CHAPTER VI

BREAKING THROUGH

Changes To Be Expected

The transition from a secondary oriented society to a primary oriented one will bring some significant changes. These changes need not be traumatic if the direction is toward greater equilibrium. A dangerously tilted ship righting itself is a healthy change. Let me suggest several shifts that can be anticipated.

First, there will be a shift in expectations from grandiose aspirations that over burden institutions to modest ones that recognize their essential but limited functions. Secondly, there will be a shift in scale to the level appropriate for the situation - personal, local community, regional, national, global. As the scope of society has increased to national, regional and global levels structures have been stretched and strained. In the struggle to readjust roles some discoveries have been made. For example, despite good intentions efforts at the federal level to renew local communities have not done well. Another discovery is that global networks are not limited to those at the summit. Global contacts can be accomplished in remarkable ways on a local basis. Another discovery is bigger is not always better. For example, primary health care is not better through the constructing of larger health care systems. In other words, there is an appropriate level for particular tasks. Always increasing the size is not universally a good solution.

"Have you ever thought of trying a lay school of theology at the local level?" Archie asked over a cup of coffee. At the time of this conversation in the early 1960s I was an administrator in the national office of my denomination with a field of vision conditioned by a national structure. "We have organized lay schools nationally and regionally using our colleges and seminaries," I replied, "but never on a local level." We talked further. He thought the idea of using professional theologians in a local parish to explore the meaning of the faith would be workable. It made sense to me too because I was already becoming a bit uneasy that the lay schools of theology were taking the laity too far away from their own contexts. There were a few, of course, who really wanted a more traditional classical theological education with prescribed curriculum, lectures, reading assignments, etc. The seminaries already did that for resident students. What concerned me was that apart from a limited interest in some to make technical theology a hobby, the program was not capturing the imagination of the ordinary church member. Archie's suggestion brought the focus closer to the primary life areas of work and family. So we tried a Lay School of Theology in Archie's town and the "Faith in Life Dialogue" project was born. A shift in scale changed the whole character of the movement. Little did I realize then that Archie had started me on a slide downward to the roots.

Another example of a shift occurred when I was part of a team invited to design a national church convention in Canada whose end result would be concrete action rather than general resolutions. A convention process was developed using small interest groups with floating resource people from a wide variety of areas. During the first days in the small groups there was an exciting exchange of ideas and concerns. We were very encouraged. But the last day was calamitous. Rather than specific actions emerging, a series of resolutions came out of frustrated groups who discovered that the only implementation they could do in that setting was to make demands on the national organization (already overburdened with expectations and in some ways impotent to act). Our miscalculation was immediately evident. A shift in the constituency of the groups should have been made when it came to implementation. Groups should have been formed that were viable action groups representing persons from the same local area or from a particular profession through which action could flow. The planning team had made the national organization and not their local situation the context for the delegates' action.

A third shift will be in the understanding and exercising of authority. There are signs that some secondary institutions are changing their idea of authority. Perhaps they are recognizing that some things are simply unmanageable.[1] The way in which leadership will be exercised appears to some as no leadership at all for it is not centralized but increasingly dispersed. Organic processes operate differently. They look down and around in the soil and not up and beyond for direction.[2] For seeds to germinate they must be allowed to die in the earth. Relinquishment is an important part of that process. Being a manager and being a mid wife are quite different functions.

The larger the system the more difficult it will be to let go.[3] Anne Schaef believes that the inability to relinquish authority is a problem particularly for men. She makes this interesting observation:

> Men will fight tenaciously for their ideas. In fact, men defend their ideas like a lioness defends her cubs. On observing this, I realized that men's ideas really are their offspring. Perhaps, then, it is easier for a woman to part with her ideas because she has the capacity to produce human offspring, while a man's major production is his ideas.[4]

Quite a different reaction from fearing the loss of authority comes from base communities where vulnerability is shared. Jean Vanier, whose community includes physically and mentally handicapped persons, writes:

> True authority is exercised in the context of justice for all, with special attention to the weakest people, who cannot defend themselves and are part of the oppressed minority. This is an authority ready to give its life, which does not accept any compromise with evil, deceit, and the forces of oppression. A family or community authority, as well as having this sense of justice and truth, needs personal relationships, sensitivity in its action and the ability to listen, trust and forgive. None of this, of course, excludes moments of firmness. At the same time, and perhaps for the same reasons, many people confuse authority and the power of efficiency, as if the first role of people with responsibility was to make decisions, command effectively and so exercise power. But their role is first of all to be a reference, provide security, confirm, support, encourage and guide.[5]

Relinquishment is a foolish act ("Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" I Cor. 1:23) but it is not an irresponsible one. Relinquishment represents a completely different way of looking at authority. It is the view of those who know they live by gift and in turn are seeking to be a gift to others. In order to understand what "responsible relinquishment" is, it is necessary to examine the nature of authority as modeled for us by the Christ who became powerless for our sake. Power and authority are not synonymous. There are people who occupy positions of authority who have little power. There are others who are not in the seats of authority but who exercise great power.

