Bonhoeffer and the Benedict Option: The Mission of Monasticism in a Post-Christian World

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Abstract

This article brings Bonhoeffer into conversation with the Benedict Option in order to analyse the inner logic of neo-monasticism. Both contend that missional faithfulness in a post-Christian context requires the church to abandon the pursuit of power, a task that lies at the heart of the neo-monastic posture. But Bonhoeffer does so while remaining alert to the great temptation of monasticism. The temptation is not merely that the church becomes sectarian. The more serious problem has to do with the way the church's separation from culture is theologically construed. This article suggests that whereas the Benedict Option is grounded in a Christ-idea, Bonhoeffer's neo-monasticism is grounded in Christ himself. The temptation, in other words, is that ideology becomes confused with Christology. Following Bonhoeffer, this article claims that confusion on this point risks embroiling the church in the very power games that neo-monasticism attempts to avoid. Whereas ideologically grounded neo-monasticism must confront the world in the mode of conflict, Christologically grounded neo-monasticism is free from the temptation of power, and from this posture authentic witness becomes possible.

In his *Ethics* manuscripts, Dietrich Bonhoeffer distinguishes between 'peaceful times' and 'times of great crisis'.[1] No doubt he situated his own theological

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work from 1933 onward within the context of the latter. This crisis, in Bonhoeffer's estimate, penetrated to the foundations of Christianity itself. 'I am becoming more convinced every day', he declared from his pastorate in London, 'that in the West Christianity is approaching its end.'[2] With this diagnosis he became one of the first to acknowledge what many are still discerning today: that the decline of Christendom places unique challenges and responsibilities before Christian theology. In particular, as Bonhoeffer's own theological work testifies, the church must attend to the nature of its existence. What does it mean to be the church? And it must ask a question that for centuries it had not asked: How will it *survive*? Bonhoeffer's reflection on this question yielded surprising results. 'The restoration of the church', he boldly claims, 'must surely depend on a new kind of monasticism.'[3]

This was, of course, a strange response for a German Protestant theologian raised in the liberal tradition, and few contemporaries shared his sentiment. But Bonhoeffer's vision would endure. Decades later, in a very different intellectual context, Alasdair MacIntyre reinvigorated the monastic impulse: in the midst of fragmentation and moral chaos the preservation of western culture would depend on 'new forms of community' in which authentic moral and intellectual life could be sustained. Just as monasticism preserved culture at the onset of the dark ages, so too are we waiting for 'another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict', MacIntyre famously contended.[4] Many within the church heard his warning as a call to action: if the church is to survive, it must go on the offensive by separating from the surrounding culture and fostering its unique forms of practice, language, and belief. Only a robust return to tradition—and the structures of communal life that could sustain this return—would equip the church to withstand the rising tide of secularism.

Unlike Bonhoeffer's earlier suggestion, MacIntyre's neo-monastic argument found a receptive audience. In his influential work, *The Nature of Doctrine*, George Lindbeck argued that 'for the sake of survival' Christian communities

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2   Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *London: 1933–1935*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 13, ed. Keith W. Clements, trans. Isabel Best (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), p. 81 (hereafter DBWE 13).

3   Ibid., p. 285. In this paper I follow common usage in referring to this 'new kind' of monasticism as 'neo-monasticism'. A precise definition of the term will become clear below. For now, note that neo-monasticism shares in common with its traditional forebear the notion that the church must separate from society (hence the *monos*—literally 'alone'—of monasticism).

4   Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theology*, 2nd edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).

must 'develop close-knit groups' which are 'similar to those of monasticism'.[5] Stanley Hauerwas' ecclesiological program operates under the similar assumption that Christians are called to live as aliens in the post-Christian West.[6] Robert Jenson straightforwardly proposes that the western church would do well to emulate Celtic Christianity.[7] While the neo-monastic movement has garnered a small following on the fringes of evangelicalism, it has remained largely an academic affair.[8] For scholars trained in postliberalism and postmodern hermeneutical theory, neo-monasticism represents an intellectually satisfying path beyond the problems that modernity bequeathed to the church.

However, with Rod Dreher's 2017 work, *The Benedict Option*, the movement has broken out of its academic silo, spilling into journals, magazines, and periodicals that would otherwise never mention St. Benedict. No wonder *New York Times* columnist David Brooks calls Dreher's work 'the most important religious book of the decade'.[9] True or not, this claim should catch our attention; when a work on the nature of the church garners a wide and receptive audience, it deserves measured theological scrutiny.

This article takes up the task. It will become evident, however, that in order to analyse the Benedict Option we will have to grapple with the very nature of the church and its mission. Toward this end, I invite Dietrich Bonhoeffer into the conversation. Both he and the Benedict Option point toward the neo-monastic nature of the church's existence in a post-Christian world. More particularly, both contend that the path toward missional faithfulness in such a context requires the church to abandon the pursuit of power, a task that lies at the heart

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5   George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), pp. 133, 78.

6   See, for example, Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989). For Hauerwas' reliance on MacIntyre, see Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 2nd edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. Xiii–xxxiii, and Charles Pinches and Stanley Hauerwas, *Christians Among the Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. 55–69.

7   Robert Jenson, 'It's the Culture', *First Things* (May 2014), p. 34.

8   Donald Bloesch, *Wellsprings of Renewal: Promise in Christian Communal Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974); Rodney Clapp, 'Remonking the Church', *Christianity Today* (August 12, 1988), p. 20; David Janzen, *The Intentional Christian Community Handbook: For Idealists, Hypocrites, and Wannabe Disciples of Jesus* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2013); The Rutba House (ed.), *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005); Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008). Wilson-Hartgrove points to the specifically Benedictine and MacIntyrean roots of New Monasticism; see *New Monasticism*, p. 37.

