

The Young People's Magazine

**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1



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Cover Picture: A hornbill, in Zimbabwe.

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Volume 84

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Number 1

We Need a Mediator

If two people have a serious argument and cannot see how they can become friends again, what might they do? They might look for a mediator, someone who would come between them and try to sort out whatever has caused them to become enemies.

Unless we find a mediator, we all continue as God's enemies because of sin. That is the way we have begun life in this world. We do not want to love God; we do not want to give up our sins; we do not want to serve Him and obey all His commandments; we do not want to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. And "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalm 7:11). In other words, while people continue in rebellion against God – while they are acting wickedly, speaking wickedly and thinking wickedly – they are under God's sentence of condemnation – condemned to eternal punishment in hell.

How can we be delivered from that terrifying sentence? Certainly, we *should* feel terrified of what is before us in a lost eternity, if we are still condemned before God as guilty sinners.

What hope can we have of being reconciled to God? Many people try to stop sinning against God. They want to please Him in the hope that they will, in this way, be delivered from condemnation. But there are two problems with this: (1) it is impossible for us, through our own powers, to stop sinning; (2) even if we could stop sinning from now on, we cannot get rid of the guilt of our past sins.

What must we do then? It should be obvious that we need help, and that help must be effective. We must find a mediator, a mediator that can really take away sin and its guilt. And Christ is the only Mediator between us and God. There is no use looking for help from anyone else in this world; the help that we need for our souls is so great that no mere human being can do us any real good. But Christ *can* save sinners.

He took human nature and came into this world when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He is both God and man. So He stands between God and sinners; He acts as a Mediator, to reconcile sinners to God.

He acted as Mediator when He made Himself responsible, in the place of

sinners, for enduring the punishment that they would otherwise have to bear for ever and ever. Think of Peter or John or Matthew among the disciples, or Mary or Martha in Bethany. They were sinners; they could never bear the punishment that was due to them because of their sins. But the Lord Jesus stood between them and the God who must punish sin.

Jesus could represent them before God because He had a human nature – like Peter, for instance, except for sin. Jesus had no sin. But He took all of Peter's sins and suffered for them; He could do so only because He became man and suffered unto death. In this way, He carried away all of Peter's sins. This meant that it was righteous in God to forgive them.

What is more, Martha and the others needed to be accepted by God as perfectly righteous, as having kept all of God's commandments perfectly, if they were to enter into heaven when they died. This also became possible because, when Jesus became man, He came "under the law" (Galatians 4:4). Martha's sins were forgiven because Christ suffered in her place, but she was also treated as perfectly righteous because Christ kept God's law in her place. So she was justified; God accepted her as righteous. So we can be sure that, although she had been a sinner, Martha entered heaven.

Also because Jesus was not only man, but the Son of God, He could carry out all His responsibilities in a worthy way. In every way He was perfectly suited to be a Mediator; He could do everything perfectly that had to be done so that sinners might be reconciled to God.

Christ continues to act as Mediator between God and sinners. He acts (1) as a Prophet to teach them, (2) as a Priest to make intercession for them, and (3) as a King to rule over them.

1. Christ still acts as a *Prophet*. We are ignorant; at best we know so little; we need to be taught. Particularly, Christ works through the Holy Spirit to apply the Word of God preached and read, so that sinners enter the way of salvation. They are made able and willing to go in that way, trusting in Him as the Saviour. And He goes on teaching believing sinners in the same way, so that they learn more and more from the Word of God and continue in the good way that leads to heaven. When Mary sat at the feet of Jesus to hear the wonderful things that he had to say to her, it was because she was well pleased with Him as a Prophet. She had already experienced the blessings of Jesus' teaching, and she wanted to have as much more of it as was possible. So should we.

2. Christ still acts as a *Priest*. While He has finished His priestly work of offering up Himself as a sacrifice to take away sin, He has not finished acting as a Priest. The Old Testament priests not only offered up sacrifices, but they also offered up incense. And the smoke of the incense rising up

towards heaven was a picture of prayer. But how can we, sinners though we are, come into the presence of God? We must come through Christ as the Mediator. He presents the prayers of people in this world to His Father, and He does so because of what He did in this world. Matthew would have been conscious, as he went about spreading the gospel, that he needed God's blessing. He would recognise also that he needed to pray for a blessing, and that he needed to pray for the sake of Christ, if God was to answer him. This is how *we* must come to God in prayer also.