There are two types of power. One is coercive power: the ability by physical or psychological force to get others to do your will. The other type is non-coercive power that inspires and evokes voluntary response. When authority cannot inspire or persuade, then coercive power is often employed. When people in authority have the ability to inspire they do not need coercive power. When those in authority believe that there is no wisdom or ability to make correct decisions at the base, they act unilaterally or hierarchically, seeking no other counsel but their own. Such authority is concentrated in the sovereign who decides on behalf of the masses. When those in authority believe that the masses possess wisdom and responsibility, then no unilateral decision or action is warranted. It is shared. In such a case authority comes not from above but through the people themselves.

To be effective authority needs power. It is desirable that it is non-coercive power, but for that certain conditions must pertain. In its fallen state, living under the tyranny of its own will, humanity is helplessness and powerlessness and faces spiritual chaos. In that situation God exercised a unilateral act of authority. God intervened without prior consultation. It was grace alone. Given the state of alienation that act was of necessity one sided but it was not coercive. It was an act of self-giving love, the supreme instance of unilateral love for others untainted by coercion or manipulation.

In moments of chaos intervention can be a loving act. If a fire in a crowded theater creates panic a unilateral act is salvatory. Someone needs to exercise authority by jumping on stage, grabbing the mike and giving clear and forceful instructions. Where no center of authority exists power may have to be seized to prevent total collapse. This is of course the case that dictators and other hierarchies seek to make to legitimatize their seizing control. The question that Bishop Hanns Lilje put to his friends during the plot against Hitler when they asked him for advice was, "Are you certain that when you remove the center of authority, you can establish a new center?" Intervention is a tricky business. In a few cases, like mob panic in a burning theater, it is justified. But in most other cases it is not. The Incarnation, however, is quite another matter. Although possessing absolute power and authority, God comes into our midst bereft of these prerogatives in the form of the suffering servant. That kind of unilateral use of power and authority is redemptive.

Because of the Incarnation and the Death and Resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Spirit, there is a different type authority in the body of Christ. That is the kinds of authority Christian communities have been given (Matt. 28:18-20). God's people possess power when they act graciously. Love establishes the authority. That type of authority is "saptiential," for it does what it says. Therefore it has power. The only real power the church has is the power it receives when it is willing to relinquish power. Forgiveness is one of the most significant forms of that power (John 20:23). This is a peculiar kind of empowerment for it involves not the transfer of power but the releasing of power. In forgiveness the ones forgiven are liberated from the power of sin and guilt. They are set free to become what they were meant to be. That is a power that unleashes incredible resources. At the same time the ones who doe the forgiving receive power, namely the power to say no to the claims of anger, hate and envy. To liberate humankind from these powers is simultaneously to set people free to exercise authority over their own lives. Therefore the degree to which the church is a responsible relinquisher, to that degree it empowers people.

The shift to sharing power in decision-making is closely related to the shift already discussed from rational to intuitive values.

> A different statement of priorities, methods and values is going to be required, one which is, and must be harder to express than the crudities of a behaviorist or positivist scenario for human life, and can perhaps only be experienced in poetic or theological terms. The poetry is that of Wisdom, and it expresses a feminine type of experience and a feminine kind of decision-making process; one which emerges from the situation by a growing clarification and conscious articulation of shared experience, finally brought to a point of definition, perhaps, by one authoritative voice, but not imposed from outside.[6]

Leaders must live in community to know the wisdom of shared life. Leadership involves learning to listen well, being sensitive and open and living and thinking laterally. This is to exercise authority with and not over people. Such leaders are given authority by the group because others perceive wisdom and sensitivity in them.

> We may well find that strength lies not in a leader's assertiveness but precisely in his or her ability to listen to others; not in bulldozer force but in an imagination, not in megalomania but in recognition of the limited nature of leadership in the new world . . . . leadership may well prove to be more temporary, collegial, and consensual.[7]

Can such leaders be trained? Certainly not in the old way nor according to the current definitions. Having lived through a number of curriculum reforms only to discover that the Golden Age did not arrive, I have come more and more to see the critical question is more one of selection than training. Ross Kinsler, writing out of his involvement in Third World programs of theological education by extension, agrees.

> In every culture church leaders need, more than schooling, a sense of calling and dedication, gifts (in the traditional and in the charismatic sense), the ability to participate in their group, identification with the group, acceptability to the group, etc. From this point of view any system of theological education is important not so much for what it teaches (quantity and quality) but for how it selects or excludes the real leaders.[8]

Such people already exist. They will be discovered and their gifts unleashed, I believe, as we shift to human scaled societies in which authority is neither repudiate nor imposed but rediscovered and shared.

