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Christa K. Johnson

Cedarville University, christajohnson@cedarville.edu

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J. S. Bach: The Good Lord of Influence

Many musicians stand in awe of Johann Sebastian Bach's ability to create a masterpiece. For example, Beethoven called him the "father of all harmony" while Debussy knew him as "the Good Lord of music."¹ In fact, few question Bach's greatness as a musician, but the source of that greatness is a different discussion altogether. Is his musical greatness solely attributable to nature and good DNA? Surely this is part of the equation, but nurture too played a role--he had to cultivate this talent through other environmental factors. Bach's educational opportunities, career positions, and religious beliefs influenced and completed his excellent compositional style.

Johann Sebastian Bach received a solid education before beginning his professional career as a musician. The law in Germany stated that children were required to start school at the age of five, and history shows that Bach started to attend a German school in Fleischgasse at that age.² His father worked as a musician at St. George's Church, and as a result, Bach attended the Latin School there when he turned seven.³ After the death of his parents, Bach moved to Ohrdruff under the care of his older brother, who was also a musician.⁴ While there, Bach began his schooling at Ohrdruff *Lyceum Illustre Gelichense*, excelling far above the other students. After a few years at the school in Ohrdruff, he moved to Lüneburg and began to study at St. Michael's School.⁵ His years at St. Michael's ushered in his career as a professional musician.⁶

These various educational opportunities that Bach experienced in his childhood influenced the way he composed music later in life. Furthermore, they laid the foundation for the rest of his musical achievements. For example, the school in Fleischgasse equipped him with

¹ Martin Geck, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Life and Work* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), ix.

² Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (New York: Norton, 2000), 26.

³ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 22-26.

⁴ Christopher Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach: An Essential Guide to his Life and Works* (London: Pavilion, 1997), 9.

⁵ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 37-42.

⁶ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 11.

musical creativity. According to Martin Geck, professor of musicology at the University of Dortmund, the pictures in the hymnals that the school used as part of the curriculum inspired some of the musical ideas in Bach's later works. Geck goes on to explain: "Their graphic and symbolic vividness later found specific equivalents in his compositions: exposure to these early images no doubt influenced the way he would join music and theology throughout his life."⁷ In addition to the experiences at Fleischgasse, Bach also became familiar with music ensembles at St. George's. Bach participated in the choir at St. George's, the chorus *musicus*.⁸ This ensemble exposed him to the style formation and performance of choral music, influencing his own compositions.

Bach continued to gain experience as a musician in his later years of schooling. At Ohrdruff *Lyceum Illustre Gelichense*, Bach held the position of singer of figural and *Currende* music. Martin Geck believes that, in addition to Bach's vocal studies at the Lyceum, he began to study the keyboard more extensively, possibly as a result of his older brother's keyboardist position at the time.⁹ An excerpt from J. S. Bach's obituary illustrates his impressive talent for learning to play the keyboard:

He [Johann Sebastian Bach] betook himself to Ohrdruff to his eldest brother, Johann Christoph, organist in that town, and under his instruction laid the foundation for playing the clavier. Already at this tender age, little Johann Sebastian displayed an uncommon love for music. In short time he had of his own free will mastered all the pieces that his brother had given him to learn.¹⁰

Bach excelled musically at Ohrdruff as a result of both the Lyceum's instruction and his brother's influence.

⁷ Geck, *Life and Work*, 39.

⁸ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 25.

⁹ Geck, *Life and Work*, 40.

¹⁰ Geck, *Life and Work*, 40-41.

Bach's musicality grew even still at St. Michael's School in Lüneburg. The school provided practical opportunities that his previous schooling did not offer him. Martin Geck explains, "Nonetheless, the move to Lüneburg has great significance for Bach: now he need not sign up for a musical apprenticeship but can 'study' instead and thereby acquire the qualifications of an academically educated cantor, qualifications that will later become indispensable when he applies for the cantor's position at Leipzig's Thomaskirche."¹¹ It was here that he gained the most knowledge and experience he needed for his later career positions.

However, the practical experience was not all that St. Michael's had to offer Bach. St. Michael's contained an extensive library of music from a variety of composers such as Heinrich Schütz, Dietrich Buxtehude, and even Bach's own ancestors; this was not something that Bach overlooked.¹² In addition to the exposure to these manuscripts, hearing live performances by different musicians influenced the styles of Bach's later compositions. One portion of Bach's obituary reads, "From here [Lüneburg] he also had an opportunity to listen frequently to an orchestra maintained by the Duke of Celle and consisting in the majority of French musicians; from this he could establish his mastery of the French style, which in those lands was something entirely new at the time."¹³ Bach's education, from his enrollment in the German school at Fleischgasse until his final years at St. Michael's school, laid the groundwork for his future career as a professional musician.

