

“Oh Love That Will Not Let Me Go” ~ George Matheson

Born with poor vision, Matheson's eyesight gradually worsened until he was almost totally blind. However, he was academically gifted, and his sisters learned Latin, Greek, and Hebrew to help him study. He graduated from the University of Edinburgh (MA 1862), then became a minister in the Church of Scotland. He pastored in the resort town of Innelan for 18 years; due to his ability to memorize sermons and entire sections of the Bible, listeners were often unaware he was blind. In 1886, Matheson became pastor of St. Bernard's Church in Edinburgh, where he served 13 years. He spent the remaining years of his life in literary efforts.

Matheson said about this hymn:

My hymn was composed in the manse of Innelan [Argyleshire, Scotland] on the evening of the 6th of June, 1882, when I was 40 years of age. I was alone in the manse at that time. It was the night of my sister's marriage, and the rest of the family were staying overnight in Glasgow. Something happened to me, which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice rather than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high.

*O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.*

*O light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.*

*O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.*

*O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;*

*I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.*