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Solzhenitsyn's Christian Civilization Rhetoric
The Other "Dream" Speech Thirty Years Later

ROBERT STEPHEN REID

"One word of truth shall outweigh the whole world."

—ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN, Nobel Lecture

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn died on Sunday, August 3, 2008. By all accounts he was one of the literary giants of the twentieth century and certainly a significant player in the era's Cold War politics. Most of the obituaries and tributes have lionized his literary contributions and his role in the politics of the era, but when it came time to comment on the politics of his 1978 Harvard Commencement Address the judgment typically became more reserved. For example, the Associated Press writer Douglas Birch observed that, "Solzhenitsyn was not a storybook hero for his admirers in Europe and the United States. Many, especially in the West, found his political judgments as distressing as his literature was inspiring."¹

In eulogizing Solzhenitsyn's contributions on a *Morning Edition* broadcast, Martha Wexler hesitated at much the same point as Birch, conveying the surprise still felt by many at the stinging words of his Harvard Commencement Address. Wexler said,

In 1978 Solzhenitsyn shocked his admirers with the commencement speech he delivered at Harvard University, heard here through an interpreter [An original broadcast is intercut with Solzhenitsyn speaking in Russian and the voice of his English interpreter.]—"How has this unfavorable relation of forces come

about? How did the West decline from its triumphal march to its present debilitation?”—Solzhenitsyn thundered against the West’s materialism, its boundless freedom, its reliance on secular law, its spiritual and moral weakness. Many observers said that Solzhenitsyn never got to know America; that he shut himself off from the country like a recluse at his Vermont estate.²

It seems that thirty years later we still believe he was wholly insensitive to the country that had hosted his exile.

Of course some commentators responded differently. After reading the Associated Press obituary, NewsBusters.org’s managing Editor Ken Shepherd blogged his own frustration with the media’s general unwillingness to take Solzhenitsyn’s faith commitment as the context of his assessment of the West.³ Respected Solzhenitsyn scholar, Daniel J. Mahoney, concurred. He wrote,

The tributes and reflections that have been published on Solzhenitsyn in the Western press since his death have generally been respectful, and many have been evenhanded. But quite a few obituaries and retrospectives have repeated hoary distortions that just won’t go away. It has been repeatedly asserted that Solzhenitsyn hated Communism *and* Western democracy equally despite the fact that he repeatedly praised the *civic* experience of the West . . . [T]he legend of Solzhenitsyn’s opposition to Democracy—and penchant for authoritarianism—is endlessly recycled in otherwise friendly accounts of his life and legacy.⁴

The epicenter on which this divided assessment rests is Solzhenitsyn’s “Commencement Address” at Harvard on June 8, 1978.

Solzhenitsyn’s “A World Split Apart” clearly stands with Churchill’s 1946 Westminster College “Sinews of Peace” speech as one of the most significant commencement addresses of the 20th century.⁵ The choice of Solzhenitsyn to be Harvard’s commencement speaker was only publicized a few days before the event, but those who came knew that the speech would transcend the typical commencement genre constraints. Nevertheless, the 22,000 people who gathered that rainy June day to hear this Cold War dissident speak still seemed genuinely surprised that, given such a public stage, he chose to decry the impoverishment of the human spirit he observed in our Western consumer culture.⁶ Though some media pundits like Michael Novak and George Will found the Commencement Address to be one of the most important documents of our time,⁷ many others dismissed it as “dangerous”⁸ and a “gross mis-

understanding of Western society.”⁹ Solzhenitsyn was considered to be a “zealot,”¹⁰ or worse, a “Slavophile.”¹¹ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. argued that the speech lacked any “clear development.”¹² Harvard’s Russian historian Richard Pipes agreed finding it “chaotic in structure (it must have been written in fits and starts).”¹³ New York Times Columnist James Reston quipped that “for all its brilliant passages, it sounded like the wanderings of a mind split apart.”¹⁴