Even more foundational than the educational institutions, Bach's family was also crucial in nurturing a background of music. His father was at the center of this nurturing. Before Bach turned nine years old, his father taught him how to play both the keyboard and violin.¹⁴ Learning

¹¹ Geck, *Life and Work*, 43.

¹² Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 10.

¹³ Geck, *Life and Work*, 45.

¹⁴ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 8-9.

these instruments was expected of him because of his father's position as a musician at St. George's Church.¹⁵ Another talented musician from whom young Bach learned much about music was his uncle Christoph Bach. Bach admired his uncle, calling his music "beautiful, expressive, progressive, and well crafted."¹⁶ There was even a paragraph dedicated to him in J. S. Bach's obituary describing his uncle's influence as a musician in Bach's career.

Bach's education influenced his future compositions. His school years provided him with musical creativity, experience working with other musicians, exposure to manuscripts, and mentorships among family. Without his foundational education, Bach may not have musically excelled to the extent that he did.

Not only did J. S. Bach's education influence his compositions, but his career positions also influenced them. Bach's various occupations exposed him to both sacred and secular music. His earliest professional experiences presented him with the opportunity to compose sacred music. Bach's first professional jobs as a musician were positions as the church organist, first in Arnstadt, and then in Mühlhausen.¹⁷ Both job descriptions included playing the organ for regular church services and special occasions, working with the church choirs, and composing music for the services and choirs as necessary.¹⁸ However, Bach experienced discontentment and frustration while holding these positions. He preferred to make the simple and bland church music more colorful, but his administrators thought he strayed too much from the familiarity of the piece and distracted the congregation and the church musicians.¹⁹ Martin Geck says, "If one listens to Bach's harmonization of the hymn 'Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend' in the organ

¹⁵ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 28.

¹⁶ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 28-29.

¹⁷ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 13-23.

¹⁸ Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685-1750*, Vol. 1. (New York: Dover, 1979), 224-25.

¹⁹ Geck, *Life and Work*, 51-52.

chorale BWV 726, composed around this time, one can understand the objections raised by his superiors: Bach is playing with the chromatic possibilities of a four-part setting...in a way that distracts one from the *cantus firmus* more than it emphasizes it.”²⁰

Example 1, “Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend,” BWV 726



Some of the distractions that people complained about probably occur at the deceptive cadence on G major instead of D major, the resolution to C major, and the fast chord changes in the second to last measure; the listeners did not expect to hear such harmonizations in a hymn setting.²² After other similar disagreements with his administrators, Bach began to search for a career change. Bach explained his growing frustration to his administrators at Mühlhausen, saying, “Now, God has brought it to pass that an unexpected change should offer itself to me, in which I see the possibility of...the achievement of my goal of a well-regulated church music without further vexation.”²³ Bach believed that music was a God-given art to be used to its

²⁰ Geck, *Life and Work*, 51.

²¹ Geck, *Life and Work*, 499-500.

²² Geck, *Life and Work*, 500.

²³ Geck, *Life and Work*, 70.

fullest potential, and when he realized that his careers at Arnstadt and Mühlhausen were hindering this conviction, he relocated to Weimar.²⁴

Bach's employment at Arnstadt and Mühlhausen consisted of conflict and incongruity; however, these stations exposed him to other styles of instrumental and vocal music. He excelled in his studies of organ music specifically. Since his duties at Arnstadt were not tedious or lengthy, he had abundant spare time to spend at the organ.²⁵ Having extra practice hours led to his development of numerous organ pieces, including chorale preludes.²⁶ One example of Bach's organ chorales is "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," BWV 720, which he wrote to commemorate the inauguration of the new organ at Mühlhausen in 1709.²⁷ If Bach had held a more demanding livelihood, he could not have spent as much time crafting his organ masterpieces.

