

“Lord, I’m Coming Home” ~ William J. Kirkpatrick

William J. Kirkpatrick wrote the music to many of our favorite hymns. Born in Duncannon, Pennsylvania in 1838, William learned to play musical instruments at an early age and received formal training. He published his first hymn collection at age 21, but although he issued around fifty books of music in his life, he often found it necessary to support himself with carpentry or furniture making, although he devoted every spare moment to music, playing for churches and writing hymn tunes.

Even his service with the Union armies in the Civil War was as a musician, first major to the 91st Regiment P. V. Not until after the death of his first wife in 1878 was he able to devote himself full time to music. William wrote the tunes to many favorite hymns: "We Have Heard the Joyful Sound," "'Tis Sweet to Trust in Jesus," "Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It," and "He Hideth My Soul."

He wrote both the words and the music to the song "Lord, I'm Coming Home".

The story behind it shows him as a soul-winner.

William was song-leader at a camp meeting. The hired soloist had a magnificent voice, able to put tremendous expression into the music he sang. However, William noticed that the young man never stayed to hear the sermon.

Afraid that the soloist was not a Christian, William knelt in his tent and prayed long and earnestly for his soul. The words to "Coming Home" formed in his mind. He wrote them down and set them to a haunting tune.

*I've wandered far away from God
Now I'm coming home
The paths of sin too long I've trod
Lord, I'm coming home.
Coming home, coming home never more to roam
Open wide thine arms of love, Lord I'm coming home.*

That evening, William handed the newly-written words and tune to the soloist. Visibly moved after he had sung them, the man stayed for the sermon, went to the altar that night and gave his heart to Christ. The song became a popular invitation hymn in evangelical services, winning many others beside the man it was written for.

*I've wandered far away from God,
Now I'm coming home;
The paths of sin too long I've trod,
Lord, I'm coming home.*

Refrain:

*Coming home, coming home,
Nevermore to roam,
Open wide Thine arms of love,
Lord, I'm coming home.*

*I've wasted many precious years,
Now I'm coming home;
I now repent with bitter tears,
Lord, I'm coming home.*

Refrain:

*I'm tired of sin and straying, Lord,
Now I'm coming home;
I'll trust Thy love, believe Thy Word,
Lord, I'm coming home.*

Refrain:

*My soul is sick, my heart is sore,
Now I'm coming home;
My strength renew, my hope restore,
Lord, I'm coming home.*