What are we to make thirty years later of Solzhenitsyn’s *moral* critique of the West’s Cold War ideological alternative to communism’s vision of world domination? Was it an expression of a Christian civilization rhetoric delivered in the wrong forum? Edward Ericson noted that it is his nonliterary letters and speeches of the 1970s that made it fashionable to call Solzhenitsyn a prophet.¹⁵ Does suggesting that he is prophet, even as his critics in the media often do, function as a way of dismissing his critique? In the same prophetic tradition we might also consider Martin Luther King Jr.’s “March on Washington” speech. It can just as readily be termed an expression of a Christian civilization rhetoric as prophetic speech.¹⁶ Yet, unlike the Harvard address, by almost any measure the March on Washington speech is viewed as the *gold standard* of an effective, appropriate, and timely word inviting listeners to re-imagine the potential of our national character. Thus, we might well ask why one speech is accorded the highest praise while the other has received such a mixed if not generally negative response in the media even thirty years later.

In what follows I examine the constructed ethos of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Christian civilization rhetoric in the Harvard Commencement Address with a view toward identifying what Michael Hyde calls “the ethos of an identity that dwells rhetorically” in a speech.¹⁷ To do this I employ the resources of the theory of contemporary Christian discourse I recently articulated which provides a means to consider the coherence of a Christian speaker’s *narrative identity*, his or her *moral vision*, and his or her *cultural voice*.¹⁸ My purpose here is to discover whether there is something intrinsic to the way that Solzhenitsyn constructed his ethos that can help us appreciate how it could engender and continue to engender such strong reactions and claims of incoherence.

Solzhenitsyn’s Narrative Identity

Solzhenitsyn was raised in a traditional Russian family and was especially influenced by an aunt who loved Russian literature and her Russian

Orthodox faith equally. He traded this worldview in for the Marxist-Leninist alternative during his later schooling, but incarceration in the Gulag caused him to question which ideology should shape his vision of life. His subsequent novels make it quite clear that he believes the totalitarianism inaugurated by the Bolsheviks gave the twentieth century its distinctive character. It is a worldview people must resist, he contends, if the human spirit is to thrive. Edward Ericson and Daniel Mahoney write that he returned to the Christian worldview of his rearing, but that his mature articulation of Christian truths were “deeply informed by his experience in the prison camps” where “he experienced *in extremis* and learned about the heights and depths of the human soul.” His faith, they claim, became rooted in this experience and was “severed from every form of sectarianism.”¹⁹

When Solzhenitsyn was released from the prison camp in 1957, he was baptized and received into communion of the Russian Orthodox Church. It was, however, not until 1972 that he made this commitment public when he published an open letter to the leader of the Orthodox Church in Russia in which he confessed that he was scandalized at how the church agreed to innumerable accommodations to the atheistic Soviet state, effectively surrendering the church’s influence in the society:²⁰ “Step by Step we have lost that radiant ethical Christian atmosphere which for a thousand years shaped our mores, our way of life, our beliefs, our folklore, and the very fact that the Russian word for the people—*Krest’iane* [peasants]—was derived from ‘Christians.’ We are losing the last traces and signs of a Christian people.”²¹ He saw the abdication of the church as a capitulation of what mattered the most in Russian culture.

Alain Besançon argued that there is a Slavophile tradition, especially a Russian literary tradition in which Solzhenitsyn participates, where the insights arrived at are understood as Christian thought and thereby “stamped with an overall guarantee of truth” which, in turn, creates a “fusion of the national idea with the messianic idea, the identification of Russia with Israel.”²² This tradition that folds the nation’s intellectual tradition into a Russian religious philosophy is so all-enveloping that no one who desires to move the Russian intellectual worldview forward can escape it. Besançon noted that, with the exception of the fragile but discontinuous Pushkinian thread, all Russian art, music, and literature have been shaped by its seductions.²³

This is the Theo-centric worldview he brought to bear in an assessment that juxtaposes the materialist worldviews of the East and West, presenting them as little more than variations on an anthropocentric humanism. This spiritual-humanist contrast is made most apparent in the peroration which provides the clearest statement of his identity as a person of faith:

We cannot avoid revising the fundamental definitions of human life and human society. Is it true that man is above everything? Is there no Superior Spirit above him? Is it right that man's life and society's activities have to be determined by material expansion in the first place? Is it permissible to promote such expansion to the detriment of our spiritual integrity? If the world has not come to its end, it has approached a major turn in history, equal in importance to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It will exact from us a spiritual upsurge: We shall have to rise to a new height of vision, to a new level of life where our physical nature will not be cursed as in the Middle Ages, but, even more importantly, our spiritual being will not be trampled upon as in the Modern era. This ascension will be similar to climbing onto the next anthropologic stage. No one on earth has any other way left but—upward.