In addition to his extended hours at the organ, Bach listened to professional organists play and gleaned musical ideas from them. The Arnstadt obituary reads, "He really showed the first fruits of his application to the art of organ playing and to compositions, which he had learned chiefly by observing the works of the most famous and proficient composers of his day and by the fruits of his own reflection upon them."²⁸ Bach especially admired the organ works of Dietrich Buxtehude; scholars believe that one of Bach's pieces inspired by Buxtehude's performance was the organ chorale "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern," BWV 739.²⁹ In his book *The Music of Bach: An Introduction*, Charles Sanford Terry says that from these models, "He acquired the organized clarity combined with elastic freedom, which distinguish him from

²⁴ Geck, *Life and Work*, 70-75.

²⁵ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 80.

²⁶ Charles Sanford Terry, *The Music of Bach: An Introduction* (New York: Dover, 1963), Table 1-3.

²⁷ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 22.

²⁸ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 92-93.

²⁹ Geck, *Life and Work*, 56.

his German forerunners, whose musical utterance had tended either to looseness of thought or extreme rigidity of form.”³⁰ Bach’s utilizing other musicians as examples while at Arnstadt and Mühlhausen provided additional resources he needed to compose his great organ works.

Equally important to his organ music, Bach’s vocal compositions developed while at Arnstadt and Mühlhausen. One genre of vocal music he frequently composed was the cantata, a type of composition including both voice and instruments. According to Terry, “Of all the forms in which he expressed himself, Bach was most prolific in the cantata.”³¹ The sacred cantata’s purpose was to assist the congregation in worship without involving them in the presentation of the music; Bach’s cantatas achieved this goal because he wrote them so that they presented the gospel in the performance itself.³² The cantatas could be performed in a church service, and they also could be performed at a special occasion. An example of a “special occasion cantata” is “Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr, zu dir,” a unique piece that Bach wrote for the memorial service after the city of Mühlhausen was devastated by a fire.³³ Another example of the cantatas for special events is “Gott ist mein König,” BWV 71, which was composed for the inauguration ceremony for the new town council for the city of Arnstadt.³⁴ These cantatas illustrate how Bach’s career as a church musician at both Arnstadt and Mühlhausen compelled him to compose music for church services and special occurrences.

Despite Bach’s encounters with dissatisfaction and dispute at Arnstadt and Mühlhausen, he became skilled at applying methods for sacred music to his own compositional style. A large quantity of his distinguished organ works and his celebrated sacred cantatas emerged as a result

³⁰ Terry, *Music of Bach*, 13.

³¹ Terry, *Music of Bach*, 62.

³² Terry, *Music of Bach*, 63.

³³ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 19.

³⁴ Geck, *Life and Work*, 63.

of his responsibilities as the church musician. The influence of the various sacred music styles offered at Arnstadt and Mühlhausen inspired the variety of Bach's compositions.

The next influential position that Bach held was at Weimar. He was hired as a trivial court musician, but it held opportunities for promotions.³⁵ The influences of those surrounding him, specifically his employers Duke Wilhelm Ernst and Ernst August, contributed to his compositional style.³⁶ First, Duke Wilhelm Ernst preferred sacred music to secular music; therefore, he encouraged Bach to write sacred compositions, particularly for the organ.³⁷ This was especially exciting for Bach, since he had so many disputes with his previous employers. The Duke's obituary reads, "His gracious lords' delight in his [Bach's] playing fired him up to attempt everything possible in the art of how to treat the organ."³⁸ Indeed, Bach did produce great organ works during this time. At Weimar, Bach began to compile one of his major organ works, the *Orgelbüchlein*. The hymn melodies in these organ chorales were always audible to the extent that someone could sing along, even with the chorales' complex harmonic and textural structure.³⁹ Geck explains, "Bach's aim here is a setting for four voices that do not divide the functions of melody and accompaniment among themselves but, with the pedal as an equal partner, fuse to make a greater whole, a well-articulated and thoroughly worked out contrapuntal structure..."⁴⁰ In the organ chorale "Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele," Bach manifests his intricate counterpoint techniques. Bach wraps the *cantus firmus* with the other voices to create an intricate, unique, and beautiful sound.⁴¹

³⁵ Geck, *Life and Work*, 75-76.

³⁶ John Eliot Gardiner, *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven* (New York: Knopf, 2013), 182-83.

³⁷ Gardiner, *Music in the Castle*, 183.

³⁸ Gardiner, *Music in the Castle*, 183.

³⁹ Geck, *Life and Work*, 504.

⁴⁰ Geck, *Life and Work*, 504.

⁴¹ Geck, *Life and Work*, 510.

