

THE NATURE OF GOD IN THE WRITINGS OF
NICOLAS BERDYAEV

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Nicolas Berdyaev

This thesis is an exposition of the nature of God in the writings of Nicolas Berdyaev. Berdyaev is one of the most prominent and important figures in recent philosophical theology, to which he makes a unique and valuable contribution. In every theological system the doctrine of God is related to different points of enquiry. This procedure has been followed in this thesis. The argument which runs through the thesis shows that the nature of God is to be found in Berdyaev's concept of Freedom, and the supreme value of human personality. These two concepts emerge into one, i.e., the God-Man, for freedom exists only in persons - whether human or divine - and the development of personality and the attainment of God-Manhood are impossible without freedom. An attempt also has been made to evaluate and criticize Berdyaev's idea of God.

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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO BERDYAEV'S LIFE AND THOUGHT

Nicolas Berdyaev was born in 1874 in Kiev, the cradle of Russian Christian culture. He was a scion of an aristocratic family, but while studying in Kiev, came under the influence of the writings of Kant and Hegel. While Hegel himself drew conservative conclusions from his own system, Karl Marx drew revolutionary conclusions, and young Berdyaev followed Marx and the early Communists. Expelled from the University for these Marxist leanings, he found himself in exile in the north in company with some of the founders of Russian Communism. Yet all through his life he remained an independent and a rebel. Although he accepted the economic and political conclusions of Marxism, he rejected the dialectical materialism on which they were based, and as a result he was again exiled in 1922, this time by the Communists, after he had served as professor of philosophy in Moscow University. Most of the rest of his life was spent in exile in Paris, with the little group of Russian emigres, but as he remained true to the Marxian analysis and critique of capitalism to the end of his days, and loathed the bourgeois order of society as cordially as any disciple of Lenin, he was naturally in little

favour with them. He died there on 24th March, 1948 at his writing table.

It is significant and not surprising that the dominant theme of one who suffered first at the hands of a tyranny of the Right, and then at the hands of a tyranny of the Left should be the "freedom of the spirit". This creative freedom is the essential mark of man's personality in his view. "Freedom", he says, "has brought me to Christ, and I know of no other path leading to Him. Nor am I the only one who has passed through this experience. No one who has left a Christianity based on authority can return to anything but a Christianity which is free. That is a truth born of vital and dynamic experience, which need not be linked up with any particular conception of the relations between grace and freedom... I admit that it is grace which has brought me to faith, but it is grace experienced by me as freedom. Those who have come to Christianity through freedom bring to it that same spirit of liberty. Their Christianity is of necessity much more spiritual, for it is born of the spirit and not of flesh and blood... Those whose religion is authoritarian and hereditary will never understand properly those who have come to re-

ligion through freedom, and through the tragedy im-
manent in their life's experience.¹"

Berdyaev is not a philosopher, in the sense of one who seeks a comprehensive understanding of existence and the cosmos. He has no philosophical "system", for such a system would necessitate the futile attempt to objectify reality. In the place of a system Berdyaev has a principle by which he seeks to understand existence; the principle that personality is existential, prior to Being, and one with Reality. From this pivotal centre Berdyaev surveys life, its culture, its discipline, and its tragedy, and to this principle as a criterion he brings all human thought, effort and achievement for judgment. It is equally necessary to point out that he is not a theologian in the systematic or scientific sense. Nor does he have a theological system, for once again to systematize theology, to make it objective, to freeze its intuitions into static forms, is simply to frustrate the very purpose of it; namely, to make God clear to man, and to bring them into fellowship.

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p. x.

Berdyaev does not provide a system, but rather a point of view, an intuition of the true state of affairs between God and man. "I was never a philosopher of the academic type", he writes, "and it has never been my wish that philosophy should be abstract and remote from life. Although I have always read a great deal, books have not been the source of my thought. Indeed I never could understand a book of any sort otherwise than by bringing it into connection with the experience through which I myself was living... My thought has always belonged to the existential type of philosophy. The inconsistencies and contradictions which are to be found in my thought are the expressions of spiritual conflict, of contradictions which lie in the very heart of existence itself, and are not to be disguised by a facade of logical unity. True integrality of thought, which is bound up with integrality of personality, is an existential unity, not a logical¹."

Berdyaev himself asserted that in "his

1. Slavery and Freedom p.7.

conversion to Christianity the legend of "The Grand Inquisitor" of Dostoevsky was of the greatest importance.¹ Ever since childhood he had loved Dostoevsky and had an unrivaled insight into the spirit of the great novelist who used his books as a means to express his own understanding of Christianity. In the foreward of his book on Dostoevsky, Berdyaev confessed: "Dostoevsky has had a decisive significance for my spiritual life. While I was still a youth, I received a grafting from Dostoevsky. He shook my soul more than any other writer or philosopher has done. I have always divided people into Dostoevskyites and those to whom his spirit is foreign. The very early direction of my consciousness toward philosophical problems is bound up with Dostoevsky's "cursed questions". He reveals to me some new aspect of himself every time I read him. The theme of the legend of "The Grand Inquisitor" fell into my soul in youth with penetrating sharpness. My turning to Jesus Christ for the first time was a turning to the image of Christ in the legend."²

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1. Nicolas Berdyaev: Captive of Freedom: Spinka, Matthew, p.24
 2. Dostoevsky, translated by Donald Attwater.

Berdyayev's estimate of the influence that Dostoevsky has exercised upon him is by no means exaggerated. His writings bear abundant testimony to it. The legend of "The Grand Inquisitor" is mentioned repeatedly; its conception of Christianity as utter spiritual freedom, to which every form of external compulsion, wielded either by God or man, is foreign, is absolutely basic and axiomatic for Berdyayev's way of thinking. If he became the philosopher of freedom par excellence it is because he had made Dostoevsky's central concept his own, and had since spent a life-time in elaborating it by applying it to every aspect of life and thought.

Everything Berdyayev has written has been underscored by life. The consequences of his thought and its changes may be traced in physical sufferings; his spiritual and mental pilgrimage has led him into exile. It is this note of realism, and sincerity that encourages the otherwise baffled student of Berdyayev to carry on the quest for his word to the modern spirit. "His painful pilgrimage to Christ", writes W.J. Pythian Adams, in a finely sympathetic article, "and his expulsion from the Communist Russia

as a result of that conversion, these two elements are themselves sufficient to explain the fascination which he wields with so little effort. It is here indeed, as we believe he himself seems to be aware, that the main secret of his power is revealed.¹

It would seem then that Berdyaev asks of those who would understand him a certain depth of sympathy with which first to meet the rush of strange concepts; a patient willingness to listen for a time until experience, physical and spiritual, out of which his thought has emerged and to which it returns is sensed by the psychological power of empathy. The sense of the utter sincerity of Berdyaev, Christian fellow feeling for the long tortuous path he has had to follow rests heavily upon W.J. Phythian Adams, and produces what is perhaps "too great a reluctance to bring Berdyaev to the bar of critical appraisal; "To criticize him, indeed," he writes, "even if it could be done adequately, would be a frivolous and unmeaning performance. Berdyaev is not a subject for academic disputation, he is air to be breathed. And then he

1. The Thought and Significance of Nicolas Berdyaev in the Church Quarterly Review, July-Sept., 1938. p.245.

adds with a gesture of humility; "We shall understand¹
Berdyaev better when we too have suffered."

Berdyaev belongs to no tradition in the sense in which it may be said that Karl Barth belongs to the tradition of Reformed Theology. With a vast catholicity of mind, Berdyaev draws intellectual and spiritual power from a score of sources which among themselves conflict inevitably. Among his chief mentors he gratefully acknowledges Plato, Plotinus, Boehme, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx, Leontiev, Dostoevsky, Ibsen, Tolstoy² and many others. Origen, whom he regarded as too rationalistic, he says, "Origen was the greatest genius among the teachers of the Church, and he is³ justly compared with the greatest philosophers." To these great minds he owed much; they all counted at one time and another, but none too much. He never accepted their philosophy wholly, and some of them,

1. *ibid*, p.268.

2. *Slavery and Freedom*, p.8-9.

3. Berdyaev and Origen: A comparison by Matthew Spinka in *Church History*, March 1947, p.4.

like Marx and Tolstoy, he later severely criticized. He never belonged wholly to any party, never wholly identified himself with any "school of thought". He remained aloof all his life, for he could never submit to anyone or anything. "When I recall my whole life from the very first step into it I realize that I never knew or admitted any authority or extraneous power whatsoever. I could not recognize their admissibility for, and compatibility with, the dignity and freedom of man. I have not known authority either at home, or at school, or in my philosophical enquiries, or, most particularly, in my religious life. As a child I already decided that I would not comply with any orders or consent to bow submission to any superior. I could not even visualize becoming a university teacher, since this too would inevitably entail conforming to the high priests of academic wisdom." Consequently, throughout his life Berdyaev manifested a marked independence of manners, as well as thought.

Although Berdyaev identified himself with no man, or school, he gathered to himself a wide variety

1. Dream and Reality, p.48.

of influences and insights, and made them a living unity (not a logical unity) bearing the stamp of his own uniqueness and the vitality of convictions born anew in his own experiences. So writes Geraint V. Jones: "Being a strong critic of the Erastianism of the Orthodox Church, he found himself driven into a theological position which is neither Catholic nor Orthodox nor Protestant, but which might be described as post-Protestant, including a strong dash of the prophetic. As an interpreter of history with an apocalyptic turn of mind, an antagonist of contemporary humanism, a passionate believer in the realization of creative freedom as the true destiny of man, with a Dostoevsky preoccupation with the levels of evil in human life, it is not easy to classify him with any contemporary philosopher or theologian; he has nothing in common with the Barthian group, while at the same time standing equally remote from theological Liberalism.¹" The emphasis in the phrase "theological liberalism" must fall upon the

1. The Expository Times, Vol.51. 1938-40; article on Nicolas Berdyaev: "A Philosopher of Spiritual Freedom" by Geraint V. Jones. p.431.

word "theological". For the spirit of liberalism pervades Berdyaev's entire thought. How completely characteristic of him is a brief sentence thrust shyly forward into his discussion on pantheism: "When I say 'heresy', he writes "I am not speaking my own language." With a breadth of tolerance and a warmth of appreciation unknown to the West, indeed well nigh incredible to the self-congratulatory spirit of contemporary theological schools, Berdyaev creates an atmosphere of confidence and mutual goodwill that is profoundly Christian to say the least. Evgueny Lampert confirms this judgment by an illuminating glimpse into the personality of Berdyaev:

"Berdyaev seemed to have an almost irresistible personal charm; it was somehow quite impossible not to be delighted to meet him - a fact I observed in many people, even among those whose views were strongly opposed to his. This was due to the exceptional warmth of heart, his great kindness and generosity, although personally he often seemed reserved and reticent. One never felt in him any sign of ambition and rivalry, which is such a rare quality in the literary world. Yet he never failed

to advocate his own spiritual convictions strongly and even passionately. It was strange to think that beneath the outer calm and harmony there lay hidden a "wandering" soul, for ever agitated by moral and intellectual problems, by struggling and disquietudes.¹"

Berdyaev is simply faithful to his religious tradition in giving central place to Spirit in the discernment of religious truth. It is not in any peculiar or unique sense that Berdyaev is compared with Origen, for what Origen did in pursuing gnosis had been done to a lesser degree by some before him and was certainly repeated by many after him. Berdyaev belongs in this respect, to an entire family of thinkers. His own language is clear and explicit when he discusses the nature of his thought, in his book, *Freedom and the Spirit*: "I should like what I intend to say in this book to be clearly understood. I recognize that there is something essential which I cannot put into words, and that I cannot adequately develop my inmost thoughts. It is very difficult to find a form of expression which exactly suits the essential idea as it appears to oneself... My thought as it moves within my own being is

1. Evgueny Lampert, Berdyaev and the New Middle Ages, p.13.

that of a man who, without being a sceptic, is putting problems to himself. In the solution of these problems of the spirit, or, rather, of the special problem of the relations between man and God, no exterior assistance is possible. Here no Elder, however advanced in the spiritual life, could be of any help to me. For the whole problem lies just here, in the very fact that I must discover for myself that which God has hidden from me. My freedom and my creative activity are my obedience to the secret will of God.¹"

The following sentences are illuminating and enable us to see clearly the world of concepts in which Berdyaev works. "My book is not a theological work, nor is it written according to any theological method. It belongs to no school of philosophy; rather it forms a part of "prophetic" as distinct from "scientific" philosophy... I have consciously avoided the language of the schools. It is a book of what may be called "free philosophy" written in the spirit of a free religious philosophy and gnosis. In it I have deliberately passed beyond those limits

1. Freedom and the Spirit. p. xviii.

of philosophical, theological, and mystical knowledge so dear to the Western mind, as well in Catholic and Protestant circles as in the sphere of academic philosophy." He goes on: "I regard myself as being a Christian theosophist, in the sense in which Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, Jacob Boehme, St. Martin, Francis Baader, and Vladimir Solovyov were Christian theosophists. All the forces of my spirit and of my mental and moral consciousness are bent towards the complete understanding of the problems which press so hard upon me. But my object is not so much to give them a systematic answer, as to put them more forcibly before the Christian conscience. There is no need to see in this book anything directed against the holiness of the Church. I may be much mistaken, but my purpose is not to introduce heresy of any kind nor to promote fresh schism. I am moving in the sphere of Christian problematics which demands creative efforts of thought and where the most divergent opinions are naturally allowable."

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p. xix.

The terms "Christian Gnostic" or "Christian Theosophist" are interchangeable, since the thought process of gnosis and theosophy are synonymous: and Berdyaev unhesitatingly defines himself by either phrase. It is precisely at this point that it can be discovered why Berdyaev, with the exception of a few friends has had such a struggle to make himself understood, or to secure, at least, a sympathetic hearing. The majority of Western minds are either uncomprehending or prejudiced; in the case of the former, the fault is hereditary and constitutional, and in the case of the latter, it is a clear if excusable misunderstanding¹. The spirit of the West is intensely rational, practical, scientific; it insists upon applying its scientific method and criteria to all religious phenomena. It is preoccupied with criticism, and insists upon

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1. As will be discovered in the bibliography, secondary material on Berdyaev is remarkably scarce; there is nothing definitive. One is fortunate to find beyond a few secondary sources, a few articles setting forth his characteristic ideas. May it not mean that the Western mind has failed to appreciate Berdyaev's 'theology of mysticism'.

"anchoring" its facts and presuppositions to history, before moving on to inevitable conclusions. The mind of the West, then, is comparatively unimaginative, not to_h prosaic; it does not know what to make of myths, religious poetics, and mystic flights of speculation. Because these cannot be related to history, or expressed in rational formula, their validity and value are questioned. It is not without reason that modern science, industrialism, pragmatism, humanistic liberalism and materialism have flourished in the Western hemisphere; they are the children of, and congenial to, the man of the West. On the other hand, he is likely to feel, upon his first venture with Berdyaev, that he has stumbled into a void; the old familiar landmarks are gone; his beloved authorities have lost their meaning; the concepts here are elusive and difficult to express in a rational way, and his first struggle is a struggle with impatience - the natural, primitive reaction to the unfamiliar. According to Berdyaev, religion has a language of its own and until that language is learned, his peculiar religious thought remains incomprehensible.

"Religion cannot be dependent upon philosophy", he writes, "nor can philosophy limit and alter religion to suit itself. The mistake of modernism consists in the attempt to subordinate religion to reason and contemporary knowledge. In reality the problem is of a totally different order. Religion has always had its own philosophy and its religious metaphysics, which are in themselves only the expression of a particular epoch of man's spiritual development and not an absolute and definite embodiment of religious truth".

The implications of this statement are profound, and when traced, demonstrate how wide is the gulf that must be spanned before his own type of thought can truly be appreciated and understood in the deepest sense. We of the West do precisely what Berdyaev condemns: we endeavour to arrive at a theology which presents us with "an absolute and definite embodiment of religious truth". Our theology is affirmative, exoteric; it insists upon rationalizing its symbols and myths, objectifying them rather than endeavouring to enter into their

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.5.

mystical, esoteric meaning. The result is a "naturalist" theology, for by naturalism Berdyaev understands, "any metaphysical system which conceives being objectively, as 'nature' even when it may be "spiritual nature"¹. As against this rational affirmation, exoteric theology, Berdyaev stands for a mystical, negative, esoteric theology. The former handles the data of rational concepts objectively conceived and considered, ordered and arranged in a system whose finality and order are considered the highest virtue. The latter handles the data of mystic experience, the objectification of which means their distortion; they cannot be arranged systematically since they do not belong merely to the realm of the mind. They are best expressed symbolically, and therefore the language that is native to esoteric, apophatic theology is that of myth. "Myth is a reality immeasurably greater than concept", writes Berdyaev. "It is high time we stopped identifying myth with invention, with the illusions of primitive mentality, and with anything, in fact, which is essentially opposed to reality... Behind the myth are concealed the

1. Spirit and Reality, p.3.

greatest realities, the original phenomena of the spiritual life. The creation of myths among peoples denotes a real spiritual life, more real indeed than that of abstract concepts and of rational thought. Myth is always concrete and expresses life better than abstract thought can do; its nature is bound up with that of symbol. Myth is the concrete recital of events and original phenomena of the spiritual life symbolized in the natural world, which has engraved itself on the language, memory, and creative energy of the people. The original reality pre-exists in the spiritual world in deepest mystery. But the symbols, signs, images, and reflections of this primitive reality are not given to us in the natural world. Myth presents to us the supernatural in the natural, the supra-sensible in the sensible, the spiritual life in the life of the flesh; it brings two worlds¹ together symbolically!"

It may be regretted that there is so meagre a comprehension of Berdyaev in the deeper levels of

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.70.

this thought, but it must be admitted that the difficulties in the way are real and profound. The fact of the matter is that the average Westerner is more concerned with the practical problem of "getting on with the job" of the Kingdom, than with exploring this exotic spiritual realm. He is more interested in that spiritual guide which permits him to run while he reads.

The purpose of this thesis then will be to expound Berdyaev's understanding of the 'nature of God' beginning neither with the Absolute, nor with Man but with the God-Man¹. His theme is the Divine-Humanity of Man, and everything that he has to say is a leading up to, or a corollary from, this central thought. And this is so because the basic and original phenomenon of the religious life - the raw material of theology, so to speak - is the meeting and mutual interaction of God and Man, the movement of God towards Man, and of Man towards God.

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.189.

CHAPTER TWO

SOME FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

I	The Concept of Spirit	V	Objectification
II	Nature	VI	Destiny
III	Personality	VII	Symbolism
IV	Freedom	VIII	Mythology

I

To understand and appreciate Berdyaev's doctrine of God it is necessary first to deal with the various concepts he uses. The fundamental idea of his doctrine of God is that of Spirit. And spirit is the antithesis of authoritarianism. Authoritarianism, for ever figured in Berdyaev's mind by the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoëvsky's Legend is the symbol of all that he struggles against with the passion of his intense being, whether authoritarianism be manifest in culture, science, or religion. Berdyaev is alert always for the "angel of light" within whose bosom lurks the menace to man's dignity and freedom. Authoritarianism is a symbol of slavery, whether imposed by self or others; it is a token of man's spiritual death, of his eclipse as a personality, of the obliteration of his God-likeness. When the revelation is received as authoritative it ceases to be revelation and becomes a dark cloud shutting out the light. And revelation becomes darkness worse confounded when it leans for support upon a collective mind or an authoritative institution.

What crimes against man and God have been committed in the name of authority and in defense "of the faith once delivered to the saints."¹ Revelation, by definition is inward and individual; when it becomes outward and social, it may be theology, but it is not revelation. "The criterion of our faith and the knowledge of God cannot be found apart from God and His manifestation in us and our relations with Him... In demanding an authoritative criterion which will convince us of the existence of God and enable us to discern what is divine in the world, we are looking for support not to God Himself and to divine reality, but to the lower natural reality of the exterior world... Authoritarianism in the religious life is precisely the search for criteria of truth in a lower world to serve the purpose of a higher one. It is the attempt to draw from the natural world the standards of the spiritual world, a process which shows that the ultimate ground of confidence is exterior rather than interior, belonging to the constraint of what is natural rather than the liberty of what is

1. Jude 3.

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spiritual". The Christian faith is a confirmation of full and complete liberty. "Those who have known a limitless freedom of spirit", writes Berdyaev in sentences that are frankly self revealing, "and who have returned in freedom to the Christian faith, cannot efface from their souls this experience or deny its experience. Freedom, with its own interior dialectic, that tragic destiny which it bears within itself, is an experience of a particular order inherent to Christianity itself. A man who has achieved a definite victory over the seductive temptations of humanism, who has discovered the hallow unreality of the deification of man by man, can never hereafter abandon the liberty which has brought him to God nor the definitive experience which has freed him from the power of evil. It is impossible to entertain the question of religious liberty upon any abstract ground, and to treat it from a static point of view... My Christian faith is not a faith based on habit or tradition. It was won through an experience of the

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.26. Se also p.94.

inner life of a most painful character... Freedom has brought me to Christ and I know of no other path leading to Him; nor am I the only one who has passed through this experience. No one who has left a Christianity based on authority can return to anything but a Christianity that is free.¹"

Berdyaev's view of spirit introduces a context of mystical experience, free speculation and intuitive perceptions that are the despair of the subject in his attempt to express them, for they elude conceptual and rational formulation. In order to read Berdyaev with profit, therefore, it is necessary to come with a patient and intuitive sympathy, a readiness to share the travail of a soul upon which has fallen "the uncreated beam", a disregard of authorities that is not born of disrespect or irresponsibility, but of the paradoxical realization that only as "authorities" are held not to be authoritative can they be of any assistance in the quest of the Spirit. "I recognize that there is something essential which I cannot put into words",

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p. x.

writes Berdyaev, as if anticipating a protest, "and that I cannot adequately develop my inmost thoughts. It is very difficult to find a form of expression which exactly suits the essential idea as it appears to oneself... My thought as it moves within my own being is that of a man who, without being a sceptic, is putting problems to himself. In the solution of these problems of the spirit, or, rather, of the special problem of the relations between man and God, no exterior assistance is possible... For the whole problem lies just here, in the very fact that I must discover for myself that which God has hidden from me. God expects from me a free creative act. My freedom and my creative activity are my obedience¹ to the secret will of God." The approach to such a concept of the spirit must be similarly active, not passive: free, not bound; intuitive as well as rational.