9   David Brooks, 'The Benedict Option', www.nytimes.com/opinion (April 12, 2017).

of the neo-monastic posture. Bonhoeffer's voice is especially relevant at this point, for while he advocates a neo-monastic ecclesiology, he remains alert to the temptation lurking within monasticism. This temptation is not merely that the church becomes sectarian, as is often feared. Bonhoeffer presses deeper. There are indeed varieties of sectarianism, and the most pressing dangers arise not merely when the community insists on separation from the surrounding world but when this separation is grounded in a Christ-idea rather than Christ himself. The temptation, in other words, has to do with the difference between ideology and Christology and how they respectively shape the inner logic of separation. I argue below that confusion on this point risks embroiling the church in the very power games neo-monasticism endeavors to avoid.

Thus while I am making a specific argument about the nature of neo-monasticism in Bonhoeffer and the Benedict Option, I am also making a more fundamental ecclesiological claim about the role of Christology and ideology in forming, sustaining, and motivating Christian mission. Whereas ideologically motivated neo-monasticism inevitably encounters the world in the mode of conflict as it seeks to construct (or reconstruct) the cultural conditions that stand as the *sine qua non* of Christian faithfulness, Christologically motivated monasticism operates hermeneutically. For it, no culture is necessary for faithfulness, which means the church can be the church in all times and places, even the most purportedly pagan. The task of the church, then, is not to manipulate cultural conditions so that they become conducive to inherited forms of ecclesial life but to discern how to perform the faith in a given time and place. I thus conclude by suggesting that in contrast to ideologically motivated neo-monasticism, which operates in the mode of exile, Christologically motivated neo-monasticism operates in the mode of pilgrimage. Whereas exiles long to return to a home that has been lost, pilgrims recognize that no earthly locale is ultimate. Thus, whereas exiles perpetually face the temptation to shape, determine, or otherwise control history as they seek to reconstruct the home culture that has been lost, pilgrims are free to embrace perpetual homelessness and are therefore free to abandon the acquisition of power. In this freedom, faithful witness to Christ becomes possible.

The Benedict Option: The Possibility of Powerlessness

For the Benedict Option, the church in the West is 'now in a time of decision'.[10] If it wants to survive, it is '*going to have to be the church*, without compromise,

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10   Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2017).

no matter the cost.'[11] Turning to Bonhoeffer for inspiration, Dreher proposes that this uncompromising path entails seceding culturally from the mainstream and embracing existence on the fringes of society.[12] In Dreher's U.S. context, this is indeed a novel claim. Rejecting a generation of Christian political engagement that endeavored to shape policy in the direction of so-called Christian values, Dreher proffers a bold claim: the church should admit that it has lost the public square and can stop fighting to get it back. Again echoing Bonhoeffer, he suggests that the church is now living in the midst of a flood. The best way to fight the rising waters, he paradoxically claims, is not to do so: we must 'quit piling up sandbags and ... build an ark in which to shelter until the water recedes.'[13]

Dreher's neo-monasticism thus calls the church to forswear the pursuit of political influence. Drawing heavily from the Czech former political prisoner, Václav Havel, he suggests that 'losing political power might just be the thing that saves the church's soul.'[14] More than this, it establishes the church's public witness. Following Havel, Dreher advocates 'anti-political politics', a mode of social engagement that circumvents traditional structures of political activity.[15] Living under the communist regime in the Eastern Bloc, Havel became convinced that those operating outside of the power establishment could nevertheless exert influence by enacting a politics from below. As Havel was well aware, the outcome of such activity 'is of a wholly different nature from what the West considers political success', for 'it is hidden, indirect, long term and hard to measure.' Yet it is evident, he goes on to claim, 'that a single, seemingly powerless person who dares to cry out the word of truth ... has, surprisingly, greater power ...than do thousands of anonymous voters.'[16] Precisely by breaking the rules of the game, this word of truth can disrupt the game as such,

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11   Ibid., p. 3, emphasis original.

12   Ibid., pp. 98, 120.

13   Ibid., p. 12. For Bonhoeffer's similar use of the ark metaphor, see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education at Finkenwalde: 1935–1937*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 14, ed. Mark Brocker and H. Gaylon Barker, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), p. 724 (hereafter DBWE 14) and idem, *Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 4, ed. Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), p. 260 (hereafter DBWE 4).

14   Dreher, *Benedict Option*, p. 99.

15   Ibid., p. 78.

16   Quoted in Richard Bourne, *Seek the Peace of the City* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), p. 276. The text originally comes from a speech Havel wrote in 1984, first published in English by Erazin Kohák and Roger Scruton in 'Politics and Conscience', *Salisbury Review*, No. 2 (January, 1985).

revealing it to be merely one alternative among others and thus a contingent and finite reality.[17]

At the heart of this new form of public witness from below is what Dreher refers to as 'hands-on localism'.[18] By circumventing normal avenues of political engagement and abandoning the trickle-down logic of 'spiritual Reaganomics',[19] the church can redirect its energy toward embodying faithfulness in a particular place. For Dreher, therefore, neo-monastic ecclesiology is necessarily grassroots; Christian communities should be small and should rise organically from their location.[20] This localism characterizes more than the church's social life—it characterizes the theological relationship between the church's particularity and its universality. Whereas many theologians concerned to combat the church's cultural captivity have fought on the macro level, boldly appealing to the Great Tradition and the ecclesiastical structures that preserve it, the Benedict Option begins at the micro level. It certainly does not abandon tradition, but it does suggest that the magisterium will not win this battle for the church. No amount of power—political or ecclesiastical—can equip the church to live faithfully in its current cultural context.

