



# ON THE ROAD

Journal of the  
*Anabaptist Association of  
Australia and New Zealand Inc*  
No. 38 September 2008

## COMMUNITIES of the KINGDOM The New Monasticism and Anabaptism



- \* Seeing things common to Anabaptism and the New Monasticism (including Celtic Spirituality)
- \* Telling The Stories

- \* Seeing its relevance in the Australian Culture
- \* Learning from The New Monasticism

Friday evening 23rd January to Monday afternoon 26th January 2009  
Oasis Christian Camp, 66 Monbulk Road, Mt Evelyn Victoria  
[www.oasis.asn.au](http://www.oasis.asn.au)

**Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Conference 2009  
OPEN TO ALL**

For further information [www.anabaptist.asn.au](http://www.anabaptist.asn.au)  
Or Contact - Bessie Pereira 61 3 9893 2649 or 0412 316 252

**Jesus is the centre of our Faith!  
Community is the centre of our Life!  
Reconciliation is the centre of our Work!**

## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>COMMUNITIES of the KINGDOM</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>The Kings and Their Gods</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Tele-conversation</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>PRESIDENT'S REPORT</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Plan Be</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Anabaptism a New Monasticism</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>The Doors of the Sea</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Making China Beautiful!</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Herald Press</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>Church Planting Inner City</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Half Day Silent Retreat</b>

### On The Road

The AAANZ quarterly journal publishes news, articles, book reviews, and resource information. It is published online with a paper edition available for those without computer facilities. (Paper edition A\$25 per year) To be added to the mailing list write:

[AAANZ@iprimus.com.au](mailto:AAANZ@iprimus.com.au) or

**On The Road Editors, P.O. Box 738, Mona Vale NSW 1660 Australia**

**COVER SYMBOL:** The lamb in the midst of briars is a traditional Anabaptist symbol. It illustrates the suffering Lamb of God, who calls the faithful to obedient service and discipleship on the road. This particular rendition is from *Hymnal A Worship Book*. Copyright 1992. Reprinted with permission of Mennonite Publishing House, Scottsdale, PA, USA.

# THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR

MARK AND MARY HURST

...to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service



A major focus of this issue of **ON THE ROAD** is the relationship between Anabaptism and new monasticism. We are preparing for our exploration of this connection at the AAANZ conference in January 2009. One community

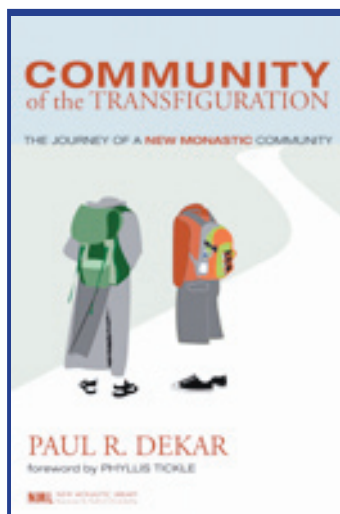
*desperately needs them... new monastic communities offer a countercultural way forward rooted in the messianic lifestyle of Jesus and the early disciples.” (118)*



that will be represented in January is the Community of the Transfiguration from Geelong, Victoria. A recent book - **Community Of The Transfiguration**, Paul Dekar, Cascade Books, 2008 – tells their story.

Paul Dekar explores the contemporary and historic interest in Christian community. In writing about the Iona community in Scotland, he says *“The testimony of so many on Iona is that healing comes through living the questions, and not accepting easy answers. Somehow, the Church at large must work at ways of restoring real community to its heart, and intentional communities such as Iona can offer hard-won experience in the quest for such an essential recovery.” (20)*

The new interest in monastic communities is still small in the overall Christian community and could be easily missed except that a number of their leaders are also prolific writers. But like Anabaptism that has always been “light on the ground”, new monasticism offers a prophetic witness to the rest of the church. Dekar writes: *“Throughout history, there have never been many monks, yet the world has often depended on them. Today, there are still not many monks, yet the world*



Throughout this issue we will introduce you to some of the key books about new monasticism. They are all very readable and we're sure you will pick up the hints of Anabaptism in these books.

Dekar tells an interesting story from the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. An African woman confronted some Americans and said *“We are worried that you Americans are not human. You don't do most of what makes humans human. Do all your people sing? Does your community dance together? Do you incorporate your young into the community? Do you have laws of stranger hospitality?” (118)*

This rebuke is not just for Americans, it is for all of Western culture and particularly our church communities. Are we creating communities of faith that celebrate life through singing and dancing? Do we think about the next generations and do things with them in mind? Do we welcome strangers through gracious hospitality? Good questions from an African sister to stir us to love and good works.

Enjoy the mix of articles, book reviews, and announcements. We look forward to seeing many of you in January as we gather to discuss these issues further.

**...new monastic communities offer a countercultural way forward rooted in the messianic lifestyle of Jesus and the early disciples.**

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

## DOUG SEWELL

### Building Peace Through Relationships

**Christian Pacemaker Teams Australasia** has taken off like a windstorm. "To devote the same discipline and self-sacrifice to non-violent peacemaking that armies devote to war" is the CPT slogan. And how appropriate it has been.

**Erin and Casper Adson**, members of AAANZ, have travelled the eastern states of Australia talking about how they worked alongside Christian Pacemaker Teams in Hebron. How Erin and Casper had their lives turned upside down by the power of creative non-violence is a powerful story in itself. Their alternative narrative of the Israeli and Palestinian story has brought new insight to the long-standing and complex conflict. The opportunities for Christians to engage in direct action as peacemakers has generated huge interest amongst a wide spread of churches including Baptist, Catholic, Quaker and the Uniting Church of Australia. The Adsons will visit Perth and Adelaide and also plan to get to Tasmania and New Zealand in 2009.

CPT Australasia wants to engage with local and regional injustices such as impacts of climate change and local indigenous issues in West Papua, East Timor and the Solomon Islands. CPT Australasia we believe will also be fundamental in moving churches to a commitment on peacemaking in coming years.

AAANZ has taken a central role in the formation of the regional CPT group for Australasia. Peacemaking is a core conviction of the Anabaptists. Foremost is a dedication to achieving peace through non-violent means. Our role is to support the victims of violence as well as to love the perpetrators, by standing in the way of injustice and violence in all its forms and to work for just and righteous outcomes that bring about reconciliation



and restoration in the same manner in which Jesus loved his enemies and by his actions and life reconciles us. When conflict is reduced to causes and ideologies and where the integrity of individual relationships are

ignored the ability to become peacemakers is also lost. There is a tension here that is dynamic and requires creative responses to each situation.

### At the heart of peacemaking is relationship building.

AAANZ has also been building relationships at a different level across our network. A directory of members along with a monthly prayer diary has been sent to AAANZ members. This allows not only me but also every member to know a little more about other members and to pray for one another on a rotating daily basis. I have said before that for a network to function effectively every person needs to be able to interact with every one else - like a web. For a network that is broad and diverse in nature this can bring about a fresh reappraisal of our own understanding and an appreciation of each other. I'd like to say to all subscribers of the AAANZ Mailings that have not yet become AAANZ members, I would welcome you as full members of our growing network.

Another benefit of being a member is to participate in our phone tele-conversations. In August, AAANZ members joined an

inspiring phone chat with **Dave Andrews**. Dave and his wife Ange, members of AAANZ, have lived and worked in intentional communities with marginalised groups of people in Australia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nepal for more than thirty years. They now live in a large joint household with their children, grandchildren and others in an inner city community in Brisbane. Dave spoke about his new book that rescues the 'Be-Attitudes' from obscurity and uses them for 'Plan Be' - "being the change we want to see in the world".

