries, reflected audience behaviour during performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* that resembled congregational rituals of prayer and meditation. Bach’s nineteenth-century reputation as a preacher in music was the product of conceptual change, too, as was Mendelssohn’s image as an apostle preaching the gospel of masters such as Bach and Beethoven. Affected by the aesthetic zeal of his sister Fanny and other musicians, his relentless historicist stance on musical performance entailed a personal sense of mission to educate congregations of listeners to appreciate and penetrate masterworks spiritually. Mendelssohn devoted all his energies to this aim as a performer and conductor. As a listener, he seems to have approached musical works through acts of *Andacht* that consisted of subjective feeling, free thinking and adoration and that had formerly been delineated by Hegel and Johann Nikolaus Forkel. Such was the case especially during his years of travel, when he was still in the process of familiarizing himself with the masterpieces of German and foreign masters. As soon as his musical horizons were developed, his spiritual modes of listening changed.

Chapter three traces further changes in modes of listening. In the nineteenth century, music was believed to speak to its audiences in a sacred language of feelings and revelation. Martin Leberecht De Wette was convinced that music was a superior ‘means of kindling religious sentiments.’ For Franz Joseph Fröhlich it represented ‘the heraldess of divine mysteries.’ Mendelssohn’s aesthetic thought combined both ideas, even though he drew clear lines between sacred and secular music in this context. When listening to church music, he seems to have searched for religious messages and feelings conveyed in the sound. When exposed to musical works that had not been composed for the church, he enjoyed the variety of emotions and moral sentiments that they expressed and conjured up. It seems that he aimed to make it possible for other listeners to enjoy music in a similar way. By reviving the *St. Matthew Passion* he hoped to share his insight into the work’s spiritual message with

his audiences. In his own oratorios and secular works that relied on the chorale as a formative element he aimed to emulate Bach's example and to satisfy others' need for religious edification and enlightenment.

Chapter four retains a primary focus on Mendelssohn's aesthetic thinking while providing an additional analysis of nineteenth-century conceptions of *Andacht*. It reconstructs semantic trajectories in the composer's writings about 'devotion' and 'earnestness' (*Ernst*) as moral imperatives of composition, performance and musical listening. The textual analysis follows no strict chronology, as the central aim is to retrace the terminologies and connotations of *Ernst* that occurred and to analyse which contextual factors influenced Mendelssohn's conceptual vocabulary and outlook. In this context, attention is drawn to diverse values of 'love,' 'diligence' 'work,' *Bildung*, 'spirit,' 'truthfulness' and 'conscientiousness' that were related to and, in some cases, emanated from the composer's understandings of *Ernst*. In its complexity, Mendelssohn's moral and aesthetic value system seems unmatched by those of his contemporaries, most notably Schumann's and Zelter's. As it seems, Mendelssohn's middle-class upbringing and religious instruction, his involvement in the Bach revival and his travel impressions during his Grand Tour strengthened his moral sense and gave new impetus to his conviction that piety and artistic integrity were closely interlinked and relied primarily on an adherence to moral commandments. Demands of professionalism, aesthetic ideals of church composition and phenomena of commercialization centrally informed the way in which he defined these various commandments, while philosophical and theological writings by his grandfather Moses Mendelssohn and his mentor Friedrich Philipp Wilmsen seem to account for his life-long adherence to them as an artist and a man.

Chapters five and six demonstrate that the moral bent of Mendelssohn's aesthetic religiousness set limits to his sympathies with art-religious conceptions of artists as deities, appraisals of their works as godly or transcendent creations and depictions of musical art as a divine offering from mythological gods. Chapter five will show that sacralizations of musicians are not absent from Mendelssohn's correspondence, but that they are most often implicit and metaphorical, if not humorous, and rarely of a religious nature. Art-religious portrayals of Bach as God's servant and of Fanny Hensel as the priestess of 'God, the gracious Lord' in

Mendelssohn's early correspondence express his reverence for these musicians as musical idols. The reasons that motivated his expressions of adoration for female artists like Delphine Schauroth go beyond artistic admiration and brotherly affection to suggest a romantic, if not sensual, interest in the opposite sex. Mendelssohn's writings about Beethoven as a human genius of superior intellect in defence against charges of 'divine' madness corroborate an understanding of artists as exceptional humans, and of artistic creation as a primary product of human ingenuity.

Chapter six explores the links between Mendelssohn's quasi-pantheistic belief in God, his adherence to a 'religion of humanism' as well as his views on the origins and effects of music, the essence of sound as well as human and divine artistic creation. In Mendelssohn's correspondence music occupies a prominent place as an art invented by God and as a responsible task for humans that has to be met with diligence, good faith in God as well as self-initiative and provides consolation and relief from earthly struggle in return, making the listener receptive to the sound of angels as well as cosmic and divine entities. These views are partially influenced by the literature that Mendelssohn read; they also reflect his response to devastating strokes of fate in his life as well as momentary impressions of sound that he conceived while playing the organ or listening to his favourite pieces by Bach. Relative to the entire correspondence, conceptions of angelic and cosmic music, however, seem to have had little impact on Mendelssohn's aesthetic thought. Generally, he wrote about 'heavenly' or 'divine' musical works in rather factual and analytical terms. Similar observations can be made about his writings on nature and culture. Strictly speaking, his perception of an omnipresent divine principle and eternal sound inherent in nature and architecture prevails only in his correspondence from his travels. There, however, articulations of sensibilities for art, religion and aesthetic beauty, as they were defined by leading exponents of *Kunstreligion* theory such as Schleiermacher, Goethe and Tieck, are all the more pronounced and fervent.

Chapter 2. The Protagonists of Kunstreligion as Participants in Church Worship

In the early nineteenth century, religious experiences, phenomena and perceptions that in earlier times had been seen as components of religious worship came to influence aesthetic reflection to an unprecedented degree. Contemporary authors described musical phenomena – in particular the personality of musicians, the performance of musical works and musical listening – in ways that recalled traits of participants of church worship, aspects and characteristics of religious ceremonies as well as rituals of prayer. According to Wilhelm Seidel, art-religious aesthetic conceptions of concerts and musicians since the turn of the nineteenth century were based on the conviction that '[w]herever music elevates humans, there is worship [*Gottesdienst*]; the concert hall and the opera house become temples, the artists priests.'¹ In contemporary thought, audiences were thought of as congregations, since the way in which they listened to music, both secular and sacred, was imagined to follow modes and rituals of religious contemplation and consisted of an appreciative reception of musical works as 'sermons in sound.'²

Such ideas were assimilated by Mendelssohn – especially in his early years. In the letters of his youth all the main components of art-religious conceptions of the *Gottesdienst* come together. This applies in particular to his descriptions of the 1829 rehearsals and performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* and interpretations of other works by Bach. In these, references to preachers, congregations, sermons, church worship and *Andacht* conjure up associations of a holistic *Gottesdienst* experience that sees the convergence of manifold elements that had formerly been mainly associated with Christian religious worship.

Kunstreligion discourse on the *Gottesdienst* peaked in the 1820s and 1830s in music criticism as well as in the correspondence and recorded verbal communication

¹ Seidel, 'Absolute Musik und Kunstreligion um 1800,' in *Musik und Religion*, ed. Helga de la Motte-Haber (Laaber: Laaber, 1995), 91-114, at 91: 'Wo immer Musik die Menschen erhebt, ist Gottesdienst; Konzert- und Opernhaus werden zu Tempeln, die Künstler zu Priestern.'

² Rudolf Werner, 'Felix Mendelssohn als Kirchenmusiker' (Ph.D. diss., Universität Frankfurt am Main, 1930), 163.

of musicians. Contemporary aesthetic interest in worship was mainly fuelled by Mendelssohn's performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*. These concerts inspired religious descriptions of audiences, conductors, musicians and performances. Portrayals of Mendelssohn as a preacher, for example, were rather rare before his involvement in the Bach Revival in the 1830s encouraged critics and writers to describe his concerts as religious events. Afterwards, aesthetic conceptions of the *Gottesdienst* disappeared gradually from writings on music.

The evolution of Mendelssohn's art-religious notions reflects this development to a certain extent. It is true that, while reflections on art and music in his letters of the late 1820s and early 1830s were marked by an increase in religious vocabulary, conceptions of worship no longer played such a prominent role in his later correspondence. As the following analyses will show, however, perceptions of artists as missionaries or preachers, of listeners as devout congregations and of music performances taking the shape of religious ceremonies not only played a role in his observation of audiences attending the 1829 performances and the musical public; they also shaped his own endeavours as a performer and conductor, and influenced his own listening behaviour as early as the mid-1820s.

In this context, not everything that Mendelssohn wrote inspired by the imagery of worship should be read as serious confessions of faith. The terminology and imagery that he adopted in line with early nineteenth *Kunstreligion* theory attest to a knowledge and more or less conscious impact of central paradigms that prevailed in the aesthetic, theological, philosophical and literary thought of his time. A thorough look at Mendelssohn's personal and professional life as well as the musical life of his time reveals that his writings do not always manifest a serious concern for interactions between the spiritual and the aesthetic. Occasionally, it is possible to trace other literary intentions that influenced his line of thought and the contents of his letters.

Early nineteenth-century views on worship

Nineteenth-century aesthetic ideas of worship were the product of extensive conceptual shifts. By engaging with the bible as well as contemporary philosophies of religion, writers of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries arrived at the understanding that worship takes place whenever and wherever someone glorifies and worships a divinity or anything considered to be of divine essence. Stimulated by this insight, views on religious worship – a concept commonly expressed by reference to the German term *Gottesdienst* – and on contemporary musical practice came to overlap. Perceived as any 'service to God' in the broadest sense,³ *Gottesdienst* manifested itself not only in external activities at church, in the circle of the family and friends or at home, but also in one's inner self and the concert hall. Generally, it became common at that time to distinguish between several forms of worship, such as: the *innere Gottesdienst* (an *inner* worship, which takes place in the mind and involves an 'ordering of one's affections toward God and humankind');⁴ the *äußere Gottesdienst* (external worship practice); the *Kirchenandacht* (morning or evening prayer at church); public and private worship (religious meditation in public and at home); and the musical *Gottesdienst* (the concert perceived as religious ceremony).⁵

In the process of conceptual change, understandings of *Prediger* ('preachers') in German-speaking countries were realigned, too, to allow for broader meanings. As Herder put it in 1806, 'no other profession in the world is considered from such varied points of view as that of the preacher.'⁶ In Christian churches and in the *anständigen Sprechart* ('in proper' or 'respectable spoken language'), anyone

³ See, for example, 'Der Gottesdienst,' *GKW*, 2:759-760: 'Eine jede Handlung, welche um Gottes willen und zu dessen Ehre, geschiehet, und der ganze Umfang mehrerer Handlungen dieser Art.' See also 'Gottesdienst,' *Herders Conversations-Lexikon*, ed. Raphael and Benjamin Herder (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1855), 3:114; henceforth *HCL*: 'Im weitesten Sinne ist G. die Hingebung des Menschen in seinem ganzen Thun und Lassen an Gott [...].'

⁴ *IKA*, 136.

⁵ See 'Der Gottesdienst,' *GKW*, 2:759-760.

⁶ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Christliche Reden und Homilien. Erster Theil*, ed. Johann Georg Müller, vol. 3 of *G. v. Herders sämtliche Werke* (Karlsruhe: Bureau der deutschen Classiker, 1826), 328: 'Kein Stand vielleicht in der Welt wird unter so verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten angesehen, als der Stand der Prediger [...].'

appointed for the proclamation of religious truths was commonly referred to as preacher since his main responsibility consisted in preaching, exegeting and explaining passages of holy scripture.⁷ While it was common understanding to conceive of a preacher equally as a man of the church and 'a priest delivering sermons, appointed for preaching,'⁸ Catholic and Protestant perspectives diverged on his status. In the Roman Catholic Church, the title of preacher was restricted to clerics who had yet to receive holy orders. After their ordination, they adopted the title of *Pfarrer* ('parish priest') or *Priester* ('priest') depending on whether they were employed by a parish or not. This distinction was not present in Protestant jurisdiction and church constitutions which equated priests, preachers and clerics.

The lay person was equally ignorant of the Catholic distinctions between the various titles of religious dignitaries, perceiving *jeden geistlichen Redner* ('every clerical speaker') as a preacher.⁹ Wider understandings of the term came to be based on the belief that a preacher could be anyone who engaged in missionary work and speech. As nineteenth-century dictionaries emphasize, the effort to convert those who went astray and fell victim to vice and sin and to guide them back to faith 'is the duty of every religious and virtuous person as well as the clergyman in particular' (*ist Pflicht eines jeden religiösen u. tugendhaften Menschen, bes. aber der Geistlichen*).¹⁰ In contemporary thought, understandings of apostles, evangelists, missionaries and preachers clearly overlapped – just like in the Bible where they all appear as 'proselytisers' (*Bekehrer*) and as 'teachers of heathens' (*[le/h]rer der heiden*).¹¹

⁷ 'Der Prediger,' *GWK*, 3:829-830. See also 'Prediger,' *UWK* (1741), 29:241-242, at 242.

⁸ *DWB*, s.v. 'Prediger,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GP07164> (accessed 15 April 2013).

⁹ 'Der Prediger,' *GWK*, 3:829-830 and 'Prediger,' *UWK* (1741), 29:241-242, at 242.

¹⁰ *DWB*, s.v. 'Prediger,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GP07164> (accessed 26 April 2013); *ibid.*, s.v. 'Bekehren,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GB03464> (accessed 26 April 2013); as well as 'Bekehren,' *Pierer's Universal-Lexikon*, ed. Julius Löbe (Altenburg: H. A. Pierer, 1857), 2:507; henceforth *PUL*.

¹¹ One passage corroborating this usage is the second epistle to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:11) in which St. Paul describes himself as 'a preacher [of the gospel] and apostle and teacher of the Gentiles.' In line with Sposato's approach, quotations from holy scripture in this study are either taken or adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the English bible, guided by his insight that it seems 'to better reflect the original German.' See Jeffrey S. Sposato, 'Mendelssohn, *Paulus*, and the Jews,' 280-291, at 290.

In figurative early nineteenth-century language distinctions between these professions were insignificant too – any person enjoining others to do and believe in something was called a preacher.¹² This rather flexible equation of preachers and missionaries found increasing opposition among theologians, however. In his *Vorlesungen über die Praktische Theologie* ('Lectures on Practical Theology,' 1812), for example, Schleiermacher drew a clear distinction between the 'missionary sermon' (*Missionspredigt*) and the 'congregational sermon' (*Gemeindepredigt*) that took place in the Sunday church service.¹³ While, according to him, the former served purposes of 'conversion' (*Bekehrung*) and 'instruction' (*Belehrung*), the latter's aim was primarily 'religious edification' (*Erbauung*):

the purpose for which it [religious speech] is deployed is none other than to revive the religious consciousness of those present [...]. It cannot be denied that religious instruction also forms a moment of it, but it is only a secondary one. The main thing is always the stimulation of religious consciousness, the edification.¹⁴

Contemporary writers influenced by *Kunstreligion* emphasized these spheres of activity for the preacher. Additionally, they drew attention to ethical aspects – in particular to behaviour manifesting piety, faithfulness, a selfless commitment as well as untiring devotion to the congregation. Goethe, for example, expected preachers to be of service to their audiences and to address the congregation's spiritual needs in sermons.¹⁵

While allusions to the various professional duties and moral qualities of preachers were widespread in nineteenth-century writings about *Kunstreligion*, explicit descriptions of artists and musicians as 'preachers' were rather rare. Usually,

¹² 'Der Prediger,' *GWK*, 3:829-830, at 829.

¹³ See the analysis of Schleiermacher's practical theology in Michael Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 222.

¹⁴ These words were published in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Die Praktische Theologie nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*, ed. Jacob Frerichs (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1850), 216, which appeared as volume 13 of the *Sämtliche Werke* ('Collected Works,' published between 1834 and 1864): 'der Zweck zu dem sie [die religiöse Rede] aufgestellt wird, ist kein anderer als das religiöse Bewußtsein der Anwesenden zu beleben [...]. Daß nun hier die Belehrung [...] auch ein Moment bildet, ist natürlich nicht zu läugnen, aber nur ein untergeordnetes. Die Hauptsache bleibt immer die Belebung des religiösen Bewußtseins, die Erbauung.'

¹⁵ This can be concluded from Goethe's essay 'Zwo wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen, zum erstenmal gründlich beantwortet von einem Landgeistlichen in Schwaben,' in *Goethes sämtliche Werke*, ed. Fritz Bergemann und Max Hecker (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, [ca. 1940]), 12:68-77, at 69.

authors of the time focused on artists with close connections to the church, as they believed that the religious topics that such artists depicted in their works reflected their piety and belief in God. Furthermore, writers were convinced that the subject matter that artists of the church touched upon was evidence of a desire to tend to the exegesis and interpretation of God's Word. For many lovers of music, Bach's church compositions and tenures as a church musician proved him to be a genuinely pious artist and preacher.¹⁶

Bach's duties and acts of proclamation as a preacher in music were clearly highlighted in A. B. Marx's review of Mozart's Requiem (1825) where they appear closely linked with contemporary understandings of evangelists. Encouraged by contemporary thought according to which 'everyone who preaches the gospel or the doctrine of Christ' (*ein jeder, der das Evangelium oder die Lehre von Christo verkündigt*) could be considered an evangelist,¹⁷ Marx felt it legitimate to refer to the composer as 'the evangelist Sebastian Bach.'¹⁸ Elaborating on this imagery, he emphasized that 'Bach had to live in [...] the sole companionship of his bible in order to assemble the people around the Gospels and bless them.'¹⁹ According to him, Bach's pious belief in God enabled him to create music which 'expressed [religious] thought and human emotion as well as a presentiment of the supernatural, unifying and merging them in pure, full force and consecration.'²⁰ Fanny Hensel seems to have experienced Bach's music in a similar way. The development of the music and the text in the cantata *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit* ('God's Time is the very best Time,' BWV 106) and its wholesome effect reminded her of a church sermon. After playing through various parts of her 'favourite motet,' she confessed to Felix:

¹⁶ In the family correspondence of the Mendelssohns, Bach was mentioned primarily as a composer of church music. Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy referred to him as 'the musical representative of Protestantism' (*der musikalische Repräsentant des Protestantismus*). See Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, letter of 3 March 1835 to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Autograph manuscript. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Music Section, MS. M.D.M. d. 30/20a.

¹⁷ 'Der Evangelist,' *GKW*, 1:1983.

¹⁸ A. B. Marx, 'Ueber Mozarts Requiem,' *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, vol. 2, no. 47 (23 November 1825), 378-382, at 380; henceforth *BAMZ*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 'Bach musste abgeschieden, mit seiner Bibel einsam leben, um das Volk zu dem Evangelium zu versammeln und zu heiligen.'

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 'den Gedanken und die menschliche Empfindung und die Ahnung des Uebermenschlichen, alles in reiner, voller Kraft und Weihe einend und verschmelzend [...] ausspricht.'

Ah! How it makes a person feel good again! I know of no preacher more insistent than old Bach, especially when he ascends the pulpit in an aria and holds onto his theme until he has utterly moved, edified and convinced his congregation. I know of almost nothing more beautiful than the fearful 'Es ist der alte Bund,' during which the sopranos so movingly intone, 'Ja komm, Herr Jesu, komm.'²¹

As Mendelssohn and Franz Liszt were among the composers of the most important oratorios of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising to see that they were both appraised as preachers in music, too. Most certainly referring to Mendelssohn's untiring and sacrificial work on the *Paulus* oratorio and other religious works prior to his assuming the post of director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra in 1835,²² the diplomat, poet and musician, Carl Klingemann (1798–1862) compared him to an 'itinerant preacher' (*Wanderprediger*) and an 'evangelist,' whose 'Gospel' was the 'right' music, the word of which still had to be spread to the concert public in Leipzig.²³ Thirty years later, on the occasion of Liszt's conducting the première of his oratorio *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* ('The Legend of Saint Elizabeth,' 1857-1862),²⁴ *The Illustrated London News* published a review that discussed the plot and libretto of this new 'religious opera' and Liszt's return to the concert platform after entering the lower orders in Rome earlier that month. Inspired by his life and stage-appearances in monastic habit, the newspaper also included a depiction of the composer 'dressed in the frock of his monastic order, in the act of wielding the conductor's baton [...], surrounded by the members of the orchestra and vocalists of the Pest-Ofen Conservatory, with a numerous and fashionable audience' (Figure 3).²⁵

²¹ Fanny Hensel, letter of 30 November [1834] to Felix, trans. in *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn*, ed. Marcia K. Citron (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1987), 160-161; henceforth *L FH*.

²² Mendelssohn spent three years of extensive work on *St. Paul* (1834-1836) and he used to keep his friend informed about his progress. See his letter of 16 February 1835 to Carl Klingemann, in *SB* (2011), 4:171-173 and his letter of 26 June 1835 to the same addressee, in *ibid.*, 4:253-256.

²³ Carl Klingemann, letter of 3 July 1835 to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Autograph manuscript. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Music Section, MS. M.D.M. d. 30/55: 'He [Moscheles] and I are very content with your winter residency in Leipzig; you can preach the real gospel to new people there [...] and move on afterwards.' (*Er wie ich sind sehr zufrieden mit deinem WinterAufenthalt in Leipzig – Du kannst dort neuen Leuten das rechte Evangelium predigen [...] und dann weiterziehen.*)

²⁴ The concert took place upon the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Conservatory of Pesth-Ofen in Budapest on 15 August 1865.

²⁵ 'Performance of a new oratorio by Francis Liszt,' *The Illustrated London News*, vol. 47, no. 1333 (9 September 1865), 250.

If, in contemporary thought, the preacher was considered a leading figure ensuring the spiritual welfare of his congregation and the artist, by analogy, a cleric tending to his audiences, the conception of audiences as congregations was the next logical step in the evolution of nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion*.²⁶ This analogy becomes apparent in the Age of Goethe and can also be traced in Mendelssohn's correspondence. Vocabulary inspired by contemporary understandings of preachers in the early letters is soon followed by implicit references to audiences as congregations. Etymologically, this conceptual outlook became possible by force of the wide original meaning of the German term *Gemeinde*.

Figure 3. Franz Liszt conducting the performance of his new oratorio at Pesh. Engraving after a sketch by M. Bartolomeus de Szekely. Reproduced from *The Illustrated London News*, vol. 47, no. 1333 (9 September 1865), 252 by permission of the National Library of Scotland.

²⁶ This development seems to be conditioned by overlapping terminological understandings of the nouns 'preacher' and 'congregation,' as discussed in the entry 'Die Gemeinde, oder Gemeine,' *GKW*, 2:549-550: 'Most often, the people who are joined together supervised by a pastor or preacher fostering their spiritual welfare.' (*Am häufigsten, die unter der Aufsicht Eines Pfarrers oder Predigers zur Beförderung ihrer geistlichen Wohlfahrt verbundenen Personen.*)

Originally, the noun *Gemeinde* denoted all individuals coming together for a shared purpose as well as assemblies of any kind and size.²⁷ It did not necessarily have religious connotations; it also, for example, served to describe the community of inhabitants of a locality.²⁸ In religious contexts, the noun denominated an assembly of people coming together for the purpose of divine revelation.²⁹ In figurative language use at the turn of the nineteenth century, two tendencies prevailed. On the one hand, the word became synonymous with the expression 'the public' (*publicum*) which, in a narrower and increasingly common sense, designated the 'audience' or 'readership' (*zuhörer-, zuschauer-, lesewelt*). On the other hand, the sacred connotations of the term resulted in word formations 'with religious overtones' (*in bewusster religiöser färbung*), such as the 'silent congregation' (*stille Gemeinde*).³⁰ In contemporary usage, this phrase was based on the belief that an artist's followers bestowed the same tacit worship on him and his works as church congregations on God and the divine word. While in Goethe's writings Rousseau's followers are portrayed as assembling in such reverential fashion,³¹ new word formations such as 'Goethe and Wagner congregation' (*Göthegemeinde, Wagnergemeinde*) applied the concept to nineteenth-century artists.³²

Explicit designations of admirers of art and concert audiences as *Gemeinde* were, however, rather rare in nineteenth-century writings on *Kunstreligion*. Most often, members of congregations adhering to cults around artists and the arts were portrayed as passing through various emotional and spiritual stages of *Andacht* and ritual acts of inner contemplation that had been perceived as typical of church congregations previously; in Kunze's terms: 'the reverential contemplation of the art

²⁷ 'Die Gemeinde, oder Gemeine,' *GKW*, 2:549-550 and *DWB*, s.v. 'Gemeinde,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG07381> (accessed 26 April 2013).

²⁸ 'Die Gemeinde, oder Gemeine,' *GKW*, 2:549-550.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *DWB*, s.v. 'Gemeinde,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG07381> (accessed 26 April 2013).

³¹ See Goethe's autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811-1814), trans. in *The autobiography of Goethe. Truth and poetry: from my own life*, trans. John Oxenford (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848), 486: 'Whoever had stood in any relation to this extra ordinary [*sic*] man, took part in the glory which emanated from him, and in his name a silent community had been disseminated far and wide.'

³² *DWB*, s.v. 'Gemeinde,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG07381> (accessed 26 April 2013).

congregation in the temple of art, the museum or the concert hall is no different from the one of the faithful congregation.' (*Die Andacht der Kunstgemeinde im Tempel der Kunst, dem Museum oder dem Konzertsaal, unterscheidet sich nicht von der der gläubigen Gemeinde.*)³³

The central features of reverential contemplation on which portrayals of concert audiences as *Kunstgemeinde* and listeners as members of silent congregations were based ever more often, included reverential silence, and a high level of attentiveness, as well as signs of intense but calm emotion. This combination of ideas brings to the fore conceptions of inner worship that feature prominently in nineteenth-century descriptions of performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*. After attending the second performance in the concert hall of the Berlin *Singakademie*, Fanny Hensel wrote to Klingemann on 22 March 1829, for example: '[t]he overflowing hall gave the impression of a church, the deepest quiet and the most solemn contemplative devotion [*feierlichste Andacht*] prevailed amongst the gathering; one heard only a few involuntary exclamations of deeply stirred feeling [...].'³⁴

While Kramer has acknowledged nineteenth-century conceptualizations of listeners' emotional, contemplative and intellectual modes of musical reception in distinctions between 'sensuous' and 'spiritual' as well as 'beautiful' and 'sublime' types of *Andacht*, it makes sense to introduce a further differentiation between 'collective' and 'solitary' attitudes of *Andacht* in order to do justice to contemporary concert reports, reviews, letters and fictional writings in which modes and experiences of contemplative listening were depicted both as communal and intimate

³³ Stefan Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners. Voraussetzungen und Folgerungen* (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1982), 90-91. A translation of *Andacht* as 'reverential contemplation' combining aspects of religious meditation and the worship of art has been favoured here since, prior to the text quoted, Kunze considers music simultaneously as the 'object and focus of worship' (*Mittelpunkt des Kultes*) within the scope of *Kunstreligion*, as a 'cultic event' (*kultische Veranstaltung*) as well as an object which should be reflected 'in the innermost spirit' (*im Innersten des Geistes*) and with 'emotion' (*Gefühl*) as 'the spiritual organ with which we perceive the supernatural in the vivid and colourful radiance of its eternal beauty' (*geistige Organ, womit wir das Übersinnliche [...] im lebendigen Farbenglanz seiner ewigen Schönheit wahrnehmen*) – central components of religious meditation conceived of as *Andacht* that will be analysed further down below.

³⁴ Fanny Mendelssohn, letter of 22 March 1829 to Carl Klingemann, translation partly adapted from Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the St. Matthew Passion* (London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 41.

processes.³⁵ 'Communal' referred to a joint listening experience of everyone present; 'intimate' to listeners seeking to avoid any distraction and to stay away from the crowds in order to listen carefully to the music. Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's depiction of the concert experience of the fictional hero in his novella *Das merkwürdige musikalische Leben des Tonkünstlers Joseph Berglinger* ('The Remarkable Musical Life of the Musician Joseph Berlinger') of 1797, for example, focuses on the listener as a solitary contemplator:

When Joseph was in a crowded concert he would sit down in a corner without glancing at the glittering audience and would listen with the same contemplative devotion [*Andacht*] as if he were in church—just as silent and motionless, and with his eyes fixed on the floor. Not the slightest note escaped his attention, and at the end he was limp and tired from exertion and attentiveness.³⁶

Berlioz's description of North German music performances contains observations both of solitary and contemplative modes of listening. Remembering a performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* that he had attended in Berlin in 1842, he wrote:

[...] the pious contemplativeness [*piété*] with which a German audience listens to such a work has to be seen to be believed. Each person follows from a copy of the text; not a movement anywhere, no whisper of approval or criticism, no applause. One is not at a concert but at divine service; one is in a church, hearing the Evangelist – which is really how this music ought to be listened to.³⁷

³⁵ According to Kramer, *Andacht* spurred processes that involved sensual perceptions and rational thoughts to varying degrees, depending on whether the listener understood the music as 'sensuous material' or a 'spiritual phenomenon.' Sublime and beautiful modes of contemplative listening were based on the eighteenth-century conviction that it was possible to encounter the beautiful and the sublime in music; both these modes were often religiously connoted in the early nineteenth century. See *IKA*, 95-133.

³⁶ For the original text see *WSWB*, 1:133. The translation is adapted from Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck, *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar*, trans. Edward Mornin (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1975), 107; henceforth *OALF*.

³⁷ Louis Hector Berlioz: *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz, Member of the French Institute: Including His Travels in Italy, Germany, Russia and England*, trans. and ed. David Cairns (London: Panther Books, 1970), 407.

Ideas of worship in Mendelssohn's correspondence

The comparative assessment of contemporary concert life and worship under the influence of conceptions of preachers, sermons, silent congregations and *Andacht* fundamentally transformed Mendelssohn's perception of musical events. This becomes immediately obvious in his correspondence of the 1830s. In the letters that he exchanged with his father and friends about Bach's sacred cantata *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit* and the *St. Matthew Passion*, he used the imagery of the *Gottesdienst* in a highly suggestive and eclectic way. His discussions of the religious character of Bach's music and its suitability for the church in March 1835 deserve particular mention, in this regard. They revolved around the cantata's chorus *Es ist der alte Bund* ('It is the old covenant'), the aria *Bestelle dein Haus* ('Put your house in order'), and the chorale *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin* ('With peace and joy I depart') which had been featured in one of Fanny's 'Sunday matinées' (*Musikmorgen*) some days earlier and had encouraged Mendelssohn to observe to his father:

However admirable the pieces 'Bestelle Dein Haus' and 'Es ist der alte Bund' may be, there is something very sublime [*Erhabenes*] and profound [*Tiefsinniges*] in the plan of the ensuing movements [...]. The words 'gentle and quiet' and the final ending from the word 'sleep' onwards sound in such a way that every room in which they are sung is transformed into a church.³⁸

Combining allusions to central theological attributes of sermons with evocations of an imaginary church, Mendelssohn's words point towards an appreciation of Bach's works as means of religious revelation and instruction by which the composer is implicitly elevated to the role of preacher. While early nineteenth-century music reviews frequently commended the spiritual depth of Bach's compositional style and his profound musical interpretations of the words in his cantata, Mendelssohn's comments are reminiscent of contemporary theological conceptions that frequently defined the contents of biblical sermons in a very similar

³⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 23 March 1835 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2011), 4:196-197, at 197. The translation of the first sentence is adapted from *FML*, 244.

way as 'profound' (*tiefsinnig*) and 'mysterious' (*geheimnisvoll*).³⁹ The imagery of the performance locale turning into a church shows how deeply affected Mendelssohn was by Bach's composition; the highly expressive religious texts and revelatory sound qualities of the music consigned him spatially and emotionally to the space of a church.

Comments in a similar direction could already be found in Mendelssohn's letters of the late 1820s and early 1830s about German performances of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and its reception by the public; he described the rehearsals and two performances of the work as follows:

In the beginning, no one wanted to approach it [the Passion] [...]. After a few rehearsals, however, everything had changed, and they sang with contemplative devotion, as if they were in church. That way, the first two performances passed off most beautifully, and it turned out, once again, that the audience is always sympathetic, if you offer them what is good – both times, all seats were sold out on the day of the announcement, and I have never seen such silence and such general emotion spread over the audience. They felt that they witnessed not music and concert, but religion and church.⁴⁰

What lies behind Mendelssohn's formulations, in this context, is most certainly a free and creative approach to theological, philosophical and art-religious conceptions of *Andacht* ('devotional contemplation'), *Erbauung* ('edification') as well as ideas of *Verklärung* ('transfiguration') and *Transformation* ('transformation') that came to interact with each other in the early nineteenth century and might provide explanations of how his art-religious allusions to concepts of worship came

³⁹ Schleiermacher, for example, commented about apostle Paul's preaching style to the Corinthians, as follows: 'What we have just heard, are *profound* and, as we certainly cannot deny, also *mysterious* words that are directly related to the subject matter of our present [Pentecost] celebrations.' See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christliche Festpredigten von Dr. F. Schleiermacher* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1826), 1:388-389: 'Was wir eben vernommen haben, sind auf den Gegenstand unsrer gegenwärtigen Feier unmittelbar sich beziehende *tiefsinnige* und wir können es gewiß nicht läugnen, auch *geheimnißvolle* Worte.' (Italics mine). Nineteenth-century understandings of *geheimnisvoll* and *erhaben* were close to each other, in a certain sense. Both adjectives denoted something which transcends the human intellect. While *erhaben* put emphasis on someone's 'immense power of intellect' (*ungewöhnliche Kraft des Intellekts*), *geheimnisvoll* was synonymous with attributions such as 'incomprehensible' (*unbegreiflich*) and 'obscure' (*verborgen*). See 'Erhaben,' *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon*, 6th ed. (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1906), 6:39 and 'Geheimnißvoll,' *GKW*, 2:493-494.

⁴⁰ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 April 1830 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2008), 1:522-523, at 522.

about.⁴¹ This interpretation finds its justification in the terminology that Mendelssohn used in the letters quoted so far as well as in formulations elsewhere in his contemporaneous correspondence. References to ideas of transfiguration appear frequently in Mendelssohn's writings as early as 1830 as a result of his reading of Goethe's description of Raffael's painting *La Transfiguration* ('The Transfiguration') in the *Italienische Reise* ('Italian Journey,' diary entry of 3 November 1787). They are also present in letters in which Mendelssohn referred to a copy of the painting that Wilhelm Hensel had created in Berlin in 1827 and in his travel correspondence that refers to the original artwork (1516–1520) which he had seen in Rome in November 1830.⁴² Elsewhere, Mendelssohn justified the success of the 1829 performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* by reference to the fact that people would attend them in order to 'edify themselves' (*die Leute erbauen sich daran*).⁴³

Mendelssohn's description of the singing style of the choir of the *Berlin Singakademie*, whom he had won over for the performance, explicitly highlights the experience of *Andacht* that normally found its place at church. In order to understand the intended sense of this ambiguous nineteenth-century German term, it is necessary to contextualize it in terms of eighteenth-century performance history and the inner construction of Bach's composition, as Mendelssohn himself did when he prepared the work for performance.⁴⁴ The *St. Matthew Passion* had originally been composed for performance during the Good Friday Vespers at the *Thomaskirche* in Leipzig. It consisted of two parts to be performed immediately before and after the sermon. Just

⁴¹ A detailed overview of ideas of transfiguration and transformation and their role in nineteenth-century intellectual and musical history has been provided by Elizabeth Kramer. According to her, the notion of transfiguration entered *Kunstreligion* in response to the critical reception of Mozart's Requiem and, after the 1820s, it became 'one of the most important spiritual ideas associated with *Kunstreligion*.' See Elizabeth Kramer, 'The Idea of Transfiguration in the Early German Reception of Mozart's Requiem,' *Current Musicology*, no. 81 (2006), 73–107, at 74.

⁴² See Mendelssohn, letters of 9 April 1830 to Friedrich Rosen, in *SB* (2008), 1:505; of 8 November 1830 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:128; and of 11 December 1830 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *ibid.*, 164.

⁴³ *Idem*, letter of 11 April 1830 to Adolf Fredrik Lindblad, in *SB* (2008), 1:513.

⁴⁴ Mendelssohn most probably started to explore the score of the Passion as early as 1823. See R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 122. According to his friend A. B. Marx, Mendelssohn was 'initiated into the spirit' of Bach's works thanks to 'his own artistic wit' and through 'profound study' (*eingeweiht durch eignen Künstlergeist und tiefes Studium in ihren Geist*). See Marx, 'Zweiter Bericht,' *BAMZ*, vol. 6, no. 11 (14 March 1829), 79.

like other pieces of the genre, it was, in Uri Golomb's words, 'intended to guide the congregation towards an appropriate response to the Gospel reading.'⁴⁵ Last but not least, while the libretto of the work that Christian Friedrich Henrici (primarily known under his *nom de plume* Picander) had provided was partly based on sermons by the Lutheran theologian Heinrich Müller (1631-1675), the music contained several chorales, a genre the role of which in religious revelation and proclamation had been debated heatedly since Lutheran times.

It seems likely that Mendelssohn was familiar with the circumstances of the Passion's original performance as well as its texts and the musical setting. He might have shared this knowledge with or owed it to his former teacher Carl Friedrich Zelter and A. B. Marx. Zelter's preface to the programme of the concert on 11 March 1829 gave specific details about the liturgical performance of the work in the Leipzig *Thomaskirche* in Bach's lifetime. Published in the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, Marx's reports about the 1829 concerts focused on the inner construction of Bach's libretto and music. According to him, the religious narration or 'divination' (*Weissagung*) of St. Matthew, together with the solo chants, choruses and chorales voicing the 'contemplations and feelings' (*Betrachtungen und Empfindungen*) of the 'congregation' (*Gemein[d]e*), 'concealed a deeper meaning' (*zeigt sich ein tieferer Sinn*). Reconstructed by Mendelssohn in performance, the setting 'animated' (*beseelt*) the choir's and the audience's inner 'participation' (*Theilnahme*).⁴⁶ Based on the same assumption, Mendelssohn seems to have been under the impression that, inspired by the composition, the members of the Berlin *Singakademie* engaged in religious contemplation that was commonly described as *Andacht*. As soon as they had mastered the technical difficulties of the work, the singers of the choir were able to concentrate on its religious contents and to communicate these to the audience.

⁴⁵ Uri Golomb, 'Liturgical drama in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*,' *Goldberg Early Music Magazine*, no. 39 (2006), 48-59, at 49.

⁴⁶ Adolf Bernhard Marx, 'Ueber die Aufführung der Passions-Musik, nach dem Evangelium Matthäi von Johann Sebastian Bach,' *BAMZ*, vol. 7, no. 13 (27 March 1830), 97-101, at 99. For a nineteenth-century reproduction of Zelter's programme descriptions see Marx, 'Zweiter Bericht,' 81.

In their calm emotion and perception of the music as religion or religious revelation, the audience's behaviour, as described by Mendelssohn, likewise approached attitudes of *Andacht*. He observed modes of musical listening that were reminiscent of congregations listening to a sermon during worship, as practices of religious contemplation were combined with attitudes of reverence and devotion. The silent, attentive and emotional reception of the music by its listeners was a product of their own *Verklärung* ('transfiguration') and emotional transformation – two interacting processes of metamorphosis that stimulated intellectual debates in early nineteenth-century theology and aesthetics. Perceived as a change in conscious perception during which a higher degree of awareness is reached which, in turn, enables the apprehension of 'something intrinsically magnificent and ideal in its magnificence and heavenly perfection,'⁴⁷ *Verklärung* explains why, in Mendelssohn's description, the audience felt encouraged by the religious message inherent in the composition to perceive the music as a manifestation of religion.

Exposed to the music, the listeners' perception of the performance became altered in Mendelssohn's view. As may be concluded from his assertion that the audience 'witnessed not music and concert, but religion and church,'⁴⁸ this changing outlook of the listeners is taken to occur on two levels. Mendelssohn's phrasing implicitly combines two variable terms, the first of which ('religion') signifies an inner mood or activity of the spirit and the second of which ('church') describes either an event (worship) or a location and building. By this means, the composer implies two simultaneous events: the audience feels present at a church service rather than a concert, which inspires an engagement in inner worship; at the same time, it feels transposed from the concert hall into the sacred space of the church. Both perceptions are explicable by reference to the concept of *Erbauung* ('edification') which, in the nineteenth century, described two divergent but often coinciding transformative processes that occur in the world of emotions (a person's inner self, as it were) and in external space.

⁴⁷ 'Verklärung,' *PUL* (1864), 18:484: 'etwas an sich schon Herrliches u. Vollkommenes in dieser seiner [...] Vollkommenheit und himmlischen Herrlichkeit.'

⁴⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 April 1830 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2008), 1:522-523, at 522.

In its original sense, the term *Erbauung*, a nominalization of the verb *erbauen* (derived from the verb *bauen*, which means 'to build'), denoted the construction or erection of a house, a church or a temple.⁴⁹ In figurative and biblical terminology, the noun described the generation of devout feelings in the course of which 'faith becomes strengthened through exposure to the word of God.'⁵⁰ In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century terminology both definitions often coincided. In Johann Heinrich Zedler's encyclopedia *Grosses Universal-Lexicon* ('Great Universal Lexicon'), for example, edification (from the Latin *aedifico* 'to build') is defined as 'the erection or construction of a house that makes it possible to focus on the sacred house and temple of the Holy Trinity which resides in our heart, body and soul.'⁵¹ This understanding of *Erbauung* as the act or process of creating space and opportunities for developing devout and reverent dispositions proved to be a recurrent topic in Mendelssohn's correspondence. Elsewhere, it seems to have inspired associations of his activities as a performer and conductor with acts of preaching and conversion.

Mendelssohn's perception of himself as Bach's apostle and Beethoven's advocate

Mendelssohn's association of his musical endeavours with the tasks of a preacher cannot be isolated from religious and aesthetic lines of thinking that were articulated by his contemporaries. Initially, his comparative look at his musical profession and the vocation of religious speakers was inspired by Fanny Mendelssohn and stimulated by remarks of other German musicians. In his early letters Mendelssohn responded with light irony to his sister's and colleagues' tendency to perceive him as the artistic counterpart of a proselytising preacher. Soon after, however, he seems to

⁴⁹ See 'Erbauen,' *GKW*, 1:1855-1856: 'Eigentlich. Ein Haus, eine Kirche, einen Tempel erbauen; wofür im Hochdeutschen doch das einfache bauen üblicher ist.'

⁵⁰ Ibid. and 'Erbauung,' *PUL* (1858), 5:812: 'diejenige Einwirkung auf das religiöse Leben, wodurch aus dem Worte Gottes der Glaube gestärkt, der Wille geheiligt u. das Herz mit Trost u. Muth erfüllt wird'

⁵¹ 'Erbauung und Besserung des Nächsten,' *UWK* (1734), 8:1478: 'eine Aufbauung oder Verfertigung eines Hauses, damit gesehen wird auf das geistliche Haus und [den] Tempel der H[eiligen]. Dreyeinigkeit, welche in unseren Herzen, Leib und Seele gerne wohnen will.'

have found pleasure and fulfillment in the analogy. As may be inferred from the correspondence of his late teens, he made duties of preaching and missionary tasks into his life's work.

A first – and, at the outset, facetious – reference to composers and artists as look-alikes of missionaries and preachers, and the earliest manifestation of ideas of *Kunstreligion* in Mendelssohn's writings, can be found in a letter which he sent to his family in 1825. At that time he was staying in Paris together with his father who had planned the trip in order to escort his sister Henriette Mendelssohn, who had been resident in Paris since 1802, back home to Germany. While Felix explored Parisian musical life, he shared his vivid impressions with his elder sister Fanny. In response to a letter from her of 11 April, he wrote that the kind of missionary service to music which she had allegedly asked him to fulfil was the course of action that he intended to pursue: 'You say, Fanny, that I should become a missionary and convert Onslow and Reicha to a love for Beethoven and Sebastian Bach. That is just what I am endeavouring to do.'⁵²

Interestingly, Fanny's original letter had contained no religious vocabulary whatsoever. Her advice to her brother to spread the word of German music in France was rather matter-of-fact. In fact, she had merely asked him whether 'Onslow [...] and Schuhu [*sic*] know Beethoven's cycle of 33 Variations on a Waltz' and suggested that he 'would gain honor' from introducing 'these gentlemen' to 'our bucolic countryman' while associating with them 'alone in their studios, as a scholar and theoretician as well.'⁵³

While Mendelssohn's interpretation of Fanny's words aligned with contemporary conceptions of preachers as proselytisers and instructors, his references to a religious mission and acts of conversion do not corroborate at this stage a compliance with art-religious perceptions of musicians as religious appointees. Rather, they represent a teasing response to his elder sister's writings that

⁵² Mendelssohn, letter of 20 April 1825 to his family, in *SB* (2008), 1:163-164, at 164, trans. in *FML*, 31-33, at 32.

⁵³ Fanny Mendelssohn, letter of 11 April [1825] to Felix, trans. in *LFH*, 9-11, at 9. 'Schuhu' was a nickname given to the Czech composer Antoine Reicha by Fanny and Felix for his generally critical and finicky demeanour.

ties in with the allegoric and ironic style of writing that he occasionally adopted in order to mock her serious outlook on life and the strict and authoritarian tone of her letters.

The next letter by Felix containing allusions to perceptions of preachers dates from 1830. It is a report on his reception as a performing musician in Bavaria. As his lines suggest, he 'set' himself 'up' to be a 'preacher in the desert' (*Prediger in der Wüsten*) and thereby pleased 'good-natured musicians' (*gutgesinnten Musikern*).⁵⁴ The events to which he owed his new reputation had occurred four days earlier during his piano recital at a musical soirée in the salon of the Countess Casimire Marie Luise Rechberg-Rothenlöwen in Munich. On this occasion, he had played Beethoven's sonata in C sharp minor, prompted by the realisation that local pianists were unaware that 'Mozart and Haydn had also composed for the piano' and 'knew Beethoven only from hearsay.' Afterwards, he had given a 'long speech' to the leading local pianist Delphine Schauroth. Appalled by local audiences' and performers' infatuations with virtuosic piano pieces by Henri Herz (1803-1888), Franz Hünten (1793-1878) and Charles Chaulieu (1788-1849), he had asked her not to follow popular demand any longer and to tend to her audience's 'knowledge and appreciation of the works of the great masters.'⁵⁵

Due to the lack of documentary evidence, it is unclear whether Mendelssohn was quoting the words of other musicians here or interpreting their comments at his own discretion by means of religious allusion – just as he had done in response to Fanny's letter. While in the Bible, John the Baptist is portrayed as a preacher in the desert who calls others to repent and appeals to everyone to leave his former life and enter a new path of life,⁵⁶ in the widely used proverb, 'the preacher in the desert' was anyone who had to say something didactic or exhortational but found neither the attention nor the interest of the crowd. This semantic usage raises the question of whether Mendelssohn used the phrase ironically to express his distress about the

⁵⁴ Mendelssohn, letter of 22 June 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2008), 1:558-561, at 560, trans. in *FML*, 80-83, at 82-83.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ See, for example, Matthew 3:1-3 & 5: 'In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of

tastes of nineteenth-century audiences and performers or in order to point at far-reaching goals and religiously inspired artistic intentions guiding his performances.

Most certainly inspired by Mendelssohn's more or less explicit allusions to John the Baptist and processes of conversion, Gisela Selden-Goth translated his expression *lange Rede* as 'a long sermon' in her English edition of Mendelssohn's letters.⁵⁷ This translation seems reasonable, even though it is not entirely legitimate if it is meant to capture the precise wording and meanings of the original text. Mendelssohn did, indeed, compare his promotional activities for Bach's and Beethoven's music to 'sermons' three years later. Several months before he assumed his first official post as a music director and conductor in Düsseldorf in October 1833, he was giving freelance concert performances in Berlin that he described as 'sermons' in his letters. As he discussed materials for a catalogue of sheet music by Bach at the beginning of the year with his friend Franz Hauser,⁵⁸ he concluded from the benevolent reception of his performance of the composer's Concerto for solo harpsichord, strings, and basso continuo in D minor BWV1052 that 'the sermon has pleased' the audience.⁵⁹

By alluding implicitly and metaphorically to contemporary definitions of the noun *Predigten* ('sermons') as conversions to faith and religious instruction, Mendelssohn once again put emphasis on the change of musical tastes for the better. This time, it was not Beethoven's but Bach's music, the performance of which was meant to raise the public's understanding and appreciation of demanding compositions. In this respect, Mendelssohn's concert repertoire clearly attests to the fact that Fanny's alleged directives to act as a musical missionary or advocate for both composers' music had not fallen on deaf ears. By the late 1820s and early 1830s, the programmes of his performances and concerts make it appear likely that

by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.""

⁵⁷ Mendelssohn, letter of 22 June 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2008), 1:558-561, at 560, trans. in *FML*, 82.

⁵⁸ Hauser had a great passion for collecting musical manuscripts of works from Bach and other composers. His thematic catalogue of Bach's works, which he had begun in Frankfurt in 1826 and only completed at the end of his life, was never published but formed the basis of the *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe* ('Bach Society Edition' or 'BG') of the complete works of Johann Sebastian Bach (the first volumes of which appeared in print in the 1850s).

⁵⁹ Mendelssohn, letter of 19 January 1833 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2010), 3:108-110, at 109.

he wanted to do justice to the more or less serious idolization of his person as a preacher that he believed her and other musicians to have in mind.

Henceforth dedicated to the task of improving audiences' musical tastes towards an embrace of German masters, Mendelssohn showed continuous commitment to works by Bach, Beethoven and Weber.⁶⁰ As a municipal music director and leader of ensembles at European music festivals he favoured performances of works by Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, and Wagner. His concerts in Düsseldorf (1833-1835), Leipzig (1835-1847) and Berlin (1840-1847) featured works by Bach, arias and overtures by Gluck and Weber, oratorios by Handel as well as symphonies, concerts and operas by Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn.⁶¹

The fact that the selection of compositions for his concerts can be attributed to other motivations and inspirations, too, has to be acknowledged, however. In view of his principal preference for musical works by pre-romantic composers, for example, numerous musicologists have justifiably pointed to the composer's musical upbringing and tastes as well as his dispositions towards historicism and nationalism as motivating factors. The masterpieces of the German canon from Bach to Beethoven were the works with which Mendelssohn grew up and which came to inform his aesthetic judgement and preferences. His musical education revolved around Bach in particular. Bach's style of composing, as reflected in Breitkopf & Härtel's edition of his four-part chorales from 1784-1787, guided Zelter's teaching.⁶² After the completion of Felix's musical apprenticeship with Zelter, his conducting and concert programming were guided by two opposing premises that Mintz

⁶⁰ A comprehensive overview of Mendelssohn's commitment to these and other early composers can be found in Susanna Grossmann-Vendrey, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und die Musik der Vergangenheit* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1969).

⁶¹ For more detailed information about Mendelssohn's concert repertoires see *SB* (2009), 2:37-38, 4:9, 20-22. If Mintz is to be believed, even 'though the Leipzig *Directorium* had an overall supervisory role, Mendelssohn seems to have been largely free to express both his personal taste and his sense of duty in arranging the programs for the Gewandhaus. See Donald Mintz, 'Mendelssohn as Performer and Teacher,' in *The Mendelssohn Companion*, ed. Douglass Seaton (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001), 87-142, at 100.

⁶² See *Grove Music Online*, s.v. 'Mendelssohn, Felix' (by R. Larry Todd), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51795pg1#S51795.1> (accessed 18 April 2013) and R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn's Musical Education: A Study and Edition of His Exercises in Composition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 28.

described as an attempt to keep up 'a pretty steady stream of old greats' and an effort 'to restrict performances of new music to works that he deemed serious and worthy.'⁶³

A cultural historian may take the view that Mendelssohn's committed efforts of 'adding neglected works to the repertory of older music' can also not be seen in isolation from the missionary interests of nineteenth-century historicism and cultural nationalism.⁶⁴ In line with contemporary performing trends, a heightened concept of historical art and music came to prevail in early nineteenth-century aesthetic thought. At that time, works of earlier masters were considered to be products of a greater past and superior to the seemingly trivial artistic creations of the present day. As Krummacker has established, the historical works performed most frequently at the concerts of older music that were springing up all over Europe in the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s, 'were assembled into a canon of exemplary patterns, which, as historical models, thus also validate normative demands.'⁶⁵ More and more often, the pieces favoured were written by indigenous composers and stirred cults of their creators as cultural and national icons that turned into quasi-religious worship.

As it deepened the public's awareness of its own cultural heritage and played a major role in the formation of the Austro-German symphonic canon in German-speaking countries, Mendelssohn's selection of composers clearly reflects the 'increased devotion to earlier times and their gifts to posterity' that is intrinsic to early nineteenth-century historicism.⁶⁶ His favouring of Bach was fully in line with the nineteenth-century revival movement which brought back the Baroque

⁶³ Mintz, 'Mendelssohn as Performer and Teacher,' 91. For examples and summaries of Mendelssohn's concert programmes, listings of works for his Leipzig concerts and a very short overview of his public repertoire as a pianist and organist see *ibid.*, 100-111.

⁶⁴ To quote James Garratt, a 'broad-based introduction to nineteenth-century historicism and to the ideational foundations underpinning the critical, historiographical and compositional reception of early music' can be found in the first chapter of his monograph *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9-35. For an analysis of Mendelssohn's role, in this context, see James Garratt, 'Mendelssohn and the Rise of Musical Historicism,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, ed. Peter Mercer-Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 53-70, at 66-67 in particular.

⁶⁵ Friedhelm Krummacker, 'Art—History—Religion: On Mendelssohn's Oratorios *St. Paul* and *Elijah*,' in *The Mendelssohn Companion*, ed. Douglass Seaton (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001), 299-393, at 309.

⁶⁶ This understanding corresponds to Walter Wiora's definition of retrospective historicism, as translated in Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 12.

composer's works into the repertoire and had been initiated by the Berlin *Singakademie*. The founder of the ensemble, Carl Friedrich Christian Fasch, and its later director, Carl Friedrich Zelter, were among the first to rehearse and perform Bach's musical works that had long since been forgotten. Mendelssohn's conducting of the *St. Matthew Passion* tied in directly with their endeavours. As it encouraged concerts featuring the work throughout early nineteenth-century Europe, his revival of the Passion has justifiably been identified as an important stage in the nineteenth-century Bach Renaissance.⁶⁷ In view of the foregoing, Cooper's appraisal of Mendelssohn as 'one of the central figures in the formation of the western European musical canon,' and Todd's portrayal of the composer as 'the stimulating agent behind the posthumous canonization of the Thomaskantor,' are perfectly accurate.⁶⁸

As with like-minded contemporaries, Mendelssohn's historicist endeavours were aimed at rescuing the works of past composers from oblivion. Attestations of pleasure and pride in his letters whenever his concerts succeeded in saving musical works from obscurity, clearly suggest this. With regard to the *St. Matthew Passion*, for example, he was pleased to report to Franz Hauser on 16 April 1830 that 'the passion has come back to life, and will now probably not be forgotten for a long time.'⁶⁹ Earlier that month, Johann Theodor Mosevius (1788-1858) had conducted the work in Breslau (on 3 April 1830), and in Hamburg rehearsals for another performance were under way.⁷⁰

Mendelssohn's reference to the series of performances that he organized in Leipzig from the 1830s onwards as Kapellmeister and musical director of the

⁶⁷ After Mendelssohn's two performances of the work (on 11 and 21 March 1829), it was performed again in Berlin (on 17 April 1829 by the Berlin *Singakademie*, conducted by Zelter) and then in Frankfurt on the Main (on 29 May 1829 by the Cäciliansverein in the Saal des Weidenbusches), Breslau (on 3 April and 5 May 1830 by the *Singakademie* in the auditorium of the university), Stettin (on April 1831 in the Jacobikirche and, later on in the year, in the Musiksaal of the Schützenhaus), Königsberg (on 17 April and 1 May 1832 as well as in 1834 in the Löbenichter Kirche), Kassel (on 20 October 1832 in the Brüderkirche, another time the same month in the Hoftheater and on 5 April 1833 in the Hofkirche), Dresden (on 31 March 1833 in the Opernhaus am Zwinger) and Halle (1836). The 1840s saw performances of the complete Passion or parts of it in Paris (1840), Leipzig (on Palm Sunday 1841 and on 23 April 1843, conducted by Mendelssohn in the Thomaskirche and the Leipzig Gewandhaus respectively) as well as in Munich (1842).

⁶⁸ John Michael Cooper: 'Knowing Mendelssohn: A Challenge From The Primary Sources,' *Notes*, vol. 61, no. 1 (September 2004), 35-95, at 37; and Todd, *Mendelssohn. A Life in Music*, XIX.

⁶⁹ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 April 1830 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2008), 1:522-523, at 523.

⁷⁰ The planned performance in Hamburg never materialized.

Gewandhaus as 'historical' (*historisch*) concerts likewise suggest intentions to raise awareness and knowledge of musical masterworks.⁷¹ Concerts with similar titles and intentions were launched until mid-century throughout Europe by composers and musicians such as Anton Friedrich Justus Thibaut (Heidelberg), François-Joseph Fétis (Paris) and Ignaz Moscheles (London). The educational purpose of their concerts was reflected in their didactic programmes. Inspired by the wish 'to situate each document from the past within its historical context,' the music was frequently presented in chronological order.⁷²

Whether these didactic or, in Mendelssohn's terms, 'proselytic' aims would bear fruit among European audiences was occasionally contested in the nineteenth century. In 1833 Mendelssohn himself expressed his doubts whether the 'conversion' of the crowd to music that he considered to be great would be successful. This is suggested by his comment 'the sermon has pleased them [but] they remain the same as before' in his letter to Franz Hauser about his concerts in Berlin in January 1833,⁷³ that has already been mentioned earlier on page 94. This formulation had originally appeared in the anonymous German folk poem *Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt* ('St. Anthony of Padua's Sermon to the Fishes'). By using it, Mendelssohn seems to indicate his critical viewpoint on what he called the 'public (the philistine audience, I mean)' that seemed to him highly 'unpleasant and so displeased.'⁷⁴

In the original folk tale, the preacher and priest St. Anthony delivers a sermon to a congregation of fish. While his audience of carps, eels and pikes give the impression of being genuinely interested and enthusiastic, they fail to grasp the sermon's significance and meaning:

The carp with roe / have all come here, / have opened their mouths wide, /
listening eagerly. / No sermon ever / pleased the carp so. / [...]. / Big fish,

⁷¹ These concerts were guided by 'the idea that the world of musical performance should consist of a cross-section of historical styles,' according to Cooper, 'Knowing Mendelssohn,' 103.

⁷² Benedict Taylor, 'Musical History and Self-Consciousness in Mendelssohn's Octet, Op. 20,' *19th-Century Music*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Fall 2008), 131-159, at 156.

⁷³ Mendelssohn, letter of 19 January 1833 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2010), 3:108-110, at 109.

⁷⁴ Idem, letter of 19 January 1833 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2010), 3:108-110, at 109. The poem was included in the first volume of Achim von Arnim's and Clemens Brentano's anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* ('The Youth's Magic Horn') which was first published in 1805.

little fish, / noble fish, common fish, / all lift their heads / as if they were rational creatures: / At God's behest / they listen to the sermon. / The sermon having ended, / each turns around; / the pikes remain thieves, / the eels, great lovers. / The sermon has pleased them, / but they remain the same as before.⁷⁵

Mendelssohn's remarks about concert audiences in Berlin that immediately precede his comments about the congregation of fish articulate his worries that his own sermons were equally doomed to failure. In his eyes, the eager applause after his performance of Bach's Concerto for solo harpsichord, strings, and basso continuo in D minor BWV1052 was suspicious, and he confessed: 'the people were all so enchanted [*entzückt*] that I am convinced the piece has pleased no one.'⁷⁶

Mendelssohn's fear that his audience's enthusiasm for Bach's harpsichord concerto was superficial and based on enchantment rather than understanding was not unfounded. Even though the early nineteenth century had seen major improvements in the education system and levels of musical literacy, the public's musical knowledge was still 'often shaky,' to quote James Hepokoski.⁷⁷ With regard to general knowledge of Bach's works, there was particular room for improvement. The publication of scores proceeded quite slowly and performances of his compositions were rare. Those few works that had been published during Bach's lifetime went out of print after his death and were almost exclusively known to musical connoisseurs and composers with access to manuscript scores. The use of his instrumental pieces as teaching examples for harmonisation encouraged the publication of selected keyboard works, chorale-preludes for organ and violin sonatas in the years following Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's death.⁷⁸ The first printed edition of Bach's first Harpsichord Concerto (BWV 1052) and the *St. Matthew*

⁷⁵ *Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt*, trans. in Magnar Breivik, 'A Sermon for Fishes in a Secular Age: On the Scherzo Movement of Mahler's Second Symphony,' in *Voicing the Ineffable. Musical Representations of Religious Experience*, ed. Siglind Bruhn (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2002), 47-70, at 57-58.

⁷⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 19 January 1833 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2010), 3:109.

⁷⁷ James Hepokoski, 'Beethoven reception: the symphonic tradition,' in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 424-459, at 429.

⁷⁸ See Ludwig Finscher, 'Bach's Posthumous Role in Music History,' in *Bach Perspectives*, ed. Michael Marissen (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 3:1-16, at 3 & 13 and *Grove Music Online*, s.v. 'Bach Revival' (by Nicholas Temperley and Peter Wollny), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01708> (accessed 2 July 2013).

Passion appeared only in 1830 and 1838 respectively. From the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, church and concert audiences were hardly exposed to Bach's cantatas and passions since they were widely considered too elaborate and difficult and their allegedly 'old-orthodox' texts discouraged performances.⁷⁹ As a result, general knowledge of his works was often confined to an awareness of their existence.

Mendelssohn as a listener engaging in *Andacht*

Mendelssohn's own enthusiasm for well-known and lesser known works by Bach and other composers was by no means superficial. In fact, his respect for their compositions inspired types of listening behaviour that clearly correspond to modes of solitary, emotional, spiritual and collective *Andacht*. A first indication of the composer's reception of music pointing towards devotional listening can be found in the family correspondence of his youth. In a letter dating from 18 July 1826, Mendelssohn informed his father Abraham and his sister Fanny that he had been involved in a rehearsal and musical performance in Berlin under the directorship of Karl Möser several days earlier. During the final rehearsal in the Reimerschen Garten, he put down his violin when the orchestra was about to play the overture from Carl Maria von Weber's last opera *Oberon* (1826) in order to engage with the music in 'holy respect' (*heiligem Respect*); as he wrote: 'The overture from *Olimpia* we did not need to practise, the one from *Faust* went well. Now, it was time to play the opening piece from *Oberon*. With holy respect I put my violin in the box, and went to the lawn in order to listen, a bit expectant.'⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Christoph Wolff, 'Bach's Vocal Music and Early Music Criticism,' in idem, *Bach: Essays on his Life and Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 377-398, at 379-380. Notions of the orthodox character of Bach's libretti survived into the twentieth century. The quote given in the text is from Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach*, trans. Ernest Newman (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 1:233.

⁸⁰ Mendelssohn, letter of 18 July 1826 to Abraham and Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:181-184, at 183. The final concert was given by Karl Möser in Berlin's Reimer'schen Garten on 17 July 1826.

In combination with the attribute 'holy,' Mendelssohn's 'respectful' way of listening to Weber seems to approximate modes of religious *Andacht*. His reception of the music, as he described it here, combines the central features and elements of the solitary type of contemplative listening. He deliberately left the orchestral stalls and sat down at a distance which shows that he sought solitude and isolation in order to concentrate fully on the music. Furthermore, he attended to the music full of expectation and attentiveness, which is suggested by the fact that, after the rehearsal, he was able to write down from memory specific details of the overture's instrumentation and notation for his family.⁸¹

While his enthusiasm for Weber's *Oberon* overture reflects contemporary audiences' eagerness to listen to a work which had only been performed in London before the composer's recent death,⁸² Mendelssohn's terminology is also closely related to early nineteenth-century conceptions of religious awe that had formed part of the original meaning of the Latin noun 'devotio,' from which the German term *Andacht* is derived.⁸³ In contemporary use, the idiomatic phrase 'to have a holy respect' denoted an attitude that was guided by 'reverential and fearful awe' (*ehrerbietige[r], furchtsame[r] scheu*) for someone or something.⁸⁴ In early nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion* such a deferential mode of behaviour was usually adopted towards artists after their death. Inspired by the conviction that, in their afterlife, the deceased ascended into heaven, the holy dwelling place of God as well as the angels and the Blessed, dead artists usually came to enjoy the same adoration as saints and, accordingly, were deemed to be worthy of similar levels of worship.

Beyond that, Mendelssohn's reference to 'holy respect' also brings to mind Johann Nikolaus Forkel's suggestion to approach Bach's musical works with 'holy adoration' or 'prayer' (*heiliger Anbetung*) in his biography *Ueber Johann Sebastian*

⁸¹ Please refer to appendix one for a transcript of the letter, including the music samples that Mendelssohn sent to his family.

⁸² Weber died two months after conducting the world première of the opera on 12 April 1826 and 19 other performances of the whole work in London. The first complete performance of the composition in Germany only took place in Leipzig on 23 December 1826. Möser's promenade concert represents the first concert performance of the overture in 1826.

⁸³ The original meaning of 'devotio' is usually paraphrased by reference to 'religious awe' or *Ehrfurcht* in early nineteenth-century English and German dictionaries.

⁸⁴ DWB, s.v. 'Respect,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GR04726> (accessed 26 April 2013).

Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke ('Johann Sebastian Bach, his Life, Art, and Work,' 1802), which Mendelssohn had surely read before finishing his composition lessons with Zelter in 1827.⁸⁵ He might have gained knowledge of the biography from his teacher (who had reviewed the work anonymously), Fanny (whose early musical views seem to have been stimulated by it), Abraham (whose library consisted largely of Bach) or from his great aunt, the Bach enthusiast and harpsichordist Sarah Levy (whose subscription lists include this work and other literature pertaining to Bach).⁸⁶ In its central emphasis on 'awe' (*Ehrfurcht*) towards 'the sublime art of this forefather of all musicians, German and foreign' (*erhabene Kunst dieses Ersten aller deutschen und ausländischen Künstler*),⁸⁷ Forkel's characterization of musical reception in his preface shows close links both to Mendelssohn's idiomatic reference to 'holy adoration' and art-religious concepts of *Andacht*.

Indications as to whether emotional, sensuous and spiritual modes of *Andacht* played a role in Mendelssohn's way of listening can be found in his descriptions of the Holy Week ceremonies in Rome that he sent to Zelter on 16 June 1831. At that time, he was undertaking a two-year journey through Europe that also included stops at various destinations in Switzerland, France and Britain. This trip was meant to conclude his education and was expected to facilitate his decision about where to start his professional career.⁸⁸ It had the character of a 'Grand Tour'—an educational tour lasting several months or years, which had been common for the nobility and wealthy men since the seventeenth century and the itinerary of which typically

⁸⁵ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke. Für patriotische Verehrer echter musikalischer Kunst* (Leipzig: Hoffmeister und Kühnel, 1802), ix, trans. adapted from idem, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life, Art, and Work*, trans. Charles Sanford Terry (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), xxv.

⁸⁶ In the family correspondence Forkel is mentioned in the context of the Bach Revival. See, for example, Abraham Mendelssohn, letter of 10 March 1835 to Felix, in *ML*, 69-74, at 71: 'Moreover, I felt more strongly than ever what a great merit it was on Zelter's part to restore Bach to the Germans; for, between Forkel's day and his, very little was ever said about Bach [...].' For further relevant literature see Carl Friedrich Zelter, 'Recension,' *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, vol. 5, no. 22 (23 February 1803), 361-366; henceforth *AMZ*; Hinrichsen, 'Choralidiom und Kunstreligion. Fanny Hensels Bach,' in *Fanny Hensel, geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Komponieren zwischen Geselligkeitsideal und romantischer Musikästhetik*, ed. Beatrix Borchard (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999), 216-222, at 219 and Kyungju Park Lee, 'Fanny Hensel's Piano Works: Opp. 2, 4, 5 and 6' (Treatise (D.M.A.), Florida State University, 2008), 21.

⁸⁷ Forkel, *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben*, x & viii.

⁸⁸ See Mendelssohn, letter of 21 January 1832 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:485-487, at 485-486.

involved a visit to Rome around Easter or Christmas. Often portrayed as the highlight of the Italian tour in contemporary travel literature, memoirs, novels and music journals, the Holy Week ceremonies in Rome became a main event not to be missed for thousands of tourists and pilgrims travelling to Italy every spring during Mendelssohn's lifetime. The music ensemble involved – the choir of the Sistine Chapel – drew increasing numbers of tourists both from Europe and overseas to Rome in the first four decades of the nineteenth century.

The popularity of the choir resulted less from proficiency in performance than from the traditional repertory (rarely heard *stile antico* works of the Renaissance), the ensemble's vocal style (a cappella) and membership (male singers only, the soprano and alto parts sung by castrati and falsettists) as well as its historical performance practice (which was aimed at recreating Renaissance practices of faux-bourdon, psalmody and ornamentation).⁸⁹ Contemporary interest in the ensemble, however, was not always purely musical. As Boursy has established from nineteenth-century German and French music periodicals as well as accounts in travel books, memoirs, diaries, letters, and novels, for many visitors the choir 'represented a lost innocence and purity, a renunciation of modern corruption and complexity, a mystical brand of truth and beauty that was otherwise no longer accessible. Irrespective of its musical success, it answered a deep psychological need.'⁹⁰ For many musicians and reformers of church music the choir's repertory represented the epitome of holy and sacred art unaffected by the vulgarity of modern church music.⁹¹ The musically literate among the audience expected musical marvels from the choir and most listeners hoped to have a mystical experience while attending its performances.

Unsurprisingly, the popularity of the Easter processions and the choir also encouraged Mendelssohn to spend several months in Rome. Reporting on the Holy

⁸⁹ In fact, some singers' faithfulness to the original work was rather limited out of ignorance or for virtuosic display. In the end, what was presented to the audience often had little relation to the original composition. More information on the choir's early nineteenth-century history can be found in: Richard Francis Boursy, 'Historicism and composition: Giuseppe Baini, the Sistine Chapel Choir, and *stile antico* Music in the First Half of the 19th Century' (Ph.D. diss., University of Yale, 2005).

⁹⁰ Boursy, 'The Mystique of the Sistine Chapel Choir in the Romantic Era,' 329 & 327.

⁹¹ Some of them believed that a restoration of church music to its former glory and purity would only be possible through an extensive study and emulation of the Sistine Chapel's repertoire and performance practice. See *ibid.*, 312 & 328.

Week performances, which he had attended in March and April 1831, he confessed to having listened to the music with a 'contemplative' and 'sincere' frame of mind:

It was fortunate that I resolved to listen to the various Offices with cool and close attention, for nonetheless, from the first moment in the chapel I felt sensations of seriousness [*Ernst*] and contemplativeness [*Andacht*]. I consider such a mood indispensable for the reception of anything new, and no portion of the general effect escaped me, although I took care to observe each separate detail.⁹²

As these lines suggest, in Mendelssohn's experience and modes of behaviour, *Andacht* represented both a discursive act of the mind and a feeling. On the one hand, his approach to *Andacht* drew on his rationality and detached objective intellect engaged in observant reasoning. On the other hand, the aim to achieve objectivity is impeded by the power of subjective feelings and moods. Nevertheless, rational thinking is never discarded completely; adopting this complex devotional state of mind, Mendelssohn is able consciously to take in all the musical details and facets of the ceremonial context.

This understanding is reminiscent of Hegel's conceptions of *Andacht* and its relation to 'free thinking' (*freies Denken*) as he articulated them in his lectures on aesthetics in 1818 and the 1820s. Focusing on the *Stellung der Kunst im Verhältnis zur endlichen Wirklichkeit und zur Religion und Philosophie* ('Position of Art in Relation to the Finite World and to Religion and Philosophy') in the first part of his lectures, he stated that '[w]orship is the community's cult in its purest, most inward, most subjective form—a cult in which objectivity is, as it were, consumed and digested, while the objective content, now stripped of its objectivity, has become a possession of mind and feeling.'⁹³ Further on, he emphasized that,

the inwardness of the heart's worship [...] is not the highest form of inwardness. As this purest form of knowledge we must recognize untrammelled *thinking* in which philosophy brings to our minds the same content [as religion] and thereby attains that most spiritual worship in which

⁹² Mendelssohn, letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:283-293, at 283, trans. adapted from *FML*, 133-149, at 134.

⁹³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik. Erster und zweiter Teil*, ed. Rüdiger Bubner (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1971), 170-171, trans. in *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* by G. W. F. Hegel, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1:104.

thinking makes its own and knows conceptually what otherwise is only the content of subjective feeling [...].⁹⁴

As there is no clear evidence to suggest that the parallels in thought between Hegel and Mendelssohn were the result of a concrete influence of the philosopher on the composer, it is fair to interpret Mendelssohn's references to *Andacht* as expressions articulating his fervent interest in music that was rarely to be heard in performance and his strong sensibility for the emotive and spiritual effects of religious music and ceremony. In Italy, his dispositions towards religious *Andacht* as a listener seem to have been a direct response to the sacred space of the Sistine Chapel and the expectation of hearing the religious chants of its famous choir.⁹⁵ Rare signs of reverence towards the music and the religious ceremony among the rest of the audience may also have stimulated accordant devotional behaviours and sentiments in him.⁹⁶ Another letter detailing his impressions of the Holy Week celebrations confirms implicitly that the worshipful reception of the event by those present proved contagious to Mendelssohn in a certain way. As he became fully submerged in the crowd and absorbed into the general atmosphere, he felt enabled to appreciate the music and the proceedings of the ceremony more consciously. Accordingly, he wrote to his father afterwards: 'That man must be unhappy, indeed, in whom the devotion [*Andacht*] and reverence [*Ehrfurcht*] of a vast assemblage did not encourage similar dispositions towards devotion and reverence [...]' that instil awe for the event's 'perfect totality which has exercised the most powerful influence for centuries past.'⁹⁷ Thanks to his sensitivity towards the behaviour of the host of listeners surrounding him, Mendelssohn was able to take the step from solitary to

⁹⁴ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 171, trans. in idem, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:104.

⁹⁵ See Mendelssohn, letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:283, as analysed and quoted on the previous page.

⁹⁶ While Mendelssohn observed devout audiences during the Roman Easter processions in 1831 (Mendelssohn, letter of 4 April 1831 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:245-250, at 245, trans. in *FML*, 120-126, at 120), he had complained about their lack of devotion during the funeral solemnities for the deceased pope Pius VIII in Rome in December 1830 (idem, letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:171-174 at 173, trans. in *FML*, 104-107, at 106). Elsewhere in his correspondence from Rome, he wrote that 'no one spends any thought on music, or art and theatre' (*kein Mensch an Musik, oder Kunst und Theater denkt*). See Mendelssohn, letter of 21 March 1831 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2009), 2:235-237, at 235.

⁹⁷ Idem, letter of 4 April 1831 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:245, trans. adapted from *FML*, 120.

collective modes of devout listening, thereby becoming a fully integrated member of the nineteenth-century congregation of listeners.

* * *

While conveying a subjective view of Mendelssohn's conceptions of artists as preachers and audiences as congregations, the quotations as well as contextual and terminological analyses given provide revealing insights into the composer's relationship to the imagery of the *Gottesdienst* as articulated in early nineteenth-century writings inspired by *Kunstreligion*. In line with contemporary authors who assigned religious roles to artists with an obvious connection to the church, Mendelssohn considered Bach to be a composer of 'sublime' and 'profound' sacred music who was comparable to a preacher. At the same time, he seems to have felt that audiences deserved to be portrayed as silent congregations only if their reception of music matched the devout modes of listening, that he had observed at the 1829 *Singakademie* performances. Those audiences that did not engage spiritually with the music and responded to performances with nothing more than superficial applause inspired scornful and sarcastic remarks by Mendelssohn. His predilection for depicting his own concerts of sacred and secular works by Bach and Beethoven as sermons attests to the fact that an application of religious vocabulary to wider aesthetic contexts was not something that he considered unfeasible or unorthodox.