Example 2, “Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele,” BWV 654, from *Orgelbüchlein*



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“Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele” and others demonstrate Bach’s freedom to compose sacred organ music at the level of complexity he desired under the influence of his employer, Duke Wilhelm Ernst, at Weimar.

In addition to Wilhelm’s influence on Bach’s sacred organ music, Ernst August guided Bach toward a more secular style of music. One of his tasks as the court musician at Weimar was to perform his chamber ensembles in the court.⁴³ This automatically exposed Bach to the secular style and allowed him to write for and perform in that setting. Furthermore, when Ernst August introduced Bach to his cousin Johann Ernst, they soon realized that Bach and Johann shared a common love for the Italian style. Johann studied the Italian style while he was at school, and the works that he brought back inspired Bach.⁴⁴ This shared interest sparked Bach to study the Italian style more, and, as a result, Bach gleaned ideas from other composers and

⁴² Geck, *Life and Work*, 509-11.

⁴³ Geck, *Life and Work*, 86.

⁴⁴ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 29.

applied what he learned to writing his own concerti.⁴⁵ When Johann and Ernst August learned this, they may have requested that Bach perform them and write more music of this genre.⁴⁶ One of the concertos that Bach wrote during his years at Weimar was *Brandenburg Concerto No. 1*, BWV 1046a. Bach's use of instrumental techniques in this concerto identifies it as an appropriate piece for the court setting. For example, Bach's employer loved to hunt, and so it seems fitting that Bach wrote in a well-known "hunting call" in the opening horn part of the concerto.

Example 3, *Brandenburg Concerto No. 1* in F Major, BWV 1046



Bach's experience playing both secular music for the court and sacred music for his employer caused him to develop as a musician and inspired him to write many new pieces of varying styles.

When Bach's occupation at Weimar came to a close, he found another career as a court musician in Cöthen in 1717.⁴⁸ At Cöthen, Bach was exposed to the secular music style even more than he was at Weimar.⁴⁹ This was partially as a result of his new position as *Kapellmeister*, the director of all court music and chamber music, which required him to

⁴⁵ Geck, *Life and Work*, 93.

⁴⁶ Geck, *Life and Work*, 93.

⁴⁷ Geck, *Life and Work*, 563.

⁴⁸ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 31.

⁴⁹ Gardiner, *Music in the Castle of Heaven*, 189.

compose more orchestral works than ever before.⁵⁰ With the new position also came some new benefits: his employer at Cöthen willingly allowed Bach to travel, and Bach took this opportunity to discover new music.⁵¹ These factors contributed to the development and completion of the *Brandenburg Concertos*. Bach began the work in Weimar, but composed the later concertos for Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg, whom he met on one of his journeys. Bach wrote to him, saying, “I have then in accordance with Your Highness’s most gracious orders taken the liberty of rendering my most humble duty to Your Royal Highness with the present concertos, which I have adapted to several instruments.”⁵² Some scholars debate whether this figure impressed Bach or if Bach planned to be hired by him, but either way, the *Brandenburg Concertos* resulted from this experience.⁵³ Also, Bach’s music that he wrote at Cöthen reflected the feelings he had toward his new position. Bach experienced both good times and bad there, but overall he enjoyed his time working as *Kapellmeister* with an employer with whom he got along. He said, “There I had a gracious prince, who both loved and knew music, and in his service I intended to spend the rest of my life.”⁵⁴ The *Brandenburg Concertos* reflect this positive attitude. Charles Sanford Terry explains, “They rouse enthusiasm by their rotund polyphony, splendid vigour, and glorious melody.”⁵⁵ Bach employed “rotund polyphony” by writing the concertos for a full orchestra, with each instrument blending together to create colorful sonorities. The “splendid vigour” manifests itself in the quick tempo and fast moving sixteenth notes that Bach writes in, and the listener will not forget the “glorious melody” that Bach so skillfully composes.

⁵⁰ Geck, *Life and Work*, 107.

⁵¹ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 32-33.

⁵² Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 209.

⁵³ Geck, *Life and Work*, 106-107.

⁵⁴ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 33.

⁵⁵ Terry, *The Music of Bach*, 53.

Example 4, *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D Major, BWV 1050*

Allegro.

Flauto traverso.

Violino principale.

Violino di ripieno.

Viola di ripieno.

Violoncello.

Violone.

Cembalo concertato.

5

accompagnamento

Bach's contentment with his Cöthen station manifests itself in the *Brandenburg Concertos*, and Bach's flourishing career at Cöthen initiated his composition of the orchestral genre.

