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**АННОТАЦИЯ**<https://doi.org/10.26176/MSC.2019.38.3.004>

**Богословие Страстей И. С. Баха сквозь призму песни И. Хермана *Herzliebster Jesu*: феоис по-лютерански?**

Статья представляет собой опыт интерпретации «Страстей по Иоанну» и «Страстей по Матфею» И. С. Баха как единой богословской концепции, состоящей из двух частей. Эту концепцию можно считать своеобразным аналогом восточнохристианской идеи обожения (феоисиса); ее основы заложил М. Лютер, однако в завершенном виде она складывается в Страстях Баха, который опирался на традиции лютеранского благочестия, представленные прежде всего в церковных песнях. Согласно содержащейся в статье гипотезе Бах не случайно использовал в обоих Пассионах различные строфы Страстной песни И. Хермана «Возлюбленный Иисусе»: чтобы изложить собственную версию учения об Искупительной Жертве, он объединяет, вслед за Херманом, богословские мотивы мессианства Иисуса и воплощения в Его фигуре Божественной Любви. Сложное соотношение этих мотивов получает отражение в музыкальной символике двух шедевров и в особенностях их либретто. При этом в статье оспаривается распространенная в западном музыковедении точка зрения, согласно которой «Страсти по Иоанну» и «Страсти по Матфею» выражают две противоположные, взаимоисключающие теории искупления, якобы сосуществовавшие в лютеранстве с самого начала его истории.

*Ключевые слова:* музыка и богословие, Бах и Лютер, Страсти И. С. Баха, Иоганн(ес) Херман, песнь «Возлюбленный Иисусе», обожение, Густаф Аулен, теория «Христос-победитель», сатисфакционная теория искупления, тональная символика

**ABSTRACT**<https://doi.org/10.26176/MSC.2019.38.3.004>

**Theology of Bach's Passions through *Herzliebster Jesu* by J. Heermann: Lutheran Theosis?**

The essence of this article is an attempt to interpret of St. John Passion and St. Matthew Passion by J. S. Bach as a single theological concept, consisting of two parts. This concept can be considered as sui generis counterpart to the Eastern Christian idea of divinization (theosis); M. Luther laid its foundations, but it was finally developed in the Passions by Bach, who relied on the traditions of Lutheran piety presented primarily in church hymns. The hypothesis of the article is that Bach did not accidentally use the various stanzas of J. Heermann's Passion hymn *Herzliebster Jesu* in both works; to set forth his own version of the theory of atonement, he combines, following Heermann, two theological motives – Jesus as Messiah and as embodiment of Divine Love. The complex relationship of these motives is reflected in the musical symbolism of the two masterpieces and in the features of their libretti. At the same time, the point of view widespread in Western musicology is challenged, according to which St. John Passion and St. Matthew Passion express two opposite, mutually exclusive doctrines of atonement, which supposedly coexisted in Lutheranism from the very beginning of its history.

*Keywords:* music and theology, Bach and Luther, Passions by J. S. Bach, Johann(es) Heermann, hymn *Herzliebster Jesu*, divinization, Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor* theory, satisfaction theory of atonement, tonal symbolism

**Roman Nasonov**

## THEOLOGY OF BACH'S PASSIONS THROUGH *HERZLIEBSTER JESU* BY J. HEERMANN: LUTHERAN THEOSIS?<sup>1</sup>

Wide gaps in theological concepts, as well as in the living experience of faith behind them, are often used to divide and set Eastern and Western Christianity against each other. But these differences can serve a fruitful dialogue of churches, and moreover, contribute to a better awareness of the traditions they have accumulated. And in other cases, turning to “alien” categories and views helps us to solve scientific problems. Therefore, before attempting to comprehend Bach’s music from the standpoint of an Orthodox Christian, it is necessary to recall the difference in the approach of the churches to one of the most important issues of the Christian doctrine.

