

ULRA Application Essay: Library Resources Use

My submission is an interdisciplinary essay at the intersection of Biblical studies, historical (particularly Lutheran) theology, and musicology, exploring how Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* reflects the Bridegroom imagery present throughout the Gospel of Matthew, and how Bach calls on the audience of the piece to enter into the Passion narrative. The essay is a balance between reference to secondary sources and analysis of primary sources (i.e., the text of the Gospel of Matthew and the score of the *St. Matthew Passion*). I used a great variety of library sources, including monographs (Scriptural, theological, and musicological), articles from online databases (Scriptural and musico-theological), Biblical commentaries, and a musical score, as well as using recordings of the *St. Matthew Passion* to inform my analysis. I also did some work with the original German libretto and the 1545 *Lutherbibel* to explore the connection between Bach's music and the text of the *Passion*.

The assignment for New Testament Introduction mandated that the paper use five sources (at least one monograph, one Biblical commentary, and two articles). However, upon looking into my desired topic, I realized that I would need (and want) to use more. When beginning my research, I contacted Alan Krieger and Robert Simon, the Theology/Philosophy and Music Librarians to consult for sources. My sources bridge all three fields of interest addressed in this paper, and some of these sources are themselves interdisciplinary at their core.

My interest in the topic began after reading Markus Rathey's *Bach's Major Vocal Works*, on musicological and theological background of Bach's key choral compositions. In his chapter on the *St. Matthew Passion*, Rathey argued that the *Passion*, although it had been historically compared unfavorably with Handel's *Messiah* because of the sadness of its content and expression, was in fact a reflection of the profound joy and hope of the Christian life. Rathey

described a theme already of great interest to me in my reading of Matthew, and so my topic was decided.

Because of my low level of familiarity with Bach academic scholarship, I went in that direction first, coming upon Eric Chafe's seminal work *Tonal Allegory in the Music of J.S. Bach*, a monograph with a strong musicological focus on Bach's music, but always with an eye to theological and historical context. In addition to discovering structural analyses and bits of historical context which I had never considered, I found that its argument also described threads of logic and analysis that I myself had caught onto in a lesser degree (particularly Chafe and his description of the role of the oboe da caccia, which I expanded by pairing it with Bach's use of the oboe d'amore), and I found myself buried in the project.

After reading Chafe, I sought ways in which the musicological tools incarnated, commented on, and clarified the Biblical and theological background of the libretto. I checked out Brant Pitre's *Jesus the Bridegroom*, Marianne Blickenstaff's "*While the Bridegroom is with them*", and a couple commentaries on Matthew, by Witherington and Hauerwas. I also found Walter Wilson's article "The Crucified Bridegroom and his Bleeding Daughter", a close reading of the Question on Fasting in Matthew 9, where Jesus first described himself as a bridegroom. Towards the end, as my argument was taking shape, I looked for sources in 18th Century Lutheran theology, to more smoothly bridge the Biblical studies with the musicology. The only article I ended up referencing was Isabella van Elferen's "The Hungry Soul", which described the theological background of 18th Century German Lutheranism, with the particular goal of understanding Bach's theological landscape.

A great majority of my sources were book-length pieces, i.e. monographs and commentaries. I was awed at the breadth of the Hesburgh Library's collection, particularly in the

realm of theological monographs, which I was able to use and reference in my research, and regrettably, there was so much material that I could just not put into my paper, but was formative in the way I looked at and approached my research question. In looking for articles, ATLA for theology and RILM for music were essential to me. There were a lot of articles that I read via ATLA, many of which I did not end up referencing, but they certainly turned me in the right direction, and there were a lot that I wish I could have read but didn't. Without the Hesburgh Library's access to ATLA and RILM, this project could absolutely have never reached the level of completion or understanding that it has.

Ultimately, despite everything this project has taught me, I think the thing I learned that will stay most with me is that I cannot use all the sources I find, even if they are deeply relevant; I have a tendency to consider texts deeply rather than cursorily, so I chose to use fewer sources in favor of deeper engagement with each I used. There were a number of books, including Michael Marissen's *Bach and God*, Mtata and Koester's *To All the Nations: Lutheran Hermeneutics and the Gospel of Matthew*, and Robin Leaven's *J.S. Bach and Scripture*, as well as some articles, such as Daniel Melamed's "The Double Chorus in J.S. Bach's *St Matthew Passion*", and several other sources which I found helpful in guiding me how to ask my question, but which were ultimately not as directly relevant to my research question as would allow me to use them in my paper. That being said, I recognize now that this is an essential part of the research project: to learn everything you can, and leave aside anything extraneous; nothing you read is a waste.

I am deeply indebted to the Hesburgh Library for giving me the resources to explore this question, at a juncture of subjects in which I have a particular interest. I fully intend to explore this subject even further, with the Library's help, beyond the confines of this project.