Bach's job at Cöthen also impacted the style of his vocal music. Bach wrote and performed most of the Cöthen vocal works for court activities. Two examples are *Serenata*, "Der Himmel dacht auf Anhalts Ruhm und Glück," a piece written for Prince Leopold's birthday, and *Serenata*, "Die Zeit, die Tag und Jahre macht," a piece written for the New Year's Day festivities.⁵⁷ The circumstances surrounding his tasks during the Cöthen years prompted Bach to compose many original works, both instrumental and vocal.

Bach spent the last years of his life working in Leipzig as the cantor at St. Thomas's church (1728-1750). The music written during this time reflects the demands for which he had

⁵⁶ David J. Rothenberg and Robert R. Holzer, *Oxford Anthology of Western Music*, Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford), 432-33.

⁵⁷ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 197.

to write. Here Bach directed the weekly church services and programs, published music, and taught private lessons and music classes in St. Thomas's school.⁵⁸ He also assisted other churches with their music; he composed his *Cantata No. 75* for the Nikolaikirche Trinity Sunday service.⁵⁹ The music composed during his early years in Leipzig fell into the sacred genre and was similar in style to the music he wrote at his positions in Arnstadt and Mühlhausen.

Naturally, Bach found other areas to compose outside the church setting. When he was not busy with his church music, he directed the *Collegium Musicum* ("Music Union") in Leipzig.⁶⁰ This group performed pieces in more relaxed settings like coffeehouses and outdoor gardens, and the pieces that Bach wrote for them display the comfortable setting. His "*Coffee*" *Cantata*, or "*Schweigt stille, plaudert nicht*," BWV 211, tells about a girl whose hidden desire is to enjoy coffee, making it the perfect subject to perform inside a coffeehouse.⁶¹ Bach's Leipzig career swayed his writing style toward church music, but he supplemented his deeply sacred environment with chances to compose and perform secular music.

Bach's works that he wrote during his final years at Leipzig reveal a final declaration of his approach to music. He received criticism from people that disagreed with his compositional style, but he remained firm in his individuality until the end. One work that represents this attitude is the *Art of Fugue*. This work shows Bach's entrance into an innovative style while keeping characteristics of his earlier fugues.⁶² He applied the methods that he had mastered, like detailed counterpoint and unusual harmonies, to the conventional fugal simplicities.⁶³

⁵⁸ Christoph Wolff, *Bach: Essays on his Life and Music* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1991), 359.

⁵⁹ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 45.

⁶⁰ Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685-1750*, Vol. 2 (New York: Dover, 1971), 182.

⁶¹ Headington, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 52-53.

⁶² Wolff, *Essays*, 365.

⁶³ Geck, *Life and Work*, 625.

Example 5, Contrapunctus, 5 BWV 1080, 5 from *The Art of Fugue*

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Often, these fugues expanded into more complex structures. Bach perfected the art of twisting the subject of the fugue into something new and different each time it appeared. In Contrapunctus 7, Bach inverts the subject and alters the rhythm each time the subject appears.⁶⁵

Example 6, Contrapunctus, 7 BWV 1080, 7, from the *Art of Fugue*

66

⁶⁴ Geck, *Life and Work*, 625.

⁶⁵ Geck, *Life and Work*, 623.

Some see these techniques as Bach's final statement of his music style to world. Christoph Wolff quotes Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, one of Bach's students, in Marpurg's dedication to Bach's sons: "At the very time when the world was beginning to degenerate in another direction, when light melody making was gaining the upper hand and people were becoming tired of difficult harmonies, the late Capellmeister was the one who knew how to keep to the golden mean, and taught us how to combine an agreeable and flowing melody with the richest harmonies."⁶⁷ Bach's experiences at Leipzig enabled him to produce excellent music the way he believed it should be composed. His distinctive careers at Weimar, Cöthen, and Leipzig molded the styles and genres of music he wrote.

Finally, J. S. Bach's religious faith influenced his compositional style. His entire life revolved around his faith, from his Lutheran upbringing and his religious education to his careers as a sacred church musician.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Bach applied his Christian faith to all aspects of his compositions, including the secular ones. In fact, in his book *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven*, John Eliot Gardiner says, "The dedication of his art to God's glory was not confined to signing off his church cantatas with the acronym *S(oli) D(eo) G(loria)*; the motto applied with equal force to his concertos, partitas, and instrumental suites."⁶⁹ Bach united his faith and his music by writing instrumental music to accompany different hymns, biblical texts, and librettos dealing with theological topics; more important than just accompanying, however, this instrumental music supported and enhanced the meaning of the text. The principle that instrumental music should add to the text was passed down to Bach from Martin Luther.