Reversing Roles

As already noted the male/female issue is bringing about a significant change in roles in modern society. What might a similar change mean for primary and secondary institutions? What would happen if the primary and secondary changed roles? What would happen if the periphery moved to the center and what is in the center moved to the periphery? What would it mean for the relationship between teacher and pupil, parent and child, professional and lay, rich and poor, first world and third world if roles were reversed? Did not Jesus suggest such a shift in inviting those who are first to be last and those who are the greatest to become the least? In Christian theology such a change is called conversion. In the language of the soil it is known as regeneration.

One way change might happen in an organic and less violent way is for secondary systems to go on a sabbatical and lie fallow for a while. They have more than earned a rest. If they were understood as living organisms, as I believe

they should be, then such a practice would be recognized as necessary for life. Some remarkable and unexpected things might occur. There are, in fact, some interesting examples where this has happened. When foreign missionaries had to leave Madagascar in the 19th century and China in the 20th century, there was a remarkable rooting process that took place. Small household groups formed. The church grew dramatically. When the medical doctors went on strike in California, the death rate dropped! Some congregations have been revitalized during the absence of a pastor because they had to fend for themselves. They became a voluntary society again and resources were discovered they didn't know they had. It is not necessarily true that chaos results when the secondary system and its representative professional leaves. The pruning process may appear at first to be the destruction of the tree, but pruning strengthens the roots and makes the tree more fruitful eventually.

Another way of changing roles is for the secondary and primary to "get inside" each other. I do not mean this as some kind of infiltration or espionage work, but as a way of discovering the reality of each other. We all live in secondary systems but only a few have leadership roles in them. On the other hand everyone can have a leadership role in a base community. The level of participation is different. To redress the imbalance it is necessary for the secondary structures to bring the reality of the primary world into their consciousness. Some healing things have happened even in large organizations when their staffs have met on some neutral ground for a retreat in which personal agendas and encounters were dealt with. Hidden agendas that were causing real barriers were brought into the open and faced. These experiences of vulnerability help secondary systems to get down to primary values.

I have a friend who has used what he called "Power Labs" as a way to raising consciousness about racial issues. People from the same community spent some days together during which those who had positions of power were made powerless by the removal of money, shoes and privileges. Those with no power back home were given authority over the others. It was a painful but revealing experience. I have another friend who was burned out after twenty-five years in parish ministry. He left the congregation for six months and worked anonymously pumping gas in another state. It was a healing time that regenerated his pastoral ministry. What I am talking about in the reversal of roles is of course what happened in the Incarnation. God took on human form, entered fully into the human situation not as a privileged person but as one who became vulnerable ending his life with condemned criminals.

Can secondary institutions experience a role reversal? Can they provide the social and psychological space that not only tolerates but also encourages such change? Nature has her own way of returning the secondary to the primary. Fruits, leaves, and flowers are discarded. They fall to the earth to become part of the soil. Much of what is above in the plant world such as fruits, flowers and leaves, are seasonal, "temporary", and are discarded as normal procedure for the sake of the ongoing productivity of the plant. The root system, hidden in the soil, is the long term, sustaining part of the system. Regeneration, however, is contrary to the way we have come to view secondary institutions. They are built to survive at all costs. In fact great sacrifices are asked of the base to maintain structures above it. But what if the reverse where the case, as it is with living things? What if the fruit ripening on the tree were seen only as a momentary product of a long process of cultivation? Once ripened it can be relinquished with gratitude. By falling the fruit enriches the soil and releases new seeds. If it is retained on the tree it serves no one. You can, of course, "bronze" them on the branches to keep up the outward appearance, but all within would be dry and lifeless.

One implication of an organic model would be for leadership roles in secondary systems to be temporary. The earliest practices of Christian ministry had this character. In early Christian households responsibility was passed around. For this to happen, of course, the scale and scope of secondary systems need to be limited. I believe that institutions like the congregation can be modest in size and program yet very significant. They do not need to carry all the tasks that may be done more effectively by members in their own primary worlds even though there are many who want the "church to do it". What I am suggesting is a pruning process of cutting back expectations, staffs and budgets. While it would be admirable for this to happen voluntarily as a conscious theological decision ("Have this mind among you" Phil. 2:5), it will most likely happen when forced by a financial crisis. Perhaps there is a gentler way to change. Let me suggest, however, what some modest but significant changes might be that pruned back church institutions might undertake.

Hosting the base

One test of the sensitivity of the secondary to the primary is the way people feel when they enter secondary institutions. People are easily intimidated by size, prestige and power displayed in its many subtle and not so subtle forms: titles on doors, professional garb, diplomas, technical language and a whole assortment of practiced rituals. Many people otherwise secure and adult in their own setting become insecure in corporate offices, in the presence of

professionals, in a classroom, in large assemblies and in public worship. Many feel out of place, powerless, inept and second-class in church institutions. What a tragic contrast to the way people felt in Christ's presence.

