

# BLACKFRIARS

## SUPPLEMENT

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### THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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### MAJESTAS DIVINA

BY

ERICH PRZYWARA, S.J.

(Translated by Thomas Corbishley, S.J.)

#### II. SERVICE (*Continued*).

“ For if the meaning of your life of service  
of the Divine Majesty  
be that you make use of creatures  
in so far as they help to this end,  
reject them  
in so far as they are an obstacle ”  
then the innermost set of your soul  
must be an attitude of poise  
towards everything created  
“ in so far as that is permitted to our free will and not forbidden  
so much so that for our part  
we do not will to have  
health rather than sickness  
wealth rather than poverty  
honour rather than dishonour  
length of life rather than shortness of life  
and so of all the rest  
only desiring and choosing  
that which best corresponds to the purpose of my creation.”

If the meaning  
if all the happiness and satisfaction  
of your life  
is that God be your all  
in the service of His Divine Majesty  
that you stand ever before His Throne

like Cherubim and Seraphim,  
 above heaven and earth  
 ready to become the instrument of His Will  
 if then the one necessary thing  
 is the expression of His Most Holy Will  
 a Will that can be realised  
 in *all* creatures  
 because everything created is an image of His Nature  
 if then the vast expanse of God's Infinity  
 must be found in your anticipations  
 your searchings, your longings,  
 your acts of will  
 so that even your ways and projects  
 may share something of the "unsearchableness" of His Ways  
 the "foolishness" of His Decrees  
 how can you  
 settle down  
 in the sheltered comfort of a narrow circle  
 incapable of new adventures  
 new triumphs  
 new disappointments  
 how can you hold back  
 timid coward  
 from the darkness of the night  
 through which God the Incomprehensible  
 with loving care leads his servants  
 that "power may be made perfect in weakness."

If there be nothing  
 in heaven or on earth  
 which is not of service  
 for the Services of His Divine Majesty  
 how can you cling obstinately to one immutable plan  
 how can you find in a persistent attachment  
 to what is familiar  
 in hostility to all change  
 a proof of loyalty to Him  
 how can you inveigh against those  
 who do not serve Him in *your* way  
 seeing that from them  
 He wants another way  
*their* way.

How can you expect ever to attain to an unchangeable perfection  
 seeing that the Lord can bid you  
 any day

to go a different way  
 how can you find interior consistency  
 save in a consistent readiness  
 for different ways, different methods  
 according to the demands  
 of His Service  
 how can you think of your " immutability " "  
 save in a constant mutability  
 in accordance with His Will.

There is then only one way  
 " in which the Creator and Lord can more surely work  
 in His creature " "  
 and that is " if the latter find itself  
 strongly attached to anything at all  
 it should strive towards the contrary  
 in constant prayer to God our Lord  
 affirming that it does not desire this thing  
 unless His Majesty give to its desire the right spirit  
 so that the basis of its desire  
 be solely the service, praise and glory  
 of His Divine Majesty."

Is then the " lifeless tool " "  
 the ideal  
 of the service of His Divine Majesty  
 an entire absence of all fear, hope, love, hate,  
 a man who has lost  
 everything that distinguishes him  
 from others  
 that makes him *this* individual man  
 his special likes and dislikes  
 his special reaction to the attractions without  
 his sensibility and delicacy of perception  
 for another's individuality  
 responsive as the pulsing air?

Does this man come to the fullness of life  
 only in a self-"immolation"  
 Does your salvation consist in a substitution  
 replacing the fulfilment of *your* desire  
 the achievement of *your* individual happiness  
 by a chill " official service."

Behold this is the inscrutable mystery  
 of your being and nature

that " God above you " is  
 in you  
 your happiness  
 that you have need of a God  
 in whom can be fulfilled  
 all your longing for happiness  
**YOURS**  
 in whom can be filled  
 even to overflowing  
 all your capacity for love  
**YOURS**  
 fulfilled and satisfied.

But  
 this can only be fulfilled  
 if He is that Divine Majesty  
 to whom loving awe and awed love  
 ministering love and loving service  
 is your corresponding attitude.

Not *this* is the idea of an unconditioned service  
 of His Divine Majesty  
 that on your lips be no more heard the cry  
 " Abba, Father,"  
 that you lose all memory of your sonship  
 your " partaking of the Divine Nature ";  
 but rather that all your inexpressible nearness to Him  
 is vividly conscious of a sacred remoteness  
 from His Divine Majesty  
 that He remains for you  
 the INFINITE GOD  
 He the Ocean, you the tiny drop.

Nor is the meaning of your attitude of poise  
 to all created things  
 that you put off all that makes you  
 you  
 and so become something like a " universal man "  
 that no longer your breath quickens for joy  
 that you no more experience real pain  
 like a real man  
 no longer feel attached to one, repelled by another  
 are no longer keen of vision, quick to hear  
 full of a sympathetic appreciation  
 of your own personality  
 or of another's.

No  
 this is the true poise  
 that your sensitiveness  
 of " loving discernment and discerning love "
 grow and unfold  
 precisely because  
 you are drawn neither to yourself nor to other creatures  
 in a headlong self-seeking  
 but as it were  
 with the eyes and ears and hands  
 of God  
 who is at the very heart of all His creatures  
 in each individual nature  
 according to its individual nature.  
 Because now the deepest currents of your soul's movement  
 are permeated with the peace of eternity  
 the roots of your life  
 struck ineradicably  
 in " the land of the living "
 because your life is a tree  
 bursting forth  
 in a whispering rustling of leaves  
 growing up to a life that comes  
 from God  
 " lover of life."

As the service of His Majesty  
 is only the basic condition for the abiding sanctity  
 of your love for Him  
 since the reverence of remoteness preserves  
 your realisation of Him  
 as the Infinite  
 so  
 this poise of will  
 is only the basic pre-condition  
 for the fulness and richness and most delicate flowering  
 in you  
 of a genuinely human sensibility  
 since the reverence of restraint  
 of detachment from yourself and from others  
 makes your eye purer and more alert  
 to see the multiplicity and individuality  
 and complete autonomy  
 of all that is;  
 for now you are unprejudiced, un-self-seeking.  
 no longer do the clouds and fumes

of your restless desire and knavish fear  
 hide you from yourself  
 smoulder between you and other creatures  
 since your hands have learnt to hold aloof  
 not to snatch  
 greedily  
 since your feet are kept at a distance  
 by a Burning Bush  
 since everywhere  
 you come upon a " holy land "   
 within yourself  
 between yourself and all that is made.

See how the nobility of your Service  
 of the Divine Majesty  
 and your consequent poise  
 in face of all created things  
 the passionless tenderness of your love  
 raises you to heights  
 of a full-grown humanity  
 undreamed-of before  
 fashioning you into the man  
 of God.

*(To be Continued)*

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## THE NEW LIFE

BY

IRENE MARINOFF.

Those who are received into the Church later in life lack an inestimable privilege. Not for them the intimacy of long acquaintance, nor the memories of a childhood spent at their mother's knee, not for them the almost imperceptible growth in an atmosphere perfectly adapted to the needs of their soul. It is only with faltering footsteps, not rarely after some profound crisis, that the convert approaches the Church, conscious of his defects, yet eager to learn. Then, as he meets the Teaching Church, this desire will quickly deepen into love, a love which seeks expression in manifold ways. It is true he may discover no new features in the well-loved face. But as Her perfections are infinite, Her praise admits of endless variations.

It was seven or eight years ago, I believe, in the Cathedral of Cologne, with its vast spaces and soaring pillars, its lofty chapels and the majestic aloofness of the High Altar, that the meaning of