**Tim Costello** will be our next speaker at the AAANZ members' tele-conversation on 4 October. To participate email me at [doug.sewell@tpg.com.au](mailto:doug.sewell@tpg.com.au)

Also make sure that you don't miss out on attending the next AAANZ Conference 23 to 26 January 2009 - **The New Monasticism and Anabaptism** - to be held at Mt Evelyn near Melbourne. Communities such as *Peace Tree* in Perth, *Jesus Generation* in Canberra, *Community of the Transfiguration* near Geelong and *Urban Neighbours of Hope* in Melbourne will speak of their experiences and the challenges of pioneering new ways of living together whilst serving others. For more details and to register now go to [www.anabaptist.asn.au](http://www.anabaptist.asn.au).

# ANABAPTISM

## THE BEGINNING OF A NEW MONASTICISM

MARK S. HURST

### Introduction

Wolfgang Capito, a Reformer in Strasbourg, wrote a letter to the Burgermeister and Council at Horb in May 1527 warning about the Anabaptist leader Michael Sattler. He was worried that Sattler was bringing about “the beginning of a new monasticism.” (Yoder, 87)

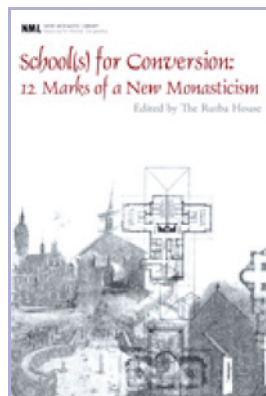
Both Anabaptism and “new monasticism” are being explored today as relevant expressions of the Christian faith in our post-Christendom environment. The connections between these two movements will be examined in a conference sponsored by the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand in January 2009 as they were in a recent conference in Great Britain called “New Habits for a New Era? Exploring New Monasticism,” co-sponsored by the British Anabaptist Network and the Northumbria Community.

(See <http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/19> for papers from the conference.) The British gathering raised a number of questions for these movements:

*“We hear many stories of ‘emerging churches’ and ‘fresh expressions of church’, but Christians in many places are also rediscovering older forms of spirituality and discipleship. Some are drawing on the monastic traditions to find resources for a post-Christendom culture. ‘New monasticism’ is the term many are using to describe these attempts to re-work old rhythms, rules of life and liturgical resources in a new era. Is this a hopeful sign? Or is this ‘monastic-lite’, a fad that is unlikely to last? What does ‘new monasticism’ mean and what does it offer the church?”*

### New Monasticism

New monastic writers start with an exploration of our 21st century Western setting: *“Today... faithfulness to the gospel is in danger. As our culture’s project desperately works to maintain control despite its looming death, the*



*‘living arrangement’ worked out by the church and the culture is collapsing. Many parts of the church are sinking with the culture and doing so without any resistance. The call for a new monasticism is the work of God’s Spirit calling us to renewed understanding of the gospel and faithful witness to it through new forms of monastic community.”* (Rutba House, 9)

Alasdair MacIntyre’s conclusion in **After Virtue** is quoted often by these writers: *“What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the dark ages which are already upon us... This time, however, the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been among us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for Godot, but for another-doubtless very different-St. Benedict.”* (Rutba House, 2)

This idea *“that our increasingly fragmented and barbarous Western Civilization can only be saved by a new Benedict... is the somewhat grandiose idea behind the call for a new monasticism that can produce disciplined communities sustaining the virtues of civilized life... The new monasticism... will have little of value to offer the world if it tries to meet the needs of the world as defined by the world. What the world needs is Jesus, and a people who allow their lives to be radically reshaped in communities demonstrating love and non-violence of the One who sent Jesus.”* (Rutba House, 95)

These new intentional communities are appearing in all the major western Christian traditions—Evangelical, Protestant, Catholic and Pentecostal-Charismatic—and although they vary in purpose, outlook, and theology, they share a common centre: a commitment to follow Christ without compromise. Most of these communities are small, and when viewed individually appear to be insignificant and ineffective. But when they are viewed as part of a global movement it becomes apparent that an equivalent to the Benedictine monastic

movement of the first millennium is taking place in our time. This new movement has much in common with the one that preceded it:

- *Its communities are being formed by lay Christians.*
- *They are self-governing.*
- *They are focused on prayer and personal conversion.*
- *They are devoted to radical hospitality, especially for the poor.*
- *Their members engage in productive work in the wider community.*

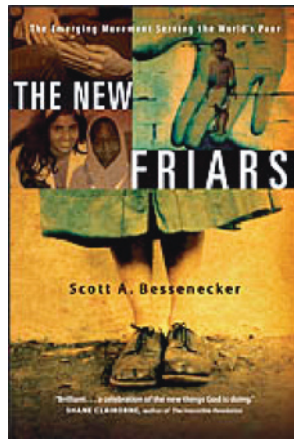
What is new about this movement of Christian intentionality is however as significant as its continuity with the past:

- *Its members are both married and celibate.*
- *Its communities vary greatly in organizational structure.*
- *They provide for large degrees of individual freedom.*
- *They are located in both urban and rural places.*
- *Their membership is ecumenical, and their outlook is global.”* (Kauffman, 2)

Some see this development as “suggesting unease with megachurch religion” and are surprised at the movement among Protestants who generally demonstrate “distaste with all things monkish.”

*“Martin Luther called monks and wandering friars ‘lice placed by the devil on God Almighty’s fur coat.’ Of all Protestants, American evangelicals in particular - activist, family-oriented, and far more concerned with evangelism than solitary study or meditative prayer - have historically viewed monks as an alien species, and a vaguely demonic one at that.”* (Worthen, 1)

Over 100 new monastic groups have sprung up in North America “suggesting that mainstream worship is leaving some people cold.” These new monastic communities “share a common frustration with what they see as the overcommercialized and socially apathetic culture of mainstream evangelicalism.” “They perceive a ‘spiritual flabbiness in the broader church and a tendency to assimilate into a corrupt, power-hungry world,’ writes author



## Scott Bessenecker in *The New Friars.*”

Bessenecker writes: “When I read about the intense Christian communities cropping up in corners of our twenty-first-century world, something inside me cries out to be a part of them. For much of my Christian life I have sought an expression of Christian community that defies the often-hollow suburban life held up to us as the ‘American

*Dream.’ We’re trained for an individualistic existence with self at the centre, especially for those of us in white American culture who grew up in suburban, single-family dwellings, separate from our extended family, encountering neighbours only at a superficial level. The new monasticism, as it is being called, is partly a reaction to the self-absorbed life of material accumulation, career obsession and amusement fixation that is promoted in the West and that is now being exported around the world as a picture of ‘the good life.’”* (Bessenecker, 187)

These new monastics “are post-Protestants, breaking old liturgical and theological taboos by borrowing liberally from Catholic traditions of monastic prayer, looking to St. Francis instead of Jerry Falwell for their social values, and stocking their bookshelves with the writings of medieval mystics rather than the latest from televangelist Joel Osteen.” While their numbers are still small in the overall American Evangelical scene, “their criticisms may resonate with more mainstream believers. A recent study by Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois... discovered that many churchgoers felt stalled in their faith, alienated by slick, program-driven pastors who focus more on niche marketing than cultivating contemplation. The study suggested that megachurch members know how to belt out jazzy pop hymns from their stadium seats, but they don’t always know how to talk to God alone.”