The way people feel in institutional settings is a litmus paper test of that institution's sensitivity to the base. It is not only a matter of size but also a matter of affirmation. Some large systems have managed to maintain the priority of the personal and practice gracious hospitality. I remember once being greeted at the parking lot by the president of a university who insisted on taking my bags and leading me to my room and then, over a cup of coffee, made inquiries about my family and me. Accessibility, hospitality, affirmation and recognition of the gifts of others are all signs of a secondary system hosting a primary one. Being the host is perhaps the main function that should be expected of people in positions of institutional leadership. If they see their role primarily as one of hospitality they would have a healthier secondary system. Listening to what is actually going on at the base might drastically cut down on the memos about what ought to be done. I once in jest invited a friend in a national church office to attend a regional church conference as a listener and to sit on the platform with a piece of tape over his mouth as a dramatic sign (like Jeremiah) of the new listening posture of the hierarchy so loudly claimed in its editorials but seldom practiced. We both chuckled over the idea because it was so preposterous, especially the thought that the local committee might give him a larger honorarium for doing that than giving a speech! But is it so preposterous? Listening to its members is one of the key functions of leadership.

A second modest but significant step is the sharing of information. Fewer programs would be imposed from above to consume the energies of the staff if there was awareness of what was already going on at the base. Institutions have an important function in the retrieval and sharing of information. In the self-contained village society the brokerage of information was taken care of naturally in the market place gossip and through the occasional troubadour bringing news from the outside. Even in the modern world after the village squares and market places disappeared, the party line telephone and local newspaper kept the process going. But today those systems have mostly disappeared. Institutions can render an important service by sharing information not about their own agendas so much as reporting what one's neighbor is doing or needing. Giving away what one has been given requires different skills than most institutional promoters possess. These skills include listening instead of only speaking, attentiveness downward rather than primarily upward, mingling with ordinary people rather than with the elite, sharing rather than protecting sources and a common vocabulary rather than the in-language most systems quickly develop. In this modest but significant step I see the new professional (teacher, pastor, administrator, social worker, public official, etc,) as a "bumble bee," picking up pollen here and there and leaving it where it can stimulate germination. You might call this function "cross-pollination" and it is a vital part of the regeneration process. Of course some of this is already happening. My point is that understanding such linkage as essential can help people in leadership positions redefine their role. Caring for the soil and what is growing in it is, I believe, the best way to maintain healthy secondary systems.

A friend in Birmingham, England, David Clark, has approached the task of helping basic Christian communities maintain contact with each other by establishing a network and publishing a newsletter about their activities. The whole thing is done with part-time workers and Clark's voluntary time. Although there is pressure from some quarters to enlarge the operation, I was impressed at a consultation of base groups organized by Clark that they were agreed it should be kept modest. Because Clark is sensitive to the base, he understands how they can be well served by a modest approach.

Another illustration of such locating and linking systems is the mail order catalogs which put information into the hands of the individual who then makes his or her own choice. The telephone book, especially the yellow pages, is another example. It would, however, be good to have a green section of human resources in the telephone book as a supplement to the yellow section that is mostly commercial. The local library, of course, is a splendid example of how a secondary system can share information. Computer terminals and Watts lines makes any local library part of a global network of resources. Secondary systems are at their best when they locate, link and cross-pollinate. This role does not require control as much as connection, not centralization as much as dispersal, not research and analysis as much as search and sharing, not unified policy as much as diverse practices. A good example of how this can be done is the Alternative Catalog launched with a modest grant from a national church organization.

There is much more that can be done. A publisher of a journal or newsletter can connect six people in the same town who are unknown to each other but are in the publisher's computer under the same zip code. Who knows what might happen when people discover others with similar interests in the same neighborhood. The stranger often becomes the bumblebee in carrying from one place to another connections that do not get made in a vertical system. Many clergy have information about the needs and skills of people and consciously or unconsciously cross-

pollinate. Mail carriers, garbage haulers, milk deliverers and even family doctors did much of this cross-pollinating until they were replaced by super markets or restricted their services to a central office. When they were busy bees out in the field secondary systems functioned much better.

Power has been defined as knowledge. You have power when you have knowledge the other does not have. The Christian faith, however, speaks of another kind of power: knowledge that comes when you give away what you know. Knowledge that is dispersed bears more fruit. This is very different from the protectionism and the patenting of ideas for exclusive use of a few for their personal advantage. Such giving away is foolishness in typical institutional and professional circles, but it is a very necessary procedure in living organisms. In the church this means giving away the words and the rituals of grace. They are gifts in the first place, gifts to be shared. As Christ laid down his life for others so the church as Christ's body grows when it shares its gifts.