Archpriest Maxim Kozlov, a well-known Orthodox theologian, one of the most authoritative experts in the field of Protestant theology in the Russian Orthodox Church, asserts:

The doctrine of salvation by faith alone greatly impoverishes Protestant faith. Because if a person is already saved, then he, of course, can pray, he can strive to live righteously, obey the commandments, but asceticism will never come into his life. Equally, there will never be a conscious desire to overcome certain passions and sinful habits, the root of evil that lives in the soul of every person. Wherefore this fight – sometimes with sweat, with pain, with blood, with tears, – the fight which sometimes takes years, if a person is already saved by the virtue of external justification given to him through faith? And hence the exceptional superficiality of the Protestant image of faith, Protestant piety. Outwardly, everything can be very pious, but a truly profound Christian spiritual life, aimed at obtaining in the soul the image and likeness of God, is almost impossible for Protestants [1].<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The article is based on the presentation given at the International Scientific Conference entitled “Lutheran Music Culture”, 14–16 September 2017, Uppsala University.

<sup>2</sup> See also: “You may notice that Western Protestants differ from us in their outwardly carefree mood, they are always smiling and always joyful. This is because they consider

The notion that Protestants lack an inner spiritual life, may be, have surprised some of Lutherans. Perhaps such opinion seemed offensive to someone. I also disagree with this view. But we must imagine that this misunderstanding stems from a profound difference in the views on the salvation and atonement of sins between the Christians of the West and of the East. The parable of the Prodigal Son can serve as a model of the notions of the Fall of Man and the Redemption of inherited sin in the East. The son voluntarily leaves his father's house and must return to it himself. The father does not feel wrath towards the son and does not accuse him of anything. He loves his son and is waiting for his return. Returning home means healing the fallen human nature, and the process of salvation is conceived in the Orthodox tradition as "theosis", that is, divinization, restoration of the damaged image of God after which man was created. The ideal model of divinization is the way of life of an ascetic, for example, a hermit or an Athonite monk. Spending his whole life in prayer and in the struggle with his passions, he unites in prayer with divine energies that healthfully affect his being. From this point of view the Protestant, saved by faith alone, could really seem a passive consumer of the good influence that Christ's self-sacrifice has on the life of mankind.

My first question is: Is it true that the followers of Luther are nothing more than passive consumers in respect of salvation by faith alone? Is there anything in the Lutheran tradition like divinization among the Eastern Christians? What can the two great Passions by Bach tell us about the inner spiritual life of a Lutheran?

The second theory, which I would like to challenge, is presented in the works of such authoritative scholars as Jaroslav Pelikan and Eric Chafe. We can say that at the moment it is generally recognized. According to this theory, "Bach's two surviving Passions exhibit very marked traits of the two theories, the classic view (*Christus Victor*) in the case of the St. John Passion and the Latin (the satisfaction theory) in the case of St. Matthew Passion" ([8, 115]; see also [11, 89–101, 102–15]).

Probably, we all are well aware that the researchers who hold this point of view rely on the terminological apparatus and the ideas of the outstanding Swedish theologian Gustaf Aulén.

Aulén assigns a special place in the history of theology of redemption to Luther. The latter supposedly adhered to both mutually exclusive doctrines: "There was some form of coexistence and interaction of these two theories in Luther's work, though their exact relationship may never be fully agreed upon" [8, 114]. However, the Protestant theologians did not understand Luther's point of view to the full extent and soon after his death they leaned toward a more formal and rational theory of satisfaction. But Bach, who was keenly interested in theological literature and had the editions of Luther's writings at his disposal, consciously or intuitively

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themselves already saved. Catholics are another matter; Catholics know that this is not an easy thing. But Protestants, as brothers in Christ, help everyone, help us, sincerely believing themselves already saved. And this is very sad. Because, therefore, the concept of asceticism, the concept of the fight against sin, often perennial, grave, with sweat and blood, about overcoming the sinful beginning in oneself, their own passions and sinful habits is completely absent. If a person is already saved, then how can one be serious about some ascetic doing?" [3, 117].

understood what the founder of the Church meant, and consistently reflected in his two Passions the duality of Luther's views on the issue of redemption.

Sir John Eliot Gardiner in his popular book "Music in the Castle of Heaven" develops this idea and makes a number of impressive and fairly logical assumptions. The great musician has creatively developed the ideas of Chafe. He admits that Bach secretly from the consistory, perhaps even with deception, enunciated in the St. John Passion the view corresponding to the Gospel of John and consistent with the Luther's notion of the *Christus Victor*. Outraged by the composer's free-will, the city authorities forced him to radically revise his work, and as a result, a new, second version was performed in Leipzig in the following year, and in this version Bach made a compromise with the "orthodox" theory of satisfaction [10, 388–392].<sup>3</sup>

