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Lutheran Liturgy as an Architectonic Prototype: The Case of Mendelssohn's Oratorio *Elijah*

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Abstract. The article discusses Felix Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah*. Reasons for the composer's turn to Old Testament themes and choice of the prophet Elijah as the main character of the work are examined. It is shown that Mendelssohn was attracted by the theatricality and dramatic richness of the plot, which resonated with his personal disappointment experienced while serving as director of the Berliner Singakademie, as well as reflecting his search for harmony and reconciliation between his own religious convictions (Lutheranism) and Jewish heritage. The range of Mendelssohn's theological interests revealed in a study of his correspondence testifies to his deep knowledge of contemporary theological schools of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg. Semantic parallels are traced between the structure of the Lutheran liturgy and Mendelssohn's oratorio, highlighting important semantic sections (prelude, Kyrie, Gloria, psalm, reading from Scripture, Creed, sermon, preparation for communion, Sanctus, blessing and postlude). It is shown that the Christological nature of the oratorio is used by Mendelssohn to reveal one of the key tenets of Lutheran faith — the grace of God. It is suggested that the unfinished oratorio *Christ* represented for Mendelssohn a natural continuation of the Old Testament story that he retold in *Elijah*.

Keywords: Felix Mendelssohn, oratorio, *Elijah*, Lutheran liturgy, Christology

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Лютеранская литургия как архитектурный прообраз оратории «Илия» Феликса Мендельсона

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Аннотация. Объектом исследования статьи выступает оратория Феликса Мендельсона «Илия». Автор рассматривает причины обращения композитора к ветхозаветной тематике и выбор пророка Илии в качестве главного героя сочинения. Устанавливается, что Мендельсона привлекла театральность и драматическая наполненность сюжета, который оказался созвучен внутреннему разочарованию композитора, испытанному на посту директора Певческой академии в Берлине, и отразил поиск гармонии и примирения между его индивидуальными религиозными взглядами (лютеранство) и иудейским происхождением. В статье очерчивается круг теологических интересов Мендельсона, изучается его переписка, свидетельствующая о глубоком знании современных ему теологических школ Фридриха Шлейермахера и Эрнста Вильгельма Генгстенберга. Автор статьи прослеживает смысловые параллели между строением лютеранской литургии и ораторией Мендельсона, выделяет важные смысловые разделы (прелюдию, Kyrie, Gloria, псалом, чтение из Писания, Символ веры, проповедь, подготовка к причастию, Sanctus, благословение и постлюдию). Делается вывод о том, что христологичность оратории помогает Мендельсону раскрыть один из основных постулатов лютеранской веры — благодати Божьей. Высказывается предположение, что неоконченная оратория «Христос» являлась для Мендельсона закономерным продолжением Ветхозаветной истории.

Ключевые слова: Феликс Мендельсон, оратория, «Илия», лютеранская литургия, христология

Introduction

The present work considers the architectonic prototype of Felix Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* as a metaphorical embodiment of the structure of Lutheran worship. Such an interpretation becomes possible only under the condition of a Christological reading of the Old Testament plot, since the structure of the Lutheran worship service with its culmination in the sacrament of communion is unthinkable outside the paradigm of the Gospel and the understanding of the figure of the Messiah. The structure of the oratorio reveals not only adherence to liturgical tradition and

form, but also Christological content that unfolds on many levels of musical dramaturgy.

The oratorio *Elijah*, which belongs to the works frequently performed within the Lutheran tradition, is also one of the most dramatic works composed for the church. "After the success of his *St. Paul*, Mendelssohn wanted to create an oratorio about Elijah, which would be constructed like an opera, that is, without a narrator, with the action unfolding only in the dialogues of the characters," notes Rainer Albertz. [1, p. 201] In terms of this theatricalisation and in the very appeal to the genre of oratorio, Mendelssohn undoubtedly

follows the traditions of George Friedrich Handel. His realisation of this concept through the presence of through-composed numbers, the psychological development of the main character's image, and the contrast between the exalted, heavenly world of the believer Elijah and the wild, archaic paganism, contributes to the work's dynamic and engaging quality.