3. Christ still acts as a *King*. He is in control of everything that happens. But especially He subdues sinners to Himself, not least in their conversion, and He goes on ruling and defending them, while He restrains and conquers all His and their enemies. How thankful John would have been that the Lord Jesus had subdued his soul and made him willing to walk in the paths of new obedience! How thankful John would also have been till the end of his days in this world that the great King was continuing to rule and defend him and to restrain and conquer his enemies! We too should be very thankful if we have good reason to believe that Christ is our King. If not, we should be earnestly praying that Christ would not only become our King, but also our Prophet and our Priest.

Luther Rice, later to become an American minister, was under a great sense of his guilt before God; he felt that he very much deserved to be punished for his sin. At last, he felt that he must put himself absolutely at God's disposal, and he saw himself no longer "at variance in the quarrel with my Maker". He believed that God had reconciled him to Himself. Rice now felt very happy.

But, after a day or two, he began to wonder if there was anything of Christ in what had happened; otherwise his could not have been a saving conversion. No doubt he wondered if he had looked to Christ as the One who had made reconciliation for sinners. He then began to see very clearly that this experience was very definitely the result of the atonement made by Christ, that he was completely indebted to Him, as his Mediator, for it all.

He began to think over the teachings he had learned from the answers in *The Shorter Catechism*. They now opened up to his mind, he said, with "light and beauty and power". He was thoroughly glad that, when he was younger, he had learned these answers. "I then felt," he wrote, "and still feel glad that I had been so taught." It would be good, at the beginning of another year, if you would pay more attention to these teachings. It would be good if you would think over them and pray that Christ would teach you these things as your Prophet; you never know how valuable you might yet find them – just as Luther Rice did – for they sum up the Bible's teaching.

The Sons of God: Adoption in Romans 8

3. Who Are the Sons of God?

Rev David Campbell

We have looked at the first of the three points we proposed – the making of the sons of God. This article concludes this point and goes on to give the first of *the marks of the sons of God*, which is the second part in this Youth Conference paper.

It is always useful to keep the summaries of doctrine in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms before our mind when studying the Word of God. This might be a good place to give the words of *The Larger Catechism* to the question, “What is adoption?” (Question 74). “Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, in and for His only Son, Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of His children, have His name put upon them, the Spirit of His Son given to them, are under His fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory”.

It might be worth drawing attention to the terms used in the latter part of Romans chapter 8 which very beautifully reflect what the catechisms describe as the “liberties and privileges of the sons of God”.

First, in verses 17-18: “And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Then also in verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

And again in verse 31: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

And let us refer again to the words that gave Robert Bruce hope at his death (verses 35,38), “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am persuaded, that neither death nor life . . . nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Application. I want to encourage all of you to look up these verses, think about them, pray over them, look up the cross references to them in your Bibles, read good commentaries on them. These verses contain what is a great source of comfort for the children of God. These promises are the assurances given to them in the gospel. If you cannot claim a right to these things, seek to obtain such a right. If you hope that you can make such a claim, be eager and diligent in seeking grace to live up to such a claim and

profession and to see more of the good of God's chosen and to rejoice in the gladness of His nation, and to glory with His inheritance.

2. The marks of the sons of God. This brings us to our second subject, one of great importance if we are seriously inquiring about our personal relation to God and our state of soul before Him. How may we know whether or not we are the children of God? What evidences will assure us that we have been adopted into the family of God and possess the rights, liberties and privileges of His children? This is all the more important today when so many people assume that everyone is a child of God, or at least that everyone who has the outward name of being a Christian is somehow to be automatically considered and addressed as a child of God.

As we have seen in the previous section, that is far from true. We must be born again. We must have faith in Jesus Christ. We must have the Spirit of Christ. It is a most dangerous error to teach people that everyone is God's child and that God is a loving heavenly Father to all. How terrible to be mistaken about this and to be deceived by ministers or others about it! Let us be extra careful when we hear or read such ideas. God is our creator and in that sense we are His offspring, but we are born into the world as sinners; we are children of the devil. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

So what are the marks of the sons of God? How may we know that *we* are the children of God? We have abundant help in answering these questions – some of that help is in Romans 8.

The *first* mark given in the chapter is that the children of God are *spiritually minded*. Verses 4-9 make a distinction between the flesh and the Spirit. Let us read them carefully:

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

The sons of God are spiritually minded. What does this mean?

