

5-1-2010

Something Old, Something New: In Search of the New Monasticism

Julian Collette

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/obsculta>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#)

ISSN: 2472-2596 (print)

ISSN: 2472-260X (online)

Recommended Citation

Collette, Julian. 2011. Something Old, Something New: In Search of the New Monasticism. *Obsculta* 4, (1) : 22-28. <https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/obsculta/vol4/iss1/9>.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Obsculta* by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csbsju.edu.

Something Old, Something New: In Search of the New Monasticism

Julian Collette

Julian Collette is a student of monastic studies and pastoral ministry. He has lived in various intentional communities such as New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California, and an Ecovillage and Zen Buddhist Meditation Center in Massachusetts. In June 2011, as part of his academic program at Saint John's Theology•Seminary, Julian will embark on a 14 month bicycle tour of the United States, visiting various intentional communities including those identified with the New Monasticism movement. Along the way he will conduct interviews which will be made available in a podcast. Julian's journey can be followed by visiting: www.emerging-communities.com.

In June of 2004, with the help of a grant from the Fund for Theological Education, more than sixty people gathered together in Durham, North Carolina, in an effort to discern the distinctive marks of a burgeoning contemporary movement of intentional Christian communities across North America. The outcome of the discernment process is now codified in the "12 Marks of the New Monasticism."¹ Composed largely of Protestants but ecumenical in scope and deliberately open to learning from the whole Christian tradition, members of these so-called new monastic communities are "[relocating] to the abandoned places of Empire," to "[share] economic resources" among themselves and the poor of their surrounding communities; offer "hospitality to the stranger"; work to overcome racism; "[submit] to Christ's body, the church"; provide "intentional formation" for new members; foster "community" and "support for celibate singles alongside monogamous married couples and their children"; live within "geographical proximity" of one another, often in the same household; engage in ecological stewardship and "support...local economies"; practice "peacemaking...and conflict resolution"; and "[commit] to a disciplined contemplative life"² (for the 12 marks in their entirety, see Appendix). In this essay, I will examine more closely the historical narrative within which this movement locates itself, and what the marks themselves entail, with special attention to relocation, resource sharing, healing of racial divisions, contemplative prayer, and commitment to

the church. In the course of this exploration, I will compare and contrast these marks with reflections from the 'old monasticism'³—that is, from men and women, past and present, reflecting upon or writing from within the classical patterns of Christian monasticism—on what essential attributes constitute an authentic monastic way of life. The fruit of this exploration will be brought into conversation with what some contemporary 'old monastics' are proposing as a monastic vision for the future. My intention is to point to the possibility of a convergence between the 'old' and the 'new' in their mutual searching and living into an unknown future amidst unprecedented change and uncertainty. In the context of this convergence, what emerges into view is perhaps the first green shoots of a new paradigm of religious life that cuts across denominational lines and transcends familiar boundaries between celibate and family life, contemplation and social action, and the cloister and the world.

In the introduction to *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of the New Monasticism*, Jonathan R. Wilson (father-in-law of author and 'new monastic' Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove) situates the emergence of a new monasticism in the context of contemporary philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre's cultural analysis. Citing "fragmentation of culture, the failure of the Enlightenment project" to provide a universal common ground through human reason, and the rise of a Nietzschean ethic of the glorification of power, Wilson concludes with MacIntyre that what is urgently needed at this time in history is "another St. Benedict"—or more precisely, "the formation of a new monasticism."³ In the book's preface, the editors draw a quick, revealing sketch of the history of monasticism up to our own precarious moment. Keeping in mind their loca-

¹ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What it has to Say to Today's Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 36-39, and The Rutba House, ed., *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of the New Monasticism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, A Division of Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), x-xiii.

² The Rutba House, ed., xii-xiii.