Until the very end of his life, Bach fought with the consistory for the St. John Passion to be performed in its original form, in all its essentials, and shortly before his death he had achieved his goal [ibid., 392–393].<sup>4</sup> By virtue of the Gardiner's literary talent, the fate of St. John Passion is perceived as a fascinating and exciting romantic story. Indeed, according to some indirect evidence, it can be assumed that the performance of this work caused a conflict with the city authorities and that this conflict could have become one of the dramas of Bach's life. It is quite possible to assume that the consistory was puzzled by the absence of the call to repentance in the Passion. But I don't think that the clash was theological and that Bach insisted that Jesus offered a redemptive sacrifice to the Devil, while his superiors were confident that the sacrifice was intended for the wrathful God.

The idea that in the St. Matthew Passion Bach sought to present ideas that are close to the theory of satisfaction, raises even greater doubts. Elke Axmacher has established that the libretto of this work is largely based on Passion sermons by Heinrich Müller. As noted by Axmacher, Picander in adapting Müller's sermons chose to eliminate all the references to God's wrath as the reason for the sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> It is thanks to Picander or to Bach, who could give advice to Picander, that "the St. Matthew Passion participates in the gradual trend away from the Anselmic-Lutheran doctrine of atonement" [7, 112].

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 597–602 in the Russian edition.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 602–4 in the Russian edition.

<sup>5</sup> "The individual comparisons have shown how consistently Picander adhere to certain principles when working on his model. That these were probably not as clear to him as they were brought up here is of no importance. The observations can be summarized in five points: 1. In his poetry, Picander ignores almost all theological considerations and reflections of his original. In particular, he avoids statements about God's wrath, which Jesus has to bear in his Passion, therefore all statements in which God appears as the 'author' of the suffering Jesu. Thus he takes (in the sense of ecclesiastical-orthodox doctrine) of the Passion consideration their most important basis: If Jesus has not really suffered God's judgment on sin until death, there is no exemption from judgment for man. — 2. Picander eliminates from his Passion poetry not only the angry God, but to a great extent the acting God in general. With him God has only the function of a spectator, at most that of an addressee of Jesus' actions. Thus he dissolves the old-church doctrine of the essential unity of father and son. <...>" ([6, 183–4]; translated from German by the author of the article).

To what has been said, we can add that the work of Aulén, published in 1931 [5], is not a reliable source on the history of the doctrine of atonement. Its paradigm has repeatedly been criticized. In particular, the doctrine of the ransom of mankind from the Devil through the Christ's death was not the generally accepted "classical" theory of the Church Fathers, although such a view was shared by some of them. The dualism of good and evil forces isn't a good match for the tenets of Christianity in principle. Its significance in the teachings of Luther should not be absolutized. As Paul Althaus points out, describing the role of the devil, Luther adheres to dualism within the limits established by God's omnipotence ([4, 165]; see also [9]). Ultimately, Luther adhered to the same doctrine that his Church subsequently shared, the theory of penal substitution that had arisen from the development of Anselm's doctrine of atonement as satisfaction. Neither Luther nor Bach as the author of the St. John Passion were the mavericks in the history of the Lutheranism and the prophets of the *Christus Victor*. This very concept is an invention of Gustaf Aulén. Accordingly, the two great Passions by Bach were not created as an illustration of the two competing theological theories. What connects them in such instance? This is the second of my questions.

Let us consider a specific case. The Kirchenlied *Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen*, by Johann Heermann is the only Lutheran hymn from which verses were included in the libretti of both Passions. In the St. John Passion Bach used the seventh to ninth stanzas (in the Chorales Nos. 3 and 17), and in the St. Matthew Passion — the first, third and fourth (in the Chorales Nos. 3, 19 and 46). Let's pay attention to the fact that the verses of this hymn in both cases are at the very beginning of the work: after the opening chorus and the first reading of the Gospel.

CHORALE NO. 3	CHORALE NO. 17
7. O große Lieb, o Lieb ohn alle Maße, Die dich gebracht auf diese Marterstraße Ich lebte mit der Welt in Lust und Freuden, Und du musst leiden.	8. Ach großer König, groß zu allen Zeiten, Wie kann ich gnugsam diese Treu ausbreiten? Keins Menschen Herze mag indes ausdenken, Was dir zu schenken. 9. Ich kann's mit meinen Sinnen nicht erreichen, Womit doch dein Erbarmen zu vergleichen. Wie kann ich dir denn deine Liebestaten Im Werk erstatten?

