

So Send I You: Margaret Clarkson's Life of Triumphant Praise

Treasures of Wheaton, 2002

Presented by David Malone, Director of Special Collections

So send I you to labor unrewarded,
To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown,
To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing,
So send I you to toil for me alone.

So send I you - to loneliness and longing,
With heart a-hungering for the loved and known;
Forsaking home and kindred, friend and dear one,
So send I you - to know my love alone.

So send I you - to leave your life's ambitions,
To die to dear desire, self-will resign,
To labor long and love where men revile you,
So send I you - to lose your life in mine.

481 So Send I You
At My Father's side you Me, even so send I you. John 20:21
E. Margaret Clarkson, 1944
TORONTO: 11 10 11 30 Rat.
John W. Peterson, 1944

1. So send I you to la - bor un - re - ward - ed, To serve un -
2. So send I you to kind the loneli and bro - ken, O'er un -
3. So send I you to lone - ly - ness and long - ing, With heart a -
4. So send I you to serve your life's am - bi - tion, To die so
5. So send I you to hearts made hard by ha - tred, To eyes made

paid, un - loved, un - sought, un - known, To bear re - buke, to suf - fer
souls to work, to weep, to wake, To bear the bur - den of a
long - ing for the loved and known, For - saking home and kin - dred,
dear de - sire, self - will re - sign, To la - bor long, and love where
blind, be - cause they will not see, To spend, though it be blood, to

scorn and scoff - ing - So send I you to toil for His a - loni -
world a - way - ry - So send I you to suf - fer for My sake,
friend and dear one - So send I you to know My love a - lone,
men re - vile you - So send I you to lose your life in Mine,
spend and spare not - So send I you to taste of Cal - va - ry.

Refrain (following the final stanza)
"At the Fa - ther's side you, So send I you."

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This hymn, "So Send I You," has been called the greatest missionary hymn of the twentieth century. A lonely and scared young teacher wrote it as she contemplated her isolation—a loneliness that pervaded her heart and soul. Margaret Clarkson experienced loneliness of every kind—mental, cultural, and spiritual—as she began teaching at a logging camp in northern Ontario, Canada she wrote these words of pain and suffering. However, years later she would see the "one-sidedness" of this hymn and compose a newer version—one that reflected her growth and rest in Christ.

So send I you—by grace made strong
To triumph o'er hosts of hell,
O'er darkness, death and sin
My name to bear, and in that name to conquer
So send I you, my victory to win



SC-033, Photograph #3

[Margaret Clarkson](#), who's rarely used first name is Edith, was born in 1915 into, as Margaret herself described, "a loveless and unhappy marriage" which broke up when she was twelve. The memories of her childhood were of tension, fear, insecurity, and isolation.ⁱ Margaret was born in Melville, Saskatchewan where she lived until her parents, Frederick and Ethel, and the family moved to Toronto when she was around age four. Throughout her life, she was plagued by pain; initially from migraines, accompanied by convulsive vomiting, and then arthritis—two ailments that accompanied her continually. In *Destined for Glory*, she related sadly that her mother told her that her first words were "my head hurts."ⁱⁱ At age

three Margaret, or Margie as her friends knew her, contracted juvenile arthritis, and became bed bound. She recalled the pain as well as the bald spot worn on the back of her head from lying in bed so long.ⁱⁱⁱ

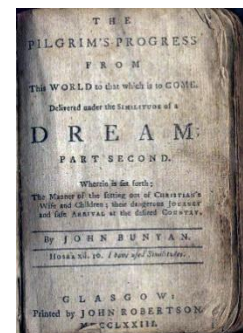
As mentioned, when Margaret was nearing five, she moved to downtown Toronto. The street that they lived on “was a long one, with a high-steeped church at either end.” Margaret’s family attended the closest one, St. John’s Presbyterian Church.^{iv} She described her time at this church, which had a significant impact upon her,^v as growing up in “the heart of a large evangelical church.”^{vi} Margaret was active in church, though she felt no kindred connection, remembering that she was different from everyone she knew.^{vii} Through memorization, Margaret won a hymnbook from her Sunday School, which she would love to climb in a tree with to the highest point possible and sing.^{viii}