While New Monastics often live and worship together and “tend to favour simple living, left-leaning politics, and social activism” they are different from the Jesus People of the 1970’s in “their intellectual seriousness and monastic forms of prayer and study that set

*them apart... The real radicals aren't quoting Che Guevara or listening to Rage Against the Machine on their iPods," writes Wilson-Hartgrove in **New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today's Church**. 'The true revolutionaries are learning to pray.'*

Molly Worthen discovered that *"Most New Monastics are trying to create an alternative to conservative mainstream evangelicalism. They embrace ecumenism over doctrinal debate, encourage female leadership, and care far more about social justice and the environment than about the culture wars. Shane Claiborne, founder of one of the best-known New Monastic communities, the Simple Way of Philadelphia, asks that churches that invite him to speak offset the carbon emissions produced by his visit by "fasting" from fuel."*

She concludes: *"New Monastics consider themselves 'monks in the world.' They are not interested in extreme isolation or asceticism... Nearly all have regular jobs and social lives. From the traditionalist perspective, many break the most essential monastic rule: they are married. Most groups support those who choose a celibate lifestyle, and a few have a member or two who do so, but it happens rarely."* They seek *"to better integrate core Christian values into their lives as average citizens. This is the fundamental difference between old monks and the new. New Monastics often quote one of their heroes, Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who captured the ambitions - and the ecumenical limits - of the movement when he wrote in 1935, 'the restoration of the church will surely come only from a new kind of monasticism which will have nothing in common with the old but a life of uncompromising adherence to the Sermon on the Mount in imitation of Christ.'"*

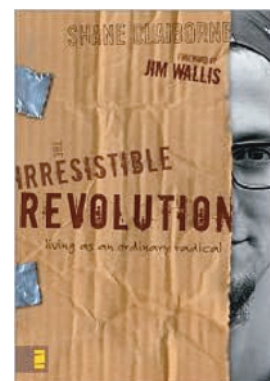
Some Evangelical critics of the movement fear New Monastics are getting too Catholic, too New-Age, or too near Eastern religions. Some Catholics are also wary, fearing these new monastics are watering down age-old traditions while other Catholics ask "What took you so long?" The monastic tradition is a spiritually rich one waiting to be discovered. There are Anabaptist connections in this new movement, particularly in the area of peacemaking. A number of early leaders of new monastic communities joined Christian

Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc. Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in Iraq at the beginning of the present war. One was Shane Claiborne, one of the movement's most popular authors, popular speakers and social activists. His book ***The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*** is a very readable description of the movement and has won praise from U.S. Evangelical luminaries like Brian McLaren, Ron Sider, Tony Campolo, Leonard Sweet, Tom Sine, and Rob Bell.

Claiborne includes in his book the "Twelve Marks of New Monasticism", a list developed at a gathering of new monastics in Durham, North Carolina.

*"This contemporary school for conversion which we have called a "new monasticism," is producing a grassroots ecumenism and a prophetic witness within the North American church which is diverse in form, but characterized by the following marks:*

- 1) *Relocation to the abandoned places of Empire.*
- 2) *Sharing economic resources with fellow community members and the needy among us.*
- 3) *Hospitality to the stranger*
- 4) *Lament for racial divisions within the church and our communities combined with the active pursuit of a just reconciliation.*
- 5) *Humble submission to Christ's body, the church.*
- 6) *Intentional formation in the way of Christ and the rule of the community along the lines of the old novitiate.*
- 7) *Nurturing common life among members of intentional community.*
- 8) *Support for celibate singles alongside monogamous married couples and their children.*
- 9) *Geographical proximity to community members who share a common rule of life.*
- 10) *Care for the plot of God's earth given to us along with support of our local economies.*
- 11) *Peacemaking in the midst of violence and conflict resolution within communities along the lines of Matthew 18.*
- 12) *Commitment to a disciplined contemplative life.*

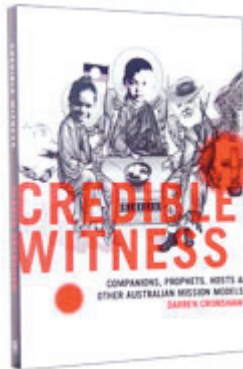


*May God give us grace by the power of the Holy Spirit to discern rules for living that will help us embody these marks in our local contexts as signs of Christ's kingdom for the sake of God's world."*

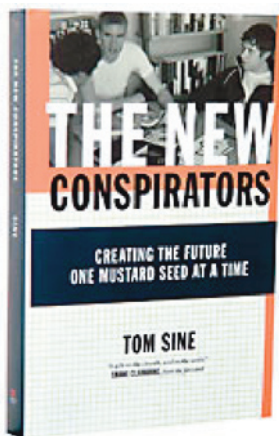
Anabaptist themes like *community* and *reconciliation* are reminiscent of this recent Anabaptist statement: "Jesus is the centre of our faith! Community is the centre of our life! Reconciliation is the centre of our work!" (Becker)

### New Monasticism in Australia

Darren Cronshaw in **Credible Witness**, his helpful book on Australian mission models, writes about "the postmodern desire for a fresh experience of mystery and everyday spirituality." He contrasts this with a "marketing and management approach" used by many churches today. "Rather than alleviating spiritual poverty, marketing approaches can foster it further...promoting a consumerist approach to Christianity and reliance on techniques rather than God's leadership." (28) Like new monastics in North America, many Down Under are looking for a more genuine Christian experience.



Tom Sine in **The New Conspirators** explains what is happening among young activists and innovators in the church by categorising them into at least four streams: **emerging, missional, mosaic and monastic**. These categories are fluid; communities in Australia seem to merge aspects from the different streams.



The Celtic tradition is attracting attention from a number of groups. Brad Bessell from Adelaide wrote:

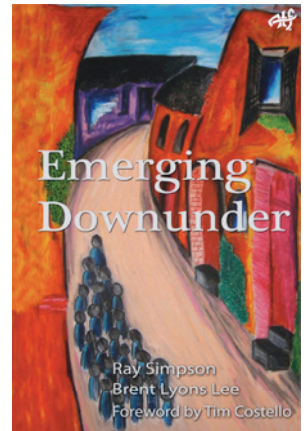
*"I believe that the role of Celtic Spirituality in this nation is to bring healing and reconciliation between the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal. In fact, I believe that had Celtic monks come to Australia instead of convicts*

*etc. then the Aboriginal people would have had a spiritual experience similar to that of the ancient Celtic Christian...the role of the Celtic renewal in this nation is to encourage the Church to embrace a faith that is more gentle and incarnational than the colonial one that we have inherited from our English forebears and less 'salesman' like than the recent American models that we seem to have embraced."* (Simpson 3, 4)

Scott Bessenecker helps in classifying some of these communities in his writing about the distinction between historic orders of monks:

*"The cloistered (or inward) and the missional (or outward) forces in these various monastic communities were often held in tension, some emphasizing one over the other. Likewise today we find both cloistered and missional communities cropping up. The New Monasticism often consists of households of Christian men and women planted in dying inner-city communities within their home country, attempting to live the Christian ideal among their neighbours, drawing the lost, poor and broken to themselves. They resemble more the cloistered order. The new friars, on the other hand, have something of the spirit of mission-driven monks and nuns in them, leaving their mother country and moving to those parts of the world where little is known about Jesus."* (21, 22)

One Australian group he includes among the 'new friars' is **Urban Neighbours of Hope (UNOH)**. They identify themselves as "a missional order" and have a list of values very similar to the Twelve Marks of New Monasticism:



**Gospel Justice:** We value living out God's priority for those facing poverty.

**Incarnational:** We value the Kingdom coming among poor communities with whom we live and identify.

**Compassion:** *We value personally relating with those facing poverty, coming alongside them and responding to needs.*

**Holistic in Mission:** *We value serving the whole life of our neighbourhood the way Jesus would using Word, Deed and Sign.*

**Discipleship:** *We value loving and obeying Jesus as Lord ourselves and helping our neighbours to do this together.*

**Spiritual Formation:** *We value the life-long journey of growing closer to and more like Jesus through the use of spiritual disciplines and increasing simplicity in lifestyle.*

**Team Building:** *We value working in teams so that we can mutually affirm and challenge each other in seeing our vision become a reality.*

**Organic Growth:** *We value reproducible models of nurturing, training and raising up of new team and leaders as the means of growing UNOHers and Jesus-centred movements.*

UNOH also has a "Common Rule of Life" that guides its community with spiritual practices that include Solitude, Scripture, Spiritual guides, Hospitality, Just Stewardship, Servanthood, Worship, Living Among the Poor, and Discipleship.