Mendelssohn composed the oratorio fairly quickly. In September 1845, he "received a commission to compose ... for the next Birmingham Musical Festival. And already on August 26, 1846, a successful world premiere took place under his direction." [Ibid., p. 201] At the same time, the internal work with the theme (creating the libretto, understanding the meaning of the biblical prophet) took a long time: "Mendelssohn worked on the material for 'Elijah' for ten years." [2, p. 130] Therefore, it is clear that he had thought about writing the oratorio back in 1837, but was unable to begin the active phase of creating the work. For a long time, the composer was not able to find a libretto that would fully correspond to his inner feelings, theological understanding and worldview. He first turned to his childhood friend Karl Klingemann. However, this collaboration turned out to be unsatisfactory, so he then turned to the pastor and theologian Julius Schubring (who had studied with Schleiermacher).

From Personal Disappointment to Theological Metaphor

Why did Mendelssohn choose as the main character of his oratorio a prophet, who, despite his deep faith, was tormented by doubts, broken, and exiled? We will consider whether this decision may reveal hidden intentions of the composer.

1) For example, it is possible that in *Elijah* he saw a reflection of his own history. As one of the most talented students of Carl Friedrich Zelter, who did everything possible to perform the *St. Matthew Passion* by Johann Sebastian

Bach, who put all his efforts into the Berliner Singakademie and undoubtedly saw himself as the natural successor of his teacher, Mendelssohn had hoped to receive the post of director of the academy. However, in 1832, it was proposed that he share this position with Karl Friedrich Rungenhagen, who was inferior to him in professional terms. Despite his subsequent successes and career development, the pain of this deeply wounding blow would linger throughout his life. To this personal affront, Dietrich Eibach adds objective historical facts that correspond to the state of affairs in Europe at that time: "The previous years (before the premiere of *Elijah*) were characterised by the last great famine of the pre-industrial era <...> and perhaps such experiences associated with difficulties and deprivations played a role in the composition." [Ibid., p. 130]

2) As a Lutheran believer, but who was born into the family of the son of the Jewish philosopher and educator Moses Mendelssohn, it may also have been important for him to reconcile the Old and New Testaments. The composer's choice of an Old Testament prophet, the introduction of oriental intonations into the musical fabric of the oratorio on the one hand, and the concluding chorus foretelling the coming of Jesus Christ, multiple references through musical quotations to the *St Matthew Passion* and *St John Passion* on the other, testify to his striving for self-identification and an inner need to unite his faith and his roots. The German researcher Johannes Popp writes about Mendelssohn: "...the composer of Jewish origin at the age of 26 — with the support of an admiring public — receives the management of the Gewandhaus orchestra in Leipzig and, in addition, becomes one of the most important creators of Protestant church music after Johann Sebastian Bach." [3, pp. 9–10]

3) Finally, Christology, a doctrine that helps us see in the Old Testament the premonition and

expectation of the appearance of the Messiah, may have played an important role in choosing the subject for the oratorio. Christology appears to play not only a plot-semantic role, but also an architectonic one — it is what connects the Old Testament narrative with the New Testament perspective, allowing Mendelssohn to build a composition that is multidimensional in its depth and consistent with the Lutheran liturgy. We will examine this theological feature of the interpretation of *Elijah* in more detail in the next section of the article.

For Mendelssohn, the sum of these thoughts was probably important, and the indicated reasons influenced his choice to one degree or another. After all, *Elijah* is one of the few Old Testament stories (with the exception of the *Psalter*) that attracted the composer's attention in terms of spiritual creativity. At the same time, the figure of the Messiah, Christ, as the embodiment of God's grace sent to us for salvation, is invisibly present in the narrative of the oratorio (for more details on the symbolism in the oratorio *Elijah*, see: [4]).

Theological guidelines: from Schleiermacher to Hengstenberg

The Mendelssohn family home was one of the centres of active musical, philosophical and literary life in Berlin. Felix's parents not only gave their children a brilliant education, but also attracted outstanding people of the time to their home. Felix's childhood compositions were immediately performed at home by a chamber ensemble of the best musicians in Berlin. The family's social circle included Friedrich Schleiermacher, the von Humboldt brothers, and even Johann Wolfgang Goethe himself, who not only happily communicated with the talented young man (in 1821), but also invited him to visit him (in 1825) with a request to tell him about all the latest musical and philosophical developments.