(1) It means that they now begin to *understand* the things of the Spirit – the spiritual nature of the law and the gospel, the work of the Spirit in their hearts and the principle of spiritual life and spiritual faith and obedience. In the past they could not, and did not, understand anything about these things.

The *flesh* here means our fallen and corrupt human nature – soul and body. They who are “in the flesh” are still not born again. Therefore they cannot understand spiritual things – they are “dead in trespasses and in sins”. But, being alive in their souls, those who have the Spirit of Christ do begin to understand spiritual things.

(2) They have a *mind* for these things – they desire, delight in and seek after them. This is new, for their hearts were closed to them before and they minded the things of the flesh – sinful things, delighting in them and craving them, and unable to find any delight in the things of God at all, and no spiritual inclination for them. Things like the law and commandments of God, prayer, worship, reading and hearing the Word were not really of any interest to them. But now, being made spiritually alive, they are now in sympathy with these things and are drawn to them. In chapter 7, Paul says that he “delights in the law of God after the inward man” – that is, inwardly. It is, as it were, “written on their hearts”. They are not living the way they do just because of outward constraints or example – however useful these are – but because they want to be holy and they desire to be free of sin.

(3) They actually *live, or walk, after* the Spirit and not after the flesh. This walk in life is far from perfect – far from what it ought to be – but they now are able, by grace, to begin to live and walk in new obedience. The course, general habit, direction and bent of their lives is towards God, His Word, and obedience to His revealed will, but it was their own will, their own desires and their own principles that they lived by before.

(4) They are spiritually minded in thinking *about earthly things* as well as about heavenly things. They need much grace to live with spiritual thoughts, desires and inclinations when they are surrounded by earthly and often by sinful things. But this is their high and holy calling. It is a heavenly calling and they begin to wrestle here against earthly and fleshly thoughts and considerations, seeking grace to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world. They think of earthly things and behave towards them in the light of the Person and work of Christ, His love and grace towards them, in the light of God's Word, His all-seeing eye, His holiness, in the light of their appearing before Him at death and in the light of eternity. In so far as they are by grace enabled to do so, they are spiritually minded.

Perhaps I should draw attention here to a notable work by the great English Puritan, John Owen, on the subject of being spiritually minded. It is based on the words in Romans 8:6. It can be found in his *Works* – in volume 7 – and it is a significant read of 230 pages. It is also printed in a separate book, and as a Kindle book, and I believe it is also available as an audio book. I hope that some of the older folks among you, and in time all of you, will try to

look out for this kind of book and try to digest it as best you can. There is so much benefit to be had from these classic writings on such important subjects. Perhaps if you devoted half an hour each day to reading (or listening to) this book entitled, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*, and laid aside your phones for that half hour, you would discover many precious and searching truths and would be much the better for doing so.

The Reformation in Europe

5. Spain and Poland

This is the last part of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference. Last month we considered the success, or otherwise, of the Reformation in France, Scandinavia and Italy.

Let us now turn to *Spain*, where the story is sadly similar to that in Italy. In Spain the Inquisition was already well established before the time of the Reformation. To express a slight doubt about purgatory was enough to bring a professor in a Spanish university before the Inquisition, and anyone who, for example, questioned the value of being a monk was also likely to have to face that vicious body – and even more so somebody who was beginning to receive Luther's teaching about justification by faith alone.

Jaime de Enzinas had left Spain to study abroad. While in Paris he was influenced by the heroism of Protestant martyrs and was converted. For some reason he went to Rome, where someone reported him to the Inquisition. They had him arrested and sentenced him to death by burning. He was martyred in 1547.

His brother Fransisco translated the New Testament into Spanish, not realising that this had been done already. His work was printed in Antwerp in 1543. When the Spanish King, Charles V, arrived in Brussels soon afterwards, a copy was presented to him; he was asked to give permission for it to be circulated in Spain. All that seems to have happened was that Fransisco was eventually thrown into prison. He was charged with translating the Scriptures, and also a book by Luther. Fransisco spent his time in prison translating the Psalms. But after 15 months, he one day found the doors open, walked out and escaped to Germany.

Some Roman Catholic leaders in Spain were very forceful in opposing translations of the Scriptures. One even claimed that they were "the true fountain of all heresies" (heresies are teachings that are seriously false). The authorities in Spain tried to make sure that no Bible or Protestant book could be brought into the country by sea or land, but they were not entirely success-

ful. For instance, one man carried a load of books in two large casks over the Pyrenees, through a pass up to 2400 metres high, and brought them to Seville, from where the books were distributed to various parts of the country.