Mendelssohn's use of the language of worship, in this sense, reveals dichotomies in his aesthetic thinking and in his view of nineteenth-century musical life: musical masters who resemble preachers in their ability to express themselves in sublime and profound ways are portrayed as being superior to composers of light music; congregations of devout listeners are clearly distinguished from the often ignorant musical public in Berlin; and performers who commit themselves to presenting showpieces are pitted against musicians like Mendelssohn, who feature sophisticated musical works in recitals that function as sermons and events of conversion.

Mendelssohn's allusions to images of the *Gottesdienst* presented so far, however, should not always be taken at face value. Often his vocabulary is meant ironically and serves rhetorical as well as expressive purposes. His quotation from

the German folk poem *St. Anthony of Padua's Sermon* was intended to articulate critical views about the musical public rather than religious aims. His reference to sermons in the context of his performances hints at manifold communicative aims and points of reference. Processes of canon formation, leanings towards historicism and the rising momentum of the Bach Revival, for example, clearly influenced both Mendelssohn's vocabulary and actions. His advocacy of composers whom he considered worthy of holy worship seems to have developed early on into both a professional and religious mission. His commitment as a performer and conductor to save works from the recent and not so recent past from obscurity was relentless. As a listener, he paid holy respect and devout attention to the works of composers whom he admired and aimed to emulate, as well as to pieces that were rarely performed during his youth. These included compositions by Bach and Weber as well as Gregorian melodies that were performed by the Chaplain Singers of the Pontifical Chapel in Rome. The fact that, during his youth, Mendelssohn approached these works with a spiritual mindset that Hegel and Forkel considered typical of *Andacht* and prayer, reflects the influence of art-religious approaches to musical listening on Mendelssohn's burgeoning musical tastes and knowledge. As he focused on details of the melody, instrumentation and performance both rationally and emotionally, he was able to absorb and appreciate musical beauty more consciously.

Chapter 3. Music and Art as Religious Languages

In musicological studies, *Kunstreligion* is often described as a manifestation or reflection of nineteenth-century 'religion of feelings' (*Gefühlsreligion*). Dahlhaus, for example, has argued that the turn and early decades of the nineteenth century marked the point in time at which 'the doctrine of art religion' turned into a 'religion of feelings' under the influence of Schleiermacher's theology.¹ Most often, this correlation of both brands of thought is inspired by contemporary writings that portrayed music as an essence that expresses and induces pious feelings formerly associated with the *Gottesdienst*. A limitation of *Kunstreligion* to conceptions of worship, however, would be one-sided. The contemporary view on music as a language of feelings was much more versatile. It took inspiration from ancient and eighteenth-century ideologies of feelings, and it transformed these into a sacralised religion of feelings.

For some writers, the idea that music could turn listeners into faithful believers did not do full justice to its meaning and functions. According to them, its purposes went far beyond a reflection and induction of pious feelings. In their writings, they articulated the notion that music could communicate religious truths and become a medium of religious revelation. Both lines of thought were summarized concisely by Rudolf Werner in his 1930 analysis of Mendelssohn's religious compositions:

Since the end of the 18th century to the present day Protestant church music – congregational singing and a few small liturgical pieces excepted – has had the exclusive purpose, of either awakening feelings of devotion and edification in the congregation [...], thereby strengthening the impact and importance of church worship, or of producing an effect similar to that of a church service [...] by itself as a sermon in sounds.²

¹ Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 77 & 86.

² Rudolf Werner, 'Felix Mendelssohn als Kirchenmusiker' (Ph.D. diss., Frankfurt on the Main, 1930), 163: 'Seit dem Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts bis heute fällt der protestantischen Kirchenmusik – von dem Gemeindegesang und einigen kleinen Liturgieresten abgesehen – nur die Aufgabe zu, [...] Gefühle der Andacht und Erbauung bei der Gemeinde zu erwecken und die Wirkung und die

The prevalence of both ideas in the writings of Mendelssohn and his contemporaries justifies a thorough analysis of the notions that went along with them. Accordingly, this chapter addresses interactions between religions of art and feeling with conceptions of religious revelation. It also explores the historical origins and contexts of nineteenth-century thought. Attitudes towards the emotive effect and impact of music that prevailed in earlier eras help to explain how nineteenth-century individuals arrived at new classifications of religious feelings that they believed music to express and invoke.

Nineteenth-century convictions that music articulated and conjured up feelings that were considered typical of worship and of divine, universal or absolute essence, fundamentally transformed ways of listening and, ultimately, also affected Mendelssohn's approach to composition. They brought about new critical responses to Bach's sacred works as well as Beethoven's symphonies and, in Mendelssohn's case, also shaped his reception of Fanny Mendelssohn's early songs. Mendelssohn approved both of *Empfindsamkeit* in art and of works like the *St. Matthew Passion* that he considered conducive to feelings of worship and, in this regard, the highest point reached in the art of church composing worth emulation. On the one hand, he was convinced that any art-form had the power to affect morals and sentiments and, in this regard, assimilated the belief put forward by Carl Friedrich Zelter, Friedrich Philipp Wilmsen and others that music had the capacity to transform the human soul. On the other hand, he had little concern for conceptions of feeling that ran counter to his aesthetic and religious beliefs; he was, for example dismissive of the thought that musical works could make audible 'holy' and 'divine' feelings.

Mendelssohn was similarly critical of the belief that sacred and secular works were equally suited to serve purposes of religious revelation. He admitted that all art 'spoke' of something. In his eyes, however, only sacred music and paintings could articulate religious messages, and they did so in sound and colours, that were most conducive to the expression of such contents. These understandings seem to have directly influenced his decision to revive the *St. Matthew Passion*. Refraining from

Bedeutung des Gottesdienstes zu erhöhen, oder [...] für sich allein, als eine Predigt in Tönen, eine ähnliche Wirkung hervorzurufen.'

major changes to the original composition, he emphasized certain points of the work's message through a well-considered selection of musical and textual passages.

In his conviction that musical sound represented not only a language of feeling but also 'a language of biblical paraphrase,' he approached musical works in a way that combined modes of listening and composition that his childhood tutor and lifelong friend Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884) and the music critic Franz Johann Karl Andreas Kretschmer (1775-1839) described as typically Catholic and Protestant, respectively.³ While Mendelssohn's reception of music went through stages of sensual perception and spiritual reflection, his opinions about the efficacy of dramatic, narrative, symbolic and prophetic elements of composition for purposes of revelation and the edification of listeners were subject to change, and guided his compositional thought in several directions.

Aesthetics of ethos and sentiment as precursors to nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion*

Responding to the importance of worship in early nineteenth-century religious and philosophical discourse, contemporary authors on music often saw 'religious feelings' (*religiöse Gefühle*) as the effect and expressive content of music irrespective of genre or style. Music was believed to express, evoke and induce a wide range of feelings in those who attended performances or were exposed to musical works as practitioners or church-goers. Formulations that focus on feelings of worship, reverence and holy joy were especially prominent, as were convictions that music could transform its listeners' feelings and the very essence of their soul. Defined as an 'inner feeling' (*inneres Gefühl*) or 'force of the soul' (*Seelenkraft*), the listener's moral condition was also seen as becoming affected in a transformative

³ Mendelssohn corresponded with Andreas Kretschmer in 1833 but surely knew him from the 1820s when they both attended rehearsals of the Berlin *Singakademie*, of which Kretschmer was a member between 1813 and 1824.

process that might be described as catharsis.⁴

The linking of music with emotion and feeling had its origin in intellectual debates that reached back into antiquity and received new impetus and interpretations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Of major impact was, first of all, the ancient 'doctrine' or 'theory of ethos' – a constellation of ideas that found common ground in the belief 'that music exerts a moral influence upon men.' The conviction that, in their "likenesses" (*homoiōmata*) of every emotion and ethical state, melody, rhythm and harmony possessed the power to 'regulate the soul's motion' towards righteousness and virtue was widespread among ancient theorists and music teachers. It gave them confidence 'to impart culture and to improve moral character' through music and the kind of feelings that it arouses.⁵

Revived in Christian Gottfried Körner's (1756-1831) essay *Ueber Charakterdarstellung in der Musik* ('On the Representation of Character in Music,' 1794) and earlier eighteenth-century writings,⁶ the belief in music's cathartic power gave impetus to an idea that would become influential for *Kunstreligion*: music could bring about a moral, spiritual and emotional transformation of its listeners. Moses Mendelssohn expressed this thought in 1755 in his *Elfter Brief über die Empfindungen* ('Eleventh Letter on Sentiments'). There he described the effect of music as *Tonkunst* in very positive terms by asking rhetorically:

Are people still surprised at the magical power of harmony? Can it strike us as strange that its pleasing qualities work on minds with an attraction so powerful that it tames people who are crude and unmannered, calms those

⁴ Moses Mendelssohn defined a person's 'moral conscience' (*moralisches Gewissen*) together with 'moral taste' (*bon-sens* or *moralischer Geschmack*) as an 'inner feeling' (*inneres Gefühl*) and an entity driven by the 'upper soul force' (*obere Seelenkraft*) of human 'reason' (*Vernunft*). See Alexander Altmann, 'Das Menschenbild und die Bildung des Menschen nach Moses Mendelssohn,' in *Mendelssohn-Studien: Beiträge zur neueren deutschen Kultur- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, ed. Cécile Lowenthal-Hensel (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1972), 1:11-28, at 18 & 23-24.

⁵ *Grove Music Online*, s.v. 'Ethos' (by Warren Anderson and Thomas J. Mathiesen), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/09055> (accessed 25 October 2012).

⁶ For Körner, ethos played a major role in the classification of instrumental music as a fine art as opposed to an agreeable art. See Robert Riggs, "'On the Representation of Character in Music": Christian Gottfried Körner's Aesthetics of Instrumental Music,' *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 81, no. 4 (Winter 1997), 599-631, at 613 as well as Mark Evan Bonds, 'Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 50, no. 2/3 (Summer – Autumn 1997), 387-420, at 401-402 for an English translation and a short analysis of the primary source.

who are in a rage, and brings joy to those who are sad?⁷

In the nineteenth century, Hegel attested to the ongoing prevalence and popularity of similar ideas. In his lectures on aesthetics, he observed that, in recent years, music had been viewed as a means of 'the *purification* of the passions, instruction and *moral* improvement.' According to him, 'the theory that art was to curb crudeness and educate the passions, remained quite formal and general.'⁸ Such views took a more religious bent in the writings of theologians like Martin Leberecht De Wette. In his pamphlet *Die neue Kirche, oder Verstand und Glaube im Bunde* ('The New Church, or Understanding and Faith in Union,' 1815) he wrote:

For the cultivated minds of our age, art and poetry are the most effective means of kindling religious sentiments [*Erweckungsmittel religiöser Gefühle*]. Faith finds its most direct expression in feeling [*Gefühl*], and religious feeling is best served by art.⁹

Another influence on Romantic conceptions of music and feelings came from the mid-eighteenth-century esthetic of sentiment. Ideas of *Empfindsamkeit* embraced the notion 'that music's main aims were to touch the heart and move the affections' by expressing a variety of subjective feelings and human passions within a musical work.¹⁰ Together with theories of ethos, such ideas survived into the nineteenth century as a 'popular aesthetic' (*Populärästhetik*) that, according to Dahlhaus, continued to rest on the assumption that art depicted and influenced human feelings.¹¹ At the same time, they gave impetus to an 'esthetic of feelings that seems "sacralized"' and came to dominate aesthetic thought on *Kunstreligion* in the first

⁷ Moses Mendelssohn, *Schriften zur Psychologie und Aesthetik sowie zur Apologetik des Judentums*, ed. Moritz Brasch (Leipzig: Verlag von Leopold Voss, 1880), 54-57, at 54, trans. in idem, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 48-51, at 48.

⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1:49.

⁹ Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, *Die neue Kirche oder Verstand und Glaube im Bunde* (Berlin: Nauck, 1815), 86-87. The translation is partly taken from Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music* trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 96. De Wette refers to music in particular here, which becomes clear in the following paragraphs. See p. 130 of this study.

¹⁰ *Grove Music Online*, s.v. 'Empfindsamkeit' (by Daniel Heartz and Bruce Alan Brown), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08774> (accessed 25 October 2012).

half of the nineteenth century in interaction with a 'metaphysics of art.'¹² Both aesthetics were based on doubts as to whether the former characterization of music as the 'language of the (human) heart' was accurate. They came to oppose the 'anthropocentric' tendency of *Empfindsamkeit* and drew closer again to antecedent 'theocentric' understandings of music as pointing to the divine.¹³ Inspired by the independent theory of instrumental music that developed in the early decades of the nineteenth century, some authors came to 'reinterpret the tangible affects' audible in the music as 'abstract' or 'objectless' feelings that are 'divorced from the world' and from 'earthly conditions,' that is, as more or less far removed from mundane and subjective affections or even as 'attributes of the absolute, godly spirit.'¹⁴

Overall, four kinds of feelings were focused upon in contemporary writings. Most prominent were allusions to feelings that were directed towards God (either the Christian God or a divine force conceptualized in categories of the infinite and unspeakable). Usually, these feelings bore certain resemblance to sentiments traditionally associated with church worship. Other writers expressed their appreciation of art's emotional appeal by putting central emphasis on the holy or divine essence of everyday feelings that they heard expressed in the music. Often, this usage expressed itself in attributions employing adjectives with religious connotations such as 'holy,' 'divine' and 'sublime.' Emotions that were seen as universally shared by humankind or intrinsic to the divinity formed the third and fourth categories of feelings. Nineteenth-century authors drew on each one of these – or both in combination – in order to describe the expressive content of musical works.

¹¹ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 92.

¹² Idem, *Absolute Music*, 102.

¹³ If Müller-Blattau is to be believed, 'the change of style around 1750 which brought about [...] the one-sided development of music into a language of human emotions' (*die Stilwende um 1750, die [...] die Vereinseitigung der Musik zu einer Sprache menschlicher Gefühle bedeutete*) proved highly detrimental to the development of church music especially in Northern Germany. There, music stopped to be 'a music that pointed beyond itself towards the Divine [and] Eternal' (*eine Musik, die über sich hinaus wies auf das Göttliche, Ewige*). See Joseph Maria Müller-Blattau, 'Die Idee der "Wahren Kirchenmusik" in der Erneuerungsbewegung der Goethezeit,' *Musik und Kirche*, Vol. 2 (1930), 155-160 & 199-204, at 199 & 155.

¹⁴ Dahlhaus, *Absolute Music*, 6 & 102.

Feelings directed towards God included religious awe and devotion, emotional *Erbauung* ('edification') as well as a sense of faithfulness and piety. For many writers, it was especially Bach's and Beethoven's works that were expressive and evocative of religious feelings of rejoicing, reverential gratitude and fear of God.¹⁵ References to feelings that were directed towards the infinite, the absolute and the unspeakable rather than to the Christian God arose predominantly in response to Schleiermacher's definition of religion and religious feeling as 'the sensibility and taste for the infinite' (*Emfindung und Geschmakk für das Unendliche*).¹⁶ Jean Paul Richter's (1763-1825) poetic portrayals of God as 'an unutterable sigh lying in the depths of the soul' (*ein unaussprechlicher Seufzer, im Grunde der Seelen gelegen*) and of the Christian faith as 'infinite longing or ineffable bliss' (*unendliche Sehnsucht oder die unaussprechliche Seligkeit*) proved highly influential for aesthetic texts, too.¹⁷

One of the earliest authors to make use of ideas of the infinite and unspeakable in depictions of music was E. T. A. Hoffmann. In his review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony dating from 1810, he portrayed recent instrumental music as evocative of indefinite feelings that consist of an experience and consciousness of the ineffable and the infinite:

Music reveals to man an unknown realm [...], a world in which he leaves behind all precise feelings in order to embrace an inexpressible longing. [...]. In singing, where the poetry suggests precise moods through words, the magical power of music acts like the philosopher's miraculous elixir [...]. Any passion – love, hate, anger, despair, etc. [...] is clothed by music in the purple shimmer of romanticism, so that even our mundane sensations take us

¹⁵ In Bach's case, these interpretations seem natural due to the devotional nature of the text of the *St. Matthew Passion* and other religious works.

¹⁶ Schleiermacher included this definition of the 'true religion' in the second speech entitled *Über das Wesen der Religion* ('On the Essence of Religion'). See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1806), 41-177, at 65, trans. in idem, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, ed. and trans. Richard Crouter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 96-140, at 103.

¹⁷ Jean Paul Richter, *Levana oder Erziehlehre von Jean Paul. Erstes Bändchen* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1827), 58, trans. in idem, *Levana; Or, The Doctrine of Education* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 55 as well as idem, *Vorschule der Ästhetik: Erste und zweite Abtheilung* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1841), 102, trans. in idem, *Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter's School for Aesthetics*, trans. Margaret R. Hale (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 64.

out of the everyday into the realm of the infinite.¹⁸

Feelings that were seen as divine or holy in essence played a major role in the reception of Beethoven's music, too. In early nineteenth-century reviews of the Choral Symphony, for example, critics focused on feelings of 'holy joy' directed towards life, God and religion that they thought Beethoven's music conjured up. In alignment with the generally accepted dictum that these feelings might be best reflected in slow movements, an anonymous review of the Adagio reads as follows:

The Adagio has the highest, holiest, and most ennobling joy of life [as content]. It is the joy in God and in the blessings of religion that manifests itself in thanksgiving, melancholy, a feeling of unworthiness, and unending love; resignation, tolerance of that which cannot be altered, devotion.¹⁹

The Fifth Symphony also figured prominently in the writings of authors who assumed music to express universal human feelings. In A. B. Marx's 1824 review of the work, the composition is characterized as a lyrical piece 'which portrays not a feeling but a succession of soul states with a deeper psychological truth.'²⁰ As suggested elsewhere in his writings, these soul states may be conceived of as transcendent or even divine. According to his monograph on art philosophy entitled *Über Malerei in der Tonkunst* ('About Painting in Music,' 1828), they inhabit man and nature and hover everywhere around us: 'Just like the human body, everything in nature has, in some measure, its particular soul and thus, beyond all physical conditions [...] its peculiar psychological effect. [...]. We are truly beset with more ghostly voices in creation than those emanating from the human brain and heart.'²¹

¹⁸ E. T. A. Hoffmann, 'Recension. Beethovens Symphonie, No. 5,' *AMZ*, vol. 12, nos. 40 & 41 (4 and 11 July 1810), 630-642, 652-659, at 631, trans. adapted from Hoffmann, *Musical Writings*, 234-251, at 236-237.

¹⁹ 'Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, in Stettin,' *BAMZ*, vol. 4, no. 11 (14 March 1827), 83-87, at 85, trans. adapted from *IKA*, 273.

²⁰ A. B. Marx, 'Etwas über die Symphonie und Beethovens Leistungen in diesem Fache,' *BAMZ*, vol. 1, no. 20 (19 May 1824), 173-177, at 174, trans. partly adapted from Scott Burnham, 'Criticism, Faith, and the "Idee": A. B. Marx's Early Reception of Beethoven,' *19th-Century Music*, vol. 13, no. 3 (Spring 1990), 183-192, at 188.

²¹ A. B. Marx, *Ueber Malerei in der Tonkunst: Ein Maigruß an die Kunstphilosophen von Adolph Bernhard Marx* (Berlin: G. Finckesche Buchhandlung, 1828), 62: 'Wie der Menschenkörper, so hat jedes in der Natur gewissermaßen seine besondere Psyche, und damit außer allen physischen Bedingungen [...] seinen eigenthümlichen psychischen Effekt. [...]. Es umwehen uns wahrlich mehr Geisterstimmen in der Schöpfung, als bloß aus Menschenhirn und Herzen.'

Marx was convinced that composers were able to interpret and translate these omnipresent soul states in their art thanks to their superior powers of apprehension. This particularly applies to Beethoven, who 'leaves human society to live in nature and solitary company with it,' and 'whose ear has to fall deaf [...] so that he may be able to hear more secret voices.'²² In the process, he experiences his own 'earthly apotheosis' (*irdische Allvergöttlichung*) and, at the same time, his music turns into an 'art of the soul' (*Seelenkunst*) and a 'thousand-fold soul language of nature' (*Tausend-Seelen-Sprache der Natur*).²³ These thoughts are developed further in Marx's monograph *Die Musik des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts und ihre Pflege* ('Music of the Nineteenth Century and its Culture,' 1855) where he suggests that, in their omnipresence, human and natural soul states partake in the 'all-encompassing apotheosis' (*Alldurchgöttlichung*) of the world and, this way, point at the divine.²⁴

Feelings that were seen as inherent in, or emanating from, the divine (the fourth category of feelings mentioned earlier) were the product of what Dahlhaus called a 'suspension and the transfiguration of the affections.'²⁵ In some writings, authors expressed the belief that, in instrumental music, human feelings could be portrayed in a way that revealed their divine origin and enduring ties with God. The most explicit description emphasizing the transition of human feelings into facets of divine personality through instrumental sound can be found in Christian Hermann Weisse's philosophical writings. In his *System der Ästhetik als Wissenschaft von der Idee der Schönheit* ('System of Aesthetics as the Science of the Idea of the Beautiful,' 1830), he asserted that

²² Marx, *Ueber Malerei in der Tonkunst*, 59: 'Beethoven verläßt die Menschengesellschaft, um in der Natur und mit ihr allein zu leben; sein Ohr muß ihm verschlossen werden, [...] damit er geheimere Stimmen vernehme.'

²³ Ibid., 60, 7 & 58.

²⁴ A. B. Marx, *Die Musik des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts und ihre Pflege: Methode der Musik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1855), 38, trans. adapted from idem, *Music of the Nineteenth Century and its Culture. Method of Musical Instruction*, trans. August Heinrich Wehrhan (London: Robert Cocks and Co., 1855), 22-23: '[...] the endless variety of modes and forms in which both his [man's] bodily and mental powers appear active, awaken [...] the idea of [...] an intimate connection between every thing [*sic*] that exists and happens, whether [...] it be represented as an actual deification of the whole universe (pantheism), or in the form of an original creator and supreme governor, or as a combination of different powers (gods), who [...] either stand under the control of a higher and incomprehensible power (fate), or are destined finally to return to the fold of the eternal Father.'

²⁵ Dahlhaus, *Absolute Music*, 165.

[t]he vitality of the spirit, which displays its characteristic quality [...] in instrumental music, expresses itself in this art as an incessant surging or hovering between the two opposite poles of mourning and joy, or of lament and rejoicing, feelings and conditions that appear here in their pure form as attributes of the absolute or, if one chooses to use the term at this juncture, the godly spirit [...].²⁶

Aspects of religious feelings in Mendelssohn's writings on music and the arts

Mendelssohn's aesthetic thought on sacred and secular music combined aspects of various ideologies that supported close connections and interrelations between music and feelings. His views on the arts clearly combined central tenets of *Empfindsamkeit* with perceptions of music as a transformative and cathartic art. As far as his views of music as a language of feelings are concerned, his writings reveal that he was leaning towards what later became Dahlhaus's *Populärästhetik*. He did not tolerate aesthetic criticism of *Empfindsamkeit* in art. His correspondence of 1833 with his friend, the pastor and theologian Ernst Friedrich Albert Baur (1803-1866), is the best proof of that. In a letter now lost, Baur had articulated his contempt for the sentimentalism that he perceived to dominate in contemporary art. Doing so, he had compared music's indulging in feeling and moving listeners' affections with a plant that overblossoms (*überblüht*) and dies in the process.²⁷ In his response, Mendelssohn dismissed this line of thought as erroneous:

there is no such thing as an excess of sensibility [...]. The soaring, elevated emotions that people enjoy so much when listening to music are no excess [...]. Moreover, the blooming of a plant never causes it to fall sick; except when the blooming is forced, and forced to the utmost. And such sickness is no more a blossom than sentimentality [*Empfindelei*] is sentiment [*Empfindung*].²⁸

²⁶ Christian Hermann Weisse, *System der Ästhetik als Wissenschaft von der Idee der Schönheit* (1830; reprint, Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1966), 2:57, trans. in Dahlhaus, *Absolute Music*, 101-102.

²⁷ This can be concluded from Mendelssohn's response to Baur's letter in which he quoted his friend, writing: 'You strive to discriminate between an excess of sensibility and genuine good taste, and you say that a plant, too, may bloom itself to death.' See Mendelssohn, letter of 4 March 1833 to Ernst Friedrich Albert Baur, in *SB* (2010), 3:136, trans. in *FML*, 210-212, at 211.

²⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 4 March 1833 to Ernst Friedrich Albert Baur, in *SB* (2010), 3:136, trans. adapted from *FML*, 211.

Mendelssohn's letters of the 1830s clearly reflect his predilections for portrayals of personal and human emotions in music. The way in which he articulated his thoughts is reminiscent of Hoffmann's imagery of the world of feelings opened up by music and of Marx's conception of soul states. Mendelssohn's letter about Italian paintings to his second cousin, the pianist Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, shows this clearly. Inspired by the expressiveness of the imagery used by Italian Renaissance artists, he formulated the following premises for his own art:

That is what I think of any art and ask of it: it takes anyone away with it in its own kingdom and shows one human the other's innermost thoughts and feelings, and makes clear to him how someone else's soul looks. Words cannot do this as strikingly as colours or music.²⁹

This suggests that Mendelssohn interpreted the feelings and impulses of the soul that paintings and music revealed to the listener as inherently human, personal and tangible. This non-adherence to rationales of the sacralised aesthetics of feelings is further suggested by the fact that his writings on art give no hints of depictions of feelings as 'holy' or 'divine.' In fact, associations of feelings with the infinite, absolute and inexpressible, as they were drawn by Hoffmann and Weisse, are nowhere to be found in Mendelssohn's correspondence.

Mendelssohn's non-compliance with the view that music expressed divine or holy feelings might, on the one hand, be attributed to his 'faith in God' (*Gottgläubigkeit* or *Gottglauben*) according to which the human was to be differentiated clearly from the divine.³⁰ On the other hand, Mendelssohn considered the language of musical sound and the states of the soul evoked by it as too clear and distinct to allow for metaphysical interpretations. This is clearly suggested in his letter to Marc André Souchay (1824–1880) of 15 October 1842:

People often complain that music is too ambiguous; that what they should think when they hear it is so unclear, whereas everyone understands words. With me it is exactly the reverse, and not only with regard to an entire speech, but also with individual words. These, too, seem to me so ambiguous, so

²⁹ Idem, letter of 12 October 1830 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, in *SB* (2009), 2:105-108, at 107.

³⁰ See chapter one (pp. 28-35 in particular) for a discussion of Mendelssohn's and his father's 'God-believing' (*gottgläubig*) religion that rested on clear distinctions between the human and the divine.

vague, so easily misunderstood in comparison to genuine music, which fills the soul with a thousand things better than words. The thoughts which are expressed to me by music that I love are not too indefinite to be put into words, but on the contrary, too definite.³¹

Verbal hints of religious feelings communicated and evoked by music can be found in Mendelssohn's correspondence nevertheless, even if they often play a subordinate role. His remarks in the letter to Pereira-Arnstein mentioned on the previous page, for example, suggest that he aimed to emulate Italian painters' ability to reflect the inclination of their souls towards religious feelings of *Andacht* immediately in their art. Even though he did not articulate this idea very clearly, the succession of his thoughts is highly suggestive; his reflections on Italian art are immediately followed by the remark: '*This* is what I ask of *any* art [...].'³² (Italics mine). He seems to have put this thought into action immediately. His works of this period include, among others, the *Drei Kirchenmusiken* ('Three Church Pieces,' Op. 23, composed in October-November 1830), a setting of Psalm 115 *Non nobis Domine* ('Not unto us, O Lord,' Op. 31 of November 1830) as well as the chorale cantata *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* ('O head, full of blood and wounds' of September 1830).

As far as a stimulation of a religious sense and piety through music is concerned, Mendelssohn resorted to central premises of his time. In his correspondence, he referred to specific works that, in his view, evoked religious sensibilities in their listeners as well as feelings and contemplative processes of *Andacht*. Most of these compositions were written by Bach; Mendelssohn was convinced that they stood out favourably from most other religious works that were popular among his contemporaries. While he perceived Bach's music to produce moods in its listeners and performers that might be described as *Erbauung* and

³¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 15 October 1842 to Marc André Souchay, in *Briefe aus den Jahren 1830 bis 1847 von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1899), 229-230, at 229, trans. in *FML*, 313-314.

³² Idem, letter of 12 October 1830 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, in *SB* (2009), 2:107: '[...] you can see that they must have painted with a devout heart.' (*man sieht, daß sie aus begeistert andächtigem Herzen haben malen müssen*)

devotion,³³ he considered Palestrina's works as flawed in their emotive impact. On hearing the *Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae* ('Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet') during Holy Week in Rome in 1831, he complained to Zelter that the work emphasized text passages that were liturgically and theologically irrelevant. In his eyes, the way in which the work was composed and performed failed to stimulate emotional responses of *Andacht* and reverence in Protestant listeners:

It is rather unfortunate, however, that those very parts which they sing most touchingly and devoutly, and which have evidently been composed with peculiar fervour, should chance to be merely the titles of the chapter or verse [...]. This must be not a little repulsive to a Protestant heart [...]; for any one who sings 'chapter first' cannot possibly make me feel any pious emotions [*andächtig*], however beautiful the music may be.³⁴

A stimulation of *Andacht* and a change of heart to piety also played a major role in the theoretical discussions of the constitution of 'a genuine church music' (*eine wirkliche Kirchenmusik*) that Mendelssohn led with Baur following decrees in 1822 by the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III that had stipulated the unification of the Lutheran and Calvinist confessions and a new common Prussian liturgy. In a letter dated 14 December 1834, Baur imagined church compositions the music of which could bring about a spiritual catharsis. In his view, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* pointed the way to a new form of religious music:

It should be a very powerful music, neither a historical nor merely a dramatic one but one which intentionally afflicts the listener and shakes him to the core so that *he becomes new*. This is why I am longing for something higher than an oratorio; I would wish to make this kind of music a part, if not the best part, of the sermon. [...]. It should have come to me earlier, that there is no need to search for this type of church music, as Bach's *Passion* represented such in its era.³⁵ (*Italics mine.*)

³³ See the comments about 'ideas of worship in Mendelssohn's correspondence' in the previous chapter.

³⁴ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:283-293, at 285, trans. in *FML*, 133-148, at 136.

³⁵ Ernst Friedrich Albert Baur, letter of 14 December 1834 to Mendelssohn, quoted in *SB* (2011), 4:531-532: 'Es müßte aber auch eine ganz gewaltige Musik werden, nicht eine historische ja nicht einmal bloß eine dramatische sondern eine die dem Zuhörer geflissentlich mitspielt, ihm Mark und Bein schüttelt daß er neu wird. Darum mein Wunsch höher hinauf geht als zu einem Oratorium, ich möchte sie zu einem Theil, zum besten Theil der Predigt machen. [...] Es hätte mir früher einfallen

Mendelssohn's response suggests that he was very much in favour of a church music that took inspiration from Bach and could bring together all the qualities and requirements that his friend put forward: an integration into the church service that would allow the music to play an active role in the liturgy, as well as a setting that reinforces theological points or contributes religious messages to the sermon and brings about the congregation's spiritual transformation towards *Andacht* and piety through processes of *Erbauung*. However, at that time, he still could not imagine how such music should be constructed, and struggled to pin down the technical means by which religious feelings and messages could be represented in music: '[w]hat I do not understand is the purport—musical, dramatic, oratorical, or whatever you choose to call it—that you have in mind.'³⁶ Also, he doubted that music could take over the role of a sermon; since the order of the service was specified precisely in the liturgy, music could only take over supplementary and accompanying functions by promoting religious sentiments. In the end, he saw no possibility for autonomous religious works or liturgical music to be used in a way that Baur envisioned.³⁷

In Mendelssohn's writings about secular music, religious feelings and considerations of the emotive and transformative effect of music played a less prominent role. In explaining the content of his *Lieder ohne Worte* ('Songs Without Words') to Souchay, for example, he describes how music conjures up and instils multiple feelings. Which of these comes into effect depends solely on the music, and even though the precise designation of each feeling might vary, the transformative

sollen, daß nicht erst zu fragen ist, ob es eine solche Kirchenmusik gibt, die Passion von Bach ist für ihre Zeit.'

³⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 12 January 1835 to Ernst Friedrich Albert Baur, in *SB* (2011), 4:140-141, at 140, trans. adapted from *FML*, 234-236, at 234.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, trans. partly adapted from James Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 83, and *FML*, 235: 'True church music – that is, music for the Evangelical service that has a place in the course of the liturgical ceremony itself – seems to me to be out of the question, not merely because I cannot at all see where in the service music should have a place but because I cannot conceive that any such place could exist. Perhaps you have something to tell me which will clarify [...] how we can make music an integrated part of the service, and not merely a concert which stimulates devotion [*Andacht*] to a greater or lesser extent. This was the case with Bach's "Passion;" it was sung in church as an independent piece of music, for edification [*Erbauung*]. As for actual church, or if you like to call it so, music for public worship, I know none but the old Italian compositions for the Papal Chapel, where, however, music is a mere

effect of a piece of music on the listener's psychology and emotional state is always the same – an assertion by the composer that may be read as a confession of faith in music as a 'universal language of feelings':

the same words never mean the same thing to different people. Only the song can say the same thing, can arouse the same feelings in one person as in another, a feeling which is not expressed, however, by the same words. Resignation, melancholy, the praise of God, a hunting-song, do not conjure up, the same thoughts in everybody. [...]. Words have many meanings, but music we could [...] understand correctly.³⁸

A similar interpretation appears valid for his appraisal of Fanny's early songs, which focuses essentially on feeling and emotion. Regarding her *Liederkreis* ('Circle of Songs,' Cat. of works, Hellwig-Unruh: No. 236), he observed that:

there are sounds which give the impression that they are sung not only by one but all persons who have ever felt the same, and every good man has felt that way and is just not able to say it; thus one wants to kneel down when there is, at once, one person able to give expression and voice to the feelings of all those unable to speak.³⁹

The transformative processes towards intellectual and spiritual enrichment, religious feeling and morality, that Mendelssohn's contemporaries believed music to promote, played a diverse role in Mendelssohn's writings. In a petition of 1840 that was meant to convince the Saxon King's Kreisdirektor, Johann Paul von Falkenstein, of the necessity of establishing an Academy of Music in Leipzig, Mendelssohn defined music as a 'branch of art' that both accommodates and fosters a 'feeling for what is true and serious.'⁴⁰ This view of emotional and moral transformation's being brought about by music may be traced back to Wilmsen and Zelter. In the addendum

accompaniment, subordinate to the sacred functions, co-operating with the wax candles, the incense, etc.'

³⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 15 October 1842 to Marc André Souchay, in idem, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1830 bis 1847* (1899), 229-230, at 229-230, trans. in *FML*, 314.

³⁹ Idem, letter of 3 July 1829 to Paul, Lea und Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:325-330, at 326.

⁴⁰ Idem, letter of 8 April 1840 to Johann Paul von Falkenstein, in idem, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1833 bis 1847*, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1863), 227-231, at 228 & 230, trans. adapted from *FML*, 291-294, at 291-293: 'For a long time, music has been indigenous to this country, and just that trend which must lie nearest to the heart of every ardent and thoughtful friend of art, namely the feeling for what is true and genuine, has always been able to strike roots in this soil. Such universal sympathy [for art] is certainly not accidental [...].'

that Wilmsen added to Mendelssohn's handwritten confirmation confession, he included remarks that anticipated Mendelssohn's understanding of music as having a wholesome impact on the moral constitution of the soul. One of these comments stated that 'art, exalted and sanctified through religion, makes the soul strong and free, noble and great.'⁴¹

Zelter's principles of musical pedagogy and practice exerted a long-lasting influence on Mendelssohn. He had first witnessed these in the 1820s while attending Zelter's composition classes as well as rehearsals and performances of his choral society.⁴² Information throwing light upon Zelter's vision of the artist as 'creator of the moral human' (*Bildner des 'moralischen Menschen'*) – according to Bernhard Schmidt, one of his central maxims – can be extracted from his correspondence with Goethe and his *Denkschriften*, seven 'Memoranda' that he sent to Prussian officials in 1803 and 1812 in order to communicate his thoughts on the development of musical culture in Prussia.⁴³ In the *Erste Denkschrift* Zelter expressed the belief that '[a]rt, in its true sense, is and remains a language of feelings' (*die Kunst, in ihrem wahren Sinne, ist und bleibt eine Sprache der Empfindungen*). At the same time, he emphasized that '[i]f we seek to act through art, and rear the moral man, we have to appeal to his morality, his most noble high-mindedness' (*wollen wir jetzt durch die Kunst wirken, und den moralischen Menschen bilden, so müssen wir seine Sittlichkeit, sein Edelstes in Anspruch nehmen*).⁴⁴

Elsewhere in the same memorandum, he wrote about the purpose of art 'to guide the inner self of man, that is, his mind, his love and his moral feeling.'⁴⁵ As he

⁴¹ Friedrich Philipp Wilmsen, *Bemerkungen des Seelsorgers* ('Pastor's Comments,' 27 September 1825), quoted in Mendelssohn, *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdys Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann in London*, ed. Karl Klingemann (Essen: G. D. Baedeker, 1909), 362 and trans. in Clive Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 102.

⁴² John E. Toews, 'Memory and Gender in the Remaking of Fanny Mendelssohn's Musical Identity: The Chorale in "Das Jahr,"' *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 77, no. 4 (1993), 727-74, at 733.

⁴³ Bernhard Schmidt, *Lied – Kirchenmusik – Predigt im Festgottesdienst Friedrich Schleiermachers: Zur Rekonstruktion seiner liturgischen Praxis* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 109.

⁴⁴ Carl Friedrich Zelter, 'Erste Denkschrift an Hardenberg' (28 September 1803), quoted in *Carl Friedrich Zelter und die Akademie: Dokumente und Briefe zur Entstehung der Musik-Sektion in der Preussischen Akademie der Künste*, ed. Cornelia Schröder (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Künste, 1959), 72-81, at 79.

⁴⁵ Zelter, 'Erste Denkschrift' (28 September 1803), quoted in *Zelter und die Akademie*, 79: 'daß die Kunst [...] den innern Menschen, d. i., seinen Verstand, seine Liebe und sein moralisches Gefühl leiten soll'

argued, the fine arts had the 'common purpose' (*gemeinschaftlichen Zweck*) to set in motion the 'activity of inner powers of the soul, whereby man in himself becomes more perfect and therefore more noble.'⁴⁶ As the church had lost its authority in 'nurturing the inner, higher and future man' as well as 'elevating his spirituality and engaging his soul,'⁴⁷ the arts and sciences 'had become the real means to spread pure morality and a sense of religion that recreates and re-constitutes the outer being's morals from the divine that resides in man.'⁴⁸ Music was most apt to fulfill this shared aim, as its intervals and sounds 'are not separate from man's physical and spiritual apparatus' (*sind nicht getrennt vom Menschen und seinem leiblichen und geistigen Apparat*), and 'his nerves, the most secret forces of his mind, resonate in these kindred sounds' which 'attract him' and 'carry him away' (*seine Nerven, die geheimsten Kräfte seines Gemüts klingen wider bei den verwandten Tönen und ziehn ihn an, ja sie reisen ihn fort*).⁴⁹

As has been shown, the idea that music carried its listeners away took diverse turns in Mendelssohn's writings. According to him, musical works or sounds had the capacity to draw anyone into a realm in which the innermost feelings and thoughts of humans took definite shape and could either be religious or of a more moral and worldly bent, very personal or universally shared. His correspondence with Baur suggests that he did not doubt the fact that, once transferred into this world opened up by music, listeners could reach an awareness of biblical issues and religious messages that were conveyed in sound, which is a thought that was widely shared by others in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁶ Idem, 'Zweite Denkschrift' (c.1803), quoted in *ibid.*, 82-88, at 82, trans. in Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 64.

⁴⁷ Idem, 'Aus der dritten Denkschrift' (28 December 1803), quoted in *Zelter und die Akademie*, 89-90: 'Die Kirchendisziplinen [...] haben ihre Autorität [...] verloren [...]. Die Künste und Wissenschaften aber allein, haben sich unter diesen Umständen [...] in der Achtung erhalten [...]. Würden nun diese Künste und Wissenschaften wieder auf solche Dinge angewendet, die den innern, höhern, künftigen Menschen anbauen, seinen geistigen Theil [...] ernähren und erhöhen [...], so könnte etwas erreicht werden, [...] das man Bildung nennen dürfte.'

⁴⁸ These comments about 'die Kunst [...] als das eigentliche Mittel zur Herstellung reiner Sittenhaftigkeit und einer solchen Religiosität, die den äußern Menschen aus dem innewohnenden Gotte moralisch, in jedem einzelnen Falle gleichsam neu konstruiert' can be found in his letter of 22 July 1804 to Goethe, quoted in *ibid.*, *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Zelter in den Jahren 1796 to 1832: Erster Theil, die Jahre 1796 bis 1811*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer (Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1833), 1:123.

⁴⁹ Zelter, letter of 3 July 1808 to Goethe, quoted in *ibid.*, 1:212-215, at 214.

Music as a vehicle of religious revelation

When early nineteenth-century critics contemplated musical works, they started hearing more in the music than an expression of religious feelings. Abandoning Enlightenment notions of materialism, they perceived music to be more than physical matter and to convey – to use Kramer's terms – 'otherworldly ideas.' In alignment with contemporary conceptions of *Kunstreligion*, they expected music to convey a religious message or a 'divine word.'⁵⁰ It is not too daring to suggest that these authors and listeners came to consider music a medium of religious revelation comparable to holy scripture and sermons. Franz Joseph Fröhlich's appraisal of musical art as 'the heraldess of divine mysteries' (*Verkünderin der göttlichen Geheimnisse*) in his review of Beethoven's Choral Symphony encapsulates general contemporary thought on music's revelatory capacities and content.⁵¹

Initially, such interpretations of music as a substance serving revelation arose in art-religious discussions of sacred music, where it became common practice to distinguish between church music as divine praise, as a means of edification, and as a vehicle of revelation.⁵² In contemporary thought, Bach's music – and his *St. Matthew Passion* in particular – achieved most of these purposes. While, in their writings discussed so far, Mendelssohn and Baur focused on the edifying effect and proclamative nature of Bach's music, the view that his music was itself an 'exegesis of the biblical word' (*Auslegerin des Wortes an sich*) was already expressed in a letter to the editor signed B. that appeared in the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* on 21 March 1829.⁵³

In the context of secular music, art-religious conceptions of musical works as revelation came to interact with ideas of 'ideal' or 'spiritual' music – a new classification introduced by Marx. According to him, works belonging to that brand

⁵⁰ *IKA*, 9 & 208.

⁵¹ Franz Joseph Fröhlich, 'Sinfonie, mit Schlusschor über Schillers Ode: "An die Freude," für grosses Orchester, 4 Solo- und 4 Chor-Stimmen, componirt von Ludwig van Beethoven. Erste Recension,' *Cäcilia*, vol. 8, no. 32 (1828), 231-256, at 235-36, trans. in *IKA*, 270-271.

⁵² See *IKA*, 221.

⁵³ B., 'Grosse Passion von Johann Sebastian Bach,' *BAMZ*, vol. 6, no. 12 (21 March 1829), 92-93, at 93.

did not stop at invoking sensations and emotions in the listener but 'made known' (*kund gebe*) and 'stimulated' (*anregen*) something higher lying beyond that: an 'idea' (*Idee*) or 'notions' (*Vorstellungen*).⁵⁴ He never discussed the nature of either comprehensively in his writings. Subsequent authors inspired by *Kunstreligion*, however, seized on his theories and gave them a genuinely religious bent.

The spiritual ideas that listeners heard expressed in music in the early nineteenth century were manifold. If one reads Fröhlich's review of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony further, one comes across various religious notions that the critic believed the music to convey. According to him, the work gave an idea of the laws governing earthly life and divine creation while providing a vision of Christian paradise:

Just as Dante allows us to descend into the greatest depths of hell in order to be vaulted into the rapturous intuition of the highest blessedness in paradise, so Beethoven begins his poetic setting here, a setting in which he climbs toward the hymn of joy through the sound of which we perceive everything created [...] to become one. The master leads us first into the depths of the earth where we perceive the muffled echoes of life that progresses so mysteriously. To this end, he introduces the big drum quietly [...] in a basic rhythm [...] which joins the various manifestations of life together that flow into multitudinous directions, as if it were a sacred law consolidating the whole.⁵⁵

In his correspondence, Mendelssohn never questioned the expressive and revelatory power of music to go beyond an expression of religious feelings in order

⁵⁴ Marx, 'Etwas über die Symphonie und Beethovens Leistungen in diesem Fache,' 183: 'Für eine geistigere Auffassung der Tonkunst [...] glaubt nun der Verfasser dieses Aufsatzes schon viel gewonnen, wenn man nur erst allgemeiner erkennt, dass sich über dem blossen verständigen Erkennen der Form eines Kunstwerkes und über der blossen sinnlichen und allgemeiner Gefühlsanregung noch etwas Höheres in den Werken der Tonkunst kund gebe. [...]—es genügt für jetzt, wenn auch nur erkannt wird, dass ein Tonstück fähig war, eine Idee—bestimmte Vorstellungen anzuregen.'

⁵⁵ Fröhlich, 'Sinfonie, mit Schlusschor über Schillers Ode: "An die Freude,"' 246: 'Wie Dante uns in der Hölle grösste Tiefe hinabsteigen lässt, um uns zu der entzückenden Anschauung höchster Beseeligung im Paradiese zu erschwingen: so beginnt hier *Beethoven* mit seiner poetischen Schilderung, die er bis zum feurigsten allgemeinen Hymnus der Freude steigert durch welche begeistert wir alles Geschaffene [...] sich einen sehen. Und da führt uns denn des Meisters dichtender Geist zuerst in die Tiefen der Erde, wo wir des geheimnisvoll sich bewegenden Lebens dumpfe Anklänge vernehmen. Daher lässt er sehr sinnig die grosse Trommel [...] ganz leise beginnen, in einem Grundrhythmus [...] der das reichste, in der verschiedensten Richtung ausströmende Leben, gleichsam als heiliges Gesetz des Ganzen, verbindet.' The translation given is partly adapted from *IKA*, 274.

to articulate transcendent truths. Having heard Renaissance church music performed at the Sistine Chapel in 1831, he came to the conclusion that, while vocal music possessed revelatory power useful to religious instruction, in the greatest sacred masterworks it was the music that conveyed the message, and that the words were virtually irrelevant. He articulated this thought very clearly in a letter to Zelter about the Holy Week ceremonies in Rome, in which he confessed: 'I require no underlying thought when I hear music—which to me is not “a mere medium to inspire the mind to religious reflection and dispositions” [...] but a distinct language which speaks clearly; and the sense is only paraphrased and contained in the words.'⁵⁶ As may be concluded from these words, for Mendelssohn music did not merely possess the potential to stimulate discursive acts of the soul through which believers were enabled to grasp religious truths spiritually, it also communicated these truths directly to the listener's heart and mind in the sound material.

This image of music as a language of revelation or a 'speaking art' (*sprechende Kunst*) appears very frequently in Mendelssohn's letters and exclusively in reflections on vocal music. As his formulations suggest, however, in his view, it was not the sung text but the music that carried revealing meaning and spoke to him. In a letter to the Swedish composer Adolf Fredrik Lindblad, in which Mendelssohn also included a score of his song entitled *Frage* ('Question,' published in 1830 as his Op. 9/1) for critical evaluation, he wrote, for example: 'The song that I am enclosing with the score of the quartet forms its theme. You will hear it speak with emotion

⁵⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:283-293, at 291, trans. adapted from *FML*, 145-146. Selden-Goth translates *Andacht* by reference to the English term 'piety.' The original phrase used by Mendelssohn himself (*Mittel mich zur Andacht zu erheben*) and other formulations in inverted commas seem to be quotations from an unidentified nineteenth-century booklet that contained information about the liturgy for the Roman holy week. This source situation complicates finding the most accurate translation of Mendelssohn's words. Considering the corroborated use of music in Roman Catholicism as a supportive means to incline the human mind towards the 'contemplation of matters of the divine' (*Betrachtung göttlicher Dinge*), a translation as 'religious reflection,' however, seems also accurate. See Norbert Korber, *Bitte an die H. H. Bischöfe der österreichischen Staaten, die Volkssprache in öffentlichen Gottesdienst einzuführen* (Vienna: Christian Friedrich Wappler, 1782), 46-47 for more information about the role of music in religious ceremony, influenced by the decisions and decrees of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1545-1562).

through its notes in all its parts.'⁵⁷ After a London performance of Handel's *Messiah* in May 1829, he expressed his astonishment about how 'the same music speaks the same language everywhere,' but complained that 'nonetheless, every note revealed that it was Englishmen who played the music, and that they had little interest in it.'⁵⁸

This focus on sound as language throws revealing light on central early nineteenth-century aesthetic conceptions: the idea of music as an absolute language and the understanding of vocal music as, what Garratt called, 'absolute vocal music.'⁵⁹ Both notions arose in confrontation with ancient aesthetic ideas of how music and language were interrelated and more recent aesthetic currents, and they were meant to silence critical voices that continued to perceive instrumental music as meaningless noise.

In antiquity, music theorists and philosophers gave expression to an idea that would have lasting impact until the seventeenth century. The most influential articulation of this idea has been summarized by Dahlhaus: 'music, as Plato put it, consisted of *harmonia*, *rhythmos*, and *logos*. *Harmonia* meant regular, rationally systematized relationships among tones; *rhythmos*, the system of musical time, which in ancient times included dance and organized motion; and *logos*, language as the expression of human reason.' This line of thought conditioned the view that '[m]usic without language was [...] reduced, its nature constricted: a deficient type or mere shadow of what music actually is.'⁶⁰

Such reservations and 'the old eighteenth-century fear that non-texted instrumental music might mean nothing at all, that it would collapse into empty pretence' proved very persistent in aesthetic debates.⁶¹ In the first half of the nineteenth century musical thought was shaped by two opposing factions. The members of the more conservative party entertained a certain 'mistrust of absolute

⁵⁷ Mendelssohn, letter of [19] and 22 April 1828 to Adolf Fredrik Lindblad in Stockholm, in *SB* (2008), 1:240-244, at 241. Material from the *Lied* had provided the unifying motif for Mendelssohn's string quartet op. 13.

⁵⁸ Idem, letter of 19 May 1829 to Eduard Devrient, in *SB* (2008), 1:292-293, at 292.

⁵⁹ Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 52-57.

⁶⁰ Dahlhaus, *Absolute Music*, 8 & 24.

⁶¹ For more information on this development see James Hepokoski, 'Beethoven reception: the symphonic tradition,' in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 424-459. The quotation is taken from page 430.

instrumental music independent of language.' Its most prominent members – aestheticians such as Hegel and, later on, Georg Gottfried Gervinus, Heinrich Bellerman and Eduard Grell – sympathized with the long-standing prejudice 'that music had to depend on words to avoid either degeneration into pleasant noise that neither touched the heart nor employed the mind, or becoming an impenetrable spirit language.'⁶² The other party did, in a certain way, not escape critical lines of thought either, but it did not reject instrumental music and found much worth in the instrumental parts of vocal music. Hoffmann, for example, was certain that 'church compositions communicate through the "universally comprehensible medium of music"' and that 'the words associated with the singing are only incidental.'⁶³

The line of thought entertained by the second party might be best described in Dahlhaus's words: 'If instrumental music had been a "pleasant noise" *beneath* language to the common-sense estheticians of the eighteenth century, then the romantic metaphysics of art declared it a language *above* language.' Following this rationale, members of the second party 'sought refuge in hermeneutics that forced upon "pure, absolute music" [or "absolute vocal music"] just what it sought to avoid [...]. The urge to include it in the central sphere of language could not be suppressed.'⁶⁴ Mendelssohn's letters just quoted and the writings of his contemporaries attest to the truth of this fact. Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder considered music to be similar to nature since it represents a language that speaks of heavenly truths and enables mortals to understand these in their inner meaning and essence: 'I know only two wonderful languages through which the Creator has granted man the means of grasping and comprehending the Divine in all of its force, at least (not to appear presumptuous) insofar as that is at all possible for poor mortals.... Nature and Art.'⁶⁵ In de Wette's writings, music also figures as a language: 'The true German and Protestant and, at the same time, most sacred art is

⁶² Dahlhaus, *Absolute Music*, 9.

⁶³ Hoffmann, 'On a Remark of Sacchini's, and on so-called Effect in Music,' trans. in *Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 152-159, at 153.

⁶⁴ Dahlhaus, *Absolute Music*, 9.

⁶⁵ Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, 'Von zwey wunderbaren Sprachen, und deren geheimnißvoller Kraft' ('Of Two Wonderful Languages and Their Mysterious Power,' 1799), in *WSWB*, 1:97, trans. adapted from *OALF*, 59.

music, which [...] speaks to the human spirit most vividly and immaculately and takes hold of him and moves him in his innermost self.'⁶⁶

In Mendelssohn's letters, the notion of music as a speaking language and conceptions of it as a vehicle of divine revelation only coincided in contemplations of religious musical works. His correspondence, in fact, contains only one musical reference to both concepts in their combination. In his letter to Zelter about the Holy Week ceremonies, quoted earlier, he concluded his comments about music as a religious and revelatory language with the remark: 'This is the case with the [*St. Matthew*] "Passion" of Sebastian Bach [...].'⁶⁷

Mendelssohn never commented on the religious truths and messages that he believed music conveyed to the human mind. This silence hints at a paradox in his conception of 'speaking art': it speaks of something that no one can put into words or express. As his writings reflect, he also considered the fine arts to be languages that spoke to his inner self. While he was able to summarize the emotional content of works of painting and sculpture, it was difficult for him to go beyond general considerations of aspects of feelings in order to arrive at conclusions as to which fundamental beliefs or tenets of faith were expressed in artworks. This becomes obvious in the thoughts that he communicated to his parents about Titian's *Deposizione di Cristo* ('The Entombment of Christ,' c. 1520) in October 1830: 'It is a composition that fills me with enthusiasm and *speaks*, and will never leave my memory.'⁶⁸ (Italics mine.) His ensuing descriptions of its contents dwell on discussions of emotions and feelings:

This picture represents the conclusion of a great tragedy: so still, so grand, and so acutely painful. Magdalene is supporting Mary, fearing that she will die of anguish; she endeavours to lead her away, but looks round herself once more, evidently wishing to imprint this spectacle indelibly on her heart, thinking that it is for the last time; it surpasses everything; and then the sorrowing John, who sympathizes and suffers with Mary; and Joseph, who

⁶⁶ Wilhelm Martin Leberecht De Wette, *Die neue Kirche oder Verstand und Glaube im Bunde* (Berlin: Nauck, 1815), 87: 'Die deutsche und protestantische und zugleich die heiligste Kunst ist die Musik, welche [...] am lebendigsten und reinsten zum menschlichen Geiste spricht, und ihn in seinem Innersten ergreift und bewegt.'

⁶⁷ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB*, 2:283-293, at 291, trans. in *FML*, 133-148, at 146.

⁶⁸ Idem, letter of 11 October 1830 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:101-105, at 104, trans. adapted from idem, *LIS*, 29-37, at 36. He saw a replica of the painting in the Palazzo Manfrin Venier in Venice.

absorbed in his piety, and occupied with the tomb, directs and conducts the whole; and Christ himself, lying there so tranquil, having endured to the end.⁶⁹

Mendelssohn's reservations towards putting the revelatory contents of musical works and paintings into words may be attributed to an almost pious, art-religious respect for these communicative art forms. As he admitted to Schubring, he was very anxious always to judge matters of art (and of religion as well) in a respectful and cautious manner and to base his arguments on sound judgement:

To talk about all the things in the world, beliefs, people, penchants jokingly, superficially [...] without determination, only in a compliant and wielding manner, and to judge just that which stands much higher, be it religion, art, love, uncompromisingly – this I can not do [...]. Especially in these higher regards, I want to proceed slowly, quietly and gently.⁷⁰

Furthermore, as a composer and musician, he was mainly interested in aspects of style, compositional technique, genre and musical means of expression. In his correspondence, reflections on these issues are frequent. Of central interest to him was how the spiritual messages of passion compositions manifested themselves in the music. He elucidated his thoughts on this matter in writing to Zelter. In the early 1830s he was convinced that narrative as well as scenic-dramatic styles and settings could serve revelatory purposes. He argued that it had been Bach, who had merged both approaches and had made perfect use of the expressive qualities inherent in music in his *St. Matthew Passion*. In its combination of 'simple narrative' and 'grand, solemn, dramatic truth' he considered the revelatory power of Bach's composition to be unmatched by any other work of sacred music:

One of the two following methods ought to be adopted. The 'Passion' ought either to be recited quietly by the priest [...]; or else the scene ought to be so completely reproduced, that it would make me feel as if I were actually present, and saw it myself. In that event, Pilate ought to sing just as he would have spoken, the chorus shout out 'Crucifige' in a tone anything but sacred; and then, through the impress of complete truth, and of the subject portrayed, the singing would become church music.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Idem, letter of 11 October 1830 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:104, trans. in idem, *LIS*, 35-36.

⁷⁰ Idem, letter of 26 October 1829 to Julius Schubring, in *SB* (2009), 2:429-431, at 430.

⁷¹ Idem, letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:291, trans. in *FML*, 145-146.

Mendelssohn's interest in music as a communicative art form and his appraisal of the *St. Matthew Passion* as a work of art 'speaking' a dramatic and narrative language that reveals religious messages and paraphrases biblical truths seem to have determined early on his direction as a conductor and composer. Even though his motivations were most certainly manifold, his perceptions of religious musical pieces and genres as media of proclamation may have played a role in his decision to perform the Passion and to use certain musical elements of it in his own compositions.

Mendelssohn's attempt of religious revelation through the revival of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*

In light of Mendelssohn's general silence on which religious messages he believed musical works to reveal, any investigation in this direction has to rely on contextual analysis and considered hypothesis. This applies in particular to his relationship to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. There is hardly any written evidence by him that throws light on which professional, aesthetic or religious aims Mendelssohn pursued when he chose the work for his conducting début. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether his amendments to the libretto and score for the 1829 performances were, in fact, meant to emphasize certain messages contained or 'paraphrased' in the music, as some scholars have argued. As far as his revisions are concerned, the only thing for certain is that, according to his own testimony, all changes to the work had been done in good conscience and were well thought out.⁷²

The possibility that Mendelssohn's performance of the Passion and the realignment of its parts and texts for performance had been mainly guided by religious, even confessional, concerns has been suggested by Michael Marissen and Jeffrey Sposato. Marissen has argued that 'religious aspects are among the most important in understanding why Mendelssohn chose a work by Bach, why he chose

⁷² See, for example, idem, letter of 12 and 13 April 1830 to Hermann Franck, in *SB* (2008), 515-517, at 516: 'What I left out I think I can account for, to trifle arbitrarily with such a work seems improper

the Matthew Passion in particular, and why he made specific, extensive cuts from the Matthew Passion.⁷³ According to him, Mendelssohn 'wanted the music to be specifically Christian,' and the Passion's less anti-Jewish text and general message accorded well with his religious beliefs as a Jew turned Lutheran.⁷⁴ Sposato also acknowledges the importance of 'theology as the overriding factor' in Mendelssohn's repertoire choice and editorial decisions.⁷⁵ Contrary to Marissen, however, in his more extensive analysis of Mendelssohn's edited version of the work, he came to the conclusion that, by keeping 'all the anti-Semitic content that placed the blame for the crucifixion squarely on the Jews,' he aimed to demonstrate his 'detachment [...] from Jewish culture at this time.'⁷⁶

Sposato's and Marissen's analyses of documentary sources are both compelling in their conclusions that Mendelssohn's personal struggle for religious self-identification influenced his approach towards the work. However, their focus on opposing confessional attachments (Lutheran or Judaic), seems unnecessary. It fails to do justice to Mendelssohn's versatile interest in wider religious ideologies and to his leanings towards religious tolerance that he shared with other members of his family. In light of Mendelssohn's family background, it seems more likely that he relished the idea of performing the St. Matthew Passion since it offered the chance to emphasize, establish and illustrate existing parallels between Judaism and Christianity as well as affinities between Jews and Christians in front of his audience.

From this point of view, Mendelssohn's emphasis in his conversations with Devrient on the fact that it was 'a [Protestant] comedic actor and a Jew-boy' who presented 'the greatest Christian musical work' to 'the people' (whose confessional

to me.' (*Was ich weggelassen habe glaube ich verantworten zu können, willkürlich mit [einem solchen] Werke zu schalten scheint mir verboten.*)

⁷³ Michael Marissen, 'Religious Aims in Mendelssohn's 1829 Berlin-Singakademie Performances of Bach's St. Matthew Passion,' *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 77, no. 4 (1993), 718-726, at 718.

⁷⁴ According to Marissen, the libretto 'focuses much more on Christ [...] whose death is brought on by the guilt of all,' whereas Bach's *St. John Passion*, Heinrich Graun's *Der Tod Jesu* and other works usually performed during Holy Week focus on the Jews as being responsible for Christ's suffering and death. See *ibid.*, 718-720.

⁷⁵ Jeffrey S. Sposato, *The Price of Assimilation: Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 51.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 177 & *idem*, 'The Price of Assimilation: The Oratorios of Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition' (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, 2000), 60.

affiliations are most certainly deliberately not specified) might not only express Jewish self-awareness, as has been often suggested.⁷⁷ Beyond that, it might also testify to a personal mission to bring adherents of both creeds together through the performance and to an anxiety to demonstrate that confessional attachments were ultimately irrelevant as long as certain religious truths, laid out in the *St Matthew Passion* and shared unanimously by the Jewish and Christian creeds, were accepted. These theological truths may be found in the libretto and the music. In fact, in recent years, they have repeatedly been identified as essential parts of the message that Picander and Bach intended to convey in the libretto and in the music based on the biblical text.

Even though neither Bach nor Picander left any conclusive testimony to support this claim,⁷⁸ John Butt's analysis of Bach's Passions and his methods of scoring seems accurate in indicating that 'Bach and his librettists seem to have gone out of their way to embellish the story rhetorically, to drive home theological points and to guide the meditation of the congregation.' Beyond that, 'Bach's scoring of the Passions may have been designed to [...] create extra shades of meaning in the text and music.'⁷⁹ These theological points and meanings are blatantly obvious in the libretto. As emphasized by Marissen and numerous analysts, 'the Matthew Passion text instructs us in the opening chorus, and continually through the passion setting, to meditate on all of humanity's guilt [and sin, as may be added] versus Christ's innocence.'⁸⁰ While only Christianity entertained the conviction that Jesus had died for the remission of the sins of all, conceptions of sin as 'lawlessness' and a violation

⁷⁷ See Mendelssohn's comments about the performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* (1829), quoted in Eduard Devrient, *Meine Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy und seine Briefe an mich* (Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1869), 62, trans. and interpreted in Jeffrey S. Sposato, 'Creative Writing: The [Self-] Identification of Mendelssohn as Jew,' *Musical Quarterly*, vol. 82, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 190-209, at 206.

⁷⁸ In the early nineteenth century, knowledge of Bach's music, letters as well as explanatory notes providing information about his aesthetic intentions in his musical works was very fragmentary. Since Mendelssohn used to base his opinions about musical works primarily on what he heard rather than on what he read (that is on written testimony or critical aesthetic texts), it is very unlikely that he would have put too much value on existing documentary sources anyway. Following this rationale, the ensuing discussion of Bach's and Picander's intentions that they most likely pursued when they wrote the *St. Matthew Passion* are based on what is audible and obvious from the score: the text and the music.

⁷⁹ John Butt, 'Bach's vocal scoring: what can it mean?,' *Early Music*, vol. 26, no. 1 (February 1998), 99-107, at 104 & 106.

⁸⁰ Marissen, 'Religious Aims in Mendelssohn's 1829 Berlin-Singakademie Performances,' 720.

of divine Commandments and certain understandings of sinners were shared by Christians and Jews. Judaism declares that people are born with free will and a tendency to evil, which explains why they commit sins at various points in their lives. Similarly, in the New Testament all humans are considered sinners (see Romans 3:10 as well as 1 John 1:8) with the exception of Jesus who was seen as both human and divine.

Based on old theological traditions in the interpretation of Matthew's narration of the passion of Jesus in the gospels, it is neither the Jews nor individuals who are identified specifically as responsible for Christ's suffering. According to Rüdiger Bartelmus, 'there are [accordingly] neither clearly good nor clearly bad characters' in Picander's libretto, 'but people are all equally sinners.'⁸¹ At several points in the Passion human sinners and believers are present through the appearance of two choruses. While Choir One represents 'the Daughter[s] of Zion' or 'the Daughter[s] of Jerusalem' by Old Testament writers, Choir Two was meant to impersonate 'the Faithful,' that is the individual believer and the Church, as Picander noted down in his edition of the libretto.⁸² In the opening chorus both choirs are complemented by an extra soprano line for the traditional German *Agnus Dei*, the chorale *O Lamm Gottes unschuldig* ('O innocent Lamb of God'). In their lyrics the choruses express grievance, sadness and guilt. Additionally, they appeal to the audience not only to contemplate and lament the sufferings of Jesus, but also to be conscious of their own sin, reciting: 'Come, ye daughters, help me lament, / Behold! Whom? The Bridegroom. / Behold him! How? Like a lamb. [...]. / Behold *our* guilt.' (Italics mine.) Similarly, the chorus in Recitativo No. 25 speaks of personal guilt and directly appeals to the listener's conscience with the words: 'Alas, *my* sins, they have thee sorely stricken; / I, ah Lord Jesus, have this debt encumbered / Which thou art bearing.' (Italics mine.)

⁸¹ Rüdiger Bartelmus, 'Die Matthäuspassion J. S. Bachs als Symbol. Gedanken zu einem unerschöpflichen musikalisch-theologischen Werk,' *Theologische Zeitschrift*, vol. 1, no. 47 (1991), 18–65, at 38.

⁸² Konrad Küster, 'Matthäuspassion,' in *Bach-Handbuch*, ed. idem (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), 452–466, at 457.

Mendelssohn's treatment of the biblical text on which Bach's recitatives were based, and his revisions to other parts of the work were most certainly inspired by a shared theological insight into Jews' and Christians' mutual responsibility for Christ's death and an eagerness to mediate between Christians and Jews by reinforcing Bach's religious message.⁸³ While in its original shape, the Passion had already focused on Christ's death as brought about by the guilt of all, Mendelssohn strengthened this appeal. Most noteworthy, in this context, are his cuts to Bach's chorales that seem inspired by the logical conclusion that, if everyone was to be blamed for Jesus's demise, enquiries into the identity of the guilty party were ultimately unnecessary. In this sense, Mendelssohn's deletions of the hymn *Wer hat dich so geschlagen* ('Who has buffeted thee so,' no. 37 (44)) and of the second verse of the passion chorale *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* (no. 54 (63)) might not have been intended as pro-Jewish gestures, as Marissen has suggested, but still prove significant in realigning Bach's religious message. As these cuts result in the disappearance of textual lines such as '*who* has so struck you, my savior, and so nastily injured and tormented you?' and '[*who* has] so scandalously mauled you?' (Italics mine), textual passages indicating the guilty party become less prominent.⁸⁴

According to Butt, Bach's insight into the universal guilt of human sinners for Christ's suffering also explains why he gave the parts of Peter and Judas to soloists and ruled out their participation in any of the choruses, chorales and arias. As a result, 'their parts become featureless—virtually anonymous [...] while the sorrow of their betrayals is vividly portrayed in the Evangelist's depiction of weeping and in

⁸³ The libretto of Bach's Passion is mainly based on the account of Jesus' suffering and death given in the 26th and 27th chapters of the gospel of Matthew in Luther's translation. Passion chorales and religious poems by Picander complement the text and are set as free choruses, ariosi and arias. There is general consent among scholars that Bach influenced the final shape of the libretto. In particular, he chose the chorales, favouring those dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. Mendelssohn retained most chorales and only removed small snippets from the verbatim biblical accounts that Bach had set to music in form of recitatives, while dispensing with most arias in the 1829 performances. The pieces that he cut encompass, in addition to the ones mentioned in the main text and all the solo arias except for 'Buß und Reu' (no. 6 (10)) and 'Erbarme dich' (39 (47)), the chorales 'Ich will hier bei dir stehen' (no. 17 (23)), 'Mir hat die Welt trüglich gericht' (no. 32 (38)), 'Befiehl du deine Wege' (no. 40 (53)), and 'Wie wunderbarlich ist doch diese Strafe!' (no. 46 (55)).

⁸⁴ See Marissen, 'Religious Aims in Mendelssohn's 1829 Berlin-Singakademie Performances,' 723 & 725. Following Marissen's approach, 'the numbers in parentheses are those of the original edition of the *Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von Johann Sebastian Bach-Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis* ('BWV'), ed. Wolfgang Schmieder (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1950), while the others are those of the second edition (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1990).'

the arias sung by the concertists.' This way, 'their failure is universalized, passed from one singer to another, to show that it is a matter for the general human condition and not the personal tragedy of an individual sinner.'⁸⁵

Mendelssohn's eagerness to strengthen the Passion's religious message also inspired the decision to retain only two of the solo arias in an attempt, identified by Martin Geck, to accentuate an 'exchange through dialogue' (*Wechselrede*) between *testo* (recitatives) and *turba* (choruses and well-selected chorales). By this means, the two central features that Mendelssohn had identified as accounting for the revelatory power of the work earlier on, come to the fore more clearly: the narrative element is strengthened and 'the dramatic profile of the biblical narration' (*das dramatische Profil des Passionsberichtes*) is enhanced. To put it in Geck's terms, 'the actual biblical testimony' (*dem aktuellen biblischen Zeugnis*) and 'dramatic concision' (*dramatische Knappheit*) are given more weight than 'epic and contemplative breadth' (*episch-kontemplativer Breite*).⁸⁶

In this regard, Mendelssohn's predilection for the *St. Matthew Passion* and his approach in editing the work seem indicative of aims of religious proclamation, even if other motivations have to be acknowledged, too. Given the lack of testimony by Mendelssohn explaining why he presented the *St. Matthew Passion* to Berlin audiences in 1829 and arranged it for performance, most scholars have justifiably highlighted stylistic preferences, professional and pragmatic considerations as well as aesthetic decisions on his part. Some musicologists exploring these issues have focused on Mendelssohn's musical tastes that were drawn to the works of the German canon from Bach to Beethoven. Others like Sposato have highlighted factors of performability as well as 'audience familiarity' and preference.⁸⁷ The access Mendelssohn had to musical scores of Bach's works might have been determinative,

⁸⁵ Butt, 'Bach's vocal scoring,' 104.

⁸⁶ Martin Geck, *Die Wiederentdeckung der Matthäuspassion im 19. Jahrhundert: Die zeitgenössischen Dokumente und ihre ideengeschichtliche Deutung* (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1967), 41. Sposato has interpreted Mendelssohn's style of editing as an attempt to 'condense the work and quicken its dramatic pace' and 'dramatic continuity,' too. See Sposato, *Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (2006), 46, 41, 42 & 48.

⁸⁷ Sposato believes that Mendelssohn was aware that his audiences would not accept the length and original shape of the work, and that his cuts were inspired by an insight into which chorales were most familiar to his audiences and which arias and ariosos would please and impress them most. See Sposato, *Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (2006), 41 & 47-48.

too.⁸⁸ While his meticulous approach towards Bach's chorales and recitatives seems to reflect an adherence to ideals of *Werktreue* (that stipulated a faithful rendition of the original work), his textual cuts to the libretto and the score at other junctures have been interpreted as concessions to early nineteenth-century genre perceptions. In fact, Mendelssohn left the musical substance of the Passion, as it had survived in score, mainly untouched (apart from several cuts resulting from textual revisions). His annotated performance score only contains minor changes such as tempo indications, added sforzati in the string accompaniment and playing instructions.⁸⁹ Other editorial revisions were influenced by 'the prevailing nineteenth-century view of oratorio' that 'held that arias and ariosos were too closely tied to opera and distracted from the genre's central focus,' as Sposato has established.⁹⁰ In light of these manifold interpretative approaches and the fact that Mendelssohn used to listen to Bach's compositions with musical connoisseurship and theological interest, it seems likely that both aesthetic and religious considerations guided his approach to the *St. Matthew Passion*, as well as to other musical works.

Listening for revelation in music as practised by Mendelssohn and his contemporaries

Mendelssohn's view of music as revelatory substance combines modes of musical reception that were regarded as typically Christian in the early nineteenth century. At that time, Catholic and Protestant attitudes towards music were explored by writers on music such as Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884) as well as the church inspector and author Franz Johann Karl Andreas Kretschmer (1775-1839). In their writings, they outlined opposing Catholic and Protestant approaches to religion, which allegedly affected attitudes towards musical listening as well as composition and performance.⁹¹

⁸⁸ See Marissen, 'Religious Aims in Mendelssohn's 1829 Berlin-Singakademie Performances,' 718.

⁸⁹ See the analysis of the score in Geck, *Die Wiederentdeckung der Matthäuspassion*, 36 & 41.

⁹⁰ Sposato, *Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (2006), 48.

⁹¹ The texts analysed further on comprise Kretschmer's report about the Third Elbe Musical Festival in Halberstadt (1828) in which he included a discussion of the aesthetic merits of Beethoven's oratorio *Christus am Oelberg* ('Christ on the Mount of Olives' op. 85) and Spohr's *Die letzten Dinge* ('The Last Judgement') as well as Droysen's analysis of the *St. Matthew Passion*.

According to Kretschmer, the Protestant faith was based in equal measure on inner knowledge and on tenets outlined in holy scripture. In his writings, he credited Protestants with adhering to religious truths as they are written down in the Bible and reverberate in their hearts and minds. He wrote that '[t]he Christian religion is a matter of presentiment, of faith in sublime, transcendent, unworldly proclamations of the Holy Scripture, which ought to seek and find the reflective echo in our breast, in our soul. We Protestants acknowledge this and adhere to it [...].'⁹² By contrast, he felt that the Catholic was more inclined to interpret the words and meanings of Holy Scripture with his senses only:

Catholicism, on the other hand, prompted by the weakness of human nature, likes to grasp everything with the hands, tries as far as possible to bring its secrets, its proclamations, down to the worldly level, to transplant them from the domain of mental reflection [*Gemüthsreflexion*] into that of sensuous perception. [...]. Thus, while Protestantism seeks to elevate the earthly and historical part of the lore of holy scripture to the transcendental, the religion of spirit [*Gemüthsreligion*], Catholicism, by contrast, drags even the purely transcendental part down to earth, to sensual perception [...].⁹³

Influenced by these assumptions, Catholic and Protestant understandings of music were understood to diverge fundamentally. As Kretschmer believed, for Catholics, music was primarily sensual rather than spiritual. For Protestants like him, by contrast, music represented a spiritual essence, that is a 'form of [religious] proclamation which disdains the lower realm of sensuality, foreshadows the eternal and transcendent and animates the mind to premonitions.'⁹⁴ Due to Protestant predispositions towards interiorized faith and loyalty to the Bible, music is not taken to convey but rather to re-affirm religious messages. This rationale might make Mendelssohn's conceptions of religious music understandable, as he communicated

⁹² Andreas Kretschmer, '4. Berichte. Drittes Musikfest an der Elbe, gefeiert in Halberstadt (Schluss.),' *BAMZ*, vol. 5, no. 30 (23 July 1828), 238-42, at 239, trans. in *IKA*, 131.

⁹³ Kretschmer, 'Drittes Musikfest an der Elbe,' 239. The translation of the first sentence is adapted from *IKA*, 131. The original text of the second sentence is, as follows: 'Während also der Evangelismus selbst den irdischen Theil der Überlieferungen der heiligen Schrift, den historischen, zum Uebersinnlichen, zur Gemüthsreligion zu erheben strebt, so zieht dagegen der Katholizismus sogar den rein übersinnlichen Theil zu Erde, zur sinnlichen Anschauung und Einwirkung hinab.'

