

SOFTLY AND TENDERLY

Will Thompson, 1880

This is a 3-part arrangement of the popular hymn "*Softly and Tenderly, Jesus is Calling*", written and composed by hymn-writer, Will L. Thompson, in 1880. He titled the related tune: THOMPSON. "*Softly and Tenderly*" is the most widely known of his compositions and has circulated far beyond its origins in the American Restoration Movement. It is among the most prolifically translated gospel songs and has spread appealingly into the repertoire of various fellowships of Christendom.

The hymn was featured prominently in the 1985 Academy Award-winning movie, "*A Trip to Bountiful*", as well as, at a memorial service for American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, April 8, 1968. It was also used as an a capella version is sung by Alessandro Nivola in the film, "Junebug" in 2005.

When famed evangelist, founder of the Moody Bible Institute, and colleague, Dwight Lyman Moody, lay on his death bed in his Northfield, Massachusetts, home, Will Thompson made a special visit to inquire as to his condition. The attending physician refused to admit him to the sickroom, and Moody heard them talking just outside the bedroom door. Recognizing Thompson's voice, he called for him to come to his bedside. Taking his hand, the dying evangelist said, "*Will, I would rather have written 'Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling' than anything I have been able to do in my whole life*".

Will Lamartine Thompson (1847-1909) was one of the most prolific and popular songwriters of the late 19th century. Both a lyricist and composer, he ensured he would always remember words or melodies that came to him at odd times: "No matter where I am, at home or hotel, at the store or traveling, if an idea or theme comes to me that I deem worthy of a song, I jot it down in verse. In this way I never lose it". He had published his first two songs by the age of 16. Among his popular songs include "*Darling Minnie Gray*" and "*My Home on the Old Ohio*"; his secular and patriotic songs include, "*Housewife's Lament*" (penned under a woman's name). But he is probably best remembered for his beautiful hymns, including "*Jesus is All the World to Me*" and "*Lead Me Gently Home*".

~ Tull