The Protestant movement did make some progress in Spain, particularly in the towns of Seville and Valladolid, where congregations were established. Indeed the Reformation movement spread through many parts of the country. Over 2000 people, widely scattered over the country, were able to maintain loose contact with each other and keep meeting in private without being detected. Yet the slightest public expression of support for biblical teaching was likely to be put down immediately by the Inquisition, which in Spain was specially powerful and ruthless. One enemy of the Reformation admitted that, if the Inquisition had not taken care "to put a stop to these preachers, the Protestant religion would have run through Spain like wildfire".

The Inquisition had no sense of fairness or honesty in the ways it sought to extract information from people suspected of Protestant views; torture was common. Those convicted were handed over to the Government to be burnt, and the burnings took place in public, sometimes with the King present. Dozens of Protestants might be put to death on one day. In the end, the Inquisition's brutal methods were, in their own terms, successful. Effectively the Reformation in Spain was ground into the dust, and the country for a long period lost the gospel completely.

The last country we will say something about is **Poland**. At the time of the Reformation it was a much bigger country than today. It had close trading links with Germany; so news of Luther's ideas spread quickly into the western part of the country, but in 1520 the King banned bringing Luther's books into Poland. In 1523 it was declared that anyone who believed Luther's teachings or spread them was liable to be put to death. Yet in the port city of Gdansk, as early as 1522, so many were influenced by Lutheran teachings that they were able to persuade the rulers of the city to set aside a church for Protestant preaching.

A translation of the Bible into Polish followed and local printers began to produce copies of Luther's books in their own language. Felix Cruciger, a Roman priest, resigned from his position in 1546. He was brought before the bishop's court and charged with heresy. He was asked if he followed Calvin's opinions, but in fact Cruciger had never heard of Calvin. The result was that he bought some of Calvin's writings, read them and realised that they were not heresy but scriptural truth.

Hundreds of Protestant churches were set up in Poland, including a congregation of Scottish merchants in a place called Thorn. The best known of Poland's Reformers was John à Lasco, also known as Jan Laski, who

spent some time as a minister in England. Back in his own country, Laski had to spend much of the last year of his life opposing a serious heresy which had invaded many of the churches. The heresy was Socinianism, which denied many important teachings of Scripture, including the fact that Jesus is fully divine and that He suffered for the guilt of His people as their substitute. Because of the spread of this heresy, Protestantism in Poland was seriously weakened and, in the long run, the gains of the Reformation were largely reversed.

Much, much more could be said about these countries, and about others also, including the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary and the Czech Republic. But let us try to emphasise some of the gains of the Reformation, which we still benefit from today.

1. How thankful we should be that we all have direct access to the Bible, that we are free to read it and to get good from it for our souls.

2. We should also value the fact that the Reformation recovered the truths about how a sinner can be saved. It is by faith alone in Christ alone that a sinner is accepted by God, not by any works of righteousness that he or she may do.

3. The Reformers taught the important truth – which they found in the Bible – that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between us and God: not Mary or any other saint.

4. The Reformers also stressed the blasphemies of the mass. No priest has the power to change the bread into the body of Christ. True Protestants have been delivered from the temptation to worship what is still a piece of bread.

5. The Reformation delivered people from many more of Rome's dangerous doctrines, such as purgatory and all the other traditions that she has claimed to add to the Bible.

But let us not rest satisfied with right ideas of Scripture truth if we do not ourselves believe in Christ for salvation. We must seek the Lord while He may be found. We must trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

A Fall and Rising Again

In 1892 a colporteur – someone who went about selling Bibles and other good books – was attacked by a band of Jews. They stole the 50 New Testaments he was carrying, and handled him very roughly. At first he wished to bring the men to court, but his friends persuaded him to wait and see what the Lord would do to show the authority of His Word. About six weeks later, in the middle of the night, two unexpected visitors came to the colporteurs'

headquarters; one of the visitors was called Moses, an elderly man dressed as an orthodox Jew, but frail and limping; the other was his son.

The father introduced himself as “a business man and the president of our synagogue”. He came to confess that he had organised and led the attack on the colporteur; he thought he was doing something that God would reward. But he now saw things differently.