⁹⁴ Kretschmer, 'Drittes Musikfest an der Elbe,' 240: '[...] die wahre Musik selbst [ist] eine höhere, das niedere Reich der Sinnlichkeit verschmähende, das ewige Uebersinnliche, das Gemüth ahnen

them to Johann Georg Heinrich Christian Schwerdt (1810-1888). In writing to the Evangelical pastor on 1 March 1847, Mendelssohn expressed his conviction that 'poetic circumscriptions of single apophthegms of the Bible never appear to me felicitous' since 'music itself already represents a language of biblical paraphrase.'⁹⁵

Views like this could not fail to have an impact on confessional modes of listening. According to Droysen and Kretschmer, adherents of all Christian denominations were affected by the sensory appeal of music that seemingly conveyed religious meaning. For Catholics, this meaning seemed immediately discernible by the senses; in their attempt to extract religious meaning directly from audible sound, they allegedly paid more attention to what they actually heard rather than to the subtle messages that might be inherent in the sound and accessible to reason. In a way, their modes of listening were less introspective and reflective.

The Protestant approach was quite different, according to both authors. The Protestant neither yields completely to the aesthetic stimuli of the music nor does he become overwhelmed by sensual feeling that overrules his thinking. To the Protestant, an awareness of religious truths through music is the outcome of a two-stage communicative process that is best described as 'inner worship' (*innerer Gottesdienst*) or *Andacht*. In the process of inner reflection, the listener reaches religious awareness. In a first step, music speaks to the listener's senses. In response to the sensual stimulus, the listener's inner self runs through a process of transformation and becomes engaged in the activity of discursive reflection. In Mendelssohn's correspondence this sequence of events comes into play in his youthful reflections on Fanny's musical works. Even though the early works of hers that he examined were secular, he seems to have approached them in the same way as he listened to Bach's church music. After studying her *Liederkreis* thoroughly in the summer of 1829, he commented to his parents: 'there are tones that rear up and

lassende Verkündigung [...], als Gefährtin, als Gehülfin, damit diese Verkündigungen desto sicherer und voller jenen reflektirenden Wiederhall [...] in unserm Gemüthe finden [...].'

⁹⁵ Mendelssohn, letter of 1 March 1847 to Georg Heinrich Schwerdt, quoted in Martin Staehelin, 'Mendelssohn der Theologe,' in *Hamburger Mendelssohn Vorträge. Band 2*, ed. Hans-Joachim Marx (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2008), 153-195, at 154: '[...] diese Form (der Beschränkung auf biblisch originale Spruchzitate) selbst, indem mir dichterische Umschreibungen der einzelnen Bibel-Kern-Sprüche selbst – niemals für die Musik halb so glücklich erscheinen, als eben diese Kern-Sprüche selbst – vielleicht weil die Musik selbst schon einen Art Umschreibung dazu bildet.'

turn into language, and shout into one's ears.'⁹⁶ One year later, he was convinced that Fanny's compositions reflected her spiritual knowledge of the divine secrets of musical art, and he confessed to Fanny in writing: 'I have only to think of some of your pieces to become quite tender and sincere [...].'⁹⁷ His letters also attest to the fact that his approach towards his sister's compositions was marked by the aim (and struggle) to understand them rationally:

The closing of the second piece [of the *Liederkreis*] I played calmly to myself several times last night, and then was drawn to folly in my room, and pounded my fist on the table, may possibly also have cried a lot, but then I played it repeatedly for the quarter of an hour and now I know it well [...].⁹⁸

In Droysen's and Kretschmer's view, the music of both Christian churches did justice to these Protestant and Catholic modes of music reception; the works composed by Catholic composers were 'focused solely on sensory impressions' (*nur auf sinnliche [...] Eindrücke gerichtet*),⁹⁹ 'stunning us and giving us completely over to a shattered and remorseful disposition.'¹⁰⁰ According to Kretschmer, Protestant composers like Spohr, by contrast, felt the responsibility to 'translate religious proclamations into sound, to make any apprehension of these truths resonate more vividly in the high eternal realm of our self' (*diesen Verkündigungen Töne zu geben, deren Ahnung noch lebendiger in dem hohem ewigen Theil unsers Selbst wieder klingen zu machen*).¹⁰¹ Droysen added a further component to this thought in his analysis of the *St. Matthew Passion*. According to him, the composition represented a genuinely Protestant work since it disclosed protestant mysteries of faith as they live in the breast of all Christians by enhancing activities of religious contemplation.¹⁰² In

⁹⁶ Idem, letter of 3 July 1829 to Paul, Lea und Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:325-330, at 326.

⁹⁷ Idem, letter of 11 June 1830 to Fanny Hensel, in *SB* (2008), 544-546, at 544, trans. in *FML*, 75-77, at 76.

⁹⁸ Idem, letter of 3 July 1829 to Paul, Lea und Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:325-330, at 326.

⁹⁹ Kretschmer, 'Drittes Musikfest an der Elbe,' 240.

¹⁰⁰ Gustav Johann Droysen, 'Ueber die Passions-Musik von Johann Sebastian Bach,' *Berliner Conversationsblatt für Poesie, Literatur und Kritik*, vol. 3, no. 52 (14 March 1829), 205-206, at 206, trans. in *IKA*, 172.

¹⁰¹ See Kretschmer, 'Drittes Musikfest an der Elbe,' 240, where the author describes Spohr's *Die letzten Dinge* as 'a genuine Protestant oratorio' (*ein ächt evangelisches Oratorium*).

¹⁰² See Droysen, 'Ueber die Passions-Musik von Johann Sebastian Bach,' 206.

his focusing on the music as revelatory language and a stimulant of contemplative devotion, Mendelssohn combined both thoughts in his discussions of the Passion with Baur and Zelter, a sufficient account of which has already been given so far in this chapter.¹⁰³ While in these debates the *St. Matthew Passion* featured prominently as a musical sermon changing the listener's inner self and affecting his religious sense, Mendelssohn's 1829 adaptation of the work corroborates his penetrative insight into central biblical messages that he believed Bach to convey and deemed spiritually enlightening for his own listeners.

Religious revelation and feeling in Mendelssohn's music

Mendelssohn's concern to serve his listeners' spiritual needs for religious instruction and revelation guided his own composition from the 1830s onwards at the latest. This is corroborated in his correspondence of the last two decades of his life in which theoretical reflections on questions of religious expressiveness are brought to bear on his own music. The musical means that he considered useful for his purposes are the same ones that figured prominently in Kretschmer's analysis of the styles of composition that Catholic and Protestant composers applied in order to accommodate their audience's spiritual and sensual modes of listening for religious instruction and elevation. In the critic's article just discussed, 'dramatic' (*dramatische*), 'reflective' (*reflektirende*), 'symbolic' (*symbolische*) and 'historical' (*historische*, in the intended meaning of 'narrative' or 'epic') styles of composition find mention.¹⁰⁴

In his analysis of Catholic church music, Kretschmer observed an overabundance of dramatic elements which he considered highly detrimental. Since, in his view, Catholic composers focused too much on 'dramatic and earthly sensations' in musico-dramatic representations of events of holy scripture and religious history, he considered it impossible that they could create music in which a higher truth could be heard.¹⁰⁵ According to him, the oratorios by Catholic librettists and composers

¹⁰³ See pp. 120-122, 128 & 131-133 of this study.

¹⁰⁴ Kretschmer, 'Drittes Musikfest an der Elbe,' 239-240.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 240: 'Alle diese Tonstücke aber malen, wie gesagt, dramatisch irdische sinnliche Zustände nur, es klingt uns darin nichts Höheres an, und dies würde auch dem Wesen eines solchen Drama entgegen laufen, das nur auf sinnliche Anschauung und Eindrücke gerichtet ist.'

were, in their inner essence, 'primarily earthly musical dramas.' While they effected a 'stimulation of faith among the audience' (*Glaubenserhebung der Zuschauer*), they were, in most cases, far from becoming 'religious proclamation' (*Verkündigung*).¹⁰⁶

As stated in his historical survey of church music, in the Middle Ages this uplifting effect on the listener's religious outlook was mainly achieved through the use of 'acting personas in theatrical attire' who were 'all equipped [*ausgerüstet*] with [...] earthly passions and feelings' and gave voice to them in dramatic expression no matter if they took over the roles of 'Christians, heathens and Jews, martyrs, angels and the devil, even the three-personed God.'¹⁰⁷ Based on dramatic traditions in sacred comedies and tragedies, this sixteenth-century convention survived into the nineteenth century: genuinely Catholic in its essence,

Beethoven's music indulges in dramatic-sensual perception [...]; we feel and share Jesus's fear on the Mount of Olives in the first recitative and aria, sung by Christ; we believe to hear and see the rough, yet somewhat anxious warriors who are supposed to capture him and the fearful disciples [...]; the affectionate voice of the angel speaks to us [...].¹⁰⁸

By contrast, Protestant works such as Spohr's oratorio *Die Letzten Dinge* ('The Last Judgement,' 1826),

have no dramatic effect whatsoever, and can not have any in their inner essence; they aspire to something higher that elevates us beyond the earth. The poet of the oratorio, Rochlitz, has writtten the libretto like a true prophet; there is not even one single sentence that is concerned with earthly matters and sensuality; instead, the text guides our intuitive glance continuously upward towards regions which are the realm of religion [...].¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 239-240.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 239: 'So entstanden schon im frühern Mittelalter, lange vor der Reformation, die geistlichen Komödien und Tragödien, welche irgend einen Abschnitt der Bibel, von der Erschaffung und dem Sündenfall an bis zur Erlösung u. s. w. dramatisch, durch agirende und gehörig ausgeputzte Personen, zur Glaubenserhebung der Zuschauer, darstellten; Christen, Heiden und Juden, Märtyrer, Heilige, Engel und Teufel, ja selbst die drei Personen der Gottheit, aber alle mit den nämlichen irdischen Leidenschaften und Gefühlen ausgerüstet und sie dramatisch äussernd, figurirten darin.'

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 240: 'Alles lebt in Beethovens Musik in dramatisch sinnlicher Anschauung, ergreift darin; wir fühlen die Angst Christi am Oelberge, in dem ersten Recitativ und Arie, von Christus gesungen, mit; wir glauben die rauhen und dennoch etwas bangen Krieger, die ihn fangen sollen, und die ängstlichen Jünger [...] zu hören und zu sehen; die teilnehmende Stimme des Engels spricht zu uns [...].'

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 240: 'Spohrs "letzte Dinge" haben dagegen gar keinen dramatischen Effekt, und können ihn ihrem innern Wesen nach nicht haben; sie streben nach einem höhern, uns über die Erde erhebenden. Der Dichter des Oratoriums, Rochlitz, hat es als wahrhafter Prophet gedichtet; es hat in keinem Satze

Originally, this 'prophetic' approach towards composition had been introduced by Handel as 'another genuinely Protestant idea for an oratorio' (*eine andre ächt evangelische Idee zu einem Oratorium*); in his *Messiah*, the composer had:

compiled a series of pronouncements of the Bible that articulate themselves partly plainly and partly symbolically and refer to the Messiah [...] while avoiding any poetic, historical and dramatic apparatus; and he added a music that [...] acts as higher proclamation that disdains the lower realm of sensuality and makes the mind [*Gemüth*] perceive the transcendental [*Uebersinnliche*] in order make sure that these pronouncements find [...] reflective resonance in our mind [...].¹¹⁰

Mendelssohn's views on the role of dramatic, narrative, reflective and symbolic elements in church music with regard to his aims of revelation, however, differed significantly from Kretschmer's in the beginning. This is corroborated both in Mendelssohn's correspondence and the style of his compositions. As has already been mentioned, the admiration that he expressed in his letters for the *St. Matthew Passion* as a Protestant piece of religious proclamation was most likely inspired by Bach's brilliant use of narrative and dramatic elements. Mendelssohn's later writings develop this thought further in his discussions of the oratorio *St. Paul* – a work that, in Glenn Stanley's eyes, can be considered as 'Mendelssohn's application of Kunstreligion theory, to recreate in music a true ("as if") religious experience in a concert piece' in a way that 'demonstrate[s] Mendelssohn's skill and sensitivity' both 'to Bach's style' and to 'the meditative nature' of his Passion chorales.¹¹¹

mit der Erde und ihrer Sinnlichkeit zu thun, sondern richtet unsern ahnenden Blick fortdauernd nach oben, in die Regionen, welche das Reich der Religion sind.' This oratorio was performed as *The Last Judgement* at the Norwich Festival of 1830 and is not to be confounded with Spohr's first work in the genre, *Das jüngste Gericht* (written in 1812).

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 239: 'Er stellte eine Reihe reiner, theils direkt, theils sich symbolisch aus[s]prechender Verkündigungen der Bibel, auf den Messias [...] sich beziehend, zusammen, mit Vermeidung [...] alles formell poetischen, historischen und dramatischen Apparats; und gesellte ihnen die Musik bei, [...] die [...] selbst eine höhere, das niedere Reich der Sinnlichkeit verschmähende, das ewige Uebersinnliche, das Gemüth ahnen lassende Verkündigung sei [...], damit diese Verkündigungen [...] reflektirenden Wiederhall [...] in unserm Gemüthe finden [...].'

¹¹¹ Glenn Stanley, 'Bach's "Erbe": The Chorale in the German Oratorio of the Early Nineteenth Century,' *19th-Century Music*, vol. 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1987), 121-149, at 131-132 & 129.

In his correspondence about *St. Paul* prior to its première at the Lower Rhenish Music Festival in Düsseldorf, Mendelssohn's appreciation of dramatic and narrative elements comes clearly across in his explicit wish that, just as in the *St. Matthew Passion*, in the finished work 'the narrative and the dramatic representation are blended.'¹¹² This approach is in line with nineteenth-century conventions of the composition of oratorios. Christian Martin Schmidt has summarized the contemporary view that favoured a balanced use of narrative and dramatic elements in oratorios with much insight:

The traditional definition of the oratorio [...] characterizes the oratorio within the spectrum of vocal music as a genre based on epic means of expression. In normative analogy to classifications of the dramatic – epic – and lyric in literary theory the genre is, on the one hand, distinguished from the opera which represents the dramatic and, on the other hand, from the song which is considered lyric. The element that gives shape to it is, thus, the epic recitative, in which a narrator ('orator,' evangelist) recites the plot and creates the context-forming principle for the development of the arias and choruses. The expressive bent of these latter pieces, which one may describe as reflective or contemplative, that is, drawn to a lyrical tone, [...] did not conflict with the basic concept of the epic. The disproportionate inclusion of the dramatic, by contrast, was considered threatening to the oratorio in its substance, since such an extension of expressive means was seen as an objectionable transgression that would result in nothing else than a deficient opera. Within the discussion of the constitutive features of the oratorio genre that continued throughout the nineteenth century with astonishing intensity, the question of the tolerable proportion of dramatic elements has been of central importance.¹¹³

¹¹² Mendelssohn, letter of 6 September 1833 to Julius Schubring, in *SB* (2010), 3:262-263, at 262.

¹¹³ Christian Martin Schmidt, 'Zwischen Eschatologie und geschlossenem Kunstwerk: Gattungskonzept und Bibelinterpretation in Mendelssohns Oratorium *Elias* op. 70 MWV A 25, *Denkströme*, no. 7 (2011), 122-150, at 134: 'Die traditionelle Definition des Oratoriums, die zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts noch verbindlich war, legt das Oratorium innerhalb des Spektrums der Vokalmusik auf die Ausdrucksform des Epischen fest. In normativer Analogie zur literaturtheoretischen Trias Dramatisch – Episch – Lyrisch wird die Gattung einerseits von der Oper, die das Dramatische repräsentiert, andererseits vom Lied, das als lyrisch gilt, abgegrenzt. Fundament der Gattung Oratorium ist somit das epische Rezitativ, in dem ein Erzähler ("Orator", Evangelist) den Gang der Handlung vorträgt und die Zusammenhang stiftende Grundlage zur Entfaltung von Arien und Chören schafft. Deren Ausdruckshaltung, die man als reflexiv oder betrachtend beschreiben, d. h. dem lyrischen Ton nahestehend ansehen kann, stand [...] nicht im Widerspruch zu dem epischen Grundkonzept. Als Bedrohung des Oratoriums in seiner Substanz dagegen wurde die allzu deutliche Einbeziehung des Dramatischen empfunden; denn eine solche Erweiterung der Ausdrucksformen empfand man als unzulässige Grenzüberschreitung, die in nichts anderem resultieren könne als einer defizitären Oper. Innerhalb der Diskussion über die konstitutiven Merkmale der Gattung Oratorium, die während des gesamten 19. Jahrhunderts mit erstaunlicher Intensität geführt wurde, ist die Frage nach dem vertretbaren Anteil des dramatischen Elements von zentraler Bedeutung.'

In Mendelssohn's case, reflections on the dramatic and narrative constitution of the oratorio were connected with an aim to create a work that could serve as proclamation – this is suggested by his concern that none 'of the main points in the narrative and the facts, and also in the character and teaching of St. Paul, have either been omitted or falsified.'¹¹⁴

Mendelssohn's reflections on the role of the chorale in his first oratorio can be explained by reference to lines of thought developed in aesthetic and theological debates on genres of church music. He seems to have shared an understanding of the genre as both a proclamative and a reflective element that was widespread in the nineteenth and earlier centuries. In these periods, chorales were supposed to provide elements of the oratorio's message and furthermore comment on the story from a present-day point of view while, at the same time, inspiring, in Kretschmer's terms, 'reflective resonance' in the listener.¹¹⁵ The suitability of the chorale as a means of preaching and a vehicle of religious revelation had also been discussed in Protestant theology since the Reformation. Kerygmatic theology principally approved of religious proclamation by means of song and chant. This favourable view of music had already influenced Luther's composition of Catechism Songs and his theological thought. In his preamble to the Wittenberg Hymn Book (1524) he had emphasized that by means of the chorale 'God's Word and Christian doctrine are furthered and practised in many ways' (*Gottes Wort und Christliche Leere, auff allerley weyse getrieben und geübt warden*) that would 'advance the holy gospel and bring momentum to it' (*das heylige Evangelion [...] zu treyben und ynn Schwanck zu treiben*).¹¹⁶ In the nineteenth century, this thought was challenged by theologians like Schleiermacher. He defined hymns as the counterpoise to the sermon, primarily meant to invoke and represent a congregation's religious feeling, to stir Christian consciousness and to express the praise of God.¹¹⁷ In nineteenth-century Protestant

¹¹⁴ Mendelssohn, letter of 6 September 1833 to Julius Schubring, in *SB* (2010), 3:262-263, at 262.

¹¹⁵ Kretschmer, 'Drittes Musikfest an der Elbe,' 239.

¹¹⁶ Martin Luther, 'Vorrhede Martini Luther,' in Johann Walter, *Wittenbergisch Geistlich Gesangbuch, von 1524 zu drei, vier und fünf Stimmen. Neue Partitur-Ausgabe nebst Klavierauszug*, ed. Otto Kade (Berlin: T. Trautwein'sche Buch- und Musikalienhandlung, 1878), 29-30.

¹¹⁷ See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Die Praktische Theologie nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*, ed. Jacob Frerichs (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1850), 13, 168 & 757.

liturgy this view was acknowledged in a clear distinction between the word as proclamation (the sermon) and the congregation's response in prayer and chant.¹¹⁸

Mendelssohn's use of chorales in his *St. Paul* oratorio may have been inspired both by Luther and Schleiermacher, as it turned the audiences' thoughts toward the church and was meant to support the spiritual and religious message that he wanted to convey. In light of his selection of Lutheran chorales, he seems to have been eager to use texts that articulated the belief in one God and feelings of gratitude and praise towards him. This two-fold message comes across in the oratorio most notably in No. 3 *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* ('To God on high be thanks and praise') and No. 36 *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott* ('We Believe in One God'), the Lutheran versions of the *Gloria* and *Credo*. In this context, his self-admitted concern to incorporate Lutheran tunes and texts into the libretto, as they were printed in hymn books and had formed the basis of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*,¹¹⁹ hints at intentions to uplift his listeners' spirits and spread religious messages that had, he believed, also been important to Bach. After all, he had been intimately familiar with the latter's church settings of identical texts since his youth.¹²⁰

If considerations of preaching and proclamation were indeed the intention behind Mendelssohn's appreciation of the Lutheran chorale, then recent scholarly interpretations of his integration of popular chorales into his symphonies, solo concertos, sonatas and songs as an attempt to explore the possibility of religious revelation in secular music, might indeed not be far-fetched.¹²¹ The allusions to chorales in Mendelssohn's second symphony are easily detectable, as is his attempt

¹¹⁸ This distinction was mainly inspired by the Torgauer Formel ('Torgau Formula,' 1576), a manifesto of Lutheran theology.

¹¹⁹ See Mendelssohn, letter of 22 December 1832 to Schubring, in *SB* (2010), 3:89-92, at 90.

¹²⁰ There are various settings by Bach of the chorales *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr* (BWV 260, 662, 663, 664, 675, 676, 677, 711, 715-717, 771) and *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott* (BWV 437, 680, 681, 740, 765, 1098). Mendelssohn seems to have become familiar with the four-part vocal settings through Zelter, as they were included in the chorale volumes that his teacher used for instruction. (See *Johann Sebastian Bachs vierstimmige Choralgesänge* (Leipzig: Johann Gottlob Immanuel Breitkopf, 1785-1787), 2:70 & 76, 3:144, and 4:183 & 189.)

¹²¹ Theo Haupt has argued that Mendelssohn's secular oeuvre 'attests to the fact that art music proclaiming [...] the biblical message and the *Gottesdienst* do not exclude each other' (*dass die biblische Botschaft verkündende und umschreibende Kunstmusik und der Gottesdienst sich nicht ausschliessen*). Felix's way of composing annihilates any separation between sacred and secular music in an attempt to turn all music into a 'sermon' (*Predigt*). See Theo Haupt, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und der protestantische Gottesdienst* (unpublished monograph, 2010), 71.

to structure several of his works for piano and organ through chorale quotations.¹²² His integration of Bach's cantata arrangement of Luther's chorale *Ein' feste Burg* ('A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,' BWV 80) into the orchestral texture of the final movement of his Reformation Symphony of 1829-1830 directly relates to Bach.

Considering Mendelssohn's general eagerness to integrate baroque structural forms into his works, however, his predilections towards allusions to the chorale in his compositions also attest to a certain bent towards what Garratt has called 'compositional historicism.'¹²³ This movement inspired composers to adopt styles and approaches that drew their inspiration from historical materials as well as techniques of artistic schools and movements of the past, and its members held the chorale in high regard, especially in the shape that Bach had given to it. Mendelssohn's own idealisation of the church and oratorio styles by earlier composers transformed his compositional style and idiom especially in the 1830s.¹²⁴

Mendelssohn's reflections on the composition of a second oratorio in the 1840s followed revised rationales. Against Schubring's advice, he decided to use only one Lutheran chorale in his new work. This decision was inspired by an insight that the chorale called forth associations of Protestant congregational singing which Mendelssohn considered irreconcilable with the old-testamential content and message that he wanted to convey. At the same time, he was reluctant to dispense with chorales altogether, since he considered the style and 'the colour of a Chorale' indispensable expressive means in oratorio compositions.¹²⁵ Furthermore, he wanted his latest composition to be primarily symbolic and dramatic rather than reflective or narrative. Even though the subjects that he took into consideration changed – first he aimed to devote the work to Elijah or St. Peter (July-December 1837), then to Bonifacius (November-December 1838), John the Baptist (January-February 1840)

¹²² See the comments about Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* ('Hymn of Praise') Symphony Op. 52 and his instrumental works in Eva-Maria von Adam-Schmidmeier, 'Priester des Publikums: Felix Mendelssohn im Kontext einer neuen "Kunstreligion,"' *Musik und Unterricht*, no. 85 (2006), 28-39, at 32-33. The most prominent example of chorale quotation in Mendelssohn's pianistic oeuvre is his use of the tune of the chorale *Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit* ('Before your throne I now appear') in the final movement of the Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 66, which was also set to music by Bach.

¹²³ Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 81.

¹²⁴ See *ibid.*

¹²⁵ See Mendelssohn, letter of 30 December 1846 to William Bartholomew. Autograph manuscript. The British Library, London, Add. Ms. 47859A, *Meyerstein Bequest* XVII, fols. 4-5.

as well as earth, hell and heaven (February 1840) – he did not waver in his conviction that the subject of the oratorio

should not be treated historically, according to my feeling [...]. I think, therefore, it must be symbolic, though all the historical points might eventually be introduced [...] – all this not in an historical, but a prophetic light within a larger context, if I may so express myself [...] by means of scriptural passages [...].¹²⁶

Mendelssohn's terminology, in this context, seems to be inspired by Goethe. As Schmidt has established, in his letters to Schubring, Mendelssohn used the term 'historical' (*historisch*) in the sense of 'epic' (*episch*).¹²⁷ In the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* ('German Dictionary') by the Brothers Grimm, this synonymous terminological understanding is referenced in a quote from *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* ('The Sorrows of Young Werther,' 1774): 'the letter will be agreeable to you, as it is historical (only contains narration [and] no reflection).'¹²⁸ Mendelssohn's meaning of 'symbolic' (*symbolisch*) seems to have been inspired by Goethe's understanding of 'symbolism' (*Symbolik*), as outlined in his collection of aphorisms entitled *Maximen und Reflexionen* ('Maxims and Reflections,' published in 1833): 'Symbolism transforms the appearance into an idea, the idea into an image, in such a way that the idea remains infinitely powerful and unattainable in the image, and even if expressed in any other language, would remain unattainable.'¹²⁹

This assumption of an influence by the poet seems likely. Goethe's aesthetic theories had an immense influence on Romantic understandings of symbolism in art. An example that reflects Mendelssohn's word usage inspired by Goethe can be found in his correspondence of 1837. According to Baur, Mendelssohn considered Saint Peter to be 'a symbolic person' (*eine symbolische Person*), and he claimed 'to find an idea revealed in Peter's character, even if only in what the Bible has to tell us about

¹²⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 14 July 1837 to Julius Schubring, in *SB* (2012), 5:304-305, trans. adapted from *FML*, 268-270, at 268-269.

¹²⁷ Schmidt, 'Gattungskonzept und Bibelinterpretation in Mendelssohns Oratorium Elias,' 139.

¹²⁸ *DWB*, s.v. 'Historisch,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GH10105> (accessed 11 May 2013): 'Der Brief wird dir recht sein, er ist ganz historisch (*enthält nur bericht, keine reflexion*).'

¹²⁹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, ed. Siegfried Seidel (Berlin: Aufbau, 1960), 638, trans. adapted from *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: The Romantic Ironists and Goethe*, ed. Kathleen Wheeler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 229.

him' (*eine Idee in des Petrus Person ausgeprägt zu finden, und zwar auch nur in dem, was die Bibel von ihm erzählt*). As Mendelssohn believed, this fact justified an attempt to explore the theological importance of the apostle in a musical work.¹³⁰

In the end, however, it was Elijah who, as a 'proper prophet through and through' (*durch und durch Propheten*), inspired Mendelssohn to compose an oratorio that resembles 'a theatrical piece without any *visible* [but symbolic] action' (*ein Theaterstück nur ohne sichtbare Action*). Mendelssohn was adamant that this piece should be based on words from the Old Testament that throw revealing light on this 'strong, zealous [...], even bad-tempered, angry and brooding' (*stark, eifrig auch wohl böse und zornig und finster*) figure and that the 'general significance' (*allgemeine Bedeutung*) of the text was revealed in a way that reaches the heart of the listener.¹³¹ According to him, epic – or narrative – elements were not apt to achieve this aim.¹³² He insisted that the narration of the action should be minimal and used merely as a minor formative element, as it failed to leave a lasting impression on the listener and was incompatible with the plot and the vividly symbolic manner of representation that he had in mind. Elsewhere, he argued that, in a setting revolving around the life of Elijah, 'the dramatic element should predominate, as it should in all Old Testament subjects.'¹³³ Drawn to Goethe's aesthetic thought, he seems to have felt that a dramatic setting alone was apt to reveal the action's 'true symbolism, where the particular represents the general, not as a dream or shadow, but as a vivid and immediate revelation of the unfathomable.'¹³⁴ Accordingly, he decided that '[t]he personages should act and speak as if they were living beings' and the music should re-create the 'real world, such as you find in every chapter of the Old Testament.' At the same time, 'the contemplative and pathetic element [...] ought to

¹³⁰ Ernst Friedrich Baur's letter of 28 and 30 July 1837, that quotes from a letter by Mendelssohn of mid-July 1837 that is now lost, can be found in *SB* (2012), 5:664-665, at 665.

¹³¹ Mendelssohn, letters of 2 November & 6 December 1838 to Schubring, in *SB* (2012), 6:224-225, at 225 & 247-248, at 247.

¹³² See idem, letter of 2 November 1838 to Schubring, in *SB* (2012), 6:224-225, at 224, trans. in Frederick George Edwards, *The History of Mendelssohn's Oratorio 'Elijah'* (London: Novello and Company, 1896), 13: 'no epic narrative must be introduced.'

¹³³ Mendelssohn, letter of 6 December 1838 to Schubring, in *SB* (2012), 6: 247, trans. in Edwards, *The History of Mendelssohn's Oratorio 'Elijah'*, 17.

¹³⁴ Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, 520, trans. adapted from idem, *Maxims and Reflections*, ed. Peter Hutchinson, trans. Elisabeth Stopp (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 37.

be entirely conveyed to our understanding by the words and the mood of the acting personages.'¹³⁵

These theoretically reflected principles become apparent in the various drafts and versions of the *Elijah* score with increasing clarity. Based on a symbolic interpretation of holy scripture, the oratorio dispenses with historical narration – the biblical account is articulated in what may be called 'soloistic' or 'semi-dialogues' (*Halbdialoge* that compare to rhetorical questions in that no answer is given) and, occasionally, the narration of the events is left to the choir and distributed among its polyphonic voices. The structure of the work is based on a plot that is divided into scenes, and as Mendelssohn emphasized to Schubring, the 'heart-affecting sense of the Scriptural words' becomes apparent in 'appeal and rejoinder, question and answer, sudden interruptions, etc., etc.'¹³⁶ By this means, Mendelssohn arrives at a new holistic approach to composition that tightly integrates captivating dramatic action and dialogue with biblical narration, while providing a symbolic interpretation of holy scripture.¹³⁷ In the process, he accomplished that which he had doubted to be possible in 1835: a setting that is both edifying and revealing, a musical work that can act as a 'missionary' and 'congregational sermon' outside church and a piece the 'dramatic' and 'religious' truths of which simultaneously touch Catholic and Protestant listeners' senses, hearts and minds.

¹³⁵ Mendelssohn, letter of 6 December 1838 to Schubring, in *SB* (2012), 6: 247, trans. in Edwards, *The History of Mendelssohn's Oratorio 'Elijah'*, 17.

¹³⁶ Idem, letter of 2 November 1838 to Schubring, in *SB* (2012), 6: 224, trans. in Edwards, *The History of Mendelssohn's Oratorio 'Elijah'*, 13.

¹³⁷ How Mendelssohn has articulated his 'symbolic' vision of holy scripture in his libretto has occupied the minds of his contemporaries. According to them, the text on which the oratorio is based (1 Kings 17-19), 'is rendered symbolic by its preparation for Christianity.' By selecting a series of prophecies that carried 'long-term implications' for events in the New Testament, Mendelssohn was 'sparking recollections in the listener's mind of how these prophecies were fulfilled' in the Gospels. Elijah is depicted as a Christ-like figure who 'helped to transform the Old into the New Covenant' and prepared the way for Christianity. See Otto Jahn, 'Ueber F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy's Oratorium Elias,' *AMZ*, vol. 50, no. 9 (1 March 1848), 137-43, at 138, trans. in *Mendelssohn and his World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 364-81, at 366; Sposato, 'The Oratorios of Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition' (2000), 357; idem, *Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (2006), 142; and Schubring, letter of 15 June 1846 to Mendelssohn, trans. in Edwards, *The History of Mendelssohn's Oratorio 'Elijah'*, 25-26, at 25.

* * *

As the comparative analysis of the composer's correspondence given in this chapter suggests, Mendelssohn's attitudes towards music as a language of feelings and of revelation were versatile and subject to change. His view of musical feelings was representative of *Kunstreligion* only to a limited extent. He certainly attached much importance to feelings in music, but he generally refrained from extolling the emotive contents and powers of music in religious or hyperbolic terms. He believed that the feelings expressed and evoked by sound originate from a person's inner self, and that they are neither intrinsically divine nor of an ineffable, infinite or unspeakable nature. His aesthetic thought clearly differentiated between the human and the divine, which reflects central tenets of his religious belief. He associated music with the world of human feelings and conditions of the soul. In his view, musical sound gave a definite shape to feelings that were universally shared among human beings, and it communicated these in a way that was understood by everyone. While his contemporaries came to sacralise earlier ideologies of feeling, Mendelssohn was leaning towards traditional notions that characterized the inner purpose and essence of music as an expression of human feelings and emphasized music's benevolent effect on its listeners' ethos. This comparatively conservative stance seems closely linked with Mendelssohn's reception of Renaissance art that instilled into him ambitions to achieve the same mastery of gesture to express feelings in art that painters of this period displayed in their works.

The manifold kinds of sacralised feelings that nineteenth-century authors conceptualized, permeated writings on sacred and secular music in equal measure. Mendelssohn's conceptions of the role that feelings played in sacred and secular music were more differentiated than those of his contemporaries. While others wrote very generally about the emotive effect of music, he was convinced that feelings of worship or devoutness played only a minor role in secular works. Similar distinctions also determined his conception of music and art as revelatory languages. Strictly speaking, he considered only religious works such as Italian Renaissance paintings and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* as artistic achievements that revealed religious truths and beliefs. Overall, Mendelssohn's position on religious feeling and

revelation assimilated and realigned views of ethos and of church music that prevailed in the writings of members of his circle of relatives and friends, including Moses Mendelssohn, Zelter, Wilmsen, Baur and Droysen.

Since it was difficult for Mendelssohn to put into words the messages that musical sound conveyed to him and was capable of expressing, he resorted to the medium of sound itself in order to express his impressions of music in performance and composition. In this context, his revival of the *St. Matthew Passion* may be understood as his attempt to instruct his audiences in certain religious truths that he came to perceive and appreciate while listening to the work, even though his burgeoning musical tastes, stylistic preferences and pragmatic considerations might have given additional impetus to his endeavour. On the one hand, his perception of the sound in the work as a 'language of biblical paraphrase' seems to have inspired a presentation of the music that remained close to the original score in accordance with ideals of *Werktreue*. On the other hand, his cuts to the libretto and arias seem to have been intended in equal measure to accommodate the musical knowledge and tastes of his audience, and to make the verbal message of the work unambiguous both for people like him who struggled with the semantic arbitrariness of words, and for others who were more versed in understanding verbal rather than musical language.

His contact with Renaissance art and his experience of listening to Bach's works also deeply influenced his composition. He hoped to articulate religious thoughts and feelings in his oratorios and other works, and he employed dramatic, narrative and reflective devices that he had previously detected in the *St. Matthew Passion* in order to do so. While his leanings towards 'compositional historicism' and aesthetic preferences in favour of Lutheran chorales were most certainly determinative, it seems that he chose certain means of expression formerly employed by Bach also in the belief that they were most suitable to articulate his own religious thought, and to explore the truth of an art-religious tenet that he had questioned previously: that all music can serve religious revelation. As will become clear in the following chapter, to choose the appropriate musical means and contents for his expressive ends was a matter of artistic and moral conscience to Mendelssohn.

Chapter 4. *Andacht* and *Ernst* as Moral Imperatives of Aesthetic Religiousness

In scholarly literature, the eighteenth century is often referred to as the ‘Age of Morals’ due to its thriving philosophical discourse on the constitution of morals and deontology. This interest in ethical matters lived on into the nineteenth century; many authors of this period emphasized the emerging moral values of respectability, industriousness, duty and integrity, while reinterpreting ethical notions developed in the Enlightenment and *Empfindsamkeit* periods. Among these was Jean Paul who, in his treatise *Levana oder Erziehlehre* (1807), redefined religion as ‘the poetry of morality’ (*die Poesie der Moral*) and emphasized that ‘religiousness, in its highest degree, is identical with morality.’¹

In this general climate of moral renewal, values of *Ernst* (‘earnestness,’ ‘seriousness’ or ‘sincerity’) became increasingly widespread and religiously conflated. As Helmut Loos has pointed out, in the early nineteenth century the adjective *ernst* was often coupled with the attribute *heilig* (‘holy,’ ‘saintly’ or ‘sacred’) or used as its synonym in writings on the arts.² In the musico-poetic aphorisms of Schumann’s diary entries with the title *Hottentottiana* (1828-1830), for example, he described how ‘seriously and saintly a luminous genius hovers over the urn of the good man.’³ On a similar note, the constitution of the Berlin *Singakademie* of 1816 declared that ‘[t]he Singakademie is an arts organization for holy and serious music.’⁴ This dual characterization of music conditioned an increasing emphasis on aesthetic and ethical values of propriety and morality to which composers were supposed to conform.

¹ Jean Paul Richter, *Levana; Or, The Doctrine of Education* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 57 & 54.

² Helmut Loos, ‘Robert Schumanns kunstreligiöse Sendung,’ in *Robert Schumann Persönlichkeit, Werk und Wirkung; Bericht über die internationale Musikwissenschaftliche Konferenz vom 22. bis 24. April 2010 in Leipzig* (Leipzig: Schroeder, 2011), 354-363, at 357.

³ Robert Schumann, *Tagebücher, Band I, 1827-1838*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: VEZB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), 76: ‘ernst u. heilig schwebt ein leuchtender Genius über die Urne des guten Menschen’

⁴ ‘Grundriß der Verfassung der Sing-Akademie zu Berlin (Berlin, 1816),’ in *Sing-Akademie zu Berlin. Festschrift zum 175jährigen Bestehen*, ed. W. Bollert (Berlin: Rembrandt Verlag, 1966), 61-68, at 65: ‘Die Singakademie ist ein Kunstverein für die heilige und ernste Musik.’ The genre classification

As will be shown, Mendelssohn did not remain untouched by these developments.⁵ While he did not use the phrase *ernst und heilig*, he was convinced that serious music (by which he understood religious music, in particular) had to fulfill ethical and moral demands in order to deserve the title ‘holy.’ As Schumann recalled, he put enormous value on ‘the highest moral and artistic maxims’ as central components of his own religiosity and outlook as an artist.⁶

The following sections will draw attention to facets of Mendelssohn’s mindset as a composer, performer, conductor and listener that attest to an approach to art that is both religious and ethical. In this context, Mendelssohn’s passing references to *Andacht* deserve further mention, since his ethical understanding of the term influenced related moral concepts that were associated with religious and aesthetic *Ernst*. As will be shown in the first section, the vocabulary of *Andacht* in Mendelssohn’s correspondence received its definite shape both through his involvement with Bach and the *St. Matthew Passion* and through his visit to Italy in the early 1830s. As Mendelssohn’s engagement with *Andacht* was rather short-lived and receded all the more as he became more professionally engaged in music as a conductor and composer, the following sections focus on his conceptions of *Ernst*, which remained central to his outlook as an artist right until the late years of his life. Various translations as ‘seriousness,’ ‘earnestness’ and ‘sincerity,’ in Mendelssohn’s writings, *Ernst* denoted attitudes of love, awe and ‘zeal’ (*Eifer*) and came to interact with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century notions of ‘education’ (*Bildung*), ‘spirit’ (*Geist*), moral conscience and honesty.

‘serious music’ (*ernste Musik*), that rose to prominence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is related to this usage.

⁵ Mendelssohn’s thought on aesthetic morality was most certainly influenced by Jean Paul’s *Erziehlehre* and other contemporary writings. This is suggested by his frequent references to the poet’s works in his early letters, and by Schumann’s later assertion that ‘[h]e knew almost all the important passages of the Bible, Shakespeare, Goethe, Jean Paul (as well as Homer) by heart.’ Robert Schumann, ‘Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy vom Jahre 1835 bis zu seinem Tode,’ in *Musik-Konzepte* Heft 14/15, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1980), 104, trans. adapted from Benedict Taylor, *Mendelssohn, Time and Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 156.

⁶ Schumann, ‘Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy,’ 113: ‘Höchste sittliche und künstlerische Maxime; daher unerbittlich, scheinbar manchmal schroff u. inhuman[.] Seine Religiosität.’

Mendelssohn's devout approach to composition in engagement with Bach

Processes and features of spiritual contemplation conforming to early nineteenth-century German understandings of *Andacht* not only influenced the way in which Mendelssohn listened to music and how he interpreted the behaviour of the *Singakademie* at the 1829 performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*. A similar devotional state of mind was also a necessity and a moral requirement for him in order to write music. This fact arises clearly from a letter of June 1829, in which he confided in his parents that he had been unable to keep his promise to compose a concert aria for the soprano Pauline Anna Milder-Hauptmann (1785-1838).⁷ He confessed that he had encountered 'so many new and unexpected things disturbing [his] inner peace' in London and, as a result, had failed to find 'enough thoughts and absorption [*Andacht*] in order to compose.'⁸ This succession of thoughts brings together central characteristics of devotional contemplation: an inner attitude or mood of tranquillity, a receptiveness to ideas, and concentrated thinking.

The thought that compositional principles of *Andacht* imposed moral obligations on composers appears in Mendelssohn's correspondence with the critic Friedrich Rochlitz and the composer Louis Spohr of February 1835. Joining their discussion about whether the words of Christ could be set dramatically in an oratorio, he emphasized to Spohr that whatever 'a true musician writes down with sincerely felt reverence [*Andacht*] can never desecrate the religious words on which his setting is based.'⁹ As this succession of thoughts suggests, Mendelssohn considered imperatives of *Andacht* a matter of urgency especially when composers set religious themes and topics to music. In Spohr's case, he may have felt that an exhortation to *Andacht* was particularly necessary. Six years earlier, Spohr's oratorio *Die Letzten Dinge* had met with Mendelssohn's unforgiving scorn due to the profane musical

⁷ Earlier on, Mendelssohn had dedicated the aria *Tutto è silenzio* (1829) to the soprano.

⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 19 June 1829 to his family, in *SB* (2008), 1:315-318, at 315.

⁹ Idem, letter of 5 February 1835 to Louis Spohr, in *SB* (2011), 4:158-161, at 160: 'Denn [...] was ein rechter Musiker mit Andacht und von Herzen hinschreibt das wird wohl keine Profanation sein [...].'

setting. While Mendelssohn confessed a distaste for the plot in a letter written shortly after he had heard the work performed in Hamburg in April 1829,¹⁰ his anger was directed primarily at the music that, in his view, desecrated the words through an abundant use of dramatic effects and a certain lack of spiritual depth. This becomes obvious from his rather harsh review of the piece that he provided to his mother: ‘the composition was simply disgraceful, people here mistake dullness [*Mattigkeit*] and boredom for edification, and find the music holy [*heilig*]; in fact it is profane [*unheilig*], and a sinful play of trifles.’¹¹

Mendelssohn seems to have shared the contemporary view that the oratorio was too ‘full of force and art in the fugue movements’ and ‘expression [...] in the arias’ in order to be regarded as religious music.¹² Spohr had in fact adopted a rather operatic style which displayed an abundant use of intricate chromatic harmony and masterly orchestration in this work. This approach ran counter to Mendelssohn’s moral and aesthetic orientations that he expressed in a free associative play with the religious and figurative meanings of the antonymic terms ‘holy’ and ‘profane.’ Reminiscent of theological terminology, he applied the attribute ‘profane’ in order to characterize the object of his judgement as ‘sinful.’¹³ At the same time, he associated its antonym ‘holy’ with a certain style. Inspired by aesthetic ideals brought forward by members of the Cecilian Movement of church reform, he favoured inventive and expressive simplicity in religious music as opposed to anything superfluous and formulaic that he perceived as empty in expression and ineffective in uplifting the spirits of listeners.

¹⁰ The libretto of this oratorio was written by Rochlitz. He compiled the text from quotations and paraphrases from Revelation, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

¹¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 14 April 1829 to Lea and Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:263-265, at 264, trans. adapted from idem, *A Life in Letters*, ed. Rudolf Elvers and trans. Craig Tomlinson (London: Cassell Publishers, 1986), 56-58, at 56.

¹² See, for example, the comments about religious compositions by Mozart, Haydn and Spohr in C. B. von Miltitz, ‘Was heisst klassisch in der Musik?’, *AMZ*, vol. 37, no. 51 (23 December 1835), 841-843, at 843, trans. as ‘What is the Meaning of “Classical” in a Musical Sense’ in *Musical Library: Monthly Supplement*, no. 25 (April 1836), 64-65 at 64.

¹³ See, for example, ‘Unheiligkeit,’ *UKW*, (1746), 49:1630: ‘Unholiness is the opposite and counterpart of holiness [...]; accordingly, unholiness [...] is partly also a kind of premeditated sinfulness’ (*Unheiligkeit ist das Gegentheil und Widerspiel der Heiligkeit [...]; also ist die Unheiligkeit [...] theils auch eine vorsetzliche Sündlichkeit.*)

Comments about devotional or ‘holy’ attitudes towards composition such as the ones discussed so far are extremely rare in Mendelssohn’s later correspondence. In view of this fact, the question arises as to why his disposition for *Andacht* and references to it were so prominent in the late 1820s and the early 1830s. His comments about *Andacht* in June 1829 were, surely, inspired by the experience of the *St Matthew Passion* performances three months earlier. As outlined in chapter two, in subsequent descriptions of the event, several members of the audience and critics in attendance had resorted to notions of *Andacht* and concepts related to worship in order to portray the progress of the concert, the choir’s performance and the reactions of the audience. Mendelssohn was certainly aware of how his conducting debut had been received by his family and friends as well as by the general public and the critical press. Afterwards, his memory of the rehearsals and concerts as well as their reception as events of worship was kept awake through letters from his relatives and friends who had been present or involved in the work’s performance. Worth mentioning in this context is Fanny, who had sung as an alto in the chorus; on 3 June 1829 she informed Felix that his friends Baur and Schubring preferred to sing and play extracts from the passion instead of praying at night or attending Sunday church services.¹⁴

Mendelssohn’s reference to devout composition in his correspondence with Rochlitz and Spohr of 1835 seems not directly related to Bach, even though the composer’s name was mentioned at least once in their letters.¹⁵ Mendelssohn’s words rather reflect his stance on church composition that received its definite shape through his work on his first oratorio *St. Paul* which had occupied him since the previous year. As has been shown previously, this composition inspired a comprehensive engagement with Bachian models. Beyond that, it represents

¹⁴ Fanny Mendelssohn, letter of 3 June 1829 to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, trans. in *LFH*, 43-47, at 44-45: ‘[a]sk Rietz, who says that when Schubring goes home at night he sings from the Passion; ask Baur, who doesn’t go to church on Sunday but plays from the Passion; and ask us—we also play and sing from the Passion.’

¹⁵ When Rochlitz commissioned Mendelssohn to write an oratorio and found out that Spohr was already in the process of setting his libretto *Das Ende des Gerechten* (‘The End of The Righteous,’ 1806/revised 1835), he compared both composers with Handel and Bach who had unknowingly composed the *Messiah* and the *St. Matthew Passion* at around the same time. See Friedrich Rochlitz,

‘a modern rumination about Bach’s immortal [*St. Matthew*] Passion’ while reflecting Mendelssohn’s own ‘spiritual journey’ and ‘growth,’ to use Larry Todd’s terms.¹⁶

The emergence and theological roots of concepts of *Ernst* in Mendelssohn’s correspondence

Elsewhere in his correspondence, Mendelssohn’s descriptions of processes and components of the reception, performance and composition of music apply concepts related to, but different from, *Andacht*. Predominant were references to notions of ‘earnestness’ (*Ernst*) or ‘sincerity,’ ‘earnestness’ and ‘seriousness’ (*Ernsthaftigkeit*), even though terms with related moral implications can be found, too. The underlying terminological and conceptual outlook might be best described by further reference to Lydia Goehr’s hierarchical classification of ideals, principles and concepts as ‘emergent’ and ‘regulative.’¹⁷ In its rare and rudimentary appearance in Mendelssohn’s writings, *Andacht* might be considered an emergent concept. Arising in 1826 in the letters of his youth, its meanings were possibly influenced by Mendelssohn’s reading of Forkel and Hegel. Then, it gained a more explicit shape through his experience of performing the *St. Matthew Passion*. Finally, its use declined after cultural encounters with non-devout audiences in Italy put its validity in question.

As suggested by documentary evidence given in chapter two,¹⁸ Mendelssohn’s conception of *Ernst* coincided with ideas of *Andacht* in the early 1830s in his descriptions of his devotional and sincere state of mind during Holy Week in Rome. In contrast to the latter, however, it ‘achieve[d] a position of regulative force’ in Mendelssohn’s discussion of musical and artistic matters possibly due to the fact that it was associated with a much wider range of ethical

letter of 7 December 1834 to Mendelssohn. Autograph manuscript. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Music Section, MS. M.D.M. d. 29/326.

¹⁶ R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 343.

¹⁷ For Lydia Goehr’s classifications see idem, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 101-106.

¹⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:283-293, at 283, quoted on p. 104 of this study.

behaviour in contemporary thought. As references to *Ernst* permeate Mendelssohn's correspondence throughout his life, new meanings and applications of the term developed. This brings to mind Lydia Goehr's assertion that '[a] regulative concept determines the normative content of subsidiary concepts as it does the content of associated ideals.'¹⁹ Basing her thinking on Foucault's concept of discursive formations in his theoretical work *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, she emphasizes 'that a given ideal, concept or principle is seen to determine or delimit through its regulative capacity a domain of behaviour, objects, rules, tools, and discursive practices.'²⁰ In Mendelssohn's writings such ideals of practice and behavioural imperatives include 'enthusiasm' (*Begeisterung*), 'spirit' (*Geist*), inner 'urge' or 'verve' (*Drang*) and 'conscientiousness' (*Gewissenhaftigkeit*). These ideals came to influence his perceptions of musical listening, composition and performance just as much as values of *Andacht* and *Ernst*. And like concepts in general, their emergence was rooted in theories, beliefs and values that interacted with each other.²¹

In the beginning, Mendelssohn's conceptions of *Andacht* and *Ernst* were based equally on quasi-religious values of awe and respect as well as on notions of the fear of God. The perception of nature as divine creation and the contemplation of art as a product of human creation produced, in his words, 'serious' (*ernsthafte*) moods in him that equalled the adoring attitudes of faithful believers. While staying in London in 1829, for example, Mendelssohn used to stroll through the fields in the night. During one of his excursions, the lights of the city conjured up religious associations of a halo in his mind:

if one walks on the field at night, one sees a bright, wide band of light across the whole horizon; this is due to the many lights that are scattered throughout the city; it looks like a halo and, the other day, made me very serious [*ernsthaft*] at midnight.²²

In Italy, Titian's devout and serious works caused similar sensations of awe in Mendelssohn. His reaction to the paintings that he saw in Venice resembles the

¹⁹ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 103.

²⁰ Ibid., 104.

²¹ Ibid., 107-8.

worship of the religiously sublime among believers and philosophers. According to him, the superior contents and meanings of Titian's works could only be experienced and not grasped with words:

[...] if I am to speak of Titian, I am impelled to become serious. [...]. His glorious 'Entombment,' and also the 'Assumption,' fully evince this. How Mary floats on the cloud, while a waving movement seems to pervade the whole picture [...]—all words seem poor and commonplace in comparison! [...]. The three angels too, on the right of the picture, are of the highest order of beauty, —pure, serene loveliness, so unconscious, so bright and so seraphic. I must however say a few words about the 'Entombment,' [...]; it surpasses everything [...].²³

Other early references to *Ernst* in association with ideas of 'love' (*Liebe*) and *Andacht* point to an influence from Luther. In his pamphlet *Ob man vor dem Sterben fliehen möge* ('Whether one may flee from dying,' 1527), Luther had emphasized the beneficial and rewarding value of 'love, devotion and sincerity' (*Liebe, Andacht und Ernst*) in combination. In his view, an adherence to these three modes of behaviour reflected a good morality that rejected ulterior motives for personal gain and thereby obviated God's anger:

Experience proves that those serving the sick with love, devotion, and sincerity are commonly protected [...]. It is not surprising, however, if those who care for a patient in greed and expectation of inheritance and seek their own profit in such deed, would eventually get infected [...], and [...] die before coming into possession of the property or inheritance.²⁴

Even though there is no evidence to indicate that Mendelssohn ever possessed editions of Luther's religious writings, the composer most certainly had acquired at least a rudimentary knowledge of Lutheran theology by the late 1820s, and his

²² Mendelssohn, letter of 15 May 1829 to his family, in *SB* (2008), 286-290, at 286.

²³ Idem, letter of 11 October 1830 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:101-105, at 104, trans. adapted from *LIS*, 29-37, at 34-36. Lady Wallace translates *so muß ich ernsthaft werden* with 'I must do so in a more reverent mood.'

²⁴ Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luthers Deutsche Schriften theils vollständig, theils in Auszügen. Ein Denkmahl der Dankbarkeit des deutschen Volkes im Jahr 1817 zur würdigen Feier des dritten Jubelfestes der protestantischen Kirchen*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Lomler (Gotha: Beckersche Buchhandlung, 1816), 2:159-184, at 172: 'Es beweist auch die Erfahrung, daß die, so solchen Kranken dienen mit Liebe, Andacht und Ernst, daß sie gemeiniglich behütet werden [...]. Wer aber eines Kranken wartet um Geizes und Erbtheils willen, und sucht das seine in solchem Werk; da ists

perusing of a collected edition of Luther's chorales, which Franz Hauser had lent him as reading material for his Grand Tour in Vienna in 1830, might have stirred memories of the reformer's thoughts on religion that he had become familiar with during his youth.²⁵ As early as 1825 Mendelssohn was disputing questions of confessional religion with Schubring.²⁶ As Schleiermacher's student,²⁷ Schubring surely benefited from his teacher's extensive knowledge of Luther's religious writings during these discussions. Schleiermacher himself had studied theology at the University of Halle, which, since its establishment in 1694, had developed into a thriving institutional centre of Lutheran pietism. He also served as professor of theology and philosophy there between 1804 and 1807. As Langton has highlighted, his work as a professor, pastor and theologian was aimed at reconciling the theologies of the Lutheran and Reformed churches.²⁸

Music as a commitment and a commodity during Mendelssohn's years of travel

In Mendelssohn's correspondence of the late 1820s and early 1830s, values of *Ernst*, *Andacht* and *Liebe* are semantically reduced to a common denominator. Usually, the meanings of these three terms derive from Luther's theology and designate a pure commitment to an action for its own sake as well as altruistic behaviour that disregards ulterior motives such as private or professional gain, personal profit or enjoyment. One such designation can be found in another letter by Mendelssohn in

auch nicht Wunder, daß er zuletzt vergiftet werde [...], daß er [...] auch sterbe, ehe denn er das Gut oder Erbe besitze.'

²⁵ The relevant edition is the following one: Martin Luther, *D. M. Luthers geistliche Lieder nebst dessen Gedanken über die Musica*, ed. Karl G. Grell (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1817). Mendelssohn refers to it, among others, in his letter of 5 September 1830 to Eduard Devrient, in *SB* (2009), 2:93-96, at 96.

²⁶ According to Schubring, 'Mendelssohn's character had a deep feeling of religion for its basis. That this wanted the specifically church colouring is a fact on which we disputed a great deal in our earlier years.' See Julius Schubring, 'Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy,' *Daheim*, vol. 2 (1866), 373-376, at 373, trans. (anon.) as 'Reminiscences of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy,' in *Musical World*, vol. 44, nos. 19 & 20 (12 and 19 May 1866), 300-302 & 318-319.

²⁷ Schubring started his theology studies with Schleiermacher at the University of Berlin during Easter 1825 and was introduced to the Mendelssohns by the poet Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827) shortly after. See Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 147.

which he refers to Titian's paintings. Repelled by the derogatory reviews of his works by the Nazarenes that he had overheard at the Caffè Greco in Rome, he depicted Titian's *Madonna di San Niccolò dei Frari* ('Madonna and Child with Saints') as a masterpiece reflecting its creator's self-less conduct and commitment to his art and profession:

These judges of Hades do not even shrink from discussing Titian's painting in the Vatican [...]; they say that it has neither subject nor meaning; yet it never occurs to them that a master who has worked so long on a picture with love and devotion, must have had quite as much insight into the subject as they are likely to have [...]. Whether it was created on commission, as some allege, or not, is of no consequence; he has imbued it with his own sense of meaning and poetical feeling, and has thus made it his own.²⁹

Elsewhere, Mendelssohn commented favourably on other paintings by the same artist, including the *Presentazione di Maria al Tempio* ('Presentation of Mary as a Child in the Temple'), *Assunta* ('Assumption of the Virgin') and *Le Deposizione di Cristo*. He argued that Titian's severe and sincere artistic intentions, as they showed themselves in these works, stood out positively against the work ethics of contemporary Italian composers. In his observation, the painter's disregard of personal and financial gain was no longer a distinctive mark of art production. Early nineteenth-century Italian composers pursued their profession for other reasons:

There is too great a disproportion between such works that have been created in utmost earnestness [*der höchste Ernst*] and full ardour [*Begeisterung*] and music that is based only on accidental conventionality and serves as a means to pass the time; [...]. I have made the acquaintance of many musicians here and have met no one who is more interested in his art than in any other source of income, and who lived for it driven by an inner need and serious intentions [*aus Drang und mit Ernst*].³⁰

The conditions elsewhere seemed equally bad to him. During his first visit to England, Mendelssohn came to the conclusion that in London, 'music is a matter of

²⁸ Daniel R. Langton, *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination: A Study in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 180.

²⁹ Mendelssohn, letter of 11 December 1830 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:160-168, at 164, trans. in *FML*, 99-104, at 101-102. The translation of the last sentence has been adapted from *LIS*, 77-88, at 83-84.

³⁰ Idem, letter of 5 March 1831 to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in *SB* (2009), 2:222-228, at 223.

fashion and is treated that way, it constantly renews itself, like fashion itself, and, like fashion, is the topic of conversation.’³¹ In Germany, he criticized the musical conditions at various points in his life. In October 1829, for example, he complained to Devrient about the business acumen of German impresarios and musicians, contrasting Christian values and moral notions of honesty with concepts of greed, vanity and sin:

They treat music like a trade, they calculate, pay, bargain [...]; but if you compare an English Music Festival with such a lousy German one, unfortunately there is a big difference. Being similarly calculating and greedy, people in Britain still remain gentlemen, [...] and that is what is missing too much in the former dear chamber musicians (they are whiners, full of vanity, ignorance, brutality and emptiness.) [...]. They do not even possess the one quality that I ask of my shoemaker, they are not even honest, and are allegedly such emotional people who live only for art!³²

In Paris, he was appalled by the ‘vanity and outward show’ of French musicians that resulted from a widespread obsession with becoming popular and from a lack of genuine ‘interest in high art’ that articulated itself in ‘famous’ performances of ‘miserable, vile, infamous, lousy, boring quodlibet[s]’ like Henri Castil-Blaze’s adaptation of Carl Maria von Weber’s *Freischütz*.³³

In such lines, one can already sense Mendelssohn’s dislike for the commercialization of art that became much more pronounced with the years. Even though processes of merchandising were most apparent in cultural and industrial

³¹ Idem, letter of 9 and 10 May 1829 to Adolph Bernhard Marx, *SB* (2008), 1:284-286, at 285.

³² Idem, letter of 29 October 1829 to Eduard Devrient, in *SB* (2008), 1:436-438, at 437. Since Mendelssohn commented much more favourably on German musical life elsewhere, his highly critical remarks in this letter might have been stirred up by professional blows and throwbacks, such as the refusal of the Thüringisch-Sächsischer Musikverein to perform one of his works at its first music festival held in September 1829.

³³ See Mendelssohn’s memories of his 1831 stay in Paris, as described in his letter of 30 November 1839 to Ignaz Moscheles, in idem, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1833 bis 1847*, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1863), 212-214, at 212, trans. adapted from *FML*, 284-286, at 285. His lines about Castil-Blaze’s adaptation of Carl Maria von Weber’s *Der Freischütz* (that was first produced to much popular acclaim under the title *Robin des bois* at Paris’s Odeon theatre in 1824 and frequently performed afterwards) are taken from Mendelssohn, letter of 6 April 1825 to Lea and Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy as well as Carl Wilhelm Ludwig Heyse, in *SB* (2008), 1:153-157, at 156-157, trans. in idem, *A Life in Letters*, ed. Rudolf Elvers, trans. Craig Tomlinson (London: Cassell Publishers, 1986), 33-40, at 39.

centres such as Paris and London, music and theatre became major products of the leisure industries that emerged throughout Western Europe at the time. With the rise of the bourgeoisie, music turned into a commodity that was meant to provide recreation, amusement and entertainment for an increasing musical public and, as such, it became subject to mechanisms of supply and demand. As variable fashions regulated popular taste, a wide range of products swept the market. It included, at various junctures, *opera buffa*, *potpourris* on Romantic operas (popular especially in early nineteenth-century Paris) and instrumental showpieces presented at solo recitals by celebrities such as Liszt and Paganini. As many nineteenth-century intellectuals perceived the composition and performance of music as components of an individual's spiritual education, they viewed many pieces in the repertoire with suspicion, and, as a result, deplored the new status of music as a pastime and a commodity. While some educated members of society bemoaned the loss of quality and depth in contemporary artworks, others had reservations about the moral temptations of the leisure industries.

Mendelssohn's journey towards professionalism: values of work, duty and diligence versus temptations of fun and pleasure

Mendelssohn's moral and ethical association of concepts of earnestness and love with actions that denote a contrast to 'fun' and 'pleasure' (*Spaß*) as well as to 'amusement' (*Vergnügen*) is fully in line with contemporary terminological as well as religious understandings of *Ernst*.³⁴ These conceptual meanings influenced his perceptions of the regional differences in sentiments, mentalities and behaviour that he observed during his Grand Tour, which in turn informed his decision to become a composer and conductor in Germany. Beyond that, these established terminologies also shaped his reflections on professionalism and his view of the responsibilities that came with the musical profession.

³⁴ *DWB*, s.v. 'Ernst,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GE08220> (accessed 19 May 2013): 'ernst bezeichnet [...] den gegensatz von scherz und spasz.'

In his travel correspondence, Mendelssohn reflected extensively on attitudes of pleasure as well as fun and earnestness – sometimes in the form of idiomatic expressions, sometimes by means of puns. Remaining true to his preconceived aim to study the outlook, opinions and judgements of the people whom he would meet during his Grand Tour,³⁵ he closely observed behaviour that both manifested and contradicted imperatives of earnestness. The former category included, above all, industriousness and eagerness to work, while the latter category included untidiness, idleness, thoughtlessness, gluttony and feasting.

While Mendelssohn's writings about Vienna contained occasional complaints about how 'dreadfully licentious and feckless' (*schrecklich liederlich und nichtsnutzig*) people were,³⁶ he saw all facets of earnestness and pleasure coming together in Italy. According to him, the typical Venetian 'lie[s] on the grass and eat[s].'³⁷ By contrast, in Naples, he was negatively attracted to the general tendency to idleness and non-thinking,³⁸ whereas in Rome he came to enjoy 'the most beautiful mixture of pleasure and seriousness' (*die schönste Mischung von Lust und Ernst*).³⁹ In alluding to this seemingly ambivalent atmosphere, Mendelssohn's descriptions of Rome articulate a perceived schism in the outlook of the Italian capital and its population. While he referred to the city as 'eternal' (*ewig*) and 'solemn' (*ernst*) in line with long-standing perceptions of the eternal city, he simultaneously drew attention to the insatiable thirst for hedonistic pleasures that prevailed among the population of contemporary Rome.⁴⁰ On the one hand, he wrote to Zelter after a visit to the Colosseum and the Basilica of Constantine:

³⁵ This aim is corroborated, among others, in Mendelssohn's letter of 10 January 1829 to Ignaz Moscheles, in *SB* (2008), 1:257-258, trans. in idem, *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn to Ignaz and Charlotte Moscheles*, ed. and trans. Felix Moscheles (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1888), 5-7, at 6: 'I intend to [...] devote three years to travelling; [...]. The object I have in view is [...] to compare the various views and opinions of others, and thus to consolidate my own taste.'

³⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 October 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:111.

³⁷ Idem, letter of 11 October 1830 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:101, trans. adapted from *LIS*, 29.

³⁸ Idem, letter of 13 April 1831 to Rebecka Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:252-257, at 252, trans. adapted from *LIS*, 135-143, 135: '[...] I have not yet been able to engage in any serious, quiet thought [*zu einem ernsthaften, ruhigen Gedanken*], there is everywhere such jovial [*lustig*] life here, inviting you to do and think of nothing.'

³⁹ Idem, letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:174.

⁴⁰ Rome was known as the Eternal City already among ancient Romans. Tibullus (54-18 B.C.) and Ovid referred to the city as everlasting, and people believed that, no matter how many other empires

The impression of Rome as a whole is so solemn [*ernsthaft*] [...], it fills one's inner being so intensely, that it is in fact precisely as one would like to picture life in ancient times. Other ruins are depressing and melancholy, but these are the most solid monuments of a glorious past. Whilst in other places everything reminds me of destruction and decay, here I delight in their eternal magnitude and might.⁴¹

On the other hand, he drew attention to the fact that the Italians whom he came across seemed ignorant of the glorious past of their country and lacked the sincerity that their ancestors rightly accorded to domains that he saw as serious areas of life himself: namely historical knowledge, art and religion.⁴² Unable to conceal his shock about the realities of modern Italy from his friend Friedrich Rosen, he wrote:

Since then, the Italy of today has revealed itself to me [...]. Here you can see a people that is really far inferior to the civilized nations of Europe, [among which] any artistic idea, and any sense for art has disappeared, [they are] without love for each other, without faith in anything except their self-made, absurd superstitions; and so they rove about idly from day to day [...].⁴³

Despite his consternation, however, he could not escape a certain fascination and enthusiasm for Italy. In Rome, he tried to divide his time between work and pleasure. He used to work in the mornings and went for sightseeing and promenades in the afternoons. The evenings were reserved for socializing with friends and acquaintances.⁴⁴ From time to time, however, the laid-back Italian lifestyle proved very attractive and alluring to him, and he had to confess, with a certain sense of irony:

might fall, Rome would exist forever. In Vergil's *Aeneid* Jupiter tells Venus that he will give the Romans an *imperium sine fine* ('an empire without end'). Perceptions of Rome as a site of serious study and of sincere appreciation of art, as opposed to a dwelling place of pleasure seekers, were introduced by Winckelmann (1755) and Goethe. See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey 1786-1788*, trans. W. H. Auden & Elizabeth Mayer (London: Collins, 1962), 124, 137-138 & 199 (diary entries of 10 November 1786, 13 December 1786 and 16 March 1787).

⁴¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 1 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:148-151, at 148, trans. adapted from *FML*, 94-99, at 94.

⁴² This thought is expressed most clearly in Mendelssohn's letter of 7 December 1830 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:152-154, at 153-154, trans. in *LIS*, at 71-74, at 73: 'The fact is, that the people are mentally enervated and apathetic [...]. [...], they can recall a brilliant and heroic past, but they do not value it. It is thus no marvel that they do not delight in Art, for they are indifferent to all that is earnest [*Alles Ernstere*].

⁴³ Mendelssohn, letter of 9 July 1831 to Friedrich Rosen, in *SB* (2009), 2:315-318, at 316.

⁴⁴ See Mendelssohn, letter of 22 November 1830 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 134-137, at 126.

During the last few weeks, I have had some idle periods, where I did nothing all day long; for one, it was the beautiful weather with spring flowers and sun heat that inspired me to walk during the mornings [...], and in the evenings there was plenty of dancing [...], and, [...] it gave me particular pleasure [...] to dance in the eternal and solemn city of Rome [*im ewigen und ernsten Rom*].⁴⁵

In spite of all the pleasures of his journey, however, Mendelssohn gradually came to realise that it was only in Germany that he would be able to live and work in a way that he found proper. His decision to remain in his home country was, among other reasons, motivated by an awareness that the best musicians were to be found here, as well as other professional concerns that he explained to his father:

I am resolved therefore to make the attempt in Germany and to remain and work there as long as I can and make my living there, for that I consider my first duty. If I find that I cannot do this, then I must leave for London or Paris, where it is easier to get on. If I must, I shall know at least that one is better remunerated and more honoured and lives more gaily and at ease there than in Germany, where a man must press forward [and] toil continuously [*immer fortschreiten, arbeiten*], and take no rest. Still, I prefer the latter.⁴⁶

Formulations like this and comparable lines of argument in Mendelssohn's correspondence of the late 1820s and early 1830s not only hint at terminological dichotomies between 'earnestness' and 'pleasure,' they also point towards correlated antagonistic views of *Arbeit* – a German term that combines conceptual meanings of 'work' and 'profession' – and pastime (*Vergnügen*). Mendelssohn seems to have considered his musical activities as serious work from 1825, at the latest. That year, his father had taken him to Paris in order to ascertain the sufficiency of his talents for a musical career. After Luigi Cherubini's positive affirmation, Felix pursued music more earnestly, giving opus numbers to his own compositions, undertaking concert tours as a pianist and engaging prolifically in conducting and composing. As his contemporaneous correspondence with the Swedish composer Adolf Fredrik Lindblad and the Austrian composer-conductor Ferdinand Stegmayer (1803-1863)

⁴⁵ Mendelssohn, letter of 30 January 1831 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2009), 2:197-199, at 198.

⁴⁶ Idem, letter of 19 December 1831 to his father, in *SB* (2009), 2:430-433, at 432, trans. adapted from *FML*, 178-181, at 180.

corroborates, he was also keen to find an original musical language in order to prove himself worthy of the musical profession, and he was aware that an earnest and professional pursuit of music required consummate commitment, diligence and sophistication.

Mendelssohn and Lindblad had become friends in Berlin in 1826, and exchanged compositions and letters regularly for the following two years. In their correspondence they discussed Beethoven's works and guiding principles of composition.⁴⁷ As Mendelssohn considered Lindblad the more professional musician, he often looked for his guidance.⁴⁸ In a letter to the Swedish composer, he compared his own works with Lindblad's published songs of the same period,⁴⁹ admitting: 'Now I see clearly, how much more advanced than me you were back then, but believe me, my way of composing differs greatly from my usual style of working now.' At the same time, he confessed that he had put an end to his 'reckless' early compositional efforts and that his way of composing had become 'much more serious' (*viel ernsthafter*) over the past year.⁵⁰

The following spring, Mendelssohn was full of admiration for the songs of Stegmayer and the latter's conduct as a composer. In a note of compliment, he expressed his pleasure about the fact that Stegmayer's approach to music was sincere, committed and original and did not comply with the contemporary craving for fun and pleasure that prevailed among other composers:

to everyone who is concerned about music and pursues it not for fun but out of seriousness and love [*aus Ernst und Liebe*], it must grant joy and sincere pleasure to know your songs since they do not express what hundreds of other composers have said and will repeat, but they articulate what you think and feel and what only you have been able to express.⁵¹

⁴⁷ For some concise remarks about their correspondence and its influence on Mendelssohn's work see R. Larry Todd, 'The Chamber Music of Mendelssohn,' in *19th-Century Chamber Music*, ed. Stephen E. Hefling (New York: Routledge, 2004), 170-208, at 185-187 in particular.

⁴⁸ Both Mendelssohn's and Lindblad's instruction in composition from Zelter had found an end in 1827. Eight years Mendelssohn's senior, Lindblad was the first of the two to obtain a musical post. Between 1827 and 1861 he directed a music and piano school in Stockholm.

⁴⁹ The songs referred to were published in *Norden-Saal, eine Sammlung schwedischer Volkslieder, übersetzt von Amalie von Helwig, geborne Frein von Imhoff, mit Begleitung des Pianoforte, nach den alten Gesang-Weisen bearbeitet von A. F. Lindblad* (Berlin: Schlesinger, 1827).

⁵⁰ Mendelssohn, letter of [19] February 1828 to Adolf Fredrik Lindblad, in *SB* (2008), 1:240-244, at 241.

⁵¹ Idem, letter of 23 April 1828 to Ferdinand Stegmayer, in *SB* (2008), 1:244-245, at 245.

Henceforth, notions of ‘duty’ (*Pflicht*), ‘diligence’ (*Fleiß* or *Eifer*) and ‘progress’ (*Fortschreiten* in the sense of a pursuit of perfection) took prominence in Mendelssohn’s correspondence. His use of these terms, in this context, is typical of his age; they usually appear with meanings that are synonymous with terminological understandings of *Ernst*. In their summary of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors’ terminological usage, the Grimm Brothers came to the conclusion that ‘the meaning of *Ernst* is also closely related to understandings of ardour [*Eifer*].’⁵² In citing from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources, they furthermore pointed out related senses between *Ernst*, dutifulness and industriousness.⁵³

While, in 1832, Mendelssohn expressed a certain uneasiness about the fact that ‘after spring I have to [...] become a serious man and go where there is work and room to be effective,’ his worries were of very short duration.⁵⁴ Very quickly, he regained the dutiful and industrious enthusiasm that he had already cultivated before his Grand Tour. Except for very brief periods in his life where his work was interrupted or overshadowed by personal grief, composition represented an affair close to his heart, and his persistent efforts as a composer and conductor originated in moral obligations to be of service to society, his art and his own personal development.

As Clive Brown has established, this work ethic had been instilled into Mendelssohn by his father whose ‘firm intention’ it had always been that, ‘if his son were to devote his life to music he should [...] have proper professional appointments, thus putting his gifts at the service of society.’⁵⁵ In recognition of his father’s wishes, Felix came to understand that ‘his motivation always had to be the achievement not of worldly acclaim or material success but of the best of which he was capable in whatever sphere he applied himself.’⁵⁶

⁵² DWB, s.v. ‘Ernst,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GE08220> (accessed 19 May 2013): ‘zugleich liegt dem ernst die bedeutung von eifer [...] unmittelbar nah.’

⁵³ DWB, s.v. ‘Ernst,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GE08220> (accessed 19 May 2013).

⁵⁴ Mendelssohn, letter of 18 January 1832 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, in *SB* (2009), 2:463-466, at 464: ‘[...] nach dem Frühjahr muß ich die Reisejahre schließen, ein ernsthafter Mensch werden, und hingehen, wo es was zu arbeiten und zu wirken giebt.’

⁵⁵ Clive Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 115.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

While Schumann has identified the ‘sternest fulfillment of his duties towards God and man’ (*strengste Erfüllung s[einer] Pflichten gegen Gott und Menschen*) as Mendelssohn’s very own guiding principle,⁵⁷ Großmann-Vendrey has ascertained that this sense of duty was based on the ‘ethical and moral tenets of the enlightenment’ (*die ethisch-moralische Haltung der Aufklärung*).⁵⁸ She argues that Mendelssohn’s upbringing was guided by Lessing’s educational values, as outlined in his major work of religious philosophy, *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (‘The Education of Humankind,’ 1780).⁵⁹ According to her, Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn urged their son to unceasing activity in the pursuit of his obligations towards society and the optimisation of his own intellectual abilities. Supposedly inspired by Lessing’s thoughts on ‘the age of the performance of duties’ (*Zeitalter der Pflichterfüllung*), Mendelssohn’s education encompassed an attendance to his various talents (in drawing, painting and composition) and additionally a compulsory cultivation of his skills in these areas that, early on, acquired the style and character of work (*Arbeitscharakter*).⁶⁰

Großmann-Vendrey’s assumptions are solid albeit vague – especially since she neither provides documentary evidence that would prove Abraham’s knowledge of Lessing’s literary *oeuvre* nor presents an analysis of Lessing’s central arguments about human education. That Mendelssohn’s parents held Lessing in high esteem can be verified easily. Abraham Mendelssohn’s correspondence with the German biographer Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (1785-1858) reveals that he was an eager reader of Lessing’s literary and philosophical writings. Shortly before his death, he wrote to Varnhagen, after an argument about the underrated talent and genius of Lessing, Moses, Karl Gutzkow (1811-1878) and Heinrich Laube (1806-1884):

If you consider that Lessing [...] has written ‘Nathan,’ ‘Emilia Galotti,’ ‘The Education of Mankind,’ ‘Laokoon,’ the ‘Dramaturgie’ [...]; [...] and that

⁵⁷ Schumann, ‘Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy,’ 105.