To understand Berdyaev's concept of spirit we must relate spirit to the existential apprehension

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.xviii.

of Being as distinguished from and opposed to the rational concept of Being ontologically defined. Berdyaev's philosophy of spirit is a philosophy of the pure existence of the Subject and therefore sets aside a metaphysics which defines Being objectively. Spirit is more primary than Being; it lies beyond the rational concept of Being: spirit cannot be objectified for it does not exist as object, but rather in, through, by and identical with the subject. Spirit is life and not a thing; it is activity, not passivity; it is creative freedom, not created nature. Spirit is reality and actuality of a kind qualitatively distinct from that conceived by historical metaphysics. Spirit is pure uncreated, subjective, personal existence having nothing in common with the natural world of the scientist, nor the realm of Ideas, nor Perfect Being, nor the Absolute of the philosophy, nor the dualism of Creator and created of the theologian. Spirit is an emergent¹ of the UNGRUND; it cannot be rationalized, determined,

1. A full treatment of the concept UNGRUND will be found on page 97f.

objectified. It just is! And manifests itself as incontrovertible fact in personal existence..

II

In his doctrine of God Berdyaev also distinguishes Spirit from nature. Spirit is not a natural but a super-natural fact and category. By definition the natural world is a created world, and from it spirit has fled; nature is passive and is subjected to the objectifying processes of scientific method and so made to yield its secrets. Spirit is the antithesis of nature since it stands for reality as uncreated, subjective, personal, and existential, while nature stands for reality as created, objective, impersonal and ontological. It becomes apparent that if spirit is antithetical to the natural, it is to be distinguished from the soul of man. The soul is a psychical fact; a psychological category and is therefore an expression of naturalism. It becomes an object of scientific investigation as psychologists probe into the inner life of man. Such scientific probing never reaches the spirit, however, although

spirit is there overseeing the operation! Spirit is the token of a qualitatively higher form of existence than the natural, objective form of body and soul. As the fusion of body and soul man belongs to the natural world; but as a living spirit he transcends nature and partakes of un-created divinity. "The threefold conception of man as a spiritual, psychic, and corporeal being, has a permanent validity. This does not mean, however, that man's spiritual nature is on the same level as his psychic and corporeal natures, but it does imply that his soul and body can participate in a new and higher order of spiritual existence, that man is able to pass from the natural order to that of freedom, from the region of discord and hostility to that of love, union and ¹meaning." Thus man is man by virtue of spirit, not intelligence nor psychic life. In his spirit are hid the secret of his destiny, the possibility of union with God and man, and all the latent tragedy of joy and freedom. Spirit, as distinct from soul, is the principle of cohesion and meaning

1. Spirit and Reality, p.6.

in man and without it his life would become as much a victim of necessity as the other members of the animal world. Spirit is that which brings a microcosm to being in man: "Spirit cannot be opposed to body and to matter, as though it were a reality of the same order as that of body and of the material world. It is from within, from the depths, that spirit absorbs into itself body, matter and likewise soul, but spirit belongs to a different scheme of things. Nature is not denied but rather illuminated by spirit. Spirit unites itself inwardly to soul and transfigures¹ it". The presence of the spirit then can only be attested by the out-reach of man toward his destiny; by the manifestation of his freedom; by the creative activity that fills his days; by the power of love which emanates from him. It is possible to distinguish the "Natural" man, even though it is not possible to objectify the spirit of the latter, for "by their fruits ye shall know them". "Spirit is life and not an object, and in consequence it

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.8.

can only be known in concrete experience, in an experience, that is, of spiritual life and in the¹ accomplishing of its destiny". Spirit, as of man, is a category of value; its manifestations in life is an indication of worth. For spirit alone is of intrinsic value; its incarnation in personality constitutes the value of man. All other values are relative to man as spirit, and are real "values" only as they are means. Spirit alone is an end, a value, in itself. "Spirituality is the highest quality we can discern in our judgment of men. Every man has a soul - such is his nature - but his spirituality may remain undiscovered or suppressed. Spirit is the highest quality of the soul, a symbol of freedom from the power of the world. Spirit is truth, the purpose of the soul... Spirit is axiological; it is not nature, not even psychic nature, but² truth, beauty, purpose, freedom." The despiritualization of man is synonymous with his descent into nature and necessity, it is symbolised by the erection

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.9.

2. Spirit and Reality, p.39.

of secondary and derivative values, such as money, to the place of ends toward which life moves. Life loses its wholeness, its unity, its purpose, and man becomes part of the natural order with its absence of meaning and direction. Spirit alone elevates man and reveals his intrinsic worth and dignity.

Spirit itself is not susceptible of 'proof'. It was pointed out above that the presence of spirit, and the activity of the spiritual life, can be attested by the quality of life lived and values created. This is not to say that spirit itself becomes an object of knowledge. Spirit is nothing if it is not self evident, but not self-evident as object, but only as subject. Spirit cannot be proved or demonstrated as factual! The subject alone knows spirit for he is spirit. "Spirit as the knowing subject is at the same time the known object. Spiritual life is not an object of knowledge, it is the knowledge itself of spiritual life. Life is only open to life. Knowledge of life is life itself... Everything that transpires in the life of spirit and in its own

knowledge of itself lies within the unfathomable depths of spirit. Everything that takes place in the spiritual world takes place in me.¹" The spirit is nothing then, if it is not self-evident. He who seeks for a proof of spirit confesses he is devoid of it! For all the proof belongs to the world of naturalism, of objectification; it is concerned with sense perceptions and rational data. The problem of the reality of spirit simply cannot occur in the spiritual life; if it does occur, there is no spiritual life. For the spiritual life itself is the creative movement of spirit, and thus carries with it the reality of which it is the manifestation. Spiritual life and experience is not the sign of spirit; it is spirit! Mystic experience is not a symbol of Reality beyond; it is itself that Reality. Therefore it must be said that spiritual life is life of the most real and absolute kind. It is the manifestation of life itself and all life that is not spiritual is bare existence in bondage to

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.9.

necessity and unmeaning; it is biological and quantitative, a mere atom of nature. "Spiritual experience alone can provide us with proofs of its existence; only the manifestation in man of spiritual realities can prove to him the existence of these realities. The man whose life is not turned towards God cannot demand to be shown God or to have His reality demonstrated.¹" Spirit is its own proof, then, and he who is the subject of it finds no problem arising as to its reality. Nor is he concerned with the argument which denies spirit and asserts that the spiritual life is the emotional life of the soul. For such an argument usually rests upon the conception of spirit as found in naturalist metaphysics, as a substance, a thin attenuated 'stuff' in which the reality of sense perception is immersed. Therefore the whole truth about the nature of spirit is missed and the sceptic has merely created a straw man for the purpose of obliterating it. Thus spirit is conceived as creative activity, and freedom; it is

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.12.

existential experience. What is cannot be disproved! The attempt to disprove the reality of spirit fails of necessity since to possess itself of the arguments with which to demolish spirit, naturalist metaphysics must cease to be natural and become spiritual, and thus concede failure. The sufficient proof of the existence of spirit is - the existence of spirit.

III

Berdyaev declares that spirit is inconceivable apart from personality, and must, to become intelligible, be interpreted in a personalist way. The reason is clear: spirit is concrete, rather than abstract; subjective, rather than objective; individualistic, rather than general, and therefore by definition personal. In the personality, spirit comes into flower; and apart from personality there is no manifestation of spirit. "The personality is individually unique, separate, distinct, unlike anything else, possessed of a universal content, capable of embracing the world

with its love and understanding. Spirit comes
to life only in this sphere.¹ Personality is no
naturalistic category; the object of psychological
plotting and measurement. Personality is spirit
becoming incandescent in the subject; it is the
centre of creative freedom and activity. Per-
sonality, God's image in man, is the token of
infinite possibilities as it becomes the ex-
pression of spirit. Personality, therefore, is
the manifestation of an actuality with which
psychology can never come to grips, and psychology
ought always to acknowledge its limitation here.
"Spiritual life, in so far as it is a special quality
inhering in the life of the soul, must always
elude the science of psychology."² For this
reason a psychological study and "account" of
prayer, or mystic experience is manifestly in-
adequate. It is bound always to produce man,
a creature of necessity, to be explained in terms
of heredity or environment, or in the various
permutations and combinations of the subconscious.

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1. Spirit and Reality, p.12
 2. Freedom and the Spirit, p.18

The result is that psychology reduces man to a mere creature and prayer to an escape-mechanism or autosuggestion, while mystical experience is to be attributed to some form of psycho-pathology! This process of naturalizing and debasing man goes on while all the time spirit is manifesting itself in the subject, and eluding the attention of the psychologist. Psychology's account of the inner life of man is like an anatomical account of the human organism: in both instances life with its vitality and freedom, is unaccounted for, and spirit has fled the probe and dissecting knife. The tragedy of psychology is its persistent attempt to pass off a theory as an account, and its failure to acknowledge as data what it cannot explain. Psychology, in its mechanistic phases, finds the concrete fact of spirit, manifesting itself in culture and morality, mysticism and philosophy, to be incomprehensible. And well they might be, for they belong to a realm inaccessible to the psychological method. The "historic, spiritual, experience of mankind can

only be approached from the angle of spiritual
experience...¹ If one may paraphrase the language
of Hebrews: "He that cometh to spirit must be-
lieve that it is..."²

The limitations of psychology to comprehend and explain spirit are the limitations of reason and the concepts with which men think. The limitations of human reason involves the spiritual man in the inescapable use of paradoxes. The endeavour to express the inexpressible is to fall into seeming contradiction. Rational language is the primary means of communication between men; but the spiritual life, with its mysticism, and intuition lies beyond the rational. The intellectual communication of the irrational necessitates a drastic distortion of accepted meanings and has often brought upon the heads of mystics a variety of charges such as panpsychism, or pantheism or the deification of man. The meaning of the spiritual life forever lies veiled in paradox. "The events in which the

1. *ibid*, p.19.

2. Hebrews 11:6.

deepest reality of being is revealed are paradoxical for reason and the rational consciousness and give rise to antinomies because they are incapable of reduction to concepts. In the religious life, in so far as it is genuinely spiritual and not natural, there is revealed to us an identity of contraries, namely the identity of monism and dualism, of unity and multiplicity, of immanence and transcendence, of God and man. All the attempts which have been made under the various systems of naturalist and rationalist theology to eliminate the paradox of spiritual life are entirely exoteric, and whatever value they possess is purely temporary and pedagogic.¹ For this reason, the true language of the spiritual life is not that of objective nature and reason, but the living language of symbol and myth, to which point the discussion of spirit will return.

In the last analysis, however, the spiritual life is *sui generis*; it has no argument

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.22.

to put forth, no case to plead, no justification to offer, no apology to make. The spiritual life is sufficient in itself for its subject; that spirit is manifest to him and in him and by him is enough. He is quite unconcerned about problems of criteria and authorities; for he is his own criterion and authority. Spirit manifest in consciousness, carries with it its own authentication; for it is a possession and a self possession: it is an awareness of its own reality; it exists in its own right and is not the expression, reflection or imitation of something else. Thus authoritarianism is an irrelevant question in the life of the spirit, and to raise it is to reveal a lack of apprehension and of spirit itself. "In the spiritual world, the Truth, that is, God Himself, is alone the authority and the sole criterion of the truth, and man possesses it because it lives within him and because of his experience and his relations¹ with it." This characteristic of the spiritual

1. *ibid*, p.27.

life, namely that it is itself and nothing else, discloses one of the most striking paradoxes of all. It is the paradox of utter self absorption and perfect communion: of the inner preoccupation that embraces all of existence; of the perfect individualism that is at once universal in its scope. The spiritual life is not isolation or egocentricity; these are only possible in a world of subject and object relationships. The subject is isolated by virtue of the fact that what it seeks is objective to it. But in the spiritual realm there is only a subject-object relationship; and spirit comprehends all subject, bringing them into perfect and complete communion. Spirit becomes manifest in historic tradition and into that tradition the individual seeking a spiritual life, must enter. The spiritual life involves at the outset a communion with the historic manifestation of spirit. "An isolated individual by himself cannot know, still less commence, the spiritual life." The knowledge and

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.19.

experience of the spiritual life, therefore, does not involve the subject in an oblivion of self absorption by which he is cut off from his fellows; precisely the opposite is true. It presupposes a sense of "catholicity", a kinship, with the historic stream of spirituality, the spirit of "soborny". The profound intuition of religious tradition consists precisely in its having discovered the spiritual life not in external nature or in abstract thought but in "sobornost"¹. It is only by means of the spiritual life that man is lifted out of his isolation, that he frees himself from the obsession that the real world is one of objects and means, that he recognizes his kinship with and participation in that creative activity which will bring into being a true community of personalities. The spiritual life is a self transcendence which is a true self realisation, a fulfilment that implies and requires the fulfilment of other selves. It is freedom that issues, not in irresponsibility, but in an experience that transcends the idea of

1. *ibid*, p.20.

responsibility, for it is one of creative fellowship and love, devoid of coercion and duty because it is completely spontaneous.

IV

The concept of Spirit is not rationally conceptual. It is a reality that flashes out in a kaleidoscopic variety of ways, manifesting itself as a moral, cultural and social dynamic, but in itself remaining elusive and fleeting. The spirit "bloweth where it listeth, and thou knowest not whence it cometh or whither it goeth."¹ The full orbéd grandeur of spirit escapes the imagination but certain of its characteristics are creativity, meaning, value, love. Spirit is the inexhaustible source of whatever good and worth man knows and aspires after. If one were to endeavour to define spirit in terms of its chief and most obvious attribute, one would say: SPIRIT IS FREEDOM! From that freedom flows everything else, creativity, dynamism, destiny, good and yes, evil! By definition spirit is freedom, unqualified and unidentified. It is a movement,

1. John 3:8.

spontaneous and free, in the depths of existential Being. Berdyaev approves one definition of freedom but insists that it gives us no real clue to its mystery; freedom, is "self-determination in the inmost depths of being and is opposed to every kind of external determination which constitutes a compulsion in itself.¹" That is, freedom is freedom; the definition merely brings us back to its starting place. To venture into freedom is to venture into an abyss; it is to be poised over vacuity; it is to be staggered by the incomprehensible. Spirit issues from God, not as a created thing, but as an emanation; but it must ultimately be traced to UNGRUND as the primal source of all existential centres of life. This is the paradox of freedom; "It is a Divine emanation, and at the same time it can reply to the Deity in terms not dictated by It. Spirit is not only Divine... it is freedom in God and from God.²"

Since freedom is of the spirit it is futile to seek for it in the natural world, or to explain it

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.122.

2. Spirit and Reality, p.33.

psychologically. The problem of the free-will is merely a confusion of the issue, for freedom belongs not to the will or to any other phase of the human psyche; it is exclusively spiritual. Freedom is not a category, properly speaking, that belongs to any philosophical or scientific system; it is the primal category, existing in itself, unrelated and undetermined. All intellectual disciplines, by definition, proceed by rational concepts, deductions, and relations, but freedom slips through the fingers of reason because in its inner mystery it is irrational. It can only be known in experience; in the dynamic of life.

V

The concept of Objectification holds an important place in Berdyaev's doctrine of God. Spirit is continually occupied with the idea of objectification, seeking its analysis and solution. The existential subject, the medium of spirit, is a centre of creative life, of dynamic force, of non-conceptual reality; it is immersed in experience - of suffering and achievement, of freedom and creative activity.

In the realm of existential entities, the subject-object relationship disappears, and in its place the relationship of subject to subject which involves no encroachment upon the freedom and absolute nature of the individual microcosm. The realm of existential subjects, however, is not the world which most men know! Their world is bounded by nature and law; its social life involves restraint and censure; its religious life implies authority and obedience; its intellectual life proceeds by rationalism and the use of abstractions; it is a society of objects dominated by subjects with a tragic disregard of wherein intrinsic value may actually reside. This is the realm of objectification; it is static, and immobile; like a frozen waterfall, having the appearance of life and movement but actually lifeless and dead.

Certain characteristics of objectification are clear in the above description. First, objectification is socialization. The objective world is the socialization of spirit. Creative activity must inevitably express itself in outward forms which become the heritage of music and art, of social custom

and conventionality, of religious tradition and cults. Spirit is a lava bursting forth from the heart of Reality only to lose its heat and vitality in the slowly cooling form and rock masses of the mountainside. In the socialization of spirit the free becomes determined; the subjective, objective; the real, illusory; the dynamic, conservative. Thus society is the realm of objective, determined, illusory, and conservative elements. And when society is thus described who can doubt that this is the society in which we live; a fallen world morally and spiritually inert, with the burst of light here and there as creative venturous spirits seek the real of the spirit. The history of society presents a scene of constant struggle and travail therefore of rebirth. Culture in so far as it is commendable and worthy, represents the recreation and remoulding of society's forms. "There are two aspects to objectification", writes Berdyaev, "on the one hand it denotes the fallen, divided and servile world, in which the existential subjects, the personalities, are materialized. On the other

hand it comprehends the agency of the personal subject, of spirit, tending to reinforce ties and communications in this fallen world. Hence objectification is related to the problem of culture¹..."

The only means, then, by which society, the objective world, is saved from stagnation and utter decay is the constant interruptions and recrudescence of spirit within it.

A second characteristic of objectification is Rationalization. The Spirit is objectified when it is submitted to the limitations of rational consciousness. An intuition becomes a concept, and spirit is objectified; a mystic flight of experience is caught in mid-air and made into a system of thought. Truth, as spirit conceives it, is in the best sense anarchical, explosive, dynamic; it is unbounded and free; it knows no restraints nor authorities for it does not need them. The world has therefore never indulged the freedom of the spirit, and spirituality has often been the way to martyrdom. "In the sphere of knowledge, objectification,

1. Spirit and Reality, p.52.

elaborates concepts and rationalizes actuality, disdaining the individual... In a certain sense the whole visible objective edifice can be regarded merely as a symbolism of the spiritual world.¹" Truth as spirit senses it, is not primarily, only or wholly, conceptual; truth, as the real apprehension of reality and depths of existence, is grasped by the spirit in the working out of destiny and is discoverable in love and intuition; in freedom and despair, in suffering and death, in joy and resurrection. Truth so conceived cannot be rationalized. To describe love conceptually is to quench the fire. So objectification in rationalizing truth makes communion with truth an impossibility; objectification is synonymous with isolation and despirituality.

The third characteristic becomes apparent: objectification is illusion. The process of objectification, in that it shuts man out from actuality, minimizes his truly spiritual experiences, surrounds

1. Spirit and Reality, p.57

him with law and necessity, forces man to live in an illusory world; illusory because the objects by which he is surrounded are non-existential and unfree, and with them he can hold no communion. The tragedy of life is man's insistent self-deception; his refusal to recognize that the objective world is the unreal world. He lives throughout his life in unreality, without the spiritual heights to which he might climb, or the depths of reality he might plumb. Objectification becomes the source of tragedy experienced but unrecognized; an incredible wastage of potentiality. "The objectifying processes at work upon spirit inspire pessimistic reflections; but even the most pessimistic view of the historical objectification of spirit is unable to undermine our faith in man and his creative vocation¹". The tragedy of spirit in history is just the inability, or failure, of the masses of mankind to realize the creative vocation of spirit and so in consequence to live as organic with the perishable world of nature.

1. Spirit and Reality, p.57.

VI

Human destiny is inconceivable apart from freedom. Man is man by virtue of the fact that he exists at the intersections of two realms; that of spirit and that of nature; of the existential and the objective; of freedom and necessity. To deny freedom is to thrust man out of the realm of spirit into the realm of nature; it is to destroy his manhood and to make him one with the beasts that perish. Apart from freedom, man knows no value, possesses no meaning in himself, looks toward no destiny; he creates nothing, enjoys no sense of worth, and lapses into unbreakable isolation. Without freedom man is no longer man. Thus the loss of freedom is the frustration of human destiny, for it is man's destiny by the exercise of freedom to enter upon communion with God, to realize the potential value and good implicit in his free creative power. And just because freedom is necessary to man in order to enable him to reach his destiny in God, it is necessary to God. It is not only man "but God who cannot get on without human freedom. God demands from man the freedom of the spirit, for He

only wants the man who is spiritually free. The divine plan for man and for the world cannot become incarnate apart from the freedom of man and the freedom of spirit. Human freedom has as its foundations the demands of the Divine ¹will." In the name of his own nature, of his spiritual well-being, of his ultimate destiny, in the name of God man must be recognized as a free agent, and liberty to exercise and manifest that freedom must be granted to him at all times and under every circumstance. Authoritarianism in any form is the debasement of man, and his profoundest frustration: it is the source of religious strife and political tragedy and the wide scale social oppression. Authoritarianism is the enemy of the spirit, and is a threat to all creative freedom and the annihilation of the meaning of human existence.

