

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH  
INTO BACH AND THE CHORALE:  
ASPECTS OF REPERTOIRE, PEDAGOGY,  
THEORY, AND PRACTICE<sup>1</sup>

Robin A. Leaver

The chorales of Bach appear to be well-known, after all, they have been used for generations for the teaching of keyboard harmony and counterpoint. Yet for all their familiarity, their background, the contexts within which they originated, their transmission by Bach's sons and pupils, as well as other issues, remain imperfectly known. The primary thesis of this article is that our knowledge of Bach's understanding and use of chorales, texts as well as melodies, is fragmentary and incomplete, and much research still needs to be done in order to enlarge the picture of Bach's knowledge of, involvement in, and use of the Lutheran chorale. The corpus of Bach chorales may well have been more diverse than the Kirnberger-C. P. E. Bach edition published by Breitkopf between 1784 and 1787 might suggest. Twenty years earlier, in his new year catalog of 1764 Breitkopf offered two different manuscript collections of chorales harmonized by Bach:

- 1) Bach, J. S. *Capelmeisters und Musikdirectors in Leipzig*, 150 Choräle, mit 4 Stimmen. *a* 6 thl.[150 Chorales in 4 parts] (p. 7) . . .<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The article is a revision of a paper originally given as a public lecture at Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 2008.

<sup>2</sup>Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1873–1880), 2:596, note 23.; Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach, His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685–1750*, trans. Clara Bell and J. A. Fuller Maitland, 3 vols. (London: Novello, 1899; reprint, New York: Dover, 1951), 3:115, note 170. [Cited hereafter as Eng. Trans.]