

8/20/21

George Matheson - 1842-1906- blind Scottish theologian, author and pastor - and Elaine Hagenberg - b. 1979 - internationally admired choral composer - never had the opportunity to meet one another, but they truly seem like kindred spirits! Both had the ability to feel deeply and to respond with exquisite creative results...



George Matheson

On the evening of June 6, 1882, George penned the words to this hymn:

“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.”



Elaine Hagenberg

He wrote that evening after experiencing “severe mental suffering and the hymn was the fruit of that suffering...the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of working it out myself.” Was he recalling the time when his fiancée backed out of their engagement when he told her he was losing his sight?

What his specific pain was that evening, no one knows for certain, but his deep faith inspired the heartfelt words almost instantly. Each of the four stanzas begins with a key word: Love, Light, Joy, Cross ... words not only describing his own relationship with Jesus, but also names universally attributed to the Christ.

Over a century later, Elaine Hagenberg was so deeply moved by that text that she even kept the original Victorian words (thee, thou etc...) when she composed her anthem while also creating a fresh new melody and the most delicious harmonies. She has composed over 50 pieces and led workshops in this country and around the world as featured guest artist and clinician — all while raising four children at home!

I am sad that George had to experience such intense inward pain – BUT also grateful that he gifted the world with his powerful faith statement which inspired Hagenberg's heart to create such a beautiful interpretation in song – –
a song which our choir will be learning in rehearsals this coming year!

[Click here to listen](#) ... close your eyes and let the music speak to your soul ...