⁵⁸ Susanna Großmann-Vendrey, ‘Mendelssohn und die Vergangenheit,’ in *Die Ausbreitung des Historismus über die Musik: Aufsätze und Diskussionen*, ed. Walter Wiora (Regensburg: Bosse, 1969), 73-84, at 74.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

almost every line of his displays the clearest understanding united to the deepest feeling—you will kindly excuse me for speaking rather too warmly yesterday in his defence.⁶¹

Lessing's central arguments in his treatise *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* were based on the insight that divine revelation through Holy Scripture and Christ's appearance on earth would represent God's attempt to educate the human race. Guided by this thought, the author developed 100 numbered propositions in which he outlined parallels between mankind's spiritual and moral growth throughout religious history and the stages of development that children and young adults pass through, influenced by their parents' upbringing. A close reading of these propositions reveals the many parallels between Lessing's comments about 'divine' and 'human' education, Mendelssohn's upbringing, and Abraham's principles of parenting.

Lessing's conviction that in religious history an era of enjoyment and ambition was followed by an age in which the performance of one's duties proved predominant may have motivated Abraham's exhortations to his children to act according to duty and to be diligent and assiduous. It also conjures up associations with Mendelssohn's increasing serious outlook after his acquaintance with Cherubini, as it was reflected in his musical activities, his letters to Stegmayer and Lindblad as well as his correspondence during his Grand Tour that discusses serious and pleasurable approaches towards art.

According to Lessing's comments in § 16, in early religious history human behaviour was regulated by 'physical punishments and sensual rewards' (*sinnliche Strafen und Belohnungen*) before an awareness of responsibilities and duties came to prevail that he described as 'a heroic obedience to obey the laws of God simply because they are God's laws, and not because He has promised to reward the

⁶¹ Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, letter of 16 November 1835 to Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, quoted in Thomas Lackmann, *Der Sohn meines Vaters: Biographische Studie über Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy und die Wege der Mendelssohns* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008), 26, trans. in Sebastian Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family: From Letters and Journals*, trans. Carl Klingemann (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882), 1:336.

obedience to them here and there' (§ 32).⁶² As soon as religious history progressed from the era of the 'sensual Jew' toward the faith of the 'spiritual Christian' (§ 93),⁶³ 'nobler and worthier motives of moral action' came to the fore. As Lessing put it (in § 55): 'The child had become a youth. Sweetmeats and toys have given place to the budding desire to go as free, as honoured, and as happy as its elder brother.'⁶⁴ Henceforth, 'inner and outer acts' or deeds were guided by a sense or love of virtue (§ 80).⁶⁵ The claim that a child's upbringing should effect a similar inner sense of duty to do good and, in this sense, re-enact the paradigm shifts observed in religious history, is indicated in § 83:

The flattering prospects which are suggested to the youth, the honour and prosperity one lures him with: what are they more than the means of educating him to become a man, who, when these prospects of Honour and Well-being have vanished, shall be able to do his Duty?⁶⁶

Wherever the roots of Mendelssohn's outlook are to be found, most professional choices that he made in his career have to be understood as being motivated by a sincere sense of duty. Worth mentioning, in this context is, first of all, his decision to apply for the directorship of the Berlin *Singakademie* after Zelter's death in 1832, and his taking over of the post of music director in Düsseldorf one year later. His change of position from Düsseldorf to Leipzig in 1835 in spite of wishes either to retire in order to go on travels and compose for a while or to remain in the Rhineland as a full-time composer,⁶⁷ has to be seen as similarly motivated. Last but not least, his temporary involvement in plans by the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV to implement a general reform of sacred music throughout Prussia also corroborates his sincere commitment.⁶⁸ In this context, his self-avowed duty to make

⁶² Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, 'Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts [1780],' in idem, *G. E. Lessing, Werke*, ed. Herbert G. Göpfert (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), 8:489-510, at 492 & 497; henceforth *EMG*. Trans. in idem, *The Education of the Human Race*, trans. F. W. Robertson (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1872), 29; henceforth *EHR*.

⁶³ *EMG*, 510, trans. in *EHR*, 76.

⁶⁴ *EMG*, 502, trans. in *EHR*, 47.

⁶⁵ *EMG* 507, trans. adapted from *EHR*, 67.

⁶⁶ *EMG* 508, trans. adapted from *EHR*, 69.

⁶⁷ See Mendelssohn, letter of 14 March 1835 to Ferdinand Hiller, in *SB* (2011), 4:191-193, at 191.

⁶⁸ The king appointed Mendelssohn Prussian Director of Sacred Music in November 1842. His failure to define the exact duties that this post entailed, and various bureaucratic obstacles that Mendelssohn

his audiences familiar with good music, already presented in the second chapter, has to be understood simultaneously as a service to humanity, to the contemporary music industry and to the development of musical art.⁶⁹ His ‘preaching’ of good music in his concerts was done in the hope of convincing the public of the value of musical masterpieces. In addition, his efforts as a conductor and composer were committed to respecting and to defending the dignity of art. He expressed this thought most clearly in the second draft of a letter of thanks to the director of the Leipzig University in response to the honorary doctorate that was granted to him in 1836 in recognition of his services to the musical life of Leipzig.⁷⁰ Here he explained that the award gave him further encouragement ‘to pursue further the path on which I hope, one day, to be of avail to my own art’ and made him feel great gratitude towards people who cherished ‘the earnestness and purity of art and its grandeur.’⁷¹

From other composers he expected nothing less. On 14 March 1835, for instance, he appealed to Ferdinand Hiller to follow his own example in adopting a post as *Kapellmeister* in a German town in order to stand up ‘for the cause of good music’ (*für die Sache der guten Musik*).⁷² At that time, Hiller was staying in Paris where he worked as a teacher of composition at Alexandre-Étienne Choron’s School of Music, and the two composers engaged in heated debates about the differences between German and French music and the question of which country would be the best to live in and to work as a musician.⁷³ Mendelssohn’s letters of the time show how seriously concerned he was about his friend’s progress as a composer. In Paris he saw the development of Hiller’s talent threatened, since there musicians of minor

encountered in Berlin, brought the project to an untimely end in 1844. See Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 407-409, 418-425, 442-446, 450-456, 464-472 & 483-484.

⁶⁹ Mendelssohn’s commitment to spreading taste and knowledge of good music is further corroborated in his letter of 27 March 1834 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2010), 3:374-377, at 375, trans. adapted from *FML*, 225-231, at 225-256: ‘[...] if I succeed in thoroughly delighting and exciting both my own feelings and those of all in the house about good music, that is worth something, too!’

⁷⁰ The first draft of this letter has survived as an autograph manuscript. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Music Section, M.D.M. d. 31/48. The whereabouts of the finished letter are unknown.

⁷¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 22 March 1836 to Karl Friedrich Günther, in *SB* (2011), 4:414-415.

⁷² Idem, letter of 14 March 1835 to Ferdinand Hiller, in *SB* (2011), 4:191-193, at 192.

⁷³ References to their ‘eternal debate’ and ‘old quarrel about Paris and Germany’ can be found in Mendelssohn’s letters of 11 March 1835 and 20 June 1836 to his family and Carl Klingemann in *SB* (2011), 4:186-188, at 187 and 468-470, at 469.

talent were honoured most, inasmuch as their music satisfied audiences' indiscriminate and superficial tastes.⁷⁴ As he highly disapproved of 'the Parisian atmosphere of pleasures and honours,' he hoped sincerely that, in the end, his friend would 'return to his study' and his native land 'in order to purge his talent clean through all misery' and 'work diligently to progress.'⁷⁵ He was certain that this was 'possible nowhere else than here,'⁷⁶ as in Germany musicians 'never can relax' and 'have to labour [*sich quälen*] all their lives long and are never appreciated—and yet, they produce Works.'⁷⁷

Mendelssohn's middle-class values of *Ernst* and *Eifer* as ideals of self-cultivation

Mendelssohn's allegiance to ideals of personal progress (*Fortschreiten*) and diligence is corroborated in countless letters. His sincere commitment to artistic growth, moral demands of industriousness and life-long learning is first reflected in the correspondence of his youth. From 1831 onwards, he emphasized that one 'must be industrious, and work hard,'⁷⁸ and that, 'for thorough self-cultivation, the whole of a man's life is required (and often does not suffice).'⁷⁹ He believed that 'one has to work hard and aim to advance oneself' (*man muß arbeiten und sich weiter zu bringen suchen*) and that 'one must seek to make progress' (*man muß weiter zu kommen suchen*).⁸⁰ According to Schumann, his guiding principle was that 'one has to compose something every day' (*man müsse alle Tage etwas componiren*).⁸¹

⁷⁴ Idem, letter of 20 December 1831 to Carl Klingemann, in *SB* (2009), 2:434-437, at 434, trans. in *FML*, 181-184, at 182-183.

⁷⁵ Idem, letter of 23 March 1835 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *SB* (2011), 4:196-197, at 197, trans. adapted from *ML*, 74-76, at 76 and letter of 20 June 1836 to Carl Klingemann in *SB* (2011), 4:468-470, at 469.

⁷⁶ Idem, letter of 20 June 1836 to Carl Klingemann in *SB* (2011), 4:468-470, at 469-470.

⁷⁷ Idem, letter of 20 December 1831 to Carl Klingemann, in *SB* (2009), 2:434, trans. adapted from *FML*, 182.

⁷⁸ Idem, letter of 14 November 1834 to Fanny Hensel, in *SB* (2011), 4:82-84, at 84, trans. in *ML*, 51-53, at 53.

⁷⁹ Idem, letter of 23 December 1834 to his family, in *SB* (2011), 4:114-117, at 115, trans. in *ML*, 60-63, at 62.

⁸⁰ Idem, letters of 21 February 1832 and of 25 February 1832 to Abraham and Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:485-487, at 485 and *ibid.*, 487-489, at 489.

⁸¹ Schumann, 'Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy,' 113.

Mendelssohn's correspondence of this and the following decade reveals the diverse origins and influences that stimulated an association of values of diligence and self-cultivation with ideals of *Ernst* on his part, while affecting his views about *Bildung* and piety in the process. In terms of content and formulations, some of his letters point to an influence of Abraham Mendelssohn's moral values. In his correspondence with his mother of 1 June 1836, for example, he showed his gratitude to his father whose exhortations to hard work and personal improvement had allowed him to grow as an artist:

It gives me peculiar pleasure to be able to write to you that I am now fairly established in Germany [...]. I wish only I could have written these words to my father, for he would have read them with satisfaction. But his dearest wish was progress; he always directed me to press forward, and so I think I am doing his will when I continue to labour in this sense, and endeavour to make progress without any ulterior views beyond my own training towards improvement [*Ausbildung*].⁸²

Letters dating from the 1840s attest to Mendelssohn's adherence to these ideals in the last decade of his life. This fact clearly arises from his petition to Johann Paul von Falkenstein of 1840 that has already been mentioned in passing in chapter three. Keen to enforce his ideas of a conservatory, Mendelssohn pointed out the need to further young musicians' progress and studiousness through instruction. According to him, music represented 'a spiritual and intellectual necessity' and an apt 'species of intellectual learning' (*Art geistiger Bildung*). Because engaging with music promoted an individual's intellectual development and moral welfare, musical talent should be fostered at 'a school, in which music may be pursued with conscientious study and *an earnest mind*.'⁸³ (Italics mine.)

⁸² Mendelssohn, letter of 1 June 1836 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2011), 4:457-459, at 458, trans. adapted from *ML*, 102-104, at 103-104.

⁸³ Idem, letter of 8 April 1840 to Johann Paul von Falkenstein, in idem, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1833 bis 1847*, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1863), 227-231, at 228 & 230, trans. adapted from *FML*, 291-294, at 291-293: 'Music has [...] become [...] a spiritual and intellectual necessity. [...] as the expansion of systematic instruction is the best mode of preserving every species of intellectual learning, so it certainly is with music, too. [...]. Here in Leipzig there is a deeply-felt need for [...] a school, in which music may be pursued with conscientious study and an earnest mind; and on several grounds Leipzig seems to be a peculiarly suitable place for it. The university already provides a centre for intelligent [*bildsame*], aspiring

While Mendelssohn's aim 'to make progress without any ulterior views' reflects an indebtedness to his father's wishes,⁸⁴ his comments to von Falkenstein suggest that his artistic ambitions had deeper roots in contemporary middle-class values. Classical ideals of the perfection of human personality and eighteenth- as well as early nineteenth-century ideals of education cannot be excluded as contributing factors either. An influence of religious values and ethical considerations is also likely, as several scholars have emphasized in recent years. First of all, 'the myth of mobility,' as summarized by Gay in his study of bourgeois values and morals, seems to have carried much importance for Mendelssohn and the rest of the family. In fact, 'the general conviction that the social world of the educated and active bourgeois was a world with few barriers, in which hard work, shrewd intelligence, unwearied persistence, brought returns that an older status-ridden society had denied to all but the most fortunate handful,'⁸⁵ was most certainly shared by Mendelssohn's father, if not also by his grandfather Moses. Born into a poor Jewish family in Dessau on 6 September 1729 and originally destined for a rabbinical career, Moses Mendelssohn had educated himself in German thought and literature, and, from his writings on philosophy and religion, came to be regarded as a leading cultural figure of his time by both Germans and Jews. Because of his intellectual verve and growing prestige, he was offered high-ranking positions in Prussia.⁸⁶ Thanks to the official recognition that he received, the Mendelssohn family was already well established and wealthy by the time of his death in 1786.

Großmann-Vendrey's assumption of Felix's adherence to a 'Protestant work ethic' is also not inappropriate.⁸⁷ According to her, Mendelssohn's faithfulness to the 'Enlightenment Ethos of Work' resulted in an understanding of piety as being

[*emporstrebende*] young people, and such a school of science would have many points of contact with one of tonal art. In most of the other large towns of Germany, public amusements dissipate the mind and exercise an injurious influence over the young; here, however, where most of these amusements are more or less connected with music or consist of it wholly [...], this institution would benefit both the cause and the individual.' Selden Goth translates *Bildung* as 'development.'

⁸⁴ See his letter of 1 June 1836 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, just quoted in English translation on the previous page.

⁸⁵ Peter Gay, *Education of the Senses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 65.

⁸⁶ Because of Moses' reputation as a brilliant thinker, the King of Prussia Friedrich II appointed him court philosopher and granted him exemptions from anti-Jewish regulations.

⁸⁷ Großmann-Vendrey, 'Mendelssohn und die Vergangenheit,' 74-75.

synonymous with a diligent and persistent effort towards moral and artistic improvement. The documentary evidence that she gives shows this clearly. In response to comments about his alleged piety made by his friend, Johann Wilhelm Schirmer, the Professor of Landscape Painting at the Royal Prussian Academy of Art in Düsseldorf, Mendelssohn wrote in 1838:

So I am said to have become pious! If this is intended to convey what I conceive to be the meaning of the word [...], then I can only say that, alas! I am not so, though every day of my life I am working with greater earnestness, to the best of my abilities and endeavour more and more to resemble this character. I know indeed that I can never hope to be altogether a pious man, but if I ever approach to being one, it will be well. If people, however, understand by the word 'pious,' a Pietist, one of those who lay their hands on their laps, and expect that divine Providence will do their work for them, and who, instead of striving in their vocation to press on towards perfection, talk of a heavenly calling being incompatible with an earthly one, [...] God be praised! such a one I am not, and hope never to become, so long as I live [...].⁸⁸

Feder assumes Mendelssohn's striving for perfection and progress to be of Jewish origin. According to him, 'Mendelssohn's virtues might also have included a fair portion of [...] the Enlightenment philosophy of his grandfather Moses Mendelssohn, in whose doctrines the "continuous development to higher degrees of perfection" plays a central role.'⁸⁹ The view that 'the highest good was [...] the continuous pursuit of perfection,' seems, in fact, omnipresent in the philosopher's writings.⁹⁰ The kind of perfection that Moses expected humans to achieve consisted

⁸⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 21 November 1838 to Johann Wilhelm Schirmer, in *SB* (2012), 6:239-240, at 239, trans. adapted from *ML*, 150-151, at 150.

⁸⁹ Georg Feder, 'On Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's Sacred Music,' in *The Mendelssohn Companion*, ed. Douglass Seaton and trans. Monika Hennemann (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001), 257-281, at 258. Feder is quoting from Alexander Altmann, 'Das Menschenbild und die Bildung des Menschen nach Moses Mendelssohn,' in *Mendelssohn-Studien: Beiträge zur neueren deutschen Kultur- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, ed. Cécile Lowenthal-Hensel (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1972), 1:11-281, at 26.

⁹⁰ Luca Fomesu has detected this view in Moses Mendelssohn's *Phädon oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* ('Phaedon or On the Immortality of the Soul,' 1767), in his critical commentary *Zu Rousseaus Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* ('About Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,' 1756), his *Sendschreiben an Lessing*, 2. Jenner 1756 ('Open Letter to Lessing, 2 January 1756') and his *Betrachtung über die Ungleichheit und Geselligkeit der Menschen* ('Discourse on the Inequality and Sociability among Men,' 1789), as printed in Moses Mendelssohn, *Schriften zur Philosophie und Ästhetik*, vol. 2 of *Gesammelte Schriften* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann, 1972), 7-8, 83-96 and 133-40, at 134-6. See Luca Fomesu,

of a complete accord between the upper and lower powers of their soul. On the one hand, he hoped for a refinement of the ‘upper powers of the soul’ (*oberen Seelenkräfte*): of ‘reason’ (*Vernunft*), that is, the human capabilities of scientific perception, abstract knowledge and rational reasoning; on the other hand, he was concerned about the cultivation of the ‘lower powers of the soul’ (*unteren Seelenkräfte*), comprising ‘sensuality’ (*Sinnlichkeit*) and ‘intuition’ (*Anschauung*).⁹¹ This view is expressed most clearly in his *Briefe über die Kunst* (‘Letters on Art,’ 1757), in which he wrote: ‘The perfection of man consists not only in the well-being of the body but also in a purified mind, a righteous heart, and in a fine and tender feeling for true beauty.’⁹²

Further writings by Moses Mendelssohn suggest that this comprehensive state of perfection could be achieved through *Bildung* (forms of ‘education’ including instruction, training and also self-learning). Geared in equal measure to *Cultur* [*sic*] (‘culture’ understood as a generic term for crafts, arts and customs of a society, their perception and evaluation as well as skills, inclinations, instincts and habits in these domains) and *Aufklärung* (theoretical insight and knowledge attained through reasonable thinking about matters of human life), education could effect a reconciliation of sensuality and reason as well as *Anschauung* (‘sensual perception’ or ‘intuition’) and abstract knowledge.⁹³ Progress to higher perfection in these areas formed the purpose, destination and bliss of all mankind.⁹⁴ It also represented a continuous, even endless process that continued in the afterlife.⁹⁵ In his reworking of Plato’s famous dialogue entitled *Phädon oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele*

‘The Problem of Theodicy,’ in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy: Volume 2*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 749-778, at 763.

⁹¹ Altmann, ‘Das Menschenbild und die Bildung des Menschen nach Moses Mendelssohn,’ 18.

⁹² Moses Mendelssohn, ‘Briefe über die Kunst,’ in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften. Nach den Originaldrucken und Handschriften. Vierter Band. Erste Abtheilung*, ed. Georg Benjamin Mendelssohn (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1844), 66-74, at 68: ‘Die Vollkommenheit des Menschen besteht [...] außer dem Wohlbefinden des Körpers in einem gereinigten Verstande, einem rechtschaffenen Herzen, und in einem feinen und zärtlichen Gefühl der wahren Schönheit [...]’

⁹³ Altmann, ‘Das Menschenbild und die Bildung des Menschen nach Moses Mendelssohn,’ 13 & 18. Moses Mendelssohn discussed the question of how this union could be achieved psychologically in his treatise ‘Von der Herrschaft über die Neigungen’ (‘On the Power of the Affections,’ 1765) and the ‘Rhapsodie oder Zusätze zu den Briefen über die Empfindungen’ (‘Rhapsody or Additions to the Letters on Sentiments,’ 1761).

⁹⁴ Moses Mendelssohn, ‘Briefe über die Kunst,’ 67.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 67 et passim.

(‘Phaedon or On the Immortality of the Soul,’ 1767), that Felix Mendelssohn read while staying in Naples in the spring of 1831,⁹⁶ Moses Mendelssohn expressed the thought that ‘perfection [...] must, in respect to itself, have an endless progress.’ He believed that ‘[o]ur soul, as a being, which is rational, and aims at perfection, belongs to the class of spirits’ whose ‘existence commences [...] with a progress from one degree of perfection to another’ and whose ‘being is capable of perpetual growth and expansion.’⁹⁷

In the early nineteenth century, *Bildung* and *Cultur*, as they were understood by Moses Mendelssohn, were firmly interlinked in the consciousness of the middle classes. To quote Gay, members of the German bourgeoisie considered ‘*Bildung*, the secure possession of high culture, or, at times, its suave display,’ as a mark of status. In Prussia and other German states, to be a ‘good bourgeois’ meant to enable one’s children access to higher education. ‘To know classical texts, to quote liberally from German literature, to show a cultivated interest in the arts and music’ was considered tantamount to social prestige.⁹⁸ And, as Botstein and recent scholars have emphasized, in the nineteenth century music was a central ‘instrument of spiritual education.’⁹⁹

***Geist* and *Gesinnung* as attitudes of *Ernst* and aesthetic yardsticks**

Depictions of music applying concepts of *Ernst* in order to suggest its relation to spiritual activity lead to another important semantic connotation of earnestness as being synonymous with ‘spirit’ (*Geist*). While Mendelssohn’s concept of *Geist* was, at first, closely linked with his view of religion as being inwardly oriented, it came to interact with his religio-aesthetic notions of *Andacht* and *Ernst* in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Earliest traces of spiritual conceptions entertained by Mendelssohn can

⁹⁶ See Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 244.

⁹⁷ Moses Mendelssohn, *Phaedon; Or, The Death of Socrates* (London: J. Cooper, 1789), 199-200.

⁹⁸ Gay, *Education of the Senses*, 22.

⁹⁹ Leon Botstein, ‘Mendelssohn, Werner, and the Jews: A Final Word,’ *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 83, no. 1 (Spring 1999), 45-50, at 48. See also Daniel Langton, ‘Felix Mendelssohn’s Oratorio *St Paul* and the Question of Jewish Self-Definition,’ *Journal of Jewish Identities*, vol. 1 (2008), 1-15, at 11.

already be found in his confirmation confession that, according to Brown, deviates from conventional nineteenth-century statements by other candidates for confirmation in reflecting the ‘sincerely held views’ of someone who had reached ‘moral integrity’ and ‘intellectual maturity’ at a very early stage in life.¹⁰⁰ As Mendelssohn’s answers to Friedrich Philipp Wilmsen’s questions for examination suggest, he understood *Geist* as the locus of inner reflection and religious meditation. His insight that ‘Christianity requires from us the worship of God in spirit [*im Geist*] and truth [*Wahrheit*], and [...] repudiates empty ceremonial and hypocrisy’ clearly reflects his understanding of Christianity as an inward faith that relies on mental processes rather than external procedure or sensual rituals.¹⁰¹

The direct transmission of his ideals of spiritual contemplation from religion to the fine arts is first observable in the early 1830s. His correspondence of these years reveals that ideas of the spiritual played a prominent role in his reception of religious art – in rare cases he even drew explicit parallels between concepts of *Ernst*, *Andacht* and *Geist*. In some letters, Mendelssohn’s usage of these three terms suggests that, in his aesthetic mindset, their meanings were mutually exchangeable or, at least, very closely related. This is not surprising if one keeps in mind that, in his thought, *Ernst* and conceptions of spiritual education became inseparably linked, and contemplative *Andacht* involved not only feeling but also spiritual reflection.

To illustrate these terminological correlations, a further reference to Mendelssohn’s writings about paintings by Titian and other Renaissance artists of 1830 and 1831 seems worthwhile. As Mendelssohn confirmed to Goethe, he was convinced that Italian painters of the past had pursued their art ‘with urge and in earnestness’ (*aus Drang und mit Ernst*).¹⁰² In his eyes, works such as Titian’s

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn*, 92-93. According to Brown (p. 93), Mendelssohn’s confirmation confession forms ‘the most important surviving document for understanding the basis of Mendelssohn’s religious and ethical thinking, for in later life these remained very private matters about which he rarely talked and even more rarely wrote.’

¹⁰¹ Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Konfirmations-Bekennntnis* (‘Confirmation Confession,’ 1825), quoted in *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdys Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann in London*, ed. Karl Klingemann (Essen: G. D. Baedeker, 1909), 358-361, at 360, trans. in Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn*, 93-101, at 97.

¹⁰² Idem, letter of 5 March 1831 to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in *SB* (2009), 2:223.

Presentazione di Maria al Tempio, Assunta and *Le Deposizione di Cristo*, as well as Giorgione's *La Donna con Chitarra* ('Woman with Guitar') radiated the 'opulence, power, and religious devotion [*Andacht*] of the great men who painted these pictures.'¹⁰³ The imagery of *Assunta* and *Le Deposizione di Cristo* showed most clearly that Titian 'has fathomed the depths of human sorrow and knew how it is in Heaven.'¹⁰⁴ These written statements indicate that Mendelssohn was convinced that Renaissance painters had been able and eager to communicate their spiritual knowledge about the world and the hereafter.

In Mendelssohn's writings on music, notions of *Geist* appear as ideals of performance, composition and teaching. A letter to his mother shows that his appreciation of recitalists depended on their commitment to conceptualize and penetrate musical works spiritually, which explains why he favoured Fanny's performances over those of other pianists. Since this fondness for 'spiritual' performances and playing-styles formed a recurrent theme in Mendelssohn's correspondence, his comments about Fanny are more than an expression of pride, brotherly allegiance or family solidarity.¹⁰⁵ He wrote:

all the [...] coquetry with [dexterous] skill no longer blinds the audience easily; there must be spirit [*Geist*] if the performance is meant to captivate everyone, and while I admittedly prefer to listen for an hour to Döhler rather than to Fanny, after eight days, I cannot bear to listen to him any longer out of boredom, and only then do I start grasping a true sense of Fanny's style of playing, which is the only true one.¹⁰⁶

In Mendelssohn's observation, the success of virtuosi's technical showmanship in performance and the outlook of their works inspired other performers and composers to follow suit. According to him, in Munich, musicians adored musical masterpieces but did not play them; he observed that they 'believe[d]

¹⁰³ Idem, letters of 12 and 16 October 1830 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein and Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:105-108, at 106 and 108-111, at 109, the latter of which is trans. in *FML*, 88-89.

¹⁰⁴ Idem, letter of 11 October 1830 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:104, trans. adapted from *LIS*, 35.

¹⁰⁵ Further comments about the role of the spiritual in Mendelssohn's conception of pianists such as Fanny and Liszt and his artistic and private relationship to Fanny will be given in chapter five.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, letter of 29 May 1837 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2012), 5:277-278, at 277.

that good music may be considered a heaven-sent gift, but just in abstracte [*sic*], and as soon as they sit down to play they produce[d] the most insubstantial and tasteless stuff imaginable, and when people do not like it they pretend that it was still too serious.’¹⁰⁷

In this context, Mendelssohn’s use of the two opposing attributes ‘serious’ and ‘insubstantial’ shows adherence to what Stephen Downes called ‘the traditional equation of the binary opposition German-Italian and spiritual-sensual.’¹⁰⁸ Downes has established that, in nineteenth-century thought, compositions by German masters were generally understood as ‘text[s] with a content to decipher or as a structure to be revealed by analysis,’ and contrasted with Italian music that ‘exhibit[ed] only lyrical sensuality.’¹⁰⁹ While it was usually Rossini’s music that was perceived as having been written for sheer effect and as lacking in spiritual substance,¹¹⁰ in Mendelssohn’s letters, the *airs variés* and *variations brillantes* of composer-pianists such as Henri Herz and the Abbé de Chaulieu (1639–1720), who were French by domicile and nationality respectively, were criticized, too. He characterized these works as ‘the most meagre and absurd stuff imaginable’ (*das dünnste, abgeschmackteste*) and associated Herz’s music with ‘juggler’s tricks and ropedancer’s feats’ (*Springer- und Seiltänzerkünsten*).¹¹¹ This widespread anti-Franco-Italian bias in early nineteenth-century musical debates in German-speaking countries was closely related to German nationalism and early nineteenth-century discussions of genre theory and style that continued up to the time of Liszt and

¹⁰⁷ Idem, letter of 22 June 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2008), 1:560, trans. adapted from *FML*, 82.

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Downes, ‘Musical Pleasures and Amorous Passions: Stendhal, the Crystallization Process, and Listening to Rossini and Beethoven,’ *19th-Century Music*, vol. 26, no. 3 (Spring 2003), 235-257, at 242.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹¹⁰ While Stendhal detected in Rossini’s compositions a ‘smile of pleasure at every bar’ that was directly opposed to Mozart’s ‘grave, half conscious musings conjured up from the very depths of being,’ Mendelssohn associated Rossini’s music with ‘coquettish affectations’ (*coquetten Maniren*) such as extended cadenzas, decorative trills, runs and appoggiaturas. At the same time, he bemoaned that even the best pianists in Munich were ignorant of works by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven. See Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, trans. Richard N. Coe (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), 404, and Mendelssohn’s letters of 1 April 1825 and 22 June 1830 to Fanny and Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy as well as Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2008), 1:150-153 & 558-561, at 151 & 560, trans. in Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 143.

Brahms. In Mendelssohn's case, a preference for spiritual German as opposed to sensual foreign music was stimulated by an evolving understanding that any music that sounded serious and displayed spiritual depth stimulated the intellect. Depending on the respective period of his life, this encompassed symphonies, excluded operas and dramatic music, or was limited to sacred music only.¹¹²

The focus on the spiritual in art also informed Mendelssohn's pedagogical principles from the 1840s onwards. As a teacher, he encouraged his students to articulate spiritual contents in their compositions. When he became involved in the reorganization of the music section of the Royal Academy of Arts at Berlin at the request of Friedrich Wilhelm IV in 1841, this central premise determined his course of action. During the negotiations of his role in the planned educational reforms, he drafted a '*Pro Memoria*.' In this script of May 1841, he discussed his views on the new music school in detail. In his closing comments, he emphasized that it was a spiritual content allied to workmanship that distinguished art from craft and that should be focused upon in teaching: 'Every genre in the arts is first elevated above the level of craft when it devotes itself by means of the greatest possible technical perfection to a purely spiritual purpose [*einem rein geistigen Zwecke*] for the expression of a higher thought [*eines höheren Gedankens*].'¹¹³

In the 1820s, he had entertained ideas of *Geist* that seem philosophically and religiously oriented. On the one hand, he understood the noun as suggesting morally

¹¹¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 22 June 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2008), 1:560, trans. in *FML*, 82-83.

¹¹² Mendelssohn's change of perspective can be traced in the following letters and formulations: Mendelssohn, letter of 25 April 1829 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:269-276, at 275: 'his first orchestral symphony [...] reflects [its creator's] sense of diligence and sincerity (*seiner ersten Orchestersinfonie, in der [...] ein tüchtiger ernsthafter Sinn sich zeigt*);' idem, letter of 2 September 1829 to Fanny and Rebecka Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:387-390, at 390: 'I have to play something serious, sacred by Handel and other composers in the evening (*dann am Abend ihnen was ernsthaftes, geistliches von Händel od. dgl. spielen muß*).' Mendelssohn's exclusion of opera from serious music might have been inspired by his teacher Zelter who, according to Applegate, 'excluded opera altogether from the category of serious music.' See Celia Applegate, 'How German Is It? Nationalism and the Idea of Serious Music in the Early Nineteenth Century,' *19th-Century Music*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Spring 1998), 274-296, at 292.

¹¹³ Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, 'Pro Memoria wegen einer in Berlin zu errichtenden Musikschule' (May 1841), reprinted in idem, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1833 bis 1847*, 289-291, at 291, trans. adapted from Bruno Hake, 'Mendelssohn as Teacher,' in *Mendelssohn and His World*, ed. R. Larry Todd and trans. Susan Gillespie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 310-337, at 311.

good actions and intentions; on the other hand, in his view, the term, or its conceptual expansion to ‘in good spirit’ (*mit gutem Geist*), was reminiscent of theological and philosophical notions of conscientiousness and honesty.¹¹⁴ The former understanding was, amongst others, inspired by Kant, as a further look at Mendelssohn’s letter to Devrient after a performance of Handel’s *Messiah* HWV 56 at St. Paul’s Cathedral on 2 May 1829 reveals. As indicated previously, Mendelssohn was shocked about the performers’ lack of interest in this masterpiece. According to him, they had played the music without *Geist* even though the work that they presented deserved reverential absorption. Here, the term *Geist* features simultaneously in the sense of ‘without verve,’ ‘in inanimate spirit’ and ‘without a good disposition’:

It appeared strange to me the other day when I heard the *Messiah* that all the notes were the same and each entry was the same in English as in German [...], and still it was obvious from every single note that it was Englishmen who played the music [...]. The letter [*Buchstabe*] was there, but the [*Geist*] was absent, and inasmuch as the letter kills, life was lacking everywhere.¹¹⁵

Coupling the terms ‘letter’ and ‘spirit,’ Mendelssohn’s formulations seem reminiscent of Kant’s distinction between legality and morality in the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (‘Critique of Practical Reason,’ 1788): ‘We may say of every action that conforms to the law, but is not done for the sake of the law, that it is morally good in the letter, not in the spirit (the intention).’¹¹⁶

Theological notions of *Geist* as conscientiousness and truthfulness came to influence the composer as early as 1825. They already found mention in Wilmsen’s addendum to Mendelssohn’s confirmation confession that quotes from Romans 8:9b:

¹¹⁴ Mendelssohn’s comments about the programme negotiations of Karl Immermann’s newly established Theater Verein in Düsseldorf have to be understood in these senses: ‘Yesterday we had the first meeting of the administrative council [...], and the whole affair is proceeding well and in good spirit.’ (*Gestern haben wir die erste Sitzung des Verwaltungsrathes gehabt [...], und die Sache geht gut von Statten und in gutem Geist.*) See Mendelssohn, letter of 4 July 1834 to Eduard Devrient, in *SB* (2010), 3:467-468, at 467.

¹¹⁵ Idem, letter of 19 May 1829 to Eduard Devrient, in *SB* (2008), 1:292-293, at 292.

¹¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898), 164.

who does not have the Spirit of Christ [*Christi Geist*], is not His. This spirit is, above all, a spirit of truth. To remain faithful to it, never deny it out of fear of man, to profess, defend and protect it [...] when it is under attack, brings honour to the confessors of Jesus Christ. The Christian abhors any violation of the truth, especially hypocrisy, pretence and falsehood; his heart is true [*wahrhaftig*], sincere and faithful.¹¹⁷

Mendelssohn felt bound to these commandments for the rest of his life. Unwilling to set the choruses of Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, as requested by Friedrich Wilhelm IV in 1844, for example, he declined the commission for reasons of truthfulness and conscience when he wrote to Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen, the Prussian Ambassador to London:

I will always obey the commands of a sovereign so beloved by me, even at the sacrifice of my personal wishes and advantage; but if I find I cannot do so with *a good artistic conscience*, I must endeavour candidly to state my scruples or my incapacity [...]. This may sound absurd in the mouth of a musician, but [...] in an occurrence so personally important to me, shall I not follow the dictates of *honesty and truth*, as I have striven to do all my life?¹¹⁸ (Italics mine.)

Philosophical and theological notions of truthfulness and conscientiousness in Mendelssohn's aesthetics of *Ernst*

In the nineteenth century, ideas of 'honesty' and 'truthfulness' (*Ehrlichkeit*) as well as notions of 'conscientiousness' (*Gewissenhaftigkeit*) and seriousness often overlapped. According to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Ernst* denoted 'that which is really meant, true, firm and zealous' (*das wirklich gemeinte, wahre, feste und*

¹¹⁷ Friedrich Philipp Wilmsen, *Bemerkungen des Seelsorgers* (1825), quoted in Mendelssohn, *Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann*, 362: '[...] wer Christi Geist nicht hat, der ist nicht sein. Dieser Geist ist vor allem ein Geist der Wahrheit. Ihr getreu bleiben, sie niemals aus Menschenfurcht verleugnen, sie auch unter Spöttern freimütig bekennen, verteidigen und schützen, wenn sie angegriffen wird: darin sollen die Bekenner Jesu Christi ihre Ehre finden. Der Christ verabscheut jede Verletzung der Wahrheit, besonders Heuchelei, Verstellung und Falschheit; sein Herz ist wahrhaftig, aufrichtig und treu.'

¹¹⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 4 May 1844 to Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen, in idem, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1833 bis 1847*, 404-408, at 407-8, trans. adapted from *ML*, 329-333, at 332-333.

eifrige), and for Mendelssohn this meaning had an enormous significance.¹¹⁹ That it formed one of his central artistic and moral maxims arises most clearly from his letters of the early 1830s in which he defended his penchant for writing church music against appeals to compose for the stage and charges of imitating Bach. When Devrient criticized his decision to postpone the composition of an opera in favour of writing sacred cantatas,¹²⁰ he justified himself with an ‘inner need’ shared with Bach to occupy himself with religious topics in composition and thought. Accordingly, he informed his friend that certain similarities of their works in terms of content and style were the result of shared spiritual affinities:

I have recently written several works of sacred music; that is quite as much of a necessity [*Bedürfnis*] to me as is the study of some particular book, such as the bible or some other, to people who have that impulse, and who care for no other reading at that time. If it has similarity to Seb. Bach, again, I cannot do anything about it, for I wrote it just according to the mood I was in; and if the words put me in a mood similar to that of old Bach, so much the better.¹²¹

Further on, he commented on his own recent work, emphasizing that the ‘forms’ and musical structures (chorale melodies composed in fugal counterpoint and progressing in unison) arose logically from the spiritual matters occupying his mind.¹²²

One year earlier, he had dispelled Zelter’s fears that, in his ‘predilection for one of the great masters,’ he might devote himself ‘too much to church music and be led into imitation’ in similar terms.¹²³ As he explained to his former teacher, it had always been his intention to create works the style and contents of which had

¹¹⁹ *DWB*, s.v. ‘Ernst,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GE08220> (accessed 19 May 2013).

¹²⁰ The relevant works created during that period are *Vom Himmel hoch, da komm’ ich her* (January 1831), *Verleih uns Frieden* (February 1831) and *Wir glauben all’ an einen Gott* (March 1831).

¹²¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 13 and 19 July 1831 to Eduard Devrient, in *SB* (2009), 2:323-327, at 324. The translation of the first sentence has been adapted from *FML*, 149-151, at 150, whereas the following English phrases are taken from James Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 91-92.

¹²² *Idem*, letter of 13 and 19 July 1831 to Eduard Devrient, in *SB* (2009), 2:324, trans. in Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 92.

¹²³ Zelter’s letter in which he had articulated his objections towards Mendelssohn’s religious works due to a resemblance to Bach’s church music is unfortunately lost, but Mendelssohn referred to it in the lines quoted. See Mendelssohn, letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:171-174, at 172, trans. in *FML*, 105.

recognisably and earnestly emerged from his own inner self, and to apply his own creative power in order to produce genuine art:

Nothing is valid except that which has flowed in deepest sincerity [*Ernst*] from the innermost soul. And though the aesthetes and scholars struggle to prove why this is beautiful and that less so, by means of purely external qualities like epochs, style, and whatever their pigeon holes may be called, I believe that that is the only immutable criterion for architecture, painting, music, and everything else. If the object alone had not given rise to the work, it will never ‘pass from heart to heart’ [...].¹²⁴

In this concern for a unity of content and form that reflects the earnestness and conscientiousness of an artist’s soul, Mendelssohn’s aesthetic thought once more reveals his spiritual kinship with Hegel. While Garratt has already pointed out a few fundamental parallels between Mendelssohn’s and Hegel’s aesthetics of *Ernst*,¹²⁵ the manifold similarities in their outlooks deserve some more attention at this point.

Garratt has ascertained that both Hegel and Mendelssohn were concerned that artistic productions should be ‘products of conviction.’¹²⁶ For Hegel, the responsibility of an artist consisted both of manifesting the spirit of his era in the contents of his works and of ensuring that his materials and modes of expression were in keeping with the respective religious consciousness and spiritual life of his age,¹²⁷ whilst ‘shaping the external artistic appearance [the form] in a way congruent to such content.’¹²⁸ In this context, he emphasized the necessity that ‘the artist is bound up with the specific character of such a world-view and religion, in immediate identity with it and with firm faith in it.’ Only then ‘is he genuinely in earnest with

¹²⁴ Mendelssohn, letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:172. The translation is compiled from Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 92 and *FML*, 105-106. Garratt translates *aufrichtig* as ‘sincere.’

¹²⁵ Remarks by Garratt that are relevant for the line of enquiry of the present study are mainly limited to the assertion that Mendelssohn’s ‘compositions are the product of conviction (Hegel’s *Ernst*)’ and the thought that ‘[h]is anxiety that his church music would be seen as containing a disunity of form and content shows an awareness of Hegel’s requirement that the appearance of a work embodies the substance of the artist’s consciousness.’ See p. 92 and large parts of the third chapter of Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 62-132.

¹²⁶ Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, 92.

¹²⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* by G. W. F. Hegel, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1:439.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 603.

this material and its representation' and 'this material remains for him the infinite and true element in his own consciousness [*Bewußtsein*] [...], while the form in which he exhibits it is for him as artist the final, necessary, and supreme manner of bringing before our contemplation the [...] soul of objects in general.'¹²⁹ He believed that the dependence on commissions had always proven detrimental to artists' spiritual obligations as, in this case, 'the topic comes to the artist from outside [...] that topic yet always remains to him a material which is not in itself directly the substance of his own consciousness' no matter how 'much he puts his heart into the given topic.'¹³⁰

The spirituality that Hegel expected contemporary artists to articulate in their works was not necessarily confessionally bound. It could conform to outward manifestations of religion if its doctrines were sincerely believed and felt to be true. In its inner essence, it emanated from a 'free soul' or 'spirit' that transforms certain concepts of faith into 'higher content.'¹³¹ He was adamant that materials (art's contents) and forms (artistic modes of representation) had to be chosen carefully by the artist in accordance with the bent of his soul and his mindset.¹³² In Hegel's terms, the 'subject-matter' and the 'mode of portrayal' had to be 'immediately identical with the inwardness, the nature, the unconscious substantial essence of the artist.'¹³³ Roughly summarized, artistic shapes had to meet religious sensitivities, subjective convictions, the spiritual contents of artistic works and the artist's good conscience.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Ibid., 603.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 606.

¹³¹ Ibid., 606: 'The artist today need[s] not [...] worry about the salvation of his own soul. From the very beginning, before he embarks on production, his great and free soul [...] must be sure of itself and confident in itself. The great artist today needs in particular the free development of spirit; in that development all superstition, and all faith [...] is degraded into mere aspects and features. These the free spirit has mastered because he sees in them no absolutely sacrosanct conditions for his exposition and mode of configuration, but ascribes value to them only on the strength of the higher content which in the course of his re-creation he puts into them as adequate to them.'

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 605.

¹³⁴ See *ibid.*, 604: 'The requirement is only this, that for the artist the content [of his work] shall constitute the substance, the inmost truth, of his consciousness and make his chosen mode of presentation necessary.'

Mendelssohn's adherence to Hegel's religious and aesthetic creeds can be demonstrated by reference to another letter to Pereira-Arnstein of 3 July 1831. In his opening comments, he explained why he felt it impossible to comply with her request to provide a setting of Joseph Christian Freiherr von Zedlitz's poem *Die nächtliche Heerschau* ('The Nighttime Parade,' 1821).¹³⁵ In his explanations, considerations of truthfulness as well as a loyalty to his beliefs and convictions with respect to artistic contents and forms played a central role. His thoughts, first of all, attest to his moral reservations about setting the words to music; he confessed: 'I like to take music very seriously, and I consider it impermissible to compose anything I do not feel through and through. It is as if I told a lie, for notes have just as specific a meaning as words—maybe even more specific.'¹³⁶ Hegel's requirement that music should reflect its creator's earnestness and consciousness shines through clearly here: Mendelssohn was not convinced of the authenticity and truth of the poem. Its artificial contents failed to stimulate him both emotionally and creatively:

[...] it strikes me as if the poet himself did not believe in his misty figures and forms, and used them only for ornamentation, so the whole thing seems to me artificial, not natural, not truthful at all (please excuse my frankness); this is why many passages leave me cold – in particular the end with the dead Caesar [...].¹³⁷

In his refusal to set the poem due to the lack of any belief in Zedlitz's poetic truths and subject-matter, Mendelssohn's attitude is clearly reminiscent of further arguments brought forward by Hegel in his lectures on aesthetics. In his closing statements about *Das Ende der romantischen Kunstform* ('The End of the Romantic Form of Art') Hegel had criticized romantic artists who chose contents for their works that were foreign to their convictions and beliefs, emphasizing: '[i]f [...] we

¹³⁵ Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein's letter of 8 February 1831 that included this request is unfortunately lost.

¹³⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 3 July 1831 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, in *SB* (2009), 2:303, trans. in Feder, 'On Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's Sacred Music,' 273.

¹³⁷ Mendelssohn, letter of 3 July 1831 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, in *SB* (2009), 2:303. Since Mendelssohn's use of the noun *Nebelgestalten* is ambiguous, it has been translated as 'misty figures and forms,' based on nineteenth-century meanings of the term in the sense of *nebelichte gestalten, eine figur* and *ein schema*. *DWB*, s.v.v. 'Nebelarm,' & 'Nebelgestalt,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?lemid=GN03520> & <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&hitlist=&patternlist=&lemid=GN03560> (accessed 21 September 2013).

nowadays propose to make the subject of a statue or a painting a Greek god, or, Protestants as we are today, the Virgin Mary, we are not seriously in earnest with this material. It is the innermost faith which we lack here [...].'¹³⁸ Mendelssohn's writings about music and his compositional output of July 1831 suggest that he shared this thought; he was only able to express in music what he felt to be truthful to his own aesthetic and religious beliefs, and it was impossible for him to accept commissions for music based on topics that Hegel would have described as incompatible with his inner conscience.¹³⁹

Faced with the task of finding the right music for Zedlitz's poem, Mendelssohn struggled with certain ambiguities in its content and form. He believed it to be not only futile but also objectionable to choose any available style or means of representation in order to translate the poem's content and narrative form into music:

You are placed between a dramatic conception or a mere narrative; the one [composer], in the 'Erl König,' [*sic*] causes the willows to rustle, the child to shriek, and the horse to gallop. The other imagines a ballad singer, calmly narrating the horrible tale, as you would a ghost story, and this is the most accurate view of the two; Reichardt almost invariably adopted this reading, but it does not suit me; the music stands in my way. I feel more receptive towards the fantastic when I read such a poem quietly to myself, and imagine the rest, than when it is depicted, or related to me. It is impossible to understand 'The Nighttime Parade' as a narrative, inasmuch as no particular person speaks, and the poem is not written in the style of a ballad.¹⁴⁰

Correlating aspects of form and content with his own sense of truthfulness and earnestness, Mendelssohn's objections were also influenced by his perception of himself as an artist. As he indicated further on in his letter, it was his aim to remain true to his own musical language. At that time, his music was of a more solemn bent that did not allow for mimetic imitations of real-life or poetic events that, in his view, too easily degenerated into humorous tone-painting and pompous effect. To provide a composition that compared to the spectacular settings of his contemporaries would

¹³⁸ Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 603-604.

¹³⁹ See *ibid.*, 606.

have run counter to his maxim to compose only music that he considered to be good enough:

I could indeed have composed music for it in the same descriptive style, as Neukomm and Fischhof, in Vienna. I might have introduced a very novel rolling of drums in the bass, and blasts of trumpets in the treble, and have brought in all sorts of hob-goblins. But I love my serious elements of sound [*meine ernsthaften Töne*] too well to do anything of the sort; for this kind of thing always appears to me a joke; somewhat like the paintings in juvenile spelling-books, where the roofs are coloured bright red, to make the children aware they are intended for roofs; and I should have been most reluctant to write out and send you anything [...] that did not entirely please myself, because I always wish you to have the best I can accomplish [...].¹⁴¹

Considerations of genre and aesthetic preference also played a major role in his refusal to set the poem. After extensive deliberation, he came to the conclusion that it was impossible for him to compose music that would be suitable for a ‘descriptive poem;’ after all, ‘the mass of compositions of this nature [...] prove my point; for I am not acquainted with one single work of the kind that has been composed well [*gelingen*].’¹⁴² In general, however, Mendelssohn remained faithful to his prioritising of moral rather than aesthetic considerations, as he had expressed them in his letter to Zelter quoted at the beginning of this section. He believed that what made musical works and paintings art was not necessarily an adherence to requirements of style or of form in conformance with aesthetes’ and scholars’ notions of beauty, but the fact that they had been created in ‘deepest sincerity.’¹⁴³ This thought also guided his reception and appreciation of performances; as a further

¹⁴⁰ Mendelssohn, letter of 3 July 1831 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, in *SB* (2009), 2:303, trans. adapted from *LIS*, 201-202, at 201.

¹⁴¹ Idem, letter of 3 July 1831 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, in *SB* (2009), 2:304, trans. in *LIS*, 202.

¹⁴² Idem, letter of 3 July 1831 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, in *SB* (2009), 2:303, trans. adapted from *LIS*, 201-202, at 201. At this point, it should be noted that Mendelssohn was prone to change his mind about the value of ‘descriptive music.’ Early on inspired by A. B. Marx’s thought on programme music, his overture to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, op. 21 (1826) and the *Hebrides*, op. 26 (1830) have earned Mendelssohn the reputation of ‘landscape painter in music,’ and as late as 1846/1847 he depicted natural phenomena such as the fury of the wind and earthquakes in a vividly descriptive manner in his ‘Elijah’ oratorio.

¹⁴³ See the analysis of Mendelssohn’s letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter on pp. 188-189 in this chapter.

reference to his letter about the Roman Easter processions dating from 1831 demonstrates:

[...] in order to win my respect, it is sufficient, as I have already said, for any project—whatever its sphere—to be carried out with fidelity [*Treue*] and consciousness [*Gewissenhaftigkeit*] as far as ability will permit. Thus you must not expect from me a formal criticism of the singing, as to whether they intoned correctly or incorrectly, in tune or out of tune, or whether the compositions are good.¹⁴⁴

These moral principles steered Mendelssohn's composition towards other subject matter in the early early 1830s. Rather than setting Zedlitz's poem, it was Goethe's ballad *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* ('The First Walpurgis Night,' 1799) that absorbed his compositional energies and whose contents struck a chord with his own religious self-consciousness.¹⁴⁵ He took much interest in the religious message of Goethe's text. This is suggested by the fact that, contrary to his general antipathy towards giving programmatic descriptions of musical works, in the preface to the published score of his secular cantata, Mendelssohn quoted Goethe's summary of the plot. According to the poet, his ballad was symbolic of the self-assertion of a confessional group against religious intervention and suppression:

It is actually intended in a highly symbolic sense. For in the history of the world it must happen over and over that something old, established, proven, calming [*ein Altes, Gegründetes, Gepriiftes, Beruhigendes*], is crowded out, pushed away, displaced, and, where not eradicated, penned into the narrowest space by emerging innovations.¹⁴⁶

Setting aside assumptions that Mendelssohn had recognized the story of his ancestors and Jewish contemporaries or even his own situation as an assimilated Jew in

¹⁴⁴ Mendelssohn, letter of 4 April 1831 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:245, trans. in *FML*, 121.

¹⁴⁵ Mendelssohn commenced work on setting the ballad in September 1830. While staying in Paris in 1832 he added an overture to the composition. By 15 July, he had completed an early version of the score. Ten years later, he rewrote the whole piece before authorizing its publication as 'Ballade' op. 60 in 1843. For further information about the genesis of the work see John Michael Cooper, *Mendelssohn, Goethe, and the Walpurgis Night: The Heaven Muse in European Culture, 1700-1850* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2007).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, trans. in Douglass Seaton, 'The Romantic Mendelssohn: The Composition of "Die erste Walpurgisnacht,"' *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 68, no. 3 (July 1982), 398-410, at 404-405.

Goethe's plot,¹⁴⁷ it seems that his deep sympathies for religious freedom and tolerance might have encouraged his interest in and enthusiasm for the ballad.

In combining ideals of artistic truth and beauty with maxims to act according to one's best abilities and the dictates of one's own religious convictions, Mendelssohn's notions of truthfulness and conscientiousness reflect the long-lasting influence of the moral values of his grandfather and of the religious instruction that he had received from Wilmsen. The parallels between Felix's approach to composition and Moses Mendelssohn's philosophical ideas have already been highlighted by Feder, who stated that, '[a]s a musician Mendelssohn treasured the ideals of truth, beauty and goodness [...] which Moses Mendelssohn was among the first to introduce to the world of the Enlightenment.'¹⁴⁸ Felix had most likely become familiar with Moses' general motto of the Enlightenment 'Discover truth, love beauty, seek goodness, do the best you can' (*Nach Wahrheit forschen, Schönheit lieben, Gutes wollen, das Beste tun*) in conversations with his father and his uncle Joseph, who had made the slogan the guiding principle of their jointly founded *Gesellschaft der Freunde*. Inspired by Wilmsen, truthfulness early on became a binding religious commandment and guiding principle for Mendelssohn. His confirmation confession attests to this fact:

If man wants to give himself sufficient reasons for everything that he does, if he wants to obey the commandments [...], he must proceed according to principles [...] by which he lets himself be guided and ruled [...]: *Reverence before God* [...]. *Undaunted candour* [...]. A third principle should be *humility*. [...]. Further, *Unselfishness*. [...]. *Truthfulness* [...].¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ While Goethe's text tells the story of the Druids in the German Harz mountains, who attempted to defend their pagan rituals against interventions from the Christian state force, several scholars are convinced that Mendelssohn decided to set the ballad because he identified the Pagans as Jews and central lines of the text such as 'And if we are robbed of our old customs, Who can rob us of thy light?' (*Und raubt man uns den alten Brauch, dein Licht, wer kann es rauben?*) as 'a Jewish protest against the domination of Christendom.' Authors and studies advancing this viewpoint are: Heinz-Klaus Metzger, 'Noch einmal: *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*,' in *Musik-Konzepte* Heft 14/15, ed. idem and Rainer Riehn (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1980), 93-96, at 94 as well as Seaton, 'The Romantic Mendelssohn: "The Composition of "Die erste Walpurgisnacht,"' 405. There is no documentary evidence in Mendelssohn's correspondence to substantiate these claims.

¹⁴⁸ Feder, 'On Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's Sacred Music,' 260.

¹⁴⁹ Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Konfirmations-Bekenntnis* ('Confirmation Confession,' 1825), quoted in idem, *Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann*, 359, trans. in Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn*, 95-97.

* * *

Mendelssohn's comments about commandments of *Andacht*, *Ernst* and truthfulness leave us with multifaceted impressions of his thought on *Kunstreligion*. He seems to have associated devotional absorption and earnestness with behaviours that could simultaneously count as morally good, aesthetically valuable, and pious. In doing so, he joined others with a bent towards aesthetic religiousness who equated religiosity with morality and emphasized the importance of both in art. Early on in his life, Mendelssohn elaborated the multifarious meanings, connotations and facets of earnestness into a complex system of values to which he held firmly as an artist and a man. While he placed the highest demands of conscientiousness and truthfulness on himself, he also encouraged others – composers and performers in particular – to be selfless and diligent, to respect artists and their works and to show a serious concern for the spiritual in art. His views, for that matter, were informed and strengthened by an aversion for anything commercial, by national stereotypes, professional concerns, middle-class values as well as aesthetic ideals of genre and composition advanced by the Cecilians. Beyond that, his opinions reflect the influence of others whose ideas and writings shaped his moral outlook either directly or indirectly: above all, his father Abraham, Wilmsen and Lessing, as well as individuals such as Hegel, Luther and Moses Mendelssohn who may also have stimulated his own views of the divine in man and art to a certain extent.

Chapter 5. Human and Divine Icons in *Kunstreligion* Theory

As Helmut Loos has highlighted, there was a strong tendency in nineteenth-century Germany to erect statues and memorials that honoured composers as ‘artists of religious disposition’ (*Künstlergestalt[en] religiöser Prägung*).¹ He argues that the imagery used by German sculptors reflected and visualized the changing philosophical ideas and aesthetic topoi of the period.² Commemorative monuments to Beethoven erected throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, depict the changing perception of the composer, charting his evolution ‘from truth-seeker via prophet to God.’ Thus, as Loos describes, the Dresden sculptor Ernst Julius Hähnel’s design of the Beethoven Monument in Bonn of 1845 represents Beethoven as an ‘old German master in a scholar’s gown with paper and quill’ (*im Stile eines altdeutschen Meisters im Gelehrten-Talar mit Papier und Feder*), whereas later memorials after designs by Kaspar Clemens von Zumbusch (Vienna, 1880) and Max Klinger (Leipzig and Vienna, 1902) depict the composer as the prophet Moses and a ‘deity of nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion*’ (*Gottheit der bürgerlichen Kunstreligion des 19. Jahrhunderts*).³ In comparison, architectural sacralizations of Bach were rather low-key, hesitant and resistant to apotheosis; he was usually portrayed as a pious musician and God’s servant.⁴

These religious perceptions of composers find mention in Mendelssohn’s writings and those of his contemporaries. In alignment with aesthetic understandings of the divine and human in earlier centuries, ideas of artists as divine creators, prophets and priests as well as conceptions of divine possession and possessors were combined in manifold ways in nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion* theory. In

¹ Helmut Loos, ‘Der Komponist als Gott musikalischer Kunstreligion. Die Sakralisierung der Tonkunst,’ in *Musik im Raum der Kirche. Fragen und Perspektiven; ein ökumenisches Handbuch zur Kirchenmusik*, ed. Winfried Böning. Stuttgart: Carus-Verlag and Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2007, 98-139, at 99.

² Ibid., 98-99.

³ Ibid., 98-99. Zumbusch’s memorial shows Beethoven sitting in a chair in a posture that seems reminiscent of Michelangelo’s Moses statue that adorns Pope Julius II’s tomb in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome. By contrast, Klinger’s imagery was inspired by Phidias’s Statue of Zeus at the Olympian Temple of Zeus, as described by Pausanias.

⁴ Ibid., 99.

Mendelssohn's letters, sacralizations and deifications of musicians are rare in comparison, often metaphorical rather than of a religious nature, and sometimes purely implicit. His writings about female artists like Fanny Hensel reveal aesthetic understandings of artists as priests while reflecting developments in his personal life, the influence of altering gender perceptions as well as changing literary and musical tastes. Elsewhere, religious imagery throws revealing light on his veneration of Bach and his stance on the mythical and critical Beethoven reception of his contemporaries. As Mendelssohn's cautious and sometimes ironic use of human and divine concepts suggests, he considered artistic talent a product both of human ingenuity and of divine providence.

Trajectories of apotheosis and transfiguration in writings about the arts

Throughout human history, the divine has proven to be a flexible and changeable category. While in its narrower sense associated with God or deities, the attribute 'divine' early on featured prominently in deifications and sacralizations of outstanding individuals. The example was already set by Homer who, in his *Odyssey*, described any 'human who was distinguished, excellent in any sense' as 'divine.'⁵ Inspired by his writings and ancient terminology, 'divine' (*göttlich*) took multiple meanings in descriptions of extraordinary men, philosophers, artists as well as emperors and heroes. Understandings of the adjective as 'similar or equal to God' (*gottähnlich*, *gottgleich*) could also be observed in the Renaissance, whereas meanings in the sense of 'God-sent' (*gottgesandt*) and 'immortal, God-blessed' (*unsterblich*, *gottbegnadet*) became common in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries respectively before they came together in nineteenth-century writings leaning towards *Kunstreligion*.⁶

⁵ Col. 1373 in *DWB*, s.v. 'göttlich' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG23964> (accessed 10 June 2013): 'allgemein in der bezeichnung jedes in irgendeinem sinne ausgezeichneten, vortrefflichen menschen'

⁶ See cols. 1369, 1364 & 1373, in *ibid*.

In the Ages of Genius and German Classicism (1765-1832) comparisons between men and God or Gods that focus on their resemblance or identity came to thrive to an unprecedented degree. This new focus was conditioned by an exploration of ancient Greek culture in the writings of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803), Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813) and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), a direct adoption and re-interpretation of Greek and Latin rhetoric as well as a revival of Platonic idealism.⁷ This Platonic revival was part of a movement now described as ‘neo-classicism’ or ‘romantic classicism.’ It took its rise around the middle of the eighteenth century and inspired the circulation of ancient classical sources in German translations at the end of the century.⁸

From around 1800, the renewed interest in what Elizabeth Kramer has summarized as ‘the relationship between human and divine experience’ as well as analogies and discrepancies between ‘human and divine modes of artistic creativity,’⁹ gave rise to new ‘religions of humanity’ that came to affect writings on art and artists. Nowak has highlighted the new perceptions of the human and divine that arose very concisely; according to him, from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, ‘the “old faith” is replaced by the faith of humanity in itself’ (*an die Stelle des ‘alten Glaubens’ tritt der Glaube der Menschheit an sich selbst*).¹⁰

This change of faith could be observed very clearly in Friedrich Schlegel’s and David Friedrich Strauss’s writings. Schlegel confessed in his correspondence that his literary activities were guided by the intention to ‘found a new religion.’¹¹ According to his philosophical writings, the doctrines of this new religion were based on the belief that ‘the human is everywhere the highest [*das Höchste*] and higher

⁷ Col. 1370 in *DWB*, s.v. ‘göttlich’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG23964> (accessed 10 June 2013).

⁸ Among the intellectuals who contributed to the study of Plato from the turn of the nineteenth century were Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher. Their interpretations and translations of Plato’s dialogues were published under the title *Platons Werke* (‘Plato’s Works’) in six volumes between 1804 and 1828.

⁹ *IKA*, 175 & 28.

¹⁰ Adolf Nowak, ‘Religiöse Begriffe in der Musikästhetik des 19. Jahrhunderts,’ in *Religiöse Musik in nicht-liturgischen Werken von Beethoven bis Reger*, ed. Walter Wiora, Günther Massenkeil and Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1978), 47-58, at 53.

¹¹ Friedrich Schlegel, letter of 2 December 1798 to Novalis, in idem, *Periode des Athenäums*, 25. Juli 1797-Ende August 1799, ed. Raymond Immerwahr, vol. 24 of *Friedrich Schlegel Kritische Ausgabe* (Zurich: Thomas-Verlag, 1958), 205.

than the godly.’¹² In his work *Gespräch über die Poesie* (‘Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms,’ 1800) this thought seems to have inspired a conception of the poet as a ‘divinity’ (*Gottheit*) whose poems ‘we are able to understand [...] because part of the Poet lives in us.’¹³ Even though Strauss’s theological work *Das Leben Jesu* (‘The Life of Jesus,’ 1835-1836) caused much controversy with its thesis that ‘[h]umanity is the union of both natures, the incarnate God: the infinite manifesting itself as finitude and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude,’ its contents had a big impact on nineteenth-century discourse on divine humanity, too. His thoughts inspired early writings by Nietzsche and gave new impetus to apotheotic portrayals of artists.¹⁴

The imagery of apotheosis that prevailed in *Kunstreligion* has been explored by numerous scholars. According to Randall, in the early nineteenth century composers were ‘accorded godlike or demigod status,’ and they were ‘depicted as residing in a pantheon of the gods.’¹⁵ As such, they were, in Kramer’s terms, worshipped as ‘transfigured deities’ or ‘spirits’ and ‘divine creators’ whose divine and human traits were defined differently for each individual.¹⁶ Portrayals of artists as transfigured individuals built on the religious sense of the noun ‘transfiguration’ that originally denoted a momentary transformation of a man or woman into someone having the aspect of the divine.¹⁷ Kramer has outlined how such transformative processes had been depicted in ancient mythological texts and sacred stories by Christian authors prior to the eighteenth century before they entered aesthetic discourse on *Kunstreligion*.¹⁸ In these sources and the Bible, the

¹² Idem, ‘Ueber die Philosophie,’ *Athenaeum. Eine Zeitschrift von August Wilhelm Schlegel und Friedrich Schlegel*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1799), 1-38, at 11, trans. in Aniela Jaffé, *Was C. G. Jung a Mystic? and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Hinshaw (Einsiedeln: Daimon, 1989), 40.

¹³ Idem, ‘Gespräch über die Poesie,’ *Athenaeum*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1800), 58–128, at 59-60.

¹⁴ David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1840), 1:735, trans. in George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 164.

¹⁵ Annie Janeiro Randall, “‘And Art Shall Say, ‘Let There Be Light’’: Religious Imagery and the Nineteenth-Century Musical Imagination,” in *Art and the Religious Impulse*, ed. Eric Michael Mazur (London: Associated University Press, 2002), 84-90, at 84.

¹⁶ *IKA*, 184, 201 & 203-204.

¹⁷ See, for example, ‘Transfiguratio,’ *UWK* (1745), 44:2097: ‘the change of the physique or the transformation of the appearance’ (*die Veränderung der Figur oder die Verwandlung der Gestalt*)

¹⁸ Elizabeth Kramer, ‘The Idea of Transfiguration in the Early German Reception of Mozart’s Requiem,’ *Current Musicology*, no. 81 (2006), 73-107, at 74.

transfigured ones took various shapes and forms. Most commonly, reference was made to stars, shades of light and ghost-like apparitions.¹⁹ At the end of the eighteenth century, conceptions of geniuses as imaginative individuals and ‘creative humans’ as well as ‘spirits of higher or (rarely) lower provenance’ prevailed. As commonly believed, they turned into ‘other-worldly, transfigured spirits, heavenly high figures beyond reach, heroes and demigods (assisting mankind)’ after their deaths.²⁰

Two new usages clearly set nineteenth-century art-religious texts apart from earlier writings, however. From around the turn of the century, ideas of apotheosis also often prevailed in biographical and critical portrayals of living composers and performers.²¹ Furthermore, the divine aspects and characteristics that were transferred onto human artists were no longer necessarily based on mythological accounts of the Greek deities but also influenced by Christian understandings of God that derived from loan translations in the German Bible and theological texts. In these sources God was praised for his ‘mercifulness’ (*Barmherzigkeit*), ‘wisdom’ (*Weisheit*), ‘power’ (*Gewalt*), ‘allmightiness’ (*Allmacht*) and ‘eternity’ (*Ewigkeit*). Elsewhere, he was portrayed as ‘infinite’ (*unendlich*) and ‘immortal’ (*unsterblich*) or simply as ‘divine’ (*göttlich*).²² In Christian and earlier religious contexts, the latter adjective functioned as an attribute qualifying the triune Christian God, individuals worshipped in Christianity (such as the Virgin Mary) and mythological divinities.

In nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion* theory, associations of the attribute ‘divine’ with understandings of ‘God-blessed’ or ‘God-sent’ proved particularly attractive in texts that featured portrayals of poets, painters and musicians. Reflecting ancient theories of poetic and prose writing as well as religious roles and positions in

¹⁹ The Gospels describe Jesus’s Transfiguration on Mount Tabor as an event during which he became radiant and clothed in rays of white light. See Luke 9:28-36, Mark 9:2-9 and Matthew 17:1-8.

²⁰ *Goethe-Wörterbuch online*, s.v. ‘Genius,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/GWB/?sigle=GWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=JG02041> (accessed 12 June 2013): ‘schöpferische [...] Menschen,’ ‘Geistwesen höherer od (selten) niederer Provenienz,’ ‘entrückte, verklärte Geister, himmlische, unerreichbar hohe Gestalten, (dem Menschen hilfreiche) Heroen u Halbgötter’

²¹ This usage is related to, but distinct from ancient Greek and Roman customs where emperors and other respected persons (state officials, philosophers, benefactors of the people, as well as parents and their children) were regarded and celebrated as gods after, and, in rare cases, before their deaths. See ‘Apotheosis oder Consecratio,’ *UWK* (1732), 2:934-936 and ‘Apotheose,’ *PUL* (1857), 1:617.

the Old and New Testaments, these individuals figured in nineteenth-century sources in various guises. They were often portrayed in analogy to descriptive accounts of ‘divine possession’ or ‘divine possessorship,’ and they were also viewed as priests and prophets. Depending on the category of divine or ecclesiastic personality chosen, descriptions of the characteristics, faculties and powers attributed to musicians and artists varied, and this in turn affected the way in which processes of the composition, interpretation, staging and performance of musical works were portrayed.

Notions of artists as being ‘possessed’ by the divine or as representing ‘divine possessors’ took their beginnings in ‘Plato’s theory of poetic inspiration,’ as outlined in the dialogue entitled *Ion* (written around 394–391 BC), and in the ancient treatise *Peri hypsous* (‘On the Sublime’).²³ They also interacted with conceptions of prophets, priests and God (or the gods) shortly after their first appearance and inspired portrayals of artists as such.²⁴ By the turn of the nineteenth century, comparisons between these individuals or professions were well established, and they found new impetus in art-religious portrayals of artists and musicians by Mendelssohn and his contemporaries.

For Plato, artists (poets and rhapsodists specifically) were merely the means through which the gods articulated their ideas. They were moved to artistic creation by ‘a divine power’ and their writings were the product of divine afflatus rather than original thought: ‘it is not by art that they compose and utter such fine things [...] but by a divine dispensation, each is able to compose that to which the Muse has stirred

²² Col. 1036 in *DWB*, s.v. ‘Gott’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG22661> (accessed 27 July 2013).

²³ These texts are analysed in Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the Idea of Musical Genius* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001).

²⁴ In scholarly literature dealing with *Kunstreligion*, nineteenth-century notions of artists as prophets and priests have mainly been dealt with by Elizabeth Kramer, Helmut Loos, Daniel Chua, Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, and Stefan Kunze. The general importance of these notions for the religion of art and romantic aesthetics of music has been highlighted most prominently by Kunze who wrote about ‘the general romantic topos of the artist as a priest’ and Hartwich who identified the prophet as the embodiment of the ‘romantic Künstlergenie’ who formed the centre of the ‘enterprise [*Unternehmen*],’ known as ‘romantic *Kunstreligion*.’ See Stefan Kunze, *Der Kunstbegriff Richard Wagners: Voraussetzungen und Folgerungen* (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1982), 90 and Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, ‘Musik und Religion - Richard Wagners Parsifal,’ *Wagnerspectrum*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2009), 185–198, at 186.

him [...].²⁵ By contrast, the anonymous author of the ancient treatise *Peri hypsous* ('On the Sublime') saw artistic creativity and ingenuity as something innate and put much emphasis on artists' 'inventive skill,' power and 'nobility of mind' as divine possessors.²⁶ According to "Longinus," the strength of artists mainly consists in the ability to immerse their minds into 'what is noble and, as it were, impregnate them again and again with lofty inspiration.' As 'men of spirit' they possess 'weighty thoughts' and the natural ability to transform these into 'a great style' of sublime writing.²⁷ Accordingly, their works are neither the direct product of divine seizure nor does human training play a role in their creation. The ability to produce art is an inborn talent – although it can be enhanced through practice.²⁸ As soon as their skills reach their peak, poets' 'sublimity [of thought] lifts them near the mighty mind of God.'²⁹ Following this understanding, they may be perceived as superhumans or demigods.

Central thoughts in these ancient conceptions of possession and possessorship can be identified as being at the root of religious and aesthetic understandings of prophets and priests. As it seems, there is much common ground between prophets and the possessed ones as well as priests and ancient possessors, and the differences between both groups of individuals boils down to the simple formula 'vessel' versus 'genius.' In religious understandings, prophets' deeds and speeches were guided by divine inspiration. The biblical notion of a prophet was that of a person driven by 'a holy, spiritual impulse' (*heiligem geistestriebe*) to 'proclaim and testify God's word' (*gottes wort verkündigt und bezeugt*), as it was revealed to him by the divinity.³⁰ This

²⁵ Plato, *Ion*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, in Plato, *The Statesman, Philebus and Ion* (London: William Heinemann, 1925), 401-447, at 421 & 423.

²⁶ "Longinus," *On the Sublime*, trans. in Aristotle: *The Poetics; Longinus: On the Sublime; Demetrius: On Style*, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939), 121-256, at 125 & 179. According to studies into the history of the source, the treatise was either the work of the critic Cassius Longinus of Palmyra (third century A.D.) or an anonymous writer of the first century A.D. Due to the still doubtful source situation, it has become accepted to put the originally assumed author into quotation marks. In his text, "Longinus" discusses stylistic sublimity in both poetry and prose.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 143-145.

²⁸ See "Longinus," *On the Sublime*, 141 & 143: 'although it [the command of full-blooded ideas] is rather a gift than an acquired ability, we should still do our utmost to train our minds into sympathy with what is noble and, as it were, impregnate them again and again with lofty inspiration.'

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 227.

³⁰ DWB, s.v. 'prophet,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GP07896> (accessed 10 June 2013). See also 'Prophet, Propheten, Weissager,' *UWK* (1741), 29:843-

divine revelation could reach the prophet in states of ‘rapture’ (*Verzückung*), ‘frenzy’ (*heydnische[s] rasen*) and obsession or resulted from the prophet’s interpretation of divine signs and symbols.³¹ To others, prophets seemed rather passive in their service to the divinity; they did not do much more than to lend their voice to God (or the gods) in their sermons, psalms and songs.³² By contrast, priests allegedly stood out in the way in which they fulfilled their divine vocation and applied their divine gifts and talents on earth. They were very eloquent and skilled in their art or profession. In early nineteenth-century thought, they possessed superior intelligence and wisdom. This idea especially prevails in writings touching upon religious history, such as Herder’s *Von Gottes Sohn, der Welt Heiland* (‘On God’s Son, the World’s Saviour,’ 1797), where priests are depicted as ‘the wise men of the nation’ (*die Weisen der Nation*).³³

Inspired by holy scripture and other texts, prophets and priests were understood in the early nineteenth century as being God’s servants and initiates. Just as, in the Bible, prophets appeared as ‘God’s labourers,’ the priest’s role was that of someone who was ‘appointed to the direct service of the deity.’³⁴ As humans, prophets and priests were called by God to accomplish a divine mission. This mission consisted in the communication of instructive and predictive messages that they received from above. In the German Bible, the prophet is depicted as ‘a messenger commissioned by God to make known the unknown.’³⁵ In narrower and antiquated word meanings as well as in the Old Testament, he was a person who proclaimed religious truths and gave others an understanding of their meaning.³⁶ The priest had manifold tasks: in Christian churches, his role in religious worship consisted of varied responsibilities such as holding mass, administering the holy

863, at 843: ‘diejenigen [...], welche von besonderen Dingen und Rathschlüssen Gottes [...] eine besondere göttliche Offenbarung empfangen haben [...]’

³¹ ‘Prophet, Propheten, Weissager,’ *UWK* (1741), 29:843-863, at 843.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Johann Gottfried Herder, ‘Von Gottes Sohn, der Welt Heiland. Nach Johannes Evangelium’ (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1797), 47.

³⁴ ‘Prophet, Propheten, Weissager,’ *UWK* (1741), 29:843-863, at 843 and *DWB*, s.v. ‘Priester,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GP07462> (accessed 11 June 2013). For relevant passages from the Bible see, above all, 2 Kings 21:10.