Researchers often relate Mendelssohn's religiosity precisely to the ideas of Schleiermacher (see, for example, [5]), who attempted to reconcile rationalism with the Protestant faith. Indeed, it has been argued that "[Schleiermacher] sacrificed [the] essence of Christian theology to make it more acceptable to rationalists." [6, p. 264] Indeed, at a superficial glance, Schleiermacher's popularisation of faith and Mendelssohn's church music may seem to follow similar trajectories. Schleiermacher appeals more to the term "religion" than "theology", picking up "the influence of Romanticism, with its newly awakened sense of the historical in religion, plus its interest in the immediate and the transcendental," [7, p. 351] while Mendelssohn, with his educational activities, the revival of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in 1829, and the collection of donations for the erection of a monument to the Leipzig cantor in 1840, strives to attract the attention of listeners to church music.

However, upon a more detailed examination of Mendelssohn's views, the information that can be gleaned from his correspondence, and, moreover, the composer's musical legacy itself, indicate that the doctrine of revelation associated with Schleiermacher's school of thought "left no room for a unique, historical revelation in Christ." [6, p. 295] On the contrary, the composer deeply perceives and inherits precisely the Christocentric (in Martin Luther's commentaries on the Galatians this point is emphasised especially clearly [8, p. 55]) understanding of the knowledge of God, leading through Bach to the theological expositions of Luther.

On the other hand, it seems unlikely that the ideas of Mendelssohn's influential contemporary had no impact on his perception at all. Oddly enough, it is among the reminiscences of spending time together with Goethe (including those reflected in a letter from Weimar home on May 25, 1830 [9, p. 6]) that we find a clue

to the direction of Mendelssohn's theological thought. Elbert Hubbard writes the following: "When Goethe was seventy-eight and Mendelssohn eighteen, they spent another month together; and a regular program of instruction was laid out. Each morning at precisely nine, they met for the poet's 'music lesson', as Goethe called it, and the boy would play from some certain composer, showing the man's peculiar style, and the features that differentiated him from others. Goethe himself has recorded in his correspondence that it was Felix Mendelssohn who taught him of *Hengstenberg* and Spontini, introduced him to Hegel's *Aesthetics*, and revealed to him for the first time the wonders of Beethoven" (my italic. — *E.P.*).¹

Both Mendelssohn's letter and the above quotation mention the name of Hengstenberg, [10] another contemporary theologian, who was also a regular in the Mendelssohn household. We are talking here about someone who was a teacher at the University of Berlin, the author of the book *Christology of the Old Testament*, who continued the tradition of Lutheran orthodoxy.

Hengstenberg, who appreciated the depth of Schleiermacher's ideas, states that he himself, "nevertheless, was not infected by the superficiality of his argumentation," and makes the following confession: "I shall not remain what I am, if indeed I did so, I should never be a theologian; but to that man I shall never betake myself." [Ibid., pp. IX–X] Thus, both Mendelssohn and Hengstenberg avoid the influence of Schleiermacher, just as Bach avoided the influence of the Pietism that was widespread in his time.

The composer's understanding of the theological depth of the Lutheran faith is also

reflected in his music. Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* is a multi-level, richly meaningful composition with references to biblical texts, to Bach's legacy — and, moreover, to the Lutheran liturgy. All these various symbols, quotations and allusions help to foreground the figure of Christ in the Old Testament story in terms of the idea of grace and mercy of God, which is fundamental to Lutheran teaching.

Lutheran Liturgy as an Architectonic Prototype of the Oratorio

In Russian musicology, beginning with the works of Boris Asafiev, Yuri Tyulin, Mikhail Druskin and up to the works of Yuri Kholopov, ideas about form outgrow the framework of compositional structure; here, form is interpreted in a natural, sometimes unconscious way of thinking. In Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* we can speak of liturgicity in terms of the unfolding of a musical action, which is likened to a service: thus, a sermon in sound. Just as Bach creates the architectural basis of his musical works, taking as a basis the model of a Baroque temple (which is written about by both Druskin and Kholopov), so Mendelssohn brings the living breath of the liturgy into the structure of the oratorio.

