

**Devotional Thoughts :: Thinking Aloud by Leonard Pavitt**

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(A Contemplation on Devotion Across Generations)

Why is it that newly formed groups, born out of a desire to live according to what they see is the true or original meaning of their particular religion or way of living, always lose that first clear vision that led them to live so differently, and that they then, slowly and inevitably become something other?

I remember reading a book some years ago called, if I remember right, The Pilgrim Church. It traced various Christian groups from the early church up to the twentieth century and showed how these groups appeared to have had an insight into the 'true' beginnings of their faith which led them to return to the first flowering and make a new beginning again, casting off the traditions and forms that had accumulated since. This new clarity, this new beginning was, in turn, lost after a generation or two but somewhere else a new group would again rediscover the 'first born' way and what was seen as the 'true way' was once more found and taken. So that the basic, original and genuine creation had another chance to survive intact.

When one looks at the recent history of various groups, it so often appears that the first enthusiasm and clear vision of the way ahead is lost by the succeeding generations. It seemed to me that this also applied to those forms of tightly knit community groups, whether religious or not.

What appears to happen is that the original group is composed of people who are not only driven by a vision of what they think 'should be' and a determination to put this into practice, but they are also ready to put their own 'stability' at risk to achieve it.

For many this means giving up their careers, relationships, perhaps familial ties, and putting all they possess into the building of the 'new way.' In other words, many such members of new groups truly risked all and, by doing this, not only showed their whole-heartedness but committed themselves totally to making it work.

However well these first totally committed people attempt to pass this whole-hearted giving on to their children, those children when they join the group, simply do not have to make this same sacrifice and great leap into an uncertain future. They don't have to give up the security of a home and job and income as their parents did for the 'new way.' They don't have to run the risk of losing contact with their family or sinking all their hard-earned savings into the venture. Rather one could say that for them such risks would only happen if they decided to leave, for then gone is their security and their familial ties. In a sense, they would be showing the same courage in leaving that their parents or grandparents had shown in joining.

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