³⁵ ‘Der Prophet,’ *GKW*, 3:845-846: ‘ein zur Bekanntmachung unbekannter Sachen unmittelbar von Gott verordnete[r] Bothe’

³⁶ *Ibid.*: ‘ein [...] Lehrer, [...] welche[r] andern unbekannte Religions-Wahrheiten bekannt macht’

sacrament and granting absolution of sins;³⁷ in Catholic and Protestant belief, some of these tasks were complemented by duties of liturgical singing, preaching and religious speech, which explains why priests were occasionally portrayed as preachers and vocalists intoning ‘holy songs’ of praise and worship.³⁸ While Catholics understood priesthood exclusively as a sacramental role for a specific elite (Catholic ordained clerics), Lutherans entertained wider understandings of it as a brotherhood of all who believed.³⁹

Nineteenth-century writers influenced by *Kunstreligion* emphasized these traits and spheres of activity of prophets and priests in their portrayals of artists and musicians. Additionally, they drew attention to ethical aspects, in particular to behaviours and sentiments manifesting piety, dignity, humility as well as a selfless commitment and untiring devotion to a higher mission. These included for priests, additionally, the appearance in an attire that was decent and humble,⁴⁰ and for prophets ‘a saintly and godly lifestyle’ (*ein heilig und gottselig Leben*) without sin that reflected their respect for or ‘fear of God’ (*Gottesfurcht*), as well as their ‘holy fervour’ (*heiligem Eifer*) and ‘diligence’ (*Fleiß*).⁴¹ Even though it was widely admitted that there had been ‘godless’ (*gottlos*) prophets in religious history whose actions seemed immoral or unreasonable,⁴² prophets were widely expected to be ‘holy men’ (*heilige Männer*), saints and ‘masters who were in control of their emotions and able to conquer their desires through reason’ (*Meister ihrer Gemüths-Regungen, die mit der Vernunft ihre Begierden bezwingen*).⁴³

Early art-religious portrayals of artists as prophets and priests that highlighted their piety and set the example for many later writers could be found in the writings of Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck. In their collection of fictitious letters *Phantasien über die Kunst, für Freunde der Kunst* (‘Phantasies on Art for

³⁷ ‘Der Priester,’ *GKW*, 3:837-838.

³⁸ Col. 2118 in *DWB*, s.v. ‘Priester’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GP07462> (accessed 27 July 2013).

³⁹ *DWB*, s.v. ‘Priester,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GP07462> (accessed 11 June 2013).

⁴⁰ ‘Priester,’ *UWK* (1741), 29:409-424, at 410.

⁴¹ ‘Prophet, Propheten, Weissager,’ *UWK* (1741), 29: 854-856.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 856 and *IKA*, 185.

⁴³ ‘Prophet, Propheten, Weissager,’ *UWK* (1741), 29:856 & 854.

Friends of Art,' 1799) they portrayed the painter Albrecht Dürer as the embodiment of the pious artist who lived in respectful humility, gratitude and fear of God, guided by an awareness that '[t]o lead such a quiet, *dependent* life, during which one at no point forgets that one is nothing other than a *worker of God*, this is to walk the surest path to happiness.'⁴⁴ In their collection of essays and narratives *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* ('Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar,' 1799), they focused on the prophetic and priestly facets of the personality of the fictional musician Berglinger. The way in which they describe his profession in *Ein Brief Joseph Berglingers* (a fictional letter written by the musician) reflects the higher truths and understandings at which a composer 'in the service' of the 'Goddess' of art arrives: the creation of art is a superior vocation freed from all earthly limitations and considerations. The fulfilment of this vocation elevates the artist to a priest, if not a God himself:

It is such a divine striving of the human being, to create that [...] which, independent of the world, is eternally resplendent in its own brilliance [...]. No flame of the human heart rises up higher and straighter toward heaven than art! No substance so concentrates in itself the intellectual and spiritual power of the human being and makes him to such a degree an autonomous, human God.⁴⁵

Soon after Wackenroder's and Tieck's artistic portrayals had been published, the tendency to draw analogies between composers as well as religious or divine characters entered music criticism. Stimulated by an interest in the prophetic, priestly and divine attributes of artists as well as biographical accounts of composers' lives that flourished from 1800 onwards, writers explored the personalities and creative processes of contemporary composers. In some writings there was a clear focus on composers of church music like Bach that seems to be inspired by aesthetic thought that Liszt summarized much later in a letter to Johann von Herbeck: '[t]he Church

⁴⁴ These lines form part of Wackenroder's essay *Schilderung wie die alten deutschen Künstler gelebt haben* ('A Portrayal of how the early German artists lived,' 1799), in *WSWB*, 1:158, trans. in *Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's Confessions and Fantasies*, trans. Mary Hurst Schubert (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 168. The essays of the 'Phantasies on Art' were partly written by Tieck and partly drawn from posthumous papers by Wackenroder.

⁴⁵ Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder/Ludwig Tieck, 'A Letter by Joseph Berglinger,' trans. in *idem, Confessions and Fantasies*, 194-197, at 195.

composer is both preacher and priest, and what the *word* fails to bring to our powers of perception the *tone* makes winged and clear.’⁴⁶ Other authors focused on Beethoven and Mozart, drawing inspiration from biographical knowledge as well as verbal evidence, including autobiographical documents found among the former’s posthumous papers as well as writings by biographers.

Beethoven’s *Heiligenstadt Testament* (1802) attracted particular interest from nineteenth-century authors.⁴⁷ Written accounts of Mozart’s and Beethoven’s lives, that appeared as books and as articles in music periodicals after their deaths, proved stimulating too. Most noteworthy are Rochlitz’ partly factual and partly fictional accounts of Mozart’s life published in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* in 1801 and Johann Aloys Schlosser’s *Ludwig van Beethoven: Eine Biographie* (‘Ludwig van Beethoven: A Biography’), which went to press a few months after the composer’s death. Inspired by Beethoven’s life, the critic Amadeus Wendt, for example, promoted a view of the composer as ‘an initiate of heaven; [who] in invisible signs [...] proclaims his visions, audible to every ear that is open, but not perceptible to everyone.’⁴⁸ While an anonymous reviewer from the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* praised Beethoven as a ‘worthy High Priest’ and his Ninth Symphony as a composition that celebrates in sound his service to the ‘divine *Tonkunst*,’⁴⁹ Goethe was convinced that Mozart was an ‘extraordinary human being [who] has been placed on earth to fulfil a mission given to him by God.’⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Franz Liszt, letter of 12 January 1857 to Johann von Herbeck, in idem, *Briefe*, ed. La Mara (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1893), 1:261, trans. in Franz Liszt, *Letters of Franz Liszt*, ed. Constanze Bache (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1894), 1:316.

⁴⁷ It was found among the composer’s papers by Anton Schindler and Stephan von Breuning and published in the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* on 17 October 1828.

⁴⁸ Amadeus Wendt, ‘Gedanken über die neue Tonkunst,’ *AMZ*, vol. 17, no. 21 (24 May 1815), 345, trans. adapted from *The Critical Reception of Beethoven’s Compositions by His German Contemporaries*, ed. Wayne M. Senner, William Rhea Meredith and Robin Wallace (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 2:185; henceforth *CRBC*.

⁴⁹ ‘Wien. Musikalisches Tagebuch vom Monat May,’ *AMZ*, vol. 26, no. 27 (1 July 1824), 436-442, at 441.

⁵⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, letter of 11 March 1828 to Eckermann, in idem, *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche* (Frankfurt on the Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), 12:660.

Mendelssohn's writings about the divine in man

Mendelssohn used to speak of Beethoven and Mozart 'with the deepest adoration at all times.'⁵¹ His letters reflect his reverence for these composers only to a certain extent. He commented a lot on Beethoven and Mozart and their music, especially during his youth, but usually not in such hyperbolic terms as his contemporaries.⁵² He occasionally referred to his musical and artistic idols as almost divine when he felt the need to defend them against criticism from music critics and theoreticians. Elsewhere, his correspondence is largely devoid of the vocabulary of apotheosis and transfiguration. He shared the conviction that artists stood out from other human beings through the possession of certain superior traits and skills. As a comparison of the artists that he deemed superior or quasi-divine with contemporary sources suggests, however, his aesthetic choices were rather unconventional for his time. His selection of artists whom he thought to display characteristics of divine or religious personality deviated from the canon of artists who were favoured or worshipped by his contemporaries; in his writings he focused on the artistic merits and accomplishments not only of Bach but also of Josephine Caroline Lang (1815–1880), Delphine (Adolphine) Schauroth (1813-1882) and Fanny Hensel.

In most cases, his preference for these artists was fuelled by personal as well as aesthetic criteria. His infatuation with young female musicians, for example, arose from a youthful interest in the opposite sex that was most likely both artistic and romantic in nature. It seems, for example, that Mendelssohn's fondness for the pianist Delphine Schauroth was not only inflamed by her precocious talent in composition and piano playing; he mentioned her very frequently in his letters and developed a close personal relationship with her in the early 1830s that prompted

⁵¹ This is corroborated in Robert Schumann, 'Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy vom Jahre 1835 bis zu seinem Tode,' in *Musik-Konzepte* Heft 14/15, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1980), 111: 'Von Bach, Gluck, Händel, Mozart, Haydn u. Beethoven sprach er stets mit der tiefsten Verehrung.'

⁵² Helmut Loos has established that, in the letters between November 1816 and June 1830, Mendelssohn often mentioned Beethoven (48 times), Bach (40 times), Mozart (28 times) and Carl Maria von Weber (16 times). In contrast to his contemporaries, however, his comments were rather factual and sometimes even critical. See Helmut Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' in *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest*, vol. 1, no. 2 (April - June 2010), 65-85, at 67.

talks of marriage in the Schauroth family and royal circles.⁵³ His eulogies on Fanny articulate brotherly affection, admiration for his elder sister as an idol, mentor and musical companion as well as conflicting interests of supporting her musical career and ensuring her compliance with traditional gender roles.⁵⁴ His early enthusiasm for her musicianship was only matched by his devotion to composers such as Beethoven and Bach whom he considered to be masters and idols.

The way in which Mendelssohn described other musicians suggests that he largely rejected equating artists with God or deities, and preferred to describe them as ‘godly’ (*göttlich*) instead. In this context, his writings were based on an understanding of the adjective which deviates from its narrow sense of ‘equal to God.’ This becomes noticeable in formulations that use the nominalized neuter form of the adjective ‘divine’ or combine it with a humanising noun in order to emphasize the humanity of artists, on the one hand, and their indebtedness to God for their talent, on the other. In his letters, he described the composer and pianist Josephine Caroline Lang, in this sense, as ‘something divine’ (*etwas Göttliches*).⁵⁵ While Titian is portrayed as a ‘divine human’ (*göttlicher Mensch*),⁵⁶ Shakespeare appears as a ‘very divine man’ (*sehr göttlich[er] [...] Mann*).⁵⁷ In this respect, Altmann’s analysis of Moses Mendelssohn’s conception of man, as articulated in his monograph *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (‘Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism,’ 1783), proves also applicable to his famous grand-son: the image of man is not deified in the sense that he ‘remains constant in his likeness to God: he is a creature geared to God, relating to him.’⁵⁸

⁵³ According to Mendelssohn, his affection for Delphine even reached the king’s ears who encouraged him to ‘marry Fräulein von Schauroth’ since ‘that would be an excellent match.’ See Mendelssohn, letter of 18 October 1831 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:406-410, at 408, trans. in Clive Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 93-101, at 29.

⁵⁴ As Brown has established, Fanny’s influence on Mendelssohn was persistent and, during his formative years, it equalled that of their parents,’ as she ‘provided him not only with a model to emulate but also with encouragement and guidance.’ See *ibid.*, 61.

⁵⁵ Mendelssohn, letter of 7 November 1831 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:413-416, at 415.

⁵⁶ *Idem*, letter of 8 November 1830 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:126-129, at 128.

⁵⁷ *Idem*, letter of 3 March 1834 to Ignaz and Charlotte Moscheles, in *SB* (2010), 3:354-357, at 357.

⁵⁸ Alexander Altmann, ‘Das Menschenbild und die Bildung des Menschen nach Moses Mendelssohn,’ in *Mendelssohn-Studien: Beiträge zur neueren deutschen Kultur- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, ed. Cécile Lowenthal-Hensel (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1972), 1:11-28, at 26: ‘Das Menschenbild

The role of female identity and divinity in nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion*: Mendelssohn's reception of Caroline Josephine Lang, Clara Wieck and Fanny Mendelssohn

Mendelssohn made the acquaintance of exceptional women artists during his early tours as a young performer and his years of travelling (1830-1832). In Germany it was the composer-pianists Delphine Schauroth and Josephine Caroline Lang who encouraged very enthusiastic letters from him in 1830 and 1831. During his Grand Tour, the Italian dancer Marianne (Marie) Sophie Taglioni (1804-1884) and the French actress Anne Françoise Hippolyte Mars (Boutet) (1779-1847) found his favour.

According to Wilhelm Seidel's introductory remarks to the second volume of the new critical edition of Mendelssohn's correspondence, Mendelssohn attributed to these women an inborn talent and 'ingenuity' (*Genialität*) in their respective arts.⁵⁹ In some letters, the composer's conviction of their genius found expression in religious terms. This especially applies to his descriptions of the singer and pianist Josephine Caroline Lang, whom he had met for the first time in 1830 in her godfather Joseph Karl Stieler's house.⁶⁰ He seems to have admired her mainly for her musical skills. His description of his second encounter with her of 7 November 1831 reveals that, in his view, she exhibited traits of a 'possessor': even though she had not yet acquired musical knowledge or professionalism, she had an innate gift for music that proved her to be a truly 'divine' and blessed musician:

Just imagine a delicate, small, pale girl, with noble, but not handsome features, [...] and all her movements and every word full of genius. She has the gift to compose songs and sing them as I have never heard anyone sing

wird nicht säkularisiert. Der Mensch bleibt in seiner Gottesebenbildlichkeit: Er ist das auf Gott ausgerichtete, auf Gott bezogene Wesen.'

⁵⁹ Wilhelm Seidel, 'Einleitung in Band 2,' in *SB* (2009), 2:7-38, at 22.

⁶⁰ Mendelssohn's first encounter with the fifteen-year old singer and his relationship to her has been highlighted in Brigitte Richter, *Frauen um Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: In Texten und Bildern vorgestellt* (Frankfurt on the Main: Insel, 1997), 79-83. Mendelssohn associated with Lang mainly as a musician and teacher. He encouraged and convinced her early on to continue her singing practice and to embark on the career of a composer. See H. A. Köstlin, 'Josephine Lang: Lebensabriss,' in *Sammlung musikalischer Vorträge*, ed. P. Waldersee (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1881), 59 and Roberta Carol Werner, 'The Songs of Josephine Caroline Lang: The Expression of a Life' (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1992), 1:110.

before [...]. Already last year the talent was there, she had not written any single song which did not exhibit a crystal-clear trace of giftedness [...]. [...] as she is still without musical training [...], [I] have [...] strongly urged her parents not to let something so divine come to nothing [...]. Maybe I will soon send you [...] some of her songs that she has copied out for me out of gratitude for the daily lessons that I gave her and my agony to teach her what she actually already knew by nature [...].⁶¹

In the 1840s, he seems to have admired her even more as a singer with a talent ‘which she inherits from the grace of God’ and a composer of ‘music so genial, [...] which affected me so deeply.’⁶²

Formulations elsewhere in Mendelssohn’s correspondence attest to the fact that he was also very fond of Mars and Taglioni, and that Fanny inspired as much loving and reverent admiration in him as did Josephine Lang.⁶³ During his lifetime, Mendelssohn was renowned for his restraint towards the other sex, which was widely seen as a sign of strength and self-control.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, impulses of lust might have formed part of his interest in Taglioni and Mars. He had seen the former perform at the première of Meyerbeer’s opera *Robert le diable* in November 1831, where she played a nun who attempts to seduce the hero. Even though Mendelssohn described the work’s plot and performance as ‘ignoble,’ he seems to have felt attracted to the ravishing dancer.⁶⁵ It is not known which stage performance of Mars he attended at the Théâtre-Français in Paris,⁶⁶ but by the late 1820s the actress had won a reputation for playing roles of ‘erotic nuance’ that attracted the attention of many tourists visiting Paris.⁶⁷ Mendelssohn’s sensual, if not sexual, interest in both

⁶¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 7 November 1831 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:414.

⁶² Mendelssohn, letter of 15 December 1841 to Professor Köstlin, in *Briefe aus den Jahren 1830 bis 1847 von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1899), 312-315, at 313-314, trans. in *ML*, 256-258, at 257.

⁶³ According to Seidel, Mendelssohn’s appraisal of the composer-pianist Lang remained unparalleled. As will be shown in this study, however, his adoration of Fanny went much further. In his correspondence, Fanny remained a constant object of veneration, as he never questioned and often extolled her talents and musicianship. See Seidel, ‘Einleitung in Band 2,’ in *SB* (2009), 2:26.

⁶⁴ See Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn*, 28.

⁶⁵ Mendelssohn described Taglioni’s dance in his letter of 20 December 1831 to Carl Klingemann, in *SB* (2009), 2:434-437, at 436, trans. in *FML*, 183-184 and the ‘ignoble’ character of Meyerbeer’s opera in his letter of 19 December 1831 to his father, in *SB* (2009), 2:433, trans. in *FML*, 180-181.

⁶⁶ Mendelssohn referred to one of Mars’s performances in the venue in his letter of 28 December 1831 to Fanny Hensel, in *SB* (2009), 2:442-443, trans. in *LIS*, 316.

⁶⁷ John Stokes, *The French Actress and her English Audience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 26-27.

women might have motivated his comparison of them with the three Charites – goddesses of charm, beauty, nature, human creativity and fertility that, according to ancient mythology, were variously considered the daughters of Zeus and Eurynome, Dionysus and Aphrodite or Helios and the naiad Aegle. As he occasionally gave in to his penchant for irony and wordplay, Mendelssohn wrote to Fanny from Paris in December 1831: ‘Today I must see Taglioni again, who along with Mars constitutes two Graces (if I find a third in my travels, I mean to marry her) [...]’.⁶⁸

Inspired by similar exaggerated declarations of love in Fanny’s and Felix’s letters, some scholars have suggested that the siblings’ relationship resembled a love affair and even involved incest.⁶⁹ Other authors have explained their hyperbolic writings out of an interest in the Romantic literature that had been published by the time of Mendelssohn’s departure for the Grand Tour, quoting Fanny who was very ‘amused [...] that all of us expressed ourselves like Jean Paul around the time you left here.’⁷⁰ While there can be no doubt about their close bonds (Felix’s agony after his sister’s death seems to have been self-destructive; he died only six months after Fanny), it seems more plausible to explain Mendelssohn’s fondness for Fanny as the love of a younger brother and the admiration for a musician to whom he felt inferior in his youth and whose guidance he required and liked to rely on. Fanny used to advise Felix on musical matters and played a major role in shaping some of his compositions including his *St. Paul* oratorio.⁷¹ For Mendelssohn, her superiority as a composer was already obvious in her early songs that, in his view, represented the most beautiful music that any human can create on earth’ and that ‘will never be composed again.’⁷²

⁶⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 28 December 1831 to Fanny Hensel, in SB (2009), 2:442-443, trans. in LIS, 316.

⁶⁹ See David Warren Sabean, ‘Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and the Question of Incest,’ *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 77, no. 4 (Winter 1993), 709-717.

⁷⁰ See Marian Wilson Kimber, ‘Felix and Fanny: gender, biography, and history,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, ed. Peter Mercer-Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 42-52, at 48 and Fanny Hensel, letter of 28 September 1840 to Felix, trans. in LFH, 296.

⁷¹ Fanny was well aware of how much Felix relied on her, as she wrote in 1822 (as quoted in Sebastian Hensel, *Die Familie Mendelssohn 1729-1847, nach Briefen und Tagebüchern*, ed. Konrad Feilchenfeldt (Leipzig: Insel, 1995), 169, and trans. in *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, 44): ‘He has no musical adviser other than me, also he never puts a thought on paper without first having submitted it to me for examination.’

⁷² Mendelssohn, letter of 3 July 1829 to Paul, Lea und Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in SB (2008), 1:326.

Mendelssohn's admiration for his sister's skills as a composer and performer early on inspired art-religious depictions of Fanny as a priestess whose music revealed her divine insight into the secrets of musical art, and whose piano playing proved her worthy of divine worship. He first arrived at these thoughts in 1830 when he compared her with Delphine Schauroth, whom he had heard perform in Paris in 1825 and whose career was thriving in Europe in the late 1820s and 1830s. His report to Fanny of June 1830 from Munich clearly articulates his fondness for both female musicians while manifesting his professional admiration and loving affection for his sister:

Delphine Schauroth, who is adored [*angebetet*] here (and deservedly), [...] is an artist and very cultivated. [...] yesterday morning, when I heard her alone and again admired her very much, it suddenly came to my mind that we have a young lady in our garden-house who has a certain different conception of music in her head from that of many ladies put together [...]. It is clear that you are this young lady [...]. You really know what God was thinking when He invented music, so it is no wonder that it makes one happy. You can play piano, too, and if you need a greater admirer [*Anbeter*] than I, you can paint him, or have him paint you.⁷³

As has been shown in chapter four, what impressed Mendelssohn in Fanny's piano playing was her sophisticated performance style that drew on spiritual activities of an active brain (or spirit) rather than only on agile fingers.⁷⁴ As he believed, this approach (and her superior skills in composition, too) made her a 'thoughtful' or 'ingenious' (*geistreich*),⁷⁵ as opposed to a 'genuine' (*wirklichen*) and 'consummate' (*vollkommenen*) virtuoso. Mendelssohn perceived a 'genuine' virtuoso as a composer-performer with superior technical skills but an insufficient commitment to provide musical works that exhibited spiritual depth. By reference to Sigismund Thalberg (1812-1871), he gave a discriminating definition of 'genuine' and 'consummate' virtuosity:

⁷³ Mendelssohn, letter of 11 June 1830 to Fanny Hensel, in *SB* (2008), 1:544, trans. adapted from *FML*, 76-77. The last two lines obviously refer to Fanny's husband, the painter Wilhelm Hensel (whom she had married the year before).

⁷⁴ See the analysis of Mendelssohn's letter of 29 May 1837 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy on p. 183.

⁷⁵ For Mendelssohn, Chopin was the most 'ingenious' (*der Geistreichste*) piano virtuoso living. See Mendelssohn, letter of 15 May 1837 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2012), 5:269-271, at 270.

His play gave me extraordinary pleasure; it is as perfect as one could wish for. [...]. What virtuosity means, [...] no one can imagine better than him, and I like it when someone is consummately devoted to what he is and represents [...]. – Once again, the never-ending misunderstanding appears that he now primarily wants to make money and delight the people, and intends to write good music in later years [...]. Is it not so that all virtuosos (at least the good ones) have to think this way?⁷⁶

Comparing Fanny to male colleagues such as Thalberg, Theodor Döhler (1814-1846), Adolph Henselt (1814-1889) and Friedrich Wilhelm Kalkbrenner (1785-1849), Mendelssohn was certain that she was their equal, if not superior to them. Accordingly, he emphasized that

[i]n her playing there is something more than mere party-tricks. Thalberg and Henselt are a rather different matter, for they are supposed to be true virtuosi in the manner of Liszt (who outclasses them all); and yet it all amounts to nothing more than a Kalkbrenner in his heyday, and blows over during their lifetime if there is not some spirit [*ein bisschen Geist*] and life [*Leben*] in it, and something more than mere dexterity. Fanny, however, possesses that something, and thus needs not fear any of them [...].⁷⁷

Mendelssohn seems to have measured the professional skills and merits of male and female performing artists by the same aesthetic standards. At the same time, it was usually those women whom he perceived to be serious competitors to their male colleagues who are described in religious terms in his early writings. This suggests that he might have associated ‘priestly’ and ‘divine’ attributes with female superiority rather than ‘superhuman’ supremacy, in this context. While he recognized Fanny as a leading pianist and composer, for example, he came to appreciate Maria Taglioni as ‘a real [female] artist’ (*Künstlerinn*) who ‘seems to be the only genuine [male] musician [*der einzige Musiker*] in Paris.’⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Idem, letter of 1 January 1839 to Carl Klingemann, in *SB* (2012), 6:274-278, at 277.

⁷⁷ Idem, letter of 15 May 1837 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2012), 5:270, trans. adapted from Peter Ward Jones, *The Mendelssohns on Honeymoon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 156.

⁷⁸ Idem, letter of 20 December 1831 to Carl Klingemann, in *SB* (2009), 2:436, trans. in *FML*, 183.

In adopting this generous view of the female gender and showing alertness to the priestly and quasi-divine ingenuity of women, Mendelssohn seems ahead of his time. Male superiority in artistic fields remained generally undisputed until mid-century, if not until the beginning of the twentieth century. As late as 1903, for example, the Austrian philosopher Otto Weininger (1880-1903) wrote that '[t]he man of genius possesses, like everything else, the complete female in himself; but woman herself is only a part of the Universe, and the part never can be the whole; femaleness can never include genius.'⁷⁹ Beyond that, Mendelssohn's perception of the 'priestly' aspects of Fanny's dexterous piano playing and composing with 'spirit' and 'life' as well as her revelatory insight and expressiveness anticipates related viewpoints on another pianist and composer who was able to gain the reputation of 'high priestess of interpretive musicians' from 1838 onwards: Clara Schumann.⁸⁰

The main traits of Clara's 'priesthood' were first formulated by the Leipzig organist and writer on music Karl Ferdinand Becker (1804-1877). They included technical superiority (at an early age that seems essentially innate rather than learned) as well as performances that radiate life and, at the same time, throw light on human life and, this way, turn into events of revelation:

Not so long ago, the German music scene was infested with the epidemic of classicism. [...] the whole of musical Germany wanted to and was supposed to submit itself to Bach's stiff fugues [...]. But the love of life was too strong, [...] hence even Germany's stiff limbs started to move, and set forth on the romantic musical pilgrimage. The active city on the Pleisse River [Leipzig], too, [...] summoned its priestess, the young Clara Wieck [...]. Born in 1818 in Leipzig, solely educated by her father, C. W. already developed [...] great virtuosity on the piano by the age of twelve [...]. Her play is life in all its nuances, shades and lights; even if perhaps it is presented in a slightly stilted, flirtatious manner, it always manifests the artist's genuine consecration.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1908), 243, trans. as *Sex and Character* (New York: A. L. Burt, 1906), 189.

⁸⁰ See the historical overview of nineteenth-century pianists in the 'Introduction' to David Dubal, *The Art of the Piano: An Encyclopedia of Performers, Literature and Recordings* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co, 1990), 17-24, at 20.

⁸¹ Karl Ferdinand Becker, 'Wieck, Clara,' in *Damen Conversations Lexikon*, ed. Carl G. R. Herloßsohn (Leipzig: Fr. Volckmar, 1838), 10:429-430: 'Es herrschte vor noch nicht langer Zeit an unserem deutschen Musikhimmel die Epidemie der Klassicität. [...] das ganze musikalische Deutschland wollte und sollte sich fügen unter Bachs steife Fugen [...]. Aber die Luft am Leben war zu groß, [...] und [...] da regten sich auch Deutschlands steife Glieder und schickten sich an zur romantisch-musikalischen Wallfahrt. Auch die handelnde Pleißenstadt [...] stellte ihre Priesterin, die

The image of Clara as ‘priestess’ was subsequently publicized and extended by further aspects of personality and traits of character in the writings of nineteenth-century individuals such as Robert Schumann, Brahms, Hanslick and, most prominently, Liszt. In their metaphorical descriptions these authors complimented her on her ‘purity of expression’ that evaded ‘exaggeration in all its forms’ as well as her ‘quiet dignity.’⁸² Furthermore, they commented favourably on her ‘serious demeanor’ and ‘personal severity’ that were reflected in her stage appearance (she used to perform in dark clothes) and her programming.⁸³ Given Clara Schumann’s favouring of sonatas, nocturnes, variations and fantasies by Beethoven, Chopin, Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann over popular tunes and virtuosic showpieces, Nancy Reich is perfectly accurate in her observation that ‘she selected her repertoire for its intrinsic beauty, style, and musical qualities and not necessarily because its difficulty might impress audiences.’⁸⁴ As far as Clara’s performance style is concerned, she earned much praise for her integrity that expressed itself in a sophisticated and restrained playing style that was geared towards *Werktreue* rather than an interpretation that drew attention to the performer.⁸⁵

In Liszt’s seminal article about Clara’s 1854 performances in Weimar, these traits inspired abundant religious and mythological references to the Pythian priestess at Delphi, Peri, sybils and hierophants; these deserve to be quoted at length:

The lovely Muses’ playmate has become a consecrated, faithfully devoted, severe priestess. [...]. A mysterious light seems to stream from her fingers, when they make the strings resound. No more do those up-flickering waves

jugendliche Clara Wieck [...]. Geb. 1818 in Leipzig, einzig und allein von ihrem Vater gebildet, entwickelte C. W. bereits in ihrem 12. Jahre eine [...] große Virtuosität auf dem Clavier [...]. Ihr Spiel [...] ist das Leben in allen seinen Nüancirungen, Schatten und Lichtern, vielleicht etwas präciös kokett dargestellt, aber stets von echter Künstlerweihe umflossen.’

⁸² See the comments about Clara’s critical reception by her contemporaries in Jeremy Siepmann, *The Piano: The Complete Illustrated Guide to the World’s Most Popular Musical Instrument* (London: Carlton, 1996), 161 as well as Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1985), 152 & 264.

⁸³ Reich, *Clara Schumann*, 152 & 281.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 295 & 256. Among the works that Clara performed by preference were Beethoven’s ‘Waldstein’ Sonata as well as Mendelssohn’s *Variations sérieuses* and the *Frühlingslied* from the fifth book of the *Lieder ohne Worte*.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 281.

of light encircle her, which made [...] one's heart beat quicker; all the warmth is concentrated into a glow, whose focus is known only to the hierophants of Art; they only may approach, to feel the electric stream of divine fire [...]. An unimpeachable perfection characterizes every tone of this soft, suffering Sibyl, who, breathing heaven's air, remains connected only by her tears with earth. [...]. When she mounts the tripod of the temple, the woman speaks to us no more. [...]. A devout, believing and submissive priestess [*Geweihte*] of the Delphian god, with trembling fidelity she performs his worship. [...]. Tremulously careful not to miss an iota of the oracle to be announced, not to accent a syllable falsely, she chastens her own feeling, so as not to become a guilty and a treacherous interpreter. [...]. She is no pianist and concert-giver in the common sense of the word; her talent seems to us like a personification of the secular oratorio: a Peri yearning for her Paradise, in constant mystic contemplation of the Sublime, the Beautiful, the Ideal.⁸⁶

Mendelssohn had become acquainted with Clara in 1832 in Paris. He first met her in private on 2 October 1834 when he was visiting the Wiecks in Leipzig. One year later, Clara started to appear as a pianist in his concerts at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. When Mendelssohn evaluated these encounters in his letters, he referred to her as a 'girl' (*Mädchen*) who plays the piano 'splendidly' (*ganz prächtig*).⁸⁷ Her rising image as a priestess of music seems not to have penetrated or did not appeal to him. His formulations rather point towards contemporary perceptions of 'genuine' piano virtuosos. To Clara's concerts in 1835 (at the Leipzig Gewandhaus) and 1838, he responded with complimentary comments about her dexterity and technical mastery. On these occasions he thoroughly enjoyed her interpretation of his own *Capriccio Brillant* for piano and orchestra in B minor, op. 22 (MWV O 8) and selected songs by Schubert in piano transcriptions by Liszt, since she played them

⁸⁶ Franz Liszt, 'Clara Schumann,' *NZfM*, vol. 41, no. 23 (1 December 1854), 245-252, at 251-252, trans. in *Dwight's Journal of Music*, vol. 7, no. 2 (14 April 1855), 9-10. Pythia was the title given to the priestess at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (commonly known as the Oracle of Delphi) who, according to myth, 'ascended into the tripod, and, filled with the divine afflatus which at least the latter ages believed to ascend in vapour from a fissure in the ground, burst forth into wild utterance.' See Lewis Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 4:189. The Peri are winged creatures of Persian mythology that are the descendants of fallen angels, either angelic or evil in character and the source of inspiration for Schumann's oratorio *Das Paradies und die Peri* ('Paradise and the Peri,' 1843). According to ancient legend, the sibyls were subject to the influence of the gods who inspired visions in them that they were supposed to prophesy at holy sites. A nineteenth-century understanding of the hierophant as 'the first priest overseeing the Eleusinian Mysteries' and a 'prophet exegeting these mysteries' is set down in 'Hierophant,' *HCL* (1855), 3:308.

‘like a little devil’ (*wie ein Teufelchen*) who ‘can do the most amazing stuff with the nicest ease’ (*macht das tollste Zeug mit der nettesten Leichtigkeit*).⁸⁸ At other times, he criticized her repertoire choices – he considered the aesthetic merits of some of her pieces doubtful.⁸⁹

Mendelssohn’s partiality for his sister and reserved praise for Clara’s pianism are not surprising. While, in the early 1830s, Fanny was winning widespread fame in Berlin through performances of her own compositions as well as masterworks by Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven,⁹⁰ Clara Wieck’s popularity at that time mainly rested on recitals of bravura works by Henri Herz, Kalkbrenner and Liszt as well as virtuoso pieces from her own hand such as the *Romance variée* op. 3 and *Souvenir de Vienne* op. 9.⁹¹ Her ‘shift from crowd-pleasing virtuosic showpieces’ for the piano ‘to more complex and less openly showy works’ of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mainly began in the 1840s, as has been established by biographers such as Nancy Reich, Joan Chissell and more recent scholars.⁹² Even though Clara already astonished audiences with her prodigious pianistic talent during her girlhood years, she gained wider critical recognition only gradually in the 1840s when Mendelssohn associated with her and her husband both professionally and privately.⁹³ Bound in friendship to the Schumanns, Mendelssohn certainly considered it inappropriate to commend Clara’s playing in the same manner as Fanny’s

⁸⁷ Mendelssohn, letters of 14 October 1834 and 29 August 1838 to his family and mother, in *SB* (2011), 4:70-72, at 72 and *SB* (2012), 6:194-196, at 195.

⁸⁸ Idem, letter of 13 November 1835 and 29 August 1838 to Fanny and Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2011), 4:340-341, at 341 and *SB* (2012), 6:195.

⁸⁹ See, for example, idem, letter of 29 August 1838 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2012), 6:194-196, at 195.

⁹⁰ In the 1820s and 1830s Fanny was active as a performer at the ‘Sunday Musicales’ (*Sonntags-Musiken*) – musical soirées that took place in the family home of the Mendelssohns at the Leipzigerstrasse in Berlin and were directed by her from 1831 onwards. For further information about these events and their reception see Monika Schwarz-Danuser, ‘Fanny (Caecilie),’ in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, 2nd ed. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2004), Personenteil 11:1534-1542, at 1535.

⁹¹ *Grove Music Online*, s.v. ‘Schumann, Clara,’ (by Nancy B. Reich), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25152> (accessed 23 July 2013).

⁹² See, for example, Jacob Sgrans, ‘Virtuosity in Clara Schumann’s Piano Compositions,’ *Musicological Explorations*, vol. 11 (Autumn 2010), 45-90, at 90.

⁹³ Mendelssohn performed with Clara Schumann on the piano on several occasions and he conducted some of her concerts. He also dedicated several compositions to her. Among these works is the *Frühlingslied* (Op. 62 No. 6) from the fifth book of the *Lieder ohne Worte* (1842-1844), which he played to her in order to celebrate her twenty-fourth birthday. See R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 458.

‘priestly’ accomplishment in performance and composition, and this reasoning might also explain the general lack of appreciative comments about Clara’s pianistic talent in Mendelssohn’s correspondence during these years.

Another explanation for Mendelssohn’s rather idiosyncratic stance towards Clara Schumann in the late 1830s, and for the rare appearance of appraisals of female artists as divine or semi-divine in general from that time onwards, may be found in the fact that his gender opinions changed from 1837 onwards. While, in 1831, he had deeply regretted that Taglioni’s career would soon come to an end as she was about to get married,⁹⁴ after his own marriage to Cécile Jeanrenaud in March 1837 he became ultimately convinced that this was the predetermined and legitimate route of life that women were supposed to follow. He indicated this thought in writing only three months later. When he was asked by his mother to encourage Fanny to publish her piano pieces and songs of the previous and the same year,⁹⁵ he refused to act according to these wishes out of personal conviction; as he confided in Lea Mendelssohn: ‘from my knowledge of Fanny I should say she has neither inclination nor professional vocation for authorship. She is too much of a woman for this.’⁹⁶ His following lines about Fanny clearly correspond to nineteenth-century perceptions of gender roles according to which women were, first of all, mothers and housewives and, if they were engaged in the arts, were meant to practise these as hobbies or social activities: ‘she raises Sebastian, takes care of the house, and neither thinks of the public nor of the musical world, nor even music at all, until her first duties are fulfilled.’⁹⁷

As Mendelssohn’s realigned opinion of gender differences of the late 1830s and 1840s suggests, as a married man he no longer conceded to women the right freely to unfold their quasi-divine artistic talent outside the domestic sphere or in a

⁹⁴ One year before Taglioni’s nuptials to Count Alfred Gilbert de Voisins, Mendelssohn wrote in his letter of 20 December 1831 to Carl Klingemann, in *SB* (2009), 2:434-437, at 436, trans. in *FML*, 183: ‘[...] in the end she will marry some count and leave the theatre and become une grande dame, or the devil knows what.’

⁹⁵ See Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s letter of 7 and 8 June 1837 to Mendelssohn. Autograph manuscript. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Music Section, MS. M.D.M. d. 32/44.

⁹⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 24 June 1837 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2012), 5:292-293, at 292, trans. adapted from *ML*, 115-116, at 115.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

way that affected their household chores and family responsibilities negatively. This attitude not only reasserts typical gender prejudice but also coincides with changing perceptions of musical masters by Mendelssohn that veered away from ideas of quasi-divine artists or priests to embrace the notion of God's servant.

Bach's image as a pious master

In many nineteenth-century writings about Bach, art-religious allusions to characteristic traits of prophets and priests are limited to comments about the composer's piety and faithfulness. The view of Bach as a devout composer was popularized most prominently in Forkel's biography. There the author put much emphasis on Bach's humility and self-sacrificial eagerness to serve God, which was supposedly reflected in the composer's music. As Forkel confessed about Bach's *Die Kunst der Fuge* ('The Art of Fugue,' BWV 1080), '[t]he pious resignation and devotion that are expressed in it move me deeply whenever I play it.'⁹⁸ Elsewhere, he wrote:

[a]s an artist Bach was exceptionally modest. Notwithstanding his pre-eminence in his profession, [...] he never gave himself airs. If he was asked the secret of his mastership he would answer, 'I was made to work; if you are equally industrious you will be equally successful.' [...]. If we add [...] the fact that he captured the admiration of all who heard him play or were acquainted with his music, then we may be sure that Bach, 'singing for himself and the Muses,' received at the hands of Fame the recognition he valued most [...].⁹⁹

Mendelssohn's conviction that Bach's religiousness found expression in his music can be found in a letter to the engraver Johann Nicolaus Hoff (1798–1873), who had been present at one of his organ concerts in Frankfurt's Katharinenkirche in July 1836. Delighted by Mendelssohn's interpretation of organ works by Bach, which had formed part of the programme, Hoff had presented a lithograph to the

⁹⁸ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke. Für patriotische Verehrer echter musikalischer Kunst* (Leipzig: Hoffmeister und Kühnel, 1802), 108, trans. adapted from Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life, Art, and Work*, trans. Charles Sanford Terry (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 108.

composer as a gift of gratitude. This work depicted the dead body of Christ surrounded by an assembly of mourners and was modelled after Pietro Peruginos's painting *Il Compianto sul Cristo morto* ('The Lamentation Over the Dead Christ,' 1495). The religious imagery of the gift seems to have been to Mendelssohn's liking. In his letter of thanks, he put Bach on a par with the Italian painter, expressing his joy to Hoff that 'the eternal and pious thoughts of my master have impressed you as deeply as the ones of your own master have enthused me.'¹⁰⁰

Mendelssohn used the term 'master' (*Meister*) in various ways to characterize Beethoven and Bach,¹⁰¹ Handel and other composers of sacred music,¹⁰² Haydn and Mozart,¹⁰³ as well as Fanny Hensel and Gluck.¹⁰⁴ In most cases, he seems to have understood the term in its secular sense as a designation for someone 'who is educated in an art or a subject' and excels in it.¹⁰⁵ Only by reference to Bach, did he embrace religious notions of masters. Mendelssohn's description of Bach as 'my own master' in the letter just quoted seems to have been meant to evoke associations of Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Judaic understandings of masters as spiritual leaders, teachers and preachers that align well with the imagery of Christ and his followers in Hoff's engraving.¹⁰⁶ In the Bible (in Matthew 9:11, Mark 9:5 and Luke 8:45 in particular) Jesus appears as a teacher of the disciples and is addressed by them as 'master.' The parallel to Mendelssohn's relationship to Bach is obvious. For Mendelssohn, Bach fulfilled the roles of spiritual mentor, teacher and aesthetic idol, and the truth of this fact has been demonstrated in the previous chapters: Mendelssohn aimed to emulate Bach's example in his conducting (chapter two), in his composition style (chapter three) and in a similar approach to writing music that

⁹⁹ Forkel, *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bach*, 45 & 48, trans. in Forkel, *Bach: His Life, Art, and Work*, 95 & 99.

¹⁰⁰ Mendelssohn, letter of 10 July 1836 to Johann Nicolaus Hoff, in *SB* (2012), 5:32.

¹⁰¹ Idem, letter of 1843 [?] to Friedrich Wilhelm IV [?], quoted in Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' 82-83, at 82.

¹⁰² See, for example, idem, letters of 14 December 1837 & 6 October 1828 to Johann Gustav Droysen and Sigismund von Neukomm, in *SB* (2012), 5 : 427-430, at 429 & *SB* (2008), 1:246-249, at 247.

¹⁰³ Idem, letter of 15 February 1832 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:477-483, at 481.

¹⁰⁴ Idem, letters of 28 December 1831 and 1843 [?] to Fanny Hensel and Friedrich Wilhelm IV [?], quoted in *SB* (2009), 2:442-445, at 444 and Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' 82.

¹⁰⁵ *DWB*, s.v. 'Meister,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GM03497> (accessed 12 June 2013): 'der in einer kunst oder einem fache ausgeleert ist und hervorragt'

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

reflects his genuine belief in the spiritual contents that he translated into music (chapter four).¹⁰⁷

Elsewhere in Mendelssohn's correspondence, attributive adjectives such as 'eternal' (*ewig*) and 'immortal' (*unsterblich*) brought the customary nineteenth-century usages of the noun 'master' more closely into line with biblical and theological notions of God as well as historicist beliefs in the lasting influence of past composers on contemporary art.¹⁰⁸ In the summer of 1838, when Mendelssohn was directing the twentieth Lower Rhine Music Festival in Cologne, he promoted the music of Bach, arguing that 'it is high time that at these festivals, on which the name of Handel has shed such lustre, another immortal master, who is in no one point inferior to any master, and in many points superior to all, should no longer be forgotten.'¹⁰⁹

Surprisingly, the imagery of the divine or immortal master has hardly been explored in studies exploring *Kunstreligion*, even though it became so omnipresent in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century texts and often took on a religious meaning under the influence of art-religious tenets. In writings on music the title of 'immortal master' (*unsterblicher Meister*) turned into a fixed appellation for composers whose works formed part of what Dahlhaus terms the early nineteenth-century 'canon of composers considered exemplary in particular genres.' These included 'Palestrina for Catholic church music and Bach for its Protestant counterpart, Handel for the oratorio and Gluck for musical tragedy, Mozart for *opera*

¹⁰⁷ A detailed discussion of musical works by Mendelssohn that are stimulated by Bach's composition techniques can be found in Dorothea Redepenning, 'Alte Techniken als Impuls zur Innovation? Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und Johann Sebastian Bach,' in '*Denn in jenen Tönen lebt es*': Wolfgang Marggraf zum 65. Geburtstag, ed. Helen Geyer, Michael Berg, and Matthias Tischer (Weimar: Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt, 1999), 69-90.

¹⁰⁸ In the Bible (in Isaiah 45:11, for example) God figures both as a *Meister* (due to his almightiness) and an immortal one (due to his eternal existence). Even though earliest equations of artists with masters could also be found in the Bible (as in Isaiah 40:19-20, where reference is made to workmen and goldsmiths), broader understandings of masters as teachers, scholars, authors, poets, idols, specialists, leading artists and craftsmen gained wider acceptance only in Old High German texts of the early Middle Ages. From then on, the term 'master' was used more often as it found application whenever there was the need to give a honourable title to someone in recognition of his authoritative position, erudition or high art. References to musicians and composers as 'masters' became common especially in secular seventeenth-century sources.

¹⁰⁹ Mendelssohn, letter of 18 January 1838 to the committee of the Lower Rhine Music Festival, in *SB* (2012), 5: 464-465, at 464, trans. in *ML*, 134-136, at 135.

buffa and Haydn for the string quartet, Beethoven for the symphony’ – ‘*classici auctores*’ on whom Mendelssohn drew when he composed in these genres.¹¹⁰

Art-religious descriptions of composers as masters were usually inspired by the thought that they had reached unmatched heights in composition, were ahead of their time and seemed to live on in their art on earth and in transfigured or divine form in the hereafter. Impressed by the unequalled sublimity and inventiveness of Palestrina’s works, the music theoretician Karl Franz Emil von Schafhtl counted him among the ‘immortal masters of the religious-romantic Middle Ages’ (*unsterblicher Meister des religis romantischen Mittelalters*),¹¹¹ whereas a correspondent of the *Magazin fr die Literatur des Auslandes* emphasized that Gluck and Haydn belonged to the ‘order of immortal masters’ (*Reihefolge unsterblicher Meister*) of German music.¹¹² Bach’s image as an immortal master mainly arose in response to revivals of the *St. Matthew Passion*. Inspired by a performance of the work in Dresden on 31 March 1833, the correspondent of the *Allgemeine Kirchenzeitung* Gustav Karlssohn wrote about the piece and its composer:

there is such a [...] diversity and force in the development of the ideas that adequately attest to the great master who has created this piece with an ingenious spirit. [...]. If this oratorio should be performed again, we would ask all the more urgently to present the work in unabridged form, as we can give the assurance that the sense for old music and Bach’s works in particular is still awake and alive [...]. When the present performance of the oratorio was finished, everyone left the hall [...] with the confession on his lips, ‘Bach lives on in his beautiful works as an immortal master.’¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 22. See also idem, ‘Mendelssohn und die musikalische Gattungstradition,’ in *Das Problem Mendelssohn*, ed. idem (Regensburg: Bosse, 1974), 55-60, at 57 & 59.

¹¹¹ Pellisov [Karl Franz Emil von Schafhtl], ‘Mnchen,’ *AMZ*, vol. 36, no. 5 (29 January 1834), 71-80, at 76.

¹¹² ‘England. Ueber den Zustand der Musik in England,’ *Magazin fr die Literatur des Auslandes*, vol. 25, no. 124 (15 October 1844), 493.

¹¹³ Gustav Karlssohn, ‘Kirchenchronik und Miscellen,’ *Allgemeine Kirchenzeitung*, vol. 12, no. 73 (9 May 1833), 591-592, at 591: ‘in den Ideengngen liegt eine Verpflichtung, Mannichfaltigkeit und Kraft, welche hinlnglich den groen Meister bezeugt, der mit genialem Geiste einst dieses Tonstck schuf. [...]. Sollte dieses Oratorium [...] wieder aufgefhrt werden, so wrden wir umso dringender bitten, dasselbe ganz unverkrzt zu geben, als wir die Versicherung beifgen knnen, da der Sinn fr alte und namentliche Bachische Musik, noch immer wach und lebendig ist und dies mehr und mehr werden wird, je mehr man so berhmte Tonstcke aus der Vergessenheit hervorziehen sich angelegen sein lt. [...]. Das Oratorium ward geschlossen, und Alles verlief den stark besuchten Saal mit dem Bekenntnisse: Bach lebt in seinen schnen Werken, ein unsterblicher Meister fort.’

An anonymous reviewer of Handel's oratorio *Athalia* (HWV 52) employed a similar imagery while quoting from Beethoven's *Studien im Generalbass, Contrapunkt und in der Compositionslehre* ('Studies in thorough-bass, counterpoint and the art of scientific composition') that were found among his posthumous papers and published in 1832. Having witnessed a performance of the oratorio in 1837, the author was certain that 'one can only marvel, admire and join in Beethoven's Creed: 'Handel was the master of all masters! Go and learn to produce such great effects with such few resources!''¹¹⁴ Beethoven and Mozart attracted the most vivid and detailed depictions as masters. For Ignaz Franz Castelli, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* showed that 'the immortal master' (*der unsterbliche Meister*) had 'rushed ahead of us in art and also into a better life' (*ist uns vorausgeeilt in der Kunst, leider auch ins bessere Leben*).¹¹⁵ Mozart appeared in reviews in the guise of an 'immortal,' 'transfigured' and 'divine' master who was 'unsurpassed' by other masters and was 'the greatest' of them all. Such appraisals of him were motivated by the insight that he had achieved 'the highest ends that can stimulate and satisfy a bright mind, refined taste, proper feeling and an educated ear in equal measure (*das Höchste [...], was klaren Verstand, geläuterten Geschmack, richtiges Gefühl und ein gebildetes Ohr in gleichem Maasse [...] entzücken kann*).' They were also stimulated by the thought that he re-entered earthly life as a 'blessed spirit' (*seliger Geist*) whenever the sound of his music reaches a man's ears.¹¹⁶

While Mendelssohn found certain justification in depicting composers like Bach as masters, spiritual guides and everlasting idols, he saw no point in hyperbolic portrayals of Bach as a 'Demi-God' or 'Apollo' that also arose after the revival of the *St. Matthew Passion*.¹¹⁷ One of the earliest depictions of Bach as a divine figure can

¹¹⁴ 'Wien. Musikal. Chronik des 1sten Quartals,' *AMZ*, vol. 39, no. 23 (7 June 1837), 372-374, at 373: 'man kann nur staunen, bewundern und einstimmen in Beethoven's Glaubensbekenntnis: Händel war der Meister aller Meister! Geht hin und lernt, mit wenigen Mitteln so grosse Wirkungen hervorbringen.'

¹¹⁵ [Ignaz Franz Castelli], 'Vienna,' *Allgemeiner musikalischer Anzeiger*, vol. 5, no. 5 (31 January 1833), 19-20, at 20.

¹¹⁶ See 'Aufruf an die Freunde der Tonkunst zu Mozart's Denkmal in Salzburg,' *AMZ*, vol. 29, no. 19 (10 May 1837), 311-312, at 311 and 'Mancherlei,' *AMZ*, vol. 39, no. 51 (20 December 1837), 840.

¹¹⁷ Samuel Wesley (1766-1837) considered Bach a 'Saint,' a 'Demi-God,' and a 'Musical High Priest' and described his compositions as the 'Works of our Apollo.' See Samuel Wesley, *The Wesley Bach Letters. Facsimile reprint of the first printed edition*, ed. P. Williams (London: Novello, 1988), 1, 29 & 6.

be found in a poem by the law historian and music correspondent Carl Friedrich Ferdinand Sietze that was written on the occasion of the anniversary concert of the Passion on 11 March 1829. Here, Bach is characterized as God's initiate and an artist with divine creative power:

This miracle reveals itself anew eternally.
 You son of man, to whom everything was so clearly apparent, Sebastian?
 How the sacred blood was shed for you,
 You have preserved for us so purely, so divinely.¹¹⁸

An earlier and, at that time, isolated reference to Bach as being divine can be found in Forkel's biography. According to the author, Bach's sacred and secular compositions for the organ stood out in a solemn and exceptional quality that is far beyond 'everything conventional.' It made him seem 'not any longer like a human being but like a true transfigured spirit who has risen beyond anything earthly.'¹¹⁹

Since Mendelssohn was mainly interested in Bach as a guiding figure for practical composition, and as a fellow musician possessing mastery in style and technique, he did not indulge in such apothotic enthusiasm. In his correspondence of the early 1830s, Bach figures as a 'pleasant old fellow' (*erquicklicher alter Kerl*) and an inimitable 'man' (*Mensch*).¹²⁰ Furthermore, he is portrayed as a superior composer and one among other 'people' (*Leute*) who deserve 'respect' by others.¹²¹ In the relevant correspondence there is not even talk of the 'holy' respect that Mendelssohn had paid to Carl Maria von Weber when he heard his *Oberon* overture in 1829.¹²² In the 1840s, finally, Mendelssohn seems to have entertained a notion of

¹¹⁸ Carl Friedrich Ferdinand Sietze, 'Die Passion,' *BAMZ*, vol. 6, no. 11 (14 March 1829), 83: 'Dies Wunder ewig neu sich offenbaret. / Du Menschen-Kind? Dem sich's so hell erschloss, / Sebastian? Wie das heil'ge Blut dir floss, / So rein, so göttlich hast du's uns bewahret.'

¹¹⁹ Forkel, *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bach*, 19, trans. adapted from idem, *Bach: His Life, Art, and Work*, 95 & 99.

¹²⁰ Mendelssohn, letters of 14 May 1834 and 23 March 1835 to Franz Hauser and Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2010), 3:426-428, at 428 and *SB* (2011), 4:197, trans. in *FML*, 244.

¹²¹ As he was considering the most suitable candidate to replace the former director of the Frankfurt *Cäcilien-Verein* Johann Nepomuk Schelble, who had resigned from his directorship in spring 1837, Mendelssohn bemoaned that among the applicants for the post there was no one 'who can perceive that Handel and Bach, and such people, are superior to what they themselves can do.' He dismissed the composer Ferdinand Ries as a worthy successor since 'he is deficient in that necessary respect for the great works of art, which is, and always will be to me, the chief consideration.' See idem, letter of 29 May 1837 to Fanny Hensel, in *SB* (2012), 5:278-281, at 280, trans. in *ML*, 114-115, at 114.

¹²² See pp. 100-102 of this study for information about Mendelssohn's 'holy' worship of Weber.

the Baroque composer as God's servant. This can be inferred from a letter in which he approved the design of the Leipzig Bach Monument (now known as the *Altes Bach-Denkmal*) that was erected on his own initiative and unveiled in the courtyard of the Thomaskirche in 1843. Mendelssohn had not only supplied the necessary funds for its construction from the proceeds of his concerts and private means, but had also provided suggestions for the design and architectural details in his letters.¹²³

The memorial's final design (devised by Felix's friend Eduard Bendemann, assisted by his colleague Julius Hübner, the professor at the Dresden Academy of Arts, and the sculptor Ernst Rietschel) was highly allegoric. It has been described in Todd's Mendelssohn biography, as follows: 'the sandstone monument rested upon a cluster of columns, and spiraling, free-standing columns at the four corners. They supported a four-sided monument protected by a "Gothic covering" and a cross. The principal side featured a colossal bust of Bach; the other three sides, bas-reliefs symbolizing Bach's work as organist, teacher (this side faced the Thomasschule), and composer of Christian music.'¹²⁴

Overall, the imagery of the monument is informed by Biedermeier conceptions of the Baroque composer that prevailed in the first half of the nineteenth century. Richard Petzold and Liesbeth Weinhold have shown that the prevailing view of Bach that became manifest in the monument was that of a 'pious, devout bard in the temple of the Lord.'¹²⁵ Visually, the bust at the front that portrays Bach, the man (represented in Figure 4) indeed justifies Peter Wollny's comparison with depictions of saints and evangelists in old sacred art and his association of late nineteenth-century perceptions of the composer as the fifth evangelist.¹²⁶ Even though Bach is

¹²³ The first of these benefit concerts for the Bach Monument took place in the Leipzig Thomaskirche on 6 August 1840. Mendelssohn appeared as a solo organist and played six works by the Thomaskantor as well as own improvisations. This recital was followed by a performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* (on 4 April 1841) and a concert celebrating the unveiling of the memorial that featured selected works by Bach. For an overview of the early history of the monument and Mendelssohn's role in it see Peter Wollny, *Ein Denkstein für den alten Prachtkerl: Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und das alte Bach-Denkmal in Leipzig* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004).

¹²⁴ Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 452.

¹²⁵ Richard Petzoldt and Liesbeth Weinhold, *Johann Sebastian Bach. Das Schaffen des Meisters im Spiegel einer Stadt* (Leipzig: Volk und Buch Verlag, 1950), 73: 'Insgesamt ist das Bildnis [...] geprägt von der bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts vorherrschenden, biedermeierlich-"unbedarften" Auffassung von Bach als dem "frommen, gottergebenen Sänger in dem Tempel des Herrn" [...].'

¹²⁶ Wollny, *Ein Denkstein für den alten Prachtkerl*, 57.

not depicted in the other reliefs, he is constantly present in the mind of the viewer beholding the images of an organ-playing angel (Figure 5), two angels with a palm leaf, chalice and a crown of thorns that refer symbolically to Bach as a great composer of Passions (Figure 6) and an angel instructing boys in singing (Figure 7). The arcade arches in Figure 5 that, in Wollny's eyes, seem to grow out of the organ pipes towards heaven like musical harmonies, seem to connect the angelic organist and composer with divine realms from where he receives his inspiration and talent.¹²⁷ That Mendelssohn considered this imagery appealing and apt is corroborated in his correspondence.¹²⁸

Figure 4. Drechsel, Ursula and Hans Drechsel, photographers. *Altes Bach-Denkmal* (North Side): Bach's bust. Photograph. 18 August 2013. Archiv U.u.H. Drechsel, Leipzig.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 56.

¹²⁸ Mendelssohn detailed his first impressions of the monument in writing to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy: 'The monument for old Sebastian Bach has become wonderfully pretty. [...]. The many columns, little columns and scrollwork, above all the bas-reliefs and the old, splendid wig-adorned countenance shone freely in the sunlight, and gave me great joy. With its many decorative ornaments the whole really recalled the old Sebastian.' See Mendelssohn, letter of 11 December 1842 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in idem, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1833 bis 1847*, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1863), 356-358, at 357, trans. in Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 452.

Figure 5. Drechsel, Ursula and Hans Drechsel, photographers. *Altes Bach-Denkmal* (East Side): Organ-playing angel. Photograph. 18 August 2013. Archiv U.u.H. Drechsel, Leipzig.

Figure 6. Drechsel, Ursula and Hans Drechsel, photographers. *Altes Bach-Denkmal* (South Side): Composing angel. Photograph. 18 August 2013. Archiv U.u.H. Drechsel, Leipzig.

Figure 7. *Altes Bach-Denkmal* (West Side): Teaching angel. Photograph. 2013. Photo courtesy of Steffen Hegner.

Taken together, the imagery of the Bach monument provides a good overall picture that helps to summarize both Mendelssohn's perception of Bach and certain fundamental ideas that informed his views on composers in general. For Mendelssohn, composers were primarily men and not Gods, even though their artistic expertise and piety as well as their guiding role as artists and teachers and the religious contents of their works made them immortal masters, too, in both meanings of the term inspired by ideas of artistic mastery and biblical notions of Jesus as a spiritual guide and mentor. Mendelssohn's lead in the erection of the Bach monument was the logical product of his admiration and respect for the Baroque composer and his works. As Alexander Rehding has highlighted, the tendency to erect commemorative monuments to artists whose works had outlived their deaths and were admired by posterity as immortal creations was widespread in German-speaking lands.¹²⁹ From the turn of nineteenth century until Mendelssohn's death, the

¹²⁹ Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 56 & 63-64. The author has also drawn attention to the fact that these monuments usually depicted artists who, in their prestige, were most suitable to demonstrate national sovereignty and superiority.

composers portrayed in these memorials included not only Bach but also Michael Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and Beethoven.¹³⁰

Musico-religious points of view on Beethoven's creative genius

The view of Beethoven in the early nineteenth century embraced manifold mythological, religious and secular ideas. A. B. Marx's reference to the 'divine-bizarre-ingenuous-crazy Beethoven' (*göttlich-bizzarr-genial-verrückten Beethoven*) in an 1828 review in the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* encapsulates the various characterizations of Beethoven by contemporary writers.¹³¹ These perceptions of the composer arose from intricate interactions between theories of *Kunstreligion*, early nineteenth-century Beethoven criticism and the Beethoven myth, that came into being during the composer's last years. The narrower and broader senses of this myth have been discussed by countless scholars. While Dahlhaus understood it as encompassing diverse perceptions of the composer 'as a Promethan revolutionary, as a sorcerer, or as a martyred saint,' Loos conceives it rather broadly as an 'emphatic image of Beethoven' (*emphatisches Beethovenbild*) and 'Beethoven's apotheosis' (*Beethoven-Apotheose*).¹³² As early nineteenth-century writings by Bettina Brentano, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Schumann and Wagner suggest, it would be, however, more accurate to discuss it as a constellation of wide-ranging metaphorical roles – either religious-mythological or secular – that had been developed in art-religious and other writings touching upon Beethoven's life and works.¹³³

¹³⁰ Mendelssohn was also involved in fundraising activities for a monument commemorating Beethoven after his death. Upon the music publisher Pietro Mechetti's request, he contributed his *Variations sérieuses* in D minor, Op. 54 (composed in 1841) to a new Beethoven Album (entitled *Dix morceau brillants pour le piano*), the sales of which were meant to provide the funds necessary for the erection of a memorial in Bonn. The memorial (a statue designed by Ernst Julius Hähnel) was unveiled four years later on the city's Münsterplatz.

¹³¹ A. B. Marx, 'Review,' *BAMZ*, vol. 5 no. 25 (18 June 1828), 198.

¹³² Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 76 and Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' 2010, 65.

¹³³ As Dahlhaus has established, the complex romantic image of Beethoven was based both on the composer's music and on 'pseudobiography,' that is on 'a few standing formulas coined by Beethoven exegetes, among them his supposed "suffering and triumph."' See Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 76.

The divine traits of Beethoven's personality and creative process were formulated by early nineteenth-century music critics, novelists and theologians. An early depiction of Beethoven as a human possessor, a son of God and a sovereign of sounds with quasi-divine power can be found in Friedrich Mosengeil's (1773-1839) review of the Pastorale Symphony:

Great and wonderful is the Lord of Nature! But not only in those places where the lightning illuminates the storm clouds and its thunder makes the mountains tremble; God's finger is also present where the spirit of a favored mortal [*einer seiner begünstigten Söhne*], blessed with the divine spark [*des Götterfunkens theilhaftig*], stands firmly in control in the midst of the wild torrents of powerful tones, and melodiously restrains and unites all these diverse sounds, which, if they flow together without constraint, lacerate the ear and shock the feelings. They must obey his creative will and at the same time give voice to his sublime ideas [...].¹³⁴ (*Italics mine.*)

The ideas that were central to Beethoven's reception during the first four decades of the nineteenth century found their most elaborate and original expression in Wagner's writings. The notion of the 'divine spark,' that was commonly used by authors of the time to describe processes of divine inspiration turning into ingenious originality, is characterized in much detail in Wagner's 1842 review of Fromental Halévy's opera *Reine de Chypre* ('The Queen of Cyprus,' 1841). Here, the *étincelle divine* is described as a phenomenon that causes 'that wondrous exaltation which gives its flight to talent' and a sparkle that 'fall[s] all burning on the artist's brain, to steep him in a kindly flame that circulates within his veins like generous wine, and dews his eyes with tears of inspiration cloaking from his sight all common, vulgar things, to let him see but the Ideal in all its purity.'¹³⁵ The positive and negative implications of Beethoven's divine talent and ingenuity are exposed in Wagner's novella *Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven* ('A Pilgrimage to Beethoven,' 1840). Here, Beethoven is 'worshipped and adored' (*verehrt[e] und an[ge]betet[e]*) as a prophet and heavenly creature by a poor musician. The conception of the composer as a

¹³⁴ Friedrich Mosengeil, 'Beethovens Pastoral-Symphonie,' *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, vol. 10, no. 133 (5 July 1810), 1049–53, at 1052, trans. adapted from CRBC (2001), 2:141-144, at 142-143.

¹³⁵ Richard Wagner, 'Halévy et La Reine de Chypre,' *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, vol. 9, no. 9 (27 February 1842), 75-78, at 76, trans. as 'Halevy and "La Reine de Chypre,"' in idem, *Jesus of Nazareth and Other Writings*, trans. W. Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 175-200, at 177.

genius whose deafness has unsettled his musical imagination also found its way into the tale in a passage where Beethoven tells his young follower of his fears that his most recent composition (the Choral Symphony) might not be well-received: ‘You might take my part, when my new work is discussed. Remember me: for the clever ones will think I am out of my senses; at least, that is what they will cry. But perhaps you see, Herr R., that I am not quite a madman yet, though unhappy enough to make me one.’¹³⁶

The ways in which perceptions of Beethoven as a madman correlated with his mythological deification in *Kunstreligion* can be revealed by looking at early nineteenth-century perceptions of artistic madness. In romantic music criticism, two views of the composer’s insanity, as reflected in his musical works, prevailed. Some writers understood madness as the ‘mental derangement’ or ‘disorientation’ (*geistige gestörtheit, verwirrung*) of an ordinary human.¹³⁷ Among them was Ludwig Tieck, who expressed the thought that, in view of the symphonies ‘of the latest times,’ ‘Beethoven cannot be distinguished from the raving mad who seldom follows through a musical idea or theme, and, never satisfied, leaps through the most violent transitions and, as though in restless battle, seeks to escape from imagination itself.’¹³⁸ Other authors explained the composer’s madness as the result of his misdirected divine inspiration. In Gottfried Weber’s review of *Wellingtons Sieg oder die Schlacht bei Vittoria*, op. 91 (‘Wellington’s Victory, or, the Battle of Victoria,’ 1813), for example, Beethoven’s alleged madness is interpreted as ‘an aberration of his muse, through which he has desecrated the glorified object, Art, and himself.’¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Richard Wagner, *Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven* (1840), trans. in idem, *Richard Wagner’s Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1898), 7:21-45, at 41. For Vazsonyi, the protagonist’s name ‘R.’ cannot conceal the fact that the poor musician in the novella is a fictional and autobiographical personification of Richard Wagner. See Nicholas Vazsonyi, ‘Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Wagner - Kunstreligion und ihre Vermarktung,’ *Wagnerspectrum*, ed. Udo Bernbach et al., vol. 5, no. 2 (2009), 199-218, at 206-207.

¹³⁷ DWB, s.v. ‘Verrücktheit,’ http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/call_wbgui_py_from_form?sigle=DWB&mode=Volltextsuche&hitlist=&patternlist=&lemid=GV03372 (accessed 13 June 2013).

¹³⁸ Ludwig Tieck, *Phantasus. Eine Sammlung von Märchen, Erzählungen, Schauspielen und Novellen: Erster Band*, ed. Ludwig Tieck (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1812), 470, trans. compiled from Charles Rosen, *Critical Entertainments: Music Old and New* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 86 and idem, *The Frontiers of Meaning: Three Informal Lectures on Music* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 52.

¹³⁹ Gottfried Weber, ‘Ueber Tonmalerei,’ *Caecilia*, vol. 3, no. 9 (1825), 125-172, at 172, trans. Nicolas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective: Critical Assaults on Composers since Beethoven’s Time* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), 45.

As Tieck's and Weber's selection of works suggest, charges of madness were popular especially among critics who had reservations about Beethoven's late compositions or were guilty of what Cook called 'a lingering resistance to the works of Beethoven's middle period' and a 'neglect of Beethoven's patriotic works of 1813–14.'¹⁴⁰

Mendelssohn was immune to these various tendencies in the writings of his contemporaries about Beethoven. As with Bach, he usually described Beethoven as a man and a superior composer. For him, Beethoven's music and writings made him a human being who had put on paper musical ideas that reflected his own spiritual wisdom and intellectual ingenuity rather than an indebtedness to a divine spark. This thought clearly arises in several of Mendelssohn's letters dating from the 1840s, in which he commented on a solo cadenza from an unidentified piece by Beethoven and the contents of his conversation books. In a letter of 24 January 1841 Mendelssohn expressed his astonishment about how

[i]n his time, he [Beethoven] was unable to produce anything that did not emit the most fervent sparks of his most profound spirit [*die glühendsten Funken seines tiefsten Geistes*]. It seems apparent to me that the cadenza has been written without difficulty; the whole third page, however, no other human being [*Mensch*] could have written but Beethoven [...].¹⁴¹ (Italics mine.)

Elsewhere, he deplored that other musicians' obsession with 'that odious divine spark of which they so often read' resulted in the production of mediocre symphonies.¹⁴²

Mendelssohn's own evaluation of Beethoven's music generally oscillated between criticism and enthusiasm. In his letters he criticized works such as Beethoven's incidental music to Goethe's tragedy *Egmont* op. 84 as unimpressive and the Cantata *Der Glorreiche Augenblick*, op. 136 ('The Glorious Moment,' 1814)

¹⁴⁰ Nicholas Cook, 'The Other Beethoven: Heroism, the Canon, and the Works of 1813–14,' *19th-Century Music*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Summer 2003), 3–24, at 8.

¹⁴¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 24 January 1841 to Joseph [?] (possibly the violinist Joseph Joachim who used to write his own cadences to concertos by Beethoven und Brahms), quoted in Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' 81.

for its text when it was performed with the alternative title *Preis der Tonkunst* and a new libretto by Rochlitz at the twentieth Lower Rhine Music Festival in Cologne in 1837.¹⁴³ In others, he wrote on a much more positive and generous note about works of Beethoven's middle and late periods, admitting that he found much pleasure and aesthetic riches in them.¹⁴⁴ When he was asked for his professional opinion about the Choral Symphony,¹⁴⁵ he wrote to Droysen:

You want me to write about the great ninth Symphony with the choruses? [...]. You ought to hear the piece, first of all. The instrumental movements belong to the greatest treasures of art that I know; from the point at which the voices enter, I also lack comprehension, that is, I find only certain details perfectly executed, and when this happens in the case of such a master, then we, or the performance, are possibly to be blamed.¹⁴⁶

Elsewhere, Mendelssohn was more outspoken in rejecting claims by critics and theorists like Weber that Beethoven's middle- and late-period compositions were the works of a crazy person because the music was difficult to comprehend and to perform. It seems that he felt obliged to defend Beethoven against aesthetic criticism that he considered disgraceful to a composer who was a hero and idol to him at various points in his life. In his early years, Mendelssohn seems to have looked for inspiration in Beethoven's works and compositional technique. Elements of Beethoven's 'heroic style' clearly influenced the shape of his Octet in E-flat major, Op. 20 (1825), whereas Felix's first string quartet (Op. 13, no. 2, 1827) seems to

¹⁴² Idem, letter of 10 January 1837 to Ferdinand Hiller, in *SB* (2012), 5:167-168, at 168, trans. in *ML*, 113-114, at 113.

¹⁴³ See idem, letters of 19 February 1834 and 2 November 1837 to Lea and Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy as well as Jacob Bel, in *SB* (2010), 3:350-353, at 352 and *SB* (2012), 5:371.

¹⁴⁴ Mendelssohn's 'outstanding appreciation of middle and late Beethoven' has recently been highlighted in Loos's analysis of letters by Mendelssohn containing, among others, comments about a concert on 15 November 1832 in the concert hall of the Berlin Sing-Akademie at which he had played Beethoven's 'Waldstein' and other sonatas. Mendelssohn reported to a friend in England after the performance: 'I played also some of Beethoven's new sonatas (usually called the mad ones) and I am sure, they did not seem so bad, as the musicians here used to find them.' See Mendelssohn, letter of 16 January 1833 to William Horsley, in *SB* (2010), 3:103-105, at 104 and Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' 69.

¹⁴⁵ As Droysen was 'absolutely perplexed' (*vollkommen rathlos*) by the symphony, he had asked Mendelssohn for 'some words' (*ein Paar Worte*) about the work in a letter of 28 October 1836 (Autograph manuscript. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Music Section, MS. M.D.M. d. 32/92).

¹⁴⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 14 December 1837 to Johann Gustav Droysen, in *SB* (2012), 5:427-430, at 429.

represent a creative response to Beethoven's late style.¹⁴⁷ In the late 1820s and 1830s, Mendelssohn earned a reputation as a performer and promoter of Beethoven's late works, being among the earliest famous conductors to interpret the Choral Symphony (which he performed in Leipzig in 1836). Throughout his life he studied and collected manuscripts and printed music by the composer, accumulating a large music collection in the process.¹⁴⁸ While there is no evidence which proves beyond doubt that he was familiar with Weber's critical and theoretical writings about Beethoven, his letter to his parents after meeting the critic in Darmstadt in 1827 seems to be a direct response to them:

In Darmstadt I went [...] to see the minister of war for musical affairs, Gottfried Weber. He was friendly and invited me to stay with him; but he spoke of Herr Beethoven like a farmer about a diseased cow. He said he was sorry for him, that he never got enough rock salt, for he would have remained a great man [...], and that now he was half again as crazy as he ever was divine. As soon as possible I asked him about the Archduke Marställen.¹⁴⁹

These highly caustic lines clearly reflect Mendelssohn's resentment and irony that were aroused by critical dismissals of Beethoven as a lunatic whose divine inspiration had turned into madness. They also suggest that Mendelssohn distanced himself from both parties of writers on *Kunstreligion* who felt it legitimate to propagate Beethoven's divine and mad character. In this regard, Loos's observation that Mendelssohn's letters are 'devoid of [sincere or seriously meant] religious reminiscences' (*von religiösen Anklängen frei*) and lack the religious 'enthusiasm' (*Begeisterungsausbrüchen*) and devoutness that his contemporaries entertained towards Beethoven is accurate.¹⁵⁰ While, at this point, Mendelssohn distanced

¹⁴⁷ See the comments in Benedict Taylor, 'Musical History and Self-Consciousness in Mendelssohn's Octet, Op. 20,' *19th-Century Music*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Fall 2008), 131-159 and Uri Golumb, 'Mendelssohn's Creative Response to late Beethoven: Polyphony and Thematic Identity in Mendelssohn's Quartet in A-major Op. 13,' *Ad Parnassum*, vol. 4, no. 7 (April 2006), 101-119.

¹⁴⁸ See David Benjamin Levy, *Beethoven: The Ninth Symphony* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 174 et passim and Rudolf Elvers, 'Felix Mendelssohns Beethoven-Autographe,' in *Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongreß Bonn 1970*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1973), 380-82.

¹⁴⁹ Mendelssohn, letter of 29 September 1827 to Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:225, trans. in *Felix Mendelssohn: A Life in Letters*, ed. Rudolf Elvers and trans. Craig Tomlinson (London: Cassell Publishers, 1986), 48-51, at 49-50.

¹⁵⁰ Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' 84. Loos gives a comprehensive overview of the presently available evidence from Mendelssohn's letters in order to prove his point. His assertion that

himself from art-religious thought in clear distinction from Gottfried Weber's writings, his own rather singular and factual judgement of Beethoven's works was generally based on a differentiated assessment of the musical assets of each single composition and the artistic achievements and innovations accomplished by the composer.

* * *

Mendelssohn's image of the artist did not exist in a vacuum. Despite his familiarity with apotheotic writings about artists by his contemporaries, he generally avoided overtly religious vocabulary and favoured a factual and rather understated writing style. For example, he expressed 'respect' rather than '*holy* respect' for Bach's and Beethoven's musical works as products of human artistic creativity, and he used the term *Meister* in its biblical and secular senses. Furthermore, he frequently described artists as 'humans' and 'men' even though of a superior kind. His favourable comments about their spiritual wisdom and artistic ingenuity hint less at a 'religion of humanity' than at ethical and religious philosophies of humanism that emphasize the innate values of humans as individuals rather than as incarnations of the divine. In this sense, Mendelssohn's description of Bach as an 'immortal master' is to be understood as a declaration of admiration for a pious man as well as a spiritual and musical idol. Mendelssohn's perception of Beethoven was to all intents and purposes enthusiastic, but it usually stopped short of apotheotic adoration.

At various points in his correspondence, Mendelssohn alluded to the art-religious views and terminology that were popular among his contemporaries. These allusions to conceptions of artists as divine creators as well as prophets and priests

Mendelssohn's upbringing in Berlin explained his lack of religious ardour for the composer before moving to Leipzig seems rather unconvincing. It is true that Leipzig represented a centre of Beethoven performance between 1811 and 1830 with Gewandhaus performances of his symphonies, concertos and overtures. At the same time, Beethoven's works were hardly performed in Berlin in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. However, as Loos himself states further on, Mendelssohn learned about Beethoven's piano sonatas while studying piano with Ludwig Berger in Berlin between 1817 and 1822. Furthermore, he surely read at least some of the many articles about performances of Beethoven's musical works in German cities that A. B. Marx published in the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* between 1824 and 1830. He also attended Karl Möser's chamber music evenings and symphony concerts in Berlin that, from 1813 onwards, featured works by Beethoven (such as the Ninth that was premiered in Berlin on 12 November 1826). See *ibid.*, 67-68 and Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, 156.

were more or less outspoken, mainly metaphorical and often critical. They were most explicit when Mendelssohn brimmed with youthful enthusiasm for female artists or felt the need to defend his masters against undue criticism, as can be observed in his writings about Beethoven's 'divine' rather than 'mad' compositions in response to reviews by critics like Gottfried Weber. In most cases, however, Mendelssohn's references to the divine manifest in artists remained implicit, as per his portrayals of his sister Fanny, which foreshadowed late nineteenth-century depictions of Clara Schumann as a priestess. Occasionally, eclectic and humorous, if not ironic, terminology prevailed. His description of Anne Françoise Hippolyte Mars and Marianne Sophie Taglioni as the 'two Graces' and Clara Schumann as 'a little devil' have to be understood in this sense.