Christianity is the ultimate emergence and resurrection and vindication of freedom. It reveals in God One who desires the love only of free men, who breaks the bondage of evil necessity,

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.128.

who delivers men from the dominion of personal and impersonal power, and sets men in the fellowship of emancipated spirits. The spiritual life as Christianity defines it, is born in freedom and ¹ lives in freedom. "You were called to freedom", cries Paul, echoing the words and the spirit of his fellowwriters of the New Testament. Christ appears in the Gospels as one who claimed freedom for Himself, shocking his tradition-ridden critics, and went about striking off the shackles of sickness and sin, of law and emotion, of Temple and Court. He appeared as and remains the great Emancipator. "Let us face the fact that true freedom is only possible in and through Christ; that Christ, whatever may be said, must be freely accepted and that it is by a free spiritual act that we must come to Him. He wants us to accept Him freely, He desires the unforced love of man, and He can never compel anyone for He always has regard for our freedom. God can only accept the free. God expects the free love of

1. Galatians 5:13

man and man expects freedom from God, that is to¹ say, the divine truth which will make him free." It follows then that the denial of freedom in the name of religion is the betrayal of Jesus Christ, it is an obliteration of the essential significance of the Christian faith, it is the end of all true communion between man and God. Salvation by faith, if faith presupposes authoritative creeds or hierarchical bodies, is a contradiction in terms; salvation by submission is a vain delusion. Christ and Christian experience are inconceivable apart from freedom, and in the end Christ and Christian experience will be the vindication, and basis of universal freedom. The leaven of freedom has been cast into the world; it continues to permeate the lump of humanity however stubborn the resistance may be. It is the faith of the Church of Christ that mankind is destined for freedom, and in the Spirit of Christ the Church labours for the emancipation of man from every form of bondage that can be named. The ultimate goal of spirit, and of

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.126.

the Spirit of God in the world, is freedom.

VII

The positive content of objectification is found in its symbolism and here a seeming contradiction is encountered. It is a little difficult to understand how what is illusory can also be symbolic, that deception can be mingled with disclosure. Berdyaev seems to be somewhat uncomfortable as his thought takes up the idea of objectification as symbolic. "It seems paradoxical", he says, "that the spiritual life, the real life, should also be symbolised,"¹ symbolised of necessity in the church as for example, in order to facilitate its growth and progress. Objectification, as symbolism would seem to be prerequisite to spirituality despite the fact that it may also be an unsurmountable barrier to the same. In any case, the objective world is a symbolic world, a world without primal reality. Thus the cultural, religious, and

1. Spirit and Reality, p.65.

institutional forms of human society are symbolic, representative, derivative, and express, or reveal the magnitude of that which stands behind them; behind the perceptible, is the imperceptible; and behind the material is the spiritual. The process by which the symbolic world of objects is transcended and overcome is by the simple but free and creative realization that the objective world is symbolic. "The consciousness that anything in this world is merely the symbol of another world has the effect of liberating man from a slavish dependence on this world.¹" But care must be exercised here, for the process is not a simple one of moving from the symbolic object to the real facts. Of what does the symbol of rank stand for in the real world? Surely not a hierarchy of human worth for this would involve human debasement, slavery. The symbol of rank simply stands for the real sanctity of man. The victory of spirit is discernible in the transcendence of the symbolic,

1. *ibid*, p.67.

the discovery of actuality behind the confession and ambiguity of the symbols which comprise the objective world.

In *Freedom and the Spirit*, Berdyaev develops more fully the meaning of symbolism, and described what might be termed the Sacramental¹ nature of the symbol. Here the paradox or contradiction in Berdyaev's thought becomes clearer. A symbol, a part of the objective order, testifies to the existence and reality of another world. As such it reveals, it conveys meaning, fulfils a purpose - all of which is difficult to predicate of an objective fact as Berdyaev defines it.

"Symbols presuppose the existence... and that² this meaning itself is revealed to us in the latter." Is objectification then, in symbolism at least, necessary as a link between the world of nature and spirit? And if it is, is not objectification then of deeper spiritual significance than Berdyaev would admit? Berdyaev gets out of the difficulty

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1. *Freedom and the Spirit*. Chapter entitled Symbol, Myth and Dogma, p.55 ff.
 2. *Freedom and the Spirit*, p.52.

by pointing out that an objective fact has meaning only in so far as it is a symbol of reality. Man, for example, as a natural fact, is void of deep significance; in common with the world of nature where accident and unmeaning hold sway, his life is without direction or purpose. But man, considered as a symbol of Deity, becomes a luminous centre; a bridge between two orders, a tie binding the realms of spirit and nature. To this interpretation of facts and phenomena in the objective world, Berdyaev gives the name "realist symbolism" as "The only authentic one which links together two worlds while testifying to the existence of the spiritual world and divine reality"¹. This is a realist symbolism; the external realm, the outer world is not merely a series of phenomena devoid of meaning or a subjective creation, but rather "a symbolic incarnation of spiritual realities."² Realist symbolism, then, is the liberating transcension of the phenomenal world;

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1. *ibid*, p.55
 2. *ibid*, p.55

it is the means of escape from the deadening burden of objectivity.

VIII

The language of symbolism, as a disclosure of the spiritual world, is mythology, Symbolism, by which the mystery of spirit is postulated and penetrated, is the concomitant of mystical theology which deals not with rational forms and formulations of transcendent truth, but with mythological representations. "Philosophical and religious knowledge, having reached the culminating point of gnosis, ceases to be dominated by concepts and turns to mythology. Religious philosophy is always bound up with myths and cannot break free from them without destroying itself and abandoning its task."¹

All vital philosophy and religions employ mythology in their endeavour to express their profoundest insights and declarations; thus Christianity reveals the great deliverance of mankind by God in the myth of Redemption and

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.69.

the Redeemer. The effort, constantly repeated in the history of Christian thought, to explain the redemption of Christ always ends up with antinomies and paradoxes which demonstrate the limitations of concepts and rational propositions. A myth is not to be despised as fiction or an imaginative invention; a myth is a means of expressing and revealing a spiritual fact to a living spirit, and is immeasurably more adequate than a rational concept. A myth is concrete, graphic, dynamic, free; a rational concept is abstract, dull, static, and bound. The dynamic of spirit, of religious reality must, of necessity, find its medium of disclosure in mythology. "Myth is the concrete recital of events and original phenomena of the spiritual life symbolized in the natural world, which has engraved itself on the language, memory, and creative energy of the people.¹" Myth is primary, therefore, while rational theology is secondary or derivative; and the theological

1. Ibid, p.70.

approach which as in Christianity must begin with mythological facts and events, must inevitably come back to a restatement of the truth in mythological terms. Either that, or take refuge in the paradoxical. How abstract and unmoving, for example is the Nicene Creed, as a rational statement of the Incarnation when compared with a mythological statement born of Christian experience.

The Christian faith, and the great body of Hebrew religious life out of which it emerged is almost exclusively mythological; the great reality of the Faith is comprised of an indestructible body of mythology beginning with the Creation and the Fall and continuing through the great spiritual event of the Redemption wrought by the God-Man. Myth succeeds rational theology in the attempt to know God, and without myth that knowledge is never complete. The doctrine of a Trinitarian God is one example. How incomprehensible to human reason is this: indeed! so that the mind tends either towards polytheism or towards

monotheism whatever the statement. Here myth and symbol are alone adequate to express, not a fiction, nor a sentiment, but what is true at the central core of reality, the deepest mystery of life. "It is only myths which can explain life... movement can never come to rest in concepts and in the rigid categories of theology and metaphysics... and the task of Christian gnosis consists in expressing Christian symbolics and in making use of¹ Christian myth."

The discussion of spirit and symbolism must close with a statement of the necessary distinction between the dogmas of the church, and dogmatic theology; these are not to be confused nor identified. Dogmas are symbols of spiritual reality and experience; they are the rationalistic expression of absolute truth. They issue in dogmatic theology when subjected to rationalization and to the degree to which they are abstractly stated, lose mystical and

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.74.

religious value. Dogmas are of value because they guide the seeker and because they are authoritative and necessary to his salvation. Dogmas, as mystical facts rather than theological doctrines, are indispensable to the soul in its quest; in so far as they are dissolved into propositions and creeds they may become hindrances and stumbling blocks. The church is continually confronted with the delicate task of maintaining her dogmas as the mythical statement of spiritual reality and yet not succumbing to the temptation to bind their rational formulations on free spirits. That the church has not always fulfilled this task with grace and love is clearly demonstrated by the tragic history of religious persecution and oppression. The church is saved by continual failure in this regard, failure that is the result of the assertion of the collective mind, when the seers and prophets of the spirit are permitted to do their work freely. The mystics are the Christian minority who comprise the springs of spiritual experience and give reality and freedom for symbolism and authority.

CHAPTER THREE

THE REVELATION OF GOD

- I Divine Manifestation is Revelation
- II Revelation is a Divine-Human Process
- III Degrees of Revelation
- IV Revelation can never be final
- V Revelation and Mysticism
- VI Mysticism and Apophatic Theology

I

"Where the divine is manifested", says Berdyaev,
"there is ¹ revelation." And in this statement
he sweeps aside the distinction usually drawn
between revealed and natural theology, between
religious terms of the Christian revelation,
and that of the pre-Christian or the extra-
Christian worlds. Revelation is of one piece
whenever and wherever it is received. Thus
the whole of man's religious experience and
life is an ascent to the Incarnation of the Word
in Jesus of Nazareth; and of that revelation
Berdyaev will use the word "unique" but not the
word "exclusive". All of revelation, therefore,
must be viewed in the light of Jesus Christ, for
since all manifestations lead to Him, He is the
light which illumines them all, brings them to
perfection, and reveals their hidden meaning.
The Christian revelation comprehends in itself
all revelation, and whatever in the historic
religions of mankind is discovered to be analogous

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.88.

to or consistent with the Christian revelation is to be considered part of it. Christianity therefore is not hostile to, but appreciative of, those elements in her sister religions which are clearly based in authentic spiritual experience. The originality of Christianity is not in an exclusive revelation of God which renders all other voices impertinent or irrelevant; her originality is precisely in that comprehensive power to draw the religions of men to herself that their meaning and promise might be fulfilled. Christ is the anticipation, not of the Jews only, but of all men everywhere.

Revelation is bound up with the religious life of man everywhere and in every age; indeed it is the basis of that life. It is the disclosure of the divine mystery, not its abolition, in which the subject-object relationship is set aside, and yet is not objective. It is the communion of subjects, where a true integration of God, immanent in man, takes place. Thus revelation is incompatible with the idea of a transcendent God who reveals himself to the object, man, as the

passive recipient of divine grace. "Where revelation is concerned there is no distinction between that which comes from without and that which comes from within, between that which emanates from the object and that which proceeds from the knowing subject, for everything is contained in the innermost depths of being and can only be symbolized externally.¹ Revelation is existential, therefore, as a movement in the depths of Being; it is the illumination of God which is also the illumination of man. It is comprehension and self realization and communion all in one. Whatever, considered as revelation, takes place in the sphere of history or nature presupposes this inner spiritual movement of God in the depths of man's nature. Apart from that inward experience, the external event has no real significance as revelation. If it is held to be revelation it is dogmatic theology or superstition and as such a token, not of the illumination, but of the obscuring of God. "There

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.91.

can be revealed to us only that which is revealed in us, for only that which happens within¹ can have any meaning for us." Man is not passive in the moment of revelation, for what is taking place is not directed toward him, or played out before him; it is taking place within him. It presupposes activity, effort, creative freedom, and the response of intuition.

II

The Revelation of God is a Divine-human process, a co-operative transaction, a bi-lateral² movement. There is the one who reveals himself and there is the one to whom he is revealed. Such a Revelation is possible only on the definition of man which is derived from the divine image within him. Revelation takes place because there is an affinity, a likeness, between God and man. When God speaks man can hear and understand because he knows the language of God; it is Spirit speaking to spirit,

1. *ibid*, p.93.

2. *Freedom and the Spirit*, p.94.

and Person to person. Revelation in such terms demands a high faith in man, and in sincerity of his seeking and yearning for God. Sinner he is, and bond-slave to nature, but the image within him is neither entirely defaced nor crushed; and by strength and virtue of that he aspires God-ward until he is born of God, and God born in Him. Here is no setting aside of the "divine initiative", but rather predicating of man a desire for God and a vision of Him that is never wholly lost or forgotten. "The denial of a higher spiritual nature in man which renders him God-like is tantamount to a denial of the very possibility of revelation, for there would be nothing to which such a revelation could be made. God would no longer have another self and would remain isolated and solitary.¹" Revelation then is divine and human; in revealing God to man, it reveals man to himself, bringing him to fulfilment. This is the reason why revelation in

1. *ibid*, p.95.

Christianity is definitive and unique, because Christianity has the God-man, the Word made flesh. In Christ God is revealed and so also man, God's "other self." For the "Second Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity is man in the absolute sense, and His revelation means the appearance of a new spiritual and¹ eternal man."

III

What of the degrees of revelation? If revelation is of "one piece" how is it possible to admit of difference and comparisons within it? The answer is simply that revelation suffers from the limitations imposed upon it by the natural world and man's own spiritual state. Revelation has in every instance to be adapted and the result is seen in the progressive forms it has taken in the history of man's spiritual pilgrimage; unregenerate man and natural limitations make a certain distortion

1. *ibid*, p.114.

of revelation quite inevitable. The unique revelation was in Jesus Christ precisely because in Him was perfect and undefiled humanity. In the earlier stages of revelation, for example, in the early Old Testament period, revelation was regarded from a naturalist viewpoint simply because the human consciousness had not proceeded beyond that point. "The Father is revealed in nature objectively before He is revealed by the Son at the deepest spiritual levels." Hence, there is the contrast between the Yahweh of Hosts, the God of power and the God of grace and truth who came in Jesus Christ. The absolute nature of spiritual truth cannot fail to suffer as it passes through the medium of human consciousness; and therefore as that consciousness is increasingly purged of naturalist elements, the truth stands out more sharply and clearly. The problem is posed then, of distinguishing the divine from the human in the character of Revelation, of separating the

1. *ibid*, p.91.

esoteric truth from the esoteric formulation. The confusion of degrees and differences in the interests, for example, of a doctrine of full and complete inspiration of the Bible is simply to exalt the unworthy and to debase the unique and pure. One does not need to devise some formula for reconciling the vengeful God of the Hebrew people with the God of infinite love and forgiveness as revealed in Christ. One simply recognizes in the former an "exoteric¹ motif reflecting the wrath of the Jewish people." In more ways than one, revelation is a compound of the divine and the human. Even with Christianity, in and after New Testament times, revelation has had to contend with diversities in human consciousness and capacity and degrees of spirituality. Thus the history of the Faith reveals development and difference, and these are reflected even within the pages of the New Testament. Who can question that Paul possessed a capacity for revelation greater, for example

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.92.

than that of Peter; a capacity that fitted him to rescue the infant faith from the "Judaizing" corruption of lesser minds and more timid spirits, a capacity that singularly fitted him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. And even down to the present day, the revelation of God in Christ still struggles against the hampering influence of the natural man and his enslavement to the objective world. This moves Berdyaev to make striking and prophetic statements: "The New Testament revelation is still hampered by unregenerate human nature and by pagan forms of consciousness. The spiritual world has not definitely entered into the natural... Christianity for the most part remains enslaved to the Law and is converted by the natural man into a legal religion instead of a religion of grace and freedom; it has moulded itself to the natural life of this world and its iron necessities... We picture the Church as a finished building, spire and all. The infinite horizons of the spiritual world are cut off from our gaze and a Christian legalism and

pharisaism begin to dominate everything.
Creative energy of mind only arouses fear,
and restrictions are placed upon its activity.¹"

IV

The Revelation of God may be unique, but it can never be final. Revelation, by definition, is not static; it presupposes activity on the part of man and therefore it cannot take place "once and for all" nor in a form which requires no revision. Revelation is a process dynamic and creative, that simply continues without finality until the end of time and the consummation of human destiny. The tension of the spirit must never be relaxed for greater and more luminous manifestations of spirit yet await it. To argue finality is to betray the cause of revelation and the spirit; it is to open the door to authority and externalism; it is an invitation to spiritual lassitude and mental dogmatism. Finality is the refuge of enslaved souls; it is condoning of

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.113.

obscurantism. Revelation in the dynamic sense of the term, revelation as defined in a theology of spirit, fills the horizon with hope and light; it does not look backward but forward. It throws open possibilities of which men have scarcely dared to dream. It believes that revelation must yet issue in a "unique spiritual world... in which dynamism of consciousness and the appearance of a cosmic consciousness will not make man the plaything of the universe. Faith in the Christian revelation guarantees the fact that man is not destined to disappear. When the Christian revelation itself is understood more esoterically and more mystically some real progress will have been made in the manifestation of the spiritual man, and a new period in Christian history will¹ begin." That Berdyaev is very near to the spirit of the Gospels here and indeed of the Pauline epistles is evident. Here is no optimistic view of the world process grounded in a blind faith in man; here is rather a faith in the inevitable

1. *ibid*, p.116.

working out of the divine purpose which is grounded in God's self revelation within man. Berdyaev's Christianity is a living, growing, vital fact comprehending all of the future and fulfilling the spirits of those who embrace it with a profound hope, with an optimism whose basis is the Eternal Spirit working with and in man.

V

The Revelation of God as Berdyaev defines it, is inconceivable apart from mysticism. The apophatic theology of spirit is a mystical theology, and is derived from the mystic's communion with the Ultimate Spirit. Just as revelation is as universal as religion so also is mysticism, for it is the soil out of which religions grow and by which they are nourished. Religion, revelation and mysticism are an indestructible triad; each presupposes, and must be defined in, the light of others. The conservative socialized aspect of religion, its institutional aspect, has always been suspicious

of mysticism because of its freedom and oblivion to discipline and authority. And yet the events which constitute the creative source of religion cannot be understood apart from mystic experience. Religion is constantly embarrassed by that which it cannot explain, and without which it cannot live.

What is mysticism?¹ It may be defined as "a revelation of revelations; a² revelation of the realities behind symbols." In this aspect, it is seen to be a preoccupation with realities, while religion ordinarily conceived, is concerned mainly with symbols. Mysticism implies then a deeper penetration; an impatience with half-way measures, and partial obscure, apprehensions. More exactly, however, and revealing the essence of the concept mysticism may be defined as the "over-³coming of creatureliness." That is, in mystical

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1. The idea is definitely discussed by Berdyaev in Freedom and the Spirit, pp.239-269 and in Spirit and Reality p.129-162.
 2. Spirit and Reality, p.131.
 3. Freedom and Spirit, p.243.

experience the isolation of the natural from the uncreated is overcome, Communion between God and man is attained in an experience of love and freedom and fulfilment of personality. "The overcoming of creatureliness" does not mean that the individual is obliterated or is identified with God; in fact, mysticism means that man has entered more fully into his own nature, and the experience is distinguished by the freely given love of a complete personality.¹" Mysticism reveals that the immanence of God is a more ultimate expression of the truth than His transcendence, for it is that by which transcendence is overcome and dualism is bridged in the discovery of the inner kinship between God and man, between the Creator and created.

It is at this juncture that mysticism faces the charge of pantheism. The reason is that the concern of mysticism with the doctrine of the immanence of God makes the language of mysticism ambiguous. Berdyaev concedes that

1. Spirit and Reality, p.147.

when an attempt is made to understand the mystics "rationally and to translate their experience into the terms of theology or metaphysics, they certainly come very near¹ to pantheism." The root of the problem, however, is not that the mystics are pantheists, but that their use of language, which is not adequate to convey their experience, is ambiguous. Pantheism, as a doctrine, is a rationalized concept and cannot possibly enclose the mystic experience both of the identity of the Creator and the created, and the gulf that separates them. This the mystics know but cannot express. "But it is perfectly obvious that mystical immanence is absolutely different from philosophical immanence, from the immanence of the theory of knowledge and theology. It is a spiritual immanence. Spirituality is the immanence of the Divine in the human, but this does not infer undifferentiated identity"². Berdyaev is concerned, in his definition of what mysticism

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1. *ibid*, p.133
 2. *Spirit and Reality*, p.133.

is, to reveal what it is not! And in distinguishing spiritual from philosophical immanence he moves on to contend that mysticism is not monism, in any form or theory. "There can be no greater error", he says, "than to interpret mystical experience in terms of monistic metaphysics." ¹ Mystical experience involves the perfect fulfilment of personality in an experience of communion with God; the dualism of subject remains, while the isolation of object is overcome. The mystical experience of which Berdyaev is speaking here and which he defines must be distinguished from the mysticism, such as in Hindu thought, which does not involve the obliteration of individuality, and absorption of the personality into Nirvana, a vast impersonal sea of "nothingness".

Mysticism is not monism, nor is it religious individualism, nor "romantic objectivity". Both individualism and subjectivity involve isolation for they are intrusions of the ego, pre-

1. *ibid*, p.133.

occupation with the self. Mysticism, however, as the fulness of the spiritual life and in experience is the overcoming of the individual isolation and of mere subjectivity. It is the entrance into the primal existential world of communion, out of which emerges a true community of spirit. Mysticism makes possible a type of Christian unity and fellowship that is beyond the power of common creeds and collective expressions of religion to produce. Mysticism is integration and realization of the highest order. It is not "a dreamy condition of the soul. It is essentially realistic and sober in the discerning and discovery of realities." Mysticism is the healthiest and most realistic of all human endeavours and aspirations.

