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Discussing BACH

Issue 2 (July 2021)

Bach and Jesus

Dedicated to the memory of our dear friend and colleague
Don O. Franklin (1938–2021) and his beloved wife Joan (1938–2021)

Editorial Introduction

Editors

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Bach and Jesus

A discussion with Robin A. Leaver, Noelle M. Heber, and Michael Marissen

Chaired by Ruth Tatlow. Recorded on Friday 11 June 2021

The logo for BachNetwork, featuring the word 'Bach' in a black serif font and 'Network' in a red script font, with a small registered trademark symbol.

ROBIN A. LEAVER | NOELLE M. HEBER | MICHAEL MARISSSEN

discuss

Bach and Jesus

Welcome to this second issue of *Discussing Bach*, featuring a live conversation on 'Bach and Jesus'.

The topic was a natural choice given both Bach Network's aim to disseminate new original insights about J. S. Bach's life and compositions, and Noelle M. Heber's recently published monograph. It felt appropriate to build a discussion around Noelle's work as we have witnessed the development of her research from early doctoral ideas ('Bach and Money: Sources of Salary and Supplemental Income in Leipzig from 1723 to 1750', *Understanding Bach* 12 (2017), 111–125) to a successfully defended doctoral thesis ('Treasures in heaven and on earth. Poverty and abundance in the life and sacred cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach', Utrecht

University, 2017), through its transformation to *J. S. Bach's Material and Spiritual Treasures: A Theological Perspective* (Boydell & Brewer, 2021).

The next challenges were to find a fitting focus for the issue, and experts whose own research and writings would overlap to create a stimulating discussion. Two obvious candidates, Robin A. Leaver and Michael Marissen, came to mind. Happily, they both accepted our invitation. Robin is renowned for his numerous influential publications on theological Bach research; he most recently completed a magnum opus, *Bach Studies: Liturgy, Hymnology, and Theology* (Routledge, 2021) published in the same month as *J. S. Bach's Material and Spiritual Treasures*. Michael is well-known for his research, writing, and lecturing on Bach's compositions. He is currently preparing, with Daniel R. Melamed, critically annotated new translations of the complete texts of Bach's liturgical cantatas, secular cantatas, and motets. His most recent book is *Bach & God* (Oxford, 2016). The three contributors happen also to be long-term supporters of Bach Network, and we think something of the joy of our mutual friendship is captured in the video.

The final challenge was to find a title that would guide the discussion into new and appropriate areas. We could have opted for 'Bach and Theology', or 'Bach and God', or 'Bach and the Redeemer', but there was something missing. When the title 'Bach and Jesus' was first mentioned, it caused strong reactions, and these reactions forced us to ask why. Could the title be perceived as offensive? Did it convey a restrictive religious persuasion? Was it too personal or implicitly devotional? etc. The fact that 'Bach and Jesus' provoked us to think felt good; a discussion on this topic would require sensitive handling, of course, but in the right hands could be profoundly insightful.

A discussion with Robin about his possible contribution quickly led to memories of one of his long-term research interests in devotional emblems, which could now be updated and incorporated into his most recent work on prayer books from Bach's time. This became his *Discussing Bach 2* presentation, 'Emblematic Jesus'. Michael would apply his expertise to Bach's portrayal of Jesus in the cantatas, and this became 'Jesus in Time and Eternity'. Both topics perfectly complemented Noelle's focus, 'Jesus as Treasure'.

None of the contributors had been told what the other would speak about, beyond the titles. This produced a live discussion in every sense, with new ideas sparking immediate responses and reactions. For instance, Michael realised that 'Jesus' was the very first word in Bach's compositions that the Leipzig congregation heard in 1723 (at 18'30"). Similarly, Robin, who had known about the companion

volume to the 1694 *Leipziger Kirchen-Andachten* for some time, saw, just two days before we recorded, the significance of its different set of 'Jesus in the heart' engravings. The Authorised Transcript, therefore, includes additional comments and insights left out in the heat of the moment, or for which there was no time. The new ideas, questions, and responses stimulated by the discussion will in time filter into new publications, and we will keep the *Discussing Bach* and the YouTube pages updated accordingly.