At the citadel of humanist thought in the United States and at the height of the Cold War, when the notion of a mutually assured destruction began to feel more inevitable than just possible, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn argued that leaders in the West should turn back to a religious worldview to find the courage to make necessary decisions in the game of geo-political brinksmanship being played out between Washington's White House and Moscow's "Old Square."

Apart from the initial audience response, the question is not whether his *narrative identity* in the speech is coherent. He received the Noble Peace Prize for the manner in which his spiritual ethos was construed across the entire corpus of his novels and essays. The question of whether his language is shaped by Slavophile nationalistic longings also misses the point. Virtually all expressions of faith, whether Christian or from any sacred tradition, represent some conception of religion as a frozen controversy tied to a distinctive language of institutional identity or in its fusion of eschatological and nationalistic ideals. The more important question in assessing the coherence of the Christian ethos that dwells rhetorically in the rhetoric of Solzhenitsyn's argument is whether Western

listeners were prepared to affirm the possibilities of his Christian civilization rhetoric.

What became apparent is that, rather than experiencing the ring of narrative fidelity in the speech, most of those who gathered that day found the Address to be incoherent. And rather than experiencing good reasons to work for change for belief and action in the world, many were stunned that he would make such condemnatory arguments about the country that hosted his exile.²⁴ In addition and perhaps of greater significance, they were shocked that in this forum he would imagine believing that moral criteria should matter more than fissionable mass. Did he really have the temerity to repudiate capitalism along with communism as spiritually unworthy of humanity's future? "Good heavens!" went the unspoken response. "Does he seriously expect us to believe that Christian moral convictions should somehow matter when it comes to the very real choices we face with nuclear missiles aimed at our country?"

Yes. He did.

Solzhenitsyn's Moral Vision

In coming to terms with Solzhenitsyn's moral vision in the speech, I have suggested elsewhere that coherent Christian discourse fully shaped by a Christian *ethos* will reveal a *telos* of hope configured in discourse that is rooted in *faith* in the divine Other as well as an assumption that an unconditional *love* flows from the divine Other to the individual and communities of individuals who participate in this storied identity.²⁵ Solzhenitsyn's *moral vision* is palpable. It arises from a view of suffering that has been at the core of his identity as a survivor of the Gulag. Rather than conceiving the schism in the world as a battle between competing materialistic ideologies, he claims that the split represents a fight of cosmic proportions in which, "the forces of Evil have begun their offensive." The real calamity in the world is the split between those who trust in their own autonomous irreligious humanistic consciousness and those who believe that our collective spiritual life is our most precious possession. In the Eastern and Western worlds of materialism Man has become the measure of all things. We have "lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity which used to restrain our passions and our irresponsibility." The result is a West with global calling cards of revolting commercial advertising. He saw no gain in imagining his beloved homeland eventually

inundated with media driven publicity, his compatriots made stuporous by TV, and Russian youth bombarded with intolerable music.

Decrying *detente* as a misplaced "belief in eventual convergence" certainly sounded odd in 1978 because it was a moral rather than a political assessment of the Cold War tactics of American foreign policy. At the heart of the speech Solzhenitsyn argued against playing the waiting game of Cold War containment, claiming that it represented a moral loss of will—a loss unworthy of those who truly stand for freedom. His address directly challenged George Kennan's claim that "We can not apply moral criteria to politics." Kennan, the West's leading advocate of the US Cold War *containment* ideology and the architect of the US policy of unilateral disarmament, believed that the only way forward was to develop strategies of negotiation designed to avoid risk. This was foreign policy as a chess game of sly gambits and *intermezzo* moves designed to prolong the possibilities of endgame. It was that policy which eventually saw the Soviet Union crumble under the weight of its own inability to keep up with the West's capacity to outspend the East in a geo-political game of fiscal and technological brinksmanship. Yet in 1978, the idea of bringing about the defeat of communism by way of *convergence*—a belief that the Soviet system would eventually collapse and finally concede victory to a capitalist-consumerist way of life—seemed unworthy to Solzhenitsyn. Instead of accepting the 'bad with the good,' he demanded nothing less than "a spiritual blaze" by those who would defend freedom. The only criteria relevant to assessing the aspiration to be free he concluded would be a moral criteria; "There are," he claimed, "no other criteria."