Margaret found great comfort and strength in hymns. Early they were her solace as, before any sort of children’s church or programs existed, she sat through entire services with their 45-minute sermons. She would leaf through pages reading and noting authors and composers. She gained a “sense of the community of saints” as she did this, which “led naturally to a search for their other writings.” She came in contact with “such people as John Bunyan, John and Charles Wesley, Martin Luther, William Cowper, John Newton, James Montgomery, Paul Gerhardt, Philipp Nicolai, Gerhard Tersteegen, Isaac Watts, Frances Ridley Havergal, and Fanny Crosby.” As she did this, she began to see the church “as one continuous, living stream of the grace of God” in which she too had a place.^{ix} During this time Margaret attended Bolton Ave. Elementary School until she was thirteen. While a student at Bolton she exhibited a strong intellect as she won 2nd prize in a nationwide essay contest offered by the League of Nations.

These childhood years were ones of great personal growth; a growth of the mind, soul, and heart. Margaret remembered that before her tenth birthday, she enjoyed gardening in her backyard, as well as roaming the large park near her home, “spending countless hours wandering the grassy slopes, pursuing the...Don River to its source, and exploring the ancient hills through which it had carved its broad, deep valley.” This “child of concrete” knew “where watercress grew in the crystal trickle of a spring hidden near an almost invisible path, and where shy, wild forget-me-nots bloomed in the shade of its moist borders.”^x

Along with her love of the outdoors, Margaret experienced recognition for her writing efforts. She enjoyed “playing with words and phrases, savoring as sweet morsels those that most delighted” her.^{xi} At age ten she had her first published work—a poem on the New Year took second place in a contest for children under sixteen.^{xii} It was also at this age that she gained an assurance of faith in Christ during a series of children’s meetings based on Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.^{xiii} Within the next year Margaret confessed her faith to the church and joined St. John’s. She was able to recite “all 107 questions and



answers of the Westminster Shorter Catechism.”^{xiv} Shortly thereafter Margaret began “writing verse more or less regularly...publishing in parish magazines and Sunday School papers.”^{xv} In addition to these new forms of expression, Margaret began to learn to play piano with the hymnbook being her chief teacher.^{xvi}

After her parents’ divorce, when Margaret was thirteen, she began to attend Riverdale Collegiate Institute. Also, she and her family moved to a new, non-denominational, church. With the move, she felt a sense of loss of the “great hymns of the Church,” as this new church used many more gospel songs in its worship. Margaret would recount that the years at this church were one of narrowness and legalism.^{xvii} When she left home at 220, she searched for a church “where good hymns as well as good preaching” could be found.^{xviii} However, it was at this new church that Margaret wrote her first Christian song, which was to be used in an evening service, at the request of her pastor. During her teens, she continued to write “songs intermittently, a few of which were published.”^{xix}



SC-33, Photograph #00

Though Margaret was able to devote her energies to writing and other pursuits she was not free from pain. When she was seventeen her arthritis went into remission, however, she was left to contend with migraines and a congenitally malformed lower spine.^{xx} Her ailments caused her to miss school for nearly a year. Her health, family situation, and the Great Depression, all made it very difficult to pursue a university education.^{xxi} Instead, she attended Toronto Normal School in order to become a teacher. In the great grace of God, Margaret was not left alone. During this time, she had been able to find a friend and mentor in a “vibrant, creative woman about 12 years [her] senior,” a relationship that Margaret maintained for 20 years.^{xxii}

Upon her completion of the teacher program Margaret found that she could not find any teaching positions in the Toronto area. Desperate, she took a position teaching elementary school in a lumber camp in Barwick, Ontario.^{xxiii} It was here in 1936 that she wrote the early version of *So Send I You*.^{xxiv} In despair, she also penned these words:

I do not know tomorrow’s way,
If dark or bright its hours may be;
But I know Christ, and come what may,
I know that he abides with me.

I do not know what may befall
Of grief or gladness, peace or pain;
But I know Christ, and through it all
I know his presence will sustain.