Mysticism is a liberation from the world of nature and history and an immediate comprehension of meaning in the depths of the spirit. The natural world with its reflections and symbols is forgotten in the face of the reality that is

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.240.

grasped in the mystic experience. Thus mysticism "presupposes a symbolical conception of the world while at the same time it transcends symbolism by abandoning symbols and turning to realities.¹" Religion is based on this transcendence of symbols and, while it tends to forget it, must replenish the springs of spiritual life in the mystical transcendence of spiritual men. Consequently, in religious institutions there are two elements; the democratic element, whose appeal is to the masses, for it is social in nature and finds expression in customs, creeds, and traditions; and the aristocratic element which presupposes the freedom of the few who will face the dangers and carry the responsibilities of freedom.² This distinction does not imply a hierarchy of personal value, but rather the universal appeal of religion itself. "For religion "addresses" itself to the whole of humanity, to small as well as great, it brings truth and light to everybody, for it is not the sole prerogative

1. *ibid*, p.248.

2. *Spirit and Reality*, p.130.

of the spiritual aristocracy of the elect...
In each of us there are elements of this
heteronomous religiosity.¹" The paradox of
religious history is that tyranny arises out
of the democratic element in religion, not out
of the aristocratic.

VI

Mysticism gives rise to apophatic theology as
distinct from cataphic. The former is negative
for it deals with that aspect of God which is
not revealed because it escapes rational com-
prehension. Apophatic theology "affirms the
spiritual interpretation of the Divine mystery,
the Unknowable, that which positive concepts are
unable to express."² Cataphic theology, on the
other hand, is concerned with God as he is re-
vealed in history, in the Bible, and in the
theology of the Church. The cataphic God is
the God of the religions collective; the God
who may be "known" apart from the mystic

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1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.248.
 2. Spirit and Reality, p.138.

experience. Apophatic theology does not imply the setting aside of cataphic theology, but rather seeks to carry on where the latter leaves off. "The conception of God expounded by cataphic theology has always been exoteric in character. Christian dogma is merely a symbolism of spiritual experience. The objective processes at work within it cannot be acknowledged as ultimate truth. The mystics do go a step further, but they can only communicate their experience through symbols and ¹myths." Apophatic theology seeks then to enlarge man's comprehension of God, not by resorting to rational and conceptual forms, but by employing those myths, for example, the UNGRUND of Boehme, that reveals to the intuitive spirit a phase of God that must forever escape the limitations of a conceptual definition.

Berdyaev's treatment of mysticism ends with the prophecy of a new spirituality that will mean the inner renewal of a Christianity whose customs and traditions have been long

1. Spirit and Reality, p.140; also Divine and Human, p.16.

out-worn and out-moded. The catastrophic nature of these years is demanding a profounder and more intense form of Christianity to cope with the crisis. Mere formal moralism and nominal allegiance are not adequate: the external, the outward, the extrovertive type of Christian is not enough. There must be a rebirth of the spirit, a new grasp of reality, a transformation of Christianity from within, a recreation of the fellowship of the Church. Nothing less will do to meet the needs of a despiritualized faith, not to speak of a des-¹piritualized world. The outward appearance of a tragic world can only be altered by an inward re-apprehension of spirit, and by a recovery of true communion. The possibility of such a recovery is locked up in man and becomes clear as man's nature is analysed.

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1. Spirit and Reality - this book ends with a chapter on "The New Spirituality; the realization of Spirit."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONCEPT OF GOD

- I The Relation of God to Man
- II The Ungrund
- III The Trinity
- IV The Holy Spirit

I

We have observed the significance of the concept of God as Spirit, but there is also the Incarnation from which Berdyaev derives his conception of God. All his thinking about God is in relation to man and God. In Christianity this fact is given clear expression by the myth of the Incarnation. "The fundamental myth of Christianity is the drama of love and freedom between God and Man, the birth of God in man, and the birth of man in God." In the coming of Christ, there is a perfect union of these two natures, of God and man, in one person, and only thus can the mystery of religious experience be explained. This relationship between man and God is paradoxical and cannot at all be expressed in concepts. God is born in man, and because of this man is lifted up and enriched. This is one side of divine-human truth: it is revealed in man's experience. But there is another side, less clearly revealed. Man is born in God and by this the divine life is enriched. Man needs God and God needs man.

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.189.

This presupposes man's creative reply to God. The relationship between God and man may be understood only dramatically, that is, dynamically. We cannot conceive of God, statically: a static conception is rational and exoteric. Admitting the existence of two natures, divine and human, which may be united, but are not identical and not fused, is a truth incomprehensible to the objectivizing reason - it is supra-rational, since reason itself inclines either to monism or to dualism. Berdyaev maintains, "the independent existence of the two natures and the reciprocal action of divine¹ grace and human freedom." There are two ways of understanding the transcendental: God may be conceived as transcending my limitations, as mystical, actual infinity, which assumes the existence of a divine element in man himself - or as an ontological reality outside man which presupposes the alienation of human nature, places it outside divinity. Only the former concept is spiritual and not idolatrous. The idea so often expressed that before God man is nothing, is quite false and degrading.

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.209

On the contrary, we must affirm that before God, and turned toward God, man is lifted and ennobled, he conquers nothingness. The rational ontological doctrines concerning the relationship between God and man are inadmissible - such have only pedagogical and social meaning for Christian societies. Even more must we reject the view, widespread in theological teaching, that God is the cause of the world, the first cause. Now causality and causal relationships are completely inapplicable to the relationship between God and the world, between God and man. Causality is a category applicable only to the world of phenomena, not at all applicable to the noumenal world. Thus God is not the cause of the world. We may say that God is the foundation of the world, its creator, but even these are imperfect words. We must free ourselves of all sociomorphism and cosmomorphism. God is not a force in the natural sense of the word, acting in space and time. He is not the master and director of the world. He is neither the world itself, nor the force released in the world. It is more correct to say that God is

the Meaning, the Truth of the world. God is Spirit and Freedom. If, in contrast with pantheistic to monism, we say that God is a person, this must be understood, not in the limited natural-human sense, but in the spiritual sense of a concrete image, with which personal contact is possible for us. Contact and relationship with God is possible, not as relationship with the Absolute, for whom there can be no other, with whom there can be no relationship, not with the God of apophatic theology, but with a real, personal God who has relationship to others. A world without God is an impossible contradiction of the finite with the infinite, accidental and void of meaning.

Man cannot be self-sufficient: that would mean that he did not exist. In this lies the secret of human existence: it proves the existence of something higher than man and in this is man's own worth. Man is a being who overcomes his limitations, transcends to something higher. If there is no God, as Truth and

Meaning, if there is no higher Justice, then everything flattens out, and there is neither any one nor anything to which man can rise. If on the other hand, man is God, the situation is flatter still, hopeless and worthless. Every qualitative value is an indication that in the path of man's life there lies something higher than man. And that which is higher than man, that is, the divine, is not an exterior force standing above and ruling him, but that which, in him, makes him truly man - his higher freedom. "Man's freedom", declares Berdyaev, "lies in this, that beside the realm of Caesar there is also the realm of the Spirit. The existence of God is revealed in the existence of spirit in man. And God resembles neither the forces of nature, nor the authority of society, or of the state.¹" Thus God is freedom, and not necessity, not authority over man and the world. What the theologians call grace, placing it alongside human freedom, is this

1. The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar, p.41.

action in man of divine freedom. We might say that the existence of God is man's charter of liberty, his inner justification for his struggle for freedom against nature and society. Christ taught that man is the image and likeness of God, and by that the worth of man, as a free spiritual being, was confirmed: man was not a slave to natural necessity. "Freedom is possible only if, beside the realm of Caesar, there exists the realm of Spirit, that is, the Kingdom of God. I repeat. God is not an objective being, to whom rational concepts are applicable: God is Spirit. The basic quality of Spirit is Freedom. Spirit is not nature. Freedom cannot be rooted in nature, but in Spirit. Man's connection with God is not of the nature of natural being, but spiritual-existential, of the depths.¹" If there is no God, there is no Mystery, and if there is no Mystery, then the "world is flat and man is a two-dimension being, incapable of rising higher.²" If there is no God, there is

1. ibid, p.42.
2. ibid, p.42.

no victory over death, no eternal life: everything is meaningless and absurd. God is completeness toward which man cannot avoid striving.

"We can only think of God symbolically and mythologically", states Berdyaev¹. For mysticism is the affirmation of God and man in terms of personality and able therefore to enter into an intimate, spiritual communion described in terms of freedom and love. "God and man are living personalities whose relationship is intimate to the highest degree and constitutes the concrete drama of love and freedom. Such a living personalism is always mythological. The meeting of God and man is a mythological representation and not a philosophical proposition."²

II

The conception of God is expressed negatively, in the mystery of UNGRUND, and positively in Trinitarianism conceived as the Divine sobornost.

1. Destiny of Man, p.38.

2. Freedom and the Spirit, p.195.

The myth of UNGRUND exercises, for Berdyaev, the greatest fascination, and for it he is indebted to German mysticism in general, and to Boehme in particular. UNGRUND is an ineffable and irrational principle which quickly degenerates into utter heresy when the corroding¹ hand of rationalism touches it. UNGRUND, comprehends the primal source of existence, and is therefore the source of God Himself. Ungrund is an abyss of "nothingness", of non-being, which strives to be something, to be Being and comes to self consciousness in God. God as Creator and as Trinity is born in Ungrund, both of that freedom and non-being over which He has no control or determining power. Berdyaev held that God created the world out of "nothing". But this "nothing" is further defined by the Platonic term $\tau\acute{o} \mu\eta \delta\acute{\nu}$ as distinguished from $\tau\acute{o} \omicron\upsilon\kappa \delta\acute{\nu}$; the former, "meonic" nothing

1. Berdyaev deals with it constantly but especially in the Destiny of Man, p.25f; Freedom and the Spirit, p.194f; Spirit and Reality, p.140,190f. The Meaning of History p.54f. Divine and Human, p.31 Beginning and the End, p.105f.

possesses a potentiality of being, a desire to be; the latter does not¹. In the act of creation, the "neonic" nonbeing has consented to become being. Thus Berdyaev stressed the voluntaristic character of nonbeing. He held that the formerly undifferentiated, indeterminate nonbeing which had been "beyond good and evil" became differentiated and determined, and hence morally cognizable. Thus God's creative act brought about a moral differentiation between good and evil.

Berdyaev identifies the Ungrund of Boehme with the Gottheit of Eckhart, as "super-existence" of "super-personality" the ineffable depths and genesis of God. Eckhart, the great German mystic made a distinction between God (Gott) and Divinity or Godhead (Gottheit). In theology this means that Gott is a revelation of cataphic knowledge, and Gottheit is a revelation of apophatic knowledge. Boehme affirmed the irrational and ineffable principle,

1. The Destiny of Man, p.163.

the mystery of the Ungrund, as the primary basis of experience. Berdyaev then goes on: "There is no rational, conceptional way of interpreting Eckhart's Gottheit or Boehme's Ungrund; their inherent mystery can only be stated in terms of a definitive concept. The conclusions of German mysticism are that neither the Divine Nothing nor the Absolute can be the Creator. The Gottheit is not creative; It escapes all worldly analogies, affinities, dynamism... the Absolute is a definitive mystery. In consequence two acts are affirmed; Firstly, from the Divine Nothing, from the Gottheit, from the Ungrund, a God is realized in eternity, a triune God; and secondly, the triune God, is the Author of the world. It appears, therefore, that there is in eternity a theogonic process, a Divine genesis. And that is the inner, esoteric life of the Deity. The act of Creation, the relationship between God and man, is the revelation of the Divine Drama, of which time and history are an inner content. This conception, which can hardly

be called pantheistic, is best of all expressed in Boehme.¹"

III

The Doctrine of the Trinity is central to Berdyaev's thought. He leaves behind the formulas and abstractions of the historic Trinitarian creeds. The dogma they express is cherished as the very foundation-work of the Faith; the dogmatic formulation is accepted as a matter of historic information only, an intellectual curiosity without any real power to instruct, a rational abstraction which only serves to demonstrate the limitations of discursive reasoning. Berdyaev vigorously maintains that the real esoteric meaning of the Trinity can only be grasped by mystical intuition; consequently he is impatient with attempts to state that meaning rationally and objectively. The true meaning of the Trinity is discovered in the life of the spirit, in the experience of

1. Spirit and Reality, p.140-141.

communion with God and with men.

In such communion the esoteric meaning of the Trinity is perceived, for Berdyaev's Trinity is a Trinity of love. Following Solovyev here, Berdyaev lifts the concept of love to the highest reach as a philosophical principle; love is the cohesive power of the cosmos; love is the ultimate goal of Creation; and love is the path that leads us into the inner life and meaning of the Trinity. God the Father, the first Hypostasis of the Trinity, whose nature is love desired His "other self" from all eternity as an object of His love; hence God the Son, the second Hypostasis, who is Man, absolute and perfect, was born from all eternity, equal in all respects and dignity to His Father and united to Him in love. In this fact that Christ is the epitome of perfect humanity and the "type" of the created world is seen the reason why not only man, humanity, but the cosmos should be the object of the divine love and redeeming purpose. "Through the birth of the Son

in eternity the whole spiritual race and the whole universe comprised in man, in fact the whole cosmos, responds to the appeal of divine love... Through the Son we return to the bosom of the Father. With Him a new race of human beings begins, the race of Christ, born and¹ regenerated in the Spirit." The duality of love, the mutual love of the Father and Son, is not complete; it presupposes, indeed re-²quires, a Trinity that love might be employed, it is clear that such love is not fulfilled in the mere state of "living together"; the union of man and woman finds a deeper satisfaction and a profounder meaning when it issues in the child which is loved by both individually and together. In an infinitely deeper sense, the

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1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.198.
 2. Although Berdyaev states that the "perception of God as a Trinity is the perception of the inner esoteric movement within God which has quite clearly no analogy with that which transpires in our natural world." *ibid*, p.192.

mystery of the divine love finds its fulfilment in the presence of the Third Hypostasis, the Eternal Spirit of God. "The relations between God and the Other Person are fulfilled in a Third. The loving Subject and the loved Object find the fulness of their life in the Kingdom of love which is the Third Person... It is only in this "Trinality" that the divine life is given to us in perfection, that the loving Subject and the loved object create their kingdom and find content and fulness of their life. The Trinity is a sacred and divine number which signifies fulness and the victory over strife and division; it is sobornost, the perfect society in which there is no opposition between personalities, hypostases, and the one Being. The mystery of Christianity is the mystery of unity in duality and finding its solution in Trinity-in-unity.¹" This statement makes quite clear that Christianity can only be defined in terms of the God-Man and the Trinity. By virtue of the Incarnation man is

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.199; also p.91.

revealed as a divine-human entity, as the "other self" of God, as the object of divine love and redeeming purpose; by virtue of the Spirit, the possibility of man's recreation and illumination and union with God emerges. The Spirit makes the fulfilment promised by the God-Man possible in the Kingdom of love. "The Kingdom of God is that of God-humanity, in which God is finally in man and man in God, and this is realized in the ¹Spirit." Thus Berdyaev makes both the Incarnation and the Trinity quite integral and essential for a true understanding of the Christian life. He does what abstract creedalism fails to do; for it is quite possible if not usual, for Christian people to profess orthodoxy relative to the Christological and Trinitarian formulas, and yet be unable to define or discover what significance these formulas have for their own lives as Christians. Creedal orthodoxy may be purely an abstract and detached

1. *ibid*, p.197.

attitude devoid of religious and moral dynamic. In Berdyaev, however, the Christian life cannot be thought of apart from the Incarnation and the Trinity; the former describes its possibility, the latter its realization.

IV

Berdyaev's conception of the Holy Spirit is suggested by the nature of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit is the realization of love. This realization of love is a hypostasis of God, a free agent, equally divine, involved in subordination to the other two hypostases. Berdyaev points out that the Holy Spirit is the immanence of God in the world and in humanity; and becomes therefore, basic to his entire philosophical outlook since this may be described as immanentism. As God immanent, the Holy Spirit gives even to the natural man some rudiments of spiritual life, and is the hope and possibility within him of a full and true life of the Spirit. In order to enter upon that life, the natural man must

be "born anew" the Holy Spirit must become within him the active, transforming agent so that he may be translated into the Kingdom of God. It is necessary, therefore, to think somewhat ambiguously of the Holy Spirit; since He is involved, in a general sense in the life of man, and in a particular sense, in the life of the new humanity whose Head is the God-Man. The "Christian revelation of the spiritual life and of the new birth, of the worship of the Father in spirit and truth, operates within the sphere of natural humanity, among the children of the first Adam, and among average men... the spirit is shed abroad in the world, only to leave it again, and then to descend once more, taking upon itself a symbolic form within the world. The world is the symbol of that which transpires within the spiritual sphere, the reflection of God's "abandon as fulfilled in¹ the spirit."

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.32.

Since love is inconceivable apart from freedom; the collective realization of spirit in the Kingdom of God is an experience of freedom. The Holy Spirit, as agent of the redemptive purpose of God, works with grace and freedom. "Grace is the realm of the Third Hypostasis, that of the Holy Spirit. In this Kingdom of the Holy Spirit the freedom of God is not opposed to that of man nor is freedom in antithesis to grace which itself acts from within the sphere of liberty. The divine mystery of life is accomplished. God meets the beloved and the reciprocation of His love is infinitely free... No resolution of the relations between God and man is possible apart from the Third Person, that is, apart from the Spirit who is Love realized. The Kingdom of Love in freedom is the Kingdom of the Trinity. The experience of freedom and its inherent tragedy bring us to the Trinity." It is clear that the sphere in

1. Freedom and Spirit, p.139.

which the Holy Spirit moves as agent is that of personal relationship between God and man, and man and man. The Holy Spirit operates within the sphere of redeemed humanity, in the fellowship of the Church, and takes no authoritarian forms. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."¹ "The agency of the Holy Spirit is not manifest in hierarchy, authority, natural laws, State regulations, or in the determinism of an objective world, but in human existence, creation, inspiration, love and sacrifice."² The Church is the symbol of the sphere of freedom and spiritual life in which the Holy Spirit moves, but is not to be considered synonymous or identical with it. "The agency of the Holy Spirit is manifest in Sobornost, in the Church as an integral whole, in the Church community."³ But the Church like every other institution, is an objectification; and faces

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1. II. Cor. 3:17.
 2. Spirit and Reality, p.187
 3. Ibid, p.186.

always the danger of being severed from the source of life. The Holy Spirit might be taken from the Church; a tragic process which may be taking place even now. "The Church as a synagogue is faced with a terrible crisis, for it is being forsaken by spirit, it has lost its prophetic spirit. And we must hope for a new age of the Holy Spirit."¹

In some of the above quotations a certain ambiguity is apparent that characterizes Berdyaev's discussion of the Holy Spirit. It is difficult often to discuss whether he is speaking of the Holy Spirit, Spirit, that is, with the definite article, or of spirit in the general sense. Thus a clear-cut definition of the Holy Spirit, as he conceives it, is impossible to derive from what he has written. It is certain, nevertheless, that his doctrine of the Holy Spirit is personal, not impersonal; the Holy Spirit is "He" not "it". Berdyaev is one with Augustine in not permitting any subordinationism of the

1. Spirit and Reality, p.187.

Holy Spirit; indeed his conception is the crown of his understanding of God. He points out what is commonly recognized that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the least explored and developed of all Christian doctrines. It is questionable, however, whether Berdyaev is really able to further our understanding of the doctrine; he enhances our knowledge of spirit, but in so doing tends to obscure our thinking about the Holy Spirit. Berdyaev renders his best service here by indicating the mystic way as the means by which the Holy Spirit is understood fully; of all doctrines of the faith, "that of the Holy Spirit is least able to be expressed conceptually, but into communion with the Holy Spirit every man may¹ enter."

1. *ibid*, p.22f.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RELATION OF MAN TO GOD

"Man can only be interpreted through his relation to God; he can only be understood through the higher and not through the lower.¹" Berdyaev's thought begins and ends with man; man is the key to reality, he is the ground of meaning, he is the *raison d'être* of value. History is merely the stage upon which man's destiny is fulfilled. Being has no being apart from man. Man is a microcosm and within him are hid the secrets of all existence, the cosmos and God. "Man" says Berdyaev, "contains the whole riddle of the universe and the solution of it."² The knowledge of man, and of man alone, breaks open the mysteries of existence and of God. "Man is a profound riddle to himself, for he bears witness to the existence of a higher world. The superhuman principle is a constituent element of man's nature... As an entity belonging to two worlds and capable of outgrowing himself

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1. *Destiny of Man*, p.60.
 2. *Destiny of Man*, p.59; the whole chapter three is given to the definition of man. Freedom and the Spirit is indispensable for an understanding of Berdyaev's view of man. Slavery and Freedom Part 1, is highly valuable. One confronts his characteristic ideas of man, however, whatever work is consulted.

man is a self-contradictory and paradoxical being, combining opposite poles within himself. With equal justice he may be said to be base and lofty, weak and strong, free and slavish. The enigmatic and contradictory nature of man is due not only to the fact that he is a fallen creature - an earthly being preserving memories of heaven and reflections of heavenly light; a still deeper reason for it is that man is the child of God and of nonbeing, of meonic freedom. His roots are in heaven in God, and also in ¹ nethermost depths." Here then is the core of Berdyaev's conception of man; he finds his source in Ungrund, a primal meonic freedom; which comes to self-consciousness in God, and is the source in man of those infinite potentialities for good, and the possibility also of the Fall. Man is inexplicable in terms of nature alone, of divine alone; he is only understood when he is recognized as compounded of nature and of divinity, and of that principle of irrational, pre-temporal freedom that is at

1. Destiny of Man, p.60.

once the source of good and evil. Thus the only adequate interpretation of man is based upon the image of God in man, and the fact of the God-Man. By virtue of the image of God within him, man is a creative being; a characteristic that underlies all else that may be predicted of him. "There are two elements in human nature, and it is their combination and interaction that constitute man. There is in him the element of primeval, utterly undetermined potential freedom springing from the abyss of non-being, and the element determined by the fact that man is the image and likeness of God, a Divine idea which his freedom may realize¹ or destroy." The Christian view of man therefore, exalts man to the highest possible reach of human imagination, for it sees God in man and man in God. And it is only on this basis that man's relation to God can be really understood. The coming of the God-Man discloses the fact that man is incorporated into the life of

1. *ibid*, p.70.

