

Eric Butterworth Speaks

Essay #16
THE HIDDEN YEARS

Christianity has always been hobbled by the results of the efforts of his early followers to deify Jesus. It was said by them that Jesus was God coming to earth to live for a while in the form of man. Unfortunately, in so doing they misunderstood the real power and influence of Jesus, and thus the real focus of his message was missed.

Jesus was not God becoming man but man becoming God. He was a person such as you and I, but he was a highly evolved man. He had a childhood as did we all, experiencing all the aspirations and fears and learning and discouragements of anyone growing up, but he discovered some amazing things about himself which were really discoveries about man--then, he went out in the world, all about the countryside, telling others all about these discoveries. He caught the vision of the ultimate perfection of man and set for himself the goal of achieving that perfection as a demonstration of the truth, achieving this goal not because he could not fail, but because he would not.

Much has been written concerning the mystical events surrounding his birth and death and his life in between, and about the prophecies of his coming and the miracles he performed, about his teachings and healings, and about the worldwide religious movement that sprung up in his name. However, most of these works deal with the religion about Jesus rather than with the religion of Jesus. Usually, Jesus is described as "very God" rather than as the one who caught the vision of the God-man within, and who set about to evolve that which is in-volved in all persons. This is too bad, placing as it does Jesus in a class by himself, so that the practical importance of his life and teachings is missed, and there is little left to do but to worship the man, or the monument which testifies to the man. Jesus taught and demonstrated the divinity of all people, not just of himself. Repeatedly, he rejected the efforts to laud him as a person. When someone addressed him as "Good Master," he responded, "Why callest thou me good? None is good, save God. The words I speak are not mine but the Father's who speaks through me."

It is persistently asked what occurred in those hidden years of Jesus when he was between twelve and thirty. What about his schooling? His associations? His experiences? There are those who suggest that Jesus must have studied with teachers in Egypt, or India, perhaps even with the Druids in England, but I am certain that he was most likely right at home in Nazareth growing up like any other youngster.

Why should we think it necessary to know any more about Jesus during those hidden years than we do about any other young person? Where were President Ford or Henry Kissinger during their hidden years? Nobody has had the day to day record of their early development written down at the time for posterity.

It is significant that in Jesus' teachings there is no use of profound, intellectual illustrations. He used only everyday illustrations, such as shepherds and their flocks, seeds growing in a field, or fruit growing on a tree; in fact there can be found nothing in all of his teaching that is alien to the simple life in Galilee and Judea. However, there is much in them about the scriptures of Judaism. He was obviously well schooled in them and quoted them directly; practically all of his teachings are based on things to be found in the Old Testament. Later Jesus was a recognized teacher of religion, and was called Rabbi not only by his disciples and friends, but also by the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees.

It is important to note that Jesus' teachings were not original with him; they were taken essentially from the Old Testament, which may be disturbing to some. But, does it really matter whether Edison discovered how to make an incandescent lamp or whether he found that concept in a scientific textbook of his day? It is irrelevant; the only thing that counts is the results and how they are made to work for people. Jesus did not create or originate Truth; he fulfilled it and made it work in healing people and in perfecting his own life. The hidden years of Jesus' life were his

years of growth just as were the hidden years in your life and mine; they are the years that contain the germ of our present experience. Perhaps even our present experience is the hidden years of growth containing the secret and the essence of a future experience! Growth is what life is all about. Paul tells us, "Study to show thyself approved under God."

Do you ever wonder how to win divine approval? God approves of you always; you are His beloved child. You win divine approval when you expand acceptance of this creative process of the Infinite Presence. We cannot contract the infinite, but we can expand the finite! We can open the windows and let in more light. We must work to expand our consciousness and to grow and expand in understanding ourselves. This is the role of our hidden years, the years between our need and its answer. Jesus taught and demonstrated that man is a spiritual being, with the Kingdom of Heaven within him. "I have said ye are gods and all of you are children of the most high; all the things that I do, you can do too, if you have faith." Jesus showed that life is a process of growing up in the knowledge and skill of mind, that man can think his way into heaven or into hell, and that a man's enemies are they of his own household.

So, the hidden years of Jesus' youth were years of preparation, of development of the consciousness that would win divine approval and that would expand the finite to the acceptance of the infinite; and then the time came to put it to the test. In John XVII Jesus is praying, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." In other words, "Let me evolve the God-self that has always been in-volved in me." Jesus continues, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world, and I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me that they all may be one even as we are one." He requested the Father to be with him in consciousness.

This is the great intention of Jesus; to realize and to demonstrate his complete unity in God and to assist all to find their own unity and the abundant life that invariably follows such a consciousness. Your hidden years, despite any trials and tribulations, are your years of growth. Your life has meaning insofar as where you are reaching in faith. Life is a school, with lessons to be learned in everyday challenges, and also from the study of spiritual things. Life is an unending growth process and in the hidden years of our life we are growing and unfolding and developing.

Just a hundred years ago, a Confederate veteran put down on paper words that speak of his upbringing and experiences during the Civil War: "I asked God for strength that I might achieve; I was made weak that I might learn to humbly obey. I asked for help that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity that I might do better things. I asked for riches that I might be happy; I was given poverty that I might be wise. I asked for power that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God. I asked for all things that I might enjoy life; I was given life that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing that I asked for, but everything that I had hoped for. Almost despite myself my unspoken prayers were answered; I among all men am most richly blessed."

He realized that he had to go through the lesser before he could attain the greater, and he gave thanks that he had passed the test.