³ Ibid., 1-2.

tion within a largely Protestant movement, perhaps it is not so surprising that this historical narrative takes a rather novel trajectory. Beginning where the classical monastic tradition generally situates its origins, with the “4th century Desert Fathers and Mothers,” the story then leaps ahead and takes a detour in the twelfth century with St. Francis and the mendicant movement he inspired. Now, a Catholic reader might already be disoriented by this account so far, considering that the rise of mendicant Orders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is itself generally considered a departure from the monastic model. Yet the story continues to wander further afield (and well out of the Catholic sphere altogether) with its next turn—“the Anabaptists of the 16th century.”⁴ From there it is no great leap at last to land in North America several centuries later, with “the Catholic Worker...the Bruderhof,” and a plethora of communities and communitarian movements in the twentieth century that reflect the authors’ understanding of monasticism, culminating in the contemporary emerging phenomenon of the ‘new monasticism.’⁵

Having been led along a different trail than what those more familiar with the classical tradition of monasticism would expect, one is now better situated to reflect on its consequences. On the one hand, the horizon of ‘monasticism’ suddenly broadens to allow for unforeseen creativity in understanding its past, assessing its present, and charting its future. On the other hand, there is at least a three-fold risk in such a broad definition. The first risk is that the definition of monasticism itself becomes so diffuse as to lose any specific meaning or integrity. This is the charge Alan Jacobs lays at the feet of the new monasticism when he quips, in a review of Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove’s *New Monasticism: What it has to Say to Today’s Church*: “Set the bar for *monasticism* [author’s emphasis] as low as Wilson-Hartgrove sets it and you might as well call a Christian college dormitory a monastic institution.”⁶ The second risk, also addressed by Jacobs, is the risk of merely picking and choosing aspects of tradition without reference to, or adequate understanding of, their actual

⁴ Ibid., ix.

⁵ Ibid., viii-x. For a fuller explication of this historical narrative, see also Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What it has to Say to Today’s Church*, 41-55.

⁶ Alan Jacobs, “Do-It-Yourself Tradition,” *First Things* 189 (January 2009): 30.

ecclesial and historical contexts.⁷ The third risk, one that arises for any group or movement seeking its historical origins, is of merely impressing one’s own self-image onto the complex and often elusive contours of history.⁸ In articulating its own emerging self-understanding, the new monasticism is highly vulnerable to all three of these risks in its attempt to insinuate itself as part of the historical tradition of monasticism; hence, the need for careful, ongoing scholarship in dialogue with those close to the heart of the classical monastic tradition.

The positive, creative aspect of this historical narrative is perhaps best understood in light of a more generic “monastic impulse,” a concept Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove borrows from theologian Walter Capps. For both Capps and Wilson-Hartgrove, “monasticism” as a countercultural movement “is *more powerful* [author’s emphasis] than any other form of resistance we’ve seen to mainstream society.”⁹ While this assertion may prompt some raising of the eyebrows from those accustomed to more sober, less enthusiastic treatments of the classical monastic tradition, appealing to the evocative concept of a revolutionary impulse asserting itself in times of crisis from the periphery of both church and culture, constituting itself time and again in communal form, has its advantages. For instance, such a perspective posits monasticism less as a specific institutional form of life than as a dynamic charism that transcends the particular cultural and religious forms through which it is embodied. This approach compliments the assertion made by Catholic religious philosopher Raimundo Panikkar that there is a “[monastic] archetype which is a *constitutive dimension of human life* [author’s emphasis].”¹⁰ While Panikkar identifies this archetype as “a deep anthropological urge,” a single-minded pursuit of the Absolute that must be integrated with the whole of human life,¹¹ the marks of the new monasticism tend more toward explicit social engagement. Hence, to speak in terms of a monastic impulse or

⁷ Ibid., 31.

⁸ See Columba Stewart, “Early Monasticism and Community Movements Today,” in Mary Forman, ed., *One Heart, One Soul: Many Communities* (Collegeville, MN: Saint John’s University Press, 2009), 5.

⁹ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What it has to Say to Today’s Church*, 42.

¹⁰ Raimundo Panikkar, “Part I. The Archetype of the Monk,” in *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982), 11.

¹¹ Ibid., 11, 14.

archetype can be especially fruitful in broadening and radicalizing how monasticism might be understood and actualized: at heart, monasticism is an expression of a revolutionary, anthropological impulse toward the Absolute, manifested in particular forms of social organization and engagement. The new monasticism can thus be best understood as a creative attempt to embody this archetypal impulse in the current North American context, with its own unique constellation of historical influences.