He argued that the debilitating dream of maintaining the world in status quo at any cost represents a collapse of whatever moral vision America once had. It is, he declares, the symptom of a society which has ceased to develop. "Facing such a danger," he asks, "with such splendid historical values in your past, at such a high level of realization of freedom and of devotion to freedom, how is it possible to lose to such an extent the will to defend oneself?" What is the crisis of a world split apart? His conclusion: "The split in the world is less terrible than the similarity of the disease plaguing its main sections." For Solzhenitsyn life must be more than the search for happiness and the carefree consumption of material goods. It has to be directed in such a way that people come to understand that the earnest duty of one's life is to experience moral growth and leave life "a better human being than one started it."

As Ericson argued, “Solzhenitsyn is ever the writer about moral issues.”²⁶ His Christian vision of life and of the nature man is the subtext that always undergirds and provides the context for all his moral judgments. He writes and speaks with the assumption that he is morally obliged to speak truth on behalf of others—a hard won realization that speech as symbolic action is the greatest resource of prophetic discourse. Baptist theologian Walter Rauschenbusch once argued that religious prophets are simply heralds of the idea “that ethical conduct is the supreme and sufficient religious act.”²⁷ And this is Solzhenitsyn’s moral worldview as well; belief can not be responsibly separated from an ethical responsibility to speak and act on behalf of others. In this sense a prophet, perhaps more than anyone else uses symbolic discourse to identify or reify the justice of a *moral vision*. Solzhenitsyn’s moral vision, across both his literary as well as his political writings, sustains the humane quality of his discourse and makes of it something that transcends the context that gave rise to it.

Solzhenitsyn’s Cultural Voice

There is little question we best understand the Address as an example of the kind of political sermon Perry Miller called a jeremiad.²⁸ Solzhenitsyn was quite literally revisiting this peculiarly Puritan art form—a form of preaching that had been perfected three centuries earlier for Cambridge audiences by the religious leaders who also happened to be the founders of Harvard University. Thus, what is perhaps more interesting in assessing the response to Solzhenitsyn’s speech was the inability of the New Englanders who gathered for the commencement to recognize their own native art form performed once again in their midst. It was a measure of how far removed they were from the vision that had given birth to their own cultural as well as institutional identity.

The jeremiad was born as a fusion of expectations engendered by John Winthrop’s original sermon, “A Model of Christian Charity,” which envisioned the founding of a Christian colony in New England as a “city on a hill” (a laboratory of visible Christian witness for all Europe) and election day sermons like Samuel Danforth’s, “A Brief Recognition of New England’s Errand in the Wilderness.” Jeremiads begin by cataloguing the iniquities of the day. They presume a causal sequence between physical afflictions experienced by the colonists and their personal iniquities. Thus, personal sins occur and communal afflictions result; when

personal repentance occurs, then afflictions subside and communal blessings increase.²⁹ In jeremiad preaching spiritual failures such as hard-heartedness, sloth, sensuality, lack of next generation zeal, a falling away from primitive affections, formality, hypocrisy, etc., were considered to be the barriers inhibiting the realization of God's blessing on the colony. Miller argued that, "The logic of the [sermon's] narrative is controlled by a precise calculation: defeat must be measured out until the amount of present distress becomes equal to past transgression."³⁰ But as Sacvan Berkovitch noted, "The Puritan clergy were not simply castigating. For all their catalogues of iniquities, the jeremiads attest to an unswerving faith in the errand; and if anything they grow more fervent, more absolute in their commitment from one generation to the next."³¹