It should be emphasised that the composer draws upon the liturgical model not in a literal sense, but in a symbolic-structural sense, using it as a conceptual framework for the form, rather than a copy of the prescribed liturgical service. Let us suggest that, in addition to the internal reasons for this, there is also a historical basis. The liturgy of the Lutheran Church experienced a certain crisis

¹ See: The literature Network. Elbert Hubbard.

URL: <https://www.online-literature.com/elbert-hubbard/journeys-vol-fourteen/6/> (accessed: 02.06.2025).

in 19th century Germany. The creation of the Prussian Church Agenda of 1816 was supposed to unify worship in Protestant and Reformed churches of various persuasions, but turned out to have the opposite effect, intensifying polarisation and alienation of traditions from each other. It is therefore rather difficult to provide a definite liturgical structure that the composer would necessarily have followed as a prototype.

Our point of view is supported by the fact that the liturgy of the Lutheran service was interpreted increasingly freely over time, facilitating a living experience of the church year from one service to the next. The process that is currently being observed in Germany shows that different liturgical landscapes can coexist with each other or coexist in parallel within one community, depending on the theme of the service. It seems that such a lively treatment of the agenda became possible precisely because of the crisis experienced in the 19th century.

And finally, the culmination and mystery of the liturgy — communion — is possible only in the context of the New Testament. Without the sacrifice that God the Father made, giving his Son to be crucified, the sacrament itself becomes a logical impossibility. For this reason, one can only speak about the form of thinking, and not about following the liturgical canon.

The overture serves as a kind of prelude to the Divine Service, preparing for the first chorale performed by the entire congregation. Traditionally, the first chorale sets the congregation up for the central theme of the service. In Mendelssohn the choir

No. 1 similarly enters after the overture with the existential request “Hilf, Herr!” (“Help, Lord!”).² No. 2 with its two-level composition — the phrase-incantation of the choir “Herr, höre unser Gebet!” (“Lord, bow thine ear to our pray’r”) and the opening word, the doubt of two human souls in the soloists “Zion streckt ihre Hände aus” (“Zion spreadeth her hands for aid”), is nothing other than *Kyrie eleison* — naturally, without the *Christe eleison* part.

No. 3 and No. 4 are similar in content to *Gloria in excelsis Deo*. Mendelssohn puts the words of praise to the Lord into a solo recitative and tenor aria: “denn er ist gnädig, barmherzig, geduldig und von großer Güte, und reut ihn bald der Strafe” (“for He is slow to anger, and merciful, and kind, and gracious and repents Him of the evil”) (No. 3), and then follows aria No. 4, distinguished by its special lyrical expressiveness and inner direction towards God, in the musical language of which one can hear the sincerity of faith and the desire for spiritual unity with Him. Since the words of praise must be followed by the prayer of the congregation, in No. 5 there is again an explosion of reproaches to the Almighty: “Aber der Herr sieht es nicht” (“Yet doth the Lord see it not”). And after this human fear of the irresistible power of the Lord, a quotation from 2 Moses 20: 5-6 sounds like a hymn of praise: “Denn ich, der Herr, dein Gott, bin ein eifriger Gott, der da heimsucht der Väter Missetat an den Kindern bis in das dritte und vierte Glied, die mich hassen; und tue Barmherzigkeit an vielen Tausenden, die mich liebhaben und meine Gebote halten” (“for I the Lord thy God am

² In the case of quotations from Mendelssohn’s oratorio, we refer to the original text in English and German. Mendelssohn Bartholdy, F. *Elias / Elijah*. Op. 70. Ein Oratorium nach Worten des Alten Testaments / Stuttgarter Mendelssohn-Ausgaben. Stuttgart: Carus, 1999. 202 S. In other biblical quotations, a reference is given to the German text and its translation into English.

a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my”).

As a Psalm, Mendelssohn chooses one of the most iconic liturgical texts with a reference to the New Testament — Psalm 91:11-12: “Denn er hat seinen Engeln befohlen, dass sie dich behüten auf allen deinen Wegen, dass sie dich auf den Händen tragen und du deinen Fuß nicht an einen Stein stoßest” (“For he shall give His angels charge over thee, that they shall protect thee in all the ways thou goest; that their hands shall uphold and guide thee, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone”). Moreover, by introducing this particular psalm, Mendelssohn seems to create a structure of multiple reflections, where biblical texts interact like a system of mirrors, expanding and deepening the theological context. On the one hand, there is a noticeable direct reference to the scene of Jesus’ temptation by the devil: Matthew 4:6 and Luke 4:10-11. On the other hand, it is obvious: Jesus passes this test, answering evil with “Du sollst den Herrn, deinen Gott, nicht auf die Probe stellen” (“You shall not tempt the Lord your God,” Matthew 4:7, Luke 4:12), while the burden of power, given to Elijah by the Almighty, the prophet cannot bear, having destroyed 450 pagan priests. Mendelssohn deliberately includes noted parallels between Elijah and Jesus throughout the opera.