Gardiner says, "The specific task of music, as defined by Luther, is to give expression and added

⁶⁶ Geck, *Life and Work*, 623.

⁶⁷ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 437.

⁶⁸ Gardiner, *Music in the Castle of Heaven*, 126.

⁶⁹ Gardiner, *Music in the Castle of Heaven*, 126.

eloquence to biblical texts: *Die Noten machen den Text lebendig* ('The notes make the words live').⁷⁰ A piece that depicts this concept is Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*. Bach's magnificent instrumentation supports the emotive gospel-sharing libretto; Bach sets the work for multiple choirs, each with its own orchestra.⁷¹ Also, Bach's stylistic use of text painting is excellent in this work. Terry describes one example: "Amidst a company of soldiers Bach places the Man of Sorrows. The music moves with unrelenting rhythm above a throbbing pedal-point which symbolizes the weary Saviour."⁷² Bach gave the choirs a specific identity at different points in the program; they portrayed believers, unbelievers, the disciples, and others.⁷³ When the choirs identify with the Jews who crucified Christ, Terry describes Bach's compositional technique: "Usually they are heard together as discordant bodies in a universal clamour. Sometimes, but rarely, they unite in unison, intent upon a common purpose, as in the shouts 'Let Him be crucified' and 'His blood be on us!'"⁷⁴ *St. Matthew's Passion* indicated Bach's skill for uniting his excellent musical style with his faith.

Another example of Bach unifying his occupation and his faith is in the work *Christ lag in Todesbanden*. Bach again used the art of text painting in a way that brought to life what the words said. Gardiner says, "In his imaginative response to Luther's text, Bach makes us aware that music can do much more than merely mirror the words from start to finish: he shows that it can hold our attention and captivate us by metaphors that strike like lightning."⁷⁵ The music in this work verifies the text, but if someone took the text out, the music itself tells the story with the same level of emotion. This occurs in *Christ lag* when the text states: "No innocence could

⁷⁰ Gardiner, *Music in the Castle of Heaven*, 129.

⁷¹ Terry, *Music of Bach*, 77-78.

⁷² Terry, *Music of Bach*, 78.

⁷³ Terry, *Music of Bach*, 78.

⁷⁴ Terry, *Music of Bach*, 79.

⁷⁵ Gardiner, *Music in the Castle of Heaven*, 133.

be found. Thus it was that Death came so soon and seized power over us – held us captive in his kingdom, Alleluia!”⁷⁶ As the text describes Death’s devious, conniving plot to reign, Bach depicts this musically by cutting off the sound completely on the words *der Tod* (Death) and *gefangen* (imprisoned); his incorporation of dissonances here further express the emotion of pain and suffering.⁷⁷

Example 7, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, BWV 4

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In both *St. Matthew’s Passion* and *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, Bach utilized his ability to complement a biblical text with music that further authenticated its message to connect his faith and his music.

J. S. Bach’s educational background, career positions, and religious beliefs shaped him into the great musician and composer that he was. There is no question that some of this talent was natural, but his outside influences did their part in affecting his compositional style.

Christoph Wolff said it best:

It was only through this union of the greatest genius with the most indefatigable study that Johann Sebastian Bach was able, whichever way he turned, to extend so greatly the bounds of his art that his successors have not even been able to maintain this enlarged domain to its full extent; and this alone enabled him to produce such numerous and perfect works, all of which are, and ever will remain, true ideals and imperishable models of art.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Gardiner, *Music in the Castle of Heaven*, 134.

⁷⁷ Gardiner, *Music in the Castle of Heaven*, 134.

⁷⁸ Rothenberg, *Oxford Anthology*, 504.

⁷⁹ Wolff, *The Learned Musician*, 472.

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This source gives a description of how Bach's personal life and beliefs carried over into his musical writings. Part I talks about Bach's worldview and beliefs, Part II talks about the music itself, and Part III talks about Bach's influence and reception.

Coudert, Allison. *Religion, Magic, and Science in Early Modern Europe and America*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011. <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmx1YmtfXzM5OTYzOF9fQU41?sid=f90b0013-756b-4483-a70b-b9cd48cc0cc3@sessionmgr110&vid=14&format=EB&rid=2>.