Margaret stayed there for two very difficult years. From Barwick she moved to a position in the public schools of Kirkland Lake, Ontario, a gold-mining community. It was here that she became Music Supervisor of six large schools after one year.^{xxv} Margaret found these years to be

“devastating,” and full of spiritual isolation. It was during this time that she also found herself faced with the possibility of a lifetime of singleness.^{xxvi}



SC-33,
Slide #11



SC-33,
Slide #9

Though a very difficult period of immense loneliness, this period enabled Margaret to begin her journey of resting on God’s sovereignty. A bright spot to her time in this wilderness was her enjoyment of the outdoors. Despite being far from her home and family, at age 26, Margaret began to establish roots by buying “an isolated, rundown summer cottage” on the Severn River for \$600--this was nearly a year’s salary for her. Though unmarried, the words of Solomon ring as true for Margaret Clarkson as they have for other women of noble character. “She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.”^{xxvii}



SC-33, Slide #8

The cottage, which she named, Innisfree--an allusion to Yeats’ poem *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*—was only accessible by water.^{xxviii} Margaret worked hard for many years to make this cottage a home. It was here that she did most of her writing.^{xxix} She recognized that it was at Innisfree that her “love of the outdoors came to full flower.”^{xxx}

In the midst of World War II, Margaret was able to secure a new position and moved to Southern Ontario and taught in the Township of York. The following year she was able to transfer back to Toronto and teach at Dawson St. Public School. During the next dozen or so years, home, for Margaret, “consisted of a drably-furnished room in a series of downtown rooming houses.”^{xxxix} Fulfilling her dream of find a church that supported good singing and good preaching, Margaret joined Knox Presbyterian Church and sat under the ministry of Dr. William Fitch.^{xxxii}

Margaret’s move back to “civilization” and her involvement in a strong, solid church afforded her the stability to focus on her hymn writing. In 1946 she wrote what she called her “first real hymn” at the request of Stacey Woods, General Secretary of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. “We Come O Christ, To Thee” was written to “link together the widely scattered groups that made up the young student movement.”^{xxxiii} The next year she published a book; *Let's Listen to Music*.

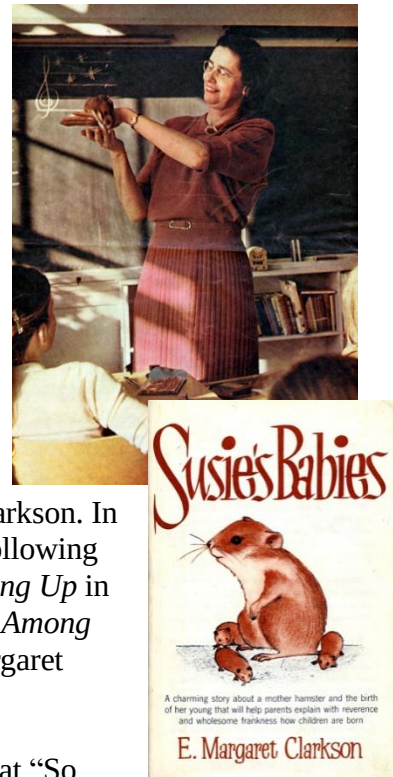


Despite the stability that Margaret most certainly felt as she settled into a teaching position and as she increased her writing activities, she was drawn in other directions. In the fall of 1948, perhaps in an effort to expand her horizons, she left Toronto and assumed an editorial position with Scripture Press in Wheaton, Illinois. However, by April she returned to Toronto, possibly missing the classroom environment and contact with students. Margaret resumed her association with the Toronto Board of Education and in 1950 began teaching at Huron School.



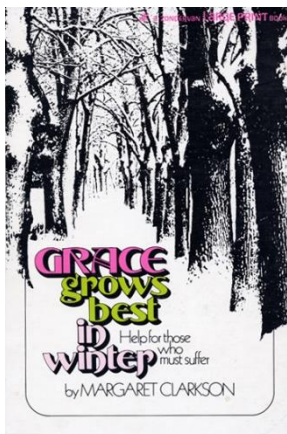
SC-33, Photograph #29

In 1955 Margaret further established her roots in Toronto as she purchased a home on a busy street, thus leaving the life of the drab rooming house for a “hefty” mortgage.^{xxxiv} In 1957 she moved to Blythwood School and the next year she published *The Creative Classroom*. While at Blythwood she began to use hamsters in her curriculum to teach elements of sex and health education and in 1960 *Susie's Babies* was published, which became a best seller. It was during these years that Margaret, admittedly, began to have a fuller sense of God’s sovereignty, especially as it related to her own personal suffering.^{xxxv} The success of *Susie's Babies* allowed Margaret to take a leave of absence during the 1960-61 school year during which she took courses in Language and Literature at University of Toronto. These courses enabled her to increase her certification and most certainly her salary.