While it may seem that monastic withdrawal entails an abandonment of the world, the Benedict Option claims the contrary: 'If we are going to be for the world … we are going to have to spend more time away from the world … We cannot give the world what we do not have.'[21] Thus the church's missional task is at once profoundly simple and radically costly: the mission of the church 'is simply to be the church'.[22] Communal sanctification is itself a form of mission, for only a well-formed community can stand out as a counterculture: 'As times get uglier, the church will become brighter and brighter, drawing people to its light.'[23]

It thus becomes clear that the ecclesiology of the Benedict Option operates according to a strict logic predicated on the church's acceptance of powerlessness. By abandoning the pursuit of social and political influence the church is free to separate from culture, attend to the quality of its own life on the local level, and thereby present itself as a cultural alternative. The extent to which

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17   Václav Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless', in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the state in central-eastern Europe*, ed. John Keane (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1985), pp. 39–40.

18   Dreher, *Benedict Option*, p. 78.

19   This term comes from Wilson-Hartgrove, *The New Monasticism*, p. 85.

20   Dreher, *Benedict Option*, p. 95.

21   Ibid., p. 19.

22   Ibid., p. 101.

23   Ibid., p. 117.

this ecclesiology can actually sustain a posture of powerlessness is an issue yet to be considered. As we will see below in turning to Bonhoeffer, it is one thing to advance powerlessness as a political tactic, another to claim that powerlessness characterizes the church as such. While this distinction may seem trivial, it signals underlying theological differences, on which hinges neo-monasticism's missional potential.

Bonhoeffer's Neo-Monastic Ecclesiology: A Different Kind of Opposition

At the onset of the *Kirchenkampf*, many held out the hope that the Confessing Church could employ traditional means to resist Hitler's planned takeover of the German church. Some within the movement, for example, attempted to broker a conversation between Hitler and Barth, hopeful that a dose of doctrinal clarity would guide Hitler into wise ecclesial decisions. Bonhoeffer was far less naïve: 'Any discussion between Hitler and Barth would be quite pointless', he curtly asserts.[24] Bonhoeffer certainly did not question Barth's theological abilities; what he questioned was whether the Confessing Church was pursuing the proper goals. We must abandon the 'parries, blows, or thrusts such as may still be allowed and possible in the preliminary battles', he suggests.[25] '*This* opposition', he continues, referring to the battle for theological clarity, 'is only a very temporary transitional phase on the way to *an opposition of a very different kind*.'[26]

The very different kind of opposition that Bonhoeffer imagined required institutional separation. Whereas many moderates within the Confessing Church sought common ground with the National Socialists, quibbling only over theological differences, Bonhoeffer sought a clean break, an entirely alternative community.[27] He came to recognize, in other words, the great difference between resistance from within traditional theo-political structures and resistance by means of withdrawing from them. The resonance with Dreher's call to powerlessness is clear. No amount of theological or political influence would help the church live faithfully in the midst of the Nazi crisis. As Bonhoeffer's friend and biographer, Eberhard Bethge, later wrote, 'He sought a

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24   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 13, p. 217.

25   Ibid., p. 135.

26   Ibid., emphasis added.

27   See Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest against Hitler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 54–55.

means of fighting Hitler that went beyond the aims and methods of the church struggle …While he supported the church struggle with all his might, at a deeper level he was looking for a different form of commitment.'[28]

This different form of commitment was not a new tactic but a call for the church to be the church. Like Dreher, Bonhoeffer recognized that enacting the anti-politics of powerlessness would require a measure of separation: 'The sanctification of the church-community consists in its being *separated* by God from that which is unholy.'[29] As he announced in anticipation of his Finkenwalde experiment, it is 'time to go into the wilderness'.[30] In Bonhoeffer's case, this entailed withdrawing from the social, theological, and political centers of power in Berlin. While Protestant theology rightly accented the church's role in proclaiming the Word of truth, Bonhoeffer realized that even the most theologically pure proclamation would not suffice for the moment of crisis. True resistance would require separation and the sanctification that it fostered. Bonhoeffer was so convinced that communal sanctification was itself a political activity that he nearly travelled to India so that Gandhi could teach him how collective formation could become a means of 'resistance against tyrannical power'.[31]

To outside observers, the neo-monastic nature of Finkenwalde was readily apparent. At the time, few considered this a virtue. Barth, for example, worried about 'the monastic eros and pathos' that characterized life at Finkenwalde.[32] Many of Bonhoeffer's students were uncomfortable with the strict ordering of daily life: lengthy Scripture readings in the form of *lectio continua*, silent meditation, and public confession all seemed too Catholic.[33] Of course, Bonhoeffer was not ignorant to the irony of a Lutheran theologian advocating a return to the monastery. 'Luther today would say the opposite of what he said back then,'

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28   Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, rev. edition, trans. Eric Mosbacher, *et al.* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 409.

29   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 4, p. 261, emphasis added.

30   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 13, p. 23.

31   Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p. 409.

32   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 14, p. 268.

33   Wolf-Dieter Zimmerman, 'Finkenwalde', in *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Wolf-Dieter Zimmerman and Ronald Gregor Smith, trans. Käthe Gregor Smith (London: Fontana, 1973), pp. 107–111. Bethge notes that the House of Brethren operated according to a distinct order (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p. 467). Even the dining hall was fashioned to resemble a monastic refectory; see Charles Marsh, *Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Knopf, 2014), p. 231. On Bonhoeffer's recognition of the liturgical and spiritual poverty in the Protestant church, see DBWE 6, pp. 406–7.

Bonhoeffer avers.[34] If for Luther faith meant leaving the monastery, faith in Bonhoeffer's time required a return to it.[35] The danger of traditional monasticism, in Bonhoeffer's estimate, is not the seriousness with which it takes discipleship or the rigor it directs toward Christian practices, but the way it relegates such things to 'the extraordinary achievement of a few'.[36] To claim that monasticism is a special achievement is implicitly to sanction the existence of non-monastic life alongside it. This unhelpful distinction only accelerated the church's secularization. Bonhoeffer therefore sought a monastic-like form of existence that would characterize the *whole* church. This is not a repudiation of 'the very lofty standards set by monastic life' but a reminder that all Christian communities, whether literally monastic or not, ought to strive diligently for holiness.[37]

Many contemporaries feared that Bonhoeffer's neo-monastic proposal represented a spiritually sophisticated excuse to abandon the world.[38] Yet Bonhoeffer was adamant that distinction *from* the world and existence *for* it

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34   Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 8, ed. John W. de Gruchy, trans. Isabel Best, *et al.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), p. 173 (hereafter DBWE 8).