The reading of Scripture during the service is analogous to the story of the healing of the boy in the Third book of Kings 17:7–24, which begins with the recitative of the angel at the end of No. 7 and continues throughout the entire duet of No. 8. Like the response of the congregation, which recites the text of the Creed in response to the reading, Mendelssohn weaves in a quotation from the Fifth book of Moses 6:5 “die beiden [Solisten] vereinen sich im gemeinsamen Gesang des

Bekenntnisses Israels (Schemá Jisra’él 5. Mose 6:5)” (“both [singers] unite in a common song of the Confession of Israel (Shema Yisrael, the fifth book of Moses 6:5)”) [1, p. 205] and from the duet of Elijah and the Widow the whole choir in No. 9 takes up and proclaims the triumph of grace.

The following numbers (10–22) represent a kind of sermon, the dramatic dynamics of which are built around an idea that covers the chronological period from archaic pagan rituals to the destruction of the Second Temple. The musical fabric of these numbers is distinguished by high expression, tense rhythm and rich thematic material, stylistically echoing Mendelssohn’s cantata *Walpurgis Night*, in which the composer already turned to images of pagan cult, chaos and collective ecstasy. Emphasising the unwavering strength of faith within the early monotheistic cult, the composer shows that it is still linked to the ritual practice of sacrifice — blood-filled altars as symbols of the awesome power of the Lord (Elijah aria No. 17), which reflects the religious reality before the destruction of the Second Temple. After this Mendelssohn embodies humility and prayer to the Lord “Öffne den Himmel und fahre herab!” (“Open the heavens and send us relief”), to the miracle of rain sent after the drought. After a pause, aria No. 21 crowns the thematic arc of the sermon, leading up to the concluding song of the congregation. Thus, No. 22 evokes associations with the community chorale in which trust in God triumphs.

The most difficult from a dramatic point of view is the transition to the moment of preparation for communion. From a Christian point of view, it is difficult to convey the idea of mercy and saving sacrifice within the Old Testament narrative without resorting to direct reference to Christ. But here Mendelssohn again turns to the effect of the comparison between Elijah and Jesus. To reveal this important parallel, the composer combines numbers 23 to

34, beginning with the Queen's false testimony and the scenes of false testimony and public condemnation of Elijah. Mendelssohn also uses the choral lines "Er muss sterben" ("He shall perish") in No. 23, which directly refer to the scene of Christ's crucifixion, with the calls "Greifet ihn, töten ihn!" ("Seize on him! He shall die!"). The aria from No. 26 "Es ist genug" ("It is enough"), due to its instrumentation and intonational connections, echoes No. 30 "Es ist vollbracht" from Bach's "St. John Passion" (viola da gamba solo, descending, falling intonation), thanks to which the correspondence and rapprochement of the figures of Christ and Elijah is strengthened. The dramatic tension of Nos. 23–25, the quiet concentration of Nos. 26 and 27 resolves in the enlightened catharsis of the trio No. 28 and chorus No. 29. The subsequent address of the angel to Elijah (No. 30) reveals the comprehensible difference between Elijah and Jesus for the listener. If Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, despite his doubts, accepts the will of the Lord, then Elijah, exhausted by internal doubts and broken, turns out to be not ready to surrender to God's will. However, in the end it is not wrath that falls upon Elijah for his disobedience, but the angel's quiet admonition, "Sei stille dem Herrn" ("O rest in the Lord"), taken up by the choir: "Wer bis an das Ende beharrt" ("He that shall endure to the end").