The **Peace Tree Community** in Perth, Western Australia is cited by Tom Sine as an example of new monasticism in Australia. They describe themselves as:

*A support group of "sinners anonymous" for "recovering consumers" who pray to embody God's grace by transforming vacant blocks into permaculture gardens, dumpster bins into delicious feasts for anyone hungry, empty homes into welcoming places for the homeless and refugees, individual lives of "successfulness" into shared lives of faithfulness, enemies into friends, our charity "to the marginalised" into solidarity "with the marginalised", the unskilled over-schooled into workers on the land, swords into ploughshares and other humble beautiful signs of God's dream for creation (or "kingdom of God").*

The Peace Tree community has been inspired by an older Baptist monastic community known as The **Community of the Transfiguration** in Geelong, Victoria. Paul R. Dekar has written about the community calling it "a compelling adaptation of historic

Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc. *Christian monastic traditions to contemporary life, the community is unique in that it continues the life and witness of a 135-year old Baptist congregation while drawing on classic sources of Christian monasticism."*

The Community of the Transfiguration began in the early 1970's. Graeme Littleton and Steven Shipman met during a monastic formation program at The Community of the Glorious Ascension, an Anglican monastery in England. Littleton and Shipman studied the Rule of St. Benedict, Orthodox sources, and a number of models of communal life, including the Ephrata Cloisters, an Anabaptist experiment that began in the eighteenth century in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

As the community grew, members developed a *Resolve*, the practices by which they live:

- *Being perfectly assured of your salvation, with your whole life proclaim your gratitude.*
- *Reject nothing, consecrate everything.*
- *Be the good of love, for God, for neighbour, for all creation.*
- *Judge no one, not even yourself.*
- *Love beauty.*
- *Maintain inner silence in all things.*
- *Show hospitality; err only on the side of generosity.*
- *Speak truth to power, especially power without love.*

...Anabaptist-Mennonites are the old "new monastics"... the Anabaptists sought to form communities of intentionality that would make the kind of serious Christian life of discipleship and communion long assumed only to be possible in celibate religious orders and live it out in families. They did so not because they couldn't control their desires and just had to get married, but because Jesus calls us to follow him as disciples in all of life." - Gerald W. Schlabach

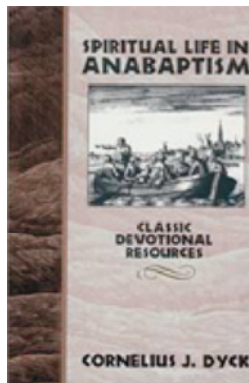


- *Let your only experience of evil be in suffering, not its creation.*
- *For us there is only the trying, the rest is none of our business.*

Dekar says the community “exhibits many generic traits of its monastic forebears and of the new monastic communities. These include the centrality of Jesus Christ, communal life under a rule of life, vital worship, use of the visual arts, care for youth, care for the natural world; and ministries among marginalized persons.” (57) The community members “live their prayers and pray their lives.” (92)

### **Anabaptism’s Monastic Roots**

What is Anabaptist spirituality? C. J. Dyck describes spiritual life as being “nourished through an intimate commitment to Jesus Christ, individually and in community.” (26) He sees several characteristics of sixteenth-century Anabaptist spirituality:



- *Community is important. Anabaptist spirituality is not merely medieval monastic spirituality extended to the laity, but is a redefinition of spirituality. In monasticism, the focus of community was on the interior life of the soul. In Anabaptism, community is faith active in love as a life of obedience to God.*
- *Restoration of ethics into personal and communal spiritual life.*
- *Suffering was central.*
- *Holiness-sanctification as a living out of the new covenant alone and in community.* (23)

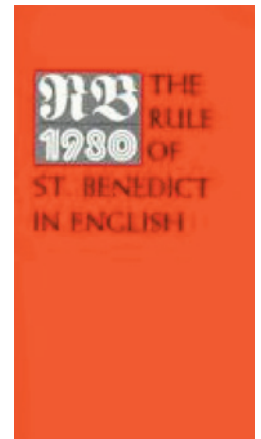
I began with a quote warning about Michael Sattler causing “the beginning of a new monasticism.” Wolfgang Capito was not alone in this opinion about Anabaptists. Martin Luther accused them of having a “monkish” life and doctrine and Zwingli saw Anabaptists as “restoring a full monkish system.” The Reformers had several concerns about these Anabaptists:

- *Their discipleship sounded like a return to salvation by works.*
- *They were influenced by medieval monasticism and asceticism.*
- *They held a typically monastic emphasis on*

*integration between the inner and outer life.*  
(Murray Williams)

Gerald W. Schlabach says, “In explaining who Mennonites are I have sometimes quoted the historians who call them, the Amish, Hutterites, and the Anabaptist forebears who preceded them all, “married monastics...Anabaptist-Mennonites are the old “new monastics.” Growing out of late medieval movements for lay renewal, the Anabaptists sought to form communities of intentionality that would make the kind of serious Christian life of discipleship and communion long assumed only to be possible in celibate religious orders and live it out in families. They did so not because they couldn’t control their desires and just had to get married, but because Jesus calls us to follow him as disciples in all of life.” (Schlabach, “Benedictine Values”)

While Sattler’s early influence among the Swiss Anabaptists is often noted, his Benedictine past and how that influenced him and the emerging Anabaptist movement is often overlooked. Weldon D. Nisly explores the connections between Saint Benedict and the Rule he developed and Michael Sattler and the Schleithem Confession he helped write in an article entitled “Hidden in Plain Sight: Mennonite Benedictine Spirituality”.

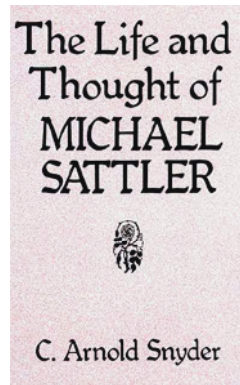


“Benedict of Nursia was born around 480 or 490 and died in 547. He wrote “a little rule for beginners” in the late 520’s, conceivably in 529. Not much is known about Benedict’s life. Yet the Rule of St. Benedict has guided a great monastic tradition in the Church ever since the sixth century. At a young age, Benedict abandoned a proper education in Rome with a deep sense that student life was morally corrupting, and went off into the hills east of Rome to live a monastic life. “All the rest of Benedict’s life was to be subordinated to the search for God and lived out...in separation from this dangerous world.”

A thousand years later Michael Sattler was born about 1490 and died in 1527. We also know little about his life. But we know that he was a monk who left his Benedictine monastery

*with a deep sense of monastic corruption. He soon joined the emerging Radical Reformation movement and in 1527, Sattler shaped a document that guided the emerging Swiss Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century. Sattler was the primary writer for these seven Schleithem Articles in which "We have been united concerning the separation that shall take place from the evil...which the devil has planted in the world".*

Nisly places Sattler back in his St. Peter's monastery in the Black Forest at a time when reform was happening among the Benedictines as well in the rest of the church scene in Europe. Sattler held the position of Prior of the monastery before he left and joined the Anabaptists.