On a very different note, Mendelssohn's approval of conceptions of Bach as a servant of God, which were epitomized in the Leipzig Bach Monument, seems to reflect a personal religious conviction about the existence of a gracious and generous God who reigns and watches over human beings. On the one hand, this conviction did not stop Mendelssohn from commending artistic talent that verged on 'divine' skill wherever he came across it; on the other hand, it prevented him from joining explicitly in the hyperbolic appraisals of artists as Gods that were common in his age. The following chapter will show that this view of the human and the divine also encouraged Mendelssohn to consider music a blessing sent from God and musical talent a skill, the cultivation and improvement of which was primarily a human task.

Chapter 6. Appraisals of the Aesthetically and Religiously Divine in Art

In the early nineteenth century, music was perceived as an essence that originates in, reveals and represents, the divine in the guise of the ineffable and absolute. Helga de la Motte-Haber has justifiably summarized this new outlook as the central doctrine of *Kunstreligion*.¹ Not only did this new approach to music turn musical works into objects of veneration and adoration, it also furthered beliefs in the divine origins of music and, as Elizabeth Kramer has ascertained, it brought into nineteenth-century music criticism the perception that ‘musical transcendence (music as pointing to the divine) and immanence (music as divine) were [...] coming together in the musical work.’²

Even though nineteenth-century writings on the origin, essence and qualities of music abound in references to the divine or heavenly, the complex meanings and connotations that Mendelssohn and his contemporaries assigned to these two concepts received little attention from scholars. While musicologists have highlighted numerous examples of nineteenth-century writers describing musical elements (like melody, harmony, rhythm and instrumentation) as being ‘divine’, ‘heavenly’, ‘ethereal’, ‘unearthly’ and ‘angelic,’ they have not considered the peculiarities of the usage of this terminology. As an examination of nineteenth-century lexicology demonstrates, it is often the case that writings pertaining to *Kunstreligion* are the product of ‘vague religious’ (*religiös unbestimmter*) ‘misuse’ (*Mißbrauch*) of language.³

This chapter explores the impact that the tenets and terminological understandings of the heavenly and divine had on Mendelssohn’s conceptions of

¹ Helga de la Motte-Haber, ‘Vorwort: Transzendenz – Imagination – Musik,’ in *Musik und Religion*, ed. idem (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1995), 7-9, at 9 and idem, ‘Grenzüberschreitung als Sinngebung in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts,’ in *ibid.*, 215-249, at 218.

² *IKA*, 251.

³ Col. 1370 in *DWB*, s.v. ‘göttlich’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG23964> (accessed 10 June 2013) and ‘Göttlich,’ *GKW*, 2:761-762. So far, only Elizabeth Kramer has drawn attention to the fact that the term ‘divine’ was subject to ‘great misuse [...] by particular, rather witty authors for that which is excellent or highly exquisite.’ See *IKA rev.*, 7.

musical *Kunstreligion*. As will be shown, Mendelssohn ascribed the origins of music as an art to the Christian God, whereas other authors such as A. B. Marx and Andreas Kretschmer seem to have favoured mythological designations of origin. While Mendelssohn's thoughts on music as a divine blessing resemble ideas of aesthetic redemption brought forward by Wackenroder and other early Romantics, his conception of music as a 'heavenly calling' that he owed both to God and his parents reflects his very idiosyncratic understanding of music. In this context, his outlook was fundamentally at odds with appraisals of music as the 'daughter of heaven' by nineteenth-century writers. By contrast, his perception of instrumental sound as transcendent essence that makes audible the music of the angels and the harmonies of the cosmos can be traced back to ideas that originated in antiquity and the Bible, were popular in mediaeval music theory and Renaissance iconography, and reappeared in nineteenth-century writings on *Kunstreligion* by A. B. Marx and Jean Paul Richter. His own writings on work-immanent 'divine' qualities of compositions reflect the fact that Mendelssohn the musician took an uncompromising stance in matters of musical excellence. Elsewhere, comments about music as something inherent in culture and nature show how much Mendelssohn the man was drawn towards *Kunstreligion*, as Novalis understood it, as well as 'Schleiermacherite' artistic sensibility and Goethean religious sense.

The 'heavenly' and 'divine' vocabulary of nineteenth-century writings about music

Throughout linguistic history, terminological understandings of 'heavenly' (*himmlisch*) and 'divine' (*göttlich*) as modifiers qualifying objects as well as phenomena of nature and culture varied; in the nineteenth century, writers on music influenced by *Kunstreligion* seized on the semantic openness of both adjectives. Original senses of 'heavenly' reflect the adjective's derivation from the noun 'heaven' (*Himmel*) and, accordingly, suggest a connection between the referent and the sky. As an attribute, the term originally denoted 'anything to be found, belonging to or originating in heaven as the realm where God reveals Himself' (*in dem Himmel*,

dem Orte der unmittelbaren Offenbarung Gottes befindlich, dazu gehörig, darin gegründet).⁴ The adjective ‘divine’ (*göttlich*) figured in similar guises. Originally, it appeared in the sense of ‘brought about by God’ (*gottgewirkt*), ‘endowed by God’ (*gottgestiftet*), ‘conferred by God’ (*gottverliehen*) and ‘ordained by God’ (*gottgewollt*).⁵ Usages of both adjectives as imputing a heavenly or divine origin to something remained vivid especially in writings inspired by *Kunstreligion* in which traditional notions of music as an art originating in heaven continued to persist while mythological perspectives of it as a gift from the ancient Gods were revived. Elsewhere, terminological understandings of *göttlich* as ‘God-bearing’ (*gotthaltig*) and *himmlisch* as ‘reminiscent of an angel’ (*einem engel gemäsz*) proved very attractive especially in texts that extolled the divine or heavenly essence of music as an art and as a manifestation of angelic sound.⁶

In general, however, two senses of ‘divine’ and ‘heavenly’ prevailed in early nineteenth-century writings, one of which is religiously inspired or connoted whereas the other one is usually classified as ‘non-actual’ or colloquial usage (*uneigentlicher Gebrauch*).⁷ Which case applies can only be established through analysing the contents of contemporary texts in detail and correlating their vocabulary with nineteenth-century and diachronic dictionaries. In fact, some authors of the time applied the adjectives in order to put into words their auditory impression of a musical work as evoking transcendent associations of the godly and the beyond; others favoured a ‘qualitative’ usage (*auszeichnender bedeutung*) or in-vogue terminology – especially when they referred to individual works of art or specific artistic achievements, the sense intended then corresponds to ‘perfect, splendid, magnificent’ (*vollkommen, vortrefflich, herrlich*), ‘excellent, very beautiful’ (*ausgezeichnet, sehr schön*) as well as ‘marvellous’ (*wundervoll*).⁸ Nineteenth-century lexicologists have established that such terminological traditions were part of

⁴ ‘Himmlisch,’ *GKW*, 2:1179-1180.

⁵ Cols. 1364 & 1366 in *DWB*, s.v. ‘göttlich’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG23964> (accessed 10 June 2013).

⁶ Cols. 1364 & 1370 in *DWB*, s.v. ‘Himmlisch’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&hitlist=&patternlist=&lemid=GH08846> (accessed 10 June 2013).

⁷ Col. 1370 in *DWB*, s.v. ‘göttlich’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG23964> (accessed 10 June 2013).

⁸ Cols. 1370 & 1374-1376 in *ibid*.

a more general linguistic development that affected a large part of religious and metaphysical vocabulary.⁹ They had originated in the literature of humanism and of the Renaissance before they came to thrive in the second half of the eighteenth century. In writings related to *Kunstreligion* that employ the adjectives ‘divine’ and ‘heavenly’ as attributes of nature as well as works of art, this figurative terminology survived into the nineteenth century. Expressions attesting to this fact include references to natural phenomena, moods and impressions aroused by landscapes or appraisals of works of art as ‘of heavenly or divine beauty’ (*himmlisch* or *göttlich schön*).¹⁰ According to the Grimm Brothers, this qualitative usage disappeared from High German only shortly before 1850 even though it continued to be popular in vernacular German.¹¹

Kramer’s assumption that critics’ favourable reception of musical works inclined them to approach these in terms reflecting ‘the same sort of respect normally reserved for essences believed to be divine in and of themselves’ offers no completely satisfying explanation of this qualitative usage.¹² In the writings of Mendelssohn and other musicians or music critics with whom he associated, references to compositions as ‘divine,’ ‘heavenly’ or ‘unearthly’ most often reflect critical appreciation rather than religious adoration along the lines of *Kunstreligion*. For those drawn to pantheistic thought and sensitive to nature, religion and art, a ‘shady’ religious predilection towards Christian terminology took precedence occasionally. Then, the expression ‘divine’ usually characterized something as ‘rooted in God’s being’ (*in gottes wesen begründet*) and as ‘corresponding, appropriate and equivalent to God’ (*gottgemäsz, gott angemessen und entsprechend*).¹³ A discussion of the manifold ideas that gave impetus to ‘quasi-religious’ and critical usages of ‘heavenly’ and ‘divine’ as concepts and terms in writings about *Kunstreligion* follows anon.

⁹ Col. 1370 in *ibid*.

¹⁰ Col. 1376, in *ibid*.

¹¹ Cols. 1375-1376 in *ibid*.

¹² *IKA*, 252. According to Kramer (*ibid.*), ‘music heard as making demands of a listener and exhibiting analytical coherence sometimes came to be treated as divine in and of itself.’

¹³ Col. 1365 in *DWB*, s.v. ‘göttlich’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung>

The divine origins and workings of music as an art and a vocation

Albrecht Riethmüller has suggested that aesthetic views on music as originating in the divine and manifesting the divine by nineteenth-century writers such as Eduard Hanslick, Hegel and Nietzsche formed part of an ever-evolving search for the natural and divine ‘beginnings’ (*archai*), ‘principles’ (*principia*) and ‘miraculous effects’ (*Wunderwirkungen*) of music that have occupied the minds of man since antiquity.¹⁴ In early nineteenth-century texts touching upon the question of where the roots of music as an art are to be found, Christian and mythological points of view prevailed next to each other. While remarks about the origin of music are conspicuously absent from the Bible, other Christian texts usually relate the beginnings of music (especially in its sacred forms) to the Holy Trinity and God’s angels. The view that the tunes of the church liturgy had been sung into Gregory the Great’s ears by the Holy Spirit (in the shape of a dove) became widespread in the ninth century. Stories that depicted angels bringing heavenly tunes down to earth and instructing the church fathers in liturgical singing, took their beginnings in writings by mediaeval theologians and clerics such as Honorius of Autun (1080-1154) and the autonomous author of the treatise *Instituta patrum de modo* of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁵

Mythological accounts focused on various deities as inventors or heralds of music. Most frequent were portrayals of the muses (the nine daughters of Zeus or Jupiter) and their leader Apollo (the ancient Greek god of music, poetry, dance and the plastic arts) as messengers delivering the gift of ‘harmony’ and rhythm to mankind as well as teaching them first skills in singing.¹⁶ In the early nineteenth

&lemd=GG23964 (accessed 10 June 2013).

¹⁴ Albrecht Riethmüller, ‘Antike Mythen vom Ursprung der Musik,’ in *Musik und Religion*, ed. Helga de la Motte-Haber (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1995), 11-32, at 14 & 18.

¹⁵ For a short discussion of relevant writings see Michael Walter, ‘Engelsmusik - Teufelsmusik. Entwicklung der literarischen Topoi,’ in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, 2nd ed. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995), Sachteil 3:8-14.

¹⁶ In the second book of Platon’s *Nomoi* (635d), the Muses and their leader Apollo are portrayed as deities that first instilled into humans a sense of rhythm and ‘harmony.’ In Hesiod’s *Theogony* the Muses are depicted as the first teachers in the art of singing who descended from heaven in order to bless mankind: ‘Such is the Muses’ holy gift to men. For while it is from the Muses and far-shooting Apollo that men are singers and citharists on earth, and from Zeus that they are kings, every man is

century, these mythological notions of music as a generous gift to mankind by the ancient deities were revived in novels, poetic accounts and music periodicals. In Jean Paul's pamphlet *Briefblättchen an die Leserin des Damen-Taschenbuchs bei gegenwärtiger Uebergabe meiner abgerissenen Gedanken vor dem Frühstück und dem Nachtstück in Löbichau* ('Letter to the reader of the Damen-Taschenbuch including my fragmented thoughts before breakfast and prior to the overnight-stay in Löbichau,' 1820/1821), for example, the ancient myth of Zeus's creation and deployment of the muses as 'gods, who, by means of words and music, would set in order [...] his whole creation' finds a resonance in a section that is entitled *Die Aussprache des Herzens* ('The Voice of the Heart').¹⁷

In contemporary texts, mythological perceptions of music's divine origin in heaven led to appellations of music as the daughter of heaven. Andreas Kretschmer's *Ideen zu einer Theorie der Musik* ('Ideas for a Theory of Music,' 1833') reflect this usage: the author discusses music as a heavenly art the essence of which seems as undecipherable as the true nature of the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis. As Mendelssohn had received a copy of the work shortly after its publication in November 1833,¹⁸ he was most certainly familiar with its introductory lines at least: 'Holy music! Daughter of Heaven! [...], should we, you Echo resounding from a better life [...], should we not be allowed to comprehend you, to even suspect what your character is [...]? Do you say, holy Isis, [...] "no one has taken a look under my veil, no one should lift it!"'¹⁹

fortunate whom the Muses love [...]. For the translation of the poem see Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1-34, at 5-6.

¹⁷ For a translation of central lines of Pindar's *Hymn to Zeus*, as summarized by Aristides, see Pietro Pucci, *The Song and Sirens: Essays on Homer* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 31. Jean Paul's poetic account, that seems to be inspired by this ancient text, was made known to a musical readership in reprint in Schumann's *NZfM*, vol. 1, no. 70 (1 December 1834), 279.

¹⁸ Kretschmer had enclosed the book as a gift of admiration in a letter dated 5 November 1833 (Autograph manuscript. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Music Section, MS. M.D.M. d. 28/134).

¹⁹ Andreas Kretschmer, *Ideen zu einer Theorie der Musik* (Stralsund: Lüfflersche Buchhandlung, 1833), 3: 'Heilige Musik! Himmelstochter! [...], sollen wir, du Echo aus einem schöneren Leben herüber klingend, [...] sollen wir dich hier nicht begreifen, nicht einmal ahnden dürfen, was dein Wesen ist [...]? Sprichst Du heilige Isis, [...] niemand hat unter meinem Schleier gesehen, niemand soll ihn lüften!' The author (also mentioned in chapter 3) had changed the spelling of his (originally Slavic) surname from 'Kretschmer' to 'Kretschmer' shortly before publishing this monograph.

Mendelssohn was likely familiar with the predominant theories as to where the origins of music were to be found. He had most certainly become acquainted with the mythological notions mentioned so far through his classical humanistic education and his wide reading of Jean Paul. According to Mendelssohn's poem *Paphlëis* (1820), instruction in Greek mythology had formed part of the daily curriculum of the Mendelssohn children.²⁰ According to John E. Toews, 'Mendelssohn in his grasp of [...] the classics was far beyond the level of any comparable musician of the age.'²¹ His knowledge, however, did not lead to assent with the contemporary revival of ancient mythological notions of music. His ironic distance in his early letters leaves no doubt that he did not have a high regard for mythological designations of origin in writings about music as an art and a talent. As a letter of 9 September 1827 to his family attests, for example, a meeting between him and the composer-conductor Julius Benedict in Stuttgart did not pass very well since Benedict had steered the conversation exactly towards such subject matter:

All of sudden, he called me fortunate and blessed since not only Saint Cecilia and Apollo were well-disposed towards me but also the high god Plutus who had been smiling at me since my childhood. How he seized on Plutus literally made me sick, I despised him from the bottom of my heart, I spoke of duties, time pressure [...], and slipped out of the door [...].²²

Mendelssohn seems to have disapproved of Benedict's statements for several reasons. Throughout his life, he met panegyrics on his own person with unease, as he was frequently in doubt about the aesthetic merits of his own works.²³ As Christopher Hogwood has shown, Mendelssohn's 'nagging self-doubts and constant agitation for things to be improved, plus an intolerance of "good enough"' are

²⁰ See Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Paphlëis. Ein Spott-Heldengedicht*, ed. Max Ferdinand Schneider and Ursula Galley (Basel: Jahressgabe der Internationalen Mendelssohn-Gesellschaft, 1961) and, for an English translation, Clive Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 66-73, at 70.

²¹ John E. Toews, 'Musical Historicism and the Transcendental Foundation of Community: Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* and the "Christian German" Cultural Politics of Frederick William IV,' in *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics, and the Psyche*, ed. Michael S. Roth (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 183-201, at 183.

²² Mendelssohn, letter of 9 September 1827 to his family and Adolph Bernhard Marx, in *SB* (2008), 1:212-215, at 213.

²³ There are numerous letters corroborating Mendelssohn's persistent self-criticism. See, for example: idem, letter of 6 April 1833 to Ernst Friedrich Albert Baur, in *SB* (2010), 3:155.

reflected both in his lifelong correspondence and in an obsession to improve his works before publication that the composer described himself as a ‘dreadful disease of altering.’²⁴ He was rather humble and used to refer to his own works as ‘trifles’ (*Kleinigkeiten*).²⁵ Even in the case of his musical idols Bach and Beethoven, he would have considered Benedict’s hyperbolic praise inappropriate. As will be shown in more detail further on, Mendelssohn was convinced that artistic talent and accomplishment were the products of human endeavour (and of a moral zeal for perfection, as indicated in chapter four) rather than something god-given.

Mendelssohn’s anger about Benedict’s comments about Plutus had other reasons. It was surely fuelled by the fact that any reference to the ancient Greek God of wealth out of the mouth of a Jew conjured up stereotypical views of Jews being obsessed with money that were widespread in Mendelssohn’s lifetime. After all, Mendelssohn came from a similar family background as Benedict (both were the sons of rich Jewish bankers), and he must have experienced any behaviour lending credence to such anti-semitic prejudice as unpleasant, if not painful. Last but not least, Mendelssohn seems to have considered Christian and mythological eulogies as empty rhetoric – or, as he put it later on in the letter, as ‘meaningless compliments’ (*nichtssagende[n] Complimente*).²⁶ As his concluding comments suggest, the anonymous author of a letter of recommendation that was meant to introduce him to Gottfried Weber had bestowed ample praise on Mendelssohn which the composer considered as overly exaggerated,²⁷ if not embarrassing. In response to it, he enclosed a request to A. B. Marx for a new reference and, in an additional postscript, suggested formulations for it that seem derived from the mythological vocabulary that the musical press of his day commonly employed and that he clearly set forth in

²⁴ Christopher Hogwood, ‘Foreword,’ in *Mendelssohn in Performance*, ed. Siegwart Reichwald (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), vii-ix, at viii, and Mendelssohn, letter of [1846] to Edward Buxton, in Frederick George Edwards, *The History of Mendelssohn’s Oratorio ‘Elijah’* (London: Novello and Company, 1896), 98-99, at 98.

²⁵ Mendelssohn, letter to Charlotte & Ignaz Moscheles, 8 January 1833, in *SB* (2010), 3:98-100, at 98.

²⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 9 September 1827 to his family and A. B. Marx, in *SB* (2008), 1:214.

²⁷ Unfortunately, Mendelssohn’s reference to this anonymous letter closes with an incomplete sentence, stating ‘The letter of recommendation that I already have is too.’ (*Der eine Empfehlungsbrief, den ich habe, ist mir zu*). The general tone of Mendelssohn’s lines, however, clearly suggests ironic disapproval. See Mendelssohn, letter of 9 September 1827 to his family and Adolph Bernhard Marx, in *SB* (2008), 1:215.

a mocking way. The irony of Mendelssohn's proposed wording is more than obvious:

Your Venerable Honour, I beseech you, encouraged by my services to heaven's daughter Musica (I invented a system whereby children learn about music through being fed: a pear is major, and a plum is minor, and thus they turn into note-devourers most rapidly!) It is, you see, important to me to get to know several men; that is to say, Gottfried Weber.²⁸

On the one hand, these sarcastic remarks might be best understood as humorous criticism of Gottfried Weber, who frequently resorted to mythological imagery in his writings on music. On the other hand, it is also possible that Mendelssohn's sarcasm was directed towards A. B. Marx himself – after all, he had addressed the letter only to his own father which gives reason to think that these lines were not meant to reach Marx directly. Marx clearly shared Weber's predilection for mythological imagery; as editor of the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, he oversaw the publication of numerous articles that were steeped in such mythological discourse. In a review of the Lower Rhine Music Festival in Düsseldorf that had appeared in his journal in the previous year, the author (someone by the name 'D.' – possibly 'Distrain,' who is mentioned in the 1826 index of authors) complimented the organisers on the chosen repertoire, emphasizing: 'You felt, firstly, the triumph of art, [...] whom everything serves that has a soul, and, at the same time, also a national impulse [...] to pay such [jubilant] tribute to the most noble daughter of heaven.'²⁹

How Mendelssohn defined the origins of music himself can be established by further reference to his enthusiastic portrayal of Fanny as a priestly musician of 11 June 1830. Here, he referred to 'God, the gracious Lord' (*der liebe Herrgott*) – an idiomatic appellation for the Christian God since Luther – as the leading authority

²⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 9 September 1827 to his family and Adolph Bernhard Marx, in *SB* (2008), 1:212-215, at 214.

²⁹ D., 'Grosses niederrheinisches Musikfest. Gefeierte in Düsseldorf den 14. und 15. Mai 1826,' *BAMZ*, vol. 3, no. 28 (12 July 1826), 222-225, at 225: 'Man fühlte, schien es, erstlich den Triumph der Kunst, der gemeinsam alles dient, das eine Seele hat, und zugleich auch eine nationale Regung [...], solche Huldigungen der edelsten Himmelstochter darzubringen.'

who had invented (*erfand*) music.³⁰ In Mendelssohn's correspondence, this general statement as to the divine origins of music stands isolated. Elsewhere, he addressed the issue from a more personal point of view. In a letter to Klingemann that he wrote one month after his mother's death in December 1842, he extolled the musical profession as 'a heavenly calling' and vocation, for the pursuit of which he has to thank both God and his parents. In grief about his loss, he felt more strongly that any artistic activity is 'a blessing sent by God.' In his view, this gift from God provided comfort and consolation; it also had the potential to elevate any human's inner self beyond the earthly and common.³¹

It is doubtful whether these written utterances can be interpreted as sincere aesthetic convictions, as they seem primarily influenced by the given situation and circumstances. On the first occasion, Mendelssohn was writing from Munich, one of the early stops on his Grand Tour during which he felt himself sadly isolated from his family and friends at home. In this context, his assertion that Fanny knew 'what God the gracious Lord was thinking when He invented music' seems inspired by a wish to express his fondness for his sister whom he dearly missed during his travels. On the second occasion, Mendelssohn was in great distress about losing his mother. Only naturally, in both situations he felt the need to remind himself of those whom he loved and the things that were important to him and for which he should thank God. Furthermore, both the idea of a divine creative force bringing the arts into the world and the notion of the arts as a means of comfort and redemption were recurrent topics in the Romantic literature that Mendelssohn was so fond of and that occasionally influenced his writing style.

The value of Mendelssohn's utterances for establishing his aesthetic and religious viewpoints is to be found in the way in which he varied thoughts on musical art as articulated in the writings of the early romantics. As we have seen, authors like Jean Paul focused on 'the divine father' (*göttlicher Vater*) Jupiter as the originator of

³⁰ Mendelssohn, letter of 11 June 1830 to Fanny Hensel, quoted in *SB* (2008), 1:544, and analysed earlier on p. 213 of this study. See also *DWB*, s.v. 'Herrgott,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GH07001> (accessed 18 June 2013).

³¹ Idem, letter of 17 January 1843 to Carl Klingemann, in *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdys Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann in London*, ed. Karl Klingemann (Essen: G. D. Baedeker, 1909), 278-279, trans. adapted from *FML*, 323-324.

music.³² Mendelssohn, by contrast, referred to the Christian God, in this context; furthermore, his appraisal of art as a ‘heavenly vocation’ is related to, but distinct from, the Romantic idea of ‘the soul’s redemption through music’ and ‘[t]he belief that arts in general, and music in particular, can provide refuge from the failed world of social and political life,’ to quote Hans Georg Schenk and Mark Evan Bonds.³³ Under the influence of theories of *Kunstreligion*, both ideas were often imbued with religious connotations in contemporary texts.³⁴ Wackenroder’s essay *Wunder der Tonkunst* (‘The Marvels of musical Art’) from the ‘Phantasies on Art’ expresses most aptly the romantic infatuation with music as providing an escape from the world:

While others deafen themselves with restless activity, [...] I submerge my head in the holy, cooling wellspring of sounds [...]. [...] I close my eyes to all the strife of the world — and withdraw quietly into the land of music, as into the *land of belief*, where all our [...] sufferings are lost in resounding sea [...]. — And how? [...], we greet and embrace as friends strange spiritual beings whom we do not know [...], and our minds become healthy [...].³⁵

In a letter quoted in the second part of Wackenroder’s novella *Das merkwürdige musikalische Leben des Tonkünstlers Joseph Berglinger*, the idea of redemption is combined with an idea of God as an artistic benefactor. At the beginning of the tale, Berglinger is portrayed as a daydreamer whose early contact with the sound of trombones and trumpets made ‘his soul spread great wings, as if he were rising up from a desolate heath, as if the curtain of dark cloud were dissolving before his

³² Jean Paul Richter, ‘Die Aussprache des Herzens,’ *NZfM*, vol. 1, no. 70 (1 December 1834), 279.

³³ Hans Georg Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics: An Essay in Cultural History* (London: Constable, 1966), 205 and Mark Evan Bonds, ‘Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,’ *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 50, no. 2/3 (Summer – Autumn 1997), 387-420, at 397. Schenk’s discussion of ideas of redemption seems to focus on the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Bond’s words can be extended to apply to Biedermeier Germany as well.

³⁴ Lexicologists generally differentiate between two meanings of the German term *Erlösung* (‘redemption’). The first one (*Ablösung* or, in English, ‘untackling’ or ‘removal’) does not bear any relation to religious vocabulary. The second one (*befreiung* or *redemptio*, which may be literally translated as ‘redemption’) is inspired by biblical language and, accordingly, often religiously connoted. *DWB*, s.v. ‘Erlösung,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GE08081> (accessed 18 June 2013).

³⁵ Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, ‘Die Wunder der Tonkunst,’ in *WSWB*, 1:205-208, at 205-206, trans. as ‘The Marvels of the Musical Art,’ in *Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder’s Confessions and*

mortal gaze, and he were soaring up to the radiant Heavens.’³⁶ Further on, he is depicted as a composer who is much aware to whom he owes his talent; as he writes to his father:

Good Heavens! Do we not owe one half of the credit we receive to the divinity of art itself [...] and the other half to the benevolence of the Creator who gave us the ability to avail ourselves of the gift? [...]. And is it not to the Creator that we owe gratitude for having given us the skill to stir the human heart by combining these sounds which from the beginning of time have possessed such wondrous affinities to our souls?³⁷

The point in which Mendelssohn deviates from Wackenroder’s writings consists in his certainty that God did not so much grant the *ability* of artistic creation but the *conditions* and *opportunities* necessary in order to devote oneself to art and pursue it professionally. Thanks to God, parents were given to him who had encouraged him early on to cultivate and perfect his innate artistic skills in music. To quote his lines after his mother’s death in full:

For the last few weeks, I have felt more vividly than ever what a heavenly calling art is. For this too I have to thank my parents! At a time when everything else which ought to interest the mind appears repugnant, empty and vapid, the smallest real service to art takes hold of one’s innermost being, leading one away from town and country, and the earth itself, and seems a blessing sent by God. [...]. The pleasant intercourse with the old familiar oboes and violas and the like which live so much longer than we do and are such faithful friends, so fascinated me that I often could not leave my desk for hours. I was much too upset and sore to think of composing, but even this merely mechanical pursuit of and preoccupation with art was my consolation the entire time I was alone, when the beloved faces of my wife and children were not present in order to make me forget about music and make me, once again, realize that I should thank God daily on my knees for all the good things that he has given me.³⁸

Fantasies, trans. Mary Hurst Schubert (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 178-181, at 178-179.

³⁶ Wackenroder, ‘Das merkwürdige musikalische Leben des Tonkünstlers Joseph Berglinger,’ in *WSWB*, 1:132, trans. in *OALF*, 102-124, at 105.

³⁷ Wackenroder, ‘Das merkwürdige musikalische Leben des Tonkünstlers Joseph Berglinger,’ in *WSWB*, 1: 141, trans. in *OALF*, 118-119.

³⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 17 January 1843 to Carl Klingemann, in idem, *Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann*, 278-279, trans. adapted from *FML*, 323-324.

Even though Mendelssohn was convinced that the refinement of musical skills was the artist's responsibility, he firmly believed that artistic progress was guided and assisted by divine providence. In this context, the two abbreviated prayers *L.e.g.G.* (short-hand for 'Let it succeed, O Lord' – *Laß es gelingen, Gott*) and *H.D.m.* (for 'Help me, [O Lord]' – *Hilf Du mir*) which he used to inscribe at the beginning of his manuscript scores,³⁹ corroborate his belief that the enhancement of any musician's proficiency was both in his own and in God's hands. In Mendelssohn's correspondence with Devrient of July 1831, the thought that trust in God did not make one's own commitment towards perfecting one's talents and accomplishing sophisticated works of art superfluous is combined with the belief that only the one who relied on God as his divine patron and benefactor would be rewarded with professional and financial success. In his response to a letter in which Devrient had articulated doubts as to whether his endeavours to make a career as an opera composer were eager enough, Mendelssohn emphasized:

[...] had it been the will of God that I should be renowned at the age of twenty-two, I no doubt should have been so. I cannot help it, for I can no more write to win a name, than to obtain a conductor's position. It would be a good thing if I could secure both. But so long as I do not actually starve, so long is it my duty to [...] leave the results to Him who disposes of other and greater matters.⁴⁰

To Devrient's enquiries about his progress on writing an opera, he replied: 'Although I firmly believe that a kind of Providence sends us all things in due time, and therefore also libretti; still, we must do our duty and look around us [...].' Accordingly, he intended to search actively for a librettist in Munich, London and Düsseldorf and, 'in the meantime,' he intended to 'write as good music as I can, and hope to make progress.'⁴¹

In this focus on music as a human art and a divine blessing, Mendelssohn's idiosyncratic thought on the origins and effects of music as an art and a discipline

³⁹ These translations are taken from R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 173. He has identified the first acronym as being possibly derived from Jeremiah 17:14.

⁴⁰ Mendelssohn, letter of 13 and 19 July 1831 to Eduard Devrient, in *SB* (2009), 2:324-325, at 324, trans. adapted from *FML*, 149-151, at 149.

⁴¹ Idem, letter of 13 and 19 July 1831 to Eduard Devrient, in *SB* (2009), 2:324-325, trans. adapted from *FML*, 149-151.

combines fundamental doctrines of humanist ideology with his very own ‘faith in God,’ referred to earlier in chapters one and three. While, in Julian Huxley’s understanding, humanism upholds ideals ‘of active open and continuous development’ as well as of ‘personal, social, and evolutionary’ improvement not ‘on the next world but on this,’⁴² *Gottglauben* expressed itself in a faithful reliance on God as a providing force and, as will be shown in more detail subsequently, an association of musical sounds with a world beyond, from whence this force originates.

The sublime essence of instrumental sound: associations of angelic and cosmic music

Mendelssohn’s and Wackenroder’s writings about the consolatory and redeeming effect of musical sound just presented were not uncharacteristic of the Romantic age, but still comparatively rare. As Bonds has shown in his analysis of writings about instrumental music from Kant to Hoffmann, from the enlightenment into the nineteenth century, ‘the object of description, [...] had [generally] shifted from music’s effect to music’s essence or, more specifically, to the perception of an ideal realm reflected in that music.’⁴³ In Mendelssohn’s time, sound was widely perceived as audible matter tearing down the barrier between earthly listeners as well as heavenly hosts of angels, spirits or ghosts. In E. T. A. Hoffmann’s prose work *Der Dichter und der Componist* (‘The Poet and the Composer,’ 1813), for example, instrumental sound is described as a substance that conveys messages about a heavenly realm inhabited by ghosts. In this fictional tale about the poet Ferdinand (most certainly representing the real-life poet Ferdinand Hippiel) and the composer Ludwig (van Beethoven, as it seems),⁴⁴ two questions feature prominently: ‘Is not

⁴² Julian Huxley, ‘The Coming New Religion of Humanism,’ *The Humanist*, vol. 22, no. 1 (January/February 1962), 6.

⁴³ Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 14.

⁴⁴ See the analysis of this work in Aubrey S. Garlington, Jr., ‘E. T. A. Hoffmann’s “Der Dichter und der Komponist” and the Creation of the German Romantic Opera,’ *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 1 (January 1979), 22-47, at 33.

music the mysterious language of a faraway spirit world [*Geisterreichs*] whose wondrous accents, echoing within us, awaken us to a higher, more intensive life?’ and ‘Can music proclaim anything other than the wonders of that region from which it echoes across to us?’⁴⁵ Similar concerns already guided Hoffmann’s line of thought in his review of Mozart’s and Beethoven’s symphonies in the 1810 July issue of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*:

We hear the gentle voices of love and melancholy, the nocturnal spirit-world dissolves into a purple shimmer, and with inexpressible yearning we follow the flying figures kindly beckoning us from the clouds to join their eternal dances of the spheres (as, for example, in Mozart’s Symphony in E flat major, known as the ‘Swan Song’). In a similar way Beethoven’s instrumental music unveils before us the realm of the mighty and the immeasurable. Here shining rays of light shoot through the darkness of night [...].⁴⁶

This new focus on the inner nature of instrumental sound also prevails in Mendelssohn’s correspondence. It seems to have given rise to associations of ‘angelic music’ (*Engelsmusik*), that is, music that is of a heavenly character and resembles the music that the heavenly hosts perform in order to praise God. As Mendelssohn confessed in a letter to his friend, the composer Wilhelm Taubert, for him, ‘the sound of instruments has such a solemn and heavenly quality [*so was Feierliches, Himmlisches in sich*] in it.’⁴⁷ Such comparisons between heavenly and earthly music were not new. Related notions had already been discussed in mediaeval treatises, were revived in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writings, and had been immortalised in sacred paintings, with some of which Mendelssohn was familiar.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ E. T. A. Hoffmann, ‘Der Dichter und der Componist,’ in *AMZ*, vol. 15, nos. 49-50 (8 and 15 December 1813), 793-806 and 809-817, at 800, translation partly adapted from Garlington, ‘E. T. A. Hoffmann’s “Der Dichter und der Komponist,”’ 33 and *E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism*, ed. David Charlton and trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 188-209, at 196.

⁴⁶ E. T. A. Hoffmann, ‘Recension. Beethovens Symphonie, No. 5,’ *AMZ*, vol. 12, no. 40 (4 July 1810), 630-642, at 632-633, trans. in idem, *Musical Writings*, 238.

⁴⁷ Mendelssohn, letter of 27 August 1831 to Wilhelm Taubert, in *SB* (2009), 2:366, trans. adapted from *FML*, 165-166.

⁴⁸ The idea of angelic music was first introduced into Italian mediaeval music theory by Nicolaus de Capua in his *Compendium musicale* of 1415. Influenced by Christian thought, he abolished the Pythagorean tripartite division of musical genres: *musica mundana* (the music of the spheres) is

Even though Mendelssohn's library seems to have included no theoretical treatises and pamphlets that contain information about mediaeval music theory, he might have come across conceptions of angelic music by mediaeval music theorists as early as 1830. While staying in Rome, he kept company with the Italian bibliophile and composer Fortunato Santini (1778-1861). As a token of his affection and admiration, Santini granted Mendelssohn free access to a massive library of music materials that he had assembled from 1796 onwards.⁴⁹ In addition to roughly one thousand published scores and manuscripts of polyphonic music of the Italian Baroque and Renaissance periods, this collection also included several theoretical works by authors like Gioseffo Zarlino and Ercole Bottrigari who aimed to reform mediaeval musical theory and thought.⁵⁰

Nineteenth-century texts that allude to conceptions of angelic music in the midst of a wave of renewed interest in mediaeval music theory and which were most certainly known to Mendelssohn include, above all, critical and fictional writings by A. B. Marx and Jean Paul.⁵¹ For Marx, Palestrina's music sounded 'as one might imagine a proclamation of angelic voices,' since 'the chords waft in the softest piano, as if from a far distance, before swelling to a mighty call and dying away again, through the arches of the cathedral.'⁵² In Jean Paul's fiction, the idea of *Engelsmusik* is invoked in emphatic outbursts. In his first major novel *Die unsichtbare Loge* ('The Invisible Lodge,' 1793), the protagonist Gustav feels overwhelmed by his teacher's

replaced by *musica angelica* (the heavenly chants of the angels), *musica humana* (originally the musical harmonies of the human body) is re-defined as liturgical chant that takes place in the church, and the meaning of *musica instrumentalis* (originally earthly vocal and instrumental music) is narrowed down to include only music executed on instruments. See Reinhold Hammerstein, *Musik der Engel: Untersuchungen zur Musikanschauung des Mittelalters* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1990), 137.

⁴⁹ See Mendelssohn letter of 8 November 1830 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:127, trans. in *LIS*, 54: 'The Abbate Santini is a valuable acquaintance for me, as he has a very complete library of ancient Italian music, and he kindly gives or lends me anything I like, for no one can be more obliging.'

⁵⁰ For details about the Santini Collection see Klaus Kindler, 'Sammlung Santini,' in *Das Handbuch der historischen Buchbestände in Deutschland* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1993), 4:239-240.

⁵¹ The music theories of authors from earlier generations (including Boethius, Nicomachus Gerascnus, Gaudentius, Macrobius, Jamblichus and Pythagoras) were discussed anew in nineteenth-century literary writings, theoretical works and music periodicals such as A. B. Marx's *AMZ*.

⁵² A. B. Marx, 'Etwas über Joseph Haidn [*sic*] und seinen Standpunkt in der Kunstentwicklung,' *BAMZ*, vol. 1, no. 35 (1 September 1824), 299-302, at 302: 'wie man sich eine Verkündigung von Engelstimmen vorstellen mag, so wehen die Akkorde aus dem leitesten Piano, wie aus weiter Ferne, anschwellend bis zum mächtigen Rufe und dann wieder versäuselnd, durch die Wölbungen des Doms.'

religious chants and exclaims enthusiastically: 'Oh, Music! Echo from a distant harmonic world! Sighing of the angels within us!'⁵³

That Mendelssohn's allusions to angelic music could have also been stimulated by the imagery of sacred paintings is suggested in his correspondence with Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein and Friedrich Zelter of October 1830. In a letter dated 12 October, Mendelssohn articulated his impressions of Titian's *Assunta* that he had admired in Venice's Galleria dell'Accademia earlier in the month by reference to *Engelsmusik*. His assertion that the oil painting had made him perceive 'the noise and the rejoicing, and the bright music of the angels,' seems to derive partly from Titian's imagery and also from associations conjured up by the picture.⁵⁴

The imagery of angels as musicians singing God's praises and playing instruments in his honour had already found its way into the fine arts between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. In the Renaissance, an increasingly consolidated Marian cult inspired the production of paintings that addressed religious topoi such as Virgin Mary's ascension and coronation, giving further impetus to depictions of angelic instrumentalists and orchestras. According to Irene Earls, a typical Renaissance Assumption came to feature two or three central components: 'The Virgin is typically depicted in mid-air, being raised by choirs of angels who sometimes play musical instruments.'⁵⁵ Mendelssohn had a sharp eye for such imagery, as he was able to describe visual elements in Titian's painting from memory, some of which are quite hard to detect: 'the music that the angels make during the Assumption,' angels that 'encircle Mary with joyous shouts of welcome,' and an angel which 'gaily beats the tambourine' together with 'a couple of others' who 'blow away on strange crooked flutes whilst another charming group is singing.'⁵⁶ His reference to angelic singing might have been primarily inspired by the Bible, as such visual content it is not clearly evident from Titian's painting (see

⁵³ Jean Paul Richter, *Die unsichtbare Loge* (1793), in idem, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Norbert Miller (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1959), 1:7-469, at 60, trans. in Bonds, 'Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music,' 405.

⁵⁴ Mendelssohn, letter of 12 October 1830 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, in *SB* (2009), 2:107.

⁵⁵ Irene Earls, 'Assumption,' in idem, *Renaissance Art: A Topical Dictionary* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 28.

⁵⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 October 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:109, trans. adapted from *FML*, 89.

Figure 8). In the Old Testament, angels' acclamatory praise of God is frequently described as noise (or shouts), whereas in the New Testament the notion of melodious angelic singing prevails.⁵⁷

Figure 8. Titian, *Assumption of the Virgin*. 1516-1518, Oil on wood, 690 x 360 cm. Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, Italy. Available from: ARTstor, <http://www.artstor.org> (accessed 26 June 2013).

Associations of angelic music also played a major role in Mendelssohn's letters in which he detailed his impressions of the sound of the organs on which he used to practise and perform as a tourist and recitalist. Enthused by daily instrumental practice in the St. Peter's Church in Munich, where he had stopped on his way from Switzerland to France during his Grand Tour, he sent the following evaluation of the instrument to Fanny on 16 September 1831:

[...] it has wonderful registers [...] thanks to which *the heavenly flowing sound of the instrument* edifies me every day. I have found here the stops

⁵⁷ Walter, 'Engelsmusik – Teufelsmusik. Entwicklung der literarischen Topoi,' 8.

with which one must play Seb. Bach's 'Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele.' [...]. For the moving voices I have an 8 foot Flute and a very soft 4 foot, which continually *hover above the chorale*. [...] for the chorale there is a manual with nothing but reed stops, and there I opt for a soft Oboe, a very gentle Clarion 4 foot, and a Viola; thus the chorale is drawn out so quietly and yet penetratingly, *like distant voices*, singing from the depths of their hearts.⁵⁸ (Italics mine.)

At first sight, these lines may be interpreted as nothing more than an expression of enthusiasm for the instrument and as registration instructions that Mendelssohn deemed most apt for an interpretation of Bach's chorale setting BWV 654.⁵⁹ Once again, however, his words more or less consciously evoke images of angelic and, at this juncture, cosmic, music that finds its echo on earth in the congregation's singing of chorales. More specifically, Mendelssohn's description seems reminiscent of ancient and mediaeval thought that assumed a hierarchy of cosmic harmonies ('the heavenly flowing sound of the instrument' in Mendelssohn's terminology), angelic music (the sound of the 4 foot Flute that, in Mendelssohn's ears, 'hovers above the chorale') and congregational singing (the chants of 'distant voices' that the composer believed to hear resonate in the Oboe, the 4 foot Clarion and the Viola).⁶⁰ An influence of such notions seems very likely. Pythagorean ideas of cosmic harmonies enjoyed great popularity in the early nineteenth century. According to Neubauer and Bonds, early Romantic music aesthetics relied fundamentally on a revival of Pythagorean theories of philosophy and music theory in the context of an emergent independent theory of instrumental music and 'a vigorous renewal' of idealism in late eighteenth-century philosophical and aesthetic

⁵⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 September 1831 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:393-397, at 395, the translation of which can be found in William A. Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 89 – except for the first sentence: *Aber es sind wunderschöne Register darin [...], da erbaue ich mich denn täglich am himmlischen strömenden Ton des Instruments*.

⁵⁹ An interpretation in this sense has been suggested in Andreas Arand, 'Mendelssohns Vorstellungen vom Registrieren auf der Orgel,' *Ars Organi*, vol. 60, no. 3 (September 2012), 157-159, at 158.

⁶⁰ Mendelssohn's perception of the sound is somewhat emotional and highly subjective. In fact, the decorated chorale melody that enters in bar 12 is the highest of the four voices. As it seems, his comment about the 4 foot Flute that 'hovers above the chorale' describes its floating up- and downward movement as well as the soft quality of the sound that this organ stop generates (and that, in a certain sense, counteracts the reedy sound of the chorale melody) rather than the pitch.

writings by Winckelmann, Kant, Schiller, Herder, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schelling.⁶¹

Mendelssohn's imagery of 'flowing' and 'hovering' sound seems to merge Pythagorean and mediaeval theories with the metaphorical language of Romantic poetry. As Jörg Jochen Berns has highlighted, both the ancient mythological model of the harmony of the spheres as well as biblical notions of heavenly music created by angels are based on a notion of sound as engaged in a perpetual motion that approximates Mendelssohn's vision of instrumental sound.⁶² While the Pythagoreans believed that the homogeneous movement of the planets created sounds or tones that were analogous to those forming musical scales, Plato added a further component to this view of the universe. In his account of the cosmos in the legend *The Myth of Er* that concludes his *Republic* (617b.4–7), sirens inhabit each planet's orbit, and their chants produce a harmonious sound. In later centuries, Jacobus of Liège re-defined this sound as *musica coelestis vel divina* (the music of God, the angels and the creatures of heaven) in the treatise *Speculum musicae* (1324/1325) before Goethe romanticised the concept of heavenly and divine music in his poem *Aussöhnung* ('Reconciliation,' 1823):

But music hovers forth on angelic wings
Tone upon tone a millionfold to weave:
Oh how it penetrates the soul, and brings
Eternal beauty to us as we grieve!
The eye grows moist, the heart's longing feels and hears
The heaven-sent gift of music and of tears.⁶³

⁶¹ See John Neubauer, 'Epilogue on Romanticism,' in idem, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986), 193-210, at 193 and Bonds, 'Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music,' 389-390.

⁶² See Jörg Jochen Berns, 'Instrumentaler Klang und herrscherliche Hallräume in der Frühen Neuzeit: Zur akustischen Setzung fürstlicher *potestas*-Ansprüche in zeremoniellem Rahmen,' in *Instrumente in Kunst und Wissenschaft: Zur Architektonik kultureller Grenzen im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte and Jan Lazardzig (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 527-555, at 529: 'Both models could easily be combined [...] since they both describe an incessant harmonious flow of sound.' (*Beide Modelle ließen sich [...] vor allem deshalb miteinander vereinen, weil beide ein unablässiges harmonisches Klingen meinen.*)

⁶³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Aussöhnung,' in idem, *Alles an Personen und zu festlichen Gelegenheiten Gedichtete enthaltend*, vol. 6 of *Goethe's sämtliche Werke in vierzig Bänden* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1853), 99-100, at 99, trans. adapted from idem, *Selected Poetry*, trans. David Luke (London: Penguin, 2005), 219-220, at 219.

According to Hammerstein, conceptions of cosmic and heavenly music influenced perceptions of instrumental sound early on. Only applied to musical automatons in early antiquity, the notion of such instruments as an ‘image of celestial cosmic harmonies’ (*Abbild himmlisch-kosmischer Harmonien*) and a manifestation of ‘numinous consecration, sublime majesty and power’ (*numinose Weihe, Erhabenheit und Macht*) was soon transferred onto the organ, and this usage survived until today.⁶⁴ Evidence of such changing views is manifold. The earliest description of an organ that contains references to cosmic music can be found in the *Greek anthology*. In a riddle-epigram about the ‘hydraulos’ that the Roman philosopher and emperor Julian (331/332-363, also known as Julian the Apostate) contributed to this literary compendium, the organ is described as an instrument expressing the grandeur of the universe due to the seemingly infinite range of sounds that its various stops could create.⁶⁵ Similarly, in Milton’s ode *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity* (1629), the organ figures as one of many elements that blend together to create a sound that, in its essence, corresponds to ancient notions of the harmony of the spheres, mediaeval models of *musica coelestis* and Christian conceptions of angelic music:

Ring out, ye Crystal sphears, / Once bless our human ears, / (If ye have power
to touch our senses so) / And let your silver chime / Move in melodious time; /
And let the Bass of Heav’ns deep Organ blow; / And with your ninefold
harmony / Make up full consort to the’ Angelike symphony.⁶⁶

In nineteenth-century writings, finally, such views are occasionally reduced to allusions to the religiously sublime. Evidence of this conceptual shift can be found in Philipp Spitta’s article *Die Wiederbelebung protestantischer Kirchenmusik* (‘The Revival of Protestant Church Music,’ 1882), in which he describes the organ as the instrument of ‘genuine’ Protestant church music per se that, ‘through the calmly

⁶⁴ Reinhold Hammerstein, *Macht und Klang. Tönende Automaten als Realität und Fiktion in der alten und mittelalterlichen Welt* (Bern: A. Francke, 1986), 98.

⁶⁵ Julian the Apostate, as quoted and analysed in Leo Spitzer, ‘Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word “Stimmung” (Part I),’ *Traditio*, vol. 2 (1944), 409-464, at 433.

⁶⁶ Quoted in *A Milton Encyclopedia*, ed. William Bridges Hunter (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1983), 5:166. According to Hunter (*ibid.*), ‘the fusion of classical with Christian is evident throughout. The “ninefold harmony” of traditional Pythagorean/Platonic tradition is here supported by Milton’s favorite musical instrument, the organ (in its metaphorical sense, of course).’

flowing smoothness of its sound and due to the great wealth and power that the instrument is able to develop, [...] gives the impression of the sublime.’⁶⁷

Mendelssohn’s imagery of the soft sound of the flute hovering above the voices of an imaginary congregation and merging with the chants of human voices seems to be related to the writings of early Christian and mediaeval authors. They advanced notions that earthly liturgical doxology (in congregational singing) and angelic music co-exist perceivably and could even become one. This is reflected in abundant reports that spread the notion that the chants of the host of angels were audible on earth and the contemporary view established by Berns that any earthly ceremony implemented a pre-existent ceremonial practice sent from heaven.⁶⁸ Saint John Chrysostom, for example, was convinced that ‘[a]bove, the hosts of angels sing praise; below, men form choirs in the churches and imitate them by singing the same doxology.’ According to him, ‘[t]he inhabitants of heaven and earth are brought together in a common solemn assembly; there is one thanksgiving, one shout of delight, one joyful chorus.’⁶⁹ In the context of the church liturgy, such notions were inspired by the Bible. In the Apocalypse of John (Revelation 4-5), for example, heavenly worship is portrayed as running parallel to earthly worship and, at various points, both forms of worship coincide.

While early church fathers and theologians were convinced by this biblical imagery that congregations could join in angelic hymns of praise, Mendelssohn seems to have associated angelic music primarily with sound rather than sung text. This thought may have been inspired by the fine sound of the organ in Munich or associated with the biblical idea that angelic music or language in heavenly realms

⁶⁷ Philipp Spitta, ‘Die Wiederbelebung protestantischer Kirchenmusik,’ in idem, *Zur Musik* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1976), 29-58, at 41: ‘durch die ruhig strömende Gleichmäßigkeit ihres Klanges, ebenso wie durch die großartige Fülle und Macht, die sie zu entwickeln fähig ist, macht sie zugleich den Eindruck des Erhabenen.’

⁶⁸ See, for example, the Benedictine Aurelianus Reomensis’s account dating from around 850 of how a monk from St. Victor was woken up during the night by the angelic sound of the Responsorium Cives apostolorum. (Aurelianus Reomensis, *Musica Disciplina* (9th c.), edited by Lawrence Gushee in *Corpus scriptorum de musica*, vol. 21 (1975), 132.) See also Berns, ‘Instrumentaler Klang und herrscherliche Hallräume in der Frühen Neuzeit,’ 528.

⁶⁹ See John Chrysostom, ‘Homilia 1’ in *Oziam seu de Seraphinis*, fol. 1, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca*, 162 vols., ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1857-1866), 56:97, trans. in *Music in Early Christian Literature*, ed. James McKinnon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 89.

resounds on earth as instrumental sound.⁷⁰ It may have been further stimulated by Goethe's and Milton's conceptions of angelic music as hovering and ringing sound. After all, Mendelssohn did not only possess an extensive knowledge of the Bible but also collected editions of their writings.⁷¹

Based on the evidence presented in this section, it seems that Mendelssohn's descriptions of the heavenly and celestial essence of musical sound were influenced in equal measure by what he heard (the sound of the various organ registers), read (texts of ancient and mediaeval periods as well as seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and saw (Titian's Renaissance paintings).⁷² As will be shown subsequently, ideas of angelic music stimulated by auditory impressions also inspired Mendelssohn's writings about, in his terms, 'heavenly' and 'divine' compositions. Here, however, understandings of these two attributes as pointing towards transcendental realities should be clearly distinguished from qualitative usages of the German adjectives *himmlisch* and *göttlich* in the sense of 'excellent' or 'beautiful.'

The immanent-transcendent semantics and uses of 'heavenly' and 'divine' as qualitative and religious attributes

References to angelic music and transcendent realms in Mendelssohn's writings about musical works appear exclusively in discussions of Bach's music, and only in one letter of November 1831 that, once again, focuses on the Baroque composer's organ music and the solemn sound character of *Engelsmusik*, is the angelic imagery fully explicit. Writing to Fanny on the occasion of her twenty-sixth birthday, Mendelssohn described the enclosed score of Bach's organ chorale *Wir glauben all*

⁷⁰ In Revelation 4:1, for example, an angel is portrayed as 'speaking to me [most certainly St. John the apostle] like a trumpet.'

⁷¹ See footnote 106 on p. 37 in chapter one & the entry in *LOF*, 296: John Milton, *The Poetical Works*, 3 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1826). The Nativity Ode is included in vol. 2 on pp. 299-300.

⁷² Plato's works, for example, were read enthusiastically by the Mendelssohns. The Socratic dialogue entitled *Republic* was included in vol. 5 of *Platonis Opera. Cum scholiis a Rhunkenio collectis ... Editio stereotypa*, 8 vols. (Leipzig, [1818-1819]). Mendelssohn listed the third and eighth volumes of this edition in his 1844 inventory of books but he might have possessed or come across other volumes earlier on. See *LOF*, 307.

an einen Gott (BWV 740) as the perfect gift,⁷³ since, in its ‘pure, gentle solemnity,’ the piece gives the listener the impression ‘as if one were listening to the angels in heaven singing.’ He deemed its ending in particular to be ‘truly divine’ since it marks the point ‘when the chorale melody begins to flutter and dies out way up in the air and everything dissolves into sound.’⁷⁴

Everywhere else in Mendelssohn’s correspondence, such references to transcendent realms are replaced by an analysis of compositional techniques. In these analytical evaluations of musical works, the adjectives ‘divine’ and ‘heavenly’ feature prominently as well. Here, however, they can safely be interpreted as qualifiers that appear to bear little relation to *Kunstreligion*, especially when they appear in isolation (that is with no other accompanying religious terminology). More specifically, these terms are not meant to assign unearthly characteristics to compositions but to articulate a critical appreciation of work-immanent features and musical elements as ‘excellent,’ ‘beautiful’ or ‘correct.’

One of the earliest examples corroborating qualitative usages of the attributes *himmlisch* and *göttlich* is to be found in the letter of 18 July 1826 (quoted in chapter two), in which Mendelssohn evaluated Carl Maria von Weber’s overture to the opera *Oberon*.⁷⁵ His appraisal of the work’s opening bars as ‘heavenly’ is embedded in a thorough discussion of the instrumental setting and style as well as an analytical evaluation of melody and sound.⁷⁶ Articulated in a similar vein, Mendelssohn’s partiality for Bach’s chorale partita for organ *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* (‘Christ, who art the light of the day,’ BWV 766) was motivated by the quality of the

⁷³ Based on the composer’s description of the music, Russell Stinson has deduced that it was this piece that Mendelssohn sent to Fanny. See Russell Stinson, ‘Mendelssohns große Reise: Ein Beitrag zur Rezeption von Bachs Orgelwerken,’ in *Bach-Jahrbuch*, ed. Peter Wollny (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 2002), 88:119-137, at 129-130. Some scholars actually assume this work to be an arrangement of a piece by Bach or an original composition by Bach’s pupil Johann Ludwig Krebs.

⁷⁴ Mendelssohn, letter of 14 and 17 November 1831 to Fanny Hensel, in *SB* (2009), 2:421-422, trans. in idem, *A Life in Letters*, ed. Rudolf Elvers, trans. Craig Tomlinson (London: Cassell Publishers, 1986), 169-170.

⁷⁵ See p. 100 of this study.

⁷⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 18 July 1826 to Abraham and Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:183: ‘It begins with a *heavenly* Andante. It is the most beautiful of all beginnings of overtures, composed by Weber [...]. The fairies in the wind instruments play along at once, the Turkish March comes to be heard, too, and then follows a movement played by the cellos and the viola, set in Weber’s usual instrumental style but representing probably one of the most touching and noble melodies he ever invented [...].’ (Italics mine.)

composition as well. After he had received a transcription of the piece from Franz Hauser, Mendelssohn conveyed his professional opinion about it at the beginning of a highly benevolent letter, writing ‘once again, you have sent me a divine chorale from Bach in transcription, and the whole thing looks so delicate and neat and still learned [...].’⁷⁷ Applied to this stylistically sophisticated but not yet fully mature early work,⁷⁸ Mendelssohn’s usage of *göttlich* seems to express, once again, his general passion for Bach’s musical oeuvre and an admiration of his erudite style, as it manifested itself in this composition.

Mendelssohn’s pronounced analytical focus on compositions clearly sets him apart from his contemporaries. According to these, there were various religious works by Bach and other composers of the past that made perceivable something unearthly that can only be heard but not really be understood. Nineteenth-century individuals generally reckoned Allegri’s *Miserere* as exemplary in this respect. As it represented one of Italy’s main attractions that inspired annual visits to Italy and the Sistine Chapel by thousands of tourists, many travellers commented on the composition as representing music from another world sung by angels in heaven rather than human beings. The English literary critic and essayist William Hazlitt, for example, was full of enthusiasm for ‘the Miserere which is chanted by the Priests, and sung by a single voice (I understand like an angel’s) in a dim religious light in the Sistine Chapel’ when travelling through Italy with his wife from 1824 to 1825.⁷⁹ On a different note, the protestant theologian Karl von Hase (1800-1890) ranked the piece, together with Palestrina’s *Missa Papae Marcelli* (1555), among the liturgical compositions that celebrate religious or divine secrets and represent works of ‘the most spiritual art that elevates the human heart to the infinite, whereas the fine arts depict the infinite in limited earthly form.’⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Idem, letter of 30 January 1831 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2009), 2:197.

⁷⁸ Bach’s chorale partita most certainly dates back to the composer’s years in Luneburg (1700-1703) and may be counted among the early works rather than his major masterworks. Even though it lacks the craftsmanship and stylistic finesse of later keyboard compositions, its form (a set of variations) displays sophisticated contrapuntal writing, which might explain Mendelssohn’s appraisal of the work.

⁷⁹ See William Hazlitt, *Notes of a Journey Through France and Italy* (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1826), 285-286.

⁸⁰ Karl von Hase, *Kirchengeschichte. Lehrbuch zunächst für academische Vorlesungen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1836), 487: ‘die geistigste Kunst, die das Herz unmittelbar zum Unendlichen

Mendelssohn himself was familiar with the views that Italian visitors spread about Allegri's *Miserere* by April 1831 at the latest, when he attended performances of the work by the choir of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. He wrote to Zelter about bars 24–28 of the composition afterwards: '[...] whenever people say that the voices do not sound like the voices of men, but of angels from on high, and that these sounds can never be heard elsewhere, it is this particular embellimento to which they invariably allude.'⁸¹ In contrast to other Italian visitors, however, he interpreted the work's chordal progressions and vocal embellishments as products of a maestro's skill and as the outcome of an adherence to traditions of melismatic writing rather than a manifestation of angelic sound.⁸² Instead of idealising the work, he sent detailed technical analyses of the chord progressions to Zelter.⁸³ As Boursy has established from Mendelssohn's correspondence, he 'listened carefully and deduced how the various tones and their cadences worked,' noting down 'numerous musical examples in his letters.'⁸⁴ He also analysed the vocal setting and the execution of the piece. To his family he commented critically on the quality of the liturgical singing during Holy Week, and he concluded to Fanny: 'I could not detect anything unearthly or mysterious in the music; indeed I am perfectly contented to have its beauty earthly and comprehensible.'⁸⁵

Mendelssohn's conviction that a composition deserved praise for its detectable and comprehensible technical sophistication and stylistic profoundness rather than for what James Garratt has called the 'associations of the material,'⁸⁶ can indeed be interpreted as Richard Boursy suggests: Mendelssohn's judgement of

erhebt, während die bildenden Künste dasselbe irdisch begränzt darstellen.' This book was published seven years after Hase had undertaken an educational tour to Italy.

⁸¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:287, trans. in *FML*, 133-148, at 141.

⁸² See his letter of 4 April 1831 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:248, trans. in *FML*, 124-125.

⁸³ See Mendelssohn's letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:286-290, trans. in *FML*, 139-144.

⁸⁴ Richard Boursy, 'The Mystique of the Sistine Chapel Choir in the Romantic Era,' *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Summer 1993), 277-329, at 308.

⁸⁵ Mendelssohn, letter of 4 April 1831 to his family, in *SB* (2009), 2:248-249, trans. in *FML*, 125.

⁸⁶ According to Garratt, these associations could be historical, liturgical and highly religious. Palestrina's musical language and style, for example, were commonly associated with 'the Romantic ideology of the sublime' and a revelation of 'the Christian infinite.' James Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 215-218.

music was mainly based on ‘logical explanations of musical effects’ and aimed at a proper understanding of style and technique.⁸⁷ This inquisitive fervour towards the inner construction of compositions points to an approach towards musical works that Wagner would define as genuinely German in his 1840 article *Über deutsches Musikwesen* (‘On German Music’). There he concluded: ‘The German wants not only to feel his music, he wants to think it as well.’⁸⁸ Beyond that, Mendelssohn’s focus on a qualitative and critical evaluation of music seems hardly surprising if his professional life and educational background are considered. He usually approached musical works not from the point of view of a poet, theologian or ordinary tourist, but with the penetrative acumen of a musician and, if his rigorous musical training and sincere approach to the musical profession are taken into account, he might be ranked among the most critical and knowledgeable. During his early youth, he had enjoyed a meticulous musical training which was primarily focused on technically consistent part writing.⁸⁹ As a professional performer, teacher, private mentor, conductor and music director, he continued to be primarily concerned with the technical and stylistic qualities of newly published musical works, pieces given at concerts as well as compositions sent to him for professional evaluation or inclusion in his concerts at the Lower Rhenish Music Festivals, at venues in Düsseldorf and Berlin as well as at the Leipzig *Gewandhaus*.⁹⁰

As far as Allegri’s *Miserere* is concerned, Mendelssohn’s rather factual evaluation of the work can at least partly be ascribed to technical deficiencies in its performance by the Sistine Chapel Choir which might have distracted his attention from the sublime sound effects that, for others, conjured up associations of angelic or

⁸⁷ Boursy, ‘The Mystique of the Sistine Chapel Choir in the Romantic Era,’ 309.

⁸⁸ Richard Wagner, ‘Über deutsches Musikwesen,’ in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* (Leipzig: E. W. Fritzsch, 1871), 1: 185-206, at 192, trans. in Bonds, *Music as Thought*, vii.

⁸⁹ As Todd has established from an extant composition workbook, Zelter’s instruction of Felix and Fanny closely followed Bach’s pedagogical method, as set down in Johann Philipp Kirnberger’s magnum opus *Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik* (‘Art of Pure Composition,’ 1774). It strictly covered all the major aspects of theory, including figured bass exercises followed by ‘a rigorous course of chorale, invertible counterpoint, canon, and fugue in two and three parts.’ *Grove Music Online*, s.v. ‘Mendelssohn, Felix,’ (by R. Larry Todd), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51795pg1> (accessed 20 June 2013).

⁹⁰ Very often, composers and musical amateurs sent Mendelssohn their works and asked him for his professional opinion. Wagner, for example, corresponded with Mendelssohn about his Symphony in C Major, WWV 29.

unearthly sound. Like other nineteenth-century musicians, he listened with more critical ears than ‘ordinary pilgrims who are insensitive to music’ (as which Liszt described the many poets, intellectuals and tourists who attended the choir’s Good Friday performances every year).⁹¹ Accordingly, Mendelssohn easily detected ‘the most fearful dissonances’ and pitch problems in the ensemble’s singing.⁹²

Mendelssohn’s reception of Bach’s organ chorale *Wir glauben all an einen Gott* (BWV 740) did not suffer from the bad quality of a performance. As Russell Stinson has established from Mendelssohn’s letter about the piece of 17 November 1831, Mendelssohn reacted ‘to the music itself’ rather than to how the piece sounded on a particular organ when he studied a manuscript copy of the score by Johann Nepomuk Schelble.⁹³ In this sense, Mendelssohn’s words about Bach’s ‘heavenly’ music quoted at the beginning of this section clearly reflects what is going on in the score (as shown in Figure 9) while articulating spiritual associations conjured up by the flow of the sounds: Four beats after playing the last note of the hymn on the third beat of measure 27, the right hand accelerates (‘flutters’), articulating oscillating and rising sequences in a series of thirty-second notes over the following six beats before cadencing on a very high pitch (‘way up in the air’). As soon as its dissonant intervallic relations to the dominant-seventh chord in the left hand and the tonic pedal points are replaced by an extended quarter-note appoggiatura, all the voices (‘everything’) at last ‘dissolve’ into a tonic triad (‘sound’) that is ‘truly divine.’⁹⁴

⁹¹ Liszt, letter of 1 November 1862 to Carl Alexander, in idem, *Briefwechsel zwischen Franz Liszt und Carl Alexander, Grossherzog von Sachsen*, ed. La Mara [Marie Lipsius] (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1909), 114–118, trans. in Boursy, ‘The Mystique of the Sistine Chapel Choir in the Romantic Era,’ 318.

⁹² Mendelssohn, letter of 16 June 1831 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:283–293, trans. in *FML*, 142.

⁹³ Russell Stinson, *The Reception of Bach’s Organ Works from Mendelssohn to Brahms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25.

⁹⁴ This analysis is based on Stinson’s description of how Mendelssohn interpreted the music in *ibid.*, 25–26.

Figure 9. J. S. Bach, 'Wir glauben all an einen Gott, Vater,' BWV 740⁹⁵

Mendelssohn seems to have felt attracted both to the transcendental and work-immanent aspects of BWV 740 since its 'unbelievably moving' character gave him pleasure and consolation at a time of great joy and sorrow, and the certainty that his sisters would have similar feelings when playing through the work together on the piano.⁹⁶ In spite of the happy news about Fanny's birthday and Rebecka's engagement to the mathematician Lejeune Dirichlet, they all had to cope with the recent death of their aunt, Henriette Mendelssohn. In this situation, Mendelssohn surely felt very much drawn to the text of the original chorale (the German Creed that Bach had set for choir in BWV 437, includes consolatory verses like 'He cares for, guards, watches over us; all stands in his power' and focuses on a central doctrine of Mendelssohn's faith that says, 'We all believe in one God').⁹⁷ He might have also found solace in the 'sweet' sound of the music itself that abounds in tonic

⁹⁵ Stinson, *The Reception of Bach's Organ Works from Mendelssohn to Brahms*, 26.

⁹⁶ Mendelssohn, letter of 14 and 17 November 1831 to Fanny Hensel, *SB* (2009), 2:421, trans. in idem, *A Life in Letters*, 169.

⁹⁷ For a translation of Luther's version of the Nicene Creed that forms the content of this catechism hymn see Peter Williams, *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 410.

harmonies in the major mode as well as parallel thirds and sixths.⁹⁸ Beyond that, Mendelssohn's approach to the work that differed so much from his analytical reception of the *Miserere* can also be explained by the high regard in which he held Bach as a preacher, a spiritual guide and a musical idol. Stinson has interpreted Mendelssohn's publication of the organ chorale in Breitkopf & Härtel's 1846 edition of *15 Grosse Choral-Vorspiele für die Orgel von Johann Sebastian Bach* as evidence that the piece was one of his Bach favourites.⁹⁹

Mendelssohn's artistic and religious sensibility for the omnipresent divine as a manifestation of *Kunstsinn*

Mendelssohn's very professional outlook and rather factual style of writing on compositions did not only recede into the background when he was faced with Bach's music that conjured up visions of heavenly hosts and divine realms in him. During his youth, he was convinced, on a more philosophical plane, that God was everywhere – even in music and musical works the intrinsic value of which was doubtful. Even though he was not a self-confessed pantheist, he saw the divine – a creative force or ruling entity that was not from this world and that he variously characterized as 'God' (*Gott* or *Herrgott*) or 'Heaven' (*Himmel*) – prevailing everywhere. In his view, it was to be found both in man-made culture and God-given nature. In emphasizing similarities between human and divine 'creation,' his aesthetic outlook was typical of his time. It brings to mind Schleiermacher's conviction that 'Creation and art are essentially correlated: just as human beings are creative in art, so God is artistic in creation' and Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger's belief that 'a human's talent for art is the manifestation of a higher divine power.'¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Stinson, *The Reception of Bach's Organ Works from Mendelssohn to Brahms*, 26.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Ästhetik*, ed. Thomas Lehnerer (Hamburg: Meiner, 1984), 7, which contains Schleiermacher's notes and transcripts of his lectures on aesthetics (1819-1825) and, for the translation, Martin L. Davies, 'Sociability in Practice and Theory: Henriette Herz and Friedrich Schleiermacher,' *New Athenaeum/Neues Athenaeum*, vol. 2 (1991), 18-59, at 52. See also Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, ed. Karl Wilhelm Ludwig Heyse (1830; reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 4: 'Die Fähigkeit eines Menschen zur Kunst ist Äußerung einer höheren göttlichen Kraft [...].'

Mendelssohn's descriptions of the (in his words) 'beautiful' scenery that he encountered at various destinations in Britain, Switzerland, Franconia, the Rheingau, Austria and Italy in the letters of his youth are full of references to the divine. An early description of nature as God's artistic creation is to be found in his correspondence from Edinburgh of 1829 in which he compared the city's view from Arthur's Seat to a panorama painting drawn by God.¹⁰¹ When Mendelssohn stayed in the French village Chamonix and the canton of Lucerne in July 1831, he was impressed how the view of Mont Blanc and the Swiss Urner Alps made him apprehend and appreciate God's power of creation in full measure.¹⁰² Writing from 'all-too-beautiful' Interlaken and the Wengernalp one month later, he was astonished about how the surrounding grassland, trees and snowy mountains 'make you feel so tiny when you see how magnificent God, the gracious Lord, has made the world,' and how 'God's thoughts' were revealed in 'all the glaciers, snowy fields, brightly lit [...] crags and the distant mountain peaks.'¹⁰³ As these scenery depictions suggest, Mendelssohn seems to have associated sublime shapes of nature such as mountains, wide planes and the vast alpine icescape with God's unlimited wisdom and power.

In his letters from Italy, Mendelssohn focused both on the 'rather too divinely beautiful' Neapolitan landscape and on the godly qualities of Italian architecture and music.¹⁰⁴ As far as Italian architecture is concerned, his descriptions of it as 'divine' are sometimes purely implicit. When he shared his impressions of the interior of the Saint Peter's Basilica with his father in December 1830, he did so in ways that anticipate his descriptions of the French and Swiss mountainside referred to earlier.

¹⁰¹ Mendelssohn, letter of 28 July 1829 to his family, in *SB* (2008), 1:345-348, at 346: 'How could I possibly describe it? You simply must see it for yourselves. When God in heaven takes up panorama painting you can expect something terrific.'

¹⁰² Idem, letter of 31 July 1831 to Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:334-337, at 334, trans. in *FML*, 152-155, at 152: '[...] nowhere has nature in all her glory greeted my eyes with such brilliance as here [...]. [...] everyone who sees it should thank God for having given him faculties to comprehend and appreciate such grandeur [...].' See also idem, letter of 28 August 1831 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2009), 379-380, at 380: 'In the mountains [...] you are closest to nature; there, you can see the power of God, the gracious Lord right next to you.'

¹⁰³ Idem, letters of 10 and 14 August 1831 to Fanny Hensel and Rebecka Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:348-351, at 348-349 and 2:353-355, at 354 & 356.

¹⁰⁴ Idem, letter of 6 June 1831 to Abraham und Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:275, trans. in *FML*, 132.

By evoking the religiously sublime, Mendelssohn implicitly compared the architecture of St. Peter's to God's natural creation – art and nature become one:

The building *surpasses all powers of description*. It appears to me like some great work of nature [*Naturwerk*], a forest, a mass of rocks, or something similar; for I never can realize the idea that it is the work of *man*. You strive to distinguish the ceiling as much as the canopy of heaven. You lose your way in St. Peter's, you take a walk in it, and ramble till you are quite tired [...] The angels in the Baptistry are monstrous giants; the doves, colossal birds of prey; you lose all idea of measurement with the eye, or proportion.'¹⁰⁵ (Italics mine.)

The sacred music that Mendelssohn heard in Italy also evoked associations of God's presence in him. Its sounds reached his ears as 'divine' essence, that is, as a substance that seemed omnipresent and all-pervasive. After attending Pope Pius VIII's funeral solemnities in St. Peter's in Rome in December 1830, he wrote home that he had witnessed a 'divine effect' that resulted from an interaction of sound with the spatial setting as well as acoustic and visual phenomena. He described the event in much detail to his father:

It is the only occasion when there is any singing in the middle of the church, and the effect is wonderful [*es thut eine wunderbare Wirkung*]. [...] I went to the very furthest end, whence there was indeed a wonderful *coup d'oeil*. Through the spiral columns of the high altar, [...] far beyond the space of the cupola, the whole mass of the catafalque [in which the former Pope's coffin was placed] was seen in diminished perspective, with its rows of lights [...]. When the music commences, the sounds do not reach the other end for a long time, but echo and float in the vast space, so that the most singular and vague harmonies are borne towards you. If you change your position, and place yourself right in front of the catafalque, beyond the blaze of light and the brilliant pageantry, you have the dusky cupola replete with blue vapour; all this is quite indescribable.¹⁰⁶

One week later, he wrote about the occasion to Zelter that the sublime interior of

¹⁰⁵ Idem, letter of 10 and 11 December 1830 to the Mendelssohn family, in *SB* (2009), 2:167, trans. adapted from *LIS*, 75-88, at 85-86.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, letter of 10 and 11 December 1830 to the Mendelssohn family, in *SB* (2009), 2:166-168, trans. in *LIS*, 85-87.

the Saint Peter's Basilica had transformed the religious chants into miraculous sound:

There again it struck me particularly how extraordinary everything is here. They did not sing particularly well, the compositions were poor, those present were not devout [*andächtig*], and yet the whole effect was divine. This was only due to the fact that they were singing in the central nave of St. Peter's; the sounds are reflected from above and from every corner, they mingle, die away, and produce the most wonderful music. One chord melts into the other, and what no musician would dare to think of, St. Peter's Church achieves.¹⁰⁷

At first sight, Mendelssohn's formulations leave open whether the adjective 'divine' is to be understood as synonymous with 'excellent' or suggestive of an experience of something divine – in fact, they can be interpreted both ways. On the one hand, the formulation *wunderbare Wirkung* (in the sense of a 'delightful' or 'marvellous effect') suggests a qualitative evaluation of what he heard and saw. On the other hand, the reference to attitudes of *Andacht* in the sacred space of the church suggests religious understandings. In pointing out the all-pervasiveness of the sound of the religious chants, Mendelssohn's formulations may, accordingly, suggest an understanding of 'divine' as 'corresponding, appropriate and equivalent to God.' After all, the thought that the chants seem to advance everywhere brings to mind the Protestant belief into God's omnipresence.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Mendelssohn's successive assertion that he perceived an inconspicuous musical sound to be inherent in the eternal architecture of St Peter seems indicative of God's infinity; as he pointed out further on in his letter to Zelter, even when the choir's chants had faded away, music was still present in the capitals of the building.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Idem, letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:173, trans. adapted from *FML*, 106. Selden-Goth translates *eine göttliche Wirkung* as 'heavenly' rather than 'divine effect' and does not interpret Mendelssohn's reference to the German term *Gegenwart* as suggesting *geistige Gegenwart*, even though this is surely the meaning that Mendelssohn intended.

