

BLACKFRIARS

SUPPLEMENT

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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MAJESTAS DIVINA

II. SERVICE

BY

ERICH PRZYWARA, S.J.

(*Translated by Thomas Corbishley, S.J.*)

I.

Your life is transition
change
you talk of tomorrow
as if you were travelling along a road
of which this "morrow" were the stationary end
but it is a constant advance
in which you can never stand still
since "today" is a "having come" and a "going to come"
a ceaseless ebb and flow.

The world flows past you
you flow past the world
every moment which you enjoy
is a departure
every beam of sunshine
is unique, over;
every twilight is a twilight never to be repeated
every nightfall
irrevocable.

Every pain is over and done with
but so is every profound joy
how can we really suffer
since we are delivered from the pain
before it has properly begun;
how can we taste true joy

who glimpse the stale lees
before the golden draft has moistened our lips?

A shudder passes over us
for before us floats to and fro
a fluttering veil—
ourselves substanceless fluttering veils
leaves that are no sooner turned green
than they pass into the sere
a dry pallid transparency—
a shudder of awe
for they are veils that in a flash hide a Face
and then reveal It
and we sink to our knees

“ A thousand years in Thy sight
are as yesterday
it passeth and the night-watch cometh
mankind Thou dost cut off
they fall asleep
even as grass that is green in the morning
in the morning it is green and flowereth
at eventide it withereth and drieth up
all our days have flowed away
we bring our years to a close
even as a sigh.”
“Of old Thou didst establish the earth
and the heavens are the work of Thy Hands
they shall perish
but Thou abidest
all things shall wear out like a garment
as a man changeth his dress Thou shalt put them off
and they shall pass away
but Thou remainest the self-same
Thy years have no end.”

* * * * *

The ways which the world have gone from the beginning
the ways you yourself have gone from birth
childhood's dreams
the tempestuous fever of boyhood and youth
manhood's battle
the wisdom of old
impenetrable darkness to eyes that peer into the future
warp and woof of miraculous tapestry
to eye's reflective gaze over the past
meaningless contradiction to the fighter's impatience

mystery of inscrutable protection to mature age
 an Eye that pierces you through and through
 an Ear that listens to your most secret thoughts
 a Foot that accompanies you step by step
 a Hand in your hand not to thrust aside
 “. . . witness of your most secret desires
 true searcher of your heart
 attentive hearer of your tongue. . .”
 “. . . penetrating to the very dividing line of soul and spirit
 of joints and marrow
 a discerner of the conceits and notions of the heart
 neither is there any creature invisible before Him
 but all things are naked and laid open to His eyes
 unto Whom is the reckoning.”

“ Thou searchest me through and through and knowest me
 Thou knowest my sitting down and standing up
 my very thoughts Thou knowest from afar
 my faring forth and my lying down Thou dost examine
 all my ways Thou seest utterly
 before the very word is on my tongue
 Thou knowest it all
 on this side and on that Thou dost encircle me
 upon me Thou layest Thy Hand.
 Whither can I go from Thy Spirit
 whither flee from Thy sight?
 Do I scale the heavens
 Thou art there
 do I cower in the Pit
 there art Thou.
 If I should take unto myself the wings of the morning
 seeking to alight on the furthest margin of the sea
 even there Thy Hand would be leading me
 Thy Right Hand upholding me.
 Did I say: ‘ may darkness sheer hide me
 and the night be the only light about me ’
 not the darkness were too thick for Thee
 the night shineth for Thee even as the day
 darkness and light are one and the same. . . .”

* * * * *

A mystery to which the secret door
 is Death alone
 which yet even now breaks through
 into your earthly life
 a mystery announced to you in words of bliss
 a mystery which reveals itself

to faith alone
 faith wandering in darkness and shadow

YAHWEH

sitting upon a throne high and elevated
 the Temple filled with the rustling of His Garment's hem
 Seraphim before Him
 six wings had the one
 the other had six wings
 with two wings they veiled their face
 with two wings they covered their feet
 with two wings they flew
 and they called one to another
 ' Holy Holy Holy
 YAHWEH
 God of Hosts
 all the earth is full of His Glory '
 and the pillars shook . . .
 and the House was filled with incense.'"

HIS DIVINE MAJESTY

whom you shall see face to face
 praising and serving with Cherubim and Seraphim
 the meaning of your life on earth
 to fit yourself by serving in faith
 to serve Him
 in clear sight.

" Man was created to praise God
 to show Him reverence
 to serve Him
 that is salvation for him."

Spread out before you
 is the fullness of creation
 the glittering of light upon light
 charming your eyes
 the roaring of a boundless ocean
 filling your ears
 alluring scents that steep your soul in bliss
 a thousand slender arms
 caressing you
 stealing into your heart
 into its very fibres
 till it knows the ecstasy of communion.

Or again
 clouds jet-black menacing

the flash of lightning
 that makes you shut your eyes
 in pain and fear
 the roaring thunder and the howling storm
 rending tugging
 at the very cords of your being
 corruption and the sickly stench of a corpse
 sending shudders through you
 poisoned weapons that pierce your flesh
 till you reel beneath the wounds
 creatures that you seek after
 that seek after you
 creatures that you shun
 that yet find you out
 creatures that you long for
 that yet shun you.

Everything in heaven and on earth
 " health and sickness, wealth and poverty
 honour, dishonour,
 long life, short life . . ."

everything
 is eye and ear, mouth, tongue, hand, foot,
 in the one service
 of the Divine Majesty
 " everything else on earth is created
 for man
 to help him to the end for which he was created."

If then there is nothing
 in heaven or on earth
 whose deepest meaning
 is not somehow in the hand of some man
 to promote the service of the Divine Majesty
 if the meaning of your life
 is to be " one " of His servants
 who stand before His Face night and day
 waiting upon His Command
 what must be the inmost set
 of your thinking, wishing, desiring,
 fearing, dreading?
 Shall it be the more attraction to some creature
 repulsion from another
 simply because the former is agreeable
 the latter disagreeable
 or shall it be readiness
 for the service of His Divine Majesty

in all creatures
 so that you are ready to serve Him
 in those in which it is His most Holy Will that you should
 so that your true attitude to all creatures
 within and without
 is something conditioned,
 one attitude alone of your soul
 being unconditioned—
 your will to serve in all things
 His Divine Majesty;
 so that for this reason “ no attraction holds you
 enslaved
 by the desire to possess or to retain or to reject ”
 but all is done
 as “ God our Lord gives us to will
 and as appears better for the service and praise
 of His Divine Majesty; ”
 so that one thing only
 is present in your spirit
 “ the praise of God our Lord
 in which is our well-being;
 but for the rest
 no inordinate attraction fetters your freedom
 making you any more inclined or determined
 to accept or to reject
 to reject or to accept
 anything; ”
 so that in the deeps of your soul
 you remain “ like a balance
 in equilibrium
 ready to dip according as we are impelled
 by the honour and glory of God
 in which is our well-being. ”

(To be Continued)

THE HIDDEN LIFE

BY

H. C. GRAEF.

For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

The Christian life is pre-eminently a hidden life. This is a commonplace, but it seems difficult to grasp in our noisy time, which worships publicity and confuses activities with action. Yet God Himself has set before us the beauty and power of the hidden life when he chose to be born in a stable in an unknown town of