“How I have been punished for this,” he went on, “and yet how it has been overruled for my blessing! When I brought the books we stole, to the Rabbi, not really knowing anything of their contents, we examined them. And then, filled with joy at the thought of avenging ourselves on the missionaries who”, as they then thought, “were misleading many by their false teachings and books, we arranged to destroy the New Testaments the following day. As I left the house, it was growing dark and I stumbled over the parcel of books which was lying on the floor.”

He fell with such force that he could not get up. He was carried home and a doctor attended to his broken leg. Then the doctor, a Christian, told him: “My dear Moses, this is the finger of God”. The doctor was quoting Exodus 8:19 and telling Moses that God was acting against him because of his sin in rejecting the New Testament and what it says about Jesus as the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners.

But the doctor went on: “In the book you intended to destroy, you will find the best medicine for body and soul. In this book it is written: ‘Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel’. Look, my dear Moses, this New Testament has already proved a fall; may it also serve as a rising. If you will only read it, your unbelief will vanish and you will find Him of whom Moses and the Prophets wrote.”

The doctor's words reached Moses' heart; he could find no rest. Next day he sent for the books, but they had already been destroyed. He did not know where to find a New Testament, but the doctor brought him one.

He recalled, “I read it repeatedly. My eyes were opened. I saw a new world. I did not recognise myself. I began now to see the true covenant God of Israel in Jesus Christ, the promised Saviour who died for our sins and rose again for our justification. I said to Him: ‘My Lord and my God!’”

Moses had now come to the colporteurs' headquarters to confess his wrongdoing and to pay four times the price of the books. He said – in dependence on God, one trusts – “I will confess the Lord Jesus publicly before friend and foe and seek to live and serve Him to the end”. He was persecuted by his Jewish friends, including his own wife and children. But God used him in bringing some of these friends and relations to believe in the Lord Jesus, including several of his own family.

God's Blessing on Keeping the Sabbath

Rev John Tallach

This article is reprinted, with editing, from *The Young People's Magazine* for November 1937. The writer spent most of his ministry as a missionary in what is now Zimbabwe.

I have read in an old book of the wonderful way the Lord took to honour a man who suffered great loss on account of keeping the Sabbath. This man was a barber who lived in the town of Bath, in England, and who carried on his work in a fashionable shop among wealthy people. As these customers often came on Sabbaths, most of this barber's work was done on that day.

But the barber heard a sermon on the words, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy", and it led to him being convicted of sin and converted. He gave up Sabbath work and became a convinced Christian. The result of this was that he lost most of his trade and became so poor that he had to hire a cellar in the market place of the town to carry on his work.

It was in these circumstances, one Saturday evening, that a well-to-do traveller came into his shop and asked to be shaved. There was just time to do this while the customer was having his horses changed at an inn across the road. He was in a hurry. But it was dusk, and light was needed. The barber had found so little work that day that he did not have enough money to buy a candle. With sadness he told this to the stranger, who took a liking to the man and began to ask him questions.

One thing led to another until the stranger knew all about the barber's struggles, the part of country he came from, and that his name was William Reed. In fact this customer was a lawyer who was just then looking for a man of this name. Another William Reed, in Australia, had left a large sum of money to a nephew of the same name in England. Another man somewhere else was claiming this money, and the lawyer was on his way to look into his claim. But the answers he received from the barber convinced him that he had found the real William Reed.

And so it proved. The poor barber was soon a wealthy man. The fact that he had no candle was what led to him being identified. Now surely God's hand was here and God's reward for his Sabbath-keeping followed. If we honour God, He surely will reward us. Yet it may only be by a spiritual blessing ; but sometimes, as in this case, God adds a temporal blessing. We are apt to think too much of the temporal reward but, if we study our Bibles, we will see that we should do right for its own sake alone.

"But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods."

Do you know who said that? Read the third chapter of Daniel and you will conclude they were very brave words indeed, spoken to King Nebuchadnezzar by young men in Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

God can and may reward us, but our main thought must be to do His will *because it is right* and not because we expect something as a reward. It is good for you to say, I will keep the Sabbath and so please my parents and minister and get God's blessing; but it is better to say, I will keep it because I love it and it is right to do God's will for His sake.

If you have God's presence, your reward will be great enough. Do you admire the three young men and their bold words? Jesus gave the words to them and the heart to utter them and, if you ask Him, He will give these gifts to you too. A new heart asks only, Is it right? not, How much can I get out of it. God will reward those that honour Him, but remember His reward may be spiritual and not temporal, although He sometimes gives both.