The first mark of the new monasticism is “relocation to the abandoned places of Empire.”¹² Those familiar with the classical tradition of Christian monasticism will surely read into this mark a strong resonance with John Cassian, who, writing in the lineage of the Egyptian desert fathers in the fourth century, spoke of three renunciations, the first of which being physical dislocation from one’s familiar pattern of lifestyle and relationships.¹³ And like Cassian, the new monastics understand this physical dislocation as a necessary point of departure for a life lived as a radical response to the Gospel. So where are the deserts—the “abandoned places”—of the twenty-first century North American continent? According to Sr. Margaret McKenna, Missionary Sister and co-founder of the New Jerusalem Now addiction recovery community in North Philadelphia, “an abandoned place is one that has no attraction for the ‘world of what’s happening now,’ and therefore is left alone by the political, economic, and social powers that be.” It is precisely through relocation to these abandoned places that the possibility emerges for spiritual transformation and a truly creative life formed on new values.¹⁴

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove provides another insight into the creative potential of relocation in his description of his trip to Iraq in March of 2003 with a team of Christian Peacemakers. In the course of receiving the hospitality and warmth of ordinary Iraqis, who time and again voiced their disapproval of the actions of the U.S. military, and witnessing first-hand the human toll of the invasion, Jonathan was taken aback upon his return home by his inability to communicate what he

had experienced. What he saw and heard from the mainstream media contradicted what he knew and witnessed directly. He eventually came to realize, however, that the embedded journalists were sincere in their portrayal of what they were seeing. The trouble was not one of willful deceit but of location: in order to see how Iraqis were truly suffering, one had to be *with* them and listen to them in their own voice. In turn, a very different perspective of the actions of the powers that be emerges.¹⁵

Relocation to the abandoned places of Empire, in whatever form it may take, is necessary in order to learn to see from the point of view of the poor and marginalized, and hence to see how one is also enmeshed in “imperial pressures and the pleasures and rewards of conformity to the way of all empires: pride, power, and reduction of all values to the ‘bottom line.’”¹⁶ The literal deserts of the early monastic tradition thus become today the places of political and economic disenfranchisement, racial strife, and environmental degradation—wherever God’s creatures cry out for healing and restoration. The new monastics expand upon Cassian’s first renunciation by explicitly challenging the renunciate to leave behind social, economic, and political privileges by casting one’s lot with those upon whom the negative consequences of those privileges are systematically meted out.

In her essay “Exploring the Prophetic Tradition: How Shall We Act Prophetically Today?” Benedictine Sister Christine Vladimiroff asserts that, in order to be truly prophetic, a monastery “should be a clear and radical model... of the reign of God that is emerging in the midst of the world... an alternative community built on the politics of justice and compassion.”¹⁷ The new monasticism, having already located itself on the periphery of Empire, further clarifies the demands of living God’s justice and compassion in the world in the second mark: “Sharing economic resources with fellow community members and the needy among us.”¹⁸ Shane Claiborne, co-founder of the new monastic community the Simple Way in Philadelphia, writes with passion of the need for

¹² The Rutba House, ed., xii.

¹³ See John Cassian, “Third Conference: On the Three Renunciations,” in *John Cassian: The Conferences*, Ancient Christian Writers 57, translated by Boniface Ramsey (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1963), 113-147.

¹⁴ The Rutba House, ed., 15-16.

¹⁵ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What it has to Say to Today’s Church*, 75-77.

¹⁶ The Rutba House, ed., 15.

¹⁷ Christine Vladimiroff, “Exploring Our Prophetic Tradition: How Shall We Act Prophetically Today?” *Benedictines* 61.2 (2008: Fall/Winter): 11, 12.

¹⁸ The Rutba House, ed., xii.

Christians not merely to help the poor from a comfortable distance, but to form real relationships with them: “People do not get crucified for charity. People get crucified for disrupting the status quo, for calling forth a new world. People are not crucified for helping poor people. People are crucified for joining them.”¹⁹ Having thus thrown down the gauntlet, Claiborne goes on to clarify that economic redistribution is not something that can be legislated, even by a religious vow, but must be the fruit of authentic neighborly love: “Redistribution is a description of what happens when people fall in love with each other across class lines.”²⁰ Locating this mark biblically and theologically in what he calls a “theology of enough,” Claiborne’s experiences of an informal sharing economy among his own neighbors exemplify what can happen through living with such open-hearted generosity.²¹