35   See Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p. 455.

36   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 4, p. 47.

37   Ibid., p. 245. As further evidence that Bonhoeffer's ecclesial vision was monastic in nature we must consider his time spent at the Ettal monastery during the winter of 1940–41. Bonhoeffer himself drew connections between the practices of Ettal and his own experiment in life together: 'The ordered life is again very good for me, and I am amazed at the extent to which in the seminary [i.e., Finkenwalde] we did similar things quite on our own' (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1940–1945*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 16, ed. Mark S. Brocker, trans. Lisa E. Dahill (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), p. 89; hereafter DBWE 16). Greg Peters expounds on this connection in his work, *The Story of Monasticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015): 'Without a doubt, Bonhoeffer's vision of life together for Christians was monastic in its inspiration and in its structure' (p. 233). Peters goes so far as to chart the many specific parallels between the *Rule of Benedict* and Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*. Also see Peters, *Reforming the Monastery: Protestant Theologies of the Religious Life* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), p. 120. It is similarly telling that the Benedictine monks at Ettal were quite taken with Bonhoeffer's Finkenwalde writings. '*Life Together* was read here', Bonhoeffer amusedly recounted to a friend, 'and I hear that yesterday, at the monastery Christmas celebration, part of *Discipleship* was read aloud. That is quite pleasing, is it not?' (DBWE 16, p. 113). Recently, Craig Gardiner has creatively engaged the neo-monastic dimensions of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology; see his forthcoming work, *Melodies of a New Monasticism: Bonhoeffer's Vision, Iona's Witness* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock).

38   Wilhelm Rott, Bonhoeffer's assistant at Finkenwalde, visited Basel in 1935, and from Barth's calendar notes we learn of his concern that Bonhoeffer's monastic tendency 'seems more an effort to flee' (Bonhoeffer, DBWE 14, p. 266 no. 3).

must mutually cohere within one ecclesiological vision. 'The goal is not monastic isolation but rather the most intensive concentration for the sake of ministry to the world', he wrote in a letter to a friend.[39] There is, Bonhoeffer claims, an 'intrinsic connection between [the] commission and the church's own domain'.[40] Faithful engagement with the world must emerge from a posture of powerlessness, and only a 'sanctified life in God's church-community' could sustain such a posture.[41]

This brief foray into the respective ecclesiological proposals on offer in Dreher and Bonhoeffer reveals that their projects share key traits: (a) they are fashioned in response to perceived hostility against authentic faith; (b) they trust that the resources necessary for ecclesial formation can be found within the church and its traditions; and (c) they opt for ecclesial quality over quantity, for faithfulness over influence. The distinctly *new* dimensions of neo-monasticism emerge (d) in its insistence that monastic existence is for the whole church and not just a select few and (e) in its advocacy for a form of separation from the surrounding culture that does not require literal geographic withdrawal.[42] The separation proposed is not a matter of geography but one of power, a separation from the political logic operative in the surrounding culture. This is precisely where neo-monasticism holds potential to inform the contemporary church's missional self-understanding. By embodying a neo-monastic posture, the church can be present to the world without playing by the world's rules. Yet, as we will see below, the difference between powerlessness as a tactic and powerlessness as an aspect of faithfulness itself is the difference between two types of neo-monastic existence, one predicated on ideology and one that seeks the imitation of Christ.

The Christo-Logic of Bonhoeffer's Neo-Monasticism

In order to explore this difference, it is important to realize that Bonhoeffer's neo-monastic program at Finkenwalde was no knee jerk reaction. The seeds that came to fruition in his communal experiment had been planted early in his career. In contrast to both the *Kulturprotestantismus* that rendered the

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39   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 14, p. 96.

40   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 6, p. 408.

41   Ibid., p. 64. Gardiner similarly claims that Bonhoeffer's was a 'worldly monasticism' (*Melodies of a New Monasticism*).

42   Close analysis reveals Bonhoeffer's geographic move to Finkenwalde to be a politically motivated accident rather than a theological necessity.

church invisible and the anthropocentric neo-Protestantism that individualized the church, Bonhoeffer sought from a young age to articulate a theologically robust account of Christian community. This early focus on ecclesiology came to the fore in his 1927 dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*, and is famously captured in his refrain, *'Die Kirche ist Christus als Gemeinde existierend'*—the church is Christ existing as community. Although he had been captivated by the radical theology of revelation emerging from Barth in the 1920s, he worried that Barth's emphasis on divine freedom risked neglecting the temporal, historical, and social forms of Christian existence.[43] Hence whereas Barth located revelation in the ever-approaching word, Bonhoeffer located it socially in the church, which was itself the presence of Christ to the world.

Charles Marsh is surely right to detect 'a slightly monkish air' in this ecclesiological programme. It implies, contrary to Protestant theological trends of the time, that the church is a distinctly visible, tangible, and unique social space.[44] While writing *Sanctorum Communio*, of course, Bonhoeffer had no intentions of beginning a new monastic movement. His argumentation is more philosophical than practical. Drawing from Hegel, he refers to the community's empirical tangibility vis-à-vis the wider world in terms of its objective spirit. 'Where wills unite', he writes, 'a "structure" is created ... a third entity, previously unknown, independent of being willed or not willed by the persons who are uniting.'[45] Because of its objective spirit, the church is neither invisibly hidden within wider culture nor a mere conglomeration of individuals drawn from it. By spanning the spatial and temporal dimensions of the community, the objective spirit forges historical continuity and thereby allows the community to persist as one entity through time in marked distinction from others.