For Younger Readers

Not a Lion but a Lamb

He was a soldier, a very strong man. He used to be a boxer. He was so strong that he could send another man flying onto the ground with just one punch. The other soldiers were very frightened of him.

One day he wandered into a church and listened to the minister preaching from the Bible. He was interested in what he heard. So he came back again and again. He would have heard that he was a sinner and that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. So, because of what Christ has done, their sins can be forgiven.

After some time, God changed his heart. The soldier believed in Jesus as the One who died for sinners, to save them from their sins. He was now a new man. No longer did he act like a lion, making other people frightened of him. Now he was more like a lamb than a lion.

Two months later he went for his meal with other soldiers. Some of them began to make fun of him. One of them said he was going to test if the man who was once a boxer was now a real Christian. This other soldier took a bowl of hot soup and threw it at him.

Everyone else watched to see what would happen. They expected

he would act like a lion and attack the man who threw the hot soup, and perhaps kill him. But no; he just wiped the soup away. He acted like a lamb, not like a lion. God had indeed changed him.

For Junior Readers

The Gate of the Year

Here we are at the beginning of a new year – standing at the entrance to it, at its gate. As we pass through the gate of this year, we do not know what the new year will bring – but God knows!

Sadly, in our time, very few people believe in God or realise that He is in control of our lives. They do not know that, in His works of providence, He preserves and governs all His creatures and all their actions.

In days gone by, kings and queens and government ministers would publicly mention God or refer to the need for prayer. In December 1939, Great Britain was at war with Germany and the nation was gripped by fear. Uncertainty about the new year reigned in the hearts and minds of the people of this country. George VI was the British king at the time. As was the custom, the King addressed the nation over the radio at the end of the year. In the midst of all the uncertainty he spoke words of peace to calm his nation. He reminded them that God is the only true King, the One who can provide true peace and real rest in such troubled times.

As King George concluded his message of encouragement, he read part of a poem that had been brought to his attention by his young daughter, Princess Elizabeth, who was only 13 years old at the time. It said:

“And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

‘Give me a light that I may tread safely unto the unknown’.

And he replied:

‘Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.’”

The King wanted to reassure the people of Britain that their future was safe in the hands of God. And that was true if they were trusting in Him. It is also true for us today. As the new year dawns, let us remember that God is our only true hope; our times are in His hand. He will direct our lives when we put our trust in Him. He will light our path and guide our steps.

So at the beginning of this year will you not “commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass”? Read the Bible each day and you will learn, as David did: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”.

J van Kralingen

Secret Sins

W S Plumer

Taken, with editing, from *Short Sermons for the People*. The text was Psalm 139: 23,24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting".

The true Christian may be plainly known from all others by three things:
1. He really does rejoice in all the attributes of God. He adores His justice, he loves His mercy, he trusts in His power, he bows to His wisdom, he is glad that He knows all things. No man with a wicked heart could really ask God to search him through and through.

2. Every real child of God is anxious to know the worst of his case. He is candid with himself. He greatly desires that his aims, his heart, and his motives should be right. He abhors deceit in anyone, most of all in himself. He fears the treachery of his own heart.

3. The true Christian hates all sin, wars against it, loathes it, and never will be satisfied till he is rid of it. He would not follow any wicked way. He would do nothing contrary to the law of God.

No sin is hidden from God. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings" (Proverbs 5:21). "The darkness and the light are both alike to Him." No sin is secret in the sense of being hidden from God. He sees wicked thoughts in us, as well as outward acts. We normally hide our faults from others for fear of losing their respect. We hide our sins from ourselves because we dread a sense of guilt. It is sad that we often put light for darkness and bitter for sweet, and call evil good in thinking of what takes place in our hearts. Sin, reigning in the heart, will as surely work death as if it led to the greatest wickedness. When men love what they dare not speak, and desire what they would not openly assert, they forget that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he".

No one keeps too close an eye on himself, nor asks God too earnestly to search and know him. What God regards as most important is so indeed. "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6). Everything that does not express the truth is hateful to God. If open sin is rebellion, secret sin is treason. The one is the plague with the spot on the forehead. The other is the plague preying on the vital organs.