¹⁰⁸ Along with eternity, omnipotence and omniscience, omnipresence generally features as a divine attribute characterizing God in Schleiermacher's writings on religion and other texts of nineteenth-century Protestant theology and religious philosophy.

¹⁰⁹ Mendelssohn, letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:173, trans. in *FML*, 106-107: 'When I see the young musicians wandering around here and complaining that there is nothing for them to gain musically, and that they had expected something quite different, and however their litany goes, I always want to rub their noses on the capital of a column, for it is in them where the music is to be found.'

In alluding to the divine beauty of earthly creation and God's omnipresence in culture and nature, Mendelssohn's written statements just referred to may be taken to attest to an 'artistic sensibility' (*Kunstsinn*) as it is described in Schleiermacher's treatise *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* ('On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers,' 1799) and defined by Novalis as a new form of religion called *Kunstreligion*. While Schleiermacher emphasized explicitly that *Kunstsinn* and *Kunstreligion* were two different things, Novalis felt himself justified in considering the two to be identical. Overlooking Schleiermacher's subtle differentiations, he praised the theologian for having 'preached a type of love, of religion—a *Kunstreligion*—almost a religion like that of the artists, who worship beauty and the ideal.'¹¹⁰ This comparison between artistic sense and religion in his collection of aphorisms entitled *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800* ('Fragments and Studies 1799-1800') put focus on a loving and appreciative approach towards art that is reminiscent of the religious worship of believers and artists' infatuation with beauty and, accordingly, represents a common feature of *Kunstreligion* and *Kunstsinn* in Schleiermacher's understanding of these terms.

It seems likely that Schleiermacher influenced Mendelssohn's approach towards art. In a letter of 18 November 1830, the composer confessed to Julius Schubring that his initial scepticism towards the style and contents of Schleiermacher's sermons that he had witnessed at Trinity Church (Dreifaltigkeitskirche) in Berlin in 1827,¹¹¹ had turned into sympathy and inspired an identification with the theologian's views.¹¹² In this context, Mendelssohn's frequent

¹¹⁰ Novalis, 'Fragmente [und Studien 1799-1800],' in idem, *Schriften. Dritter Theil*, ed. Ludwig Tieck and Eduard von Bülow (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1846), 161-324, at 229, trans. adapted from *IKA*, 4.

¹¹¹ Sposato assumes that, shortly after his matriculation in 1827, Mendelssohn may have joined those student crowds who attended Schleiermacher's church sermons in the Trinity Church from 1813 onwards. For William Little, this possibility is an established fact. See Jeffrey S. Sposato, *The Price of Assimilation: Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49 and William A. Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 22.

¹¹² Mendelssohn, letter of 18 November 1830 to Julius Schubring, in *SB* (2009), 2:132-134, at 133, trans. in Juliette Appold, 'Felix Mendelssohn's Theological Friendship with Schleiermacher,' *Lutheran Forum*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Summer 2008), 29-34, at 31: 'It is certainly curious that I became a follower of Schleiermacher here in Rome. [...] I visited a Prussian chapel with the embassy preacher Herr von Tippielskirch. His preaching was so absolutely awful and miserable, that I was longing for calm and clear speaking as Schleiermacher does it.'

remarks about the ‘sense for art’ (*Kunstsinn* or *Sinn für die Kunst*) as well as the ‘sensibility for music’ (*Sinn für die Musik* or *Musiksinn*) amongst Italians, Germans and the French in his correspondence of the two following years suggest that,¹¹³ rather than understanding these terms merely in their common sense of an ‘innate receptivity and affinity to art’ (*angeborene empfänglichkeit und neigung für Kunst*) or music,¹¹⁴ his view of artistic sensibility might have been also stimulated by Schleiermacher’s *Speeches on Religion*, the final revised edition of which appeared in 1831 and aroused the interest of a wide readership.¹¹⁵

Juliette Appold argues that Mendelssohn knew Schleiermacher’s treatise as early as 1822 since his ‘deep love for nature’ and ‘his philosophical or theological way of understanding’ it as a youth showed reminiscences of Schleiermacher’s Second Speech.¹¹⁶ Jeffrey Sposato, by contrast, assumes that Mendelssohn had come across Schleiermacher’s writings around 1829.¹¹⁷ Even though the lack of references to specific writings by Schleiermacher in Mendelssohn’s correspondence and lists of private books suggests otherwise, it seems beyond doubt that he gained knowledge of the theologian’s written output at one time or another in private conversations or through theological disputes with other followers and friends of Schleiermacher.¹¹⁸ Among these was Schubring, a self-confessed ‘unconditional Schleiermacherite’ who was eager to convert Mendelssohn to the theologian’s doctrines of faith and to convince him not to adhere to ‘Christianity in any other shape’ than Schleiermacher’s.¹¹⁹ Mendelssohn’s cousin Georg Benjamin, who had studied with Schleiermacher at the University of Berlin between 1811 and 1813, may have also been a valuable source of information. The same applies to Friedrich Philipp

¹¹³ See, for example, Mendelssohn’s letters of 29 November 1830, 17 January 1831, 3 July 1831 and 15 February 1832 to Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein, his family and Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:142-145 at 144; 188-193, at 190; 305 and 477-483, at 478.

¹¹⁴ *DWB*, s.v. ‘Kunstsinn,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GK16734> (accessed 22 June 2013).

¹¹⁵ Schleiermacher published his work in four revised editions in 1799, 1806, 1821, and 1831. The last version was mainly studied in nineteenth-century Germany.

¹¹⁶ Appold, ‘Felix Mendelssohn’s Theological Friendship with Schleiermacher,’ 32.

¹¹⁷ Sposato argues that Mendelssohn’s frequent complaints about the lack of German literature for reading during his Grand Tour suggest an earlier occupation with Schleiermacher’s writings. See Sposato, *Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (2006), 48-49.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

Wilmsen and Carl Friedrich Zelter. Wilmsen and Schleiermacher were both members of a commission that was installed by King Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1819 in order to reorganise the German hymnbook (*Gesangbuch*). Schleiermacher and Zelter often met at rehearsals and performances of the Berlin *Singakademie*, of which the theologian was a member, and at the Dreifaltigkeitskirche, where Zelter was responsible for hiring church musicians.

Schleiermacher's thought on *Kunstsinn* is most pronounced in the third of his *Speeches on Religion* entitled *Über die Religion* ('On Self-formation for Religion'). As suggested there, 'people with the artistic sense [...] can come to intuit and feel the universe through great and sublime works of art' and, in the process, become religious.¹²⁰ In his theology, Schleiermacher defined religion as a 'sense for the universe' (*Sinn für das Universum*) – a term that, like its synonym 'space' (*Weltall*), commonly described the universal totality of everything earthly and heavenly in the early nineteenth century.¹²¹ While he focused his discussion of artistic sensibility on mindsets among people who 'are touched and seized by everything that comes into their view and strikes their intuition' and for whom the whole world is 'an endless gallery of the most sublime works of art,'¹²² he admitted that *Kunstsinn* often also entailed a 'longing of young minds for the miraculous and supernatural' that may be described as religious sensibility:

Already along with the finite [*Endlichen*] and determined [*Bestimmten*], they seek something different that they can oppose to it; they grasp in all directions after something that reaches beyond the sensible phenomena and their laws; and however much even their senses are full of earthly objects, it is always as if they had besides these yet other objects that would have to

¹¹⁹ Julius Schubring, 'Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy,' *Daheim*, vol. 2 (1866), 373-376, at 373, trans. in Brown, *A Portrait of Mendelssohn*, 102-103.

¹²⁰ See the analysis of Schleiermacher's speech in David E. Klemm, 'Culture, arts, and religion,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Marina (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 251-268, at 266-267.

¹²¹ *DWB*, s.v. 'Weltall,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GW16850> (accessed 22 June 2013) and 'Weltall,' *GKW*, 4:1482.

¹²² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1806), 184 and idem, *Ueber die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, ed. Carl Schwarz (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1868), 115, trans. adapted from idem, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, ed. and trans. Richard Crouter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 144. Schwarz's edition is based on the extended version of Schleiermacher's treatise that was published in 1831.

waste away without sustenance. [...]. A secret, uncomprehended intimation drives them beyond the riches of this world; therefore every trace of another world is so welcome to them [...].¹²³

Schleiermacher pointed out further similarities, connections and interrelations between artistic and religious sensibilities in his concluding paragraphs. According to him, a fruitful combination of both could bring about a spiritual renewal or rebirth. In other words, if a person's religious sense was nurtured by artistic sensibility, this enabled him to become a disciple of a new, consummate and unprecedented form of religion that truly represents *Kunstreligion*. As Schleiermacher put it: 'To bring them together and to unite them in one bed is the only thing that can bring religion to completion on the path which we are headed; that would be an event from whose womb religion, soon in a new and splendid form, would face better times.'¹²⁴

In Schleiermacher's view, the future course of human history would show whether this perfect symbiosis of artistic and religious senses could be achieved. *Kunstreligion* was neither a phenomenon of the past nor an accomplishment of the present. In the third edition of his *Speeches*, he observed that, in ancient Egyptian and Greco-Roman religion, art had served 'darkest superstition,' 'most senseless mythology' and 'imperfect natural religion[s].'¹²⁵ In his view, this explained why there had never been a genuine 'religion of art,' even though he had to admit that 'an artistic sense has never approached those two types of [ancient] religion without showering them with new beauty and holiness and pleasantly softening their original limitedness.'¹²⁶ In his own age, he saw the situation as much worse since this subservience of art to religion had been completely resolved and, as a result, 'religion and art' revolve around each other 'like two friendly souls' who 'hope for a fuller revelation and [...] see one another enduring, perhaps with inner sympathy and deep feeling, but yet without love.'¹²⁷

¹²³ Idem, *Über die Religion* (1868), 189, trans. in idem, *On Religion* (1992), 146.

¹²⁴ Idem, *Über die Religion* (1868), 216, trans. in idem, *On Religion* (1992), 159.

¹²⁵ Idem, *Ueber die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1821), 238-239, trans. in idem, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1893), 139.

¹²⁶ Idem, *Über die Religion* (1806), 238, trans. in idem, *On Religion* (1992), 158.

¹²⁷ Idem, *Über die Religion* (1806), 239, trans. in idem, *On Religion* (1992), 158.

If one follows Schleiermacher's reasoning and terminology, Mendelssohn's approach to art falls short of *Kunstreligion*. His religious sense was fully formed at an early age and coincided with artistic sensibility rather than emanating from it, as he perceived everything around him both with a certain degree of 'infinite longing' and aesthetic affection. As has been shown, in his view, the universal and divine could be present anywhere – it prevails in sound and manifests itself in nature which reflects God's greatness. In Italy, Mendelssohn's religious and artistic senses were particularly vigorous. In the face of a general indifference towards the arts, the population's lack of faith and widespread superstition in Rome, he felt himself reminded of his stay in Vienna during the preceding two months. As he confessed to Carl Friedrich Zelter, there 'the people I associated with [...] were so dissipated and frivolous, that I became quite spiritual-minded, and conducted myself like a theologian among them.'¹²⁸

This devotional alertness seems to have informed Mendelssohn's approach to Italian nature and culture. He reported to Zelter in the winter of 1830: 'there are more divine things [*mehr Göttliches*] here than one can grasp in a lifetime.'¹²⁹ Mendelssohn's semantics, in this context, may be related to nineteenth-century uses of the term 'divine' as an identifier of phenomena of the ancient world in comparative allusions to 'modes of life and environments associated with the gods' (*lebensformen und umwelt der götter*).¹³⁰ His usage of the nominalised neuter form of the term in phrases like 'something divine' (*etwas Göttliches*) or 'the divine' (*das Göttliche*) that denoted anything related to religion reflects contemporary language use, too.¹³¹ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, idiomatic expressions such as 'the divine' or 'something divine' proved to be popular especially in discussions of Italy in travel literature and writings on the arts. According to Boursy, at that time Italy was seen as the place where the roots of the ancient and Christian religions were to be found and still very much alive. For

¹²⁸ Mendelssohn, letter of 16 October 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter from Rome, in *SB* (2009), 2:108-111, at 111, trans. adapted from *FML*, 90.

¹²⁹ Idem, letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter in Berlin, in *SB* (2009), 2:173, trans. in *FML*, 107.

¹³⁰ Col. 1376 in *DWB*, s.v. 'göttlich' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GG23964> (accessed 10 June 2013).

¹³¹ Col. 1378 in *ibid.*

Northern and Central Europeans, the country ‘represented the past (both classical and Christian)’ through its ancient ruins and magnificent churches. As ‘the home of the glories of classical antiquity’ and the seat of the Catholic Church it reached ‘quasi-mythical status’ and inspired an ‘idealization’ of ‘Italian cities’ and ‘the Italian landscape within German literary iconography,’ as Gretchen Hachmeister has shown.¹³² Filled with ‘misty thoughts of a by-gone era when religious faith was unencumbered by the complications of modern sectarianism, philosophy, or science,’ in travellers’ diaries, novels and poetry ‘art[s], religion, and love are conflated into one integrated Italian experience’ that, very often, was far removed from ‘Italy as a historical reality.’¹³³

In Mendelssohn’s case, the ‘divine things’ that he came to admire in Italy did not include ‘[w]hat we know and revere’ (such as church music by German masters of the past). He was rather taken with ‘[e]verything new that I see each day’ that ‘becomes beautiful and admirable’ not in quality but through its relation to ‘nature and the past,’ that is, divine creation as well as religious history and worship.¹³⁴ This applied, in particular, to the ‘beautiful music’ (*schöne Musik*) inherent in ‘things’ (*Dinge*) such as ‘the most wonderful spring air’ (*schönste Frühlingsluft*) and ‘the warm blue sky’ (*warmer blauer Himmel*) rather than to the less than mediocre, if not ‘really bad’ music composed and performed by Giuseppe Baini and other contemporary Italians.¹³⁵ It also proved true for ‘immortal monuments’ such as St. Peter’s, the Pantheon and the Colosseum, the sublime architecture of which remains unrivalled in its magnitude and splendour.¹³⁶ In this context, Mendelssohn introduced a distinction between ‘musical music’ (*musikalischen Musik*) and ‘non-actual, non-immediate music’ (*nicht [...] eigentliche[n], unmittelbare[n] Musik*). He used the former term in order to describe specific musical works and the latter one in order to

¹³² See Boursy, ‘The Mystique of the Sistine Chapel Choir,’ 286-287 and Gretchen L. Hachmeister, *Italy in the German Literary Imagination: Goethe’s ‘Italian Journey’ and Its Reception by Eichendorff, Platen, and Heine* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 127 & 161.

¹³³ Boursy, ‘The Mystique of the Sistine Chapel Choir,’ 287 and Hachmeister, *Italy in the German Literary Imagination*, 80.

¹³⁴ Mendelssohn, letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:172, trans. in *FML*, 105-106.

¹³⁵ Idem, letters of 14 February 1831 and 18 December 1830 to Heinrich Joseph Baermann and Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:205-208, at 205 and 2:173, the latter of which is trans. in *FML*, 107.

¹³⁶ Idem, letter of 18 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:172, trans. in *FML*, 105.

characterize musical sound that was inherent and audible in Italian architecture, nature and paintings and partook of their divine essence and attributes.¹³⁷

In Italy, Mendelssohn's sensitivity to everything divine resulted in a heightened artistic sensibility, which especially came to the fore when he attended the papal absolutions at St. Peter's in Rome and manifested itself in an eagerness to take everything in – in his letters discussing the event quoted in extracts before, he looked through the whole interior of the vast church, he described details of the sacred space, its architectural features, the ritual action and the sound of the music from multiple perspectives so that, in the end, his impressions formed a conglomerate of miscellaneous elements. Due to his religious acumen, he was able to experience the 'miraculous effect' which the bad singing of the papal choir was able to unfold in this turbulent mixture. As his gaze wandered through the sublime architecture of St. Peter's and upwards, he perceived the church roof as a heaven or sky and the humongous dimensions of the interior as endless as those of the universe in which divine sounds prevail and disperse.

In this respect, Mendelssohn's attitude approaches that of his spiritual mentor Goethe, who emphasized in his *Maximen und Reflexionen* ('Maxims and Reflections,' 1833): 'Art is based on a kind of religious sense, on a deep and unassailable seriousness [...]. Religion has no need of a sense for art, it rests on its own seriousness [...].'¹³⁸ To gain new religious consciousness from contemplation of art was denied to the composer throughout his life. For Schleiermacher it was no different. In his *Speeches on Religion*, the theologian himself confessed – with much regret:

Were it not wanton to wish to go beyond oneself, I should wish that I could intuit ever so clearly how the artistic sense, by itself alone, changes into religion [...]. Why do those who are inclined to go this way have such reticent natures? That I am not acquainted with this path is my most acute limitation [...]. Indeed if it is true that there are quick conversions, occasions by which, for someone who thought of nothing less than rising above the

¹³⁷ See Mendelssohn, letter of 1 December 1830 to Carl Friedrich Zelter, in *SB* (2009), 2:148.

¹³⁸ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, ed. Siegfried Seidel, vol. 18 of *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Berliner Ausgabe. Kunsttheoretische Schriften und Übersetzungen*, 22 vols. (Berlin: Aufbau, 1960), 638, trans. in idem, *Maxims and Reflections*, ed. Peter Hutchinson and trans. Elisabeth Stopp (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 140-141.

finite, the sense of the universe opens up, in a moment as if through an immediate inner illumination, and surprises a person with its splendour, than I believe that more than anything else the sight of great and sublime works of art can achieve this miracle. But I shall never grasp it.¹³⁹

While related to theological and aesthetic points of view on art and religion that were advanced by Schleiermacher, Novalis and Goethe, Mendelssohn's outlook was truly eclectic in its constitution and complexity. As a convinced 'Schleiermacherite,' he possessed an artistic sense that allowed him to view the whole world as a gallery of works of art that either represented God's creation as such or were highly reminiscent of it. As his focus on artistic excellence rather than divine transcendence reflects, he was fully capable of appreciating artistic beauty for its own sake, especially when he reviewed the 'divine' (that is stylistically 'excellent') musical works of other composers. In this regard, his artistic sensibility seems to have been related to Novalis's worshipful appreciation of beauty in art without ever losing its more analytical and factual bent. As Mendelssohn's sense of religion made him alert to God's omnipresence in nature and culture and usually formed the basis of aesthetic contemplation rather than being inspired by it, it seems inherited from Goethe.

* * *

Mendelssohn's views on the divine origin, essence and qualities of art were rather idiosyncratic but also partly inspired by early romantic literature as well as religious and humanistic philosophies. As far as designations of origin of music as an art, talent and a profession are concerned, he was convinced that music was simultaneously God's invention, a divine blessing, as well as a sphere of human activity and responsibility. These views were rather singular – conceptions of the Christian God as an inventor of music are not to be found in the Bible, and Mendelssohn's conviction that artistic talent and progress are guided both by divine providence and human endeavour likewise reflect the influence of personal religious faith and moral thought on his aesthetic notions of music. Mendelssohn's assessment

¹³⁹ Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion* (1806), 237, trans. in idem, *On Religion* (1992), 157.

of composers' personalities, works and indebtedness to God for their talent may be evaluated in terms by which Rudolf Werner described the composer's musical language. As Werner asserted in 1930 about Mendelssohn's church compositions:

If his way of expressing his religious feeling is refined in scope, if it lacks [...] mystical contemplation, [...] storm and struggle [...] as much as [...] supernatural romanticisation, this is due to the limitations set to his emotional life by nature and talent, his own conduct of life and the spirit of his time. Just like his attitude to life, his religious world-view is founded in an imperturbable and joyful devotion to God that articulates itself mainly in feelings of gratitude and praise.¹⁴⁰

By contrast, Mendelssohn's references to angelic and cosmic music in descriptions of instrumental sound and Bach's music are more typical of his time. The same applies to Mendelssohn's perception of nature, architecture and music as being infused with or reminiscent of the divine that seems reminiscent of pantheistic attitudes of *Kunstreligion* as well as religious and artistic sensibilities, as they were described by Schleiermacher, Novalis and Goethe. Less oriented towards the writings of major authors on *Kunstreligion*, Mendelssohn's discussions of musical works reveal rather idiosyncratic views. Even though he made extensive use of the vocabulary of *Kunstreligion* to describe assumedly 'divine' or 'heavenly' compositions, his meanings often have to be understood in a figurative sense rather than as products of religious conviction. In fact, considerations of style and genre frequently motivated his word choice, since he generally approached musical works primarily with the critical acumen of a musician rather than from the romantic or religious point of view of a poet or theologian.

¹⁴⁰ Rudolf Werner, 'Felix Mendelssohn als Kirchenmusiker' (Ph.D. diss., Universität Frankfurt am Main, 1930), 128: '[w]enn sich nun die Aussprache seines religiösen Empfindens in einem [...] eng begrenzten Umkreis bewegt, wenn ihr [...] mystische Versunkenheit, [...] Sturm und Kampf [...] ebenso fehlen wie [...] überirdische Verklärung, so ist das in den Grenzen begründet, die seinem Empfindungsleben von Natur und Begabung, von der eignen Lebensgestaltung und dem Geist seiner Zeit gezogen wurden. Wie sein Lebensgang, [...] so ist auch seine religiöse Weltanschauung [...] auf ruhige, glück erfüllte Gottergebenheit gegründet, die am liebsten bei den Gefühlen des Dankes und Lobes verweilt.'

Epilogue. *Kunstreligion* as Devotion, Religion and *Kunstsinn*

The challenges of distinguishing *Kunstreligion* from *Kunstsinn*, religious sense or devotion to art, that nineteenth-century writers such as Friedrich Schleiermacher confronted, persist today. As discussed in chapter one, most musicologists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been circumspect in their attempts to describe the nature and essence of *Kunstreligion*. They have focused on art-religious ideas as doctrines of faith and tenets of a wider spirituality, the constitution of which hovers indeterminately between religiousness and an ardent love of art and, accordingly, remains somewhat obscure. This study has approached the topic in a way that departs from earlier scholarship by addressing the question of whether nineteenth-century writings about *Kunstreligion* should be considered an expression of the sincere religious convictions of their authors or a reflection of the fact that writers were engaging with a novel and creative vocabulary that was in common use in contemporary aesthetic discourse.

The focus on *Kunstreligion* as both a language of aesthetic discourse and a form of spirituality offers revealing, and sometimes surprising, glimpses into early nineteenth-century musical life that challenge us to reconsider our views both on musical writings as well as on the composition and performance of religious music during this period. The literary, even poetic style of writing that was cultivated by nineteenth-century music critics, for example, belied the formal conventions to which music reviews were subject. Formulated in both esoteric and technical language, reviews tended to consist of a philosophical introduction and a primarily analytical or historical main section.¹ Reflections about spiritual and aesthetic matters featured in both parts to varying amounts and formed fixed components of music journalism. In other words, spiritual language entered musical texts as a consequence of editorial directives as well as rules of practice, and not necessarily by virtue of the religious sentiments of the respective author. At the same time, the way

¹ See the comments about nineteenth-century Beethoven criticism and the prototypical shape of music reviews in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* in Carl Dahlhaus, 'E.T.A. Hoffmanns Beethoven-

in which spiritual terminology was used was often inspired by contemporary writings on language by Johann Gottfried Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schlegel and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, as well as James Macpherson's *Ossian*, which had a massive impact across European culture on how the relation of language to myth, history and thought was imagined.²

The literary language of novelists and poets inspired imitation and adaptation, too. The way in which nineteenth-century critics and composers engaged with music in writing did not always reflect their sincere beliefs and views, but was often primarily oriented towards a creative reproduction of the mannerisms and rhetorical devices of their literary idols. Jean Paul Richter's prose style in particular cast a spell on the German intelligentsia, as it combined allegoric and metaphoric imagery (both religious and secular), sarcastic humour and irony, as well as neologisms and worldplay most eloquently. It left its mark especially on Robert Schumann's music criticism and written language. Given the multiple verbal and stylistic parallels between Schumann's and Jean Paul's writings, as well as Schumann's predilection for choosing arcane and whimsical titles for his private and public reflections on music in the manner of Jean Paul, it seems daring to suggest that writings like his *Hottentottiana* aphorisms do represent sincere confessions of faith in the Religion of Art.

As far as contemporary composition and performance are concerned, aesthetic interests usually coincided with spiritual concerns. In the early nineteenth-century, new compositions of religious music fared rather badly in concerts and publishing in comparison with earlier sacred music, and composers were very well aware of this fact.³ In view of this historical situation, their composition of what

Kritik und die Ästhetik des Erhabenen,' *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, vol. 38, no. 2 (1981), 79-92, at 81 and *IKA*, 254.

² See John E. Joseph, 'The Genius of the Italian Language: Politics and Poetics,' *Historiographia Linguistica*, vol. 34, nos. 2-3 (2012), 369-377, at 372-374 & 377 as well as email correspondence with the author (March 2013). See also R. Larry Todd, 'Mendelssohn's *Ossianic Manner*, with a New Source—On Lena's Gloomy Heath,' in *Mendelssohn and Schumann: Essays on Their Music and Its Context*, ed. Jon W. Finson and R. Larry Todd (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984), 137-160 for further comments about *Ossian*'s cultural impact on early nineteenth-century writings (pp. 138 & 140-141) and on Mendelssohn's music.

³ See, for example, Berlioz's comments about the dying art of church music in Louis Hector Berlioz, 'Service Funèbre de Choron,' *Gazette musicale de Paris*, vol. 1, no. 36 (7 September 1834), 285-287,

contemporary critics came to call new religious music points less towards economic interests than to genuine intentions to create music that was ‘both spiritually- and musically-compelling’ and ‘in which musical style and spiritual experience worked in tandem.’⁴ Similarly, the then widespread popularity of performances of church compositions of previous centuries may be traced back simultaneously to aesthetic taste, fashions and trends as well as the spiritual interests and needs that prevailed among composers and the public.⁵ The historical concerts that were springing up all over Europe reflect the aesthetic and missionary interests of their organisers while at the same time developing ‘from a cult of intellectuals’ into ‘popular movement[s]’ as well as spiritual events of worship that lured increasing numbers of people from the church into the concert hall.⁶ Contemporary writings on music did not ignore these developments; they articulate historicist viewpoints while, at the same time, focusing on compositions of the past as aesthetic and spiritual treasures.

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s own aesthetic and spiritual leanings reveal further facets of what recent scholars have described as the blurred ‘composite image’ of a ‘paradoxically familiar yet [still] unfamiliar European classical composer;’⁷ at the same time, they show how the musical aesthetics of composers of his generation were constituted. Terminological, etymological and contextual analyses in the previous chapters have highlighted Mendelssohn’s own predilection for Jean Paul’s writings and puns, drawing attention to the fact that his aesthetic and religious beliefs should be correlated cautiously. While some formulations in his writings seem to manifest expressions of religiosity through a use of theological vocabulary, others hint at a treatment of ideas of *Kunstreligion* as purely rhetorical

at 285. Louis Spohr’s *The Last Judgement* (that became a favourite of choral societies in the 1830s) and Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* (premiered in 1846) were the first oratorios to challenge the dominance of Handel’s works in the repertory of early nineteenth-century choral festivals in Birmingham, Leeds and Düsseldorf. Other contemporary composers were much less successful in receiving commissions.

⁴ *IKA*, 225.

⁵ In response to these various needs, public concerts became much more frequent; they were held in parks, halls and church buildings and their programmes blended operatic, instrumental and sacred vocal music.

⁶ This development has been traced in the context of Mendelssohn’s and subsequent performances of Bach’s works in *Grove Music Online*, s.v. ‘Bach Revival’ (by Nicholas Temperley and Peter Wollny), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01708> (accessed 19 April 2012).

⁷ Nicola Grimes and Angela R. Mace, introduction to *Mendelssohn Perspectives*, ed. eadem (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 1-6, at 6, and R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2008), xi.

devices. In some cases, especially when he adopted a rather humorous or satirical tone, this rhetorical usage was intended as *Kulturkritik*, that is, as criticism of the current state of musical affairs and of discourse about music that turned *Kunstreligion* vocabulary into empty rhetoric. In this sense, Mendelssohn's double-edged allusions to tasks of preaching, congregation of fish, Beethoven's 'divine madness' or the three Graces, as well as his plays with the semantic ambiguity of terms such as 'master,' 'divine' and 'heavenly,' reveal his verbal dexterity in simultaneously evoking, problematising and polemicising *Kunstreligion*.

In this regard, Mendelssohn's style of writing invites comparisons with Schleiermacher, who wrote in favour of a *Kunstreligion* while simultaneously questioning its existence and theoretical possibility. It also brings to mind Richard Wagner, who, in the same breath, fictionalised and propagated *Kunstreligion*. Even though Mendelssohn did not address a wider musical public, he was as concerned as Wagner to explain in writing his spiritual views on aesthetics and his approaches towards composition. In doing so, he reacted to issues that mattered most to musicians of his generation: values of originality and of emulation, as opposed to imitation; questions of genre and style; concerns of spiritual depth; appeals for better music education; demands of *Werktreue*; theories of historicism; and objections to the commercialisation of music based on national perspectives and stereotypes.

An influence of religious factors and orientations on Mendelssohn's writings is, nevertheless, apparent. As chapter six has shown, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy was deeply affected by the sublime beauty and spiritual richness of the scenery, music, architecture and art to which he was exposed. Beyond that, he often expressed his enthusiasm for nature and culture in allusions to the omnipresent divine, which suggests a particularly acute religious sense. Given the idiosyncratic shape that his religious views of human and godly artistic creation took, his attitude to *Kunstreligion* was apparently influenced by his own spiritual beliefs. In fact, his adherence to art-religious thought – or devotion to art, for that matter – seems to have found its limit whenever *Kunstreligion* theories ran counter to his own religious belief system. This fact is illustrated in his writings by the tendency to sacralise leading artists but never beyond a point at which God's supremacy over men would be brought into question. Most certainly, his portrayals of Bach and Fanny Hensel as

evangelist and priestess serving the Lord rather than as divine artists, emanated both from a personal religious conviction of the existence of one God reigning over human beings, and from an attempt to distance himself from meaningless or blasphemous deifications of composers.

In this selective adherence to art-religious tenets, Mendelssohn's *Kunstreligion* took a unique shape that was seemingly predetermined by his pan-confessional adherence to universal religion. His individualistic, even eclectic stance is not surprising considering the multifarious forms in which musico-religious opinions manifested themselves in the early nineteenth century. Elizabeth Kramer has established from contemporary writings that art-religious thought on 'the various elements of music' was far from being unanimous. According to her, authors conceptualised aesthetic religion 'in diverse and individualized ways,' with 'one person's *Kunstreligion* being based on listening, another's on the idea of the divine composer, another's on the musical work, another's on the task of the critic.'⁸ Mendelssohn approached the religion of art just as he would have any other historical religion: with tolerance, critical acumen and interest. As his focus on art-religious modes of listening and perception of music as revelatory or angelic sound reflect, he bought into the religious theory of art only in so far as he saw certain universal religious values fulfilled in it.

Because Mendelssohn's convictions of aesthetic and spiritual religion depended on each other rather than being mutually exclusive, he occupies a special position in the nineteenth-century history of *Kunstreligion* that is to be distinguished from subsequent developments; to put it into Leon Botstein's terms: 'If later in the century art would become a surrogate for religion, in Mendelssohn art was a component of faith.'⁹ Predisposed to inner faith, Mendelssohn seems to have favoured a spiritual reception of music. He engaged with music in an inner process of contemplation that was reminiscent of religious meditation. His way of listening clearly corresponds to modes of *Andacht* and inner worship discussed in the writings

⁸ *IKA rev.*, 304.

⁹ Leon Botstein, 'Neoclassicism, Romanticism, and Emancipation: The Origins of Felix Mendelssohn's Aesthetic Outlook,' in *The Mendelssohn Companion*, ed. Douglass Seaton (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 1-23, at 19.

of Johann Nikolaus Forkel, Johann Gustav Droysen and Hegel. Inspired by a belief that music represented an art of inner feeling and a language paraphrasing religious truths, Mendelssohn geared his composition and conducting towards purposes of religious edification, proclamation and revelation, in the hope of stimulating inner reflections and spiritual responses in his audiences. The moral bent of *Kunstreligion* proved attractive to him, too, as he turned art-religious notions of *Andacht* and *Ernst* into guiding principles and maxims of action for artists.

Even though the influence of religious and moral creeds remained strong throughout Mendelssohn's writings, aesthetic and stylistic concerns gradually took the upper hand over spiritual considerations. It seems that Mendelssohn's transformation into a professional musician significantly altered his approach to *Kunstreligion*. The letters from his early youth generally articulate rather idealistic and avid sympathies with conceptions of art religion. These sympathies seem to have been inspired early on by his grandfather's aesthetic, philosophical and theological writings, as well as by religious and musical instruction by Friedrich Philipp Wilmsen and Carl Friedrich Zelter. They were given fresh impetus in the family correspondence that often revolved around music (Bach's compositions in particular) as well as in the literature that Mendelssohn read during his youth, including major works by Kant, Schleiermacher and Goethe. Between 1829 and 1832, Mendelssohn's art-religious affinities found their most distinct expression in terms of quantity and religious vigour in response both to the performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* and to travel impressions from Italy. Subsequently, Mendelssohn's youthful idealism for religious theories of art gave way to a more pragmatic outlook.¹⁰ This change of outlook coincided with the completion of his intellectual and vocational training, and

¹⁰ This periodisation follows that of Loos. Guided by Klingemann's characterisation of Mendelssohn as 'too diligent, too conscientious and too much a businessman' (*zu fleißig, zu gewissenhaft und sehr Geschäftsmann*), Loos arrived at the conclusion that 'the way in which Mendelssohn articulates himself in his letters after the [...] Berlin period [June 1832 - April 1833] does not correspond to the then-current image of the artist as a romantic, unworldly genius' surrendering to *Kunstreligion*. (*Mendelssohn entspricht, so wie er uns in seinen Briefen nach der [...] Berliner Phase entgegentritt, sehr wenig dem seinerzeit aktuellen Künstlerbild des romantischen, weltfremden Genies [...]*.) See Mendelssohn and Carl Klingemann, letter of 7 May 1833 to the Mendelssohn family, in *SB* (2010), 3:1640168, at 168 as well as Helmut Loos, 'Mendelssohns künstlerische Entwicklung Berlin – London – Düsseldorf,' in *SB* (2010), 3:7-22, at 22.

his return from the Grand Tour. It was further accelerated by the experience of loss and grief as well as by professional drawbacks.¹¹

Once Mendelssohn was fully occupied as a composer and conductor from 1833 onwards, art-religious lines of argumentation became part of his professional correspondence that touched upon the constitution of true church music (with Ernst Friedrich Albert Baur), the expressive potential of secular music (with Marc André Souchay), of 'holy' or 'non-desecrational' composing (with Friedrich Rochlitz) and ideals of musical and spiritual *Bildung* (with Johann Paul von Falkenstein). Occasionally, references to ideas of *Kunstreligion* during this period serve ulterior motives and professional aims (such as the establishment of a new conservatory of music) or throw revealing light on how Mendelssohn put art-religious doctrines of revelation, preaching and worship into practice in composition, performance and promotional activities on behalf of the Bach Monument.

In combining theological vocabulary, literary figures of speech, musical-stylistic, religious and moral concerns, Mendelssohn's art-religious writings provide further insights into the still doubtful constitution and history of what Hermann Kretzschmar described as 'musicians' aesthetics' (*Musiker-Ästhetik* or *musikalische Hermeneutik*).¹² Musicologists agree that *Musiker-Ästhetik* is based primarily on musical knowledge. It requires: an ability to read and interpret scores; practical experience as a composer, instrumentalist or singer; artistic talent and training; an acquaintance with music theory and history; and a sense of style, musical affects, harmonies and melodic principles, as well as a susceptibility to sound, tone colours and cadences.¹³ As such, it is usually associated with music historians, biographers, theoreticians, composer-critics and musical writers such as Zelter, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Carl Maria von Weber, Hector Berlioz and Eduard Hanslick. It is

¹¹ By the time of his return to Berlin, Mendelssohn had not only lost his aunt Henriette but was also deeply affected by the deaths of friends and confidants such as Ludwig Beer, Hegel, Goethe and Zelter. At the same time, his hope for a first official post was disappointed when his candidacy to succeed Zelter as director of the Berlin *Singakademie* was rejected.

¹² See Hermann Kretzschmar, 'Kants Musikauffassung und ihr Einfluß auf die folgende Zeit' (1904), in *Gesammelte Aufsätze von Hermann Kretzschmar*, vol. 2 of *Kretzschmars Gesammelte Aufsätze über Musik und Anderes* (Leipzig: Verlag von C. F. Peters, 1911), 242-256, at 243, and idem, 'Anregungen zur Förderung musikalischer Hermeneutik,' in *ibid.*, 168-192, at 168.

¹³ See Kretzschmar, 'Anregungen zur Förderung musikalischer Hermeneutik,' in *Gesammelte Aufsätze von Hermann Kretzschmar*, 170, 171, 173, 177-181 & 189.

commonly depicted as a school of thought that co-existed and competed with a so-called ‘philosophical’ or ‘speculative’ musical aesthetic (*Philosophenästhetik*) well into the nineteenth century. As the name implies, the philosophical branch of aesthetics was shaped by philosophers, professional aestheticians and men of letters. These individuals located the content of musical works in infinite realms or in the subconscious, relying primarily on abstract ‘reflection and arguing’ (*Nachdenken und Behaupten*), ‘figures of speech and vague impressions’ (*Redensarten und vagen Einbildungen*) as well as poetic ‘rhapsody’ (*Schwärmerei*) and literary thought.¹⁴ In extant historical overviews, Schumann and Wagner are widely acclaimed as professional writers who brought together the aesthetics of philosophers and musicians in a way that fruitfully combines practical musical insight, philosophical and aesthetic theories, as well as Romantic poetic language, to provide valuable insights into the essence, constitution and conditions of music.

Mendelssohn’s musico-religious thought is similar to – and at least as complex and intricate as – Schumann’s and Wagner’s. Not only did he draw conclusions for his own musical work from philosophical and moral positions set forth by Hegel, Jean Paul and others, he also responded to ideas developed in the theologies and philosophies of Jewish, Protestant and universal religions. While always forming a response to the music itself, his writings about music allow, at least occasionally, for a combination of musical analysis with allegoric association and poetic reflection, as his written response to Bach’s Chorale prelude *Wir glauben all an einen Gott* (BWV 740) shows most clearly. Thanks to his intellectual vigour and inquisitiveness, an exploration of his musical views reveals a lot about the ways in which *Kunstreligion* emerged as a centrepiece of *Philosophenästhetik* and became a component of *Musikerästhetik*, while providing new insights into the component parts of these aesthetics and how they interacted during his lifetime.

As the present study gives a first comprehensive and critical overview of Mendelssohn’s aesthetic and religious thought in mutual concord, it could function

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 243 & 255; *idem*, ‘Bericht über musikalische Bücher und Schriften aus dem Jahre 1897,’ in *ibid.*, 40-68, at 68; *idem*, ‘Anregungen zur Förderung musikalischer Hermeneutik,’ in *ibid.*, 170, 178-179 & 192 and Carl Dahlhaus, ‘Romantische Musikästhetik und Wiener Klassik,’ *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1972), 167-181, at 172.

as a guide for other researchers who entertain a similar interest in exploring the influence of spiritual, philosophical and literary trains of thought on the aesthetics of nineteenth-century individuals. As far as Mendelssohn's views on the arts are concerned, there is much scope for further research. A careful reading of his remaining correspondence, critical editions of which are due to appear in print within the next three years, might provide further revealing insights into his aesthetic mindset. In particular, a study establishing the chronological evolution of his musico-religious thought from his complete writings might be a worthwhile project for the future; however, even such an extensive venture would leave many facets of Mendelssohn's religious thinking about art unclarified. The composer's correspondence leaves many things unsaid; after all, Mendelssohn was convinced that any reasoning about religion and art should be subject to inner faith and moral action rather than to verbal elaboration.

Abbreviations

<i>AMZ</i>	<i>Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung</i> (Leipzig).
<i>BAMZ</i>	<i>Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung</i> .
<i>CRBC</i>	<i>The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by His German Contemporaries</i> . 2 vols. Edited, compiled and translated by Wayne M. Senner, William Rhea Meredith and Robin Wallace. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999 & 2001.
<i>DWB</i>	<i>Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm online</i> (http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB).
<i>EHR</i>	Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. <i>The Education of the Human Race</i> . Translated by F. W. Robertson. London: Henry S. King & Co., 1872.
<i>EMG</i>	Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. 'Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts [1780].' In idem. <i>G. E. Lessing, Werke</i> . Edited by Herbert G. Göpfert. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979, 8:489-510.
<i>FML</i>	Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Felix. <i>Letters</i> . Edited and translated by Gisella Selden-Goth. London: Paul Elek, c1946.
<i>GKW</i>	<i>Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart</i> . 4 vols. Edited by Johann Christoph Adelung, Dietrich Wilhelm Soltau and Franz Xaver Schönberger. Vienna: B. Ph. Bauer, 1811.
<i>HCL</i>	<i>Herders Conversations-Lexikon</i> . 5 vols. Edited by Raphael and Benjamin Herder. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1854-1857.
<i>IKA</i>	Kramer, Elizabeth A. 'The Idea of "Kunstreligion" in German Musical Aesthetics of the Early Nineteenth Century.' Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2005.
<i>IKA rev.</i>	Kramer, Elizabeth A. 'The Idea of "Kunstreligion" in German Musical Aesthetics of the Early Nineteenth Century.' Unpublished manuscript of revised Ph.D. diss., 2010.
<i>LFH</i>	Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Fanny. <i>The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn</i> . Edited and translated by Marcia K. Citron. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1987.
<i>LIS</i>	Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Felix. <i>Letters from Italy and Switzerland</i> . Edited by Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy and translated by Lady Wallace. Philadelphia: Frederick Leypoldt, 1863.
<i>LOF</i>	Ward Jones, Peter. 'The Library of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.' In <i>Festschrift Rudolf Elvers zum 60. Geburtstag</i> . Edited by Ernst Herttrich and Hans Schneider. Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1985, 289-328.

- ML* Mendelssohn's letters from 1833 to 1847. Edited by Paul and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy and translated by Lady Wallace. London: Spottiswoode & Co., 1864.
- NZfM* *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*
- OALF* Wackenroder, Wilhelm Heinrich and Ludwig Tieck. *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar*. Translated by Edward Mornin. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1975.
- PUL* *Pierer's Universal-Lexikon der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart oder Neuestes encyclopädisches Wörterbuch der Wissenschaften, Künste und Gewerbe*. 19 vols. Edited by Julius Löbe. Altenburg: H. A. Pierer, 1857-1865.
- SB* Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Felix. *Sämtliche Briefe. Auf Basis der von Rudolf Elvers angelegten Sammlung*. 6 vols. Edited by Helmut Loos and Wilhelm Seidel. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2008-2012.
- UWK* *Grosses vollständiges Universallexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*. 68 vols. Edited by Jacob August Franckenstein, Paul Daniel Longolius and Carl Günther Ludovici. Halle: Johann Heinrich Zedler, 1731-1754.
- WSWB* Wackenroder, Wilhelm Heinrich. *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*. 2 vols. Edited by Silvio Vietta and Richard Littlejohns. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1991.

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Appendix 1. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's letters

Mendelssohn, letter of 18 July 1826 to Abraham and Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2008), 1:181-184

[...].

Zweitens! gestern war das Concert im Freien zum Besten seiner Frau und Kinder gegeben von Möser. Bei eintretendem Regenwetter werden die Posaunen nicht eintreten, weil das Publikum nicht ins Haus eintreten kann. Um 8 Uhr morgen's die Probe. Da regnets. Ich gehe hin, und bin puncto halb neun

182

pünktlich da. Da sind sie aber noch beim Aufrichten eines großen amphitheatralischen Orchesters beschäftigt, welches die ganze Breite des Grasplatzes der Terrasse gegen über einnahm, und auf welchem sich die einnehmende Musik für den einnehmenden Musikdirector gut ausnahm. Neun Contrabässe liegen im Grase ausgestreckt; ein Kerl mit dem Serpent in der Hand geht spazieren, zwei Contrafagotte und drei Posaunen kommen eben durch's Souterrain; die Kanonen werden aufgestellt, Orchesterdiener laufen hin und her; Schockschwerenoth, sagt Möser; Kammermusiker sitzen auf den Bänken, lachen mit einem Mal laut auf, tragen einander Huckepack; Ritz turnt weiter hinten mit 20 andern Blase- und Saiteninstrumenten; zwei zanken sich; Puff! läßt einer die Ratschen losgehn; haltet's Maul, sagt Möser; zwei Bratschisten wetten auf's schöne Wetter etc. etc. etc. in aeternum. Endlich geht's los. Erst die Pastoralsymphonie. Möser ermahnt: Meine Herren bleiben Sie nur *zusammen*; was Sie spielen das ist mir einerley, und wir folgten seiner Ermahnung. So also ging die Probe an, Möser ging an (sein Pult nämlich) und die Ausführung ging auch an. Die Ouvertüre aus Olympia brauchen wir nicht zu probiren, die aus Faust ging gut. Nun kommt die aus Oberon. Mit heiligem Respect lege ich meine Geige in den Kasten, und gehe zuzuhören auf den Grasplatz, ein bischen gespannt. Mit einem himmlischen Andante beginnts. Es ist der schönste Ouvertüren Anfang von Weber: ungefähr

den Blaseinstrumenten spielen gleich mit, der Türkenmarsch klingt auch an, und dann kommt ein Satz in Cello's und Bratschen, wie er ihn oft instrumentirt, aber wohl eine der rührendsten und edelsten Melodien die er je erfunden; lange hat mich nichts so entzückt, wie der Gesang, der dann endlich immer lei-

ser wird, bis er endlich so auseinandergeht

Nun strömt das Allegro zu; sie fangen feurig an, es geht gut; ein kleiner Regen fällt; weiter weiter schreit Möser; der Regen wird stärker, die Töne schwächer; „Sakerment, weiter“! Da gießt's mit einemmal gewaltig und im Moment war alles durcheinander; alle suchen nach ihren Kasten, bedecken mit Schnupftüchern die Bogen und die Geigen; nehmt die Noten untern Arm schreit Möser und in zwei Secunden ist das ganze große Orchester verlassen, und keiner bleibt, als ein einziger Clarinettist, der sehr kläglich das Lied aus dem Zinngießer: „O Jemine!“ zu spielen anfängt. Das Gelächter kannst Du Dir denken. Nach einigen Minuten hörte es zwar auf zu regnen, wir hörten aber

Berlin, 18. Juli 1826 183

nicht auf (Möser's Ruf nämlich) sondern turnten wieder, und so wurde die Oberonsouvertüre bei Seite gelegt, und die 3 Lieder von Zelter probirt, bis uns ein Trompetenstoß zum Wiederkommen, und der Soldat seine Büchsen zur Schlacht bei Vittoria lud. Denke Dir 9 Posaunen, alle Blaseinstrumente doppelt, zwei Chöre von Regimentsmusik, 4 Trommeln, Ratschen, Schüsse, Kanonen, eine Regenmaschine und ein königl. Orchester, die alle zusammen präludiren und phantasiren, und die Sonne schien uns senkrecht auf den Kopf; das ist kein Spas. Dann ging die Ouvertüre und die Schüsse los; erstere abscheulich schlecht, das that aber nichts; Ritz und ich spannten einen Regenschirm gegen die Sonne auf, und spielten drunter, und das Orchester kam abwechselnd sich darunter abzukühlen.

Zur Aufführung des Abends um $\frac{1}{2} 7$ hatte Möser den Sautreffer schönsten Wetter und an 1000 Menschen zu bekommen. – Pastorsymphonie – alles still; Olympia – alles mäuschenstill; Faust – alles todtentstill; Oberon – donnernder Applaus von allen Seiten her; das war hübsch; ein böses Omen wars aber daß Möser in den ersten Tacten der Pastorsymphonie seinen Tactstock auf die Wiese fallen ließ, und uns ohne Direction spielen ließ, bis ein Höflicher ihn ihm wiederreichte; er war aber sehr aergerlich. Die Schlacht ging sehr gut, wir waren alle ganz auseinander in der Mitte; aber das thut nichts; Schubring hat sie doch auf seinem Zimmer in der Mohrenstraße gehört. Nun

ist der Brief geendigt; sowohl weil ich ausgehe, als weil der Stoff ausgeht, meine Liebe zu Dir geht aber nicht aus, sondern sie geht aus Emoll seit Du weg bist.

Fine.

Felix

Polymeter.

N. S. Grüß Saaling, Neuburg
und sie alle, und sie möchten
das Tempo nicht zu rasch nehmen, sie
die aus Haar, Mohn und J zusammengesetzt
sind, und Marx läßt sich Dir und Vater sehr empfehlen, und
die andern auch. Franck war krank.
Klingemann ist brummig, ich heut
ein Possenreißer, Lindblad
reis't unaufhaltsam nach
Schweden zurück. Leb'
Recht wohl.
Wohl.

[...].

Da ich nach einem Geldwechsler fragte, wies man mich an Herrn Benedict nach der Königsstraße, und sogleich entschloß ich mich, vom Neapolitaner Neuigkeiten einzuholen. Im Hausflur finde ich gleich Eichenlaub und Rosenkränze, die einen transparenten „Willkommen“ einfaßten, da merkte ich den Braten; wirklich ist der alte, bekannte, musicalische Benedict aus Neapel für 4 Tage in Stuttgart bei seinen Eltern, und das Schicksal will mich mit ihm zusammenführen. Ich wollte das Schicksal hätte es nicht gewollt. Denn es gibt wol wenig so Verdrießendes als eine angenehme Vorstellung eines frühern Bekannten, mit der unangenehmsten vertauschen zu müssen. Wie der sich verwandelt hat! Wie seine Badine nach den Pariser Fats, sein Schnurr- und Stutzbärtchen nach den Deutschen Fats, seine Haare und National-Beinkleider

212

nach den Italiänischen Fats, endlich Gesicht, Stimme, Sprache, Gang und Betragen nach den Grimsler Fats schmeckt, das alles ist sehr traurig, aber leider eben so wahr. Er machte mir solche entsetzliche Complimente über meine neuesten Compositionen, daß ich endlich alle Redlichkeit außer Augen setzte, und auch anfang Schönigkeiten zu sagen. Dabey habe ich mich gewiß wie ein Tanzbär ausgenommen. Mitten darin fuhr er auf: ich müsse ihm meine Symphonie aus e dur vorspielen, die herrliche. Ich sagte, von solch einer wüßst' ich gar nichts, und er antwortete: das thue ihm sehr leid, aber meine Schwester sey eine sehr talentvolle Dame, und er sey im Begriff die Italiänische Musik zu reformiren. Mein Stillschweigen darauf begeisterte ihn immer mehr, und auf einmal pries er mich dreifach glücklich und selig, da mir nicht allein Cäcilia und Apollo günstig seyen, sondern da mir auch seit meiner Kindheit der hohe Gott Plutus zugelächelt habe. Wie er den Plutus beim Schopf bekam, wurde mir förmlich übel, ich verachtete ihn aus Herzens Grunde, ich sprach von Beschäftigung, kurze Zeit, Bedauern, Versprechungen einer pünktlichen Correspondenz, Empfehlungen, und so sprang ich wieder durch das „Willkommen“ hindurch zum Hause hinaus. – Ach Herre Gott!! – Sie luden mich übrigens zu Spazierfahrt, und Diner, und Theaterloge, und was weiß ich! ein; mir war aber nicht wohl unter den Leuten, drum schlug ich's ab.

[...].

213

[...].

Felix.

N.S. Ich bitte Marx um einen Brief an Weber, denn in dem einen sind die nichtssagenden Complimente gar zu sehr gehäuft, und Zelter giebt nicht gerne einen für Weber.

N.N.S. An Marx!

O Marx!

Liebes Kind! Ew. Wohlgeboren ersuche ich, wegen meiner Verdienste um die Himmelstochter Musica (ich habe ein System erfunden, wodurch die Kinder die Musik päppelnd lernen; eine Birne ist dur, und eine Pflaume moll, und sie werden so am leichtesten Notenfresser!) Nämlich ich will mehrere Männer kennen lernen. D.h. Gottfried Weber. Schreibe mir doch, (um meines Bartes willen) was in seiner Theorie steht; kürzlich, (denn ich will gebildet erscheinen), und einen Empfehlungsbrief: Ew. Wohlgebor. schicke ich hiebey einen marinierten Musiker, oder: Ew. Wohlgeb. werden vernommen haben,

214

oder ähnliches. Im ersten mach Possen, im 2^{ten} Brief nicht. Der eine Empfehlungsbrief, den ich habe, ist mir zu

Dein
FMB.

[...].

215

Mein lieber Freund!

Mein alter Lindblad!

Ich habe lange nicht geantwortet, auf Deinen Brief (laß mich nicht so lange warten mit der revanche) aber ich wollte das Quartett mitschicken, weil das besser spricht, als die Buchstaben, und eine Zeit abwarten, grade wie jetzt, wo es spät Abend ist, und kalt, und mein Feuer im Ofen brennt, und draußen ein Sternenhimmel ist, daß man zerknirscht seyn möchte, wenn man nicht seelig seyn müßte, und wo ich nun hier so ruhig sitze, und so gerne mit Dir spräche, und Dich sehr liebe.

Denn wahrhaftig Lindblad, ich verstehe Dich und Deine schwedischen Lieder und Dein Adagio aus as von Beethoven jetzt

etwas besser, wie sonst. Es ist verflucht sentimental, und wie ich heute Abend

auf der Straße ging, da brüllte ich so laut das daß

mich die Leute sehr ansahen, ich sang aber weiter, und dachte gleich, ich müßte Dirs schreiben. Es ist die Einfachheit in dem Singen, und eine gewisse musicalische *Wendung*, (die ich nur einem *Blick*, oder einer *Erscheinung* vergleichen könnte,) kurz es ist ein Eindruck, der aus den Beethovenschen Noten spricht, und mich oft zu weinen macht (Innerlich nämlich) Kennst Du sein neues Quartett aus b dur? Das aus cis moll? Lerne sie kennen, ich bitte Dich. In dem aus b ist eine *Cavatina* aus es, und da singt immer die erste Geige, und die Welt singt mit, die 2^{te} Geige macht ihr immer die Schlüsse nach, und dann

240

kommt eine Stelle, wo es ces dur wird, und viel Geseufze, und wie das ein Weilchen gedauert hat, fängt das es dur mit solch einem himmlischen Umwenden wieder an, daß ich nichts herzlicheres kenne. Mir gefiel früher das Umwenden, der Übergang nicht, denn es geht von es dur nach es dur aber – O Gott! Lerne es kennen und denke an mich. – Auch in dem aus cis ist so ein Übergang, die Einleitung eine Fuge!! schließt sehr graulich in cis dur alle haben cis; und da kommst mit so einem süßem d dur hinein (das andre Stück nämlich) und solch kleinen Verzierung! Siehst Du, das ist einer von meinen Punkten! Die Beziehung aller 4 oder 3 oder 2 oder 1 Stücken einer Sonate auf die andre und die Theile, so daß man durch das bloße Anfangen „durch die

ganze Existenz so eines Stückes schon das Geheimniß wisse (denn wenn daß bloße d dur anfängt, die 2 Noten, so ist mir weich um das Herz) *das* muß in die Musik. Hilf mir's hineinbringen. Jetzt sehe ich wohl, wie viel weiter

Du damals warst, als ich, denn Du konntest

machen, und ich konnt' es nicht verstehen, aber glaube mir nur, ich compo-
nire jetzt auch anders wie sonst, es ist viel ernsthafter geworden.

Das Lied, was ich dem Quartette beifüge ist das Thema desselben. Du wirst es im ersten und letzten Stücke mit seinen Noten, in allen vier Stücken mit seiner Empfindung sprechen hören. Wenn Dir es das erstemal misfällt (was kommen kann) so spiele es zum zweitenmale, und wenn Du etwas menuett-artiges darin findest, so denke an Deinen steifen und formellen Felix, mit der Halsbinde und dem Diener. Ich dünkte, ich spräche aus dem Liede wohl, und es klingt mir, wie Musik. Wenn Dir das ganze Quartett auch nicht gefällt, so bitte, sieh es Dir öfter an; laß es Dir aber nicht eher vorspielen, als bis Du es ganz genau kennst aus der Partitur, und bis es Dir so gefällt; will es Dir aber gar nicht gefallen, so laß es auch gar nicht spielen. Sieh meinen Jammer!

[...].

241

[...].

Ew. Wohlgeboren

muß ich vor Allem um Verzeihung bitten, daß ich so lange nach Empfang Ihres schönen Geschenkes noch geschwiegen habe. Mich hinderten viele, nicht zu

244

verschiebende Arbeiten, die Bekanntschaft Ihrer vortrefflichen Compositionen mit rechter Muße zu machen, und doch konnte ich nicht eher Ihnen meinen ganzen Dank aussprechen, ehe ich nicht den ganzen Werth Ihrer Sendung zu schätzen wußte.

Das ist aber jetzt der Fall, und jedem der es gut mit der Musik meint, und sie nicht zum Späße (wozu man gar vieles der heutigen Zeit rechnen kann) sondern aus Ernst und Liebe treibt, muß es eine Freude und ein aufrichtiges Vergnügen gewähren, Ihre Lieder zu kennen. Denn sie sagen nicht das, was hundert andre gesagt haben und wiederholen werden, sondern sie sprechen das aus, was *Sie* fühlen und denken, und was also nur Sie allein aussprechen konnten.

Lassen Sie mich darum im Namen aller Freunde der Kunst den besten Dank wiederholen, und sein Sie überzeugt, daß bei allen Erfolgen und allen Glanzpunkten Ihrer schönen Laufbahn, stets als wahrer Theilnehmer Sie begleitet wird

Berlin 23/4 28

Ihr ergebenster
Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

245

Ew. Wohlgeboren

muß ich vor Allem um Entschuldigung bitten, daß ich mich nach so langem *Stillschweigen*, seit ich die Ehre Ihrer persönlichen Bekanntschaft hatte, nun unmittelbar an Sie wende. Aber die Freundlichkeit und Güte, von der Sie mir bei meinem Aufenthalt in Paris so viele Beweise gaben, machen mich dreist genug, dies zu tun und zu hoffen, daß Sie mir die Freiheit, die ich mir nehme, nicht übel deuten werden. Der Grund meines Schreibens ist folgender:

Der Herr Geh. Rath *Bunsen* in Rom, mit welchem meine Aeltern in Correspondenz stehen, schrieb neulich, daß Sie ein Oratorium: *Die Gesetzgebung vom Sinai* verfaßt, und dem Könige von Preußen zugeeignet hätten, welches Sie in diesem Winter bei uns aufführen würden, und daß Sie zu diesem Ende selbst nach Berlin kämen. Er gab mir nun den Auftrag, Ihnen die Mittel der

246

Ausführung, die sich bei uns dazu vorfinden, auseinanderzusetzen, da bei meinem langen Aufenthalt hier, und bei meinem persönlichen Umgang mit den meisten hiesigen Musikern, ich natürlich die Institute kennen muß, die fähig sind, ein *ernstes*, geistliches Werk würdig wiederzugeben. Daß bei bloßer Nennung Ihres Namens alle Mittel unserer Stadt Ihnen zu Gebot stehen werden, bedarf keiner Erwähnung, und jeder Musikliebende hat gewiß schon längst bei sich den Wunsch gehegt, endlich einmal die großen, schlummernden Kräfte, die bei uns zerstreut liegen, vereinigt, erweckt und zu einem großen Zwecke belebt zu sehen.

Zu Ausführung des Chors sind drei verschiedene Vereine in Berlin vorhanden: die Singakademie unter Herrn Prof. Zelter, der Hansmannische Singverein und der königl. Theaterchor.

[...].

247

[...].

genannt wird, so erstaune sehr. Ich thue es aus Leibeskräften. – Mit der Musik ist es wenig hier; v. Klingem. der Dich herzl. grüßt und mir kriegst Du nächstens 1 ausführ. Br. darüber. Die Musiker sind schlimmer als bei uns, denn es ist mehr Konkurrenz und das macht sie nicht wie die Handwerker, besser, sondern mißtrauischer und intriganter. Im Allgemeinen ist alles da was durch äußre Mittel, Einstudiren, Geld, Berechnung u. dergl. hervorgebracht werden kann; so z. B. gute Stellung des Orchesters, Egalität und Kraft in d. Saiteninstrum., sehr viel Geigen, gutes präzises Blech; alles Geistige fehlt; es ist kein Vorgeiger da, keine zarte Oboe, Clarinette od. Fagott, alles roh und plump; keine Lebhaftigkeit, sondern nur Schnelligkeit, kein Respekt vor dem Kunstwerk, mit einem Wort, kein Direktor; Sir George den Fanny Dir beschreiben mag, ist wirk. d. Beste und Feurigste, wiewohl er sich pudert; sie beten Beeth. an und kürzen ihn, sie beten Moz. an und langweilen sich dabei, sie beten Haydn an und hetzen ihn zu Tode. Die Musik ist Modesache

d. 10.

und wird auch so getrieben, erneuert sich wie sie und ist, wie sie, Gegenstand d. conversation. – Könntest Du d. heut. Tag sehen! ich sitze am offenen

[...].

London, 9. und 10. Mai 1829 285

Wenn ich in den vorigen Briefen von London entzückt war, was soll ich dann erst heute sagen? Der Frühling hat angefangen, und es ist das schönste Schauspiel, das man sich erträumen kann, die Straßen doppelt belebt, der Nebel gewichen, alle Wagen zurückgeschlagen, die Damen in bunten Kleidern, die ganze Stadt wie am Festtag so hell und feyerlich. Ich kümmer mich nichts um Visiten, sondern um die Parks, in denen ich umhergehe, reite, und fahre, das Zeichenbuch ist auch schon angefangen, und ich fahre auf den stages jetzt outside. Kommt man nun hinaus auf die Wiesen, so sieht man, daß selbst beim heitersten Wetter und bei wolkenlosem blauem Himmel über dem Unthier London ein grauer dicker Nebelstreif, von Rauch, Staub und Dünsten aller Art gebildet, sich lagert; geht man aber in der Nacht zu Fuß auf dem Felde, so sieht man einen hellen, breiten Lichtstreif über dem ganzen Horizont; das kommt von den vielen Lichtern, die in der Stadt zerstreut sind; es sieht aus, wie ein Heiligenschein, und machte mich neulich um Mitternacht auf dem Felde sehr ernsthaft. – Erst will ich jetzt, die Hauptsachen Eurer

[...].

[...].

eine Arie singt. Kurz schreib nur wieder und bald. – Ich lebe hier glücklich und froh, sobald ich Musik und Musiker um mich herum ignoriren kann, und das geht zum Glück leicht; wollte ich meine Meinung über ihre Musik ihnen sagen, so hielten sie mich für grob, und wollte ich von Musik überhaupt sprechen, so hielten sie mich für ganz toll. Da schenke ich es ihnen lieber, und gehe umher, und sehe mir die wunderschöne Stadt und das Leben auf den Straßen an; oder fahre auf dem Wasser zwischen den Brücken, Kauffarthenschiffen und Kirchthürmen, oder gehe aufs Land, wo der Frühling mit seinem prächtigen Grün und seinen Blüten schon gekommen ist, und rührend schön duftet, oder kaufe mir von einem alten schreienden Weib im Gedränge Maiblumen; darin ist wohl etwas mehr Musik, als in allen den Concerten, deren ich eins gestern überstand, eines morgen aushalten werde, und eines Freitag leiden muß. – Es scheint, daß die Passionseindrücke verwischt oder verdorben sind; das thut mir leid; so war die ganze Sache nur ein Versuch, was man leisten kann, und wir müssen denn mit dem Resultate und mit der Hoffnung zufrieden sein; daß Du aber nicht nach dem Musikfeste gehn kannst, thut mir Leid in Deine Seele hinein, Du würdest Dich und andre sehr erfreut haben. Hol manchen Schurken der Teufel, hier laufen auch viele ungehängt herum, womit ich nicht die Taschendiebe meine. – Sonderbar war mirs neulich, als ich den Messias hörte, wie so alle Noten dieselben waren, und jeder Eintritt auf Deutsch ebenso war, wie auf Englisch, und wie dieselbe Musik dieselbe Sprache überall spricht; und doch rief's aus jeder Note deutlich heraus, daß es Engländer wären, die sie spielten, und daß ihnen wenig daran läge. Der Buchstabe war da, aber der Geist fehlte, und da der erste tödtet, so war überall das Leben fort. Über die Singerey der Engländer schreibe ich

292

[...].

Euern lieben Brief vom 9^{ten} empfang ich am Dinstag, und zugleich damit die drei Briefe von Zelter, Devrient und der Milder. Nächsten Dinstag gehn mit der Gesandtschaft meine Antworten ab, an Z., dem ich einstweilen für seinen lieben, erfreulichen Brief herzlich zu danken bitte, und an Devrient und Heydemann; mit der Milder bin ich in rechter Verlegenheit, sie hat mir einen dictatorischen, 6 Zeilen langen Ukas gesendet, dessen Schluß ist „wenn Hr. Mendelssohn nicht alsbald schickt, wird Mde. Milder ernstlich böse“ und ich möchte ihr gerne gefällig sein; es ist mir aber in dieser Zeit so viel Neues, Unerwartetes, und die innerste Ruhe Störendes begegnet, daß ich nicht Muße, noch Gedanken oder Andacht genug zum Componiren habe, und mich nach den Bergen und der freien Luft zu sehnen anfangen, denn da wird mir gewiß wieder manches durch den Kopf gehen; ob das aber Concertarien sein werden, das bezweifle ich stark, ich befürchte manch seltsames Zeug. Doch will ich sehn, ob ich mir bis nächste Woche etwas herausquälen kann; dann schick ich es ihr sogleich; am guten Willen fehlt es mir nicht, denn ich habe mich gar oft ans Clavier gesetzt, um mich in die Begeisterung hineinzuspielen, und da möglicherweise die versprochne Arie und die fehlenden Lieder zu fischen, aber wenn ich hier ans Clavier komme, so ver falle ich in unaufhörliches Üben von Concertpassagen, u. dgl. Zeug, und stehe auf, ohne Gewinn und Einfälle. Gott mög es bessern, und nächst ihm Schottland und die Seen. – Was Du vom

[...].

London, 19. Juni 1829 **315**

Lieber Paul!

Gestern erhielt ich die Sendung der Schwestern und Hensels. Sie hat mir einen Tag bereitet, den ich den glücklichsten meines Lebens nennen würde, wenn ich mit Euch gewesen wäre, und den ich nie vergessen werde, und dessen Erinnerung mich immer wieder in diese Zeit, in meine jetzigen Gedanken zurückführen wird. Ich habe noch nicht solch einen Tag erlebt. Dir schreibe ich, lieber Bruder, weil ich das alles den Schwestern nicht so geradezu sagen will, vorlesen magst Du es ihnen alles. Was es für ein Gefühl ist, nach langer

London, 3. Juli 1829 325

Zeit zum ersten mal wieder Musik zu hören, das habe ich gestern empfunden. Ich war fast verdrießlich geworden, denn mir ging kein gesunder Gedanke durch den Kopf, um mich herum waren neue Musiker, aber keine neue Musik, und schon wollte ich mich zwingen, doch irgend einen Geschmack an ihren Machwerken zu finden. Da kamen Fannys Lieder. Ich denke es ist die schönste Musik, die jetzt ein Mensch auf der Erde machen kann. Wenigstens hat mich nie etwas so durch und durch belebt und ergriffen. Der Teufel hole kalte Worte. Aber es giebt Töne, die sich aufbäumen und Sprache bekommen, und einem ins Ohr schreien, und wo nicht einer singt, sondern alle, die je so empfunden haben, und jeder gute Mensch hat so empfunden, nur kann ers ja nicht sagen; da möchte man nun knien, wenns einer mal sagt, und den vielen Stummen Sprache gibt. Solche Lieder werden nie wieder gemacht werden. Es ist gar zu arg! Den Schluß vom 2^{ten} mit dem Vöglein in der Linden, spielte ich mir gestern Nacht ein paarmal ganz ruhig vor, und machte dann in meinem Zimmer Tollheiten, und schlug auf den Tisch, mag auch wohl sehr geweint haben, dann spielte ich ihn aber eine Viertelstunde lang immer fort, und nun kenne ich ihn genau; so bald ich aber ans Clavier gehe, und ihn mir wieder vorführe, so fährt mir von Neuem eine Art Schauder durch, weil ich noch nie so was gehört habe. Das ist die innere, innerste Seele von der Musik; und fange ich nun an den Schluß zu spielen, so muß ich sie alle singen, denn keins ist schwächer, ich kann nirgends aufhören; zu letzt singe ich dann das erste noch nach, worin die Worte gesprochen werden; und wenn sich die Heimkehr nach h dur hinauf schwingt, und ich mir die Seele aussinge, wenn das Hochland so fremd auftritt, und das Terzett am Ende! Es hat ja gar keine Ähnlichkeit mit meinem; was das für Einfälle sind! Es spricht noch

eine ganz andre Sprache, als meins. Und dann das grave, was sehr bitter ist! Solche Musik habe ich nie gehört; auch werde ich in meinem Leben nichts Ähnliches machen; das thut aber nichts, wenns nur in der Welt ist; einerley, wer es ausgesprochen hat. Wahrhaftig, es giebt wenig Leute, die werth sind, die Lieder zu kennen; Fanny soll sie nur wenigen vorsingen. Übrigens könnte ich sie mit Plaisir tadeln hören; machte mir nichts draus, denn sie stehn gar zu hoch darüber; aber doch sollen nur Wenige sie kennen, und nur solche die sie verstehen. Zuweilen macht uns der liebe Herr Gott raffinirtes Vergnügen;

[...].

326

In Edinburg ist es Sonntag wenn man eben ankommt: Da geht man denn über die Wiesen auf zwei höllisch steile Felsen zu, die Arthurs Sitz heißen, und klettert hinauf. Unten gehn die buntesten Menschen, Frauen, Kinder, und Kühe im Grün herum, weit umher breitet sich die Stadt aus, wo in der Mitte die Burg wie ein Vogelnest am Abhang steht, über die Burg hinweg seht ihr Wiesen, dann Hügel, dann einen breiten Fluß; über den Fluß hinweg seht ihr wieder Hügel, dann kommt ein ernsterer Berg auf dem Stirlings Gebäude erscheinen, das ist schon blaue Ferne; dahinter steht ein schwacher Schatten den sie Ben Lomond nennen. Alles Das ist aber nur die eine Hälfte von Arthurs Sitz; die andre ist einfach genug; es ist die hohe blaue See, unermesslich weit, bedeckt mit weißen Segeln, schwarzen Dampfschornsteinen, kleinen Insecten von Kähnen und Bööten, Felsinseln, und d.gl. Was soll ichs beschreiben?

Edinburgh, 28. Juli 1829 345

Ihr müßt es selbst sehen. Wenn der liebe Gott sich mit Panoramenmalen abgibt, so wirds etwas toll. Wenige Schweizer Erinnerungen können dies schlagen. Es sieht alles so ernsthaft und kräftig hier aus, und liegt alles halb im Duft, oder Rauch, oder Nebel; dazu ist gar morgen ein Wettstreit der Hochländer auf der bagpipe, und so kamen viele in ihrem Anzug aus den Kirchen, führten ihre geputzten Mädchen siegreich am Arm, sahen stattlich und wichtig in die Welt hinein; mit den langen rothen Bärten, den bunten Mänteln und Federhüten, den nackten Knien, und ihrer Sackpfeife in der Hand, gingen sie ganz ruhig vor dem halbzerstörten grauen Schloß auf der Wiese vorbey, wo Maria Stuart glänzend gelebt hat und wo sie Rizzio hat ermorden sehen. Es

[...].

346

[...].

sprechen hören, und diese letztere nenne ich Intoleranz. Von allen Sachen der Welt, von Überzeugungen, Personen, Neigungen nur spaßhaft, oberflächlich, hin und her, ohne Entschiedenheit, nur nach und nachgebend zu sprechen, dagegen gerade von dem, was drüber steht, sey es Religion, Kunst, Liebe, hart, abgeschlossen zu urtheilen – das kann ich nicht thun, und will es auch nicht gethan wissen. Gerade in diesen höheren Rücksichten will ich langsam, ruhig und vornehm gehen, weil hier Worte nie ausreichen, und ich erst wissen muß, ob ich dieselbe Sprache spreche, wie der andre; dagegen, wo die Worte allgemein übereinstimmen, da stelle ich mich gern hin, sage wie mirs um Herz ist, und stehe meinen Mann. Du sagst, ich stoße in der Kunst den Lügengeist zurück wo ich ihn treffe: das ist wahr, nur nehme ich mich entsetzlich in Acht, nicht den Lügengeist zu verwechseln, mit einem Geist, der etwas andres will, als ich: den Lügengeist aber erkenne ich daran, daß ich frage, ob einer überhaupt *etwas will* (nichts Äußerliches nämlich) oder nicht, und im ersten Falle laß ich ihn gelten, geh er auch noch so weit von mir ab; freilich sage ich meinem Freund: folge ihm nicht, er geht den Weg den ich nicht für den rechten halte, ihn selbst aber warne ich nur, wenn er mich fragt, oder wenn ich denke mein Weg kann möglicherweise auch der seinige werden, denn das muß gar nicht immer der Fall sein. Nun hast Du sogar was Kunst betrifft, zuweilen etwas so Schneidendes, daß ich es nie billigen kann: Du hast zuweilen verdammt und erhoben mit einer Kälte, die mir nun einmal wider-

430

strebt, denn auch im Tadeln soll einer warm sein, und lieber zerprügeln, als verspotten. Du hast große Männer im Vergleich mit Beethoven so sehr herabgesetzt, daß ich mich oft nicht des Gedankens erwehren konnte, Du möchtest vielleicht den Beethoven bei solch hartem Urtheil gar nicht so ganz capiren, denn dazu gehört viel Wärme und Unbefangenheit; und wie mit der Kunst, so geht es mit der Religion: ich spreche ungern über die Kunst mit anderen, als solchen, wo ich gewiß bin, daß sie meinen Sinn heraushören, die Worte vergessen; mit *denen* kann ich über Kunst sprechen, für die andern mache ich Musik, und sage: da steht es, nach dem Schlüssel habt ihr mich nicht zu fra-

gen, er muß drin liegen, sonst hilft Euch keine Erklärung. Eben so dächte ich und in noch höherem Grade, so geht es mit der Religion: weiß ich, daß mein Freund meine Worte, (die dann immer noch einen andern Begriff haben, als den im Lexicon) schon versteht, dann kann ich mit ihm darüber reden: wo nicht, so *rede* ich nicht, sondern wie ich mich in der Musik gegen Fremde auf meine Partitur, so berufe ich mich hier auf das, was ich thue. So möge es auch jeder gegen mich machen, in den hohen, und höchsten Fragen, die es giebt: in gewissen Puncten treffen wir doch zusammen, haben wir auch nie drüber gesprochen. Dieses ruhige Vertrauen auf andre, und die Zuversicht, daß es in gewissen Puncten für gewisse Menschen keine Verschiedenheit des Glaubens, nur eine in den Worten geben kann (diese *gewissen* Menschen sind aber die, die *etwas wollen*) das ist, was ich unter Toleranz verstehe. Denn beruhigt mich dieses Vertrauen nicht, dann können es die Worte gewiß nicht.

[...].