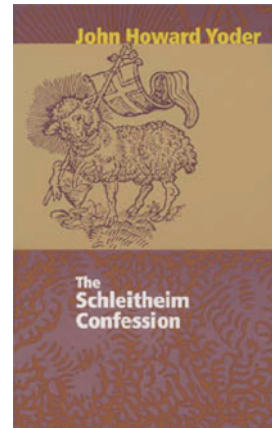
*"St. Peter's monastery was caught in the middle of the peasant revolt and reformation impulses, to say nothing of political and economic struggles and a reforming Abbot who fled. Under these conditions presumably the Prior, Michael Sattler, was left in charge of the Abbey in the spring of 1525. No documentation tells us exactly when he left the monastery. But the best judgment is that it was in May 1525, during the peasant invasion of the monastery. (Snyder, 64)*

*As a monk and Prior of St. Peter's of the Black Forest, Michael Sattler was caught in the crossfire of reform in the monastery and the peasant's oppressive plight. These concerns, not the pull of the Protestant and Anabaptist Reformation, are what seemed to drive Michael Sattler to take the dramatic step of leaving his Benedictine vows and monastic community. (Snyder, 65)*

*One additional element that we know – but know little about – is that sometime after Sattler left the monastery he married Margaretha. Her last name is unknown but she is believed to be a Beguine who with other Beguines was feeding poor people burdened by the oppressive taxes collected by St. Peter's monastery. That may well have further influenced Sattler's decision to leave the monastery.*

The document that Sattler is most known for is the Schleithem Articles. They show Sattler's Anabaptist vision and influence. The articles are about the practice of the church more than doctrine. They come with the title: "Brotherly union of a Number of Children of God Concerning Seven Articles:"

1. *Baptism...only believers and no infant baptism;*
2. *Ban...discipline to follow Matthew 18 model;*
3. *Breaking Bread...believers all united in baptism and confession/reconciliation;*
4. *Separation from evil and the devil...allegiance to God in Christ alone;*
5. *Shepherds...chosen and supported by the congregation according to rule of Paul;*
6. *Sword...ordering of God outside the perfection of Christ not permitted for Christians;*
7. *Oath...forbidden by Christ so must do all in the name of God in truthfulness.*



Nisly sees some parallels between the Schleithem Articles and the Rule of St. Benedict summarizing them this way:

- *Voluntary entry into the community and a public act of profession;*
- *Through that profession a person is subject to a common way of life;*
- *Discipline takes the form of exclusion from community activities;*
- *The community is separated from the world;*
- *The spiritual leader is to be [s]elected by the community, and is responsible for the spiritual growth and discipline of the community (Snyder, 185).*

The Schleithem Article on baptism, the Rule of St. Benedict and the Benedictine vow of profession call for repentance and new life which is a dying to self and the world and living in the imitation of Christ (Snyder, 186). Obedience and discipline are very prominent in both documents and in the monastic community. The monastic profession is a vow of stability, conversion of life, and obedience, with the knowledge of discipline

for disobedience. One very important biblical common ground in both Benedict's Rule and Sattler's Articles is the explicit reference to Matthew 18. The Gospel formula set out by Jesus for going to the sister or brother to listen, admonish, and discipline in specific stages is a frequent appeal of the Anabaptists. Likewise, chapter 23, of the Rule – "Excommunication for faults" – is equally clear and biblically rooted.

Nisly says: *"Michael Sattler was shaped in life and faith as a Benedictine steeped in obedience and discipline in the community. As an Anabaptist leader formulating the first "rule" for communal life, Sattler can be seen to draw heavily on his monastic life and the Rule to establish the centrality of obedience and discipline of the community. Nevertheless, we may see a difference in the direction of the obedience for Sattler as a Benedictine and Sattler as an Anabaptist. In the Benedictine community the direction of obedience was explicitly to the Abbot, as the representative of Christ, and to the Rule rooted in Scripture. In the Anabaptist community the direction of obedience is to what is sometimes called the "Rule of Christ" set out in Scripture and lived out in the community. In the Benedictine monastery the Abbot commands ultimate authority while in the Anabaptist community that authority resides in the community where the shepherd has special responsibilities but remains a member of the congregation (Snyder, 189)."*

Sattler lived less than two years as an Anabaptist before he and his wife were brutally martyred. Nisly says:

*"We can see that Michael Sattler brought a Benedictine sensibility – more than an obvious spirituality --with him into the Anabaptist movement. We can even see in Michael Sattler a Benedictine in Anabaptist clothing. It is probably less accurate at this point yet, to see in the Anabaptists shaped by Sattler's Schleithem Articles, a Benedictine in Anabaptist clothing. There are strong roots and parallels. It surely was an attempt to live a devout and holy life wholly rooted in scripture in a separated community of faith."*

Nisly ends his article with some dreams about where this connection might take Anabaptists today:

*- Become immersed in 15 centuries between the first & sixteenth centuries,*

- Identify interpretive and operative principles for the church (ascetic life),*
- Live with head and heart (listen and look with the heart),*
- Renew a rhythm of prayer and work (ora et labora),*
- Seek new ways for living stability and change (stabilitas & conversatio),*
- Unite hospitality and service (receive/greet all as Christ),*
- Become a Eucharistic Peace Community (sacrament, symbol, story, song),*
- Establish new paradigms of authority and obedience (responsibility & "the least of these").*

In this list, the Schleithem Articles, and the Rule of St. Benedict one can find the roots of "rules" of many of the new monastic communities emerging today. The early Anabaptists and St. Benedict provide rich spiritual resources for modern-day monks of all stripes.

***Inhabiting The Church***, a 2007 title which is part of the New Monastic Library book series, explores elements of the Rule of St. Benedict. Three new monastic writers *"decided to use [Benedict's] central vow as a springboard for a biblical-theological reflection that was true to our own*



*free-church Biblicist roots."* (Stock, 5) Their chapters explore the Benedictine themes of Vows, Conversion, Obedience, and Stability.

Schlabach in article entitled "The Vow of Stability: A Premodern Way through a Hypermodern World" picks up on this one part of the Rule of St. Benedict:

*"Benedict's rule requires a "vow of stability" -- the uniquely Benedictine commitment to live in a particular monastic community for life. At first, this may seem to apply least of all amid other ways of life. Yet precisely because it contrasts so sharply with the fragility of most commitments in our hypermodern society, the Benedictine vow of stability may speak more directly to our age and churches than anything else in the Rule... And one cannot understand the vow of stability apart from the Benedictines' two other vows --*

conversion of life and obedience, which in turn requires us to face questions of authority. Still, what I wish to argue is this:

*It is no use rediscovering any of our church's roots, nor discerning innovative ways to be faithful to our church's calling, if we won't slow down, stay longer even if we can't stay put indefinitely, and take something like a vow of stability. Slow down -- because postmodernism may really be hypermodernism. Stay longer -- because there is no way to discern God's will together without commitment to sit long together in the first place. A vow of stability -- because it is no use discerning appropriate ways to be Christian disciples in our age if we do not embody them through time, testing, and the patience with one another that our good ideas and great ideals need, in order to prove their worth as communal practices. As one Mennonite church leader remarked to me concerning the impact of constant mobility on our congregations: "It's getting so the Abrahamic thing to do is to stay put."*

### Implications For Mission

In describing new monastics and other young radicals today, Tom Sine says "One can hear a distinctly Anabaptist accent as these young conspirators in all four streams invite all of us to embrace a more radical, whole-life faith and to create churches that are more outwardly focused in mission." Stuart Murray Williams asks "What encouragements or resources can the Anabaptist tradition offer to those who are exploring new monasticism today? What might re-monking the church after Christendom mean?" He lists six responses:

- *Hundreds of **stories** – Anabaptism is a story-rich tradition – of Christians who have attempted to follow Jesus as serious disciples, despite the cost of this, and whose lives impressed their persecutors.*
- *An in-depth **critique of the Christendom mindset** that continues to pervade the churches and insights on various issues that we will need to renegotiate in post-Christendom.*
- *An insistent **focus on Jesus** as the one we follow and whose life and teaching is our example and guide. The monastic tradition is not always focused on Jesus in this way – sometimes Jesus is marginalised or the*

*object of pietistic devotion.*

- **Integration of spirituality and discipleship.** Arnold Snyder, Anabaptist historian, writes: "It is because Anabaptism echoed many elements of the monastic understanding of the 'holy life' that was supposed to follow true faith that they related social, economic and ethical issues directly to the 'spiritual life'... The living of a life of discipleship became paramount, just as it had been in the monastic traditions."

- **Ethical non-conformity.** In a violent, image-driven and consumerist culture, the Anabaptist practices of non-violence, truth-telling and generous simplicity are distinctive, winsome and powerful. Re-monking the church after Christendom is about counter-cultural living.

- A commitment to **accountability in community**, which is counter-cultural in our individualistic culture. If new monasticism only imports liturgical practices from monasticism and ignores accountability, this will not amount to re-monking. In fact, within emerging churches there are real dangers of irresponsible pillaging of ancient practices without appreciating their significance and dangers.