Another danger of secret sins is: they deceive us most. So long as men do not accuse us, we are apt to think well of ourselves. But when they know our conduct is bad, they think our hearts must be bad too. To kill a man outright would be a great crime in the eyes of most. Yet many bear grudges and old hatreds for years, and never suspect that they are murderers. Many simply

want to avoid exposure. They think stolen waters are sweet but are afraid of being caught. Sins in secret do their work most effectively. Lust, when it is conceived, brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

It is the nature of secret sins to work their way outward, just as it is the nature of seeds first to sprout in darkness and then to seek the light and air. For a while no one may suspect us of our worst faults; but they will either come to light here or meet us in the judgement. David tried it, and for a while all seemed smooth and fair. At last God's prophet said, "Thou art the man", and his shame stood revealed before Israel in the light of the sun.

Sin and holiness are opposites. They are as contrary to each other as light and darkness. He who is born again must hate iniquity and love righteousness. Nothing marks the child of God more than this. He greatly desires to be made holy. He knows that none but the pure in heart shall see God. He knows the plague of sin is in the heart. Every true Christian is very busy with his own case. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Someone who is unconverted but professes to be a true Christian often makes a better show than a converted man for some time. The first is always whitewashing the sepulchre, while the other is intent on putting all right within and he is right. An enemy within is worse than one outside. A thief living in a house has many advantages for carrying on his work.

This is not all. The very worst sins are those of the heart. The great parent of all sin is unbelief. Connected with it are pride, vanity, hatred, malice, a hard heart, a blind mind, a false peace, vile desires and polluted thoughts. Christ said, "Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

Man is full of wickedness till God's grace gives him a love for holiness. When a man often deceives himself, it is not strange if he sometimes deceives others. When the Israelites entered Canaan they did not root out all the heathen, but even made a covenant with some of them, and so were tempted by them. So when a man is born again he is not made perfectly holy all at once. Sin lurks in his heart. He is often ensnared. He makes narrow escapes and, like David, fears that he will one day perish by his enemy. If led astray, he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. Yet he may doubt if he hates sin at all. So he looks to God for help. He asks God to search him and try him, and cast out all his sins, and lead him in a good way.

If a man loves such thoughts, books and preaching as send him groaning and weeping to pray because of all his known sins, then God is leading him in the way everlasting. No man ever lost his soul who lived and died fighting

against sin. His prayers shall be heard, for he does not regard iniquity in his heart. He has the priceless jewel of godly sincerity.

He is a better man than most men think. He is a far better man than he dares to think he is. To burn up his dross he may often be cast into the furnace, but his gold will be purified thereby. God is a witness of his real desires and will send him relief in the day of battle; indeed he will show him mercy on the Day of Judgement. Let him therefore take fast hold of the covenant, look to Jesus and never rest till he has slain his last foe.

This advice is necessary. In such a man, sin is the result of infirmity, not through the love of iniquity. This proves he is a Christian. But sins of infirmity have to be repented of, and opposed constantly. Secret sins – heart sins – are the worst enemies of God and of our souls. The Romans said of a certain enemy: “Whether he is a captive or a captor, he is alike dangerous”. So they killed him. We must spare no sin, but follow it up till it is dead.

That we may deal properly with our secret sins, let us:

1. Think much of the perfect purity of God. His holiness is a flaming fire. In His sight the heavens are not clean. The darkness does not hide from Him.

2. Let us often compare our acts, words and hearts with the perfect law of God. It is exceeding broad. It is spiritual. If you have wrong views of the law, you cannot have right views of sin and you may lose your soul.

3. Hide no sin from your own eyes, and do not refuse to confess it before God. He that confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy.

4. Daily cry, Lead me not into temptation. Yet if tempted, resist the devil. Someone says, “We cannot hinder the birds from flying over our heads, but we must not let them alight and build nests in our hair”.

5. Set a double guard against those sins to which you are very liable. Are you easily angry? Then avoid people who are apt to provoke you. Are you inclined to undue sadness? Then study the promises and seek the company of cheerful Christians. Are you fond of high living? Rather shun than seek such gatherings; provide plain meals for conscience' sake. A Jew was forbidden by law to eat leavened bread during the Passover. Lest he should be tempted to eat it, he was not allowed to have it in the house.

6. Remember that there is no danger of your hating sin too much, or of your being too watchful against it. If you are inclined to be selfish, find out some way of putting this feeling to death. Are your children your idols? Remember they may be cut down in a moment.

