



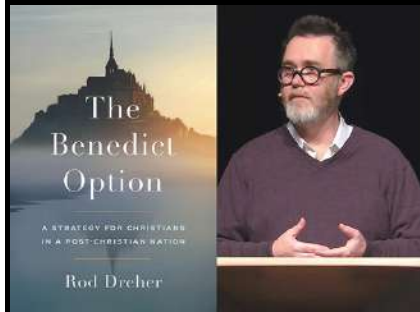
The Most Important Christian Book of the Decade?

“The Benedict Option”

by Jeffrey Breshears

One of the most anticipated books in recent years was released a couple of weeks ago: **Rod Dreher’s *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*** (Sentinel Press, 2017). This is a book that some regard as the most important Christian book of the decade, if not in several decades. As sobering and unsettling as it is inspiring, *The Benedict Option* is a clarion call for Christians to awaken from their cultural slumber. According to Dreher, a Bible-centered Orthodox Christian traditionalist and an astute social critic, we are not losing the culture war in America. We lost. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that things will improve – barring some totally unprecedented revival that dramatically alters the spiritual, moral and cultural landscape of America. What this portends for the future are not only the greatest challenges that American Christians have ever faced, but great opportunities as well.

The Benedict Option is not a book for two types of Christians: (1) self-absorbed people with little interest in the broader issues of life, including the state of our society and culture; and (2) those



uncomfortable. In all likelihood most pastors and other church leaders will simply ignore the book and hope that their congregants do the same.

who are comfortable with conventional status quo Christianity. Unfortunately, this characterizes far too many Christians, which is precisely why we find our faith constantly on the defensive, increasingly excluded from the public square and relegated to the fringes of American life.

As with most books that challenge Christians to think and reassess their values, priorities and lifestyle, *The Benedict Option* is controversial. It would be of relatively little value were it not. Since its release the book has been critiqued, nitpicked and dismissed as impractical by those who find its countercultural message too unconventional and

Many Evangelicals will object to the ecumenical tone of the book as Dreher commends certain traditions and spiritual disciplines associated with Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity. Just as likely, many Catholic and Orthodox Christians will probably be put off by Dreher’s admiration and respect for many of the distinctives of Evangelical Christianity. Conservatives will need to open their hearts and minds to Dreher’s critique of compulsive consumerism and mindless materialism, and to his emphasis on exploring creative new countercultural approaches to Christian community. [Note: Contrary to some critiques of the

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The Areopagus Calendar

Winter/Spring Seminars

The Reformation Era, Part 1

The origins, the legacy, and the major people, issues and events associated with one of the most significant and influential periods in Christian history.

Sundays

11:15 AM

Johnson Ferry Baptist Church / Room 270



The Reformation History Tour

SEPTEMBER 15-28, 2017

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The Areopagus and Christian Heritage – London

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“The Benedict Option”

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book, Dreyer does *not* contend that most Christians should withdraw from mainstream society and live communally as monastics. In fact, just the opposite: he actually calls for *more* Christian social engagement – although more selective and effective than in the past.] Likewise, liberals must awaken to the insidious forces of secularism and Political Correctness that we currently face, the unprecedented threats to religious liberty, and to the effects of the Sexual Revolution in all its manifestations from promiscuity, pornography, and the relentless assaults on the traditional family to the whole LGBTQ agenda. Furthermore, all conscientious Christians should read and heed his warnings concerning the subtle but demonstrably negative effects of technology addiction.

To summarize, there is much in *The Benedict Option* that should challenge all Christians, regardless of their denominational affiliation, their socio/economic status or their socio/political orientation. The message is as obvious as it is simple: There is something drastically wrong with status quo Christianity. If one imagines otherwise, just take a look around at the extent of the moral and cultural cancer that has metastasized in our own lifetime and how impotent the church has generally been in countering it.

A gifted writer, Dreher sets forth his case passionately, eloquently and unequivocally, yet with Christlike grace and compassion. The following are a few excerpts from the Introduction:

“For most of my adult life, I have been a believing Christian and a committed conservative. I didn’t see any conflict between the two, until my wife and I welcomed our firstborn child into the world in 1999. Nothing changes a man’s outlook on life like having to think about the kind of world his children will inherit.

“As Matthew grew into toddlerhood, I began to realize how my politics were

changing as I sought to raise our child by traditionalist Christian principles. I began to wonder what, exactly, mainstream conservatism was conserving. It dawned on me that some of the causes championed by conservatives – chiefly an uncritical enthusiasm for the free market – can in some circumstances undermine the thing that I, as a traditionalist, considered the most important institution to conserve: the family.

“I also came to see the churches, including my own, as largely ineffective in combating the forces of cultural decline. Traditional historic Christianity... ought to be a powerful counterforce to the radical individualism and secularism of modernity. Even though conservative Christians were said to be fighting a culture war, with the exception of the abortion and gay marriage issues, it was hard to see my people putting up much of a fight. We seemed content to be the chaplaincy to a consumerist culture....

“In my 2006 book, *Crunchy Cons*, which explored a countercultural, traditionalist conservative sensibility, I brought up the work of philosopher Alastair MacIntyre, who declared that Western civilization had lost its moorings. The time was coming, said MacIntyre, when men and women of virtue would understand that continued full participation in mainstream society was not possible for those who wanted to live a life of traditional virtue. These people would find new ways to live in community, he said, just as Saint Benedict, the sixth century father of Western monasticism, responded to the collapse of Roman civilization by founding a monastic order.

“I called the strategic withdrawal prophesied by MacIntyre ‘the Benedict Option.’ The idea is that serious Christian conservatives could no longer live business-as-usual lives in America, and we have to develop creative, communal solutions to help us hold on to our faith and values in a world growing ever more hostile to them. We would have to choose to make a decisive leap into a truly countercultural way of living Christianity, or we would doom our children and our children’s children to assimilation.”

The Areopagus Calendar

Spring Forums

Where Have All the Communists Gone? **Cultural Marxism and American Culture**

A presentation by
Mike Shotwell

Author of “Immersed in Red: My Formative Years in a Marxist Household”

Thursday, May 18th
7:30 PM

Perimeter Church / Fellowship Hall

Nearly 60 years ago the communist folk singer Pete Seeger wrote “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” Over the past 25 years, since the fall of the Soviet Empire in 1989, many people have wondered, “Where have all the Communists gone?”

In fact, the Marxist influences in academia, our government, the media, popular culture, and even in many churches have only become more entrenched in recent decades. Under the guise of “Political Correctness,” the left has merely re-branded and re-packaged its ideology as “progressivism” and “democratic socialism.” As such, they are flourishing and more influential today than at any time in American history.

As one who grew up in a hardcore Marxist household, author Mike Shotwell know just how insidious and corrosive left-wing ideology is and how pervasive it is in contemporary America.

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— Coming in July — ***The Benedict Option***

A Summertime Dinner & Dialogue series focusing on Rod Dreher’s book,
The Benedict Option.

Check our Areopagus website and Facebook page for times and locations.