The neo-monastic impulse latent within *Sanctorum Communio* emerged more distinctly near the end of Bonhoeffer's life. From prison he famously contended that the world had 'come of age'. He came to see, in other words, that the social forms that had characterized the church in Europe for generations were no longer sufficient for ensuring ecclesial faithfulness. His prison

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43   See, for example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 2, ed. Hans Richard Reuter and Wayne Whitson Floyd, trans. Martin H. Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), pp. 81–91 (hereafter DBWE 2).

44   Marsh, *Strange Glory*, p. 58.

45   Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 1, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), p. 98 (hereafter DBWE 1). For Hegel, see 'The Philosophy of the Spirit', trans. Steven A. Taubeneck, in *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences in Outline, and Other Critical Writings*, ed. Ernst Behler (New York: Continuum, 1991).

letters therefore contain initial gestures toward a 'nonreligious interpretation' of Christianity. Yet as Eberhard Bethge suggests, 'While Bonhoeffer developed his ideas on the nonreligious interpretation of Christianity in a world come of age, he never considered abandoning his connection with the traditional words and customs of the church.'[46] In brazenly embracing the future, he nevertheless sought to preserve the past. This dialectic posture becomes especially clear in his advocacy for the *disciplina arcani*, i.e., the discipline of the secret.[47] As used within the early church, the *arcanum* distinguished between ecclesial practices open to the public (e.g., the sermon) and those carried out within the community of the baptized (e.g., creed and Eucharist). The *arcanum* carries distinctly monastic undertones because it preserves the church's separation from the wider non-Christian culture and thereby creates space for the formation of a distinctly Christian pattern of life.[48] It thus becomes evident that at both poles of Bonhoeffer's career he envisions a monastic-like church that embodies a unique pattern of living, thinking, and speaking and that therefore stands in marked distinction from the surrounding culture.

But at this point an important distinction becomes necessary. In both cases, Bonhoeffer's neo-monastic project of ecclesial separation functions penultimately. This distinction is significant, for it shines light on the unique role of Christology within his neo-monastic vision.

The Christo-logic of Bonhoeffer's neo-monasticism first emerges in *Sanctorum Communio* as he distinguishes between the objective spirit and the Holy Spirit. The formation of the former, as important as this task is, carries theological value only because the Holy Spirit uses the objective spirit 'as a vehicle

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46   Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p. 881.

47   See DBWE 8, pp. 364, 373, 389, 428, 502; idem, *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work: 1931–1932*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 11, ed. Victoria J. Barnett, *et al.*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, *et al.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), p. 313; idem, *Berlin: 1932–1933*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 12, ed. Larry L. Rasmussen, trans. Douglas W. Stott, Isabel Best, and David Higgins (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), p. 213; DBWE 14, pp. 532, 554, 557. For the definitive scholarly work on Bonhoeffer's account of the arcane discipline, see Andres Pangritz, *Dietrich Bonhoeffers Forderung einer Arkandisziplin* (Pahl-Rugenstein, 1988). The precise meaning of this phrase in Bonhoeffer's thinking is disputed. Two strands of interpretation are available: the traditional and the revisionary. The traditional is evident in Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, pp. 880ff and John D. Godsey, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), p. 254. The revisionary is found in John D. Matthews, 'Responsible Sharing of the Mystery', in *Reflections on Bonhoeffer: Essays in Honor of F. Burton Nelson*, ed. Geffrey B. Kelly and C. John Weborg (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1999), pp. 114–126.

48   On this, see Stephen Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 33.

for its gathering and sustaining social activity'.[49] To borrow Bonhoeffer's language from that time, the uniquely visible structures of the church become the means by which Christ freely exists in and as the church community. Or to put this differently, the visible structures that constitute the community's objective spirit have value precisely because they can, by God's grace, become the means of a divine event.

The *disciplina arcani* functions according to a similar logic. From prison Bonhoeffer came to realize that in a world come of age the question that faces the church is not merely one of Christological orthodoxy (what has the church said in the past?) but one of contemporary faithfulness (what must the church say now?). Thus a driving question animates his nonreligious musings: 'Who is Jesus Christ actually for us today?'[50] He knew that this question could not be answered with mere theological propositions, as if new Christological language would save the church. In asking this question, Bonhoeffer was seeking a more concrete reality: to confront Christ himself. Instead of words about Jesus, he was seeking to be pulled 'into walking the path that Jesus walks'.[51] The *arcanum* has great value at precisely this point. Eberhard Bethge summarizes it well: 'In the *arcanum* Christ takes everyone who really encounters him by the shoulder, turning them around to face their fellow human beings and the world.'[52] Bonhoeffer recognized, in other words, that the distinct form of communal life and thought that the *arcanum* sustains places the church in a posture from which it can faithfully pursue Christ's contemporaneity and encounter Christ himself.

Barth puts helpful language to this account of neo-monastic practices when he suggests that *freedom for* God and an *openness to* God's word stand as the proper telos of monastic life.[53] With this insight, he captures the Christocentric logic of Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology. Bonhoeffer's neo-monasticism is fundamentally Christological, or, more technically, *Christotelic*, for it facilitates the community's encounter with and participation in Christ. Thus for Bonhoeffer both the objective spirit and the *arcanum* function penultimately, directing the community toward a transcendent reality. Because Christ is a living person, his

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49   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 1, p. 215.

50   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 8, p. 362.

51   Ibid., p. 480.

52   Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p. 883.