This source gives information about the religious and scientific beliefs in Europe and American during the Baroque Period. Some of the chapters talk about how the popular religions related to the scientific beliefs of the time.

David, Hans T., and Arthur Mendel, ed. *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*. Revised and expanded by Christoph Wolff. New York: W. W. Norton, 1998.

http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=LfII_HSZ0JkC&oi=fnd&pg=PR6&dq=johann+sebastian+bach+and+biography&ots=4jPiJ3jMH6&sig=HjF2K74WImClvXI9sqNs_aUAqg8Y#v=onepage&q=johann%20sebastian%20bach%20and%20biography&f=false.

This source contains many primary sources, including some of Bach's own writings and documents. The book also contains many secondary sources, such as biographical documents on Bach and information on how his contemporaries viewed him.

DeSilva, Jennifer Mara. *Episcopal Reform and Politics in Early Modern Europe*. Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2012.

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmx1YmtfXzYzODU2NV9fQU41?si>

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[d=f90b0013-756b-4483-a70b-b9cd48cc0cc3@sessionmgr110&vid=10&format=EB&rid=20.](http://d=f90b0013-756b-4483-a70b-b9cd48cc0cc3@sessionmgr110&vid=10&format=EB&rid=20)

This source contains information about the religion and politics of Europe in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. It gives insight on one of the common religions of the time period and the history of how the religion became popular in that area.

Erickson, Raymond. "The Early Enlightenment, Jews, and Bach." *Musical Quarterly* 94, no. 4 (2011): 518-47. Accessed October 4, 2014. [http://0-links.ebsco.com.library.cedarville.edu/FullText.aspx?linkout=http%3a%2f%2fjournals.ohiolink.edu%2fsearch.cgi%3f%3d\(issn%3a0027-4631%2bAND%2bv%3a94%2bAND%2bi%3a4%2bAND%2bp%3a518\)%2bOR%2bdoi%3a%252210.1093%2fmusqtl%2fgdr021%2522%26def_op%3dAUTO.](http://0-links.ebsco.com.library.cedarville.edu/FullText.aspx?linkout=http%3a%2f%2fjournals.ohiolink.edu%2fsearch.cgi%3f%3d(issn%3a0027-4631%2bAND%2bv%3a94%2bAND%2bi%3a4%2bAND%2bp%3a518)%2bOR%2bdoi%3a%252210.1093%2fmusqtl%2fgdr021%2522%26def_op%3dAUTO)

This source discusses Bach's views on anti-Semitism. It talks about his beliefs in relation to his music and how the music illustrates his ideologies. On a smaller scale, the article talks about the Jews during Bach's time and how his music shows his feelings toward them.

Franklin, Don. O., ed. *Bach Studies*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

This source contains essays that discuss some of Bach's works. The content of the essays ranges from the pieces' origin and theology to their technique and forms of the pieces. The book also contains many charts and examples.

Gardiner, John Eliot. *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven*. New York: Knopf, 2013.

This source walks through Bach's life from childhood to his death. There are chapters about his music training, his faith, and some of his positions and works. The source also includes illustrations with helpful explanations.

Geck, Martin. *Johann Sebastian Bach: Life and Work*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2000.

The first part of this source gives a good description of each job that Bach held during his lifetime. Parts two and three of the source highlight and explain Bach's musical genres he wrote while holding these positions. Part four of the source talks about other aspects of Bach's life that may have influenced the way he composed.

Headington, Christopher. *Johann Sebastian Bach: An Essential Guide to his Life and Works*. London: Pavilion, 1997.

This source provides an overview of Bach's life from his childhood to his death. It mentions some of Bach's childhood qualities and interests that may have influenced his work later in life, and it also highlights some of the positions that Bach held during his later in his lifetime. The source includes a complete list of Bach's works.

Henshall, Nicholas. "Kingdom, Power, & Glory." *History Today* 63, no. 11 (2013): 10-16. Accessed October 4, 2014.

[http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=f90b0013-756b-4483-a70b-b9cd48cc0cc3%40sessionmgr110&vid=26&hid=104.](http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=f90b0013-756b-4483-a70b-b9cd48cc0cc3%40sessionmgr110&vid=26&hid=104)

This article covers European history between 1650-1750. The author discusses different aspects of the culture, such as art, music, and architecture. He highlights some of the famous experts in these areas, including J.S. Bach.