The 1960s saw a stream of published books written by Margaret Clarkson. In 1961 *Our Father: The Lord's Prayer for Children* was published, following by *Clear Shining After Rain* and *Chats with Young Adults on Growing Up* in 1962. Over the next few years, *The Wondrous Cross* (1966), *Rivers Among the Rocks* (1967) and *God's Hedge* (1967) were also published. Margaret must have sensed the Lord’s care for her during this period.

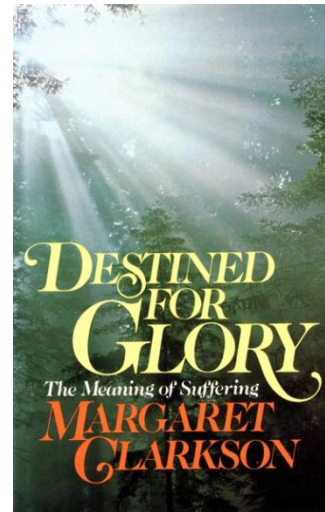
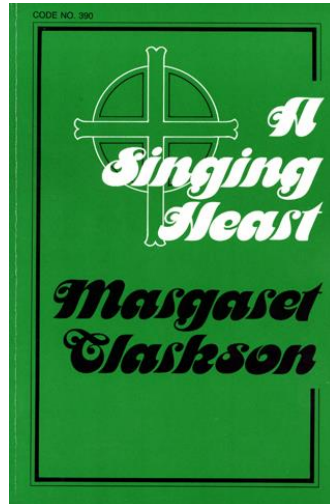
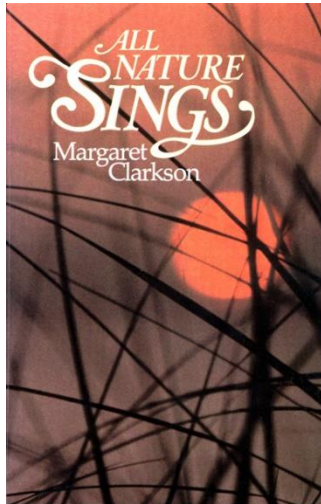
During the early years of her publishing frenzy Margaret realized that “So Send I You” was rather one-sided hymn. She decided to “rewrite” the hymn during the summer at Innisfree. After creating the second version she believed that she created a more biblical hymn that reflected the trials, and the joys, of God’s call on the lives of his children. The new version began to replace the earlier one to Margaret’s pleasure.^{xxxvi}



The gap in publishing mid-decade was brought about by her continual spinal problems, which had been masked by the migraine pain that was her constant companion. The spinal problems finally required surgery that fused much of her lower spine. A few years after this surgery Margaret’s arthritis reemerged, particularly in her back.^{xxxvii} The arthritis that returned soon began to be debilitating and brought an increased level of suffering for Margaret. With this she began to write *Grace Grows Best in Winter*, published in 1972. She did not write this book as C.S. Lewis had in the *Problem of Pain*, with philosophical arguments, but as he had in *A Grief Observed*; as a “cry of human anguish which only faith could assuage.”^{xxxviii} Margaret’s pain became so severe that she retired from teaching in 1973 at the age of 58.