53   Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/2: *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), pp. 15–16, emphasis added. It is telling that between the pre-war years, when he criticized Bonhoeffer's monastic-like project, and 1955, when he finished IV/2 of the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth seems to have become more agreeable to neo-monasticism.

ongoing action cannot be predicted ahead of time; it must be discerned ever anew. Thus precisely because it is Christotelic, monasticism must also be hermeneutical, a means of interpreting the ongoing reign of Christ. By indwelling inherited traditions, the church becomes uniquely attuned to Christ, and by separating itself from competing patterns of thinking and being, the church discovers new ways of knowing. In this, Bonhoeffer's neo-monasticism aims to sustain an ongoing mode of attention and to foster a habit of susceptibility to Christ. We must separate ourselves from the world and take deliberate efforts to be the church, Bonhoeffer would say, precisely because we follow a living Lord who is on the move.[54]

Nominalism, Culture, and the Mission of Monasticism

Having grasped the Christo-logic animating Bonhoeffer's theological imagination, we can now tease out the differences separating his and Dreher's neo-monastic project. This difference becomes acutely apparent in an unexpected place: their respective responses to the threat of nominalism. On the one hand, both worry about the challenges that nominalism presents to the life of the church. Bonhoeffer notes, for instance, that 'the movement toward human autonomy … which began around the thirteenth century … has reached a certain completeness in our age.'[55] Because of this 'the foundations are being pulled out from under all that "Christianity" has previously been for us.'[56] He first detected the ecclesiological implications of nominalism in Barth's early emphasis on divine freedom.[57] He worried that Barth's dialectical account of the Word prevented him from attending concretely to the life and practices of the church. Bonhoeffer countered by proffering a thick ecclesiology predicated on Christ's presence.[58] Later in life, he would again address the ecclesiological challenges of nominalism. In his 1939 essay, 'Protestantism without

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54   In contrast, it is telling that Dreher believes that Christ was at work in the world in the past, but not in the present: 'God used people from the West's pagan past to prepare souls for the coming of Christ', he suggests, which means that catechesis 'proceeds from the conviction that God is still doing that through the art, literature, and philosophy *of the past*' (pp. 152–153, emphasis added). Bereft of an operative doctrine of the resurrection and ascension, the Benedict Option asks only about what happened in the past, not about what Christ is doing today.

55   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 8, p. 425.

56   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 8, p. 363.

57   See Bonhoeffer, DBWE 2, p. 85.

58   See, for example, ibid., p. 91.

the Reformation', he notes that nominalist tendencies had contributed to the fragmentation of the Anglo-American church.[59] Though this critique differs in key ways from his earlier critique of Barth, it similarly presents nominalism as an adversary to genuine ecclesiology. In this later essay he goes on to claim that lurking behind the nominalist problem is an even more pressing issue: the role of Jesus in the life of church. He powerfully concludes by claiming that in the fragmented Anglo-American church, 'the person and work of Jesus Christ recedes into the background'.[60] This confusion about Christ's presence, Bonhoeffer ultimately claims, lies at the root of ecclesiological disarray. Granted the challenges that nominalism poses to traditional forms of belief, the deeper problem is not primarily that the church has lost touch with a certain metaphysical system but that it has lost touch with the risen Christ. Thus the solution is not a frenzied attempt to turn back the clock to an older worldview but intentional theological effort aimed at articulating faithfulness to Jesus in a new cultural situation.

Dreher's concern with nominalism is readily apparent. Indeed, throughout his work it plays the role of the great antagonist militating against ecclesial faithfulness. He goes so far as to deem it the root of the current crisis facing the church.[61] The Judeo-Christian culture of the West is dying, he laments, precisely because it lost faith in a particular 'Christian sacred order'.[62] He therefore bewails 'nominalist values' that undermine the possibility of a unified religious culture.[63] But whereas Bonhoeffer's solution to the problem is a renewed focus on Christ, Dreher takes the other path, embarking on a project of culture reconstruction. Indeed, the Benedict Option operates according to the belief that nothing is more important today than the survival of Christian culture.[64]

To state the matter baldly, although both neo-monastic projects are animated, at least to a certain degree, by the challenges of nominalism, they confront

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59   Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education Underground: 1937–1940*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 15, ed. Victoria J. Barnett, trans. Victoria J. Barnett *et al.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), p. 443.

60   Ibid., p. 462.

61   See Dreher, *Benedict Option*, pp. 21ff.

62   Ibid., p. 42.

63   Ibid., p. 203. Also see his claim that nominalism has given rise to the ideology of the machine (p. 220), that it has produced 'Technological Man' (p. 223), that it is the cause of individualism (p. 29), that it has eroded social stability (p. 45), created a therapeutic culture and Moral Therapeutic Deism (p. 45), and is to be blamed for contemporary sexual confusion (p. 203).

64   Ibid., p. 100. Here Dreher draws from Robert Louis Wilken, 'The Church as Culture', *First Things*, (April 2004): p. 36.

these challenges in different ways. Whereas Bonhoeffer defines the church in relation to the person of Christ and thus orients ecclesial life toward the Risen One, Dreher defines it in relation to 'a way of life',[65] a predictable mode of being grounded in a stable worldview, the promulgation of which becomes the telos of the church's service to the world.[66] At this key moment in the church's missional life, Bonhoeffer and the Benedict Option share similar diagnoses of the cultural situation yet offer markedly different prescriptions for the proper path forward.

It makes sense then, that whereas Bonhoeffer's theological imagination makes little sense apart from the risen Christ and his activity through the Spirit, Dreher makes little reference to God's real ongoing action in Christ. Indeed, the resurrection and ascension are conspicuously absent from his work and logically inconsequential to his neo-monastic proposal. For sure, he talks about the idea of God and adheres to a classical doctrine of Christ. But Christology is not Christ himself—as Barth quipped, it has neither words nor a voice.[67]

Ideology and the Temptation of Monasticism

None of this necessarily implies fault in Dreher, of course. If social instability is the felt need animating your theology, the Benedict Option provides the desired results. Bonhoeffer would suggest, however, that precisely because a metaphysically funded culture plays the role that would otherwise belong Christ himself, Dreher's neo-monastic project is not actually an alternative to the political power games of the world. It becomes, instead, another iteration of them.