A hospital board once asked a committee to design a chapel to be attached to the hospital. The committee, however, chose to be more radical and asked first what was the hospital's theology of health care. The result was a critical report addressed to the hospital board claiming that the practices of the hospital did as much to promote disease as to promote health.[9] We need to raise exactly that question of our institutions. Do they serve the base? Are they dispensable? Can they be pruned? What, for example, is the implication for the institutional church of the dispersion of gifts on Pentecost? How do we make sense institutionally of Jesus' words in the Upper Room, "It is to your advantage that I go away"? (John 16:7). The withering away of the systems can be a frightening and threatening challenge, or it can be an exciting adventure for those who know that regeneration comes through death and resurrection. If we refuse to let institutions die, they will never experience resurrection. One of the most loving things we can do is to remove the life support systems from structures that have long since expired. In their death they can continue to serve by allowing their resources to enrich the soil where new life struggling to be born and sow some new seeds. Breaking down can become breaking through.

An institution oriented to the base and able to relinquish will, of course, require a new kind of leader. As long as the primary community was the primary force in the formation of people, leaders entered institutional life with a built-in appreciation of the primary. The family doctor knew the primary setting of the patient and drew much of the data for diagnosis and prescription from it. The doctor may even have grown up in the same community. The link between the primary and the secondary was there. The politician who farmed part of the year and sat in the state legislature the rest of the year is another case in point. But today many professionals have little contact with the primary world of their clients. Too often one's primary world is something to be abandoned in order to pursue a career. Professional training in fact requires a long period of removal if not isolation physically and psychologically from the primary community. Very few ever return to it to practice what they have learned. In another context Elizabeth Janeway describes the consequences of the separation of the powerless and the powerful in terms of "distancing."

> This distancing elevates (the powerful) out of the human world and out of touch with their fellows, but it does not cure them of bad dreams. The loss of communion between rulers and ruled opens the door to fantasy and unreal expectations for both. It falsifies the nature of the relationship between weak and powerful and lessens the capacity of society to deal with the eternal matters of getting on together and managing the physical world.[10]

As a teacher in a professional school I have become increasingly concerned about the extent to which professional education subtly results in the sacrifice of the students' primary relationships while at the same time ignoring the educational value of these relationships as valuable learning laboratories for professional training. Too many marriages and significant friendships do not survive these critical years. That this happens in a theological seminary, as it does in other professional schools, is a special tragedy, since pastoral ministry should demonstrate in practice a healthy primary life in a society that has too few positive models. If the professional is not successful in primary relationships, ought such persons be qualified for leadership in systems whose function it is to serve the primary?

The place to form leaders for the future is first and foremost in healthy primary communities. As decisive as any academic record is the one from one's primary group. I've always enjoyed Bob Newhart's irreverent takeoff on Abraham Lincoln where he fantasizes that Lincoln as a person never existed but rather was the creation of the public relations firm hired to run the presidential campaign. In a telephone call from New York to "Abe" in Gettysburg before the famous speech, the public relations director says to the not-too-bright character playing Abe, "Now listen, Abe, read your biog again. First you were a rail splitter and then a lawyer, not the other way around!" Our selection

and training of professionals seems more like Newhart's version. We may wonder about the insensitivity of secondary institutions and are scandalized by the breakdown in the personal life of their professionals, but there is no mystery in that. Primary community has been for too many an acceptable casualty on the road to a successful career.

There is also a need for the professional to live as much in the primary world as in the secondary. Rather than sacrificing domestic life for the job, we need to find ways in which these two parts of life are brought together. The opening of the secondary world to women is one way this can happen. That will not happen, however, if they simply conform to what is already there, or have to add that role on top of primary responsibilities. What is necessary to establish a balance is for males to assume their responsibility in the primary worlds that they have largely abandoned. This may mean part-time occupations in the secondary world. As institutions assume more modest roles that might be possible. And given their limited budgets that might even be desirable. There will also need to be a drastic change in life styles for the new professional in keeping with a more modest role. Working part-time with more attention to the primary means that professional skills may be exercised more and more at the base level voluntarily and without pay. That is what the domestic world has always done. Or perhaps the institution itself may become more and more dependent on voluntary staff. In that way it will exist only as long as the spirit moves people to keep it alive.

There is also a measure of freedom to be won by not investing one's entire career into secondary institutions. We need free people within them, not so easily managed, not so quick to conform, not so easily threatened, who have other bases and perspectives from which to keep a more balanced attitude on their work. A "captive" staff is healthy neither for the staff nor the institution. The possibilities for alternatives that balanced primary/secondary roles might bring to such areas as health care, social services, counseling, hospitality, friendship - all of which are over priced and in short supply - are tremendous. They represent that other "economics" that both socialism and capitalism have ignored. The liberation of the primary and the relinquishment of the secondary go hand in hand. We cannot have one without the other. But relinquishment also means freedom and healing for both the primary and the secondary.