God. "The Eternal face of man abides in the very heart of the Divine Trinity Itself. The Second Hypostasis of Divinity is divine humanity. Christianity overcomes heterogeneity and establishes an absolute kinship between man and God. The transcendent becomes immanent.¹"

This view of man, of course, is the antithesis of that which defines God as the "wholly other"²; it is opposed to any form of transcendental dualism which amounts to a subjection of human nature to the divine on a basis of sheer distinction.

Berdyaev's theandristm is not to be confused with monism, a differentiated identity of the divine and human, in which man is either extinguished or becomes merely a transition in divinity. Berdyaev maintains, "the independent existence of the two natures and the reciprocal action of divine grace and human freedom."³ This view is paradoxical because it stands beyond the limits of rational formulation. It is a conviction, however, to which the great Christian mystics, notably Boehme

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.207.

2. ibid, p.209.

3. ibid, p.209.

and Eckhart have inevitably come; it represents a spiritual experience beyond the reach of exoteric theology.

"The basic and original phenomenon of religious life is the meeting and mutual interaction between God and man, the movement of God towards man and of man towards ¹God." In the progress of man's knowledge of God, there has been a steady movement away from objectifying God in terms of nature, or cosmos, or the philosophical Absolute, a movement that has become increasingly personalistic and anthropocentric. God in terms of man, the "humanization of God" as Berdyaev calls it, this is the reason why the coming of the God-Man marks the full tide of revelation. Humanity is carried to the heart of divinity and as this profound insight is worked out, the truth about God becomes luminous.

Man, the slave to his own ideas of domination and servitude has objectivized and

1. *ibid*, p.189

alienated God from his inner consciousness. "Man has made God in his own image," and invested that image not only with his own best attributes but also with his worst. He has made of Him a Potentate after an earthly pattern, subject to the human and destructive emotions of wrath, vengeance and jealousy - a Being to be regarded with fear and placated with obsequience. "An objectivized God has been the object of man's servile reverence." This is idolatry; it is not worship. "The relations between master and slave, taken from social life, have been transferred to the relations between God and man. But... the base human category of domination is not applicable to God. God is not a master and He does not dominate. No power is inherent in God. The will to power is not a property of His, He does not demand the slavish reverence of an unwilling man. God is freedom; He is the liberator and not the master. God bestows the feeling of freedom and not of subjection. God is Spirit and Spirit knows nothing of the

relation of domination and slavery. God is not to be thought of on the analogy of what takes place in society or on the analogy of what takes place in nature. We cannot think in determinist terms in relation to God. He determines nothing. Nor can we think in terms of causality. He is not the cause of anything.¹ Here Berdyaev denies the theological conception of God as omnipotent by virtue of the fiat of His will, the exercise of which involves force. But with God as experienced mystically all things are possible, though not by the fiat of His will or the exercise of force. For God is at the centre of consciousness, not on its periphery; and man is in God, not over against Him. Cause, creativity, self-determination these are from within, and when thus centred they are without measure. They are realizable only in unmediated communion with God. "God yearns for responsive love and awaits² the creative answer of man." But - "we have in

1. Slavery and Freedom, pp.82-3.

2. Freedom and the Spirit, p.197.

some way forfeited the spirit that is ours and have become mere creatures of body and soul; our consciousness is conformed to the natural world and we have adapted ourselves to the task of dealing with it. We have forgotten the spirit and ceased to know it, for only like can be known by ¹like."

"God acts, not upon the world order as though justifying the suffering of personality, but in the conflict, in the struggle of personality, in the conflict of freedom against that world order... The good news of the approach of the kingdom of God is set in opposition to the world order. It means the end of the false harmony which is founded upon the realm of the common. The problem of the theodicy is not solved by objectivizing thought in an objectivized world order. It is only solved on the existential plane where God reveals Himself as freedom, love, and sacrifice, where He suffers for man and strives

1. Cf. Kierkegaard; "Only Spirit can attract spirit."

together with man against the falsity and wrong of the world, against the intolerable suffering of the world. There is no need to justify, we have no right to justify, all the unhappiness, all the suffering and evil in the world, with the help of the idea of God as Providence and Sovereign of the Universe.¹ God is not the Absolute in the Aristotelian sense of actus purus, nor is He pure Being in the Anselmic sense of an ontological concept. "Essence is meaningless without existence."² In the God of the Bible there is at least dramatic life and movement, however naively and sometimes crudely it is represented; in the God of metaphysics there is nothing but abstraction. In God as experienced there is involved the very climax of the tragic principle. In his revulsion from all cold impassive metaphysical definitions of the Godhead, Berdyaev does not scruple to ascribe the principle of Divine-

1. Slavery and Freedom, p.87:89.

2. ibid, p.51.

Humanity to the God and Father of mankind - the focus of all free spirits who are also divinely human. Nor can his criticism that theology has made God in man's image be met by the imputation of a *to quoque*; for God as conceived of by reason, which is but a faculty of man as human-individual, is the only image-maker; but man in the creative act of experiencing God inwardly, centrally and subjectively, is reflecting in himself the very image of God. "God is a God who suffers with the world and with man. He is crucified Love; He is the Liberator. The Liberator appears not as power but as Crucifixion. The Redeemer is the Liberator, and that not as settling accounts with God for crimes that have been committed. God reveals Himself as Humanity. Humanity is indeed the chief property of God, not almightiness, not omniscience and the rest, but humanity, freedom, love, sacrifice. It is necessary to free the idea of God from distorting degrading blasphemous sociomorphism. It is man, man most horribly

dehumanized, who distorts his own image.
But God is humane and demands humanity.
Humanity is the image of God in man. Theology must be freed from a sociology which reflects the fall of the world and of man... purified and divested of false sociomorphism, from human inhumanity, objectivized and transferred to the sphere of the transcendent... The problem of theodicy, the most tormenting problem of the human consciousness and conscience, is the problem of the slavery of man and of the whole ¹creation."

"God is a God who suffers..." In other words He is the nerve-centre of His creation. If he were not so, in a world which is so full of pain; if He were, so to speak, outside it and impassible - His character would indeed be demoniacal, not divine. And so in fact His character has been, unconsciously perhaps, depicted in all those rationalizing theodices which seek to justify the ways of God

1. Slavery and Freedom, pp.85-6. Cf. Destiny of Man pp.36-8.

to man. "In the history of human knowledge of God", says Berdyaev, "the devil has not infrequently been taken for God.¹" But the God who reveals Himself to man, when Deep calls to deep and spirit answers Spirit, is not One who can even remotely be associated either with human ideas of justice or retribution or with the cruelty that prevails in the natural world. Such a conception of God is the worst possible blasphemy. God never inflicts pain; on the contrary, He suffers it. "The conventional theology of the textbooks denies the suffering of God... But if the capacity for love is ascribed to God, then the capacity for suffering must also be ascribed to Him.²"

In endeavouring to formulate our thoughts about God, declares Berdyaev, it is necessary to keep within the limits of our experience and to avoid speculation. Accordingly, it would seem wiser and also more reverent when in our thoughts we utter the

1. *ibid*, p.84.

2. *Slavery and Freedom*, p.51.

divine Name to qualify it thus: God as realized by, or as revealed to, us. If God is Personality, then God the unmanifest, God the Alone, is indeed an inconceivable thought. If God is Love, then a dual relationship must be assumed in Him, otherwise He could not exist. But doubtless there are other orders of being and other intelligences beyond our ken. "God" as someone has said, "may have other Words for other Worlds, but for this World his Word is Christ. "The metaphysical conception of the Godhead, hypostasized objectively into three "Persons" united in one "Substance" is speculative and theoretical because it lies beyond experience. No doctrine of Godhead can have any meaning for humanity unless humanity is implicated therein. But on this let Berdyaev speak. "In the spiritual experience we see man's hunger for God. The human soul searches for a higher being, a return to the source of life and to the native land of the spirit... Man in seeking for God seeks for himself and for his own humanity. The human soul suffers

the pangs of God's birth within it. This birth of God in the human soul is the true birth of man. It is nothing else than the movement of God towards him and an answer to his own hunger for God. But it is only one of the aspects of this original religious phenomenon, to which there is another side and in which another movement is involved.

"Spiritual experience also shows us that God longs for man and that He yearns for the birth of man who shall reflect His image... The primordial idea in man is the idea of God which is the theme of humanity, just as man is the theme of God. Infinite love cannot exist without a loving subject and a loved object. The birth of man in God is the answer to divine aspiration, the movement from man towards God... But the birth of man in God, his response in other words, could not be solely the work of God, for it is equally the work of man and his freedom... The Kingdom of God is that of God-humanity, in which God is finally in man and¹ man in God, and this is realized in the Spirit."

1. Freedom and the Spirit, pp.196-7.

CHAPTER SIX

GOD AND EVIL

- I The Monistic Interpretation of Evil
- II The Dualistic Interpretation of Evil
- III Freedom and Evil
- IV The Fall of Man

In his interpretation of the nature of God Berdyaev raises the question of the fact of evil. How shall he think of it? and understand and explain it? The fact of evil is the most obvious fact of the natural world and of human experience. Evil and its concomitant, sin, are the inevitable heritage of the beings created in the image of God. Man must think about evil because he cannot avoid doing so. Basically, there are two historic interpretations¹ of evil: the monist and the dualist. The former embraces a wide variety of philosophical and religious systems all of which tend to reduce evil to a nonentity, a minor phase in the evolution of the good. The Hindu religious "system" is monistic, for its basic principle is the precognition of the identity of the subject with the Absolute. The implication is that all experience with its good and evil is maya, illusion. The goal of the individual soul is the ultimate loss of personal existence and con-

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.163 ff.

sciousness which makes the illusion of evil a possibility. Another monistic religious interpretation of evil is to be found in Calvinism. The impersonalism of Hindu thought gives way to the transcendent and omnipotent will of God. Evil enters the world by the permissive will of God; men sin by that same permissive will. The will of God is the basis of human salvation, of redemption; men are predestined either to heaven or hell by the Divine fiat. Freedom of choice has no real place in a consistent Calvinism, and therefore the origin of evil must be behind the inscrutable mask of the Deity. Calvinism provides an interpretation of evil that is pure and simple rationalism, and it has all the strength of simplicity. "Pure monism is obliged to consider evil as a moment within the good, as good which we fail to understand or which is insufficiently revealed. The Divine Being is unique, everything is in Him and everything proceeds from Him. Evil has its source in the Divine Being, but it only appears as evil, because we see it in part and not as a whole; when all is seen and

understood evil disappears and is transformed into the good. Thus monism must end in the denial of the existence of evil; being incapable of discovering its source, such a philosophy seeks to explain it by appealing to our ignorance of being as a complete whole.¹"

II

The usual alternative to monism is some form of dualism. Dualism concedes a real existence to evil, so real indeed as to provide for it an ontological basis in the spiritual realm, by postulating a principle of evil embodied in an evil being or deity, the rival, so to speak of God. In Christianity this dualism takes form in the idea of Satan and his historic attempts to frustrate the divine will. Evil has a source independent of the human spirit and independent also of God. Berdyaev claims that the idea of Satan finds its origin in Persian thought, but whatever its source, it becomes unacceptable

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.163 ff.

the moment it is discovered that the individual bears in his own spirit the potentiality of evil. The hypothesis of a Satan becomes quite unnecessary when the evidence of psycho-pathology is studied! But gathering the idea for a moment, it is discovered, upon examination to shut the mind up to an impossible alternative; either Satan meets ultimate defeat upon the rock of God's will, in which case we are back at monism, or Satan continues as a symbol of divine defeat, of divine impotence.

III

Berdyaev rejects both monism and dualism because they cannot possibly account for or understand evil, and because its inner mystery is inaccessible to their rational methods. That inner mystery is irrational; it can only be expressed mythically and symbolically; it is the mystery of freedom. "Pure monism and pure dualism do not understand and therefore reject the mystery of freedom; they regard evil from an exterior point of view without grasping its inward origin." Evil is because

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.164.

freedom is; freedom is the presupposition of evil. But freedom, as Berdyaev defines it, is understood negatively as non-being, as an abyss, as Ungrund. It is beyond conceptual thinking. For that reason, "any rationalized approach to the problem, even when it takes the form of a theological doctrine based on revelation, leads to the abolition of the problem, of mystery, and ultimately to a simple justification, or negation of evil." Just because evil has its basis in meonic freedom, it is impossible to interpret it rationally as derivative or caused, for "evil is initially related to freedom rather than to causality... To say that freedom is the cause of evil is the same as saying that evil has no cause. It is only at a later stage, in its consequences, that evil submits to the power of causality. Evil may be a cause, but it has itself no cause. Freedom is a definite mystery, an irrational element. It engenders evil as well as good without any discrimination,

1. Spirit and Reality, p.113

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content simply to engender." The best interpretation of evil is therefore provided in the form of symbol and myth.

Berdyaev's interpretation of evil carries us back to the primal stratum of being, to UNGRUND. In the fathomless abyss from which emerges all of existence, including that of God, is irrational freedom which contains within it all possibility, good and evil. "The dwelling place of freedom is the abyss of darkness and nothingness, and yet apart from freedom everything is without meaning. It is the source of evil as well as of good. Thus the fact of evil does not imply that all is meaningless; on the contrary, it actually establishes the existence of meaning... God is All-powerful in relation to being but not in relation to nothingness and to freedom; and that is why evil exists." 2 The difficulty which thought experiences in explaining the origin of evil lies in the fact that neither monism nor dualism, to which reason

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1. Spirit and Reality, p.113.
 2. Freedom and the Spirit, p.160 and p.159.

naturally inclines, is able to comprehend this phenomenon. The source of evil cannot be in God, yet apart from God there is no source of being or of life. Evil does not proceed from God, but yet there is no other being who, if such existed side by side with God, could provide us with an explanation of the origin of evil. Evil being absolutely irrational, it is therefore incapable of being grasped by reason and remains inexplicable. It has not, nor can it have, any basis in reason, and possesses no positive source. It takes its origin from the fathomless abyss, from that void to which we cannot give the name of existence, and, just because reason is forced to discover the meaning of things, evil represents the absolute limit of irrationality. "Evil is non-being and has its roots in non-existence. But non-being can have no meaning, for meaning is always ontological. Therefore that evil to which a meaning can be assigned is thereby transformed into a good." Berdyaev

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.163.

then pens a passage of such lyric beauty, of such paralleled spiritual insight, that I cannot resist quoting it in full: "Above all, evil is a lie. It is always pretending to be that which it is not, and its seductive power lies in deception. The Devil is an impostor, having no source of life or being of his own. Everything he has he takes from God and then caricatures it; his power is fictitious, illusory, and deceptive. There is no such thing as a kingdom of evil in the sense of something positive existing side by side with the Kingdom of God and the Divine Being. Evil has always a negative character for it destroys life and being, in fact it destroys itself, and there is nothing positive about it. Many doctors of the Church have taught that evil is non-being; the negative non-ontological character of evil reveals itself also in our own experience of life."¹

Thus evil is a phenomenon of the spiritual life. It does not belong in the original

1. *ibid*, p.166.

sense to the world of nature and necessity and causality. It belongs to the realm of freedom, which is the realm of spirit. Evil and sin are only potentialities of a spiritual, of a divine being. Evil must be carried back and up to the ultimate source of life. "Initial freedom was the origin of evil at the highest levels of being. The spirit which belonged to the highest degree of existence was the first to separate himself from God by his own free act, and his self-assertion and spiritual pride exercised a corrupting influence upon the whole ordered hierarchy of being. It was in the highest ranges of the spiritual and not in the shallows of the material world that evil first showed itself. Evil in its origin is spiritual by nature and belongs to the spiritual world.¹" The evil of human experience, the evil devolving upon humanity is the result of this event of the realm of the spirit. The world and humanity have become separated from God, and have come under

1. *ibid*, p.161.

bondage to necessity and causality. The original self-assertion of man, the pride which tempted him to raise himself above God, the spiritual act of his own freedom, has involved him in the downward path of egocentricity, of division, hatred and isolation. All the evil and sin in which man now finds himself began with a spiritual pride, an egotistical self-assertion.

IV

The story of the Fall of Man, Berdyaev declares, is simply a mythical account of this spiritual event, which seeks on the basis of analogies drawn from the natural world to illumine the spiritual nature of evil and sin. But in attempting to reveal the origin of evil, the myth of the Fall is likely to obscure it, for it expressed spiritual facts in an extrinsic form and suggests more than the inner structure of spirit would permit. For example, the idea of a tempter puts the source of evil suggestion in another place than that of man's spiritual

nature where it rightfully belongs. Berdyaev indicates an aspect of the Fall which is usually neglected, namely, that it is a demonstration not only of the failure and weakness of man, but of his spiritual nature and infinite potentiality. "The myth of the Fall does not humiliate man, but extols him to wonderful heights... If man is a fallen creature and if he fell in virtue of freedom inherent in him from the first, it shows that he is a lofty being, a free spirit... The myth of the Fall is a myth of man's greatness."¹

Berdyaev's view of evil is cosmic rather than personal.² He wrote that when he consciously acknowledged himself a Christian, he did not feel so much a sense of personal sin or the sinfulness of men in general as the fact of evil and the consequent loss of freedom. "I experienced sin³ not as disobedience but as the loss of freedom." Berdyaev seems to prefer the word "evil" to the word "sin"; in any case, he uses the former in

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1. The Destiny of Man, p.53.
 2. Dream and Reality, p.174.
 3. ibid, p.180.

instances where the latter is clearly intended. "The cause of evil", he says, "lies in a false and illusory self-affirmation and in spiritual pride which places the source of life not in God but in self, to the annihilation of human personality in so far as it bears the divine image; it constitutes a return to the void from which the world came into being.¹" Thus "original sin" leads on to non-being and spiritual death. The specific forms under which sin expresses itself in life are familiar and their common quality is negation: animosity, hatred, envy, vengeance, depravity, egoism, cupidity, jealousy, suspicion, avarice, vanity.² The list could be extended to include all the sins into which the "original sin" of man precipitated him, sins embracing the carnal nature of man from the flesh to the spirit. The result of sin is the bondage of man to evil necessity, the progressive deterioration of his personality, his isolation from other beings, so that society becomes a loosely tied bundle of

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1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.167
 2. Freedom and the Spirit, p.166

ego-driven selves, the antithesis of the Kingdom of God, the communion of love. While evil brings man into bondage, so that "when once the human spirit has chosen that which is evil it is no longer able to determine its life freely on its own account."¹ Yet the divine remains capable of enlightenment and there remains within it an ardent longing for the divine which makes both revelation and solution possible. "Evil has not finally possessed man's nature for it is a dual nature belonging to two worlds, and even after the Fall man did not completely break with God, who continues to have dealings with him and to impart to him his regenerative powers."²

In the classical Protestant formulation of this doctrine, the original nature of man comprised both the "natural" and the "supernatural" virtues. As the result of the Fall, the latter virtues of faith, hope and love were totally lost, while the former were seriously damaged and vitiated. It is this view that goes

1. *ibid*, p.170

2. *ibid*, p.170.

under the unfortunate, and really inaccurate term of "total depravity". Luther accepted Augustine's view of this term, which in its most radical form claimed that after the Fall nothing was left of the image of God in man but the mere empty name. Luther characterizes the loss of the divine image as complete: the natural endowments are "utterly leprous and unclean". For "death crept in, like leprosy, over all the senses. So that now, we cannot reach the comprehension of this image of God by our intellect, nor even in thought... Wherefore, when we now attempt to speak of that image, we speak of a thing unknown... Of this image, therefore, all we now possess are the mere terms - "the image of God!" These naked words are all we now hear, and all we know.¹ Luther found his true disciple in this matter in Karl Barth, who² restates it in his own extreme manner by asserting that the "imago Dei" has been completely lost. This has become now a live modern issue.

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1. Martin Luther, Commentary on Genesis, quoted in A Compend of Luther's Theology (The Westminster Press, 1943), pp 80-83.
 2. The Destiny of Man, p.69.

Barth assails Emil Brunner with what appears unnecessary vigour for the latter's mild admission that although the "material" image is lost, the "formal is not; for in this manner Barth thinks Brunner has provided a potentiality of contact with God, a "capacity for revelation."¹ This hardly meets with Barth's approval.