In good jeremiad form Solzhenitsyn began his 'sermon' with the announcement that there is a split or schism in the world more important than the ideological division between East and West; it is the rift in the direction of human destinies captured by the ancient truth that "a kingdom—in this case our earth—divided against itself cannot stand" (Mark 3.25). Once the Biblical text was identified jeremiad sermons typically began to list of the deficits that demonstrate the substance of the divided worldview; in this case Solzhenitsyn provided a list of reasons why the West had failed to live into its promise. Only ego-centric blindness, he stated, could lead the West to assume it should be the cultural "yardstick" of true freedom for other nations. What are America's iniquities? First, he declared there was a decline of courage among its intellectual and ruling elite: "Should one point out that from ancient times declining courage has been considered the beginning of the end?"³² Second, he argued that the West was obsessed with well-being: "Today, well-being in the life of Western society has begun to reveal its pernicious mask." Third, the West had an over-riding social concern with a legalistic interpretation of freedom. The notion that people in a Western democracy might willingly respond to a call for sacrifice and risk is labeled absurd because of the manner in which legality has replaced morality. "Whenever the tissue of life is woven of legalistic relations," he claimed, "there is an atmosphere of moral mediocrity, paralyzing man's noblest impulses." Fourth, the West's commitment to freedom had become directionless: "It is time, in the West, to defend not so much human rights as human obligations." Fifth, the West had forfeited the "right of people not to know; not to have their divine souls stuffed with gossip, nonsense, vain talk . . . Hastiness and

superficiality are the psychic disease of the 20th century and more than anywhere else this disease is reflected in the [Western] press." Finally, the West had permitted the media to fashion "a self-deluding interpretation of the contemporary world situation . . . [that produces] a sort of petrified armor around people's minds." The promise of the West had turned into a spiritual exhaustion that is unattractive to people who long "for things higher, warmer, and purer."

From this list of deficits, Solzhenitsyn provided an analysis of how the West declined from its original promise to be the world's laboratory of freedom to its present sickness where moral criteria were no longer relevant in social and political matters. He argued that the West's excessive view of individual freedom and individual rights were championed at the cost of society's "sense of responsibility to God." The result was an embrace of a humanistic, anthropocentric materialism, the inheritance of Renaissance and Enlightenment humanism. Because of these intellectual turns in both the East and West, he claimed that it resulted in a diminishment of their most precious possession, their spiritual life, crushed now by a party mob in the East and by a commercial culture in the West. With this indictment, the Address moved to its final appeal where Solzhenitsyn claimed that the watershed we face in history is whether or not we allow our accumulating deficits to traduce our humanity. The only choice left in his eyes was to make a new turn, to ascend to a new more spiritual level of life.

If we ask, 'What is the hoped-for response implicit in the appeal of the Address?' the answer is quite clear. He would wish that his listeners would respond, "You are right! We agree with your assessment of the dreadful error of our ways." In *The Four Voices of Preaching* I identified this as the hoped-for/expected response of the Teaching Voice where the speaker's intention is to explain meaning and argue for a position.³³ Sermons in this cultural voice operate with objectivist assumptions about the nature of reality and call forth faith in an ordered, tradition-centered way of understanding the world. Of course the alternative can always occur. Listeners can respond, "You are wrong! We disagree with your assessment of the error of our ways." And this is largely what happened.

Perry Miller wrote that the dilemma of the jeremiad was that it "Could make sense out of existence as long as adversity was to be overcome, but in the moment of victory it was confused . . . It flourished in dread of success; were reality ever to come up to its expectations, a new

convention would be required, and this would presuppose a revolution in mind and in society.³⁴ Clearly, Solzhenitsyn's Harvard listeners had long since resolved the adversities of New England existence. They had lost any memory of this form of address, concluding that Solzhenitsyn was just confused, or worse, someone who longs to return to a Czarist past. On the other hand, those Western listeners for whom a religious worldview is still vital tend to experience the speech as both a coherent and a provocative assertion that the road to totalitarianism begins with the illusion that humanistic ethics are superior to a moral worldview grounded in the ethics of a religious tradition.³⁵

