

# CRITIQUE: The Benedict Option

Rod Dreher has written a book, “The Benedict Option: Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation”, in which he encourages Christians to follow the Benedictine monks and find safe havens to live to avoid their extinction. Part of the publisher’s description of the book is as follows:

*“In a radical new vision for the future of Christianity, NYT bestselling author and conservative columnist Rod Dreher calls on American Christians to prepare for the coming Dark Age by embracing an ancient Christian way of life. The light of the Christian faith is flickering out all over the West, and only the willfully blind refuse to see it...For five difficult centuries, Benedict's monks kept the faith alive through the Dark Ages, and prepared the way for the rebirth of civilization. What do ordinary 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians – Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox – have to learn from the teaching and example of this great spiritual father...Christians face a time of choosing, with the fate of Christianity in Western civilization hanging in the balance. In this powerful challenge to the complacency of contemporary Christianity, Dreher shows why those in all churches who fail to take the Benedict Option aren't going to make it.”*<sup>1</sup>

An article appeared in the IPA Review magazine<sup>2</sup> with the title, “Avoiding a Christian Extinction”<sup>3</sup>. It was a reflection on Rod Dreher's book by Fr. James Grant. The article is not available on the Internet, but here is ‘fair use’ excerpt for educational purposes:

*“Whether you are an active Christian, or someone who recognises the central role that Christianity plays in forming and sustaining Western values, the fragility of our current churches continues to evoke deep angst and concern. This trend should make us question how Christianity can be prevented from becoming a shell of its former self.*

*The most recent foray into this issue is Rod Dreher's The Benedict Option. This new book advocates that Christians embrace minority status, recognise Christianity as an 'outsider set of values' and live within the secular Western environment.*

*Dreher envisages small Christian communities in which members live with greater spiritual discipline regarding prayer, worship, and commitment to reordering their lives around the faith.*

*But this has been tried many times before. And it has overwhelmingly failed. There are thousands of Christian groups now extinct or under threat of extinction, perhaps symbolised by the Amish Community who are under enormous pressure from secular forces and near collapse.*

*Dreher misreads early Christian history. These first Christians nurtured their faith without separating themselves from surrounding communities or neighbourhoods—this was the particular strength of the faith. They may have been critical of the world, but their mission was its transformation. There is no history of club or sect behaviour that ever leads anywhere except extinction. Why? Because it goes against the fundamental Christian mission of engaging with individuals and society, resurrecting their lives and values. The making of disciples from all nations was not designed to engage a select few, but the whole of humanity. This is Christ's fundamental call to his followers.*

*The crux of Christianity's current problem is not that the secular world has turned against it in overwhelming rejection. The problem is that the secular world no longer knows what Christianity is. At the core of this new irrelevance is a Christianity that is unsure of what it stands for, that it is beset by its own fears, and has lost the confidence to speak with authority.”*<sup>4</sup>

James Grant is correct in his assertion that the very first church (approx. 34-90AD) did not separate themselves from “surrounding communities or neighbourhoods”, but affected them. We are to do the same in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How come? Because we have been advised by our King through prophetic

1 – [www.booktopia.com.au/the-benedict-option-rod-dreher/prod9780735213296.html](http://www.booktopia.com.au/the-benedict-option-rod-dreher/prod9780735213296.html)

2 – Published by the Institute of Public Affairs (Australia) [www.ipa.org.au](http://www.ipa.org.au)

3 – *IPA Review* vol. 69/3 (October 2017) p:58-61

4 – Fr. James Grant “Avoiding a Christian Extinction” *IPA Review* vol. 69/3 (October 2017) p:59

revelation that we are to be out in the world as lights, being the causal agents of its change.??????<sup>5</sup>

Kingdom Communities, which we are part of, are not escape camps where we hide from the world. They are front-line command posts where Kingdom sons interact with the community of locals around them. Our job is to impact them so those who come to love the Lord can find access to his Kingdom. We are a support group for others in the Kingdom, out there, agapē-driven, a strike-force being trained to change the world – street by street.

We have not been directed to take ‘The Benedict Option’.

Laurence

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5 – See the following prophetic messages as a starting point:

[canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MESSAGE-Are-Things-Really-That-Bad-14-8-2017.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MESSAGE-Are-Things-Really-That-Bad-14-8-2017.pdf)

[canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MESSAGE-How-to-Resist-Unrighteousness-14-8-2017.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MESSAGE-How-to-Resist-Unrighteousness-14-8-2017.pdf)