Both Anabaptism and new monasticism are about faithfully following Jesus – privately and publicly. Discipleship is a political act calling Christians to be engaged with public issues like poverty, climate change, economic disparities, and warfare.

Both of these movements realise **community** is needed for Christians to be faithful disciples. Lone Rangers need not apply. Hospitality is a major mark of these communities.

Both movements call for **disciplined discipleship** – seen in documents like the Schleithem Confession and the Twelve Marks of New Monasticism. Accountability is important.

Both movements are **counter-cultural**. Following Jesus calls Christians to be alternative, attractive, and articulate. This stance takes them to the margins of society and often the margins of the church.

Both movements take seriously the **Sermon on the Mount** with particular emphasis on being peacemakers.

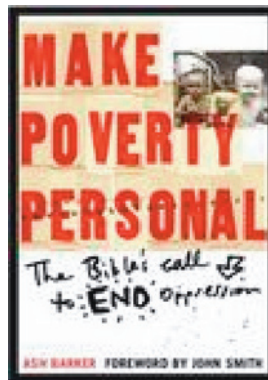
Jesus told his followers “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” (Matthew 5:14) He went on to warn about hiding this light and then said “Let your light shine before all in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your father who is in heaven.” (5:16) Anabaptists have been guilty at times of hiding the light and just remaining the “quiet in the land”. But living the light before a watching world speaks powerfully. Living in community, following a disciplined spirituality, and caring for others allows the light to shine brightly.

### The Challenge

Ash Barker from UNOH says he loves being around radicals. *“There’s a passion and feistiness that is indomitable”* but the down side is *“the constant loss of community experiments by Protestant radicals after short periods of time.*

*We’ve been great at prophetic announcements, critiquing what is wrong with our church and society, but we have had real trouble building communities long enough to see transformation occur.”* He says *“these kinds of communities are almost second nature to Catholic structures with their various orders...however it is almost always the cause of argument and schism within Protestant ones.”* (123)

Maybe Anabaptist and new monastic radicals can learn something from the Celtic and Benedictine traditions that will allow us to create more stable communities – *“specialist communities able to live out the gospel in radical, sustainable and innovative ways without trying to be everything for everyone.”* (Barker, 123)



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[The following Fusion news story came to us from Mark and Sandy McCormack, AAANZ members in Tasmania. Their son Jesse participated in Fusion's outreach in China. Photos provided by Heather Bradbury, Visual Media Manager, Fusion International Educational Exchange]

## MAKING CHINA BEAUTIFUL!

On Friday 8th of August, the Opening Night of the Olympics, authorities across China shut down public celebrations. However in the Earthquake zone in Sichuan Province, local authorities allowed a Fusion International team along with many local Chinese volunteers, to bring hope to a local community through an Open Crowd Festival. This was the first Festival of a number that took place during the Games that has seen thousands of local Chinese at Open Crowd Festivals spread across various locations in four Provinces of China.

Over the last 18 months since the first workers arrived in China, Fusion has conducted specialised training in Open Crowd Festivals for in excess of 1,000 local people. Whilst 180 Fusion International Educational Exchange team from Fusion centres across the world came in to strengthen the exercise at this time, Chinese Nationals have increasingly been taking the initiative and leading Open Crowd Festivals as the Games unfolded. Fusion International is committed to building and establishing lasting connections and networks (Social Capital) that will help humanise and transform local communities and build a harmonious and inclusive society, so that others can find their place in a higher local and global purpose.



### Earthquake Zone

Fusion was invited to run Open Crowd Festivals in two areas where the devastating earthquake of 12th May hit the Sichuan Province. In these regions, most of the children have been traumatised by what they have experienced. In some places a whole generation of children have been lost. One Festival team was based in a community where a school collapsed and 96 children and 14 teachers died. The Festival took place on rubble 300 metres from where the school used to be. After two nights of Festivals a community leader said, "Your timing is remarkable.



So many children have lost many of their friends. You have brought joy to our town. We will not forget it." In his location, until now, very few foreigners have ever been seen.

The Principal wrote a thank you letter that in part read "... In our most vulnerable time friends from Fusion came and arranged various activities for our students, teachers, parents and people in the community. We are thankful for the joy you brought us as well as your care and hard work. We invite you back again."

A TV crew arrived to film one evening of the Festivals. The Producer asked, "Why isn't the whole world hearing about this?" As they interviewed the team one of the reporters had tears in her eyes – moved both by what she saw and our motivation for doing it. Profoundly moving were parents who had lost their children watching other children having fun and smiling. The story that seemed to best sum up the impact of our time in this region was when a small boy caught up in the joy of the centre games at the Festival came to one of our workers and enquired "Where are you from? Are you from heaven?"

There were stories of people and families coming together as a result of the Festivals. One team member spoke to a boy who wanted to join the team, but he had caused a few difficulties earlier in the night. He pleaded, "Please give me a chance to be a good boy!"

### Across the Country

In the lead up to the Games Fusion ran preparation Festivals across the country. In one community five different Festivals have run since May and a local leader said, "This place is different now; people are talking to each other, people are

not angry with each other like before. There is a noticeable move in the level of community in the housing complex.” A parent added, “Our children can’t get to sleep they are so excited!” One teenage boy who has had trouble making friends now has new friends much to the delight of his parents. The Resident Committee are now active supporters as they see what has been happening. Communist Party Officials too are supportive of the Festivals. One of the new team commented, “Every single person needs to go to the Festival – it will change their lives. You plant seeds in children’s hearts and it grows bigger and bigger.”

As a result there are now more than 50 people in this community who are part of the Festival team. As they were leaving, the Chief of Police in the area said, “I hope I can see you again. We will be very happy to welcome you back for National Day Festivals.”

The whole operation worked at so many different levels, it is hard to convey all the subtleties. The relationship with the authorities that could change frequently; growing sense of trust as mothers and grandmothers brought small children along to give to team members to give them a hug; young children running to team members to be picked up and hugged. This is not normal in China, but it happens as people receive a glimpse of the way life was meant to be.



The whole experience could be summed up when a small child came up to one of our workers and said “I am hungry!” The team member went and got some food. But when she approached with some food, the child said “No, not that.” It was evident that it was food for the soul and the spirit that he was hungry for. He just wanted a hug.

On another occasion at a restaurant there was obvious affection and bonding taking place amongst the team. The restaurant staff was watching. A staff member greeted one of our

workers, evidently trying to say something important and it turned out woman wanted a hug too. After our worker recovered, she looked up to see a line was forming of other waiters and waitresses waiting for a hug.



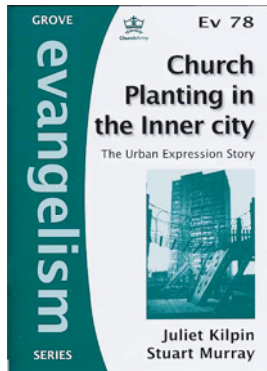
Fusion is seeking to build and establish lasting connections and networks that will help humanise and transform local communities and build a harmonious and inclusive society in communities all over China. A key aspect of the strategy involves three Festivals a year in a community, over three years. Currently during China’s National Day holiday, around October 1st, there are more than 14 communities planning Festivals mostly being run by local people of goodwill, who love their community and have been trained by our Fusion International team.

One of our team was given a Chinese name “Mei Man” which means “fully beautiful” because as the Chinese lady explained, “This is what you have been doing – you have come to ‘Make China Beautiful!’” At the Festivals in the Sichuan Earthquake zone one of the leaders said, “When you came here everything changed. The children began to laugh for the first time. They became themselves – they are children again. You may have come from afar but you are here at the right time.”

Something is building. Attitudes are changing. Hope is rising.