The reason for this has to do with the ways that ideology and Christology respectively operate within ecclesiology. In Bonhoeffer's terms, this is the difference between a Christ-idea and Christ as a living person. What the church needs, he suggests, is not 'some kind of Christianity, but Jesus Christ himself',[68] not 'the realization of a Christian idea [but] the reality of the living Jesus'.[69] This distinction carries significance because of its implications for the church's missional self-understanding. The difference between Christ as person and Christ as idea is the difference between two very different postures

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65   Dreher, *Benedict Option*, p. 101.
66   See ibid., p. 102.
67   Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, p. 536.
68   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 6, p. 155.
69   Ibid., p. 156.

toward the world. Without an operative account of the risen Christ and his ongoing agency, the church, in its missionary zeal, feels pressured to pick up the slack, which it does by promulgating the items it has at its disposal—its culture, its habits, its ideas. In this way, Bonhoeffer recognized that to trade the person for our ideas about him is to embark down the path toward ideology. As James Gustafson would later conclude in his influential essay, 'The Sectarian Impulse', when theology loses sight of God as its proper object, it instead becomes concerned 'with the perpetuation of ideology', which functions as the lifeblood of a church that lives without recourse to the living God.[70]

For Bonhoeffer this was not a mere academic matter. When we ask ideas about God to do what only the living God can do, missional disasters follow. In the midst of the church struggle, he came to believe that some conservative factions within the Confessing Church had become so concerned to uphold Christological orthodoxy that for them 'Jesus disappears from view'.[71] In a way that is reminiscent of Gustafson's insights, he notes that in standing up for a 'cause' these Christians were thereby tempted to 'entrench themselves' behind the 'faith of the church'.[72] Such Christians fought for a culture, but Bonhoeffer worried that precisely in so doing they became unable to ask the more pressing question: Who is Jesus Christ for us today?

Bonhoeffer goes one step further in his diagnosis of ideology: when the church operates ideologically rather than Christologically, it inevitably becomes embroiled in the very power games that neo-monasticism purportedly attempts to eschew. As he claims in *Discipleship*, Christianity without Jesus becomes merely an idea, and the church thereby becomes a mere human programme in competition with others.[73] 'The idea is strong' and 'nothing is impossible for the idea', he claims, which is why 'an idea requires fanatics, who neither know nor respect resistance'.[74] Thus when the church confuses 'the word of the gospel with a conquering idea',[75] it inevitably sets out 'to struggle against the enmity of the world'.[76] A church that operates ideologically rather than Christologically will adopt an account of mission aimed at promulgating religious culture. And when this happens, Bonhoeffer continues, the church

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70   James Gustafson, 'The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church and the University', *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 40 (1985), p. 87.

71   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 8, p. 500.

72   Ibid., pp. 500, 502.

73   See Bonhoeffer, DBWE 4, pp. 59–61.

74   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 4, p. 173.

75   Ibid.

76   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 6, pp. 56–57.

will find itself engaged in 'intractable conflict' against competing cultural options.[77] To put the matter sharply, whereas Christotelic neo-monasticism exerts its energy in the hermeneutical task of discerning and participating in Christ's ongoing life, neo-monasticism oriented toward worldview construction becomes a matter of cultural imperialism.

On the surface, of course, Dreher renounces the power struggle that Bonhoeffer laments. As we have seen, Dreher suggests that losing political power might save the church's soul. Yet, if this salvation necessarily requires a particular worldview, a particular culture, and can be found without recourse to the risen Christ, competition becomes the mode of the church's missional engagement. To Dreher's credit, he insists that the Benedict Option must be animated by love.[78] But when a way of life becomes the essence of Christianity, love necessarily operates in the mode of conflict. Dreher claims, for instance, that the church should 'work on building communities … of resistance that can outwit, outlast, and eventually *overcome the occupation*.'[79] The vision of neo-monastic existence purportedly patterned after powerlessness becomes, on closer examination, a tactic, a veiled pursuit of power, an attempt to defeat not only the enemy's policies (as was the case, for example, with the 'moral majority' in the u.s.) but the very metaphysical structure that gives the enemy life. The implication, in other words, is that the church ought to carry out its battle not at the level of policies and procedures but at the level of ideas. And doing *this* requires a remarkable amount of power—enough to overcome the effects of several hundred years of worldview development in order to construct a metaphysical alternative. Though the Benedict Option proposes abandoning the culture wars, it does not abandon the theo-logic that funds the wars in the first place. Powerlessness becomes a tactic toward a greater end, not a claim about the essence of the church itself.

Bonhoeffer's neo-monasticism, in contrast, was not a veiled attempt to govern history but a radical act of commitment to the One who was crowned Lord of history precisely through his total abandonment of power. Indeed, for Bonhoeffer the only antidote to the power-producing effects of ideology is Christ himself, 'who alone did not lapse into any ideology'.[80]

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77   Ibid., p. 265.
78   Dreher, *Benedict Option*, pp. 237–238.
79   Ibid., p. 12, emphasis added.
80   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 6, p. 263.

A Pilgrim Church

Perhaps the difference between these two versions of neo-monasticism is the difference between *exile* and *pilgrimage*. Dreher would argue that just as the Jews in Babylon were exiled from their home country, so too the church in the West is exiled from its home culture. The logic driving this vision is that once the church returns home, exile will come to an end. When salubrious cultural conditions finally materialize, the neo-monastic project can be abandoned in favour of a more normative ecclesiology. Powerlessness will have run its course, and the church can again embrace a position of culture control.