The New Leader

The leadership role in the church deserves our special attention in understanding the church as a primary community. I turn now to that issue. Unfortunately initiatives from the base have too often been regarded with suspicion and fear by the clergy. A priest in Nicaragua who worked with grass roots communities shared this fear:

> We were really scared. We saw these communities developing, encouraged them all we could, felt that they were of the Spirit. Then we discovered that there was hardly anything committed to us as priests which they were not able to undertake in their ministry. We were teachers of the faith? Giving and receiving from one another around the Scriptures, they were much more effective teachers of the faith. We were leaders of worship? Building into the liturgy their own music and drawing into it the ups and downs of their own experience, they were much more skilled at worship-making than us. We at least had the Mass? But it became clearer and clearer that we were not in control of the Mass, that it was an act of the people together, whatever place of prominence we might take. And when it came to living out the faith in the world--of course they had a maturity and awareness that we were heir to. We were really scared! We thought that if we gave them their head, there would be no ministry left for us. We would be redundant. . . . But we did not stand in the way. . . .
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> The result? What we lost is given back to us with new power and depth. The people understand the place of the ordained priesthood as never before; whereas we have a ministry which is no longer over them but with them. It is when we were prepared to give up the ministry as it was that God gave it back to us as a new thing.[11]

I believe that God is seeking to give the church back to the people as a new creation. That will, however, require relinquishment and perhaps even the death of many patterns. What the base is asking for and what women, for example, are seeking, is not simply to share the power that the church professional has, but to have a new kind of power. One day in a seminary class I interviewed Sister Luke Tobin on a speaker telephone. She is a strong and delightful advocate within Catholic women's orders for greater participation of women. (Her friends affectionately refer her to as "Cool Hand Luke"). When asked about the ordination of women in the Roman Church she replied, "If it were allowed tomorrow I would not seek ordination. The whole system needs to be changed first."

There is a slow but resolute shift from a system dominated by masculine values to one incorporating feminine ones. I have commented earlier on the importance of this shift. The deeper challenge of feminism (which includes some, but too few, male voices) is the transformation of institutions into an organic movement geared to other priorities. It is not a matter of women finding a place in a male church, but of all of us finding each other in a more feminine church, i.e., a primary church.[12]

In an organic system death is not be feared but understood as the way life continues. The threat we are referring to here in the shift to primary levels is a threat unto life not death. This is a threat that comes from within the Christian tradition itself.[13] To be regenerated from one's own roots is healthy and healing. The church as the body of Christ is after all a body and is properly described in organic and feminine images. Rosemary Haughton makes a striking case why such language though threatening to church hierarchy is natural to the Christian faith.

> The viciously anti-feminine language of some of the Fathers of the Church (otherwise, it seems, kindly, pious and reasonable men) is a sign of how unnatural it was for Christians, sharers in the body of him who is incarnate Wisdom, to suppress the feminine in the church. The fear of the feminine was so strong that they had to do so, but unlike their pagan contemporaries, who found it quite easy to despise women without getting angry about it, these Christian men worked themselves into a fever of neurotic repulsion at the physical femininity of women.[14]

To be a professional in an organic process requires the special ability to allow life to grow from tiny embryos,[15] to nurture and cultivate and do the midwifery tasks that are much closer to the domestic table waiting functions of ministry of the early church than what has become of professional ministry today. Pastoral ministry involves working with the soil. Those who try to do pastoral ministry in institutional settings that often remove them the primary world have a special challenge to develop a form of leadership that is servant oriented. The ministry of enablement through relinquishment means moving down rather than up. Its model is the *knosis* ("humiliation", Phil. 2:6-8) of Christ. The new leader will likely be much less visible working behind the scenes as the servant of the servants.[16]

> Will theologically trained people be found alongside the damaged and disadvantaged and marginalized in society so that they can claim, "I sat where they sat"? If this could be secured, there would be a great impulse to the reinventing of theology on a continent which is marked by theological traditionalism. God's terms for fresh vision often are: "move from where you are to a place I'll show you." [17]

The biblical imagery for replacement is exodus. From the time of Abraham and Sarah the paradigm of faithfulness has been the willingness to move to another place. Usually we think of this in terms of geographic displacement, though this is not necessarily always the case, as I will suggest in a moment. In any case voluntary displacement involves relinquishment, a willingness to risk, to leave, to die. Unlike Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan, the shift from secondary to primary is not geographic but domestic, an exodus "in place."[18]

Relinquishment has been the hallmark of God's pilgrim people. To "leave everything and follow" has been the much-applauded model of foreign missionaries who leave homeland and family. There may be something exotic about dying for the faith on some remote frontier, but it may be more important to be willing to die within structures back home. That would be no less heroic; in fact, it would be so unusual that it should qualify one for instant sainthood. In the relinquishment of power and privilege through the voluntary shift from secondary to primary there is an equally daring "leaving all" in entering unexplored land of vulnerability and powerlessness.

