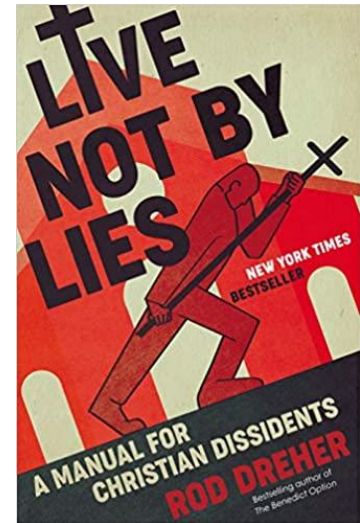


“Organize in Small Groups to Resist Soft
Totalitarianism”

a review by Dick Burkhardt of

Live Not By Lies -
A Manual for Christian Dissidents
By Rod Dreher



I don't identify as Christian – due to all the dogma and nasty things associated with that word over many hundreds of years, but this book reinvigorates the power of Christian faith – the faith that once propelled it to success in the first three centuries of resistance to the Roman Empire. This book features the impressive 20th century resistance to the Soviet Empire – in Russia itself and the totalitarian states of Eastern Europe.

Dreher is a conservative Catholic but with principles that place him in opposition both to the lies and demagoguery of Donald Trump and the “soft totalitarianism” of leftist radicals of identity politics, embodied in their “cancel culture”. Even more to his credit, he proclaims that “Christians must act to build bonds of brotherhood not just with one another, across denominational and international lines, but also with people of goodwill belonging to other religions, and no religion at all” (p 181). This is because he saw that the few courageous Christians in Russia and Eastern Europe during the Soviet era needed allies from all walks of life, including those communists who eventually saw through the lies.

Dreher's stories of the resistance are priceless. He not only researched written materials but went directly to interview those still alive or their descendants. The sacrifices were monumental, and it's amazing that some, like Solzhenitsyn, actually survived the Gulag or persecution – through sheer faith and dedication to the truth. He tells the incredible story of how samizdat – their secret literature – was written, printed, and distributed. I once knew a retired U Michigan professor – Deming Brown – who specialized in this literature.

Dreher forecasts the spread of soft totalitarianism in the West - carried out by ideology, propaganda, and slander instead of state terror. He calls us to form small groups of activists to hold true to our values. This will become the foundation for a growing resistance, just as it did under communist regimes in the Soviet era. This resistance is not just against social media attacks, but also against the decadence of

materialism and the hedonistic pursuit of happiness, not just by careerist liberals but also by Christians of the “prosperity gospel” type.

He quotes an émigré professor from Czechoslovakia about the collapse of free speech in America: “I grew up like this...but it was not supposed to be happening here” (p xiii). Dreher describes the new totalitarianism as appearing in a “therapeutic” guise of protecting “victims” against “oppressors” - a seductive appeal to justice. “These cultural revolutionaries found an ally in advanced capitalism, which teaches that nothing should exist outside the market mechanism and its sorting of value according to human desires” (p 13).

Yet in reality, soft totalitarianism is still a power play, seeking to “bring all aspects of society under its control” - to scapegoat or persecute purported oppressors (p 7). Truth is whatever the leaders of the ideology decide it is, imposed by Orwellian perversions of language. The ideal subject “has learned to love Big Brother” in a way that resembles Bolshevism (p 8). “The heresy of heresies is common sense” (p 15), where people are forced to become actors – either that or victims of the latest twist of ideology, which has become a “pseudo-religion” or cult, replacing the loss of Christianity.