

Northern Messenger

W M Poger 6083107

VOLUME XIII. No. 25

MONTREAL, JUNE 14, 1907.

40 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid

Onward Christian Soldiers.

In an interesting interview reported in the 'Methodist Recorder,' Mr. Baring-Gould was asked, 'What was the origin of your great hymn, "Onward, Christian Soldiers?"' 'I'll tell you that,' he replied. 'When I was curate I had charge of a mission at Horbury, one mile from Wakefield, and one Whitsuntide my vicar wanted me to bring all the Sunday school children up to the mother church for a great festival. "Well," I thought, "there's that mile to tramp; what shall I do with them on the way? All of a sudden it struck me, "I'll write them a hymn." And I did. It was all done in about ten minutes. I set it to one of Haydn's tunes, and the children sang it on the way to church. I thought no more about it, and expected the hymn would be no more heard of.'

Enter Into Thy Closet.

(The Rev. S. W. Pratt, in the 'Illustrated Christian Weekly'.)

This takes for granted prayer and a habit of prayer and a time and place for prayer. The closet is the praying-place.

It is a fact of unspeakable importance that a man may pray to God. The Bible teaches the duty and privilege of public and social and also of secret prayer. In all these ways a man may commune with God. He will hear and help; and at times no one else can help. Secret prayer is important to any true Christian living and growth in grace. The hour of devotion, or 'the still hour,' should be a 'sweet hour of prayer.' This involves a time and place set apart for it.

Such a habit must meet the tests of practicability and profit. It must pay to justify itself. We are God's creatures, dependent, needy, having bodies keenly susceptible to want and suffering, liable to accident and disease and death, with a future all uncertain. Our possessions may be taken away, our plans thwarted, our friends removed, while disappointment and trouble and temptation and evil come upon us, and we fall into sin or are afflicted. We have desires unsatisfied, questions unanswered, responsibilities which weigh heavily, sins unforgiven, and are not at rest. The shadow of death often crosses our path, and we are not ready to meet its issues. We have great needs every day, sore trials, troubled fears, and besetting sins. "Teach, help, save!" must be our daily cry—pardon, wisdom, strength, our daily needs. Compassed about with infirmity and ignorance and sin, we need all the time a mighty, wise, and merciful Friend, who loves us and who cannot die, to whom we can go for counsel and help. And such a one is God, who is a hearer of prayer. He is man's greatest need, and to him all flesh must come. If he has Him he has all good. If we are wise we will go to him daily for daily bread of all kinds, for forgiveness, and for strength against temptation, and the Evil One. Daily have we great occasion to give thanks for blessings without number. Nothing as a habit of communion with God, as a correspondence with heaven, will be so helpful in all parts of life.

An hour of prayer becomes the greatest



—"Sunday Reading for the Young."

privilege. We see God, we talk with him, we commune with the truth itself. Here all things are seen in the light of God. We have all in Jesus' name, and he is seen as all and in all. We have joy in the Holy Ghost. Our souls are ravished with God in Jesus Christ as we commune in the Holy Ghost. Then we can plead for ourselves and others, if we do not forget ourselves in our desire for the glory of Christ. And we go from our closets as from the mount of transfiguration, our faces shining. We are clad in secret armor for the conflicts of the world, strengthened for its labors with a divine undergirding.

Nothing but such communion meets our spiritual wants; such prayer is not only a privilege but a joy, than which our highest susceptibility knows no greater. Nothing will so clear the intellect and reveal the truth and guide the judgment. Here only can we gain strength to master appetite and passion and easily besetting sin, and to put away every tempter. Communing with the Holy Spirit, we shall not easily be enticed by man and the world. And we can do all things better and easier after such prayer.

We cannot too much magnify the im-

portance of the hour of secret devotion. It was doubtless at such a time that Paul was caught up into the third heaven. After such communion Jonathan Edwards hardly knew whether he was in the body or out of the body, and this accounts for his almost superhuman views of God's glory and kingdom.

Our Christian life and work will be very much according to our habit of prayer. The prayerless man must be largely a godless man. Spirituality will be in proportion to communion with God. Beholding his face we are changed into the same image. This is the very best means of spiritual culture.

And there is also great power in such prayer. God hears when his children pray and because they pray. Prayer prepares them to receive his gifts, and to use them, helps them to bear the cross and to endure affliction. They endure as seeing him who is invisible. Their prayers avail. Satan is afraid of such Christians and the world feels the power of their unseen friendship with God.

If we know one's habit of devotion, we can predict very nearly his Christian life and character. If he daily enters into his closet his secret communion shall be openly rewarded.