[http://www.fusion.org.au/china\\_pilgrimage.php](http://www.fusion.org.au/china_pilgrimage.php)





## CHURCH PLANTING IN THE INNER CITY

### The Urban Expression Story

JULIET KILPIN & STUART MURRAY, GROVE BOOKS

Stuart Murray may be known to some members of AAANZ. This short booklet, in the well known Grove series, tells the story of Urban Expression in which he has played a key role

from its launch in 1997.

Urban Expression is an urban mission agency that recruits, equips, deploys and networks self-financing teams pioneering creative and relevant expressions of the Christian church in under-churched areas of the inner city.

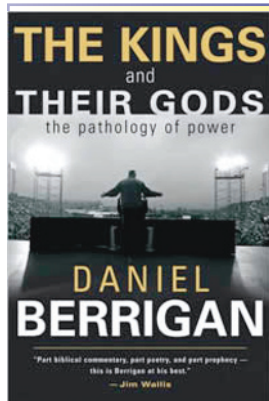
In addition to the discussion of the foundation and operation of Urban Expression, the authors also reflect on the recent history of urban mission and church planting in the United

Kingdom, the distinctive features of church planting in the inner city and the resources needed by urban church planters. The discussion does not present Urban Expression as a 'success story' (whatever that might mean) but as an ongoing journey of discovery rooted in our core values of relationship, humility and creativity.

The issues being grappled with in the UK context are highly relevant to Christian mission in the Australian context.

For those who want more information, . For more details check their website at: <http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk/>

REVIEWED BY DOUG HYND, CANBERRA



## THE KINGS AND THEIR GODS

### The pathology of power

DANIEL BERRIGAN EERDMANS 2008

We live in strangely ecumenical times indeed, when a stunning midrash on 1 and 2 Kings, by Daniel Berrigan, Catholic priest and peace activist is published by Eerdmans an

independent, Reformed publishing House from Grand Rapids, Michigan.

It is interesting to recall that nearly 40 years ago Eerdmans published the English translation of a series of studies on passages from 2 Kings by French sociologist and theologian Jacques Ellul *The politics of God and the politics of Man*.

The biblical text of 1 and 2 Kings is certainly a turbulent one. Daniel Berrigan's contribution is quite different in style and focus to that of Ellul, yet there is a certain family resemblance, in that each in their own way reads the text with an eye to the times in which they live and neither was constrained by conforming to the traditional style of academic biblical commentary.

Berrigan certainly minces no words in his assessment of that biblical era. Prophets, kings, and the gods they worship — all are found wanting. Berrigan is ironic and teasing in his questioning of who these gods actually are. Only towards the end of the Books of the Kings when we come to the prophet Isaiah is a sign of hope acknowledged by Berrigan.

The writing style is shaped by Berrigan's poet's sensibility. Paragraphs are short, allusive in their vocabulary and encourage reflective reading. The discussion and the judgments and questioning of the characters and the author(s) are informed by the experiences of a life devoted to an active prophetic response to life in the shadow of the US military empire during the latter half of the twentieth century.

The complex terrain of these two biblical books is explored by Berrigan in a way that opens our eyes to the deep flaws of their oft-praised characters. I certainly had much that I have taken for granted about the stories in these books brought into question and indeed it is a profound questioning that Berrigan brings



to bear on our pious and unreflective readings of David and Solomon and their successors.

Berrigan shows that this dark time in biblical history is in many ways repeating itself today. The wars of these kings, he says, are our wars now, and we are in the process fashioning our own gods to approve our misdeeds. These two books of Scripture come to vivid — and sometimes terrifying — life when we recognize these undeniable similarities and find that the books hold up a mirror to our own times and that reflection subverts any easy assumptions of moral advance or superiority of the twentieth century.

*The Kings and Their Gods* reveals that Berrigan at eighty-seven years of age has lost nothing of his passion and the clarity of moral concern that has marked his whole life and

witness. Here this modern-day prophet distills the wisdom gained from his long reflection on and reading of scripture and his remarkable life of discipleship. The book is both a masterful biblical commentary and a clarion call to rightly understand our time and escape the pious avoidance of the moral ambiguities of the text of the Kings as it has come to us.

*The Kings and Their Gods* balances polemics and poetry, despair and joy. It is truly a midrash, a probing reflective exploration of scripture for our troubled times, not a conventional moral argument or ideological polemic. It is both an indictment of the horror that is the lot for so many in the world today and an invitation to the great goodness and grace that may be.

REVIEWED BY DOUG HYND



## PLAN BE

DAVE ANDREWS, AUTHENTIC <http://wecan.be/>

Dave Andrews has been insisting for some time that the Sermon on the Mount needs to be rescued from the reverent obscurity to which it has been consigned by most churches, at least until recently. Some

theologians have begun to recover its relevance by challenging the framework within which it has mostly been interpreted over the past 1700 years.

Dave has started by getting us to focus on the Beatitudes as providing the key to living the virtues Jesus called for in his disciples.

*Plan Be* is a simple series of reflections on the Beatitudes that challenges us to let these affirmations of Jesus begin to shape our Christian discipleship. Activist Christians among whom he counts himself have focused too much on trying to change others. We are he argues the ones who need to be changed and to begin to practice the Beatitudes is the path to become the change that we wish to see in the world.

This is a book that takes us back to the teachings of Jesus. A challenge to let our hearts and minds be reshaped and to begin the process of imaginatively approaching the transformation of the world through the spiritual discipline of reading, memorising and reflecting on the Beatitudes.

Dave suggests that the way forward for the church would be to become a series of “recovery” groups based on opening ourselves up to each other in accountability as we seek to live out the Beatitudes. Now there is a thought.

I must confess that I have been encouraged by this little book to start the process of memorising the Beatitudes, reflecting on what they might mean for my life and the tensions that they expose within me as I struggle with what it means to be a ‘public servant’ in the public service.

REVIEWED BY DOUG HYND

**AAANZ MEMBERS' ONLY  
TELE-CONVERSATION FEATURING**

**TIM COSTELLO**  
CEO OF WORLD VISION AUSTRALIA

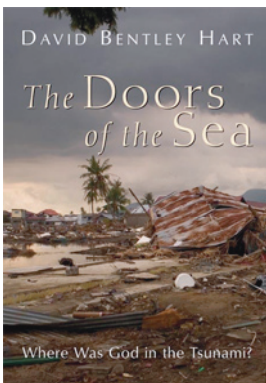
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## THE DOORS OF THE SEA Where Was God in the Tsunami?

DAVID BENTLEY HART, WM B. EERDMANS, 2005



In this striking little book, Eastern Orthodox theologian David Hart explores how Christian belief in an all-powerful and all-loving God can be squared with the realities of human suffering and natural evil, such as witnessed in the recent tsunami that devastated parts of southern

Asia and claimed up to a quarter of a million lives. Much has been written on this so-called problem of “theodicy”. But what makes this book so rewarding, apart from its exquisite prose, is that it approaches the question from an Eastern Christian perspective rather than the more familiar Western perspective.

The author is particularly scathing of Calvinist attempts to resolve the dilemma by exaggerated appeals to divine sovereignty. He acknowledges that there is more to Calvinism than its radical predestinarianism, or its “disfiguring heresy” of limited atonement, but “I would be lying if I denied that, in many of the broad themes of the theology of Calvin, there is something in my view terribly amiss and extremely remote from the theology of the New Testament” (94).

Interestingly Hart is little troubled by unbelieving critics who consider innocent suffering to be a fatal objection to the very existence of God. Such an objection may have considerable emotional or even moral force, but, for Hart, it is wholly lacking in intellectual persuasion. “Unless one can see the beginning and end of all things, unless one possesses a divine, eternal vantage upon all of time, unless one knows the precise nature of the relation between divine and created freedom, unless one indeed can fathom infinite wisdom, one can draw no conclusions from finite experience regarding the coincidence in God of omnipotence and perfect goodness. One may still hate God for worldly suffering if one chooses, or deny him, but one cannot in this way ‘disprove’ him” (13-14).