Table 1. Verses of *Herzliebster Jesu* in the St. John Passion

In the Table 1 we see the text of the seventh, eighth and ninth verses of the hymn (Chorales Nos. 3 and 17). The poet used a rhetorical figure anaphora: both

stanzas begin with an appeal to the Savior; at first he is called the Great Love, then the Great King. The choice of verses, therefore, is not accidental. Now let's pay attention to the harmonization of both key lines. The third section is written in G minor, and the key word "Love" (*Lieb*) is underlined by the triad of the dominant, triad D major. In the Chorale No. 17 Bach emphasizes the word "King" (*König*) with a similar movement from the tonic to the dominant, this time in A minor. The key word itself is marked by a triad E major (see examples 1a and b).

1a

O gro - ße Lieb, o Lieb ohn al - le Ma - ße

7/5 6/4 3 # 4+ 6 6- 7/5 #

1b

Ach gro - ßer Kö - nig, groß zu al - len Zei - ten

6 # 6 7/5 6 5 #

It may seem that Bach blatantly mistook the harmonization of these fragments, if we consider the matter from the point of view of tonal symbolism. D major is the royal key, key of trumpets and kettle-drums. It was necessary to use it in the Chorale No. 17. At the same time, the triads E major and A minor are associated with a specific Baroque Phrygian mode, in the center of which there is not the triad E minor, but the triad E major, unstable chord, sounding like a dominant to

A minor. Such harmonic tensions are perceived as musical Eros, and it would be natural to use triad E major in the Chorale No. 3 as a symbol of Divine Love.

Of course, Bach didn't confuse anything, and in order to better understand his intention, let's see in which biblical context he introduces the text of the corresponding verses of the *Kirchenlied* in the libretto of the Passion. The seventh stanza of the hymn, in which the Divine Love is mentioned, sounds right after the first portion of Gospel story. Jesus volunteers to capture himself, but asks to release the disciples. This moment is reflected in the text of the *Kirchenlied*, and one can even say that this fragment of the Passion illustrates the theory of penal substitution (not of *Christus Victor*). But I'm sure that this is not the main issue. From the very beginning, Bach makes it clear that the meaning of Christ's deeds is to manifest His immense Love for mankind. The seventh stanza of Heermann's *Lied* could have been included in the John's narration at any time, for example, after the Flagellation of Jesus or after His death on the Cross. But that's why Bach puts the seventh verse in the beginning of the work. Thus, he sets the semantic perspective: the listener must understand that all the deeds of Christ are an act of His great Love. However, this Love is not obvious: it must be seen and understood. According to the Gospel of St. John, Christ appears before us in Bach's Passion as the Messiah, as the great King, and the paradoxical combination of the word "Love" with the triad of D major teaches the listener to see beyond the King's image the main thing that moves all the actions of Christ.

Now it will not be difficult for us to understand the meaning of the second paradoxical combination — the combination of the triad E major with the word "King". The eighth verse of the *Lied* sounds like an answer to the direct question of Pilate: "Are you the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33). Outwardly, this is the main question of the whole work. St. John Passion can be presented as one great speculation on the subject of whether Jesus is the Messiah. However, there is one more issue on the question, deeper and more important: "If Jesus is the Messiah, the great King, why does He behave so strangely? Why doesn't He show His power? Why does no one come to protect Him?" And if He is not just the King, but God Himself, why are well-armed angels not destroying His enemies?" Jesus answers, according to the Evangelist John, "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Music symbolically refers to Divine Love.

The hidden theme of the first Leipzig Passion by Bach, the image of Divine Love comes to the fore in the St. Matthew Passion. The *Herzstück* of this work, as is well known, is the aria *Aus Liebe* in A minor, the musical embodiment of the great Love of Christ and His Innocence. It is characteristic that Bach retains the musical symbol of Divine Love — the Baroque Phrygian mode. In this connection, we can recall the introductory chorus, with the modulation from the E minor to the A minor at the very beginning, and, of course, the Chorale No. 62 *Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden*, sounding in response to the message of Jesus' death and harmonized in the Phrygian mode. Reflecting on their own future decease, believers want to become like the Saviour and to accept the Christian death, full of Love and not of

agony. If we could analyze the St. Matthew Passion in detail, we could make sure that imitation of Christ is the most important spiritual theme of this work.