The Orthodox theologians in the main hold that although the image of God was marred in the Fall it was by no means lost: man's divine likeness and spiritual life are not destroyed but merely damaged by the Fall, and the image of God in man is besmeared.² Berdyaev ranges himself on the side of the tradition of his own Church. Man "remains a spiritual being, although sick and broken, and has retained his religious consciousness. For the Word of God could not be addressed to a being deprived of free religious consciousness. There is liberty in man which precedes the action³ of revelation and grace." "Grace acts upon

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1. Karl Barth, *Nein! Nein!* in *Natural Theology* (London, 1946), p.88.
 2. *Freedom and the Spirit*, p.170.
 3. *Freedom and the Spirit*, p.131, also p.208.

liberty, for it can act solely upon it.¹ In defense of this view, which is basic for him, and should be for everyone else, for to cure a disease the physician must first diagnose it correctly - he argues with his accustomed vigor against the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran-Barthian theories of the status of the fallen man. Barth, for instance, denies that the natural man is capable of responding to God's grace or that there is anything left of the original image of God in man. But in that case, Berdyaev counters, the whole saving process would be initiated, performed, and consummated by God alone. Man would have no part in it. This is really another form of Monophysitism or pantheism. God is everything, man is nothing. God would save a man who really does not want to be saved, or who even refuses to be saved. This smacks of the gospel of the Grand Inquisitor,² who is set upon saving the world forcibly, against ~~his~~ will. There is no

1. Destiny of Man, p.189.

2. The Meaning of History, p.203.

freedom, liberty, in this scheme; but these are of the very essence, if God wishes a free response to his love.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GOD THE REDEEMER

- I The God-Man
- II Redemption is Creative
- III The Problem of Existent Evil
- IV The Juridical idea of Redemption
- V The Meaning of the Cross
- VI Redemption as Liberation and Transformation
- VII Redemption and the Eternal Purpose

I

Christianity is the religion of redemption and by virtue of the Incarnation, the revelation of God-Man in whom and by whom mankind is redeemed. It is the religion of redemption by virtue of the human need which it seeks to meet; it is born of two movements; that of God toward man in love, and that of man toward God in need. The love of God for man which is His desire for his "other self" can only be satisfied by a free response of man; but man through the misuse of his freedom has enslaved himself, and is therefore incapable of making the only response acceptable to God, The love of God remains unanswered and the need of man remains unfulfilled. Redemption emerges as a need, not only of man, but also for God! In Berdyaev's terms "Christianity is the religion of the suffering God. It is not God the Father who suffers, as the Patripassians used to hold, but the suffering of the Son is a measure of suffering within the inner life of the Trinity."¹

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.192.

God is not the impassive, inscrutable, self-sufficient, detached Deity of the philosophers. God needs man, a free response to His love; He yearns for his "other self"; that is to say, for humanity created in his image. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, is revealed as the One who brings man to God in bringing God to man; he fulfills, by virtue of his humanity and His Deity, the need both of God and Man. In him man is restored to freedom, he is liberated and with that fundamental need met, can respond to the love of God in a perfect communion; but in Christ also God discovers his "other self"; His yearning is met in the Eternal Man which is Christ, and the tragedy of God yields to the joy of communion, and fulfilment. In brief, then, these are the basic principles of Berdyaev's conception of redemption and the God-Man, they will be considered in greater detail. From Berdyaev's own viewpoint, all discussion of God and Man ought properly to begin, and end, with the God-Man. For the "basic and original phenomenon of religious life is the meeting

and mutual interaction between God and Man, the movement of God towards Man and of Man towards God.¹ This fact finds its full and complete expression in Christianity which alone possesses the Incarnation of God in man, so that both God and Man are revealed and brought into perfect communion. "The fundamental myth of Christianity is the drama of love and freedom between God and man, the birth of God in man, and the birth of man in God. The coming of Christ, the God-Man, is a perfect union of these two movements, the realization of unity in duality and of the divine-human mystery.² "Every religious phenomena, whenever or where-
ever, presupposes this mutual movement of God and man. The degree of revelation and redemption is the degree to which the human and divine needs are met. Christianity presupposes the same mutual need of God and Man but, because of her possession of the God-Man, brings to a climax and to a close the entire movement; it is only a question of time

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.189.

2. ibid, p.189

before humanity will be restored to God in completeness!

The peculiar conception of the Incarnation, as Berdyaev conceives it, might be noted at this point. The Incarnation, usually understood, is the union of God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ; it is a revelation of both the character of God and the nature and destiny of man. God cannot be known from nature alone, or from human imaginings, no matter how exalted or noble. His supreme revelation is in Jesus Christ alone. The humanity of Jesus Christ was in no prior sense, a pre-existent humanity. The Deity, however, of the Second Person of the Godhead descended; took the flesh, the nature of man upon himself, and so brought Deity and Humanity together in the Incarnation. In Berdyaev's terms, the union of God and Man in the God-Man is an eternal union. The second Hypostasis of the Trinity is the Eternal Man; perfect man is God's "other self"; humanity is "part" of the Godhead. The God-Man did not

become God-Man when he took on the flesh of Jesus Christ; he merely revealed himself as such to mortal sight. Not only the Deity but also the humanity are pre-existent. The Incarnation is the manifestation of what is eternally true, that there is humanity in God, and divinity in man. Christianity is the revelation of these two facts and the realization of them, by the "birth of God in man" and the "birth of Man in God". This is the relationship of God to Man as it is conceived by "theandric anthropomorphism". "Theologians will reply in alarm that Jesus Christ alone was God-Man and that man is a created being, and cannot be God-Man. But this way of arguing remains within the confines of theological rationalism. Granted man is not God-Man in the sense in which Christ is God-Man, the unique One; yet there is a divine element in man. There are, so to speak, two natures in him. There is within him the intersection of two worlds. He bears within himself the image which is both the image of man and the image of God and is the image of man in so far as the

image of God is actualised... That man bears within himself the image of God and in virtue of that becomes man, is a symbol. One cannot work out an intellectual concept about ¹ it." Berdyaev goes on to declare that, broadly speaking, the relations of God and man are defined in one of three modes: there is first, a transcendent dualism which postulates a "gulf" between God and man; and man is brought under the sign of subjection and authority. There is a division that is ontological as well as ethical; a mutual opposition and estrangement. Barth is today the chief exponent of a transcendent dualism; God is the "wholly other"; the infinite qualitative distinction between God and man, which Kierkegaard opposed to the idealism of Hegel is reaffirmed by Barth. The cause of the transcendent God has been taken up by contemporary neo-orthodox theologians whose analysis of modern man rings the changes upon his presumptuous pride and his disregard

1. Slavery and Freedom, p.45.

of his essential creatureliness. From Berdyaev's point of view, transcendent dualism can only lead to despair, or worse, to atheism, for a transcendent Deity makes the problem of evil inconceivable or obliterates it entirely; in either case, the all-powerful and the good God disappears. Secondly, there is an immanent monism; the human and the divine wills and beings are identified metaphysically and God ceases to exist independently of man, or man ceases to exist independently of God. Man is just an aspect of God. This is the view of which Berdyaev himself is often held guilty; a superficial reading of Berdyaev may lead to the conclusion that he is a pantheist or a panpsychist, or some other variety of monist. The fact is that no matter how dangerously near to pantheism Berdyaev comes in his speculation, he never obliterates the dualism of man and God, the dualism of natures and wills set apart from one another and engaged in a reciprocal action of love and freedom. This is the third interpretation of the relation between God and man; this is the "theandric anthropomorphism". It "represents the

greatest antimony for rational thought while it is also the cause of considerable complication in the Christian doctrine of Redemption and in our understanding of the work of universal salvation and deliverance.¹"

II

The relation between God and man, the birth of God in man, and man in God achieves a Redemption that is Creative. This way of redemption, which delivers the human soul from the bondage of sin and from the influence of baser elements, has often obscured the creative mission of man. Berdyaev severely criticizes the traditional Christian teaching about man, of the Church Fathers and of the current Catholic and Protestant theologies, as deficient because it does not stress the duty of the redeemed man to use all his powers toward the creation of a redeemed human social order. The gospel is presented by them as a message of salvation from sin alone. Christianity,

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.209.

as commonly understood, is too exclusively a religion of redemption. The emphasis centres upon the "fallen" man, rather than upon the redeemed and transformed man. The Church is regarded as a hospital for the curing of sick souls. There the work of redemption stops. But this is not enough; it makes the redemption negative rather than positive. God expects man's free co-operation with him in the creative task, in achieving the "victory of being over non-being", and activity that is heroic and free. "If a man does not bring his creative gift to God, if he does not participate actively in building the Kingdom of God, if he shows himself to be a slave; if he buries his talents in the earth, then the creation of the world will receive a check and the fulness of the divine-human life conceived by God will not be realized; God will suffer and will remain unsatisfied in His relations with His "other self"¹. Thus "when man thinks only of himself, his needs, his well-

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.213.

being, and human salvation, he restricts God's conception of what man should be and denies his own creative nature. But when he thinks of God, and of God's longing for love, and of what God expects from him, he raises himself to a higher plane by realizing God's idea of him, by affirm-¹ing his creative nature." Berdyaev broadens the concept of redemption by disclosing its cosmic sweep; redemption is the restoration, not only to man of his power to respond to God's love and will, but of his creative freedom. God's call to man for love and creative activity is a call that man is unable to answer. Having abused his freedom, he has become enslaved to necessity; he is in the bondage of evil, of pride, sensuality, of the love of "this world", of power, and of a dozen forms of slavery and degradation; man has become the slave of the natural world, his personality has given place to individuality and his community to society. "The natural man is too weak to accomplish his creative mission; his

1. *ibid*, p.213.

powers are shattered by sin and his freedom¹ is devitalized." Redemption is the restoration to man of his freedom by which he may give to God his love and lend him his creative activity; that with God he may be united again in the realization of the creative purpose of God from all eternity.

The task of creativity includes the transformation of the social order, which at present is dominated by selfish, evil purposes of men, into a free theonomic society, that is, one in which men voluntarily accept the will of God in all their relations. Accordingly, the ethics of creativity is not merely personalistic, certainly not individualistic; it has a vital concern for society. "Creativeness and a Creative attitude to life as a whole is not man's right, it is his duty. The creative attitude is a moral imperative in all spheres of life... The path of creativeness is also a path to moral and religious² perfection, a way of realizing the fullness of life." The transformation of the world is not solely God's

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.213.
2. Destiny of Man, p.169.

task, but man's as well; it is a theandric enterprise. God works partly through men. Creation is not complete; it is still going on. We are living in "the eighth day of creation." The ethic of creativity differs from that of redemption inasmuch as it deals with the creation of values, which is the special divinely given task of each particular redeemed man. These values differ in accordance with the gift granted him by God. Man's part in the process is that he dedicate gifts - whether they be in science, art, labour, government, economy or in some humble skill - to the ends of the Kingdom, rather than to either his own or purely secular purposes. This is done by means of holy imagination. For a creator embodies this imagination in stone, poem, picture, government, economic order, or social custom. The way of redemption depends upon a purified, God-centred will working through a powerful, holy imagination toward the creation of the social good. For Christianity is not

1. Quoted by M. Spinka, Nicolas Berdyaev, p.160; see also Freedom and the Spirit, p.176.

passive, static, quietistic; it is dynamic, creative, revolutionary. If, instead of devoting the best creative imagination to destructive ends, science were to utilize its tremendous potential for human good; if political imagination were devoted to peace instead of to war, and expansion; if economic skills were utilized for the good of all rather than for the benefit and profit of the few then many of the world's ills would be eliminated, or at least lessened.

Man's creativity is not only the fulfilment of the Creator's intention for man, and a response to God's grace; it also yields the highest satisfaction just because it fulfils man's destiny. Happiness can never become the goal of a noble life, for it is a result, not the goal, of moral or creative life. Accordingly, the ethic of creativity is not a utilitarian ethic. For only spiritual values may become the ends of life. "Therefore the positive mystery of life is to be found in love, in sacrificial giving, creative love. As has been said already,

all creativeness is love and all love is creative. If you want to receive, give, if you want to obtain satisfaction, do not seek it, never think of it, and forget the very word; if you want to acquire strength, manifest it, give it to others.¹"

III

Redemption is necessary because of the existence of evil, for if it had not existed there would have been no Deliverer, the coming of Christ would not have taken place, and the love of Heaven would not have been revealed. Evil was a revolt of freedom which manifested itself following the act of creation. Berdyaev declares that out of the divine nothing, the Ungrund, God the Creator is born. The creation of the world by God the creator is a secondary act. From this point of view it may be said that freedom is not created by God: it is rooted in the Nothing, in the Ungrund from all eternity. Freedom is not determined by God; it is part of the nothing out of which God created

1. Destiny of Man, p.180-181.

the world. The opposition between God the Creator and freedom is secondary: in the primeval mystery of the Divine Nothing this opposition is transcended, for both God and freedom are manifested out of the Ungrund. God the Creator cannot be held responsible for freedom which gave rise to evil. "God tolerates evil, allows evil for the sake of the good of freedom.¹" Man is the child of God and the child of freedom - of nothing, of non-being. Meonic freedom consented to God's act of creation; non-being freely accepted being. But through it man fell away from the work of God, evil and pain came into the world, and being was mixed with non-being. God the Creator is all-powerful over being, over the created world, but He has no power over non-being, over the uncreated freedom which is impenetrable to Him. In the first act of creation God appears as the Maker of the world. But that act cannot avert the possibility of evil contained in meonic freedom. The myth of the Fall tells of this powerlessness of

1. Destiny of Man, p.54.

the Creator to avert the evil resulting from freedom which He has not created. Then comes God's second act in relation to the world and to man. "God appears not in the aspect of Creator but of Redeemer and Saviour, in the aspect of the suffering God who takes upon Himself the sins of the world. God in the aspect of God-the-Son descends into the abyss, into the Ungrund, into the depths of freedom out of which springs evil as well as every kind of good. This is the only possible interpretation of the mystery of the Incarnation - if we are not to interpret it in the juridical sense." The descent of the God-Man into the abyss of freedom, which in man has degenerated into necessity, results in the illumination of freedom, its restoration from within, and in consequence man is able to give to God a love that is free; the only order of love which is acceptable to God.

1. *ibid*, p.34.

IV

Berdyaev opposes the juridical idea of redemption. Christ did not come in judgment, but in salvation. "For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him.¹" The history of the doctrine of redemption from the time of Anselm and his CUR DEUS HOMO has been burdened with the ideas of an offended God, of man under judgment, of divine love needing to be honoured of a Christ, who, upon the Cross bore the full fury of the wrath of God. Redemption has been defined in the rationalistic terms of legal processes and abstract laws which obliterate the ideas of divine law and human freedom. For these ideas, the historic theories of the Atonement, with the exception of those stemming from Abelard, have had little place; and significantly enough Abelard's view has generally been held suspect. For while the Church has never defined an "orthodox" theory of the Atonement, as she has a theory of the Trinity, yet the Abelardian view has generally

1. John 3:17 A.R.V.

been taken as unorthodox. With the emphasis upon the juridical idea of redemption thought has concentrated upon the Cross as the place of transaction, where the price was paid, where the wrath of God was assuaged, where the Divine honour was restored, where offended Deity was satisfied by the shedding of blood, where man found his substitute and therefore entered into a relation to God free of debt and dishonour. The sign of the Incarnation was lost, or at best was considered merely as setting the stage for the drama of Calvary. Berdyaev declares that "the juridical conception was simply an attempt to adapt celestial truth to the level of the natural man. It is not a spiritual conception at all. To regard the universal tragedy as a judicial process initiated by an angry Deity against offending man is quite unworthy. To think in this fashion is to adapt the divine life which is always mysterious and unfathomable to pagan conceptions and the spirit of tribal vengeance." Redemption is the inner

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.172.

transformation and illumination of man; it is his sanctification in the God-Man. Redemption is motivated by divine law, not required by divine anger. The forgiveness of man by God is not the achievement of Christ on His Cross; it is rather the forgiveness of man by himself! A forgiveness, an inner restoration made possible by the Christ, that brings man home to His Father. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."¹ The work of Christ, was not, as judicial theories of the Atonement seem at times to suggest, that of reconciling God to the world; for there is no barrier of offended holiness, of wounded Deity, which God must take into account. God is not severed from man; it is man who is severed from God. Nothing in God demands atonement; that need is in man alone. The form in which God appears, then, in redemption is exclusively one of love and mercy and infinite yearning. "Anger in every shape and form is foreign to God, Whose mercy is infinite."²

1. II Cor. 5:19.

2. Freedom and the Spirit, p.175.

V

In Berdyaev's view, the Cross of Christ is one event with the Incarnation. The Cross is one aspect of the "Word made flesh". The Cross was not an afterthought; it did not represent a change of programme, it was not circumstantial or accidental; it was the fulfilment of the response of God to evil and suffering which began to be revealed in the coming of the God-Man. The redemption of man is in the Incarnation of which the Cross is an expression and a completion. The descent of the God-Man into the abyss; into the Ungrund involved his sharing with man the tragedy and suffering of evil. Just as the presence of the God-Man means the illumination and restoration of freedom, so the crucifixion of the God-Man is the illumination of suffering and evil in this sense, that man discovers the inevitability of his tragedy, and is prepared thereby to endure it. The Cross is the epitome of evil and suffering in this sense, that the One who endured it was sinless and blameless. It was God in Christ who endured evil

in a moment of infinitely unjust suffering.
"And unjust Divine suffering proved to be an
expiation of all human suffering. The world
was in the power of evil; it repudiated the
greatest of all saints; it crucified Him, the
Divine Son; it crucified God Himself. The
Crucifixion of the Divine Son was a response
to human suffering and the evil of the World¹".
The idea here seems to be that the Cross, as
the revelation of the suffering God, saves man
spiritually, psychologically, if you will, from
the power of evil and suffering. He is made
able to endure, and to be victorious over,
what would otherwise destroy him spiritually,
and which is in itself inexplicable. Just as the
Incarnation as the descent of the God-Man throws
a flood of light upon the mystery of freedom,
so the Cross illumines evil and suffering, and
provides the motivating power to "see it through"
without being destroyed in one's own soul. "Man
discovers in seeing the Cross of Jesus², that he

1. Spirit and Reality, p.106.
2. Luke 14:27.

too must bear his own cross and follow after Him."
"It is impossible to rationalize human destiny",
writes Berdyaev, "if we should attempt to do so,
that would involve us in a justification of every-
thing and, in fact, in a negation of the existence
of evil. The problem of spiritual life does not
consist in explaining or justifying the sufferings
of life, but in illuminating and spiritually
surviving them. The burden of the Cross is such
a spiritually illuminating experience of suffering.
Man should bear his own cross in life and help
other men to bear theirs." The Atonement then
is that which equips man spiritually for the task
that is inevitably his; a task which would other-
wise break him. It is the disclosure of the
essentially tragic destiny of man, a disclosure
that brings with it the grace necessary to bear it.
The Atonement, then, is reconciliation with God,
yes, but it is also reconciliation with life. The
Cross is the means by which man is made spiritually
free of the effects of evil and suffering upon him.

1. Spirit and Reality, p.116

The Cross is the transformation of the human attitude to evil and therefore it is the liberation of man from its power. And suffering¹ is the path of liberation.

Berdyaev is quite undisturbed that the truth of Christianity is denied on the grounds that evil still persists and men still suffer. Evil must inevitably be the result of the misuse of freedom; and suffering must inevitably be the means by which evil is overcome. This is the condition which the coming of the God-Man makes unmistakably clear. Christianity sanctifies suffering, reveals its positive, redemptive value when freely endured. And as for the persistence of evil, can that which is born of freedom, over which God nor Christ exercise determinative authority, be charged against Christianity? "If the justice of Christ is not realized in the world, that is due rather to human injustice. The religion of love is not responsible for the fact that hate predominates in our natural world. It is impossible

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.178.

to refute Christianity by appealing to the fact of the existence of tremendous evils and sufferings in life. Christianity is the religion of freedom and that is why it cannot admit that evil and suffering are to be removed by employing compulsion and violence.¹" All that Christianity does promise is the illumination of the mystery of evil as misused freedom, and the disclosure of the positive value of suffering by which the power of evil is broken.

