

Secret

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

Why askest thou after My name, seeing it is Secret? — Malak Yehovah

Christian's widow, Christiana, now appears upon the stage. That name became hers the day she and her children entered upon the pilgrim life. Her husband had gone over Jordan, and as she would neither see nor hear of him anymore, her thoughts began to work in her mind. She had lost her husband. The loving bond of the marriage relation was utterly broken between them. None like the bereaved know the many sad recollections in remembrance of the loss of loving relations. This cost her many a tear. What was worse was the recollection of her sins, for she had been guilty of such terrible things as the hardening of her heart against the Way her husband had taken, and the keeping of her babes in ignorance. Then Christiana began to experience that through the law comes the knowledge of sin, and to cry out. "O wretched one that I am! who shall deliver me?" and, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and, "What must I do to be saved?" Were it not for the misery of their own hearts. God's best saints would fall asleep and go back like other men," like Temporary. It was then, when loaded with her guilt, when she had prayed to God and talked to her children about the Pilgrim Way, that there was a knock on her door. She called through the closed door, If thou comest in God's name, come in! Then he at the door replied, "Amen!" and opened it to enter and greet her with, Peace be to this house. The man introduced himself with. My name is Secret. I dwell with those that are on high. Christiana, the Merciful One (in answer, already, to her prayer for mercy!) hath sent me to tell thee that He is a God ready to forgive, and that He taketh delight to multiply the pardon of offenses. He calls thee to come to His presence, to His table, and that He will feed thee with the fat of His House. Then Secret gave her a letter from her husband's King, which, on opening, it gave forth the odor of the best perfume (Song of Solomon 1:3), and was written in letters of gold. The letter informed her that she should take the way of a stranger and pilgrim, for that was the way to come to the Heavenly Jerusalem and to dwell in the presence of the King with fulness of joy. At this, Christiana was completely overcome, and begged her visitor to carry her and the children there to worship the King. Then said Secret, Christiana, the bitter is before the sweet. Thou, as thy husband, must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Christiana then found herself in good company. "For the froward are an abomination to the Lord, but His Secret is with the righteous" (Prov. 3:31). On this Matthew Henry wrote, "Sinners are hated of God, but saints are loved. The froward sinners . . . are *abomination* to the Lord. He that hates nothing that He has made, abhors those who have thus marred themselves; they are not only *abominable* in His sight, but an abomination; the righteous therefore have no reason to envy them, for they have His secret with them. They are His favorites; He has that communion with them which is a secret to the world, and in which they have a joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with. He communicates the secret tokens of His love, His covenant is with them. They know His mind and the meanings and the intentions of His providence better than others can." "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants" (Amos 3:7).

There you have the heart of the matter. Scripture puts it this way: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant" (Ps. 25:14). The divine Secret is the communication of the secret tokens of His love to His beloved. The word secret itself means, 1. *love-seat, divan*, where friends sit in intimate conversation; 2. *familiar* intercourse,

intimacy; 3. *a secret*, the idea being that of honeymoon love between bridegroom and bride. It then denotes the intimate familiarity between God and His saints, and the inner spiritual comfort they have with God in the regenerate life which is hidden from the world. "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship (of which the world knows not) one with another" (I John 1:7). "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). As God's saints, we have many secret visits of love, many refreshings and expressions of grace from Him. Then we look up and say, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness" (Ps. 17:15).

Sometimes the word (secret) refers to the spiritual knowledge of God. Christians and Christianas know more of God's mind than others. God's counsel is in the Word, and it is a further evidence of His friendship to understand His counsel, to know the mysteries of godliness. Jesus said, "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). Let men of the world have the world. We would have the Word, we would have the Spirit. "Christ gave His Spirit to the rest of the apostles, but His purse to the son of perdition." Many are acquainted with Christianity as a report or a tradition, but only God's people know it (though as a despised hated people holding a despised, hated truth) in the love and saving power of it.

Sometimes knowing the Secret of the Lord means to have a quiet satisfaction with the dispensations of God's providences, which is a great comfort in all our afflictions. They who have the secret, the secrets of His wisdom (Job 11:6), interpret God's providences better than others. You have such secret knowledge as to make you sharp and eagle-eyed, knowing God's mind better than others in respect to the inscrutable providences which are so offensive to the world. You know the secret of suffering, as well as the secret joy a stranger cannot intermeddle with. You know the secret of, "I shall not be moved!"

Sometimes "secret" implies the invisible blessing which cements and holds together our life embedded in the visible evidences of outward prosperity we have in the world. So Job said, "the secret of God was upon my tabernacle" (29:4). Job had been wonderfully preserved in his abundance. God's lamp shined upon his head, the way through the darkness was illuminated by His light, the Almighty was with him to prosper him materially, his children were then about him, he washed his steps with butter and the rock poured him out rivers of oil (29:1-6). In all this plenty, the Lord preserved Job and his family, so that it was said of them, "God shall hide them in the secret of His presence Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion" (Ps. 31:20). David said, "In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me" (27:5). Whenever we do enjoy earthly increase, it is in a world where, in one sense, we are an open prey to inimical and powerful adversaries who seem to thrive on insatiable pillage and rapine. Yet there is a secret guard over us and all that we have, so that we are kept, the world cannot tell how. The Lord hedges us roundabout with the guard of a secret blessing. The Lord hates it when people make their material prosperity their comfort, their refuge and defense. What a cracked reed to lean upon! For the Lord soon enough blows it all away. But "he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1). This secret place was the Holy of holies, the inner sanctum, the secret dwelling-place of God where, by faith, the mind of the saints did rest in peace. It was the Old Testament way of dwelling at the foot of the cross of Christ, where believers find refuge from the storms of life. Then the wounds of Jesus crucified pour out a balm to heal the heartaches and foot sores of weary pilgrims. It was Spurgeon who wrote: "The secret tabernacle of sacrifice, and the royal pavilion of sovereignty afford a double security to the

Lord's people in their worst distresses.”

Jesus commanded, “When thou prayest, shut thy door and pray in Secret.” That is almost like saying that praying in public is not praying at all. It is not easy to pray in public. Some Christians cannot. But the secret of praying in public is the practice of praying in secret. There are so many difficulties connected with public prayer. It has its own besetting sins, and many more distractions and temptations than secret prayer. The real essence of prayer, sometimes hard to find in public prayer, is in secret prayer. In public prayer there is the temptation to be too polished in language, too loud and too long; to have the mind encumbered with concern for beautiful expression. In secret prayer we need not be concerned with time, length of speaking, number of repetitions, or precise rhetoric. Also there are many petitions of secret prayer which never could be mentioned in the pulpit's pastoral prayer, or even in family prayer. We may freely name names in secret, and go over details of private circumstances. We can be open, care free, out-spoken, really be ourselves in secret. There you can be your worst self, and ought to be, if you pray in good conscience. There, too, conscience is examined and made right.

Has Secret knocked on your door? If so, He speaks peace to your house.

Originally Published in:

Vol. 33a No. 2 April May 1973