

# Solzhenytsin Speaks

April 3, 2021

Here, for Easter, is Alexander Solzhenytsin's famous Templeton Address, drastically summarised. 1983.

When I was a child, people said it was forgetting God that led to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Now I am a man in 1983, that one phrase still says it all. It sums up the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century with all its crimes, starting with World War I, which would not have been possible (e.g. making poison gas into a weapon) without a godless embitterment in the leaders of Europe. Likewise World War II. Europeans are burnt out. Peace depends on stout hearts, not on the nuclear bomb. We have grown all too used to the Apocalypse. Dostoyevsky said that great events have caught us unprepared, and only after the world has been possessed by devils will it be possible to save it again.

Meanwhile the Devil is triumphing, worldwide. By 1917 the faith was extinct in Russia's leading class, and it was being threatened in the working class. Yet once upon a time Russia was steeped in Orthodox Christianity. Piety, not materialism, moulded people's thinking and their personalities, and organised their lives. But a schism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the reforms of Peter the Great weakened religion, and the secularism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century poisoned the leading class, so that by 1917 religion was crippled.

Revolution always starts with atheism, says Dostoyevsky, but never has atheism been so malevolent as it is at the heart of Communism. In the 1920's there was a veritable cloud of Christian martyrs in Russia, from top to bottom of Church and State, while for instance children were wrenched from their parents and from all religion. Stalin favoured religion only to revive Russian patriotism against Hitler, and Brezhnev

pretended to be religious so as to deceive the West, but Krushchev showed how deeply religion is hated by Communism, and by all the unworthy successors of the frenzied Lenin. However, never did any of these maddened persecutors of Christ expect what happened: beneath the Communist steamroller the Russian awareness of God is now acute and profound. Tanks and rockets will never vanquish Christianity.

In the West, religion is more threatened from inside than from outside. In the Middle Ages Secularism arose from within, more dangerous than tanks or rockets. Its ideal flies no higher than life, liberty and the pursuit of my own happiness. Good and evil are objects of mockery. Forget the human heart. Result, evil is all around. The West is slipping all the time, losing its youth. The media blaspheme Jesus and Mary. In that case, what reason do I have to hold back from doing what I like with my liberty? Why not hate my own society, as it teaches me to do? Do not the weaknesses of capitalism correspond to the weaknesses of human nature? For instance the pursuit of money to the capital sin of greed? Capitalism boasts that it establishes equality. But is that not an equality of slaves, destitute of spiritual values? And it makes me more free? But the more "free" I am, does that not mean the more blindly I hate? Salvation can never be by money or by abundance of material goods.

Without love, life and art perish. In the West that happens voluntarily at the hands of men who want to take the place of God. East and West alike have been forgetting God. Yet the key to our whole existence is the daily choice every single human heart has to make between good and evil. The modern theories re-centring everything on society have proved bankrupt, but we have not rejected their lies. Unless we turn back to God we shall never find the way out of our problems. The enemy is within me. It is we who are hanging ourselves.

Human life is merely a stage on the way to God. It is more than just the laws of matter, i.e. the physical sciences. In

God we live and move and have our being: He is the “Love moves the sun and the other stars” – Dante, concluding line of the entire “Divine Comedy.” Forget the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. We must reach for God. The so-called Enlightenment was a complete failure.

Kyrie eleison.