

The Concealed Life

John R Gavazzoni

Christian brethren have spoken of "the victorious life," "the exchanged life," "the replaced life" and certainly, in many cases, in a deeply enriching and edifying way. Recorded in the book, "Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret," is a letter that the great missionary sent to his sister, in which he described the revelation of exchanging his life for Christ's so that Christ would live His life in him. I can't express how powerfully that testimony impacted me when I read the book many, many years ago.

I wish to introduce to you another and wholly compatible aspect of our life in Christ and His life in us, which I will call, the concealed life. Now, the concealment dimension is much more, well, ---- surprise, surprise----concealed. We are much more inclined to give our attention to Christ putting Himself on display in us rather than Him concealing us in Himself, but this is the dimension that Paul confronts us with in his epistle to the Colossians, the third chapter, verses three and four.

Quoting from the NAS: "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." In his translation of Colossians, Jonathan Mitchell, puts it: "...your life is hidden (concealed) with Christ in God." Jonathan, I believe, has given the verse greater force, and properly so. Profoundly deep is the concealment of our life, hidden not only in Christ, but also in God. Deep within God is Christ, and deep within Christ is our life.

The display of Jesus' life in signs, wonders and miracles catches our attention easily, but it takes considerable reflection to fully appreciate the concealment factor of the life of the eternal Son of God as He dwelt in the midst of men. His birth was concealed from all but a very few men. A few shepherds (who, of any importance, would take them seriously?) and a few great but strange men from the east with no local credentials.

He lived most of his life obscurely in an obscure village and, even when He took the first steps toward revealing His identity, it was

without the fanfare that one might expect of God's incarnation. Certainly, it is true, that there were those treasured times of divine display in the earthly life of God manifest in the flesh, but He never, never sought to create a momentum and then ride its crest into a greater display of supernaturalism.

There was almost a rhythm of display and then retreat; repeatedly, display and then retreat to a place away from the crowds. Heal a man and tell him not to tell anyone. Show His power over nature itself, but do it in view of only a small boat load of men in the dark of night in the middle of a lake. Show forth His glory to the point that His clothing shone with heaven's brightness, but invite only three disciples to be witnesses.

I can't help noticing and being impressed with the fact that, contrary to what might be our preference, His Father never arranged for Him to "perform" before the Sanhedrin or the Roman governor. That's the sort of thing that must have driven Judas nuts. Jesus neglected so many opportunities to really get the show on the road. Time and time again, by Judas' reckoning, Jesus failed to take the advantage when it was His for the taking.

I'm convinced that's what motivated Judas to manipulate a confrontation between the temple authorities and Jesus on the night of His arrest.

He was sure that when the chips were down, when it came down to the wire, when it was a matter of life and death, the Master would seize the moment and with a sweep of His hand immobilize those who came to apprehend Him, and then demand to be recognized as the true King of Israel, the Messiah, the Heir to the throne of David.

Judas just knew in his heart that he'd been chosen for this very hour and that he'd been sovereignly endowed with the necessary courage, street smarts and savvy that could arrange the kind of crisis that would precipitate the scene he treasured in his religious imagination. But we know how his plan backfired; backfired in his mind, but in the mind of God, it was a perfect part of His perfect plan for the redemption of the world.

Back to us. Why are we surprised that our Father mixes concealment with display in our lives? The mix is different with different saints. Some know virtually nothing but a life concealed with Christ in God. With others display seems to be more the norm with only brief times of obscurity. And then there are those who have known an extreme polarity of both elements.

This should not surprise us, for, if we are children of our Heavenly Father, we ought to have the characteristics of His nature in our lives, and our Father is the God who hides Himself in darkness, who shines out of darkness and often chooses to work in such unsensational ways that sometimes it takes months or years before we realize and exclaim, "Oh Lord, I see it now, that was you at work in my life and I didn't even recognize You."

He is the God who arranged for the crucifixion of His Son in such a way as to rivet the attention of the whole city and the powers of that day, but raised Him from the dead in a most discreet manner by comparison.

The resurrected King of Glory then concealed Himself in such a way that He was thought to be a gardener by an adoring disciple. Though she finally recognized Him, her report of the encounter sounded to others like a woman in a state of hysteria because of her extreme grief.

And let's not forget His ascension into heaven----a very private affair, seemingly inappropriate to the event, wouldn't you say?. And what about Pentecost when He returned in the Spirit? Wouldn't you think He'd do that in a way that wouldn't require explanation. Something quite dramatic was happening, of that, all in the immediate vicinity were aware, but just what was going on? Peter had to explain it to them.

Peter had to explain that the same Jesus who had walked among them had poured forth His Spirit and that was the reason for the phenomenon they had just witnessed. Jesus had come again with both display and concealment working together to effect the true economy of God. Remember that: display and concealment working together.

Do you ever feel buried, hidden, concealed, out of sight, ignored, neglected, unnoticed, unappreciated and dumped-on? Well, everything's normal. Everything's OK. Every things proceeding the God Way, everything is very Christlike. Your life, plain and simple, is concealed with Christ in God.

Love ya, my fellow saints.
John R Gavazzoni