Because his theological imagination is predicated on the presence of the risen Christ, Bonhoeffer is able to offer a different depiction of the community's relationship to the world. Though he occasionally utilises the exilic texts of the Old Testament in order to describe his neo-monastic vision,[81] he more properly understands the church as a pilgrim people, not an exiled people. 'On earth, the church-community lives in a foreign land', he writes. 'It is a colony of strangers far away from home, a community of foreigners enjoying the hospitality of the host country.'[82] Notice that for Bonhoeffer the church lives in a foreign land precisely as it lives *on earth*, which means that no particular home culture would mark the end of pilgrimage. In this respect, his neo-monastic ecclesiology echoes the New Testament's account of the church as a community of 'strangers and foreigners on the earth' who 'are seeking a homeland … a better country, that is, a heavenly one' (Heb. 11:13–16).[83]

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81   See, for example, his interaction with Ezra and Nehemiah from Finkenwalde, in which he typologically locates the Confessing Church within the story of Israel during the Babylonian exile (DBWE 14, pp. 917–930).

82   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 4, p. 250.

83   It also resonates with key aspects of St. Benedict's *Rule*; see the English translation, ed. Timothy Fry, O.S.B. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982). For Benedict himself, more clearly than his namesake Option, Christian life is an ongoing process of imitation and transformation, an ongoing process of discipleship. To be sure, Benedict's *Rule* lacks the singular Christological focus that animates Bonhoeffer's work. Yet the *Rule* nevertheless operates according to an implicit account of Christ's concrete otherness, an otherness that one encounters in the face of the sick (p. 59), the stranger (p. 73), the poor and pilgrims (p. 74), and, of course, the Abbot himself (p. 86). No wonder that when Bonhoeffer recounts his experience of visiting the Benedictines at Ettal, he fondly notes the 'truly Christian deference shown to the stranger for Christ's sake' (DBWE 16, p. 89). Christ, for Benedict, is always to be *found*, never simply to be *had*. He remains elusively other than the monastic culture, no matter how pristine the culture may be. The assumption running throughout the *Rule* is that monasticism carries penultimate value as a means of equipping the monks to pursue Christ. Indeed, St. Benedict calls his work a 'little rule

Because no particular culture or worldview is logically necessary for faithfulness, the church is free to be the church in all times and places. As a stranger on earth, it can eschew what Bonhoeffer calls the the *salto mortale*—the death-defying leap—back to the Middle Ages, tempting though this option may seem when one's home culture begins to crumble.[84] As a pilgrim community it can be faithful even 'without the temporally conditioned presuppositions of metaphysics'.[85] Precisely by de-centering the importance of cultural markers like worldview and ideology, Bonhoeffer can admit that Christ is not 'the object of religion' but 'truly the Lord of the world'.[86] And with this realization the church discovers the freedom to serve not through competition, worldview formation or culture construction, but through sacrifice and witness.[87] 'The church is church only when it is there for others', he therefore maintains.[88] Without neglecting the neo-monastic endeavor to form a distinct and separate community, Bonhoeffer recognized that the church was merely an instrument, not an end in itself.[89] If ideology obstructs genuine openness to others by turning encounter into competition, as Bonhoeffer suggests,[90] then Christotelic and hermeneutical neo-monasticism holds open the possibility of forms of life that are 'wide open to the neighbor and the neighbor's concrete distress'.[91] Indeed, Christian life for Bonhoeffer is not a matter of constructing a cultural alternative to the world but of 'participation in Christ's encounter with the world'[92] and being 'pulled into walking the path that Jesus walks'.[93]

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for beginners' that one can transcend when one is ready to 'set out for loftier summits' (p. 96). In this sense, it is possible to claim that the *Rule* as a whole plays a hermeneutical function, placing one in a posture to discern 'the voice from heaven that every day calls out' (p. 16). And while Benedict was not fond of monks who literally wandered from place to place (see p. 21), his vision of Christ-directed practices implies, in agreement with Bonhoeffer, a notion of *pilgrimage* on earth, a constant 'hastening toward your heavenly home' (p. 95).

84   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 8, p. 478.
85   Ibid., p. 364.
86   Ibid.
87   See Bonhoeffer, DBWE 6, p. 357.
88   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 8, p. 503.
89   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 6, p. 404.
90   Ibid., p. 248.
91   Ibid., p. 279.
92   Ibid., p. 159.
93   Bonhoeffer, DBWE 8, p. 480.

Conclusion

There was much truth in Bonhoeffer's claim that a 'new kind of monasticism' would save the church—not because monasticism is salvific in and of itself but because monasticism, properly understood, functions penultimately to foster allegiance to Jesus, the one who is. This vision of neo-monasticism, I have argued, stands in contrast to the neo-monasticism of the Benedict Option. Granted the notable similarities between the two ecclesiological programmes, I have argued that they represent two distinct versions of monastic existence. Where one is Christotelic, terminating in an encounter with and participation in Christ; the other is cultural, terminating in the construction of a cultural alternative to the world. Where one functions hermeneutically as a means of discerning Christ, the other functions ideologically as a means of perpetuating cultural stability. Where one is penultimate, the other becomes an end in itself. Where one envisions the church as a pilgrim people longing for an eschatological home, the other envisions a church exiled from its home culture, for which it longs and after which it strives.

While Dreher's call to embrace powerlessness has much to offer a church seeking to live faithfully in a post-Christian world, without an operative account of the risen Christ, such noble desires fall flat. In such a system, ideology replaces the word of Christ, and contest becomes the mode of mission. Bonhoeffer's neo-monasticism has much to offer the church, therefore, precisely because it does not depend on a particular culture or a particular worldview. The church can be the church *anywhere* and can love *any* of its neighbors, no matter how pagan they may seem. And what the church needs to do this, Bonhoeffer suggests, is not more power but an ongoing attentiveness to the Lord who walks ahead of his people.