No. 33 and No. 34 bring us very close to the sacrament of communion. Elijah's prayer "Herr, es wird Nacht um mich; sei du nicht ferne!" ("Night falleth round me, o Lord! Be Thou not far from me!") is close to the pre-communion prayer from the Catholic Church "Herr, ich bin nicht würdig" ("Lord, I am not worthy of you"), piercing Elijah with the desire to come into contact with the Lord. After a hurricane, raging waves, an earthquake and fire in No. 34, the Lord appears to Elijah in the form of grace, as if promised in the sacrament in ("Und in dem

Säuseln nahte sich der Herr" ("And in that still voice onward came the Lord").

No. 35 is the Sanctus "Heilig, heilig, heilig ist Gott der Herr" ("Holy, holy, holy is God the Lord"). After this, Mendelssohn further strengthens the sense of introduction (Einsetzungsworte) to communion with No. 37, which is the culmination of the symbolism of in the oratorio. The 6/4 time signature, the soft, pastoral character of the key *F major*, the gradual ascending movement of the melody and the bass timbre of the solo voice take us to No. 11, the remark of Jesus "trinket alle daraus" ("Drink, all of you, from this cup"), speaking the words of the Last Supper and the introduction to Communion from the *St Matthew Passion*. The text in the Elijah part does not yet contain direct New Testament content; rather, it carries a premonition of the coming revelation and theologically prepares the ear for the Gospel perspective. The prophet cries out to the Lord and his mercy "Ja, es sollen wohl Berge weichen und Hügel hinfallen aber deine Gnade wird nicht von mir weichen" ("For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but Thy kindness shall not depart").

Just as after the prayers and words that prepare the sacrament according to Luther's teaching, a miracle occurs, and the wine and bread become the flesh and blood of Christ, in the oratorio after the foreshadowing of the New Testament, Gospel world, a miracle occurs: the Lord takes Elijah alive to heaven (No. 38). Chorus No. 39 "Dann werden die Gerechten leuchten wie die Sonne in ihres Vaters Reich" ("Then, then shall the righteous shine as the sun in their heav'nly Fathers's realm") is perceived as an artistic response to this event — the theme of overcoming death is expressed through the image of the radiance of the righteous in the Kingdom of the Father. Here Mendelssohn draws a parallel with the joy in the heart of the believer after communion, the highest proof of Jesus' overcoming of death.

Just as the liturgical structure requires a prayer of thanksgiving after communion, Mendelssohn introduces the words of thanksgiving in No. 41, “der wird des Herrn Namen predigen” (“shall call upon His name”), ending this choral number with a quartet of soloists blessing the congregation, “Wohlan, alle, die ihr durstig seid” (“O come ev’ry one that thirsteth”). The congregational hymn at the end of the service, or postlude, No. 42, completes the composition of the oratorio.

Conclusion

Thus, it was important for Mendelssohn to construct a continuous dramatic action in the oratorio. The creation of a large architectural form, which is based (consciously or intuitively) on the structure of the Lutheran liturgy, helps to express his Christological views more multifacetedly and more vividly. With every introduced quotation, with every new liturgical hymn, with every symbol, the composer intensifies the sense of mystery and destiny in the life of Elijah, similar to that which we find in the passion story of Jesus. By portraying the figure of Elijah, Mendelssohn draws a parallel with the figure of Christ. The despair and human depression of the

Prophet are familiar to Jesus, whose prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is evidence of the human nature of God the Son. At the same time, it is precisely the Divine nature of Jesus that helps him overcome this human weakness (cf. Matthew 29:36 “doch nicht wie ich will, sondern wie du willst” / “but let it be done not as I will, but as You will”), whereas Elijah is deprived of it. Therefore, the outcome of the narrative of the life of the Prophet, the only thing that Elijah hopes for, and what Mendelssohn repeatedly emphasises in his music, is the grace of God. “It is the idea of grace as the unmerited favor of God which underlies the doctrine of justification by faith, generally and rightly regarded as underlying the origins of the Lutheran Reformation in Germany,” notes Alistair McGrath. [11, p. 89] Therefore, Mendelssohn creates not just an oratorio, but a divine liturgy, in which the central miracle of communion is not yet present, but its light and the nearness of its coming are already felt.

In conclusion of our research, we will suggest that the composer could have perceived the unfinished third oratorio *Christus* as a theologically consequential conclusion to *Elijah* just as the New Testament picks up the wisdom of the Old Testament.

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