Also here the three verses of Heermann's *Lied* play a crucial part. Aria *Aus Liebe* is the answer to the question of Pilate: "What evil did He do?" (Matt 27:23; the key question of these Passion). The first stanza of the *Lied*, used in Chorale No. 3, is the paraphrase of the Pilate's question, and the fourth stanza just precedes these words of Pilate. The third verse reminds us that Jesus suffers for the sins of mankind, but its effect in Chorale No. 19 is such that we will think about the subtleties of the theological interpretations of the atonement at last. The presence of calls for repentance in the new Passion music of the *Musikdirector* was to please the consistory. But Bach goes much further. The contemplation of the Passion of Christ in his work becomes divinization, that is, a way of healing the human nature and restoring the image and likeness of God in man. And, perhaps, about this we will not read anything either in the writings of Luther, or in the *Lied* of Heermann. How is it possible, known to everyone who sensibly perceives the Bach's masterpiece. Christ has the same heart as all people, but it doesn't know and never knew hardness. The heart of a sinner who flagellates Christ with his faults is like a pillar of the scourging<sup>6</sup>. The contemplation of the Passion of Christ, accompanied by repentance, is the best means of softening the human heart. And this spiritual exercise Bach commanded us to perform every day of our life.

Thus, I partly answered the question of whether there is something in the Lutheran tradition that could be called divinization. However, the difference in spiritual experience is very significant, not least because of the Bach's Passions not being written for the monk-hermit. The main difference arises from another understanding of the Fall and the consequences of inherited sin. According the Bach's Passions, the healing of human nature is carried out in two stages. At the first, the disease is at such an acute stage that there is no other way out except calling the doctor and relying solely on his skills. At the second, the patient will have to make long efforts for his own rehabilitation. And this rehabilitation is not good works themselves, and not even repentance as such, but an endless path to the restoration of God's design of man. The two great Passions by Bach are not the illustration of two ill-sorted theological theories, but two stages of redemption, which can be understood as divinization. And in this case a person is by no means a passive consumer. First he must call a doctor (let's recall the opening chorus of the St. John Passion) — then take an active part in the treatment. Having worked out this idea, Bach completed the work begun by Luther. He presented such perfect and modern model of redemption that this experience to a larger extent, if not altogether, is relevant for every Christian, whatever Church he belongs to.

<sup>6</sup> Cf.: "Ach ja! ihr habt ein Herz, / Das muss der Martersäule gleich / Und noch viel härter sein. / Erbarmt euch, haltet ein!" (St. Matthew Passion. Recitativo. No. 51).



In order to summarize and illustrate my arguments in favor of the unity of the spiritual plan of the St. John Passion and the St. Matthew Passion, I will present five theses at the conclusion of this article, which can serve as a starting point for further discussion of the problem.

1. Both works can be represented as a single detailed reflection on the text of Johann Heermann's hymn *Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen*. Except for the opening choruses, in both Passions the verses of the *Lied* are the first sections written on non-biblical text. In both cases, the content of these verses is a kind of key to reading the whole work. The choice of the hymn as the theological basis of two works of primary importance is probably connected with the fact that the spiritual experience of Lutheranism is harmoniously generalized in it — and this is its advantage over the works of scholars, in rational presentation of which the Lutheran doctrine of the atonement acquires incompleteness and one-sidedness. In addition, Bach as a church musician was more natural to turn in the search for spiritual meanings to the Lutheran music tradition, rather than to the theological works, including those in his private library.

2. Both works are united by a system of tonal symbolism. The “regal” status of Christ in the St. John Passion is associated with a pair of keys D major — G minor. For the first time in the work these harmonies are represented in the words of Jesus — the answer to the soldiers who came to captivate him: *Ich bin's*. D major is the “hidden hero” of the St. John Passion. Only in the middle section of the alto aria *Es ist vollbracht* it finally appears as the main key (testifying that Christ is the true King). In other cases, it appears as an unstable, dominant harmony, which emphasizes the desire of Christ to sacrifice himself for the atonement of the sins of mankind.<sup>7</sup>

On the contrary, in a pair E major — A minor, playing a key role in the St. Matthew Passion, the forefront is a steady A minor as a symbol of the integrity of Jesus and his non-resistance to the tormentors, and ultimately as a symbol of Divine Love. It is important that the entire system of tonal symbolism is already set forth, in a condensed form, in the St. John Passion, in those two chorales that are written on the verses of the Johann Heermann's *Lied*.