VI

Redemption, in which is included the Incarnation and the Cross, is synonymous with the transformation and the liberation of humanity. The meaning of Redemption lies in the coming of the Second Adam, the new spiritual man, in the coming of that love of which the Old Adam was ignorant, in the transformation of the lower nature into the higher. The meaning of the coming of Christ into the world lies in a real transfiguration of human nature,

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.172.

in the formation of a new type of spiritual man, and not in the institution of laws, by the carrying out of which the spiritual life may be acquired. Thanks to the coming of Christ the spiritual life can be really attained. Here there can be no question of external relationships because the whole matter must be regarded spiritually from the point of view of immanence. Man hungers for a new and higher kind of life which is in accordance with his dignity and is eternal. It is this which really constitutes the revelation of the New Covenant. The God-Man, who unites in His person the love of God and the freedom of Eternal Man, and therefore fulfils the need both of God and Man, appears within the sphere of human life and tragedy. In him humanity is restored by a renewed act of freedom, to communion with God and God finds his "other self" in a perfect union of love. Redemption is universal in scope, for in Christ the whole of mankind, Humanity, is comprehended and restored. Thus for Berdyaev Christianity is ecumenical in intent and scope. God's intention embraces in

loving arms all his creatures, provided they choose to return to his embrace. There can be no thought of a "chosen race" in some exclusive sense, or a special group of "elect" who were predestined to eternal bliss before all ages. Salvation is intended for all men; more than that, it embraces "all things to the last bit¹ of vegetation." In this Berdyaev associates himself with another distinguished member of the Russian religious renaissance, Father Sergius Bulgakov, who developed the idea of the redemption of the whole creation - animate and inanimate - in his concept of Sophia. This is a somewhat exotic formulation of the doctrine of the continuing divine creative process - the eighth day of creation - by means of which all things are brought closer to realization of the divine idea for each individual thing. It recalls Saint Paul's words that "the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain² the glorious liberty of the children of God." "In the Son", declares Berdyaev, "in the Divine Man,

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1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.179; also quoted by M. Spinka in Nicolas Berdyaev, p.149.
 2. Romans 8:21 R.S.V.

in the God-Man is comprised the whole human race, mankind in all its multiplicity and in every shape and form... The human species belongs under one of its aspects only to the generation of the Old Adam, the sinful and fallen race of our natural world. Under its other aspect it is heavenly and belongs to the generation of the Spiritual Adam, to that of Christ. Through the birth of the Son in eternity the whole spiritual race and the whole universe comprised in man, in fact the whole cosmos, responds to the appeal of divine love... Through the Son we return to the bosom of the Father. With Him a new race of human beings begins; the race of Christ, born and regenerated in the Spirit. Christ is in man and man is in ¹Christ." Here Berdyaev restates the doctrine of recapitulation; Christ is the head of a new and recreated humanity, restored to that place of communion with God which was forfeited by the first Adam in his act of transgression.

Redemption is the liberation of

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.198.

humanity from the bondage of evil necessity. In Christ, man is free; he leaves behind him the burden of the Law for in the restoration of his freedom he has the new "law of love" which presupposes freedom as its basis of operation; a love which can do no other than produce a life of holiness, a life able in all respects to enter into communion with God. The God-Man appears in history as the Protagonist of man; the Champion of his freedom; the Emancipator from sinful slavery. "Redemption destroys the roots of sin and evil, and thereby frees man from the absolute power of the law. Redemption means, first and foremost, liberation. The Redeemer is the Liberator... Redemption means a revolutionary change in moral valuations, a revaluation of all values. It cancels innumerable taboos, it conquers the fear of outer uncleanness, it transfers everything into the depth of the human heart and overturns all the established hierarchies... The moral act is performed by man together with God, there is between them no break or opposition insisted upon by the law.¹"

1. Destiny of Man, p.135.

VII

In his view of Redemption Berdyaev considers the relation of the Incarnation and the Cross to the purpose of God from all eternity. Does the Incarnation imply that the will of God, having been violated, requires an "emergency measure to deal with the situation?" Is the Cross a desperate expedient employed as a means of restoring continuity to the divine purpose? Was the coming of Christ contingent upon the Fall and therefore must represent an afterthought of God? The answer, of course, may be given as "no" after a moment's thought about Ungrund.

The freedom from which evil is born is the freedom from which God and His good purpose is born. The point is clear that God cannot project a plan or a purpose which controls or embraces a freedom over which He has no control or authority. The Fall is therefore no untoward contingency temporarily wrecking the purpose of God; it is a condition which freedom contains as an eternal possibility. Creation, therefore is not an event which is past and gone,

followed by another event, Redemption, which covers its failure. Creation is a process, to which man is called a fellow-labourer with God, by which non-being is recalled to being, and what is devoid of meaning becomes meaningful. The Incarnation with the Cross, therefore, is simply another phase of the Creative process; a continuance of the cosmic redemptive purpose of God. The Atonement is organic to the creative will of God, one means by which that will is brought to completion. Thus it may be said, that "the Lamb was slain from the foundation¹ of the world". "The coming of Christ cannot be subordinated to such an exclusively negative source as the existence of sin and evil; it is the positive revelation of the supreme stage of creation. Redemption is not the return to the condition of Paradise but the passage to a higher state of existence, to the manifestation of the spiritual nature of man, and of a creative freedom and love hitherto unknown. Redemption is then

1. Revelation 13:8.

a new moment of creation. Creation was not finished in seven days; these were but one epoch in its destiny... The description of the Creation of the world in the Old Testament fails to disclose the creative activity of God in its fulness; and in the interpretation of creation the mind of the New Covenant is not¹ to be limited by the Old.

1. Freedom and Spirit, p.178.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ESCHATOLOGY

- I Spiritual Development
- II The Problem of Death and Immortality
- III The Idea of Hell
- IV The Idea of Heaven and Paradise
- V Eschatology is a Divine-Human Concern

Berdyaev maintains that Christianity is an eschatological messianic religion because it expects a transformation of the present world into the Kingdom of God. It looks forward to that which is not yet realized but which must be and whose realization depends upon the creative genius of man. The dynamic life of the Spirit of God infiltrates all of existence and must inevitably bring it to an end in the Kingdom of God. This process is called Development¹, and must be distinguished from evolution, in the mechanical sense, and all popular theories of progress. The development of spirit is neither the evolution of nature nor progress in social forms and institutions. According to Berdyaev the theories of evolution and inevitable progress, which were dominant toward the end of the 19th and on into the twentieth century were an over simplification of the problem; they represent a rational, objective, interpretation of the dynamic movements of life. They were naively optimistic, and in terms of their definition, denied

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.303.

the reality, and failed to comprehend the meaning of, freedom. What is automatic and inevitable cannot be creative and free. Berdyaev rejects the optimistic and humanistic world-views which have been prevalent in the West, and he does so on grounds of their philosophical inadequacy. He holds such theories to be static and impartial, and therefore incapable of grasping the dynamic realities of the spiritual life of men. The tragedy of history does not deny the fact of development; indeed, it may demonstrate it. For the spiritual recreation of life and the world is bound up with inevitable suffering.

Christianity with this basic conception of things is eschatological and dynamic; it is fluid and progressive; it is expectant and flexible. To press Christianity into static forms, to crystallize its life in doctrines and laws, is to say that all has been done that will be done; it is to look back rather than forward; it is to frustrate the genius of the faith which is the genius of infinite change and development nearer to the intention of God. "The Christian revelation

contains innumerable potential riches capable of actualization in history and in the world. Each word of the Gospel is but the hidden spring of an infinite process of development. If Christianity in the past has been to a very high degree dynamic," writes Berdyaev with the prophetic spirit creeping in, "it can be so in the future too. An arrest in its dynamic quality is only the effect of spiritual sloth and weakness... Every question has not yet been settled and Christianity is not a finished product, nor will it be finished till the end of time; its fulfilment corresponds to the coming of the Kingdom of God.¹" Thus Berdyaev shares the mind of Newman as to the necessity of dogmatic development, even though he could not share that mind on the nature and use of dogma. The point is clear that Christianity looks into the future for a continued process of self-revelation; it shares with the world order and all of life the process, not the final act, of creation.

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.305.

In so far as this development is not understood or is denied, as in authoritarian forms of religion, or is frustrated by the deadness and weight of unspiritual men, it is impeded, halted, even stopped. Development does not and cannot mean improvement in a straight line; development follows a tortuous path, is subject to upsets and reverses, meets contradiction and opposition; it is involved as are all manifestations of spiritual life in tragedy and suffering. Further, this is worthy of emphasis, development does not imply nor promise the defeat of evil, the end of suffering in history. It is a complete misapprehension of Christianity to charge it with responsibility for existent evils and the tragic dilemma of man. Christianity proclaims a new order of things, introduces a new dynamic into the stream of life, and proceeds with the business of coping with evil and realizing the good. But it cannot be accountable for that evil born of freedom over which it exercises no control. Christianity does not mean the automatic moral improvement of man's historical life; "it does not mean that

men have conquered evil and are gradually nearing the Kingdom of God. It proclaims the coming of a new spiritual epoch for man, the revelation of new spiritual forces, a fresh struggle between good and evil, and the emergence of a new good; but it also means fresh evil.¹ Berdyaev is prepared to argue that Christianity can be held accountable for the lack of a certain balance, poise and harmony possessed by the ancients. Christ indeed has "cast fire upon the earth."² An agitation has been set up in the life of man which is an evil from certain points of view, but which is the sign and token of deep and fundamental movements in the depths of the spiritual life, the disclosure of development that is quite beyond the grasp of the main idea of progress.

It is necessary then to make way for the creative of the spirit in the Church of Christ. The destiny of man is inextricably bound up with the movement of spiritual life which must be free or die. Berdyaev does not share Paul's curious

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.308.
2. Luke 12:49.

concern for the "weak brother"¹; he argues that the spiritual development of the Church has been held up for the sake of the over-scrupulous and the timid, so that while tending to the lesser needs of those who ought to know better the larger and greater needs go neglected. "It is impossible to get away from fresh experiences and contradictions by trying to put up artificial barriers; it is impossible to keep mankind in a state of somnolent, traditional, inertia."² Christianity is the religion of freedom and therefore it presupposes initiative, abandon, imagination; it makes incomprehensible a servile attitude towards God, it is incompatible with fear. It lives and thrives on new experiences and fresh achievement which over-leap all barriers with which the natural, un-spiritual man so delights to surround himself. This is not the assertion of pride! it is working out the dialectic of freedom which is wholly compatible with humility of heart in the true Christian sense.

1. I Corinthians 8:

2. Freedom and the Spirit, p.311.

In the light of this conception of Christianity as the religion of freedom and spiritual development, much of the activity and practice of the historic Church must be judged as the objectification of spirit; the Church is more often than not an accommodation to the herdmentality and the natural mind. The Church, more often than not accommodates itself to the foibles and fables of its contemporary world or stagnates itself in the life of former years and generations. The result is that the Church is either so bound up with the world as to be integral with its way of life and so impotent to change it, or it is so remote from the exigences of the actual situation, as seem irrelevant and impertinent. "Christian apologetics are so out of date in their methods that they are positively harmful and a hindrance to those who would return to Christianity. The Christian renaissance can only take place through the medium of a youthful and creative sentiment. It is difficult to frighten modern people with anything... For such the return to God and to Christianity

does not involve the "preservation" of something, but rather a spiritual revolution. It is from the depths of an unfathomable freedom that the soul comes to Christ and to God.¹ Conservative Christianity, orthodoxy as opposed to the freedom of those who risk the heterodox, is the stop-block to a Christian renaissance. The conquest of the future requires no backward look; fidelity to doctrine and form as a cloak for nostalgia, intellectual sloth and spiritual inertia, are a betrayal of the religion and cause of spirit.

II

Berdyaev's concept of eschatology takes issue with the primitive eschatology of the Church in its view of immortality, hell and heaven.² For the new eschatology is cosmic in its scope; the understanding of God upon which it is based makes impossible the preoccupation with individual salvation so characteristic of traditional Christianity. It reunites the traditional views in terms that are no longer morally offensive, for all ideas of

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.321,322.
2. Destiny of Man, pages 317-360.

selfishness, vengeance, retribution, individualism, and eternal punishment are made untenable.

There is, for instance, the question of individual immortality bound up of necessity with the problem of death. Death is man's ultimate mystery and our interpretation of death involves the whole problem of meaning in life. The usual approach to the problem is to treat it as a natural biological fact and to find a way out of its tragedy by postulating a doctrine of the soul's immortality, a natural immortality. Thus books have been written investigating the scientific evidence for immortality and in this evidence, finding support for the Christians' "blessed hope". According to Berdyaev, however, death is more than a natural and biological fact, it is spiritual as well. Physical death is the symbol of spiritual death, and therefore death takes on a moral significance. "Every kind of evil in the last resort means death. Murder, hatred, malice, depravity, envy, vengeance are death and seeds of death. Death is at the bottom of every evil passion. Pride, greed, ambition are deadly in their results. There

is no other evil in the world except death... Death is the evil result of sin. A sinless life would be immortal and eternal.¹" It is impossible to understand death in the physical sense alone, death is a token of the attempt of non-being to reclaim being, of evil to destroy meaning.

Thus the whole of man is to defeat the purpose of death in the name of life. Immortality, therefore, is no more a natural category than is death; it is the gift of those who have won the moral and spiritual victory, not only in their own existences, but in the life of men and the world about them. Death thus constitutes a moral challenge. "All and everything must be raised to eternal life... Man must always and in everything be a giver of life and radiate creative vital energy."² Man must not retreat from death but face it, in the knowledge that it is his creative mission to overcome it, to loose its hold upon humanity and the world.

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1. Destiny of Man, p.320.
 2. ibid, p.322.

The tragedy of death is the destruction, the dissolution, not of that in man which is natural but rather of that which is supernatural; that is, the image of God within him. The image of God in man is his personality; and personality comprehends communion with God, infinity of life, and it is as personality that man feels acutely the tragedy of death. The death of personality is intolerable to him. Christianity is the religion of immortality and of eternal life precisely because it means the restoration of personality, of the whole man. The Fall has involved the image of God in a process of progressive dissolution; it possesses the seeds of death within it. Without the descent of the God-Man the perfect Image of God, his subjection to death upon the Cross, and his Resurrection, there would be no staying of the process of death. "Christianity alone faces death, recognizes both its tragedy and its meaning, but at the same time refuses to reconcile itself to it and conquers it. Eternal and immortal life is possible for man not because it is natural to the

human soul, but because Christ rose from the dead and conquered the deadly powers of the world - because in the cosmic miracle of the Resurrection meaning has triumphed over meaning-¹lessness." Death in Christianity is the gate to transformation; it is a stage in the realization of spiritual life and destiny; through Christ, and his Resurrection, death becomes the "open secret" of the entire universe.

III

According to Berdyaev immortality, in the Christian sense of the word, is a present possession, an experience enjoyed here and now. It is the intrusion of the spiritual into the natural realm, of freedom into necessity, of creative spiritual life into enslavement. "He that hath the Son hath² life." The issue is inevitably raised of the nature of the "world beyond"; if eternal life is a quality of existence, and a fact of experience what does it imply of life beyond the natural span. Berdyaev points out that, traditionally, immortality has

1. Destiny of Man, p.328,329.

2. 1 John 5:12.

been considered as belonging to the "world to come" and thus has been objectified and naturalized. The fact is, however, that immortality belongs not to the future but to the present, not somewhere else but here. It is apparent at once that a philosophy of the spirit requires a drastic revision of the popular and prevalent conceptions of hell and heaven. Berdyaev's revision is vigorous and decisive. "A transcendental ontology of heaven and hell is only an objectification of spiritual experience through the medium of the categories of the natural world; it is a naturalistic concept... The idea of heaven and hell is a conception which reduces the spiritual life to the sphere of naturalism."¹

Berdyaev dismisses at once the concept of hell as the final abode of the wicked, as a place of punishment; it has no objective, metaphysical reality. He indicates that modern man has permitted common sense to revise Church doctrine about hell so that he ignores it; but

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.324.

what is needed is a revision of the concept from the point of view of human experience and philosophy. For the "idea of an objectified hell as a special sphere of eternal life is altogether intolerable, unthinkable, and, indeed, incompatible with faith in God. A God who deliberately allows the existence of eternal torments is not God at all but is more like the ¹devil." Hell as a place of retribution for the wicked, which is a comfort to the good, is a fairy tale; there is not a shadow of reality about it; it is borrowed from our every-day existence with its rewards and punishments. "The idea of an eternal hell as a rightful retribution for holding false and heretical beliefs is one of the most hideous and contemptible products of the triumphant herd-mind. From the objective point of view, from the point of view of God, there cannot be any hell. To admit ²hell would be to deny God." Berdyaev's revision of the doctrine proceeds from the assertion that

1. Destiny of Man, p. 340, 341.
2. ibid, p.341.

hell is purely a subjective experience or condition; it is a symbol of his spiritual state, or the lack of it! It is a token of the fact that man, by his freedom, has fallen back into the nightmare of non-being; it involves a psychological disintegration, man becomes a divided being. The state of the soul in hell is a state of spiritual impotence aware of itself; conscious of what is and what ought to be; desiring and aspiring but failing to achieve. Because it is grounded, as is all evil, in freedom, hell is not what God does to a man, it is what man does to himself. It is not divine judgment, it is man's slavery to himself.

Subjectively rather than ontologically understood, hell is temporal. "Hell belongs to this side, not the other, it is phenomenal, not noumenal; it belongs to time not to eternity. It is related more closely to the field of magic than to the sphere of mysticism." This means simply "that eternal damnation" is pure fiction.

1. Beginning and the End, p.237.

Salvation, as the escape from hell, is an ever-open door to those who will avail themselves of Jesus Christ. This door remains open even after physical death, for "one thing is unquestionably true! after death the soul goes on living on other planes of being, just as it had lived on other planes before birth."¹ Therefore, "not only must all the dead be saved from death and raised to life again, but all must be saved and liberated from hell."² The transfiguration of humanity and the cosmos toward which the creative life of the spirit moves will mean the final elimination of hell. The only sense in which hell can be eternal is the sense in which the personality remains indissolubly selfish and self-contained. Hell is the state to which the self belongs which refuses to give itself up. But the patience of the Eternal Spirit is infinite and must in the end defeat all self violation, and dissolve all hell.

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1. Destiny of Man, p.355.
 2. ibid, p.357.

IV

Heaven, as hell, is a symbol of spiritual life. "For heaven is not a remote transcendental and unattainable sphere; it is a part of the inmost depths of our spiritual life. When we dive below the surface and penetrate into these depths we then really commune with celestial life... In them is stored a spiritual experience which differs from that of terrestrial reality, and which represents a deeper and more spacious stratum of being. In it, in this interior spiritual reality, in this experience of the human spirit... in direct communion with the divine spirit... is revealed the drama of the mutual relations between God and man. The celestial is that deepest reality which propounds the theme of man's relations with God and the absolute source of life." Heaven then is the antithesis of hell. It represents man's experience of creative freedom, his entry into meaning, his enjoyment of communion with inner well being. There is that which is beyond heaven and hell,

1. The Meaning of History, p.44

beyond good and evil, which is to be identified with the consummation of the creative purpose of God, a synonym for the Kingdom of God, and that is - Paradise. Paradise is a concept that fills our minds with paradox and contradiction when we attempt to express its meaning rationally. It is an order of life and creative activity which is at once a consummation and a perfection. Paradise is life of an order not to be conceived by man; only to be experienced in that which lifts him above time and limitation. "A foretaste of paradise is given us in ecstasy, in which time, as we know it, is rent asunder, the distinction between good and evil disappears, all sense of heaviness is gone and there is a feeling of final liberation. The ecstasy of creative inspiration, of love, of contemplating the divine light, transfers us for a moment to heaven, and those moments are no longer in time." Manifestly, then paradise is a mystical intuitive experience, and anticipation. It is close at hand, it is pressing in

1. Destiny of Man, p.366.

upon us, if we will but respond and enter into it. "The Kingdom of God comes not only at the end of time but at every moment. A moment may lead us from time into eternity. The Kingdom of God or eternity (or Paradise) is not separated from me by the length of time which is to pass before the end of the world. There are two ways to eternity - through the depth of the moment¹ and through the end of time and of the world." The mystical soul takes the first; the plodding soul, in whom nature and necessity are strong, takes the second but ultimately both, and all mankind shall enter into creative freedom and perfection, into the abode of the Spirit.

V

Berdyaev's eschatology is a Divine-Human event.

"Every creative act of man is eschatological in character and brings this world to an end."²

Berdyaev laid great stress on the creative work of man. There is in God a need for a responsive

1. *ibid*, p.367:368

2. *The Divine and the Human*, p.200.

creative act on the part of man. Man is not merely a sinner: man is also a creator. Berdyaev is not merely abstract and visionary; for him "eschatology is not an invitation to escape into a private heaven: it is a call to transfigure this evil and stricken world. It is a witness to the end of this world of ours with its enslaving objectifications, religious, moral, social and philosophical alike.¹" Our attitude towards this event should not be one of merely passive expectancy, a resignation; it should be active, dynamic, a conscious straining toward the goal of bringing about "the end of time". Berdyaev protests that "the chief reason for the crisis of Christianity and of society, and for the decline of faith, lies in the concept of Christianity as exclusively a religion of personal salvation. On the basis of such a concept it is impossible to solve the problems of relationship between man and society. Only a new concept of Christianity, only comprehending

1. Dream and Reality, p.291.

it as a religion, not alone of personal, but also of social and cosmic transfiguration, that is by an increased sense of messianism and prophecy in Christianity, can bring a solution to the tormenting problems of relationship between man and ¹society." This transformation of society cannot be effected forcibly, either by God or by man. God does not desire it that way; and man should not. The Church, which is the society of transformed persons, and which has for its aim the transformation of man and society, works not through external, forcible means, but through the inner regeneration of men. Thus a Christian is one whose duty it is to seek the Kingdom of God.