The Coherence of Solzhenitsyn's Prophetic Ethos

In his March on Washington Address, Martin Luther King spoke to a receptive audience of civil rights activists, most of whom were African Americans whose moral vision was nurtured in the black church—a community of the faithful committed to acting on a prophetic moral vision. Solzhenitsyn's audience, on the other hand, was largely secular, ideologically diverse, and highly intellectual. They were independent-thinking Harvard grads, faculty, alums, and other people likely looking to hear a Cold War dissident politically indict the Soviet system. In many ways, Solzhenitsyn's Address eventually found a more favorable response in subsequent years, as Cold War fears waned and the coherence of his prophetic moral assessment of a Western materialistic worldview was appreciated. Both men offered their listeners a dream fueled by Christian civilization rhetoric, Solzhenitsyn speaking a hard "Truth" by way of a Teaching Voice of a failed realization of freedom and King imagining a possible future by way of a Sage Voice that invited listeners to find their way into its variously-imaged dream. The discourse of both men has been viewed as prophetic, but the appellation may have a decidedly different meaning depending on why the critic chooses to describe moral discourse in this manner.

In a considered reflection on the Harvard Address, Sydney Hook, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution of War, Revolution, and Peace, differed profoundly with Solzhenitsyn's political assessment of the West save for the assertion that the willingness to risk one's life in the defense of freedom is, in fact, a *moral* stake upon which freedom rests. He rejected both the *cultural voice* that drives Solzhenitsyn's historical assessment that the West is guilty of a failure of moral nerve and he rejected

the theological assumption of Solzhenitsyn's *narrative identity* that belief in a Supreme Power is a necessary correlate for acting with integrity and character in human affairs. He did, however, find a deep resonance with the *moral vision* embodied in the speech. He wrote,

Rarely in modern times—especially in times of relative peace—has one man's voice provoked the Western world to the experience of profound soul-searching. What Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said . . . has stirred the reflective conscience of the Western world more profoundly than even the eloquent discourses of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill . . . [The unprecedented response testifies] to the power of his words and to the fundamental character of his challenge to our mode of life, to its basic values, fears, illusions, and to a philosophy of civilization concealed by the apparent absence of any philosophy.³⁶

Critics like Hook appear to respond to Solzhenitsyn's *moral identity* as it dwells rhetorically in the Address, but are not always sure what to make of it. They affirm that his argument represents a challenge to Western identity, but resist virtually all of his political analysis and also resist his argument that a tragic de-spiritualized turn of historical events has made the West spiritually incapable of presenting the face of freedom to the rest of the world. Somehow, though, they still hear the prophet. Hook admitted, "Despite my differences with Solzhenitsyn . . . [in his convictions] I regard him as one of the great moral prophets of our time."³⁷ But Hook then argued that we dare not ground our moral convictions as a nation in the demands of any theological tradition other than pluralism or we deny the human rights of our citizenry.³⁸ And in making this caveat, Hook reduced Solzhenitsyn to little more than a prophet of courage and, in the process, ends up deifying pluralism as freedom's only pathway forward.

On the other hand, Martin Marty, the eminent Western chronicler of Christianity and *The Protestant Experience in America*, concluded that Solzhenitsyn's critique of the West catches the essence of the matter, "even if he has distorted its pluralism and misrepresented the West through the eyes of a Russian, whose people received the Renaissance and Enlightenment as a brutally swift and violent import or intrusion in the days of Peter the Great."³⁹ The rhetoric of those who speak as a prophet, Marty maintained, is always characterized by a kind of linguistic totalism without the faintest interest in whether its "language is empirically certifiable in detail."⁴⁰ As one who understood that Solzhenitsyn spoke out of

a Christian tradition unfamiliar to most Americans, Marty concluded, "I leave to others the details of response to his attack on the ways of capitalism, but I am confident he has gotten to the root of it."⁴¹