The second mark’s ethic of resource-sharing within one’s immediate community and with one’s neighbors, while consistent with classical monasticism’s practices of sharing all things in common and hospitality extended especially to the poor (see RB 33-34, 53.15²²), tends to contrast with classical monasticism in the absence of a strong sense of cloister and the emphasis on direct social action. New monastics generally live with the poor in a manner that necessarily renders the boundaries of the community more porous than the typical monastery. And while St. Benedict certainly legislated for hospitality and receiving the guest “as Christ” (see RB 53.1), his intent was not oriented toward direct social action, much less the deliberate fostering of structural change. Whatever might be the drawbacks of this porousness of new monastic communities, the emphasis on just relationships beyond the community itself does allow for a more explicitly engaged, more ‘prophetic’ witness. Hence, this emphasis on social engagement can rightly be seen as an extension of the Benedictine ethos of resource-sharing and hospitality in the wider socioeconomic sphere.

¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

²⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹ Ibid., 31-34, 36.

²² For this and all references that follow to the Rule of Benedict, see Timothy Fry et al., editors, *RB-1980: The Rule of Saint Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981).

Chris Rice, co-director for the Center for Reconciliation at Duke University Divinity School, and a former resident for twelve years in an interracial community in Jackson, Mississippi, diagnoses the ambiguity of race relations in the United States at present. Living in the post-civil rights era, racial divisions are now more discreet, and call for a more subtle analysis. At the same time, indicators suggest a not-so-subtle picture of racial divides in our churches. Rice contends “that 95% or more of white American Christians worship in all-white congregations and 90% of African Americans worship in all-black.”²³ To provide a more graphic picture of this divide among the churches, Rice turns to his own church in Durham, North Carolina, and the communities situated in the shadow of Duke University itself. The dividing line is Broad Street: “on the west side of Broad Street [is] Blacknall Memorial Presbyterian, [whose] membership is almost entirely white. Just six blocks east... sits St. John’s Missionary Baptist Church... almost entirely African American.”²⁴ Beneath this divide lies a history of “white supremacy and slavery” that is no longer expressed so much through “open hostility but by normalization within racialized, divided, accepted patterns of life.” Exacerbating this divide are economic disparities that render the African-American side of Broad Street struggling with poverty and the host of issues brought in its wake, while the white side of Broad Street hides much of their struggles beneath a veneer of affluence.²⁵

The fourth mark of the new monasticism actively addresses this situation through “lament for racial divisions within the church and our communities combined with the active pursuit of a just reconciliation.”²⁶ Rice offers insightful observations and names challenges facing new monastic communities in this regard. “Our churches and life patterns have been [deeply] formed by race and economics,” he asserts, a fact to which we are often blind. Having been made aware, however, the next steps are to grieve this situation and “do the hard work of social analysis.” In the process, we must be mindful of the tension between diversity and division, and that “diversity

²³ The Rutba House, ed., 56.

²⁴ Ibid., 57.

²⁵ Ibid., 58-59.

²⁶ Ibid., xii.

as an end in itself easily becomes ethnocentrism.”²⁷ One curious challenge that Rice poses is that ‘monasticism’ as such is a concept and reality that tends to speak primarily to people of a certain range of class and educational backgrounds. Hence, he proposes that new monastic communities must be deliberately “dialogical” across racial, economic, and educational lines, and provides an intensely evocative image for this dialogue—“imaginative encounters such as between the traditions of Benedict and of Dr. King!”²⁸

Rice’s reflections on this mark are some of the strongest among the literature available at present from the new monasticism movement. And this fact ought not to be surprising, since new monastics often draw significantly from the experience of interracial communities and movements in the Southern United States.²⁹ This body of experience, insight, and practice can be seen as a substantial contribution to classical monasticism, and a further extension of monastic relocation and hospitality, this time across the divide of the myriad Broad Streets the world over.

