

# *A Treasury of Hymns*

The Unforgettable Stories of Courage,  
Suffering, and Triumph That Brought These  
Treasured Songs to Life

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A TREASURY OF HYMNS: THE UNFORGETTABLE STORIES OF COURAGE,  
SUFFERING, AND TRIUMPH THAT BROUGHT THESE TREASURED  
SONGS TO LIFE

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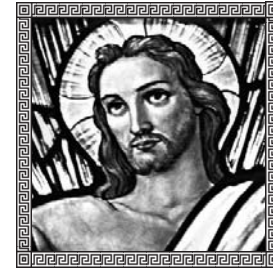
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COME, THOU  
ALMIGHTY KING





## *Come, Thou Almighty King*

Author: Unknown; possibly Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Composer: Felice de Giardini (1716–1786)

Come, Thou Almighty King,  
Help us Thy name to sing,  
Help us to praise:  
Father! All-glorious, O'er all victorious,  
Come and reign over us Ancient of Days.

Come, Thou Incarnate Word,  
Gird on Thy mighty sword,  
Our prayer attend:  
Come, and Thy people bless, and give Thy word  
success;  
Spirit of holiness, on us descend.

Come, Holy Comforter,  
Thy sacred witness bear  
In this glad hour:  
Thou who almighty art, now rule in every heart,  
And ne'er from us depart, Spirit of power.

To Thee, great One in Three,  
Eternal praises be,  
Hence evermore!  
Thy sovereign majesty may we in glory see,  
And to eternity love and adore.  
Come, Thou Almighty King!

## Come, Thou Almighty King

Used by churches around the world for over two hundred fifty years as a popular Sunday morning opening hymn, the origin of its majestic words remains shrouded in mystery.

Most hymnbooks list the author as “anonymous.” Others credit Charles Wesley, since the words were first published in a pamphlet by his brother John, along with another new hymn written by Charles. What we do know is that the hymn appeared anonymously in England to commemorate Trinity Sunday, apparently in 1757, and that same year it was printed in George Whitefield's *Collection of Hymns for Social Worship*.

One storyline has speculated it was written as a protest to the British national hymn, “God Save Our Gracious King,” which had been written more than a decade before “Come, Thou Almighty King.” Both of these hymn texts were sung to the same tune for a period of time, the same lilting melody now well known for the United States' national hymn, “My Country, 'Tis of Thee.”

Indeed, if “Come, Thou Almighty King” was written as an act of rebellion as a substitute for the words to the royal hymn, it reflected a widespread concern, especially among Methodists, about attributing godlike worship to an earthly king.

Other historians, however, feel that the hymn was written as a sequel to “God Save Our Gracious King,” a prayer for an earthly ruler, with “Come, Thou Almighty King,” a prayer to a heavenly King.

Both theories have merit. Regardless, in time the hymn became universally linked to a tune penned by Felice de Giardini, a well-known Italian violinist, composer, and director who lived from 1716 to 1786. Born in Turin, de Giardini toured Europe in the mid-1750s, then moved to London where he worked as music master for the Duke of Gloucester. His works from that era include the opera *Enea e Lavinia* and the oratorio *Ruth*. He moved to Moscow in the late 1700s and died shortly thereafter.

The hymn quickly spread throughout the world. On the other

side of the Atlantic an interesting historical footnote occurred as the American colonies fought for independence from England during the Revolutionary War: “A group of British troops invaded an American church service one Sunday morning and demanded that the Long Island congregation sing ‘God Save Our Gracious King.’ The people responded with the requested tune, but sang ‘Come, Thou Almighty King’ instead.”

This hymn is unique, since the first verse invites the presence of God the Father, the second uplifts God the Son, and the third reverences God the Holy Spirit. In the fourth and final refrain, the “great One in Three” is praised, even as the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity is affirmed. In fact, all four stanzas should be sung together to avoid slighting any of the renowned members of the Godhead. Though little remains known about the background of the song, the powerful words have stood the test of time as a majestic tribute to the Trinity.



# O, LOVE THAT WILL NOT LET ME GO





## *O, Love That Will Not Let Me Go*

Author: George Matheson (1842–1906)

Composer: Albert L. Peace (1844–1912)

O Love that will 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, Love That Will Not Let Me Go

Though George Matheson was open about the background of this song, there is still a mystery that he apparently never was willing to reveal. Concerning the hymn's background he said:

My hymn was composed in the manse of Innellan (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 re-touching or correction...this came like a dayspring from on high.<sup>1</sup>

What was "known only to myself" has been a matter of speculation since that time. Some historians believe Matheson was plunged into sorrow on the night of his sister's wedding from memories of his own dashed hopes when his beloved fiancé cut off their engagement years earlier, unwilling to enter marriage knowing that he was losing his sight. Perhaps he felt as if he was losing his sister who had helped him immensely as he overcame sight challenges in his studies and ministry.

Whatever the cause of such overwhelming sorrow, the Scottish-born George Matheson penned a hymn that has now been sung and performed around the globe, overshadowing his own remarkable ministry.