Conclusion

What should be evident from this analysis is that the "ethos that dwells rhetorically" in Solzhenitsyn's Harvard Address is not an incoherent expression of religious identity. Rather, as his defenders have maintained, Solzhenitsyn wanted his words to be heard in the context of what he had been saying in all his writings and essays. His *moral vision* remained consistent across his oeuvre. His *narrative identity* though shaped by a guild of literate Russian reflection is still consonant within a great tradition of Christian thought. His *cultural voice*, which assumed a persuasively determinant orientation toward authority while making its appeal out of a corporately affirmed tradition of truth, revealed his commitment to a consistent tradition of Christian cultural consciousness. It was his audience who no longer shared these assumptions and for that reason his discourse appeared incoherent. They resisted the idea that he had the right or the authority to judge Western culture implied by the *cultural voice* he adopted. They also found the constructed assumptions at the heart of his *narrative identity* too obscure and too Russian for American tastes. If the reactions that appeared in print are any measure, the audience may well have applauded the man more than the speech at its close.⁴²

Jewish theologian Abraham Heschel wrote, "The prophet's task is to convey a divine view, yet as a person he *is* a point of view. He speaks from the perspective of God as perceived from the perspective of his own situation . . . The prophet is not only a prophet. He is a poet, preacher, patriot, statesman, social critic, moralist."⁴³ Identifying Solzhenitsyn's discourse as *prophetic* seems to be the generally agreed upon means to resolve the seeming contradictions of his Harvard Address. For some it clarified and continues to clarify what it means to see our nation operate as a cut flower culture where we have cut ourselves off from the mainstream of any nourishing tradition of values that ground our national identity.⁴⁴ For others it served as a term to bracket this discourse as religious and, therefore, something to stir our reflective conscience, but not something to be considered as essential to our national character. And thus it has always been for those who speak and for those "who have ears to hear" such prophetic discourse.

NOTES

1. For the AP obituary see <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/solzhenitsyn-a-life-of-dissent-884590.html>.
2. Martha Wexler, "Author Who Chronicled Soviet Abuses Dies At 89," *All Things Considered* (August 3, 2008). The quoted material is transcribed from Wexler's on-air commentary rather than the abbreviated version in print at the website. Retrieved on September 15 at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93250748>.
3. Ken Shepherd, "AP Obit for Solzhenitsyn Ignores His Christian Faith," retrieved at <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/ken-shepherd/2008/08/04/ap-obit-solzhenitsyn-ignores-his-christian-faith>.
4. Daniel J. Mahoney, "Hero of a Dark Century," *National Review* (September 1, 2008) 49
5. Winston Churchill's Commencement Address was delivered at the behest of then President Harry Truman at Westminster College, in Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, 1946. The published source of the Harvard Commencement Address is found in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: The Address, Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*, ed. Ronald Berman (Washington, DC: Ethics and Policy Center, 1980) 3–20. It differs, however, in felicity but not substance from the actual speech as delivered (the source cited throughout this essay) found in both audio and authenticated transcript form at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/winstonchurchillsinewsofpeace.htm>.
6. D. M. Thomas noted that *The New York Times* only mentioned that Solzhenitsyn was the Harvard speaker a few days before the event; Thomas, *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: A Century in His Life* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998) 460. See also Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1984) 965.
7. George Will, "Solzhenitsyn's Critics," *Washington Post* (June 1978). Reprinted in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 33–35; Michael Novak, "On God and Man," in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 131.
8. "The Obsession of Solzhenitsyn," editorial, *New York Times* (June 13, 1978); reprinted in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 23.
9. "Mr. Solzhenitsyn as Witness," editorial *Washington Post* (June 11, 1978); reprinted in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 25.
10. "The Obsession of Solzhenitsyn," *Times/ Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 23.
11. Jack Fruchtman, Jr., "A Voice From Russia's Past at Harvard," *Baltimore Sun* (June 18, 1978); reprinted in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 44.
12. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Solzhenitsyn We Refuse to See," *Washington Post* (June 25, 1978); reprinted in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 64.
13. Richard Pipes, "In the Russian Intellectual Tradition," in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 115.
14. James Reston, "A Russian at Harvard," *The New York Times* (June 11, 1978); reprinted by *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 37.
15. Edward E. Ericson, *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 178.
16. On King as "prophet," see William M. Ramsay, *Four Modern Prophets: Walter Rauschenbusch, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gustavo Gutiérrez, Rosemary Radford Reuther* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986); Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Word that Moved America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 177–84.
17. Michael Hyde, "Introduction: Rhetorically, We Dwell," in *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, ed. Michael Hyde (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004) xiii.