The twelfth mark of the new monasticism is “commitment to a disciplined contemplative life,”³⁰ which admittedly appears to be one of the weak links in the chain, and therefore one of the clearest points of divergence at present between the new monasticism and the classical monastic tradition. Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove addresses this situation clearly, and names the challenge ahead: “What I have to offer here is only beginner’s wisdom—a sense that the new monasticism cannot survive without becoming rooted in the disciplines of a contemplative life.”³¹ That said, what Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove does articulate well, leaning on his mentor Jim Douglass, is a strong sense of the connection between interior transformation fostered by contemplative prayer and liberating social action; contemplation as “[learning] to see as God sees [...] receiving the gift of the ‘mind of Christ’”; the challenges inevitably faced in the practice of contemplative prayer, which he

identifies with the cross; and one’s utter dependence on God in this work.³² As regards the classical monastic tradition, the Rule of Benedict legislates for several hours of *lectio divina*, or contemplative reading of scripture, each day (see RB 48), and though this intensity of personal prayer has not always been maintained, contemplative prayer nonetheless remains a bedrock, nonnegotiable element of the monastic tradition.³³ Hence, new monastic communities will need to learn and integrate contemplative practices if they are to have an authentic claim to the monastic tradition. This is one area that could provide a fruitful place of encounter with classical monasticism, and perhaps with other religious traditions as well.

Poet, journalist, and member of Bridgefolk (a movement of dialogue between Catholics and Mennonites), Ivan Kauffman introduces the fifth mark of the new monasticism, “humble submission to Christ’s body, the church,”³⁴ from the context of his own experience. Kauffman grew up in a strict Amish community, and ascribes the withdrawal into lifeless legalism of that religious sect to its alienation from the wider Christian tradition. In fact, Kauffman’s decisive conversion occurred in the discovery, in his twenties, of what he calls “the Great Tradition.”³⁵ While Kauffman identifies commitment and accountability to tradition as essential to the vitality and longevity of Christian communities, what is not so clear is how this functions in concrete new monastic communities. Some, like Reba Place Fellowship, which Kauffman highlights, appear to thrive or flounder in relation to their affiliation or lack thereof with a particular denomination. Others appear to be much more free-floating in their affiliation. The question arises, then: given the diversity of doctrine and practice among Christian denominations, to what ‘church’ are new monastics proposing to submit themselves to?

²⁷ Ibid., 60-61.

²⁸ Ibid., 63.

²⁹ Such interracial communities and movements include John Perkin’s Christian Community Development Association and the Antioch Communities. See *ibid.*, viii-ix, 64-67.

³⁰ Ibid., xii.

³¹ Ibid., 164.

³² Ibid., 164-168.

³³ As Trappist monk Michael Casey asserts, “The communities that will survive in the future are those that best form their members in handling the vicissitudes of the contemplative life. In the last analysis there is no other valid reason for embracing monastic life than to be formed according to its mystical tradition.” Michael Casey, “Thoughts on Monasticism’s Possible Futures,” in Patrick Hart, ed., *A Monastic Vision for the 21st Century: Where Do We Go From Here?* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2006), 28.

³⁴ The Rutba House, ed., xii.

³⁵ Ibid., 68-71.

This ambiguity of affiliation and accountability is addressed by Alan Jacobs: “a key assumption [of *New Monasticism: What it has to Say to Today’s Church*, alongside two other books not explicitly related to the new monasticism] is that the beliefs and practices of other traditions that we like are detachable and transferable: It’s a buffet, not a home-cooked meal.” An ironic consequence, then, for a movement that poses a radical challenge on many levels to the Christian churches, is a tendency toward a certain vagueness when it comes to controversial issues. As Jacobs sees it, “Wilson-Hartgrove is careful not to allow anyone to think that he’s telling them what they should or shouldn’t do”³⁶

While I wouldn’t be as strident in my critique as Jacobs, I was nonetheless taken aback in reading a brief article by Wilson-Hartgrove wherein he tackles the delicate issue of homosexuality in the context of new monastic communities.³⁷ The substance of the article is summed by his assertion that, despite inevitable disagreements on matters of doctrine, “we will, in the meantime, keep washing one another’s dishes.”³⁸ According to Jacobs, this attitude also marks a shift among young evangelicals (especially those who are attracted to contemporary movements such as the new monasticism) from orthodoxy, or right doctrine, to orthopraxy, right practice.³⁹ As a matter of example, Wilson-Hartgrove then describes the experience of a gay friend who finally found acceptance and love in a new monastic community, in which he is now in a leadership position.⁴⁰ What is puzzling, however, is that—aside from appeals to Christian love and shared practice—Wilson-Hartgrove manages to sidestep addressing the deeper implications of social and ecclesial oppression of gay and lesbian people. This apparent evasion is all the more baffling from a spokesperson of a movement that is capable of bringing such a sophisticated, unflinching analysis to issues of systemic racial and economic injustice. Given that the new monasticism

³⁶ Alan Jacobs, 31.