We are grateful to everyone who has played a part in bringing this issue of *Discussing Bach* to fruition. We hope that these materials will become a catalyst for you, whether viewer, reader, or listener, to engage in deeper discussion with your colleagues, friends, and family about Bach's music and his musical portrayal of Jesus.

Ruth Tatlow (Danderyd, Sweden)

Barbara M. Reul (Regina, Canada)

7 July 2021

Contributors



Robin A. Leaver, emeritus professor of sacred music, Westminster Choir College, continues to research and write in the cross-disciplinary areas of liturgy, church music, theology, and hymnology, especially in Luther and Bach studies, most recently *Bach Studies: Liturgy, Hymnology, and Theology* (Routledge, 2021).



Noelle M. Heber is a violinist, musicologist, and educator based in Berlin, Germany. Her primary research interests centre on theological themes in both Bach's music and in his religious setting, and she is the author of *J.S. Bach's Material and Spiritual Treasures: A Theological Perspective* (Boydell & Brewer, 2021).



Michael Marissen is an emeritus professor of music at Swarthmore College and a freelance writer and lecturer based in New York City. He has published many scholarly or journalistic essays and several books on the music of Bach and of Handel.

Further reading and listening

Heber, Noelle M. J. S. *Bach's Material and Spiritual Treasures: A Theological Perspective* (Boydell & Brewer, 2021).

Leaver, Robin A. *Bach Studies: Liturgy, Hymnology, and Theology* (Routledge, 2021).

For more about the Jesuit background of the heart emblems, see Grzeškowiak, Radosław and Hulsenboom, Paul. 'Emblems from the Heart: The Reception of the Cor Iesu Amanti Sacrum Engravings Series in Polish and Netherlandish 17th-Century Manuscripts'. *Journal of Low Countries and South African Studies* 10/2 (2015), 131–154.

Marissen, Michael. *Bach & God* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

For more on conceptions of time and eternity in Bach's milieu, see Varwig, Bettina. 'Metaphors of Time and Modernity in Bach', *Journal of Musicology* 29 (2012), 154–190.

Performance of Cantata (BWV) 23: <https://www.bachvereniging.nl/en/bwv/bwv-23/>

Performance of Cantata (BWV) 61: <https://www.bachvereniging.nl/en/bwv/bwv-61/>

N.B. Updates on the topic in the form of new publications by the three contributors will be given on the *Discussing Bach* page.

Editorial and Production Team

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About Bach Network and *Discussing Bach*

[Bach Network](#) was founded in 2004 to create a forum to talk about Bach's music. Early conversations evolved into [Dialogue Meetings](#), which became Bach Network's primary physical means of discussion. From these meetings came our online journal *Understanding Bach*, where the fruit of new research discussions could be studied and enjoyed. What was missing from the written journal articles was the immediacy of the dialogue conversation and questions. This is where *Discussing Bach* enters the picture.

Discussing Bach is a brand-new multimedia, web-based publication superseding Bach Network's open access journal [Understanding Bach](#) (2006–17). Featuring scholars engaged in ground-breaking research, each issue of [Discussing Bach](#) comprises:

- Editorial Introduction;
- Link to the live video discussion with optional subtitles;
- Authorised Transcript of the live discussion;
- Further reading and listening;
- Topic-specific articles may also be published as part of the issue.

Citation style: Each of the above components will require a different citation style. Please follow carefully the instructions given in your preferred style guide.

Copyright: Bach Network holds the copyright to the discussion to protect the intellectual copyright of the researchers' ideas, some of which will be unpublished at the time of recording. Authorised subtitles are provided to facilitate accurate citation.

Future issues: The aim of *Discussing Bach* is to stimulate discussion of new research insights. Scholars are selected to contribute because of the impact of their latest research discoveries, as well as their peer-reviewed publications, whether already in press or under contract, and/or because they are sponsored by a competitive research programme.

Topics planned for forthcoming issues include 'Bach and the Thomaskantorat', and 'Bach and Humour'.

BachNetwork

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Upcoming meetings

Tenth Dialogue Meeting, Madingley Hall, Cambridge. 18–22 July 2022

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