

What This Chaplain Prophesied 100 Years Ago Is Unfolding Before Our Very Eyes

Dr. Elton Trueblood, the former chaplain for Stanford and Harvard universities in the early 1900s, was once asked what the church in America would look like in the last half of the 20th century. His answer was prophetic.

He said, “By the year 2000, Christians in America will be a conscious minority surrounded by an arrogant, militant paganism.”

Today, we are here, which is why we believe Christians should prepare for one of two things: Christ’s return or a sweeping global revival.

One thing we should not prepare to do is retreat into ourselves and wait this paganism out—because the same rising tide of evil that makes cowards run makes champions rise.

In his new book, *The Benedict Option—A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, Rod Dreher brings an urgent word, much like Dr. Trueblood years before, revealing our nation’s deep moral and spiritual crisis. He says we are at the “end of a world ... the floodwaters are upon us—and we (Christians) are not ready.”

He’s spot-on. We aren’t ready. Our churches are more like bounce houses than boot camps, enjoying the blessings of God in the nation rather than training to be a blessing to the nation.

Meanwhile, we’re witnessing “the breakdown of the natural family, the loss of traditional moral values and the fragmenting of communities,” Dreher says. Again, he’s spot-on.

But then Dreher provides his strategy (the Benedict option), which is what we want to address. He says Christians should “take measures to build a kind of ark for ourselves with which to ride out the dark ages, to hold onto our faith, and tender the faith for such a time as light returns and civilization wants to hear the gospel again.”

That’s an interesting point, especially in light of the fact that Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt. 5:14).

If we (disciples of Christ) are the light of the world, why then would we want to hide our light? And if we are a “city ... set on a hill [that] cannot not be hidden” how can we possibly seek to “shelter” from the storm in an “ark” until the light returns? This makes no sense.

When we were kids, we used to shout “No!” when our Sunday school teacher asked us if we should hide our light under a bushel while we sang, “This Little Light of Mine.”

Although we wholeheartedly agree with Dreher that Christians today should seek to build a real, counter-cultural society, we believe there is no reason we should do this under a bushel in the cover of an ark.

On politics, Dreher speaks about how some Christians simply think voting Republican or “strengthening the levees of law and politics would keep the flood of secularism at bay,” all while America continues its moral downward slide. His analysis here is on point, but his strategy, which comes with a question, we believe, is off-base. He asks, “Could it be that the best way to fight the flood is to—stop fighting the flood? That is, to quit piling up sandbags and to build an ark in which to shelter until the water recedes and we can put our feet on dry land again?”

It’s important to note here that when Peter was startled awake as Christ’s captors were upon him he reached for the wrong

weapon. He drew his sword and cut off a man's ear, to which Jesus rebuked him and brought healing instead of hurt. Often today, Christians can reach for the wrong weapon of divisive partisan politics instead of lovingly speaking the truth that sets people free. So we agree with Dreher's analysis but disagree with his strategy.

Christians must not "shelter from the storm" of politics. This morally dark sphere of culture is where the light of God's truth—that His ways are best—needs to shine bright. And, for that matter, are marriage, sexuality, gender, unborn life, etc. truly political issues?

Nope—they are gospel moral issues, for which God has all the answers. So if we retreat into our "ark," as Dreher calls us to do, our light would remain hidden.

After studying his work the first thought that came to our minds was, "No way. We were born for such a time as this—and we don't fight for victory, we fight from it. The earth belongs to the Lord, and everything in it. Those before us never retreated, nor will we.

So here are some Scriptures (with a touch of commentary) that encourage us not to shelter away in an "ark" waiting for the light to return, but rather to keep shining our light brightly even as our nation turns hostile against us:

Psalms 24:1: "The earth belongs to the Lord, and its fullness, the world, and those who dwell in it."

"Everything" means everything—government, economics, science, art, marriage, family, business—you name it. We as Christians must first model God's ways in our own lives and then teach them to others to do the same, for their good and God's glory.

Jeremiah 29:7: "Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace."

This command was given to the Israelites headed into Babylonian captivity, a place of total pagan dominance. Daniel was one of those exiles, and yet he spoke truth to the king, served in a public role (along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) and refused to retreat from the truth and bow to cultural pressure. He didn't shelter from his pagan storm—he ran into it, speaking publicly out of his personal devotion to God.

Matthew 10:27: “What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light. And what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.”

Like Daniel, when God whispers truth in our ear as we study His word and seek Him in prayer we then are commanded to share it with the world; or, in Jesus' words, “proclaim from the roofs.” We don't shelter under cover of our roof but stand on it and speak His truth. And we don't hide His words by cover of night, but rather speak them in the daytime—while everyone can hear.

John 8:32: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.”

Today, truth is being trampled underfoot. The truth about marriage, the truth about the unborn, the truth about sex, the truth about gender, the truth about creation, the truth about Down Syndrome children (most are aborted), the truth about—you name it. If we don't speak truth (in love, of course) how are people going to be set free?

And these issues manifest brightest in the realm of politics. Because we love others and want them set free, we cannot shelter from the political storm. There is a place for Christians, even if it's just one voice, speaking truth while surrounded by militant paganism.

1 Timothy 3:15: “You might know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”

The church is the “pillar and foundation of the truth,” so if we withdraw from any sphere of culture (politics included), society loses its foundation to flourish.

Romans 13:4 (Speaking of a governmental authority) “... for he is the servant of God for your good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain, for he is the servant of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him who practices evil.”

Government is a “servant of God.” How can it rightly discern between good and evil if Christians pull out? The loss of a Christian voice in government will certainly lead to the redefinition of good and evil, which is where we are headed at break neck speed. Instead of running away, we believe Christians should run directly in—for the good of others and glory of God.

Proverbs 24:10-12: “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. If you refrain to deliver those who are drawn unto death, and those who are ready to be slain; if you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’ does not He who ponders the heart consider it? And He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to every man according to his works?”

Should we leave politics and allow the unborn to continue to be slaughtered by Planned Parenthood and other abortion rights political leaders? Is our strength too small and truth not powerful enough to be a voice for the voiceless? The question is not could we stand for the unborn, but should we stand for them. And the answer is a resounding yes!

2 Corinthians 10:4-5: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ...”

A stronghold simply means a place that's been fortified so as to protect it from attack. Other versions use the word, "fortress." You'll notice today the radical left is pushing for "safe zones" and aiming to suppress free speech, especially from conservatives. They have created "fortresses" on college campuses over sexuality, marriage, life and also gender. Should truth not be spoken against these strongholds? The Greek word for "arguments" here is *logismos*, which means "a reasoning such as hostile to the Christian faith; a judgment, a decision." As we watch strongholds erected over our culture, through judgments and decisions that are clearly against God's best for human flourishing, are we to withdraw and not stand against them with the divine power God has given only to the Church?

Ephesians 5:11: "And do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, instead, expose them."

Withdrawing from "cultural conflict" prevents us from exposing the lies of Satan over the lives of the people God seeks to save. It's our God-given duty to expose lies, and then to flip those lies on their heads with God's truth that sets people free.

So, we thank Rob Dreher for his extensive work in exposing the church to the reality of what is taking place in our nation today. And we thank him for his desire for Christians to return to a deeper biblical faith, as well as his call to build a real, counter-cultural society. At the same time, we say now is not the time to shelter away, but to lovingly engage with newfound fervor and zeal for Christ as never before in our lifetime. {eoa}