

**NICOLAS  
BERDYAEV AND THE  
NEW MIDDLE AGES**

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Nicolas Berdyaev and the new Middle Ages by Evgueny Lampert

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**EVGUENY LAMPERT**

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MODERN CHRISTIAN REVOLUTIONARIES

NICOLAS BERDYAEV  
AND THE  
NEW MIDDLE AGES

By  
EVGUENY LAMPERT  
*Doctor of Philosophy*

When the flight from God is over and the return to God begins, when the movement of aversion from God becomes a movement towards Satan, then modern times are over and the middle ages are begun. God must again be the centre of our whole life . . . . . *N. A. Berdyaev*

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## PREFACE

NICOLAS BERDYAEV is the first Russian philosopher (with the exception perhaps of the Russian novelists, whose work abounds in philosophical ideas) to have made himself heard not only in his native Russia, but in the West as well. His works have been translated into many languages, and have met everywhere with an appreciative and often enthusiastic reception. It would be no exaggeration to place his name beside those of the most outstanding modern thinkers, Henri Bergson, Max Scheler, Nicolas Hartmann, Heidegger, and others. It may be said that in the person of Berdyaev Russian philosophy first faced the judgment of Europe, and indeed of the whole world.

To anyone who has read Berdyaev's books the difficulties of writing about him or of systematizing the conflicting ideas of his rich and diverse thought are obvious. While writing the present short essay I constantly came across this difficulty. The only circumstance which seemed to lighten my task was a certain affinity with his thought, and above all with his problems.

I am no upholder of the well-known principle of enquiry *sine ira aut studio*, "detachedness", for the simple fact that it cannot be attained, at least in living human thought. It is scarcely possible to know and understand the mind of an author unless one is capable of entering into it sympathetically, and in some sense of *identifying* oneself with it; those who aim at "scientific objectivity" and an impersonal neutrality are threatened with intellectual barrenness. Hence this book, being an attempt at expounding Berdyaev's thought, bears with it some of my own convictions: otherwise I would never have ventured to write it.

I should like to make it quite clear that the limits imposed on me by the purpose and size of this book made it quite impossible to exhaust the whole content of Berdyaev's thought. I have been compelled to disregard some of its important aspects, and to single out only the decisive tendencies which have bearing on his general outlook. This applies especially to section 3, where I have endeavoured to do the impossible—namely, to describe in a few pages both Berdyaev's philosophy and theology as well as his teaching about man. Such a description has inevitably entailed a discussion of some complex problems which may seem hard of access to the average reader. It would, however, do little justice to Berdyaev to over-simplify them or to disregard them altogether. Moreover their relevance is not confined to Berdyaev's thought, but is actually of general importance.

I should like to express my gratitude to Father Victor White, O.P., who, while disagreeing with some of my conclusions, has helped me with many valuable constructive criticisms and suggestions, and above all to my wife, without whose help the book could never have been written.

I have the kind permission of The Centenary Press and of Messrs. Sheed & Ward to quote from the translations of Berdyaev's books published by them respectively.

E. L.



## BOOKS BY NICOLAS BERDYAEV

All the books listed below are in Russian. Translations in English, or failing this in French or German, are mentioned when they exist. Works marked \* are specially important for the understanding of Berdyaev's thought.

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*Subjectivism and Individualism in Social Philosophy.* A critical essay on N. K. Mikhailovsky. St. Petersburg, 1901.

*Sub Specie Aeternitatis.* Philosophical, sociological and literary essays. St. Petersburg, 1907.

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*The Spiritual Crisis of the Intelligentia.* Essays in social and religious psychology. St. Petersburg, 1910.

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*The Soul of Russia.* Moscow, 1915.

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\* *The Meaning of History.* Essay on the philosophy of human destiny. Berlin, 1923. (English translation by George Reavey, The Centenary Press, 1936.)

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- The Fate of Man in the Modern World.* Paris, 1934. (English translation by Donald Lowrie, S.C.M. Press, 1935.)
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  - \* *The Origin of Russian Communism.* Published only in French and English. (English translation by R. M. French, The Centenary Press, 1937.)
  - \* *Slavery and Freedom of Man.* Paris, 1940. (English translation by R. M. French to be published by The Centenary Press.)

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