

## **'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus**

By Maggie Moller

As I pondered this month's theme of "Hope," I was drawn to the hymn, "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus." As Christians, we have hope for life after death. What does the world have to put its trust in? Some people trust in themselves; others trust in their good deeds. Some simply believe this life is all you get and that life is just a continuous cycle. How wonderful it is to know that we have hope for eternal life because of what Jesus did for us all on the cross! We have hope because we can trust in Him. How sweet it is to know He is our hope! No matter what happens in this life, we can trust Him to be by our side. This knowledge is what prompted Louisa Stead to pen the words to "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus."

Louisa was born around 1850 in Dover, England. As a teenager, she felt God calling her into missions. When she was 21, she moved to America and settled in Cincinnati, Ohio. While attending a camp meeting in Urbana, Ohio, she was again prompted by the Holy Spirit to pursue missions work. At first, she desired to go to China but was unable to do so due to poor health.

Louisa married in 1875, but tragically her husband died while attempting to rescue a drowning boy. It is thought that Louisa wrote the lyrics for "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus" shortly after her husband's death.

All the time Louisa had been living in America, she never gave up her hope of pursuing foreign missions work. Finally, around 1880, Louisa and her daughter Lily set out for South Africa. She met Robert Wodehouse there and remarried. After serving in South Africa for 15 years, she returned to America to recover her health. In 1901, she returned to missions work and served in Rhodesia. She died on January 18, 1917, in Zimbabwe. Her daughter Lily married D.A. Carson and became a missionary like her mother.

William James Kirkpatrick composed the music for this hymn. He was born on February 27, 1838, in Duncannon, Pennsylvania, where his father was a schoolteacher and musician. Growing up with musical parents laid the foundation of his musical abilities, and in 1854, he left for Philadelphia to study music and carpentry. At the time, his ambition was to become a violinist. He studied music under Professor T. Bishop and became a versatile musician playing the cello, violin, flute, fife, and organ, while also receiving vocal training. In 1861, he joined the Wharton Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, where he served in the choir and taught Sunday school.

Kirkpatrick married in 1861 and joined the 91<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the Pennsylvania Volunteers as a Fife-Major during the Civil War. He returned to Philadelphia in October 1862 after the position was terminated. For the next 11 years, he supported his wife by working in carpentry.

During this time, he was introduced to John Sweeney. They soon became musical partners, working on many major hymnbooks together. In 1878, Kirkpatrick's wife passed away, and William gave up his career in carpentry, devoting his life entirely to music composition. Between 1880 and 1897, Kirkpatrick and Sweeney published 49 major hymnbooks together. It is unknown when Kirkpatrick composed the music for "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus," but it may have been during this time. Kirkpatrick remarried in 1893 and continued to write hymns until his death on September 20, 1921. Over the course of his life, Kirkpatrick published nearly 100 major works of worship music, including special works for Easter, Christmas, and children's choirs.