“O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht” BWV 118

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| 1. **O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht,****Mein Hort, mein Trost, mein Zuversicht,****Auf Erden bin ich nur ein Gast,****Und drückt mich sehr der Sünden Last.**(Vs. 2.) **Ich hab für mir ein schwere Reis****Zu dir ins himmlisch Paradeis;****Da ist mein rechtes Vaterland,****Daran du dein Blut hast gewandt.**(Vs. 9.) **Dein letztes Wort lass sein mein Licht,****Wenn mir der Tod das Herz zerbricht;****Behüte mich für Ungebärd,****Wenn ich mein Haupt nun neigen werd.**(Vs. 12.) **Auf deinen Abschied, Herr, ich trau,****Darauf mein letzte Heimfahrt bau;****Tu mir die Himmelstür weit auf,****Wenn ich beschliess meins Lebenslauf.**(Vs. 15.) **Wie werd ich denn so fröhlich sein,****Werd singen mit den Engelein;****Und mit der Auserwählten Schar,****Ewig schauen dein Antlitz klar.** | 1. **Oh Jesus Christ, my life’s light,****My refuge, my comfort, my hope,****On earth I am only a stranger****And the burden of [my] sins oppresses me greatly.**(Vs. 2.) **I have before me a difficult journey,****Into the heavenly paradise, to you;****My true [home and] native land is there,****For which you have spent your blood.**(Vs. 9.) **Let your final word [“It is accomplished!”] be my light****When death shatters my heart;****Protect me from moral impropriety****When I anon [like you] will bow my head [to die].**(Vs. 12.) **Lord, I trust in your leave-taking [to go to God, in heaven],****On which [I] establish my final homeward journey [to paradise];****Open wide the gates of heaven for me****When I conclude my life’s course.**(Vs. 15.) **How very joyful will I then be****[When I] will sing with the dear angels****And behold your radiant face, eternally,****With the band of [God’s] elect [for salvation].** |
| Martin Behm | (transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed) |

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Scan or go to <http://www.bachcantatatexts.org/BWV118> for an annotated translation

General Note: Bach’s autograph score of the first version of this motet, BWV 118.1, scored for voices and brass instruments, includes only the first stanza of this many-stanza hymn. The instrumentation suggests the work’s use in a procession, implying that multiple stanzas were performed. The later version known as BWV 118.2, with strings, woodwinds, and basso continuo, more explicitly calls for repetition with multiple stanzas, but does not specify which ones beyond the first. Modern performances tend to present stanzas 1 and 12, or sometimes 1 and 2 along with one of the other stanzas we have provided above (we give the wordings of the Wagner Gesangbuch of 1697, which Bach owned).