All of us are indebted to pioneers who sacrificed for the sake of future generations. In America this is what many of our ancestors did. There was much hardship involved as well as uncertainty and loneliness. Many never saw the future that they helped create. In more recent times people have died in liberation struggles without seeing the day when their land, race, sex, or group would be liberated. Nonetheless, they pursued their quest. The exodus to the primary will not likely be to another land as much as rebuilding the soil in the old land. Our land was once covered with rich topsoil, but has suffered damaging erosion. Our pioneer task is to restore the soil so that it may be productive again. The efforts we begin now may not bear visible fruits in our lifetime. Yet, "for the hope that is set before us" we need to face the risks of relinquishment. As Walter Brueggemann said, "Exodus is the primal scream that permits the beginning of history."[19]

Beginning Again With The Land

This "exodus in place" I have referred to elsewhere as the Third Settlement of the Land.[20] The First Settlement of the land took place through the initial establishment of human community and agriculture in societies of small scale with a life style closely attuned to nature. A few examples of such societies still remain. The Second Settlement, at least in the North American continent, represents a shift in the view of nature and human community. Nature was seen as something to exploit and human community as a social system sacrificed to the machines of production. It was during the ascendancy of the Industrial Age that the American continent was occupied. In terms of our discussion it was the age of the dominance of secondary systems, of masculine values of aggression, of expansionism and control. In the Third Settlement there is no new, virgin land to be settled or stolen from the natives. The task is regeneration, working with nature as a partner and not as an object to be subjected and exploited. The Third Settlement does not mean geographic exodus away from other races, cultures and religious groups but an exodus within present structures learning how to live together in a pluralistic society in confined spaces and with limited resources.

The soil for the new land settlement pattern is the primary community. Unlike the previous settlements the task today is to find richness in the diversity of today's primary groups. The Third Settlement limits growth in size while pursuing growth in other ways. There will be much failure before viable models will result. But that, I believe, is the nature of exodus in place. What results will be new yet old: fresh shoots connected to ancient roots.

The Third Settlement confronts secondary systems with a special challenge. The small, frail efforts in the soil will need what Harry Boyte calls "structures of support."

> Structures of support (are) the resources and experiences that in real life generate the capacity and the inspiration for insurgency. Where do ordinary people, steeped in life-long experiences of humiliation and self-doubt, barred from acquisition of basic public skills, gain the courage, the self-confidence, the mutual trust, above all the hope to take action in their behalf? [21]

The secondary system that is best suited to host, mobilize and lead the new settlement is the religious community through its middle range institution: the local congregation. There are several reasons for believing this. For one, the congregation by its very nature is also in part a primary community. The internal call to be what it was meant to be as the body of Christ is constitutive for the congregation. A second reason is that the capacity to die is also inherent in the Christian understanding of ministry. The first secondary institutions to relinquish their life could and should be the churches. A third reason is more sociological. That is the fact that unlike any other institution the local congregation straddles primary and secondary systems. Whereas the Christian Base Community is more primary than the congregation, over against the city or the state the congregation is more primary. That ambiguity can be an asset for the Third Settlement. In particular the congregation, while usually classified with secondary in my definition, is itself a primary system in the larger community. In that larger scale the congregation is too primary to be strictly a secondary institution. On the other hand it is too large and structured to be strictly a primary one. The congregation is in a unique situation for bridging the primary and the secondary.

Regeneration as "Exodus in place" means both an end and a beginning, a leaving and a returning.[22] Leaders in the institutional the church need to become followers of those who have made such an exodus before them and experienced regeneration through relinquishment. Such people are located primarily in the base where they have chosen to live. The Third Settlement has already begun in the basic Christian communities.

Leonardo Boff after visiting base ecclesial communities in the jungles of Brazil writes of the renewal of the pastors through the people and argues that the shift to the base is not destructive of the professional in the church but renewing.

> Only an outsider can say that the involvement of the church in society cannot be reconciled to the Gospel identity of the Church. I see it just the reverse: the struggle for the rights of the poor and intervention for the liberation of the suffering strengthens the perspective of the faith. The priests here are healthier than many others which I have come to know in meetings and seminaries in this huge country who don't feel themselves so closely bound to the ways of the people.[23]

In order to understand the role of these primary communities better we need now to look more closely at their specific characteristics. We shall do so in the next chapter on varieties of base communities.

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[1]Cornuelle, *Op. Cit*. pp. 16-17, writes regarding this:

> The state of mind necessary to authoritarian management is disappearing. The boss is dead. And our institutions are in crisis . . our institutions were not built for people who want to boss themselves. . . . Highly structured, authoritarian, bureaucratic organizations were able to function passably well in a simpler world. But they cannot keep up with change. They cannot digest diversity, and our society is becoming almost incomprehensibly diverse.

[2]Sale, *Op. Cit*. p. 521, states this conviction:

> I am as certain as tomorrow that there is no mass party, no first or second or third party, no vanguard or elite, no leader or guru, no treatise or formula, that is going to bring about the human-scale future or could possibly set for us the way it has to come. . . .There is nothing more here than the clean, hard task of showing what the needed and preferably future is and helping anyone who asks in the long, complicated, exciting process of reaching it.