London, 26. Oktober 1829

431

[...].

noch toll. Übrigens sieht es mit der Musik in Deutschland doch greulich aus. Sie betreiben hier die Musik wie ein Geschäft, berechnen, bezahlen, handeln, und es fehlt wahrlich an gar sehr vielem; aber vergleicht man doch ein Engl. Musikfest mit solch lumpigem Deutschen so ist leider ein großer Unterschied. Die Leute seyen hier noch so berechnend und geldgierig, so bleiben sie doch gentlemen, sonst wären sie gleich aus guter Gesellschaft verstoßen, und das fehlt nun eben den lieben Herrn Kammermusikern gar zu sehr; (es sind Jammerfürsten, voll Eitelkeit, Unwissenheit, Rohheit und Leerheit.) Denke ich an die Musiker in Berlin, Devrient, so wird mir grimmig und gallig zu Muth. Sie haben nicht einmal die Eigenschaft, die ich von meinem Schuster fordre, sie sind nicht einmal ehrlich, und dabey alle solche Gefühlsmenschen, die so blos der Kunst leben! Ich will übrigens die Engl. Musiker hiemit nicht gelobt haben, sie sind auch infames Kropzeug, aber wenn sie einen Äpfelpye essen, so denken und sprechen sie doch wenigstens nicht über den Begriff eines pye's und wie er aus Rinde und Äpfeln bestehe, sondern sie fressen ihn munter hinein. Kurz, der Teufel hole vieles! Du siehst meinen Grimm von

[...].

London, 29. Oktober 1829 437

[...].

Neues zu erleben und zu beschließen. Ich kann die letzten 14 Tage in London die glücklichsten und reichsten nennen, die ich da genossen habe. Horn, dem ich alles zeigen konnte und der sich über alles mit mir freute und erstaunte, durch den ich die großen Eindrücke der Stadt wie neu wiederempfing, der sich unter meinen Freunden bald wohl und einheimisch fühlte, trug viel dazu bey; dann versammelte sich alle Abende spät bei mir ein Kreis von Leuten, wie er sich wohl selten zusammenfinden mag: Rosen, Mühlens, Klingemann, Kind und Horn, das war hübsch zu hören, wie da das Gespräch belebt und

466

froh ging, und wie nichts Mattes oder Falsches durchgelassen wurde, sondern zu Zeiten eine Geschwornengericht drüber zur Entscheidung gebildet, und wie alle die Menschen von Funken und Feuer sprühten, wenn man sie anregte, und wie alle so verschieden und abweichend und doch über gewisse Punkte einig waren, ohne sich je drüber verständigt zu haben: wahrlich, wenn ich so in der Nacht zu Hause kam und nun wußte alle bei mir im Zimmer ums Camin sitzend zu finden (denn um 11 versammelten wir uns gewöhnlich erst) so gab mir das ein sonderbares, glückliches Gefühl: Vorher war ich dann nicht in Gesellschaften wie damals in der tollen season, sondern in den engeren, herzlicheren Kreisen meiner Engl. Bekannten, und ein merkwürdiger, interessanter, ehrenvoller Augenblick folgte dem andern: Man merkt zuweilen, daß man etwas Unvergeßliches eben erlebt, und so ein Gefühl durchfährt einen ganz und gar. Mir ging's oft in den T[agen] so, aber nichts mehr davon, sondern nun

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467

[...].

die dort ganz lieblich aussehen müssen. – Sie schreiben mir von der Passion von Bach, und wie Sie Einzelnes daraus in Wien ausgeführt hätten. Wird denn dort nie eine vollständige Aufführung davon zu Stande kommen? Sie werden schon wissen, wie sehr gut es mir hier damit im vorigen Jahre geglückt ist. Im Anfang wollte Keiner daran, sie meinten, es sei zu verwirrt, und ganz unsinnig schwer. Doch schon nach einigen Proben war das Alles anders geworden, und sie sangen mit einer Andacht, als ob sie in der Kirche wären. So gingen denn auch die beiden ersten Aufführungen ganz herrlich, und es zeigte sich wieder, daß das Publikum immer gut ist, wenn man ihm nur das Gute giebt, denn für beide male warn alle Plätze am Tage der Ankündigung vergriffen, und ich habe nie solche Stille, solche allgemeine Rührung über die Hörenden verbreitet gesehen. Sie fühlten, daß hier nicht Musik und Concert, sondern Religion und Kirche sei. Wenn ich in späterer Zeit wieder hierher komme, denke ich

522

noch vielerlei der Art zu unternehmen. Die Mittel dazu sind hier vorhanden, es fehlt nur an Einem der Lust hat, sie in Bewegung zu setzen: Ich habe Lust, und will's Gott auch Kraft dazu, und wünsche nur mir immer solchen Erfolg wie bei diesem ersten Versuch. Denn schon voriges Jahr nach meiner Abreise, verlangte die sämmtliche Singakademie die Wiederholung der Passion so dringend, daß Zelter es ihnen nicht abschlagen konnte, und dasselbe war auch dies Jahr der Fall. In Breslau hat Mosevius vor Kurzem eine Aufführung davon veranstaltet, die vortrefflich gelungen ist, und allgemeine Theilnahme gefunden hat. Auch in Hamburg wird sie jetzt einstudirt, kurz die Passion ist wieder ins Leben getreten, und wird nun wohl so bald nicht wieder vergessen werden. Außerdem gehts in diesem Winter, was das Theater betrifft,

[...].

Berlin, 16. April 1830 523

[...].

dies ein Privatbrief, und zwar no. 1, darum muß also geplaudert werden. Ich möchte, ihr wäret neulich mit mir gewesen, als ich unter dem Volk während der Prozession umherging, und mich viel umsah und sehr zufrieden mit mir war wegen der ersten Stücke meiner Kirchensinfonie, denn ich hätte nicht gedacht, daß es mit dem Contrast der ersten beiden Sätze noch heut so passe; aber hättest Du gehört, wie das ganze Volk sehr eintönig Gebete absang, dann mal ein heiserer Priester mitten durch schrie, oder ein andrer das Evangelium ablas und wie mitten hinein auf einmal lustige Militairmusik mit Trompeten hineinschallte, und wie die bunten gemalten Fähnlein hin und her schwankten, und wie die Chorknaben mit goldnen Troddeln behängt waren – ich denke Du hättest mich gelobt, wie ichs denn selbst that und mich freute. Gleich als ich aus dem Hause trat, sahen mich die dicken Maienbäume mit denen alle Häuser geziert sind, ganz vergnügt an, die ganze lange Straße war gedielt, und so ging der Zug im langsamsten Schritt fort, zwischen der Menschenmasse drängte ich mich dann mit abgezognem Hut durch, und sah alles ganz bequem; die alten Leute trugen schwer an den reich gestickten Fahnen, dann stand alles eine Weile still während Evangelium gelesen wurde, dann gings wieder weiter, ganze Züge von kleinen Mädchen in weißen Kleidern und blauen Bändern und Tüchern mit den bunten Bibeln in der Hand und in der Mitte die lange schwarze Erzieherinn, dann die Gymnasien mit den Lehrern, dann wieder ein Zug Musikanten mit silbernen Hörnern und Posaunen, nun fing es von allen Thürmen zu läuten an, und es kam die lange Reihe der jungen Geistlichen in langen zierlichen schwarzen Röcken, mit den lauernden scharfen Augen und den klugen Gesichtern; sie lasen alle sehr eifrig in ihren

550

Büchern, und fingen dann mit sehr wohlklingenden Stimmen ein Lied aus gmol an, es war aber lang und das Ende war nicht zu hören, vor den lauten Gebeten der nachfolgenden und dem Glockengeläut; dann kamen die verschiednen Geistlichen von den Hauptkirchen, und der Bischof mit seinem silbernen Kreuz, da glänzte alles von bunten Farben und von Gold und Sticckerey, und gleich darauf kam ein kleines Häuflein Capuziner, in ihren schmut-

zigen Kutten, lauter alte bigotte Gesichter, mit entblößten Glatzen, brennende Lichter in den Händen, der Prior von zwei andern geführt; dann der Erzbischof unter einem Thronhimmel mit dem Sanctissimum ganz in Weihrauchwolken eingehüllt, hinter ihm der König, lächelnd, überall umherguckend, nach den Damen heraufgrüßend, dann alle Generäle, die Akademicien, die Universität, der Magistrat, viel Militair. Mir fiel beim Zusehen zwanzigmal ein, was wohl der liebe Herrgott dazu sagen möchte? Ich weiß es aber nicht. Ich lief noch in die Kirche, sah den Zug da wieder ankommen, der König bei seinem Eintritt wurde mit Trompeten und Posaunen empfangen, und fuhr fort zu lachen und zu grüßen, sie kamen am Hochaltar, von dem sie ausgegangen, wieder an, und da war es vorbey. Sehr unangenehm war es mir, als ich eine Weile nachher durch eine kleine Straße ging, dem unordentlichen Zug der Capuziner noch einmal zu begegnen, die mit ausgelöschten Lichtern, sehr eilig, und mit einander schwatzend nach Hause liefen; es hat mich ordentlich geärgert. – Jetzt hast Du aber genug Prozeßion, und fürchtest beinah ich möchte katholisch werden; es ist aber nicht so schlimm damit, wie Du wohl weißt, und ich habe einen Fonds von Protestantismus in mir, der fürs erste vorhält; ich mache mir nichts draus, wenn ich schlimme Augen habe, an Sonn- und Festtagen Karten zu spielen, ja ich schöbe Kegel, wenn's nicht anders wäre. Finden sich dann aber Leute, die ich sehr lieb habe und in einigen Beziehungen sogar schätze, z. B. junge Mädchen, und wollen nicht Kegel schieben, so ärgert es mich zwar vielleicht einen Moment und ich möchte gern Proselyten für die Kegelkugel werben, nachher aber macht's mir eigentlich gar große Freude, wie so jeder darin seinen eignen Weg hat und haben muß, und wie sie doch alle in einem Punct sehr einig sind, und wenn ich mit Paul zusammen später zu Bett gehe sprechen wir vernünftig darüber und ich freue mich, wie gesagt. Überhaupt hast Du versprochen, die Masern sollten eine große Rolle in

[...].

München, 15. Juni 1830

551

[...].

Ich komme eben vom Markusplatze zurück, wo ich die Zeitungen mit den wilden Ereignissen in den Niederlanden gelesen habe; das, und der Mangel an Briefen von Hause, die mir nun schon seit beinahe 4 Wochen fehlen, machte mich so ein wenig an Vergangenheit und Zukunft denken, und daher schrieb ich Dir, was ich sonst wohl lieber verschwiegen hätte. Denn geschrieben nimmt sich doch einmal Alles wie Phrasen aus, und die hasse ich; glaube nur nicht, daß bei meinem folgenden Briefe (und der steht Dir unabänderlich bevor, sobald ich Rubini in Bologna gehört habe) ich wieder so viel von mir selbst sprechen will. Davon so bald nichts mehr und nun noch ein wenig von der Gegenwart. Die ist freilich so reich und bunt, daß ich nicht weiß wo ich die Sinne hernehmen soll, um Alles genugsam in mich aufzunehmen, vielweniger wie es sich alles in Worte kleiden läßt. Jeder Tag hat mir etwas Neues, Großes gebracht; und wenn mir der ganze Eindruck des Landes, das ich mir frappierend, phantastisch gedacht hatte, ganz anders und viel schöner in seiner ruhigen, behaglichen Wärme erschienen ist: so sind auch die Kunstwerke die ich bisjetzt gesehen habe, weit über alle meine Erwartungen. Eine liebliche Schönheit, die dem Auge viel Freude machte, vollendete Formen und all' solche Äußerlichkeiten glaubte ich zu finden, und das ist es auch, was die Reisebücher und Beschreiber von den Italiänischen Malern zu rühmen wissen: aber diese Kraft, diese innerliche Wahrheit, und wie man sieht, daß sie aus begeistert andächtigem Herzen haben malen müssen – davon wissen die Beschreiber nichts zu sagen und ich ahndete es nicht. Was für ein Künstler Titian war und wie er alles Lebensglück genossen und wieder dargestellt hat, konnte ich mir nach seinen Bildern in Paris schon denken: aber hier sieht man, wie er Alles Göttliche und Überirdische auch gekannt und wiedergegeben hat. Es sind Bilder, vor denen man Umgebungen und Betrachtungen und sich selbst vergißt, deren Gegenstand man nicht ansieht, sondern mit erlebt. Ich habe seine drei Hauptwerke nun jeden Tag gesehen und immer ist mir der Eindruck, als würde ich auf einmal Zeuge von dem was da gemalt ist. Wenn man bei der Darstellung der Maria sich ordentlich mit dem kleinen, netten Mädchen, das so allein auf der großen Treppe vor dem alten Priester stehen muß, ein wenig ängstigt, und sich mit dem Volk über den Heiligenschein wundert, der sie umgiebt, oder auch einmal nur neugierig hinsieht: und wenn die

Himmelfahrt einen mit in alle Wolken hebt, daß man den Lärm und das Jauchzen und die helle Musik der Engel hört – so ist in der Grablegung eine schmerzliche Ruhe und eine Abgeschlossenheit, und auf allen Gesichtern eine Empfindung der Trauer, wie ich es nie auf Bildern gesehen habe. Das ist es, was ich mir bei einer Kunst denke und von ihr fordern möchte: sie nimmt jeden in ihr Reich mit sich fort, und zeigt dem einen Menschen des andern innerste Gedanken und Empfindungen, und macht ihm klar, wie es in seiner Seele aussieht. Worte können das nicht so schlagend, wie Farben oder Musik. Ein Rondo von Herz oder Czerny thut es aber freilich auch nicht, das ist mir auch der einzige Maaßstab, ob mir etwas gefallen kann, oder nicht. Regeln sind nur für den der es macht, nicht für den, der's genießt. – Auch

[...].

Venedig, 12. Oktober 1830 **107**

[...].

und an denen ich mich so ganz vollkommen erfreue. Die vielen Italiänischen Bekanntschaften die ich gemacht habe, zeigen daß es mit dem Sinn für Musik geht, wie mit dem für die bildenden Künste, der sich darin hervor thut, daß die untern Arabesken der Logen von Raphael mit Namen und Inschriften überdeckt sind, theils mit Bleistift, theils mit Messern in die Mauer gekratzt, so daß von den Bildern die letzte Spur gänzlich vertilgt ist, oder daß die Fresko-bilder von Giulio Romano, die ich heut Morgen in der villa Madama sah, nun zu Wänden des Krautbodens gebraucht werden oder darin, daß man dem göttlichen Apoll vom Belvedere einen Theseus von Canova gegenüberstellt und auch jenen durch Inschriften verunstaltet – so sind auch die Italiänischen Musiker beschränkt und ohne Kraft und Willen, und all ihr Lob ist mir unerfreulich. Bendemann's, die hier sind und mich voller Freundlichkeit aufnehmen sind wenig musikalisch, und Musik ist mir doch am Ende zur Vertraulichkeit unentbehrlich und so nothwendig wie die Luft; die jungen Deutschen Maler tragen Schnurr- und Knebelbärte, Sturmkkappen, führen furchtbare Bullenbeißer, und mich graut vor ihnen. Wenn sie mit alle dem nur nicht so schwächliche Madonnen malten! Kurz es fehlt mir zuweilen an Menschen, und das ist eine große Entbehrung. In Wien war das nicht so; weißt

[...].

[...].

mich betrifft so bleibe ich bei der Fahne, die ist ehrenvoll genug. Vorgestern Abend wurde ein neues Theater, das Torlonia unternommen und eingerichtet hat, mit einer neuen Oper von Pacini eröffnet. Das Gedränge war groß, in allen Logen die schönsten geputzten Leute, der junge Torlonia erschien in der Loge am Proscenium und wurde samt seiner alten Herzoginn Mutter sehr applaudirt, man rief Bravo Torlonia, grazie, grazie; ihm gegenüber Jérôme mit seinem Hofstaat und vielen Orden, in der Nebenloge eine Gräfinn Samoilow, die erste im Theater diesmal, eine gemeine, häßliche Person, die früher mit David jetzt mit Pacini reis'te und sie von ihrem großen Vermögen unterhält; über dem Orchester ist ein Bild der Zeit die mit ihrem Finger auf ein Zifferblatt deutet, welches langsam von der Stelle rückt, und einen melancholisch machen könnte, nun erschien Pacini am Clavier und wurde empfangen; eine Ouvertüre hatte er nicht gemacht, die Oper begann mit einem Chor zu welchem ein gestimmter Ambos im Takt geschlagen wurde, der Corsar erschien, sang seine Arie und wurde applaudirt, worauf der Corsar oben und der maestro unten sich verneigten (der Seeräuber singt übrigens Contre Alt und heißt Mde. Mariani) dann kamen noch viele Stücke, und die Sache wurde langweilig, das fand das Publikum auch und als Pacinis großes Final anging, so stand das Parterre auf, fing an sich laut zu unterhalten, zu lachen, und drehte der Bühne den Rücken zu; Mde. Samoilow fiel in ihrer Loge in Ohnmacht und mußte herausgetragen werden, Pacini entwichte vom Clavier, und der Vorhang fiel am Ende des Acts unter großem Tumult, $\frac{3}{4}$ auf 10 war es auch geworden nun kam das große Ballet barba-bleu und dann der letzte Act der Oper, da sie also einmal im Zuge waren, so piffen sie das ganze Ballett von vorne herein aus, und begleiteten den 2^{ten} Act ebenfalls mit Zischen und Gelächter. Am Schluß wurde Torlonia gerufen, der aber nicht kam. Das ist die trockne Erzählung einer ersten Vorstellung und Theatereröffnung in Rom, ich hatte mir es wer weiß wie lustig gedacht und kam verstimmt heraus; hätte die Musik furore gemacht, so hätte mich es geärgert denn sie ist unter aller Kritik jämmerlich, aber daß sie nun dem Liebling Pacini den sie auf dem Capitol kränzen wollten auf einmal den Rücken drehn, den Melodien nachäffen und sie karrikirt nachmachen, das ärgert mich auch wieder, und es beweis't wie tief ein solcher Musiker in der allgemeinen Meinung steht; ein anderes Mal tragen sie ihn auf den Schultern nach Hause, das ist kein Ersatz. Sie würden es in

Frankreich mit Boyeldieu nicht so machen, ohne vom Kunstsinn zu reden
blos aus Anstandsgefühl. Aber genug davon; es ist verdrießlich; warum soll
auch mit Gewalt Italien ein Land der Kunst heut zu Tage sein, während es das
Land der Natur ist, und dadurch Alles beglückt; die Spaziergänge des monte

[...].

190

Lieber Hauser!

Wenn ich an Sie schreibe, so muß ich schon nicht anders als mit Dank anfangen; da haben Sie mir wieder meinen göttlichen Choral von Bach geschickt und selbst geschrieben, und das Ganze sieht so zierlich und nett und doch gelehrt aus, wie mein Zimmer in der Bärenmühle, Sie wissen ja, welche Freude mir das muß gemacht haben und da hinkt alle Danksagung. Könnt' ich Ihnen nur etwas dagegen senden, aber da Sie alte Sachen wollen, die *mir* so recht gefallen, so sieht es dünn aus, und ich finde nicht viel, was ich Ihnen schicken möchte; von mir sind einige Stücke da, die ich Ihnen zuschicken will, aber ich konnte bis jetzt nicht zur Zeit, sie abzuschreiben, kommen, weil ich fleißig und nach einander fort gearbeitet habe, und so werde ich wohl erst in einigen

Rom, 30. Januar 1831 197

Wochen meine kleine Sendung abgehen lassen können; für die Ihrige aber nochmal meinen herzlichen Dank, wie ja für Alles. Die musik. Zeitung werde ich wohl nicht mehr bekommen, da sie, wie mir von Berlin geschrieben ist, mit dem vorigen Jahre aufgehört hat; in den Blättern, die ich durch Sie erhalten, ist die Beschreibung der Wallfahrt in Bonn mit den beiden Choralmelodien, die mich sehr ergriffen hat, aber der Marschner thut freilich etwas mich zu bestechen. Die hmoll Ouverture ist nun wieder längst fertig, auch ist seitdem Luthers Weihnachtslied „vom Himmel hoch“ beendet, nun sitze ich mitten in seinem „Wir glauben all' an einen Gott“ was ich in 3 großen Fugen componire, und dann soll noch das kleine Lied „Verleih uns Frieden“ kommen, als ein Canon mit Cellos und Bässen (die Singbässe fangen an.) Dann will ich mit geistlicher Musik für Rom aufhören, und mich an meine Sinfonie aus amoll machen, wenn das Alles fertig wird, so giebt's einen guten Stoß neue Musik. In der Zwischenzeit schreibe ich Ihnen aber „Mitten wir im Leben sind“ ab, und schicke es gleich. Ich hatte in den letzten Wochen einige faule Perioden, wo ich den ganzen Tag nichts that; einmal war es das schönste Wetter mit Frühlingsblumen und Sonnenwärme, da mußte ich den Morgen spazieren gehn, und nach den hübschen Mädchen aussehn, und Abends gab es zu tanzen und Gesellschaften vollauf, und daß ich im ewigen und ernsten Rom tanzen sollte, das gefiel mir gar zu gut, und machte mehr Vergnügen, als je sonst. Da kam man denn spät im Mondenschein über den monte Pincio nach Haus, und es war noch lebendig auf den Straßen, und stand wieder den andern Morgen spät im Sonnenschein auf, und ging wieder auf den monte Pincio spatzieren,

und so verflogen die Tage wie bunte Blüten. Das ist nun nicht mehr, es liegt Schnee auf den Dächern, man friert und sitzt am Feuer, der monte Pincio ist voll Eis – da geht es dann frisch ans componiren, und welch sonderbar ernstes Leben dieser Wechsel von Beschäftigungen innen und Außen in mir hervorbringt, kann ich Ihnen nicht beschreiben. Es ist wohl eine unvergeßliche Zeit. – Ich hatte den Mahler Rhoden bis jetzt noch nicht kennen gelernt,

[...].

[...].

hob die Idee der Fremde mir ganz auf. In Venedig traf sichs sonderbar, daß ich keinen Menschen kennen lernte, keine Briefe von Hause während meines

222

ganzen Aufenthalts erhielt, und wie ich mich dort so ganz allein fühlte, so machten die Gestalten der drei großen Bilder von Titian mir einen unvergeßlichen Eindruck; die Grablegung haben Ew. Excellenz dort wohl gesehen, aber die Praesentation und die Himmelfahrt der Maria nicht, die letztere ist erst vor 10 Jahren vom Staub und Kerzenrauch befreit, und gleichsam entdeckt worden, aber eben weil das Bild der Luft nicht ausgesetzt war, soll es seinen alten Glanz behalten haben, und wirklich ist eine Farbenglut drin, wie ich sie nie geahndet hatte. Wenn in der Praesentation, wo die kleine Maria so unbefangen die große Treppe zu den Hohenpriestern hinaufsteigt, und selbst von dem Heiligenschein, der sie umgiebt nichts zu ahnden scheint, wenn da alles so natürlich und unschuldig hingestellt ist, als könne die ganze Begebenheit eben jetzt vor unsern Augen vorgehen, so ist die Himmelfahrt ein Wunderbild, wo alle Wolken sich aufgethan haben, und wo die Engel mit Brausen und Klingen die Maria umgeben und ihr zujauchzen, während es auf der Erde unter den Jüngern toll und wild zugeht; und die Maria sieht mit einem Blick hinauf, der nur ein einzigesmal hat gemalt werden können, und den alle Nachahmungen und Kupferstiche so verdrehen oder vergrößern. Schon damals ging es mir, wie seitdem oft hier: ich hielt es für Recht der wirklichen Musik nachzugehen, und besuchte Kirchenmusiken, Opern, u. s. w., da war es aber leer und klanglos, während vor diesen Bildern, und in der freien Luft, auf dem Wasser alles Ton und Klang wie die schönste Musik war. Es ist ein zu großes Misverhältniß zwischen solchen Werken, wo der höchste Ernst und die volle Begeisterung geschaffen haben, und einer Musik, die sich nur auf eine zufällige Convenienz gründet, und wo sichs nur um Zeitvertreib handelt; fänden die Leute recht's Vergnügen dabey, so möcht' es gut sein, aber auch das ist nicht einmal der Fall. Ich habe viel Musiker hier kennen gelernt, und keinen drunter den seine Kunst mehr interessirte, als irgend ein anderer Erwerb, und der aus Drang und mit Ernst dafür lebte. Nur den Director der päpst-

Rom, 5. März 1831 223

[...].

vormalen oder vorerzählen lasse. Die nächtliche Heerschau nun erzählend aufzufassen, geht nicht, denn es spricht eben keine bestimmte Person, und den Balladenton hat das Gedicht gar nicht; es kommt mir mehr wie eine geistreiche Idee, als wie ein Gedicht vor, mir ist als hätte der Dichter selbst an seine Nebelgestalten gar nicht geglaubt, sie nur als Einkleidung gebraucht; daher hat mir das Ganze etwas sehr Gemachtes, nicht Natürliches, nicht Wahres an sich (nimm mir meine Freimüthigkeit nicht übel) daher fassen mich viele Stellen, namentlich der Schluß mit dem todten Caesar eiskalt an, und mir will

Genua, 3. und 4. Juli 1831 **303**

durchaus nicht schauerlich dabey zu Muth werden. Nun hätte ich es freilich

[...].

ist entsetzlich mit anzusehen. Die Zeit, wo Italien das Land der Kunst war, ist längst vorüber, und wenn man an die Zeit Leos X und an die Maler und Dichter und Musiker von damals, oder an die Medizäer und ihre Werke oder an Genua mit seinen Dogen denkt, und es mit dem Jetzigen zusammenhält, da ist es ja natürlich, daß damals Kunst lebte und jetzt nicht. Ich kann Dir nicht sagen, wie ich mich nach einem Tone guter Musik sehne; seit einem halben Jahre hab' ich nun keine gehört. Die guten Italiänischen Sänger muß man jetzt in Paris oder London suchen; die schlechten sind sich überall gleich. Der einzige bessere, der in Italien jetzt singt, ist Tamburini, doch ist seine Stimme ganz passirt, und Ihr habt ihn in Wien schon längst gehört. Rubini, David, Donzelli, Lablache, die Lalande und Malibran sind in London, was ist da hier geblieben? Die Orchester sind lächerlich, Kirchenmusik giebt es nicht, und

304

was man vom allgemeinen Musiksinn erzählt, ist eine Fabel, denn was das Volk betrifft, so hört man nirgends so gräßliche, rohe, falsche Stimmen, nirgends solch unmelodisches, unzusammenhängendes Geschrei, wie hier auf

den Straßen, auf dem Meer etc. und was die andern anbelangt, so giebt es erstlich einmal keine Dilettanten, wie in Wien die mittelmäßigsten, und dann können Leute nicht rechten Sinn für Musik haben, die sich solche Chöre und solche Orchester gefallen lassen, ohne ungeduldig zu werden: Chöre, ohne eine einzige erträgliche Stimme, Orchester, ohne ein reines Instrument, und das Alles nicht im Takt zusammen? Mehr als je, fühle ich es jetzt aus Herzensgrunde, daß Deutschland das wahre und aechte Land der Kunst ist. d. 4^{ten} July.

Genua, 3. und 4. Juli 1831 305

[...].

Wie schön und unvergeßlich ich den Winter zugebracht habe, wird Dir mein Bruder wohl erzählen; ich kann davon nichts einzelnes herausheben. Der Aufenthalt in Rom ist zu sehr ein Ganzes; er macht ernsthaft, und fürs ganze Leben reicher. Seitdem hat sich mir nun auch das heutige Italien aufgethan, und wenn das auch der elendste, betrübendste Anblick von der Welt ist, erniedrigend für jeden, der die Menschen lieb hat, so gehört doch auch dieser schneidendste Contrast noch mit dazu, um den Eindruck des ganzen, phantastischen Landes so gewaltig und scharf zu machen, wie er ist. Da sieht man ein Volk, das wirklich weit unter den gebildeten Völkern in Europa steht, jede künstlerische Idee verschwunden, und so auch jeder Sinn für Kunst, ohne Liebe zu einander, ohne Glauben an irgend etwas, außer an ihren selbst gemachten, abgeschmackten Aberglauben, und so treiben sie sich müßig ihre Tage herum, umgeben von den Denkmälern ihrer Landsleute, aus denen überall der höchste frischeste Lebensgeist, tiefe Andacht, Feuer und Wärme, und die innerste Freude an allem Schönen sprüht. Wenn ich Dir sage, daß die elendsten, buntgeschmierten Schenkenschilder nicht ärger aussehen, als die Bilder, die die Italiener auf die Ausstellung auf dem Capitol gegeben hatten, wo nur von Franzosen und Deutschen hübsche Sachen waren und wo man gewiß seyn konnte, wenn man ein ganz lächerliches, entweder burlesk übertriebenes oder Claurensch weichliches Bild sah, einen italienischen Namen darunter zu finden, – daß dies in Neapel womöglich noch ärger war, – wenn ich Dir sage, daß ich seit der ganzen Zeit, die ich hier bin, keinen Ton Musik gehört habe; die guten Italiener gehen nach London oder Paris, ziehen die Mittelmäßigen nach und nur die schlechtesten bleiben im Vaterlande; daß ich auf öffentlichen Gebäuden lateinische Inschriften mit Schulschnitzern sah, die *ich* bemerkte – Du wirst es nicht glauben, so wörtlich wahr es ist! Es wäre zu vergessen – man könnte sich an Natur und Vorzeit halten, und so habe ich es in Rom gethan und da war ich glücklich. Aber sie umbauen beide auch nach Kräften, und den augenblicklichen Genuß können sie doch zuweilen verbittern. Recht klar ist solch ein Contrast, wenn ich meine kleine Ausgabe von [...].

Mendelssohn, letter of 10 August 1831 to Fanny Hensel and Rebecka Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:348-351

d. 10^{ten} Es war das klarste Wetter und aller Sturm ist vorüber; wollte daß es mit allen Stürmen so schnell endigte und sich aufklärte. Ich habe einen herrlichen Tag zugebracht, gezeichnet, componirt und Luft getrunken. Nachmittags war ich zu Pferd in Interlaken, zu Fuß kann jetzt kein Mensch dahin, der ganze Weg steht unter Wasser, und zwar unter reißendem, tobenden, strudelnden Wasser, so daß man selbst zu Pferd ganz naß wird. Auch hier im Ort sind die Straßen überschwemmt und gesperrt; in Interlaken ist es aber doch zu schön. Es wird einem gar so winzig zu Muth, wenn man sieht, wie herrlich der liebe Herrgott die Welt gemacht hat, und herrlicher kann man sie nicht sehen, als da. Mir wurde aber sonderbar, als ich an den großen Nußbaum kam, an den

348

[...].

Mendelssohn, letter of 14 August 1831 to Fanny Hensel and Rebecka Mendelssohn Bartholdy, in *SB* (2009), 2:353-355

[...].

Es war ein Tag, als sey er nur dazu gemacht, daß ich über die Wengernalp gehen sollte; der Himmel mit weißen Wolken bezogen, die hoch über den höchsten Schneespitzen schwebten, die Sonne verdeckten und Kühlung schafften, unter keinem Berge ein Nebel, und alle Spitzen so glänzend in der Luft, jede Biegung und jede Wand so hell, deutlich – was soll ich es beschreiben? Die Wengern Alp kennt Ihr ja, nur sahen wir sie damals bei schlechtem Wetter, heut waren alle Berge im Feierkleid, nichts fehlte, von den donnernden Lavinien bis zu dem Sonntag und den geputzten Leuten, die in die Kirche herabstiegen, heut wie damals. Mir waren alle die Berge nur wie große Zacken in der Erinnerung geblieben, die Höhe hatte mich damals zu sehr ergriffen, aber diese unermeßliche Breite, die dicken weiten Massen, der Zusammenhang all dieser ungeheuern Thürme, wie sie sich an einander schließen und einander die Hände reichen – das fiel mir heut besonders aufs Herz. Dazu denkt Euch

Lauterbrunnen, 13. August, bis Sarnen, 20. August 1831 353

nun alle Gletscher, alle Schneefelder, alle Felsspitzen blendend hell erleuchtet und glänzend, dann die fernen Gipfel aus andern Ketten die hinüberlangen und hereingucken – ich glaube, so sehen die Gedanken des lieben HerrGott aus. Wer ihn nicht kennt, der kann ihn hier sehr deutlich vor Augen sehen und seine Natur. Und zu alle dem die liebe frische Luft, die einen erquickt, wenn man müde,

[...].

354

Mendelssohn, letter of 28 August 1831 to Franz Hauser, in *SB* (2009), 379-380

[...].

darin. Vorige Tage blieb ich in einem Kloster, das mitten in den Schneebergen auf einer breiten grünen Wiese, heimlich, und einsam und still mit vielen Häuserchen umher sich ausbreitet, mehrere 1000 Fuß über dem Meer, wo keine Zeitung und kein Militär und keine vornehmen Leute bekannt waren, Engelberg heißt es, im Unterwaldner Canton, da hab ich Sebastian Bach auf der Orgel gespielt, und selbst herumphantasirt nach Herzenslust; ich wollte Sie hätten eine lange Phantasie über das Credo gehört das mir die Mönche aufgaben, es kamen eine Menge Tollheiten darin vor, es klang aber alles gut auf der kleinen Orgel in der einsamen Kirche, und wenn gar die Mönche die Nocturnen auf dem tiefen h mit voller Kraft sangen, und man es aus der verschlossenen leeren Kirche weit über die Wiesen schallen hörte, das war ein gar sonderbarer Klang. Aber was ist denn hier nicht unvergeßlich? Ich habe mir vorgenommen, jeden freyen Sommermonat, den ich noch in meinem Leben einmal haben soll, hier zuzubringen, und in den Bergen herumzustreifen; da ist man mit der Natur zusammen, da sieht man die Macht des lieben Herr Gotts sehr in der Nähe. Nun aber leben Sie wohl; ich adressire diesen Brief an Fuchs,

[...].

380

der kleinen Lang – Habe ich Euch denn schon je von der kleinen Lang geschrieben? Ich glaube kaum und doch ist sie eine der liebsten Erscheinungen, die ich je gesehen. Denkt Euch ein zartes, kleines, blasses Mädchen, mit edeln, aber nicht schönen Zügen, so interessant und seltsam, daß schwer von ihr wegzusehen ist und all' ihre Bewegungen und jedes Wort voll Genialität. Die hat denn nun die Gabe Lieder zu componiren und sie zu singen, wie ich nie etwas gehört habe; es ist die vollkommenste musikalische Freude, die mir bis jetzt wohl zu Theil geworden ist. Denn da fehlt nichts, wenn sie sich an das Clavier setzt und solch ein Lied anfängt, klingen die Töne anders, die ganze Musik ist so sonderbar hin und her bewegt, und in jeder Note das tiefste, feinste Gefühl; wenn sie dann mit ihrer zarten Stimme den ersten Ton singt, da wird es jedem Menschen still zu Muthe und nachdenklich und wird jeder durch und durch ergriffen auf seine Weise, aber könntet ihr auch nur die Stimme hören! So unschuldig, und bewußtlos schön, und so aus der innersten Seele herauf und doch so sehr ruhig! – Voriges Jahr waren wohl alle die Anlagen schon da, sie hatte kein Lied geschrieben, worin nicht irgend ein sonnenklarer Zug von Talent war, und da trommelten Marx und ich zuerst Lärm in der Stadt unter den Musikern, es wollte uns aber keiner so recht glauben. Seitdem aber hat sie den merkwürdigsten Fortschritt gemacht, wen die jetzigen Lieder nicht packen, der fühlt überhaupt gar nichts, und so ist es nun gar leider Mode geworden, das kleine Mädchen um Lieder zu bitten, ihr die Lichter vom Clavier wegzunehmen, und sich an ihrer Melancholie in Gesellschaft zu erfreuen. Das bildet einen bösen Contrast, und mehreremal wenn ich nach ihr auch etwas spielen sollte, war ich es nicht im Stande und sagte den Leuten Grobheiten. Denn es ist möglich, daß sie von alle dem Gerede noch verdorben werden kann, weil niemand neben ihr steht, der sie verstehen oder leiten könnte, und weil sie selbst sonderbarer Weise noch ganz ohne musikalische Bildung ist, wenigstens kennt, kaum gute Musik von schlechter unterscheiden kann und eigentlich außer ihren eignen Sachen alles wunderbar schön findet. Käme sie zu einer Art Zufriedenheit mit sich selbst so wäre es gleich vorbei; ich habe

414

nun das Meinige gethan und die Eltern und sie selbst aufs Eindringlichste gebeten die Gesellschaften zu vermeiden und so etwas Göttliches nicht vergehn zu lassen, der Himmel gebe nur, daß es helfen möge. Vielleicht schicke ich

Euch, Ihr Schwestern, bald einige ihrer Lieder, die sie mir abgeschrieben hat aus Dankbarkeit, weil ich ihr täglich eine Stunde gegeben habe und mich quälte, sie zu lehren was sie eigentlich schon von Natur wußte und weil ich sie ein bischen zur guten und ernsthaften Musik angehalten habe; auch eine Brieftasche hat sie mir gearbeitet mit einem Blumenkranz und einer Leier darauf, wenn ich mich darüber und über ihre Lieder aber freute, so begriff sie es nie, machte einen höflichen Knix und nahm es für eine Redensart. Ich wollte, Ihr könntet sie einmal sehen; sie allein könnte mir das Andenken an München schon lieb machen. – Denkt Euch der gegenüber nun ein mal die Fürstinn

Stuttgart, 7. November 1831 415

[...].

sehe kein Ende davon ab, denn es ist eine fixe Idee bei ihm. Ich habe einen Aufruf an alle Menschen von Olinde Rodrigues, worin er sein Glaubensbekenntniß ablegt, und alle auffordert einen Theil ihres Vermögens und sey er so klein er wolle, den St. Simonianern zu geben; auch an die Künstler ergeht der Aufruf, ihre Kunst künftig für diese Religion zu verwenden, bessere Musik zu machen als Rossini und Beethoven, Friedenstempel zu bauen, zu malen wie Raphael und

Paris, 14. Januar 1832 **461**

David; diesen Aufruf habe ich in 20 Exemplaren, die ich Dir, lieber Vater, zuschicken soll, wie père Olinde mir auftrag; ich werde es bei einem bewenden lassen, und Du wirst genug daran haben; auch das eine nur bei Gelegenheit, versteht sich. Es ist ein schlimmes Zeichen für den Zustand der Gemüther hier, daß eine solche monströse Idee, in ihrer abschreckenden Prosa, entstehen konnte und daß von den Schülern der Polytechnischen Anstalt sehr viele Theil nehmen. Man würde nicht begreifen, wie es möglich sey, wenn sie die Sache so von außen anpacken, den einen Ehre, den andern Ruhm, mir ein Publikum und Beifall, den Armen Geld versprechen, kurz wenn sie jeden nach seinen Verdiensten belohnen wollen, wenn sie also Alles Streben, alles Weiterwollen vernichten durch ihre ewige kalte Beurtheilung der Fähigkeit; aber dann kommen zuweilen Ideen vor, von allgemeiner Menschenliebe, von Unglauben an Hölle, Teufel, und Verdammung, von Zerstörung des Egoismus, lauter Ideen die man bei uns von Natur hat und im Christenthum überall findet, ohne die ich mir das Leben nicht wünschte, die sie aber wie eine neue Erfindung und Entdeckung ansehen und wenn sie sich jeden Augenblick wiederholen, wie sie die Welt umgestalten, wie sie die Menschen glücklich machen wollen, wenn Eichthal mir ganz ruhig sagt, an sich selbst brauche man gar nicht zu bessern, sondern an den Andern, denn man sey gar nicht unvollkommen sondern vollkommen; wenn sie einander und jedem den sie gewinnen wollen, nichts als Complimente und Lobpreisungen machen, die Fähigkeit und Macht bewundern, und bedauern, daß so große Kräfte nun verloren gehen sollten, durch alle die abgebrauchten Begriffe von Pflicht, Beruf und Thätigkeit, wie man sie sonst verstand: so will es einen wie eine traurige Mystification bedünken. Ich

[...].

462

[...].

Es ist mir lebhaft aufgefallen, wie in Deutschland die Musik und der Sinn für die Kunst verbreitet ist und sich immer mehr verbreitet, während man ihn anderswo, (hier z. B.) concentrirt. Daraus folgt zwar vielleicht, daß es bei uns nicht so schnell in die Höhe, aber auch nicht so schnell auf die Spitze getrieben wird, und daraus folgt, daß wir den andern Ländern Musiker schicken können, und doch noch reich genug bleiben. Ich habe mir das Alles ausgedacht, wenn ich hier so oft Politik hören und zuweilen auch sprechen mußte, und wenn die Leute, namentlich aber die Deutschen, auf Deutschland schalten oder es beklagten, daß es keinen Mittelpunkt, kein Oberhaupt, keine Concentrirung habe, und wenn sie meinten, das werde Alles gewiß bald kommen. Es wird wohl nicht kommen, und ich denke es ist auch ganz gut so. Was aber kommen wird und muß, das ist das Ende unsrer allzugroßen Bescheidenheit mit der wir Alles für recht halten, was die Andern uns bringen, unser Eigenthum sogar erst achten, wenns die Andern geachtet haben; hoffentlich werden die Deutschen bald aufhören, auf die Deutschen zu schimpfen, daß sie nicht einig seien, und so die ersten Uneinigen zu sein, und hoffentlich werden sie einmal dies Zusammenhalten den Andern nachmachen, was das Beste ist, das sie haben. Wenn sie das übrigens nicht bald thun, so gebe ich sie darum doch nicht auf, sondern componire weiter so lange mir was einfällt. Aber das thut mir immer leid, wenn wir selbst nichts von dem wissen wollen, was wir voraus haben. Ich kam nach Stuttgart, und freute mich wieder an dem vor-

[...].

[...].

Das D moll Concert hab ich öffentlich gespielt, der Applaus nach dem letzten Stück wollte gar nicht aufhören, die Leute waren alle so entzückt, daß ich überzeugt bin, es hat keinem einzigen gefallen. Ueberhaupt habe ich so meine eigenen Gedanken über die Publica (ich meine kums) und namentlich das Berliner, sie taugen nichts. Man achtet mich jetzt hier über die Maßen, schwärmt für meine klassischen Concerte, „die Predigt hat g’fallen, sie bleiben wie alle“. Und dazu ist das verfluchte Volk so unerfreulich und so unerfreut. Nun, im April gehe ich wieder nach London. Du weißt daß mir das Philharmonic sehr angenehme Anträge gemacht hat, die ich um so vergnügter angenommen habe, da die langweilige Singacademiegeschichte immer noch unentschieden ist. Man macht mich toll mit der Geschichte, und am Ende wollen sie alle doch nichts als ihren alten Schlendrian, und also ihren jetzigen Direktor; die falsche Position die ich aber dadurch habe einnehmen müssen, ist ächt Berlinisch, nur bin ich zum Glück nicht dumm genug, mich darüber zu ärgern, daß sie mich zum Wahlpopanz brauchen. Nächste Woche sagt man soll es entschieden werden, ich gehe seit 2 Monaten nicht mehr hin. – Deine Arie bekommst Du wahrscheinlich schon als Antwort auf Deinen nächsten Brief, ich muß nun bald die Symphonie für England anfangen, und will sie vorher gewiß machen.

Berlin, 19. Januar 1833 109

[...].

Lieber Schubring

Als ich die Bogen zu meinem Oratorium zu ordnen anfang und viel an die Musik dazu dachte, die ich in diesem Winter aufzuschreiben gedenke, da gerieth mir der Brief, in dem Du mir Beiträge schicktest, auch in die Hände, und mir schien das Alles so gut, daß ich Dir den ganzen Text, so weit er neu ist, abschrieb und Dir hierbei übersende mit der Bitte eben so wie zum Anfang damals, jetzt zum Ganzen, mir Deine Bemerkungen und Zugaben zu schenken. Ich muß mich nun bald heranwagen, drum bitte ich Dich enthalte mir das Alles nicht vor, was Du mir helfen kannst; Du wirst am Rande schon mehreres bemerkt finden, was mir noch fehlt, und wo ich Stellen aus der Bibel oder dem Gesangbuch haben möchte, dann aber wünschte ich hauptsächlich Deine Meinung 1) über die Form des Ganzen, namentlich über die erzählenden Theile; ob Du glaubst, daß es im *Allgemeinen* so bleiben könnte, indem dramatische und erzählende Vorstellung unter einander gemischt sind; die Bachsche Form mit dem personificirten Erzähler darf ich hierbei nicht nehmen, und so scheint mir diese Mischung das Natürlichste und nur an einigen Stellen, z. B. dem Ananias, sehr schwierig wegen der langen zusammenhängenden Berichte 2) ob Du meinst daß kein Hauptzug in der Geschichte und den Thatsachen, so wie im Character und den Lehren des Paulus ausgelassen oder falsch angegeben sey 3) wo Du die Abtheilungen (1^{ster} und 2^{ter} Theil) machen würdest, am besten gefielen mir eigentlich 3, vor der Reise nach Damascus, und nach der Taufe, um ihn als Heiden, Bekehrten und Apostel darzustellen, aber das scheint unmöglich, weil der erste gar zu unförmlich kurz, und der 3^{te} lang würde, 2 wären practischer, und dann

262

der 1^{ste} bis nach der Taufe ging. – 4) Ob Du meinst, ich könne den Choral drin haben? Mir ist von Mehreren sehr entschieden abgeredet worden, und doch kann ich mich nicht entschließen ihn ganz aufzugeben, denn ich denke in jedem Orator. aus dem N. Testam müsse er von Natur sein. Bist Du nun der Meinung, so solltest Du mir alle Stellen und Lieder angeben.

[...].

263

[...].

dazu bekommen. Bei der Gelegenheit hat mir Hiller einen ganz allerliebsten, liebenswürdigen Brief geschrieben, er läßt Euch alle grüßen, unser alter Streit wegen Paris und Deutschland hat sich erneuert, und ich will nun ernsthaft versuchen, ob es mir nicht möglich sein wird, ihn nach Deutschland zurückzubringen. Seine Etuden, die ich kürzlich kennen lernte, haben mich so sehr überzeugt, daß er dort nicht die rechten Fortschritte macht, obschon er da einer der ersten und besten ist – oder vielleicht eben deswegen. Freilich kann ich ihm meine Düsseldorfer Musik nicht anpreisen, seine Conservatoire Concerte sind ein ganz Theil besser; gestern liefen mir ein Dutzend Musikanten aus der Probe des Messias weg, weil sie meine strenge Herrschaft endlich müde seien, und mein Solosänger, als er eben anfangen sollte „blick auf Nacht bedeckt das Erdreich“ war so besoffen, daß er übel wurde, und aus dem Saale wankte, und nicht wieder zum Vorschein kam. (Herr Parrod war es, der sich hier leider ganz auf

Düsseldorf, 11. März 1835 **187**

[...].

[...].

Ich habe Dir noch zu danken für den letzten Brief und mein Ave; ich kann es oft gar nicht begreifen, wie es möglich ist über Musik ein so genaues Urtheil zu haben ohne technisch musikalisch zu sein, und wenn ich das, was ich allerdings dabei empfinde, so klar und anschaulich sagen könnte wie Du, sobald Du darüber sprichst, so wollte ich keine einzige confuse Rede mehr in meinem Leben halten. Habe tausend Dank dafür und für Deine Worte über Bach. Du hast nun freilich nach einmaligem unvollkommenen Hören meines Stücks das herausgefunden was ich nach langer Bekanntschaft und wiederholtem Hören erst jetzt, und darüber sollt' ich mich wohl ein wenig ärgern aber dann ist mirs doch wieder lieb, daß eine solche Deutlichkeit des Gefühls bei Musik da ist, und daß Du die gerade hast Denn was am Ende und in der Mittelstelle verfehlt ist, liegt in so kleinen Fehlern, die sich mit so wenig Noten (namentlich weggestrichen) hätten verbessern lassen, daß weder ich noch irgend ein Musiker so leicht drauf gekommen wäre, bis ers oft gehört. Es schadet der Einfachheit des Klangs, die mir gerade im Anfang gut gefällt, und wenn ich auch meine daß es bei vollkommner Ausführung, namentlich mit großem Chor weniger auffallend würde, so wird doch immer etwas davon bleiben. Indessen will ichs ein andermal schon besser machen. Ich möchte aber, Du hörtest den Bach noch einmal, weil ein Stück, das Du weniger hervorhebst mir darin am meisten gefällt; es ist die Alt und Baßarie; nur muß der Choral von vielen Alt-

196

stimmen und der Baß sehr schön gesungen werden. So sehr die Stücke bestelle Dein Haus und es ist der alte Bund herrlich sind, so liegt allein in dem Plane von dem folgenden Stücke, wie der Alt anfängt, der Baß darauf ganz frisch und neu unterbricht und bei seinen Worten bleibt, während der Choral als Drittes eintritt, und wie dann der Baß freudig schließt, und der Choral noch lange nicht, sondern immer stiller und ernster fortsingt, etwas sehr Erhabnes und Tiefsinniges. Die Worte „sanft und stille“ und der letzte Schluß vom Worte Schlaf an klingen so daß jedes Zimmer eine Kirche wird, wo sie gesungen werden. Übrigens ist es eigen mit dieser Musik, sie muß sehr früh oder sehr spät fallen, denn sie weicht ganz von seiner mittleren gewöhnlichen Schreibart ab,

und die ersten Chorsätze und der Schlußchor sind so, daß ich sie gar nicht für Seb. Bach sondern für irgend einen andern aus der Zeit gehalten hätte, während doch kein andrer Mensch einen Tact aus den mittleren Stücken gemacht haben kann. Die Orgel zum Händelschen Oratorium ist nun fest bestimmt, kriegt 8 Register oder mehr, und wird im Hintergrunde des Saales aufgestellt (es kommen 2mal 16 Fuß hinein) Das wird sich gut machen, namentlich für die Arien. Wie mir Mutter schreibt, so denkt sie sich Hiller doch nicht richtig, denn trotz aller seiner Freuden und Ehren in Paris und seiner Zurücksetzungen in Frankfurt schreibt er daß er mich um meinen Platz hier am Rhein, mit allen seinen Fatalitäten beneide, und da sich wohl noch solch einer in Deutschland finden wird, so gebe ich die Hoffnung nicht auf ihn aus der Ehren- und PlaisirAtmosphäre in die Arbeitsstube zurück zu persuadiren. Neulich las ich einen Auszug aus Bulwers France, der mir gut gefiel, und ich glaube daß sich die Franzosen seit kurzer Zeit so geändert haben, wie kein andres Volk; denn daß von ihrer Umgänglichkeit und angenehmen Höflichkeit selbst vieles fort ist, beweis't Bulwer auf eine sehr lustige und geistreich anschauliche Art. Cherubini sagte mir als ich ihm mein Tu es Petrus zeigte höchst brummig mais ceci est à refaire, und ich stritt mich lang und breit mit ihm damals darüber, aber jetzt, wo ich es herausgeben will, sehe ich doch, daß er Recht gehabt hat, und ich muß das ganze Stück von vorn an umarbeiten und ausputzen, was eine schwere Arbeit ist. Indeß freue ich mich doch es drucken zu lassen. Nun lebewohl lieber Vater; das Papier ist aus, morgen schreib ich an Beckchen, der ich lange schon einen Brief schuldig bin. Bitte laß mich bald von Dir viel hören und Gutes über die böse, langwierige Wunde, die ich ganz beseitigt glaubte Hoffentlich ist sie es nur bald, und hört auf Dich zu quälen. Lebewohl und bleibe mir gut

Düsseldorf den 23 März 1835

Dein
Felix MB

Düsseldorf, 23. März 1835 197

Je mehr ich fühle, wie selten es mir gelungen ist, etwas zu leisten, worauf ich mit Befriedigung zurückblicken könnte, je deutlicher ich einsehe, wie viel mir immer noch fehlt, um mich auf mehr, als auf meine gute Absicht berufen zu (können) dürfen, (um) desto dankbarer bin ich für eine Ehre, die ich eben deshalb nicht wie eine Belohnung für ein Erreichtes, nur wie eine Aufmunterung zu fortgesetztem Streben betrachten muß. Als solche ist sie mir doppelt werth, weil sie mich weiter führen, und mich von Neuem ermuthigen wird den Weg zu verfolgen, auf welchem ich meiner Kunst einmal nützlich zu sein hoffe. (Da ich ihn schon in manchen Zeiten) Wenn es meine Pflicht (wäre diesen) ist ihn auch durch Widersprüche und Hindernisse hindurch (habe fortzusetzen müssen) und nicht davon abzulassen, so ist es wohl die allergrößte Freude, (dann wieder von neuem bestätigt) (eine) eine Bestätigung zu finden erhalten, daß

414

es (wenigstens) kein Irrweg sei, und eine (solche) schönre Bestätigung (kann mir nur) giebt es für mich nicht als die Theilnahme und die freundliche Gesinnung derer (geben), denen der Ernst (und die Reinheit) der Kunst (wie mir) und ihre Würde am Herzen liegt. (So) Es ist mir also dieser (ehrenvolle) Beweis von Vertrauen gleich wichtig und (erfreulich) ehrenvoll für meine Vergangenheit, wie für (die) meine Zukunft, und ich weiß nicht wie ich dafür (meinen) den Dank dafür genauso aus(zu)sprechen (vermöchte) soll.

Ich hoffe in den nächsten Tagen Gelegenheit zu finden, Ew. Magnificenz mündlich meinen Dank noch wiederholen zu dürfen, und indem ich (Sie bitte die Versicherungen) um die Genehmigung meiner vollkommensten Hochachtung genehmigen zu wollen, habe ich die Ehre zu sein

Ew. Magnificenz
ergebenster

Leipzig den 22^{sten} März 1836.

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

415

[...].

Dies ist ein curioses Land; neben aller Grund-Misere in Kunst Wissenschaft und sonstigem Leben, so tausend Grund-Gutes. Das ist nun hier zwischen Hiller und mir das ewige Gespräch; er will im September nach Italien, dort lange bleiben, Opern componiren, Musik machen – und ich möchte, er bliebe ganz und gar in Deutschland, um sein unverkennbares Talent durch alle Misere recht rein zu waschen, um fleißig zu arbeiten, fortzuschreiten, was man doch

Frankfurt a. M., 20. Juni 1836 469

nirgends so kann, wie hier, und damit wieder ein guter Deutscher Musiker mehr da wäre.

An Moscheles schreibe ich doch nun wirklich bald; falle ihm in meinem Name[n zu] Füßen, denn ich verdiene gar nicht, daß er meinen Brief noch lies't.

Lebe wohl für heut; ich kriege keinen vernünftigen Brief zusammen! Aber sch[reibe] Du mir ja am ersten! Ich werde auch gewiß pünktlich am 15^{ten} fortan antworten, oder noch vorher, nicht nachher. Laß uns aber fest daran halten; es ist philiströs, aber heilsam. Nun noch tausend Grüße an Rosen und lebewohl.

Dein
Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

470

Ew. Wohlgeboren

haben mir durch Ihr schönes freundliches Geschenk eine Freude gemacht, für die ich Ihnen von ganzem Herzen danke. Wenn Ihnen die ewigen, frommen Gedanken meines Meisters eben solchen Eindruck gemacht haben, wie mir die des Ihrigen, so freut es mich daß ich sie Ihnen für einen Augenblick gegenwärtigen konnte, während ich mich an dem Werke, das Sie mir schenken nun für immer erbauen kann und der Genuß davon kein vorübergehender ist. Dafür haben Sie tausend Dank.

Mit vollkommner Hochachtung bin ich

Ihr ergebener

Frankfurt den 10^{ten} July 1836

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

[...].

Es hat mich sehr interessirt, was Du mir von Henselts Spiel schreibst, und auch von andern Seiten höre ich Dein Urtheil über sein Concert in Berlin bestätigt. Das ist eben was ich in meinem letzten Briefe meinte, daß all die Fer-

Frankfurt a. M., 29. Mai 1837 **277**

tigkeit und Coquetterie mit Fertigkeit selbst das Publikum nicht mehr leicht verblendet, es muß Geist sein, wenn es sie alle fortziehen soll, und drum höre ich vielleicht Döhler lieber eine Stundelang, als Fanny eine Stundelang, aber nach 8 Tagen kann ich ihn nicht mehr vor langer Weile anhören, und dann fange ich erst an mich in das andere Spiel hineinzuhören, und das ist das Rechte. Was Du mir von der Wohnung schreibst, die noch unvermietet ist,

[...].

278

[...].

stellung auf Lebenszeit oder Pension. Von der großen neunten Symphonie mit Chören soll ich Dir sprechen? Es ist schwer, überhaupt über Musik zu sprechen. – Du müßtest sie vor allem hören. Die Instrumentalsätze gehören zum Größten, was ich in der Kunst kenne; von da an, wo die Stimmen eintreten, verstehe auch ich es nicht, d. h. ich finde nur Einzelnes vollkommen, und wenn das bei solch einem Meister der Fall ist, so liegt die Schuld wahrscheinlich an uns. Oder der Ausführung. Und darum sage ich, Du müßtest auch die ersten Stücke hören – ich zweifle, daß es in Berlin leicht der Fall sein kann. Im Gesangssatz aber sind die Singstimmen so gelegt, daß ich keinen Ort kenne, wo er gut gehen könnte, und daher kommt vielleicht bis jetzt die Unverständlichkeit. Alles das aber müßte man wenigstens besprechen – nicht beschreiben. Als ich diesen Sommer in Coblenz in einer Gesellschaft war und zwei Consistorialräthe sich so ernsthaft über den Droysen streiten hörte und die oder die Stelle seines Aristophanes und seines Alexander wörtlich anführen und sagen „Droysen sagt“, da sagte ich, ich kenne den Mann näher, und man frug mich

Leipzig, 14. Dezember 1837 429

[...].

[...].

auch die Einlage noch mit darein gehen: Thalberg ist vorgestern von hier abgereist, nachdem er in wenig Tagen 2 volle Concerte gegeben hat; er ist jetzt in Berlin, geht dann über Breslau und Warschau nach Petersburg, und will dann zur nächsten Saison wieder in London sein. Mir hat sein Spiel außerordentlich viel Vergnügen gemacht; es ist so vollkommen, wie man irgend etwas wünschen kann, und dabei sind seine Berechnungen, und wie er s[ich alle] Effecte ausspart [so] subtil und superfein gemacht, daß ich in einem fortwährenden [Erstaunen] zuhörte, wenn er so eins nach dem andern herbeischleppt. Dabei der prachtvolle Anschlag, [dann] die Kraft die er in der Faust hat zugleich mit den weich ausgespielten zarten Fingern. Etwas mehr *Musik* könnte er machen, es fehlt daran in den Fantasieen und Variationen, die er hier ausschließlich gespielt hat; man kann es kaum Compositionen nennen, weil die Composition darin so untergeordnet ist, und doch einmal die Hauptsache bleibt, die sich immer und durch alles durchfrißt und die Wirkung bestimmt. Aber was Virtuosität heißt, die kann sich eben kein Mensch besser träumen, und das an sich gefällt mir schon so, wenn einer recht vollkommen ist, was er ist. Dabei gefällt mir der ganze Kerl einzig, er ist angenehm und liebenswürdig und gescheut, eine recht seltene Persönlichkeit, und ich habe an seinem Umgange und seinem Gespräch viel Vergnügen gehabt. – Wieder kommt da das ewige Misverständniß zum Vorschein, daß er jetzt vor allen Dingen Geld verdienen und die Leute entzücken will, und sich dann in späteren Jahren vornimmt gute Musik zu schreiben, und sich selbst zu genügen. Ob aber nicht alle Virtuosen (wenigstens die guten) so denken müssen? Indeß hat doch Moscheles mitten in seinen Reisen und Effecten das g moll Concert geschrieben, und die Etuden. Jetzt

[...].

Leipzig, 1. Januar 1839 277

Mendelssohn, letter of 24 January 1841 to Joseph [?], quoted in Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' 81

[...].

„Nun tausend Dank für die gütige Übersendung der Beethovenschen Cadenz. Sie hat mich ungemein interessirt. Wie doch der, in dieser Zeit, nichts hat machen können, worin nicht die glühendsten Funken seines tiefsten Geistes sprühen. Die Cadenz scheint mir offenbar, namentlich auf den ersten 2 Seiten so ganz leicht hingeworfen, aber die ganze dritte Seite hat dann wieder kein Mensch schreiben können, als Beethoven, in der Zeit, und sieht doch wieder nichts anderm als ihm ähnlich. Und wie schön es dann wieder ins gestochne Solo hinüberlenkt! Ganz vortrefflich; und Ihnen der herzlichste Dank für die Freude, die Sie mir dadurch bereitet haben.“

[...].

Mendelssohn, letter of 1843 [?] to Friedrich Wilhelm IV [?], quoted in Loos, 'Mendelssohn und Beethoven,' 82-83

[...].

„das S. M. aber denth ... mein Gutachten vernehmen. Hiebei brauchte ich wohl von dem innern Werth der Handschriften eines Meisters wie L. Beethoven kaum erst Erwähnung zu thun; alles was unmittelbar von einem solchen Manne ausgegangen ist, jedes seiner Werke, ja jede seiner Äußerungen muß in diesem Sinne für uns wie für die späten Nachkommen stets von unschätzbarem Werth sein und bleiben.

Wird nun aber wie hier eine Geldsumme gefordert gilt es sich über das Verhältnismäßige dieser Summe auszusprechen, sie mit den Preisen wie sie sonst für die Manuscr. desselben Meisters, oder andrer Meister gestellt werden zu vergleichen, so bekenne ich, daß mir die verlangte Summe unverhältnismäßig und unbillig erscheint.

Im Vergleich mit den Manuscr. andrer unsrer großer Componisten sind nämlich die von Beeth. nicht selten, während es außerordentlich schwer ist eine voll. ständ. Part. von Händel oder Gluck selbst für die größten Geldsum. zu erhalten, während dasselbe mit den Haydnschen und Mozartschen der Fall zu sein anfängt, sind viele der vollst. Beethovensche Manuscr. noch nicht in Besitz von Biblioth. oder Sammlern, und ihre Preise, wenn sie zum Verkaufe angeboten werden sind außer Verhältniß niedriger, als dieser hier gestellte, wie ich aus eigener mehrfacher Erfahrung weiß.

Ferner scheint mir eine Hauptrücksicht bei dem Preise von Manuscr. in deren Vollständigkeit zu liegen. daher Sinf. sind das Wichtigste, die Part. von denen aber nach der Angabe des beigel. Verzeichn. wie es Hr. Pr. Schindler eingereicht hat, nur die des emoll Quartetts vollständig vorhanden ist, den andern fehlen zus... sehr bed. Stücke.

.... beruht auf einem Irrthum von dem Verzeichn. angeführt wird, daß das 1ste Finale welches in dem angegebenen Exemplar der Leonore fehlt keine Veränderung erlitten habe. Ich kenne dies Stück selbst in der ersten Bearbeitung, wo es in Text, Situation und Musik durchaus von dem bekannten Finale verschieden ist, und daher in einem vollständ. Expl. nicht fehlen darf.

Von den Conversat. und Skizzen Büchern möchte es hingegen wohl nirgends seine so reiche und vollständige Saml. geben, wie die hier angebotne, doch rechtfert. diese allein, nach meiner Ansicht, einen Preis wie den verlangten keineswegs.“

[...].

Appendix 2. *Andacht* as a mindset, ritual and mode of thinking

Early nineteenth-century German understandings of *Andacht* (devotion) were complex. They were the result of extensive conceptual shifts that brought about manifold terminological understandings that interacted and overlapped in ambiguous and arbitrary ways. This often complicates attempts of finding an adequate English translation of the term; in most cases, the meaning intended can be deduced only from the textual context and from contemporary writings by the same author. A direct look at the writings of other individuals who might have influenced terminological understandings of the author is valuable, as is an analysis of his biography and the historical context. This applies in particular to Mendelssohn who read widely and liked to exploit the semantic ambiguity of terms in creative and ironic ways.

Four types of usage of the noun *Andacht* may be distinguished in the writings of Mendelssohn and his contemporaries (see Figure 10): in some texts it denoted a mindset or mood, in others a frame of mind or soulstate. Also observable is an application of the noun in order to describe contemporary rituals of religious practice and, finally, in early nineteenth-century use, a certain mode of thinking was described as *Andacht*, too.

Understood as a mindset, *Andacht* originally described any process of ‘thinking of something,’¹ of ‘directing one’s thoughts towards an aim,’² or of concentrating ‘one’s thoughts onto an object.’³ This secular meaning of the term as paying attention to something was widespread especially prior to the twelfth century. Terms that seem most accurate for translating this meaning of *Andacht* into English include ‘attentiveness,’ ‘concentration’ and ‘absorption.’ In order to describe the

¹ ‘Andacht,’ in Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, ed. Elmar Seebold (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 29: ‘Denken an etwas’

² ‘Andacht,’ in Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, ed. Walther Mitzka (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1963), 21: ‘Lenken der Gedanken an ein Ziel’

³ *DWB*, s.v. ‘Andacht,’ <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&hitlist=&patternlist=&lemid=GA03457> (accessed 13 May 2013): ‘samlung der gedanken auf einen gegenstand’

affective and spiritual state of the person engaging in concentrated thinking, English terms such as ‘contemplativeness’ or ‘contemplative mood’ seem most accurate.

During Mendelssohn’s lifetime, it was common practice among writers to employ the term *Andacht* in order to describe attitudes of contemplativeness, irrespective of the object or intellectual domain towards which they were directed. Most prevalent were distinctions between an ethical, philosophical (or aesthetic) *Andacht* on the one hand and religious *Andacht* on the other.⁴ Many lexicologists believe that these various forms of *Andacht* had a religious basis. Supposedly, they were the result of a metaphorical or figurative (*uneigentliche*) return to theological conceptions of the term that had been initiated by Cluniac monks in the Middle Ages and will be described anon.⁵ According to lexicologists, this backward-looking religious use of language becomes apparent in the writings of the Brothers Grimm and their contemporaries through implicit or explicit allusions to characteristic features of religious contemplation. These include, in particular, a ‘submissive receptiveness and active commitment or dedication.’⁶ Attitudes of submissiveness, in this context, were, among others, dealt with by Kant who understood *Andacht* as ‘the frame of mind susceptible to devout dispositions’ (*die stimmung des gemüths zur empfänglichkeit gottergebener gesinnungen*).⁷

While the assumption of underlying religious meanings cannot be dismissed, in some cases it is difficult to trace religious connotations of *Andacht* based on verbal evidence. In addition to the guidelines for fixing the term’s meanings and connotations already mentioned, an investigation of the author’s style of writing seems worthwhile. A more sophisticated language register, for example, might

⁴ See Hans-Jörg Spitz, ‘Zur Bedeutung von “Andacht” im St. Trudperter Hohenlied,’ in *Lingua Germanica: Studien zur deutschen Philologie; Jochen Splett zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Eva Schmitsdorf (Munich, Berlin: Waxmann, 1998), 317-332, at 332.

⁵ ‘Andacht,’ in Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1963), 21: ‘Recent word usage, which seemingly returns to the original meaning of the term [...] is based on an unapparent application of its religious sense.’ (*In neuer Gebrauchsweise, die scheinbar zur Grundbed. zurückkehrt [...] liegt uneigentl. Verwendung des geistl. Sinnes vor.*)

⁶ Spitz, ‘Zur Bedeutung von “Andacht,”’ 332: ‘Even the profane use of ‘devotion’ retains the features that characterise its religious language use – passive receptiveness and active dedication.’ (*Auch noch die profane Verwendung von ‘Andacht’ kann noch die den religiösen Sprachgebrauch kennzeichnenden Merkmale – passive Empfänglichkeit und tätige Hingabe - bewahren [...].*)

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 7:841.

indicate spiritual connotations; according to Adelung, religious understandings of the term *Andacht* were more prevalent in formal nineteenth-century language, whereas a secular application of the term was more widespread in everyday language.⁸

The religious use of *Andacht* to denote a spiritual activity that was directed towards God, or towards anything considered divine, arose in southern Germany in the late Middle Ages.⁹ Broadly defined as ‘a withdrawal and purification from everything earthly’ (*eine Absonderung und Läuterung von allem Irdischen*) necessary for ‘any dealings with the Supreme Being’ (*Umgang mit dem höchsten Wesen*),¹⁰ terminological understandings henceforth diverged as to the predisposition of this form of *Andacht* towards feeling and thinking. While some authors described it as an ‘orientation of the mind towards God and religious objects with which we deal [...] during prayer, while listening to the divine word, singing etc.,’¹¹ others emphasized its emotive component, defining it as a ‘rising of the heart towards the transcendental and eternal’ (*eine Erhebung des Herzens zum Uebersinnlichen und Ewigen*).¹² Since, in nineteenth-century thought, both the rational and the emotional forms of *Andacht* were often seen as long-lasting and enduring mental states that were occasionally described as *Andächtigkeit*, a translation of both terms as ‘religious’ or ‘pious contemplativeness’ or ‘contemplative devotion’ is accurate, too.¹³

After the Middle Ages had infused the meanings of *Andacht* with religious connotations, its semantics became confined to the religious sphere to denote ‘pious

⁸ See ‘Die Andacht,’ *GKW*, 1:275-276: ‘The mind’s attentiveness or direction towards an object. In the widest meaning, only [used] in common life. In more respectable style of writing it is used only in a more narrow meaning, [in the sense of] attentive directedness of the mind towards religious practices that are part of worship.’ (*Die Aufmerksamkeit oder Richtung des Gemüthes auf einen Gegenstand. In der weitesten Bedeutung nur noch im gemeinen Leben. In der anständigen Schreibart gebraucht man es nur in engerer, von der aufmerksamen Richtung des Gemüthes auf geistliche oder zum Gottesdienste gehörige Übungen.*)

⁹ ‘Andacht,’ in Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1963), 21: ‘henceforth, ‘Andacht’ is generally used in German in its sacred use’ (*fortan wird A. im Deutschen [...] wesentl. in geistl. Sinn verwendet*)

¹⁰ ‘Andacht (Religion),’ *Damen Conversations Lexikon*, ed. Carl G. R. Herloßsohn (Leipzig: Fr. Volckmar, 1834), 1:203.

¹¹ ‘Andacht,’ *PUL* (1857), 1:465: ‘Richtung des Geistes auf Gott u. religiöse Gegenstände, mit denen wir uns beschäftigen, z. B. beim Gebet, beim Anhören des göttlichen Worts, beim Gesang etc.’

¹² ‘Andacht (Religion),’ *Damen Conversations Lexikon* (1834), 1:203.

¹³ ‘Andacht,’ *PUL* (1857), 1:465: ‘Zustand des Gemüths, in welchem sich die A. längere Zeit fortsetzt’

thoughts, piety' (*fromme gedanken, devotion*) from the sixteenth century onwards.¹⁴ As it was often associated with a 'wish to enter into communication with a higher being' (*Wunsch [...], mit einem höhern Wesen in Verkehr zu treten*),¹⁵ *Andacht* henceforth described an 'inclination to religion' (*Neigung zu der Religion*) and 'activities of godliness' (*Übungen der Gottseligkeit*).¹⁶ Strictly speaking, it is only an understanding of *Andacht* in this sense that justifies its overused translation into English by reference to terms the meanings of which lie close to each other: 'religious sense,' 'devotion,' 'devoutness,' 'faithfulness' or 'reverence' as well as 'piety,' 'religiousness' and 'religiosity.' Such terminology is apt; these nouns were often used in religious and ethical senses by nineteenth-century English writers. According to diachronic dictionaries of the English language, a 'non-religious use' of the term 'devotion' that focused on attitudes of loyalty 'to a person, cause, pursuit, etc.' prevailed mainly in the sixteenth century. In other centuries, the noun described a commitment 'to religious observances and duties,' to 'a sacred use or purpose' as well as to a deity.¹⁷ While sacred and secular meanings of 'faithfulness' and 'reverence' overlapped,¹⁸ the meanings of 'piety' usually combined ethical and moral connotations.¹⁹

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the, by then, well-established connection between conceptions of *Andacht* and religiosity brought about a further conceptual shift. The German term now became important for practices and rituals of the *Gottesdienst* (religious worship), as the appearance of phrases like *seine Andacht*

¹⁴ DWB, s.v. 'Andacht,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&hitlist=&patternlist=&lemid=GA03457> (accessed 13 May 2013).

¹⁵ 'Andacht (Religion),' *Damen Conversations Lexikon* (1834), 1:203.

¹⁶ 'Die Andacht,' *GKW*, 1:275-276.

¹⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. 'devotion,' <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/51579?redirectedFrom=devotion&> (accessed 13 May 2013).

¹⁸ 'Faithfulness' was widely used to denote the quality of remaining true to someone, something and one's faith. Similarly, the noun 'reverence' designated a 'deep or due respect felt or shown towards a person' either 'on account of his or her position, status, or relationship to oneself' or because they were 'regarded as sacred or holy.' *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.vv. 'faithful,' 'faithfulness,' 'reverence,' <http://www.oed.com> (accessed 13 May 2013).

¹⁹ On the one hand, 'piety' denoted moral attitudes of empathy and compassion (in senses that are related 'to the quality of feeling or showing pity' for someone). On the other hand, it approached meanings of 'devoutness' and 'godliness,' emphasizing someone's 'reverence and obedience to God (or to the gods); devotion to religious duties and observances.' *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. 'piety,' <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/143641?isAdvanced=false&result=1&rskey=kwcSM9&> (accessed 13 May 2013).

haben, oder verrichten ('to have or perform one's prayer') and compound words like *Morgen- und Abendandacht* ('morning and evening prayer') in contemporary texts reflect.²⁰ *Andacht* became synonymous with rituals such as the *Gebet* ('prayer'), the *Predigt* ('sermon') and the celebration of the *Abendmahl* ('holy communion'),²¹ and it came to interact with the modes of thinking that were usually adopted at these occasions: *Meditation* (religious, reverential or spiritual 'meditation'), *Kontemplation* ('spiritual contemplation') and *innerer Gottesdienst* ('inner worship'). Synonymous understandings of *Andacht* and *Meditation* were highlighted by nineteenth-century lexicologists and encyclopaedists who defined 'meditation' as 'reflection, pondering and *Andacht*.'²²

Such overlapping meanings are often implicit and rather suggestive, but nonetheless justify translations of *Andacht* as 'contemplation.' After all, the German concept of *Kontemplation* is usually defined as a process of inner withdrawal from anything earthly or an 'envisioning of God and divine truths that is, more or less, unburdened by barriers of finiteness,'²³ and, in this respect, reminiscent of notions of *Andacht*. This inner focus shared with contemplation seems to have inspired a further meaning of *Andacht*. Stimulated by conceptions of *Kontemplation* as a 'frame of mind that is preferably directed towards an observation of the divine in the mirror of one's inner self,'²⁴ *Andacht* came to manifest 'several such acts of the mind directed to God' usually conceived as inner worship.²⁵

²⁰ *DWB*, s.v. 'Andacht,' <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&hitlist=&patternlist=&lemid=GA03457> (accessed 13 May 2013).

²¹ See *ibid.*: 'Zumal wird unter andacht das gebet verstanden.' See also 'Die Andacht,' *GKW*, 1:275-276: 'eine besondere Übung der Religion, besonders das Gebeth,' 'Reden von göttlichen Dingen, in welcher Bedeutung auch die Predigten zuweilen Kanzelandachten genannt werden,' and '[i]ngleichen der Genuß des heiligen Abendmahles.'

²² 'Meditation,' *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon* (1908), 12:518: 'Nachdenken, sinnende Betrachtung, Andacht'

²³ 'Contemplation,' *HCL* (1854), 2:201: 'das von den Schranken der Endlichkeit mehr oder minder befreite Schauen Gottes und der göttlichen Wahrheiten'

²⁴ 'Kontemplation,' *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon* (1907), 11:437: 'Gemütsrichtung, die vorzugsweise auf Beobachtung des göttlichen im Spiegel des eignen Innern gerichtet ist.'

²⁵ 'Der Gottesdienst,' *GKW*, 2:759-760: 'mehrere solche auf Gott gerichtete Handlungen des Gemüthes'

Figure 10. Meanings of *Andacht*