Kevorkian, Tanya. "Town Musicians in German Baroque Society and Culture." *German History* 30, no. 3 (2012): 350-71. Accessed October 4, 2014.

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=f90b0013-756b-4483-a70b-b9cd48cc0cc3%40sessionmgr110&vid=22&hid=104>.

This source talks about town musicians in Baroque Germany. Some of the topics in the article are the jobs of town musicians, how they interacted with musicians of higher and lower status in Germany, and a case study that discovers the production of urban Baroque music. Some other less important topics include the social and cultural practices in Baroque Germany and the popular music of the time.

Marissen, Michael. *The Social and Religious Designs of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

This source talks about the relationship between the composition style of Bach's concertos. One chapter discusses Bach's religious beliefs in relation to his music. The source also includes two appendixes that comment on the early copies of his concertos and other works.

Rothenberg, David J., and Robert R. Holzer, ed. *Oxford Anthology of Western Music*, Vol. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

This source gives examples of scores from various composers. A few of Bach's pieces are included, like an example from the *Brandenburg Concertos* and *Christ lag in Todesbanden*.

Sherburn, Rebecca. "Cultural Influences on the Composition of Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata BWV 199." *Journal of Singing* 61, no. 2 (2004): 137-42. Accessed September 21, 2014.

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=215bda5e-ba46-4663-a524-a14b4209ab04%40sessionmgr4001&vid=8&hid=4108>.

This source describes the cultural influences on Bach's Cantata BWV 199. Some of the influences the author includes are nationalism, humanism, and pietism. The author also talks about the forms of the cantata.

Spitta, Philipp. *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685-1750*, Vol. 1. New York: Dover, 1979. Accessed November 2, 2014.

http://books.google.com/books?id=Z3P4b_NnNLAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=%22Johann+Sebastian+Bach:+His+work+and+Influence+on+the+Music+of+Germany,+Vol.+1&hl=en&sa=X&ei=I2JWVL39GcyvyASAwILwDw&ved=0CB8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22Johann%20Sebastian%20Bach%3A%20His%20work%20and%20Influence%20on%20the%20Music%20of%20Germany%2C%20Vol.%201&f=false.

This source goes into detail about Bach's influence on Germany through his music during the earlier years of his life. It talks about his childhood education and his early career positions. It also talks about the music he wrote during these years.

—. *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685-1750*, Vol. 2. New York: Dover, 1971. Accessed September 24, 2014.

http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jH_szq4Qhh0C&oi=fnd&pg=PR4&dq=%22Johann+Sebastian+Bach%22+and+Europe+and+17th+century&ots=JcYAcfmLtD&sig=sWf3v1Jg9k_amI2nw9dhmYU6alo#v=onepage&q&f=false.

This source goes into further detail about the influences that Bach had on the music in Germany during the later years of his life. It talks about the different positions he held during this time and what music he wrote while holding these positions. In addition to the music, it also talks about smaller details (like fingering) that Bach developed.

Strom, Jonathan. *Pietism and Community in Europe and North America, 1650-1850*. Ed. Joris van Eijnatten and Fred van Lieburg. The Netherlands: Brill, 2010.
<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmx1YmtfXzM0NjEzMV9fQU41?sid=5768f377-1eb3-4e20-b988-189dfd18cd4d@sessionmgr115&vid=4&format=EB&rid=8>.

The source discusses the religious community in Europe during some of the Baroque period. The book describes pietism in the churches during this period and the different disagreements that went along with this topic. The book also discusses some other religious influences during this time.

Terry, Charles Sanford. *The Music of Bach: An Introduction*. New York: Dover, 1963.
This source provides information about the genres of both instrumental and vocal music that Bach wrote. The author includes tables of Bach's organ music, his clavier and cembalo music, and his chamber music at the end of the book. He also includes a chapter about how Bach's career played a role in influencing his music.

Wolff, Christoph. *Bach: Essays on his Life and Music*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.
This source contains a collection of essays about different areas of Bach's life, including his musical style and career steps. The book is divided into four large categories with several essays under each category.

—. *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.
This source gives a detailed explanation of Bach's life as a musician from his childhood until his death. The source gives a description of the foundations of his musical life and explains in detail the positions that he held throughout his life, along with the different opportunities that he had while holding each position. The source gives many musical examples and appendixes for further research.