[3]In an article published in *Business in the Contemporary World*, Spring l992, entitled "East is East and West is West", William Hall argues:

> The central problem is that large institutions are the most conspicuous holdouts against the tide of democracy and free enterprise through the modern world. Now that totalitarian systems are falling everywhere, the typical business corporation, government agency, school, hospital, newspaper, TV network, church, and other major organizations stand alone with Castro's Cuba and a few other isolated backwaters as the last remaining bastions of authoritarian control. (p.18 in pre-publication manuscript).

[4]Ann Schaef, *Women's Reality*, pp. 57-58.

[5]Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth,* p. 164

[6]Rosemary Haughton , *There is Hope for a Tree,* p. 16

[7]Alvin Toffler, *Third Wave*, p. 420

[8]Ross Kinsler, *The Extension Movement in Theological Education,* South Pasadena: William Cary Library, l978, pp. 12-13.

[9]Michael Wilson, *The Hospital as a Moment of Truth*, University of Birmingham, unpublished thesis.

[10]Elizabeth Janeway, *Powers of the Weak,* New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks, l981, p. 9

[11] Ian Fraser, *Reinventing Theology*, London: U.S.P.G., 1981, p. 31.

[12]This point is made by Rosemary Haughton in *The Passionate God,* London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981, pp. 261-262:

> It is clear that the increasing prominence of women in ministerial roles in the Church is not due to women being "promoted" to male clerical roles but more to the fact that older ministerial roles are dissolving and new ones have not replaced them, but a whole new experience of ministry is emerging instead, in which it seems no odder for women than for men to be doing all kinds of things in and for the church, not all of which have been thought of as "ministerial." They include going to prison, healing people, preaching and political agitation, for instance. By these means, among others, the older structures are effectively overturned, and that means that the "bottom" people come out on "top," as indeed Jesus said they would, but "on top" does not mean that the situations have been reversed and the oppressed are now the oppressors, as in the usual revolutionary model. It means that the vitality of the "grass roots," the place where things have always grown, is not recognized as having primary significance and is therefore to be served by those who formerly merely

organized. It is in this situation of radical change that the meaning of the feminine in the Church has to be understood.

[13] The biblical case for relinquishment is impressive: the re-appearing paradigm of exodus, the Jubilee Year (Deut.), the Incarnation, Christ's teaching of losing one's life (Matt. 16:25), leaving house and family (Matt. 19:29), Jesus leaving the disciples for retreats, Ascension, and the most perplexing relinquishment of all: Christ's abandonment on the Cross (Matt. 27:46).

[14] *Op. Cit.*, p. 262.

[15] Frederick K. Wentz makes the observation that clergy are too often more concerned with fruits than with formation. In an article, "What Does Lay Ministry Look Like?", *Lutheran Partners*, July/August, l991, p. 24, Wentz makes the following point:

> The biggest problem here appears to me to lie in this: *clergy tend to look for the seeds when they should be looking for tender shoots, sturdy stalks, blossoms, leaves, fruit.* The bin-keepers are too intent upon filling the bins, reaping an early harvest, so that they hardly see these strange, green evidences of a seeds death and new transformed life . . . . .We need to trust God and the lay people around us who keep disappearing. We cannot measure what is happening by the number of seeds we can sift through our fingers!

[16] Macquarrie, *Op. cit*., pp. 310-311 says:

> "Letting-be" means helping a person into the full realization of his (sic) potentialities for being; and the greatest love will be costly since it will be accomplished by the spending of one's own being. . . . The very essence of God as Being is to let-be, to confer, sustain, and perfect the being of the creatures.

[17] Fraser, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

[18] The phrase "going to church" represents the popular ecclesiology that the church is a place you "go" to. In other words, you leave where you are, for example your primary life area, and go somewhere else where God meets you in a special way and which is called "church." "Exodus in place" reverses this ecclesiology, and emphasizes the need to enter into the places we already are, our own primary relationships, and discover something "out there" one goes to, or is loyal to, or responds to, but discovered within oneself and within those nearest you the presence of Christ, the body of Christ. That is being the church in place. If we do leave the home base (and here secondary systems can perform an important auxiliary function) then returning to it with deeper understanding and with resources for it is a worthy goal. Going to church, then, could be the way we are helped to return home.

[19] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination, Philadelphia*: Fortress Press, 1978, p. 21.

[20] Cf. Loren Halvorson, *Grace at Point Zero,* New York: Friendship Press, 1972 and *Peace on Earth Handbook*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976. Similar ideas are developed by Toffler in *Third Wave*.

[21] Harry Boyte, *The Backyard Revolution,* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980, p. 179.

[22] "[Abraham] (Gen. 11:31) left in order to come back. He left without a saving message in order to come back with the saving message. In his leaving, he is coming back! In his abandoning Ur, he is rescuing Ur." Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, p. 176. In Christ God "went out" to dwell among us for our sake. Christ was thrown out by humans to return again in the Spirit, His body radically dispersed. That is the biblical paradox of absence/presence.

[23] Leonardo Boff, *Theologie hört aufs Volk,* p. 73