Berdyaev never wearies of repeating that this task of transforming the world must never be conceived of in terms of legalism or as a regimentation imposed by some outward religious form upon human life. "Eschatological ethics does not by any means imply a passive renunciation of creative activity. Passive

1. The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar, p.62.

apocalyptic moods are a thing of the past, they are a sign of decadence and an escape from life. On the contrary, eschatological ethics based upon apocalyptic experience demands an unprecedented intensity of human creativeness and activity. We must not passively await in horror and anguish the impending end and the death of human personality and the world. Man is called actively to struggle with the deadly forces of evil and creatively to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Christ's second coming presupposes intense creative activity on our part, preparing both mankind and the world for the end. The end itself depends upon man's creative activity and is determined by the positive results of the cosmic process. We must not passively wait for the Kingdom of Christ, any more than for that of antichrist, but must actively and creatively struggle against the latter and prepare for the Kingdom of God which is taken by force.¹ Berdyaev, who is often criticized for his "sterile perfectionism,"

1. Destiny of Man, p.335.

and his consequent indifference toward the immediate, short-term implementation of the long-term goals of Christianity, is in reality intensely concerned about the intervening period between the present and "the end of time". He is perhaps unique in his emphasis upon the creative, dynamic interpretation of eschatology. Berdyaev once wrote that his desire to know the world has always been accompanied by the desire to alter it. "Knowledge, morality, art, the State, economics, all must become religious, not by external constraint but freely and from within... No ecclesiastical hierarchy can now rule and regulate society and the life of the State, no clericalism is able to make use of external force. Nevertheless I cannot re-create the State and a decayed society otherwise than in the name of religious principles... Not for anything in the world would I be free from God; I wish to be free in God and for God... God must again be the centre of our whole life - our thought, our feeling, our only dream, our only desire, our only ¹ hope."

1. The End of our Time, p.105.

CHAPTER NINE

CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Nicolas Berdyaev's challenging philosophy of Spirit, Freedom and Creativeness was a revolt against rationalism, determinism and externalism. He was a man in revolt against the world in revolt against God. His thought restores to man his dignity, his hope, his belief in his destiny and purpose, his basic freedom of spirit. He saw the destiny of man and the meaning of the world only in relation to God. His faith is eschatological and his religion is prophetic. He stressed the value of mysticism as mediated by the great masters of both East and West. Although Berdyaev never claimed to be an exponent of the official Russian Orthodoxy, yet in the West he has become the best known representative of the Russian religious renaissance. Therefore, he deserves to be better known and understood, not only for the intrinsic importance of his thought, but also for the value that such knowledge may have for the growing Christian ecumenicity. Moreover, in view of our Western preoccupation with natural science and technology, it is exactly the intuitive, existential

emphasis that our rationalistic, mechanistic, secularized culture needs.

But there are the following criticisms. In Berdyaev's thinking there are two sources which are not in my judgment wholly reconciled. On the one hand, he borrows deeply from the writings of the "pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite", who in the fifth century attempted to combine Alexandrian allegorism with Neo-Platonism. His influence upon mysticism and scholasticism was considerable, and it comes to Berdyaev through the writings of Solovyev, who made a distinction between Affirmative and Negative Theology. Negatively, God was beyond all human attributes and earthly categories, but affirmatively He could be known, in part at least, through symbols. Man could attain to knowledge of this "supra-essential" Being through a symbolic understanding of dogma and ritual and history. He further held to the mystical monistic philosophy of Neo-Platonism, and combined it with a belief in the tri-unity of God and in the existence of a heavenly hierarchy of whom the earthly hierarchy is a reflection and a descent. On the

other hand, Berdyaev is profoundly influenced by German mysticism and borrows deeply from Schelling, whose monistic philosophy was influenced by Jacob Boehme. "I regard myself", he says, "as being a Christian theosophist in the sense in which Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jacob Boehme, Vladimir Solovyev were Christian theosophists." He quotes continually with approval from Boehme and Eckhart and also from Eastern mystics, like Simon the New Theologian, whose outlook is similar.

He is thus drawn between the symbolic interpretation of the Divine Reality, derived from Dionysius with its accompanying dualism, and the mystical interpretation of God, with its attendant monism. Despite his efforts, and religious insight, that conflict, is, I think never wholly resolved.

In his writings we miss almost entirely the prophetic consciousness of God as both transcendent and immanent, standing over against history as Judge, yet working in and through it. The prophets believed that God had a plain word to

speak to mankind, a word of rebuke, of pardon and of exhortation. The great emphasis of the prophets was on man's moral relationship with God, of man's sense of personal guilt, sin and righteousness. "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before ¹me." But there is little sign of this "plain speaking" in Berdyaev's interpretation of the Divine revelation. The nature of God and of His will are wrapped up in mysterious symbols and myths which yield their esoteric truth only to initiates who have trodden the mystic way. It could easily be shown, however, that the idea of a personal relationship between God and man comes, not from mysticism, but from prophetism. Berdyaev never acknowledges this debt. It may be that in his own mind this teaching of the Hebraic prophets can be reconciled with the insight of the mystics. Actually Berdyaev's whole insistence on the value of personality traces back directly to the prophets; by themselves his mystical sources would quickly degrade personality

1. Psalm 51:3.

into a mere facet of the Absolute, devoid of freedom as we understand it.

If this be true, then Berdyaev may have erred in attempting to use "personality" as a category of explanation. It is, for him, the key to our understanding of the Divine Nature, but thus employed, it loses at once its essential mystery. After all, we do not really know what "personality" is, and the only explanation offered to us is the insight of the mystics. Mysticism at its most Christian is a dangerous ally for a personalist philosophy and so far from illuminating the mystery, only deepens the darkness.

Should personality not rather be thought out along the line of the prophets, as in Martin Buber? It is when God Transcendent has chosen to reveal Himself to men, that they have realised for the first time their true selfhood. In prophetism, however, the transcendence of God is never compromised.

In Berdyaev, on the other hand, as in the writings of the mystics, the distinction between the divine and the human becomes very slight. It

would seem at times as if they were but one level of existence, containing both God the Creator, and Man the creature, both emanations of the uncreated Ungrund. But if this be Berdyaev's position, then very serious doctrinal difficulties at once arise. In what sense can the Incarnation of Christ be regarded as the revelation of a new power which entirely alters the relationship between God and Man? If divinity and humanity be different levels of the same reality, if God be essentially in some way "human" in Himself, what does St. John mean when he says, "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among ¹us?" According to the New Testament and the Creeds, this was an entirely new and unbelievable event - yet, according to "theandric anthropomorphism", it was already implied in the Divine Nature. "The idea of God", writes Berdyaev, "is the greatest human idea. The idea of man is the greatest divine idea. Man longs for the birth of God in himself... In the depths of the divine life there exists pre-existent humanity - the drama of the realisation between God and his other, the

1. John 1:14 RV.

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divine and the human."

The concept of Ungrund, without which Berdyaev's deepest intuitions could not be understood, opens a new and, to the theological West at least, a bewildering world of speculation. It is to be noted that Berdyaev's exposition of Boehme's curious doctrine of the Ungrund - not only repeats the basic Boehmian tenet - with some important differences - but expands it in some particulars. Boehme's Ungrund, which Berdyaev interprets to mean the primal freedom, is to be found in the Godhead. Not so Berdyaev's. For him, the Ungrund - the primal freedom - is outside the Godhead, in the primal meonic stuff. It is the "primal, irrational, dark, and indetermined freedom. It is not itself evil, but makes evil possible; it comprises potentiality of evil as well as good... It lies outside God, outside of being, is pre-existent to all being which is already determined." God Himself, i.e., the divine Trinity, is derived by a theogonic process from the Ungrund or the Godhead. The

1. Dream and Reality, p.209.

Ungrund from which God is born by a theogonic process obviously cannot be the creator of anything; only God is the Creator. The doctrine may be summarized as follows: the divine Trinity is realized in eternity by a theogonic process; thereupon, God creates the world.

It must be reiterated that the Ungrund cannot be grasped conceptually, for it transcends all human concepts - it is a myth, a symbol. Accordingly, it may be spoken of only in terms of negative, mystical theology. The divine Trinity, on the other hand, may be expressed positively, although the categories of "Father", "Son", and "Spirit" are symbolic. Hence God the Creator differs from the Godhead, the "ground of God". Since freedom derives from the Ungrund, God did not create freedom and is therefore in no sense responsible for its consequences. He is not to be held accountable for the misuse of freedom on the part of man - for wars, suffering, injustice, and evil of the world order. Man, accordingly, was not created by God alone, for along with God's creative act, freedom, derived from the Ungrund, has also entered

the resultant amalgam.

Since freedom is uncreated, is the world created? Berdyaev departed in this respect from Boehme, who held that both the theogonic and the cosmogonic processes were the result of the same primal Will-to-Be. For himself, Berdyaev answered the question of creation in the traditional way, that God created the world out of "nothing". But this "neonic" nothing possesses potentiality of being, a desire to be. In the act of creation, the "neonic" nonbeing has consented to become being. Thus he stressed the voluntaristic character of nonbeing. Accordingly, Berdyaev held that the formerly undifferentiated, indeterminate nonbeing which had been "beyond good and evil" became differentiated and determined, and hence morally cognizable. Thus God's creative act brought about a moral differentiation between good and evil.

The doctrine of "uncreated freedom" drew upon Berdyaev more criticism than any other of his views. He was aware of it, and even came to the conclusion that he was alone in holding the doctrine.

And no wonder. For this highly speculative theory raises more serious problems than it allays or solves. Evgueny Lampert, in his treatise dealing with Berdyaev, declares that this is "probably the most disastrous conclusion of his whole philosophy; and one that seems, in fact, in no way warranted by his fundamental¹ presuppositions." I am reluctantly constrained to agree, in the main, with this judgment. Granting the authentic character of Boehme's genius, and the vivifying influence he has exerted on many religious thinkers and philosophers, his insights nevertheless have sometimes been contrary to basic Christian conceptions.

Perhaps it may be deemed proper to offer a few considerations as to the ground of my dissent from Berdyaev in the instance under discussion. In the first place, I do not feel convinced that God's endowment of man with freedom makes him responsible for man's abuse of that freedom. I honour Berdyaev for his unusual sensitiveness toward the fact of evil, but I dissent

1. E. Lampert, *Nicolas Berdyaev and the Middle Ages*, p.53, footnote.

from his assertion that the traditional Christian doctrine of creation makes God responsible for the consequences of man's freedom. Then again Berdyaev's "uncreated freedom" theory really does not free God from responsibility for at least consenting to use the "meonic" stuff in creation, although he knew it contained freedom. Did not God know what the consequences of freedom would be? How much difference is there between God's creating freedom, and his using matter which contained it? Furthermore, Berdyaev's theory posits two sources or agents of creation: God and the "meonic" stuff comprising uncreated freedom. This theory denies creation in the Christian sense of that word. The Creator God becomes a Demiurge who fashions the cosmos out of the pre-existent potential matter; it does not help much to call this material "meonic nothing". In vain did Berdyaev attempt to deny such an implication. "The world", he wrote, "is not an emanation from God, it is not born, nor did it evolve, but was created, that is, it was absolutely new, something that had never

been before.¹ But the world was created by God alone. How then could the world be said to be "new" when it was created out of pre-existing matter containing "uncreated freedom"? And the final objection - although it may be only to the phrasing of the concept - has to do with the whole idea of the "birth" of the divine Trinity. If the divine Trinity is in some real sense "born", even though it be out of "Godhead" or the "Ungrund", the whole absolutely basic concept of the eternal existence of the divine may be in grave jeopardy. It does not help to have Berdyaev's assurance that "the theogony does not at all signify that God has a beginning, that he originates in time, that he develops in the world process, as Fichte and Hegel have held; it signifies that the inner, eternal life of God reveals itself as a dynamic process, as an eternal tragedy, as a struggle with the darkness of nonbeing."²

The language employed by Berdyaev does

1. Destiny of Man, p.163.

2. Quoted by M. Spinka in Nicolas Berdyaev, p.122.

mean that the divine Trinity is not eternal in the present form, and therefore need not remain eternally in that form, for the divine Trinity was derived, "born" from the Godhead of which nothing positive can be affirmed. Of course, the theogonic process did not take place "in time", since time itself is a creation. Perhaps the wisest thing to do would be to take refuge in the negative mystical theology, and to say that the concept is altogether beyond positive, conceptual formulation. An ineffable event cannot be expressed in terms of discursive reason, but may be known through revelation. This excellent advice, which Berdyaev so often gave to others, in this instance he himself failed to follow. So this cure of Berdyaev's for the fancied slight upon God's character by reason of his "responsibility for man's freedom" appears to be worse than the disease. Had Berdyaev initiated his discussion of human freedom with an assumption of it on empirical grounds, his argument henceforth would have remained wholly valid and cogent. Nevertheless, since he arrived at the concept of

man's freedom, no matter by what devious route, one may regard the resulting view as to that extent consonant with the Christian world view.

In the end, much will depend on the judgment we pass on Berdyaev's use of "myth" and "symbol" as categories of interpretation of Biblical and terrestrial history. That there is here insight of great value, I doubt not; but it is a method fraught also with much danger. Myth is a means of expressing and revealing a spiritual fact to a living spirit, and is immeasurably more adequate than a rational concept. This is very true. But we must never confuse myth with speculation. After all, what is to be the criterion of truth? Is it to be the revealed Word of God, or the religious insight of the Christian mystics? Berdyaev seems to incline towards the latter.

Very significant in this regard is the use which he makes of scripture - or rather the lack of use. Although he quotes constantly from the writings of the mystics in support of his argument, referring to them almost as

"authorities", he seldom quotes at all from the Bible. A comparison of Calvin with Berdyaev on this point is most striking. Whereas Calvin never makes any statement about the nature of God without quoting the Bible in confirmation, Berdyaev scarcely ever refers directly to it at all. This leads him at times into sheer speculation, but he freely admits the inconsistencies in his own thought. A final unity in thought, he admits, cannot be reached. "The end of the dynamic of the spirit and its ever newly arising contradictions can only be the end of the world¹."

Berdyaev emphasizes the tremendous and absolutely fundamental truth that the Word of God must be known spiritually and within before He can be recognized historically and objectively as manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. Our knowledge of the Christ of Experience does not depend on our knowledge of the Jesus of History: on the contrary, our

1. Slavery and Freedom, p.9

knowledge of the Jesus of History depends upon our understanding of the Christ of Experience. "Christ must be revealed in the interior life of the spirit before He is revealed in the exterior world of nature and history. Without the inward and spiritual acceptance of Christ, the truths set out in the gospel remain unintelligible facts of the empirical, exterior world¹". No sacred books, no "body of doctrine", no traditions of men, can reveal Christ to us. They can at best supply us with information. Information is not revelation: the one is from without, the other from within. "Can it be that my faith", writes Berdyaev, "upon which my salvation and eternal life depend, itself depends upon historical facts which are subject to dispute? Can my faith be preserved if historical enquiry, owing to the appearance of new facts and new material, proves scientifically that certain things

1. Freedom and the Spirit, p.34.

which Holy Scripture relates as facts, had no existence, that they are not historical events but myths, legends, theological doctrines created by the believing Christian community?... But spiritual religion is bound to acknowledge that no religion stands on a higher level than truth, for God is truth and is known in spirit and in truth.¹" Here Berdyaev emphasizes a truth that we need to take to heart; the truth of the inwardness of religion. But is it possible to know the historical Jesus without spiritual experience? Berdyaev would answer in the negative. And this is an undeniable truth. Calvin himself taught that the Scriptures are made known to us through the Spirit. "Therefore, being illuminated by the Spirit, we now believe the divine original Scripture, not from our own judgment or that of others, but we esteem the certainty, that we have received it from God... equal to that of an intuitive (intueremur) perception of God

1. Divine and Human, p.16.

Himself in it.¹" In this Berdyaev's emphasis is wholly and completely spiritual. On the other hand does not Berdyaev minimise the objective element in religion? Is there a place for the external in his thought? Berdyaev never straightly faced the question.

Nowhere are the dangers of the speculative method more clearly seen than in Berdyaev's attempt to delineate the inner life of the Trinity, the Divine Psychology. That man should seek an esoteric knowledge of the Divine Nature is to be expected, but the Bible makes it plain that this desire cannot be fulfilled. On the contrary God jealously guards His "Name", and reveals Himself only to chosen individuals in a limited way. Only on the Cross is the veil rent apart, and the everlasting mercy of God revealed.

Berdyaev has many hard words to say about Western rationalism but here in the end we find him employing a far more dangerous

1. Calvin's Institutes, Vol. 1, Chapter VII, Section V.

speculative rationalism which imagines that it can probe into the secret personality of the Most High! The perils of theandric anthropomorphism thus become apparent. Surely the Chalcedonian Formula with its insistence on the real humanity of Jesus and on the union of the two natures, human and divine, in one Person, stands fairly and squarely in the way of any such doctrine of the divine-humanity of man. For Berdyaev, personality and divinity seem almost synonymous terms, and man thus becomes the child of God by nature, not by grace. But if that be so, if "personal" man can thus be divine, we are bound to ask in what sense Christ, the God-Man, is unique. Is the difference between us and Him only one of degree, and if so, can He really effect the reconciliation of God and Man? If the Incarnation is to have any meaning for us, surely we must hold on firmly to the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, that Christ "being the Eternal Son of God, became man, and so was and continueth

to be God and man in two distinct natures,
and one person for ever.¹" This attempt by
Berdyayev to get behind the hypostatic union
by some kind of mystic fusion is derived
from the writings of the later Greek Fathers,
notably Gregory Nyssa, but its origin is
philosophical, not Biblical.

Berdyayev's existentialism issues
in negative apophatic theology; God is always
the Subject, never Object, and therefore it
is impossible to conceive of Him in affirmative
terms or intellectual propositions for these
imply the objectification of God, and therefore
the termination of communion with Him. Berdyayev
does not say what God is, but rather what he is
not. When the mystic does endeavour to express
his apprehension of the nature of God, and of
the inner life of the Deity, he resorts to the
now familiar expedient of myth and symbol which,
as we have seen, involves the one who uses them
in no real commitment of mind. It is obvious

1. Westminster Confession of Faith, p.117.

that the argument which claims that to think rationally about the Subject is to objectify and degrade it really begs the question. Surely there is a false identification of the Subject, in this case, God, and the rational idea of Him. It does not follow that to state what God is, what my idea of Him is, is to objectify Him, and to subject Him to naturalist categories.

"I recognize the fact" declares Berdyaev "that as a thinker I belong to the aristocratically radical type... It has been my wish to think, to apprehend and to form my judgments of value simply and naturally, taking things in their essential nature, and without having to square accounts with anything, and without accommodating my opinions to anything. But to the pride and isolation of the cultural elite I have always felt a negative reaction. It has not come within my purview to indicate ways of organizing the human masses. There are many who are eager to do this without my adding to the number. There are fewer by far who are

eager to grasp the meaning of what is happening to the world and to man. I should like to belong to their number.¹" Berdyaev's is the religion of the few, of the spiritual aristocracy, of free men who have accepted Christ because they have been irresistibly attracted by Him, enamoured of Him. These spiritual aristocrats are moved solely by the highest and noblest motives; by the austere sense of freedom from all external slaveries and by the ecstatic response to the divine love. They love God neither for the fear of hell nor for the hope of heaven. Here we have an expression of snobbishness on the part of Berdyaev which is quite foreign to the Spirit of Christ!

The masses of ordinary Christians who, perforce, have to live on a lower level because they are incapable of mystic insight and the ecstatic experience and because their religious motivation falls short of the maximal,

1. The Beginning and the End, preface vi.

interest him far less. He likewise has far less to offer them, for his religious philosophy is not likely to appeal to them. To be sure, he does not go so far as to deny them place in the household of faith, but they fail to reach his ideal of a Christian. Nor is the category of "minimal Christianity" applied solely to the uneducated Christians; it is more likely to prevail among the educated classes. Of the three characteristic aspects of historic Christianity - the institutional, the doctrinal, and the mystical - only the latter two evoke Berdyaev's interest or even his enthusiasm. His demand for a maximal Christianity is both his strength and his weakness. Nevertheless it is by this criterion of aristocratic Christianity that all his thinking must be judged and interpreted.

F.H. Heinemann records a striking tribute to the unique place Berdyaev holds in modern thought. "Berdyaev became a link between East and West, between Christians of different denominations, between Christians and non-

Christians, between nations, between past and future, between philosophy and theology, between the visible and the invisible. He, in his true catholicity, holds the key to a spiritual and religious unity of mankind: "The image of God in every man. Every man possesses the dignity of a person, even if this person is inhibited or not manifest in¹ him." Berdyaev is a sincere and stimulating thinker, whose works repay study and provoke thought. If he does not reach a new solution, at least he sets up for us in a novel and suggestive way the eternal theological problem of the relationship between God's transcendence and man's freedom. The great merit of all his books is that he takes human freedom seriously, and not only in theology but also in ethics and sociology, leads a crusade against all who seek to belittle or degrade human personality. His "theandric anthropomorphism" seems to be the attempt to reconcile this conviction of man's

1. F.H. Heinemann, Existentialism and the Modern Predicament, p.155.

essential freedom and greatness with a mystical insight into the glorious love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. "The practical conclusion derived from this faith", writes Berdyaev, "is the command to be human in this most inhuman of all ages and to guard the image of man, for it is the image of God!"

1. Dream and Reality, p.302.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

1. PRIMARY SOURCES

The following is the complete list of those books by Nicolas Berdyaev which have been translated into English. The most important for an understanding of his thought are indicated by an asterick (*).

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* <u>Freedom and the Spirit</u> Tr. by O. F. Clarke	The Centenary Press, London	1935
<u>The Russian Revolution</u> Tr. by D.B.	Sheed and Ward, London	1935
<u>The Fate of Man in the Modern World</u> Tr. Donald Lowrie	S.C.M. Press, London	1935
* <u>The Meaning of History</u> Tr. George Reavey	The Centenary Press, London	1936
* <u>The Destiny of Man</u> Tr. Natalie Duddington	The Centenary Press, London	1937
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