18. Robert Stephen Reid, "A Rhetoric of Contemporary Christian Discourse," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 31 (November 2008) 109–42. *This essay argues for a rhetoric of Christian discourse that also provides for the possibility of a set of critical moves by which the coherence of public expressions of a Christian ethos that dwells rhetorically in discourse can be assessed. Three domains of identity are explored as a narrative rather than doctrinal conception of Christian identity configured in oral and written discourse: a tradition-based reasoning, a narratively-shaped worldview, and a hope engendered identity & ethic of responsibility.*

19. Edward E. Ericson Jr. and Daniel J. Mahoney, "Editors' Introduction," in *The Solzhenitsyn Reader* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2006) xvii.

20. Solzhenitsyn demanded that Russian Orthodox Church leaders explain, "By what reasoning could one convince oneself that the calculated *destruction*—one dictated by atheists—of the body and spirit of the Church is the best method of *preserving it*? Preservation, but for *whom*? Certainly not for Christ Preserved, but by *what means*? By *lies*?" Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Lenten Letter: To Patriarch Pimen of Russia," in *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*, ed. John B. Dunlop et al. (New York: Collier, 1973) 477.

21. Solzhenitsyn, "Lenten Letter," 552. See also Nils C. Nielson Jr. *Solzhenitsyn's Religion* (New York: Nelson, 1975) 80–94.

22. Alain Besançon, "Solzhenitsyn at Harvard," *Survey: Journal of Soviet and East European Studies* 24 (1979) 136.

23. *Ibid.*, 137.

24. On this criteria for assessing *narrative identity* see Reid, "Rhetoric," 128; cf. Walter Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989) 105–23.

25. Reid, "Contemporary Christian Discourse," 132.

26. Ericson, *Solzhenitsyn*, 3.

27. From Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907; reprinted, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997) 7.

28. On the Harvard Address as a jeremiad, see Mark Stoda, "Jeremiad at Harvard: Solzhenitsyn and 'The World Split Apart,'" *Western Journal of Communication* 64 (Winter 2000) 28–53. On the genre of the jeremiad, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Sacvan Berkovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); and Margaret D. Zulick, "The Agon of Jeremiah: On the Dialogic Invention of Prophetic Ethos," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992) 125–48.

29. Miller, *The New England Mind*, 27.

30. *Ibid.*, 32.

31. Berkovitch writes, "The most severe limitation of Miller's view is that it excludes (or denigrates) this pervasive theme of affirmation and exultation" in the jeremiad; *American Jeremiad*, 6.

32. The written translation strengthens a biological-medical metaphor controlling this deficit by adding the word "symptom" to the final pronouncement; *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 6.

33. Robert Stephen Reid, *The Four Voices of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006) 53–55.

34. Miller, *The New England Mind*, 33.

35. Cf. Mahoney, "Hero," 50.

36. Sidney Hook, "Solzhenitsyn and Western Freedom," *World Literature Today* 53 (1979) 573. This essay also appears in *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, 85–97.
37. Hook, "Solzhenitsyn," 577.
38. *Ibid.*, 576–77.
39. Marty, "On Hearing Solzhenitsyn in Context," *World Literature Today* 53.4 (1979), 579. The italicized reference is to Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Dial, 1970).
40. Marty, "Solzhenitsyn in Context," 580.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Thomas, *Solzhenitsyn*, 462.
43. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) xiv.
44. On the notion of a "cut-flower culture" Herberg observed, "Cut flowers retain their original beauty and fragrance, but only so long as they retain the vitality that they have drawn from their now-severed roots; after that is exhausted, they wither and die; so with freedom, brotherhood, justice, and personal dignity—the values that form the moral foundation of our civilization. Without the life-giving power of the faith out of which they have sprung, they possess neither meaning nor vitality"; Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man: An Interpretation of Jewish Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Young, 1951) 91–92.