All too often sceptics presuppose a deistic conception of God that Christian doctrine doesn’t

teach in the first place and who no one actually worships. At the same time, lurking behind moral protests to God’s existence lies the cultural memory of the distinctively Christian view of God as a God of infinite goodness and absolute love. It is this that leads critics to have the moral expectations of God that they do, for there is “no God other than the Christian God of infinite mercy who merits the effort of active unbelief” (54). Within the very atheism that refuses to believe in God for moral reasons there resides an honouring, in an elliptical way, of the Christian God.

Much more troubling for Hart are the sub-Christian views of God that many Christian apologists employ in their attempts to rationalise suffering and evil. These range from callous interpretations of earthquakes and tsunamis as manifestations of God’s wrath against the ungodly, or as merely pedagogical devices for teaching important lessons, to more sophisticated efforts to incorporate earthly suffering into some larger providential plan of God to achieve a greater good.

Now the desire to see a single transcendent will operating behind everything that happens, including every instance of suffering, violence and loss, is understandable; it offers some level of comfort in face of apparently arbitrary and indiscriminate pain. But it comes at an enormous price. It pictures God as absolute will or irresistible power alone, and does little to answer the objection that if God’s plan of salvation *requires* the torture of children, as well as every other cruelty or fortuitous misery the world has ever known, then participation in final salvation should be declined on moral grounds. “For if indeed there were a God whose true nature – whose justice or sovereignty – were revealed in the death of a child or the dereliction of a soul or a predestined hell, then it would be no great transgression to think of him as a kind of malevolent or contemptible demiurge, and to hate him, and to deny him worship, and to seek a better God than he” (92).

The fundamental weakness in all deterministic theodicies is that they refuse to take seriously the cosmological perspective of the New Testament. For the New Testament writers, the purposes of God cannot be read off the surface of nature or natural events.

(Hart observes that so-called “natural theology” may be able to deduce from the marvellous complexity of design in the world that God is an immeasurably wise and powerful engineer; but at the same time it is forced to conclude that death, brutality and violence are structured into every level of created reality). Instead, to the eye of faith, the purposes of God are most truly disclosed in Christ’s empty tomb. The resurrection bespeaks God’s implacable opposition to suffering and death, and proves that the world as we know it is *not* the way it was intended to be. Creation is still resplendent with God’s glory, yes. But this is a broken and wounded world that exists “in the long melancholy aftermath of a primordial catastrophe” (62) and which languishes under the domination of principalities and powers that never cease in their enmity toward God.

It is this that accounts for innocent suffering in the world. Suffering does not occur because God wills it, or causes it, requires it in order to achieve his saving plan; it occurs in outright defiance of the reign of God. However unsettling it may be, the biblical writers simply do not share “the solicitude shown by some Christians for *total* and *direct* divine sovereignty in all the eventualities of the fallen world” (66). Indeed “there is a kind of ‘provisional’ cosmic dualism within the New Testament: not an ultimate dualism of course, between two equal principles; but certainly a conflict between a sphere of created autonomy that strives against God on the one hand, and the saving love of God in time on the other” (62-63).

It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between what God wills and what God permits, or between primary causation and secondary causation (a distinction Calvin denied). God *permits* evil to occur rather than to violate the autonomy of the created world, since freedom is essential to achievement of the ontological good for which we were made. But this does not mean God wills or needs evil in order to achieve his ends. It is theologically incoherent to say that God requires evil to achieve his purposes, or that it was necessary for his creatures to pass through sin and death to arrive at some higher state (Calvin taught that God even predestined Adam’s fall). Evil has no contribution to make to God’s purposes; it is entirely contingent and devoid of meaning, even

if by economy God brings good from it.

None of this is to diminish God’s ultimate governance of reality. God’s sovereignty and providence reside, not in his predestination of all things, but in his final triumph over all that resists his will. There is no contradiction in affirming that God can both allow created freedom full scope, yet so constitute the world that nothing can prevent him from bringing about the final beatitude for which all things were made. “To say that God elects to fashion rational creatures in his image, and so grants them the freedom to bind themselves and the greater physical order to another master...is not to say that God’s ultimate design for his creatures can be thwarted. It is to acknowledge, however, that his will can be resisted by a real and (by his grace) autonomous force of defiance, or can be hidden from us by the history of cosmic corruption, and that the final realization of the good he intends in all things has the form...of a divine victory” (63).

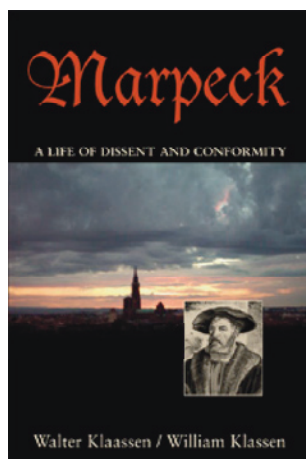
***Doors of the Sea*** is a profound and moving meditation on the problem of pain from plainly a brilliant theological mind. Its brevity means a lot of big ideas are touched on all too briefly (such as his defence of the increasingly unfashionable doctrine of divine impassibility). The book is not primarily an exercise in Christian apologetics; it is an impassioned protest against fellow believers who, out of acute anxiety to protect God’s sovereignty, are all-too ready to see the hand of God behind the horrors of human history and the disasters of the natural world. For Hart, the greatest, and indeed the only, comfort a Christian can find in the death of a child is the knowledge that in the tragedy one sees, not the face of God, but the face of God’s enemy, whose ultimate defeat is assured.

REVIEWED BY CHRIS MARSHALL, VICTORIA  
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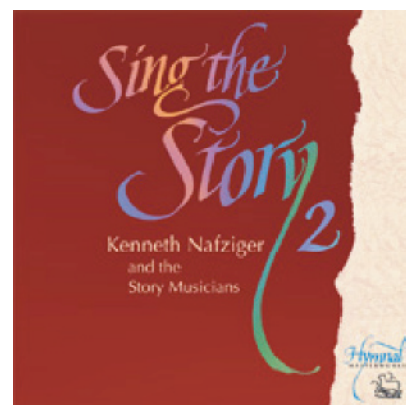
BY WALTER KLAASSEN AND  
WILLIAM KLASSEN

During the 16th century's tumultuous years of religious reformation and revolution, Pilgram Marpeck consistently but discreetly stood up to the ruling powers, calling for freedom of religion and separation of church and state. Walter Klaassen and William Klassen, editors of *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, have deeply mined Marpeck's writing and dialogue with other Reformation leaders. They place his life, work, and theology in the context of his violent, changing times. This thorough biography shows how Marpeck, perhaps more than any other early Anabaptist figure, helped lay the theoretical and practical foundations of the believers church.

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### *Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc.*

The purposes of the Association are:

- To nurture and support the Christian faith of individuals and groups in Australia and New Zealand who identify with the Anabaptist tradition.
- To network and link individuals, churches and groups of Christians who share a common Anabaptist understanding of the Christian faith.
- To provide religious services including teaching, training, pastoral care, mediation, and counsel to its members and others interested in the Anabaptist tradition.
- To provide resources and materials relating to the tradition, perspectives, and teaching of Anabaptists to both the Christian and general public.
- To convene conferences and gatherings which provide opportunity for worship, teaching, training, consultation, celebration, and prayer in the Anabaptist tradition.
- To extend the awareness of Anabaptism in Australia and New Zealand assisting individuals, churches and groups discover and express their links with the Anabaptist tradition.
- To provide an opportunity for affiliation for churches and groups who wish to be known in Australia and New Zealand as Anabaptists.

### What is Anabaptism?

Anabaptism is a radical Christian renewal movement that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Whilst Anabaptism was a grassroots movement with diverse expressions in its early development, its enduring legacy usually has included the following:

- Baptism upon profession of faith
- A view of the church in which membership is voluntary and members are accountable to the Bible and to each other
- A commitment to the way of peace and other teachings of Jesus as a rule for life
- Separation of church and state
- Worshipping congregations which create authentic community and reach out through vision and service

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