³⁷ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, “Together on the Ark: the witness of intentional community,” *Christian Century* 126.16 (August 11, 2009): 12-13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁹ Alan Jacobs, 27.

⁴⁰ Wilson-Hartgrove, “Together on the Ark: the witness of intentional community,” 13.

is a movement just beginning to articulate its self-understanding, not having ready answers to controversial issues is certainly excusable. Avoiding confronting said issues in a clear way is perhaps less excusable, especially when Christian doctrine itself is often implicated as part and parcel of the oppression in question.

Regarding the youthfulness of the new monasticism, it is interesting to note that Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove co-founded his community—Rutba House in Durham, North Carolina—approximately a year before he organized the gathering at which the twelve marks were discerned.⁴¹ In terms of the formation process of classical monasticism, he would likely have still been a postulant by that time, or at best a novice, with at least several years before solemn profession would even be possible. I point this out not to disparage Wilson-Hartgrove, but to provide perspective. What is visible above the surface at present is but the first green shoots of a vital movement in the beginning stages of coming to self-consciousness; it is too early to anticipate what the future holds. What a flourishing into the future will likely hinge upon, however, is how well these communities establish relational ties with, and are willing and able to learn from, the ‘old monasticism.’ In other words, related to appropriating a solid practice of contemplative prayer, growing more closely aligned with the classical monastic tradition in some form will be an essential task if these new shoots are to weather the challenges to come, and emerge as a viable tradition in its own right.

Some signs of hope for a flourishing future can be drawn from within the classical monastic tradition itself. In a book whose title alone—*A Monastic Vision for the 21st Century: Where Do We Go From Here?*—speaks volumes, Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister articulates the situation for monasteries at the beginning of the millennium. After delineating the myriad ground-breaking changes ushered in during the latter half of the twentieth century, Chittister, contrasting our time to that of St. Benedict, concludes:

It is not [ancient] Rome, now, that needs to be confronted with a clear, prophetic voice of justice and peace. It is Washington, the World Bank, the IMF. It is sexism, racism, clericalism,

⁴¹ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What it has to Say to Today’s Church*, 35-37.

and materialism that are strangling the life out of people. It is elitism, militarism, and nuclearism that are really terrorizing the world...monastic communities must begin to develop new ways of addressing these new issues rather than simply of ignoring them.⁴²

What is apparent is that the foundations that have undergirded classical patterns of monastic life are shifting. Both 'old' and 'new' monastics in their own way are awakening to the fact that we are currently living into a new paradigm of religious life whose precise contours are not entirely clear yet. But the signs are pointing strongly toward a more socially aware and engaged monasticism that nonetheless maintains a strong core of contemplative prayer. Just as the new monastic communities need to tap the deep rootedness and wisdom gleaned over centuries of the classical monastic tradition, so too do the lineages that the new monasticism draws more directly from—radical communitarian movements on the periphery of church and society—have much to offer the classical monastic tradition by way of social engagement and analysis. What is hoped for is that both 'old' and 'new' begin to engage in serious dialogue, reflection, and shared praxis, so that a diversity of new communal forms might arise that will one day be recognized as truly the new monasticism for which the world is waiting.

Appendix

12 Marks of the New Monasticism⁴³

Moved by God's Spirit in this time called America to assemble at St. Johns Baptist Church in Durham, NC, we wish to acknowledge a movement of radical rebirth, grounded in God's love and drawing on the rich tradition of Christian practices that have long formed disciples in the simple Way

of Christ. 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.

www.newmonasticism.org

⁴² Joan Chittister, "Old Vision for a New Age," in Patrick Hart, ed., *A Monastic Vision for the 21st Century*, 96.

⁴³ What follows is taken in its entirety from The Rutba House, ed., *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of the New Monasticism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, A Division of Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), xii-xiii.