At this time Margaret sold her Toronto home and moved to the suburbs, where she lived quietly and happily in Willowdale, Ontario.^{xxxix} Though still plagued by pain, Margaret had learned early in life that during “long hours of solitude and weakness, repeating hymns and Scriptures...could help...withstand the ravages of pain.”^{xl} Throughout her life she learned to seek solace in Christ, the

scriptures, hymnody, and the “gentle ministry of the Holy Spirit.”^{xli} During her retirement, Margaret was able to take occasional courses at Regent College in Vancouver and attended lectures in theology at Ontario Theological College in Toronto. She was also able to devote energies to continued writing. A few years after her retirement *Conversations with a Barred Owl* (1975) and *So You're Single* (1978) were published. In all Margaret published seventeen books in seven languages. In 1979 and 1981 Margaret taught Christian Hymnody at Regent College.^{xlii}



It was in these latter years of productivity that Margaret produced the greatest amount of material about herself. The earlier work *So You're Single*, followed in the 1980s by *Destined for Glory* (1983), *All Nature Sings* (1986), and *A Singing Heart* (1987), create a nexus of biographical information that Margaret had hoped would be improved upon later with a fuller autobiography, but this never happened. In 1985 Margaret again underwent “severe orthopedic surgery.”^{xliii}

Struggling for a few more years on her own, in 1992 Margaret retired to a monitored-care home in Toronto. It is here that she still resides, unfortunately unable to interact with those who have appreciated and been ministered to by her works. A bright spot of that year was the recognition of her contributions to hymnody by being named a Fellow of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada.

At the end of her introduction to *Destined for Glory*, Margaret Clarkson relates the story of a friend who came to visit, who for five years had struggled with the death of her mother after a nine-year battle with cancer. At that time Margaret had been halfway through the manuscript for the book and allowed her to read it and engage her on the subject of suffering. According to Margaret, her friend “was able to find rest on a number of points that had been troubling her and commit herself in a new way to God’s sovereignty.” Soon after, this same woman found that she was diagnosed with cancer. During this trial Margaret’s friend wrote to her that her book had enabled her to hold up under the burden of her illness and



Author photograph in
“*Destined for Glory*.”

learn about God's purpose in pain. Margaret recognized that "what higher ministry could one hope for in writing a book—or living a life?"^{xliv}

Throughout her life Margaret Clarkson seemingly experienced every form of suffering one could experience; a broken home, financial strains, loneliness and isolation, and constant physical pain, however through it all she continued to place her faith and trust in her savior. During a life of trials, she sensed God's grace and mercy and communicated that to others by providing the church with dozens of hymns testifying to his sovereignty, love, and power. Margaret Clarkson heard and increasingly understood God's call upon her life. As she matured, she recognized that she was sent out to minister to others, not in isolation, but in triumph.

ⁱ Destined For Glory, p. viii.

ⁱⁱ Ibid, p. vii.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} A Singing Heart, p. 2.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} So You're Single, p. 24.

^{vii} Destined For Glory, p. viii.

^{viii} A Singing Heart, p. 3.

^{ix} Ibid, pp. 4-5.

^x All Nature Sings, p. vii.

^{xi} A Singing Heart, p. 3.

^{xii} Destined For Glory, p. viii.

^{xiii} A Singing Heart, p. 2.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Ibid, p. 3.

^{xvi} Ibid, p. 4.

^{xvii} So You're Single, p. 38.

^{xviii} Ibid, p. 5.

^{xix} Ibid, p. 6.

^{xx} Destined For Glory, p. vii.

^{xxi} Ibid, p. viii.

^{xxii} So You're Single, p. 25.

^{xxiii} Ibid, p. 23.

^{xxiv} Ibid, p. 33.

^{xxv} Ibid, p. 23.

^{xxvi} Ibid, p. 32-33.

^{xxvii} Proverbs 31:16 (NIV).

^{xxviii} Ibid, p. 63.

^{xxix} Ibid, p. 65.

^{xxx} All Nature Sings, p. viii.

^{xxxi} So You're Single, p. 26.

^{xxxii} A Singing Heart, p. 52.

^{xxxiii} Ibid, p. 6.

^{xxxiv} So You're Single, p. 65.

^{xxxv} Destined For Glory, p. ix.

^{xxxvi} A Singing Heart, p. 153.

^{xxxvii} Ibid, p. vii.

^{xxxviii} Destined For Glory, p. ix-x.

^{xxxix} So You're Single, p. 65.

^{xl} A Singing Heart, p. 4.

^{xli} Destined For Glory, p. viii-ix.

^{xlii} A Singing Heart, p. 142.

^{xliii} Ibid, p. 78.

^{xliv} Destined For Glory, p. x-xi.