3. Divine Love is the common spiritual theme of the two works under discussion. In the St. Matthew Passion, it is set forth openly and unfolded. The direct portrayal of this sacrificial love is the soprano aria *Aus Liebe* as an answer not only to Pilate's question *Was hat er den Übels getan?*, but also to Heermann's question *Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen*. In the St. John Passion, the theme of Divine Love is present in a hidden form, but this does not at all downplay its importance. Only God's love for suffering humanity can explain the “strange” behavior of the Messiah, which is inappropriate to the earthly kings, which is victorious not through violence and the demonstration of its external power, but through the readiness to bring itself into the ransom sacrifice. Love is the answer to that mystery

<sup>7</sup> On the tonal symbolism in the St. John Passion see further [2].

of the person of Christ, which is impossible to unravel for the human mind in the St. John Passion. Crucially, this answer is given — for those who understand — already at the very beginning of the work: *O große Lieb!* For the majority of listeners who do not have an increased spiritual insight, the answer to the “mystery” of the St. John Passion is the St. Matthew Passion as a kind of “solution to a riddle”.

4. Both works have one and the same spiritual purpose — the salvation of mankind as theosis (that is, the complete healing of the fallen human nature and the return of the image and likeness of God to man). As already noted, this process takes place in two stages. In my opinion, Bach as an outstanding representative of Lutheranism essentially supplements here the teaching of Luther and gives it not only maturity and completeness, but also universality. St. John Passion is a typical “Luther” work, with an emphasis on the depth of the fall of man (*Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt / Menschlich Natur und Wesen*, as Lazarus Spengler put it) and on the senselessness of human efforts to atone for inherited sin or to promote the redemption. Thanks to the St. Matthew Passion, we understand what a great spiritual work the Christian has to do after Jesus has made his sacrifice. It is remarkable that in two works of Bach, man and God, in a certain sense, change roles. In the St. John Passion, God is active (hence the important symbolic meaning of the unstable D major), while man is absolutely passive and cannot help himself in any way. In the St. Matthew Passion, divinization becomes the task and responsibility of man, while the passive love of the immaculate but human Jesus is something like an almost unattainable ideal (therefore, in a pair of symbolically significant keys a stable A minor stands out).

The Lutheran concept of divinization (original and substantially different from the Orthodox one) is not formulated in the *Lied* by Heermann in the finished form. Its creation is entirely the merit of Bach as one of the greatest thinkers in the history of Lutheranism. Nevertheless, this teaching did not arise from scratch. It was latently contained in the experience of daily faith. Bach gave it an artistic expression, comprehending and commenting on the hymn *Herzliebster Jesu*. The significance of his artistic discovery is evident for many generations of listeners of the St. John Passion and the St. Matthew Passion. However, since the Western theology isn't equipped with the concept of “theosis”, it fell short hitherto to articulate Bach's (as the author of these two works) contribution in the history of Lutheran thought.

5. Both Passion have the same intellectual structure. In both cases, the work is, ultimately, the answer to the question contained in the text of the corresponding Gospel. At the heart of the St. John Passion is the question of Pilate: *Bist du der Jüden König?* A similar role is played by the question of same biblical character in the St. Matthew Passion: *Was hat er den Übels getan?* On the first of these questions, Jesus answers mysteriously: *Mein Reich ist nicht von dieser Welt*. In response to the second, he is eloquently silent, since the person of Christ as a pure embodiment of love testifies to his innocence better than any words. Johann Heermann paraphrased this second question and took him to the top of his hymn. However, the first of the questions not only hints at the incomprehensible divine nature of Messiah, but also implies the “human” motive of love as an explanation

of the ransom sacrifice. It is no accident that in the Chorale No. 17 of the St. John Passion, the text of not only of the eighth, but also of the ninth stanzas of *Herzliebster Jesu* is used. Saying goodbye to Heermann's *Lied* in this work, Bach brings up another question: *Wie kann ich dir denn deine Liebestaten / Im Werk erstatten?* Undoubtedly, this question is relevant in the context of the St. John Passion, but the true answer to it will be the St. Matthew Passion. So really, when creating his first masterpiece in the genre of Passion, Bach was looking far ahead?

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