7. Stop hewing out broken cisterns which can hold no water. Stop relying on human wisdom, power, or goodness. Often commit your soul to Christ.

8. When you have done your best, remember that you may be mistaken. Earnestly offer the prayer, “Search me, O God”

Scripture and Catechism Exercises

UK Names for Exercise 1 2018-19

Here are the names of those who wanted their names published here. If you forgot to say that you wanted this done, you can say so when you send in your next set of answers.

Senior Section: *Edinburgh:* Bradley Morrison. *Llanelli:* Angharad and Abigail Cran. *North Tolsta:* Ruth Morrison. *Tonbridge:* Joseph Playfoot.

Intermediate Section: *Barnoldswick:* Claudia Van Essen. *Brighton:* Katherine Hills. *Edinburgh:* Fraser Morrison. *Glasgow:* Grant MacLennan, Rebecca Smith. *Llanelli:* Jonathan Cran.

Junior Section: *Barnoldswick:* Daniel van Essen, Calvin Middleton, Isaac Fisher. *Dingwall:* Catherine Campbell. *Edinburgh:* Jenna R Campbell. *Halkirk:* Annelise Hymers-Mackintosh, Nicole Campbell, Donald Maclean. *Inverness:* Lois M Maton. *Llanelli:* Carys Cran. *North Tolsta:* Angus and Uilleam Morrison.

Upper Primary Section: *Barnoldswick:* Samuel van Essen. *Edinburgh:* Anna Cameron-MacKintosh, Susanna Campbell. *Glasgow:* Elena MacLennan. *Gloucester:* Madison Westlake. *Halkirk:* Grace Maclean. *Inverness:* Callum Arie Morrison. *Llanelli:* Carwyn Cran. *Ullapool:* Tacita Angell.

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Looking Around Us

Appearing Before the Great Judge

Three armed robbers posed as police officers when they smashed their way into a woman's home in Ayr. A friend of hers had put an expensive watch for sale on the internet, from her address. The three men forced open the door and they ran into the house. One of them brandished a knife at the woman and shouted, "Where's the Rolex?" They went on to steal a Volkswagen car worth £10 000 and two of them used it to escape.

The men eventually went away, with two fleeing in the Volkswagen while the third left in his own car. Before long he suffered a puncture; so he had to stop. He went to a petrol station and a supermarket looking for help. He was recorded on closed circuit TV, and police were able to identify both him and his car. The result was that two of the men appeared at the High Court in Glasgow, where they admitted assault and robbery. The judge will, no doubt, yet sentence them to a period of time in prison.

We may not be guilty of such sins, but we are guilty before God of many sins, not least the sins of our hearts – our lack of love to God, for instance,

and our unbelief. If we are still unconverted, our unbelief is a complete refusal to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls. It is made very plain in the Bible that He came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), yet many people – even those who regularly hear these truths refuse to look to this glorious Saviour. And that is a very serious sin.

The three men sinned when they broke into someone else's house and went away with property that did not belong to them. They also sinned by coveting what was not theirs – *desiring* what they had no right to have. One thing led to the other: the covetous thought led to theft. Sin always begins in the heart, with one's desires. How good it is to ask God to keep our hearts – to keep us from wanting to do what is sinful!

So David asked God: "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (Psalm 19:13). If he was presumptuous, he would be thinking in a proud way, neglecting the authority of God and presuming that he could do whatever came into his mind, however sinful it might be. David recognised the danger of thinking in that way and asked God to keep him back from so thinking and acting. We are in the same danger; we need to ask God to keep us.

The three men were identified because one of them was seen on CCTV. As a result two of them were arrested and brought to court. But God sees everything that happens. He sees it perfectly and understands it perfectly, including "every secret thing"; He sees it all, although other human beings often do not see the sins that are committed.

And He will bring everyone to judgement, including the armed robbers, when the world is brought to an end, when Christ will sit on the throne of judgement. Everyone will be judged with perfect judgement, which does not always happen in this world by any means, but then the Judge is One who knows everything. On the Day of Judgement, everyone who is guilty will be pronounced guilty, and everyone who is not guilty – because all their sins were forgiven for the sake of Christ – will be pronounced not guilty.

2019 UK Youth Conference

This year's Youth Conference will be held, God willing, at Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perth, PH2 9EG, from Tuesday, April 9, to Thursday, April 11. Further details should appear in next month's *Young People's Magazine*.

Price £1.00