SECTION ONE

Leaving Home 1968 - 1971

Notes on Curriculum at Union Theological Seminary
(a working paper)

David R. Graham
12/7/68

The fundamental need in this culture is for a new vision of the way it should operate. We understand now that we have moved from a Newtonian universe-as-clock to a post-Einsteinian universe-as-field-of-force. We are now in the process of inventing the concepts, images, values, behavioral patterns and teaching methods appropriate for a universe-as-field-of-force.

With regard to pedagogy, two sets of distinguishing ideas seem to have gained general acceptance, at least here at Union. We now understand that our educational goal should be acculturation rather than enculturation and that our method should be knowledge exchange rather than transferral.

The difference in emphasis between these concepts can be seen by a comparison of their definitions:[1]

enculturation: the process by which an individual learns the traditional content of a culture and assimilates its practices and values

acculturation: a process of intercultural borrowing marked by a continuous transmission of traits and elements between diverse peoples and resulting in new and blended patterns

"The enculturation concept assumes that human social growth and development is effected by adjusting, fitting, or otherwise conforming the individual to a predetermined pattern of socially defined norms. Enculturation implies the transfer to the young of values and behavioral patterns which are meant to be internalized and obeyed without serious question. In other words, the enculturation concept implies that the human organism is an object to be culturally programmed. The concept of acculturation, on the other hand, allows for more initiative on the part of the person being conditioned by his culture. It suggests that human social growth and development is a process of exchange rather than transfer."[2]

As Professor Sanders observes, we have found that with the acculturation concept the student becomes also a teacher and the teacher becomes also a

student. So that a description of the educational process takes note of a constant shifting of roles as everyone becomes students and everyone, on account of his knowledge, has the right to be heard. I think we understand now that the right to be heard means the right to teach. Students are only beginning to understand the responsibility this places on them.

These ideas are more than slightly different from ones we have used in the past, and I think most of the tensions we experience can be traced to our sincere attempts to enculturate ourselves to an acculturated educational environment. We are not particularly comfortable with shifting roles so we are having to learn how it works. ' The difficulty is not a lack of motivation to do it but a lack of clarity concerning how it's done.

My own thinking has been developing along with others' so in hopes that it will be helpful I offer it to the discussion.

The generally accepted idea that theological, like other subject education, should help us understand and deal with the needs of our culture should be reinserted into all our discussions. I say this because any viable organism -- a seminary is one -- has developed its association patterns because its members have set some goals which can be accomplished within the limits set by the organism's resources. The available resources for accomplishing the goals will vary according to external and internal factors. The constant in the life of an organism is the fact of set goals. The goals will change according to needs in the organism's external and internal environments, but without some goals the organism cannot develop association patterns sufficiently strong to hold its parts together.

My frustration in discussing curriculum revision has been that I felt we were trying to reshuffle our resources (curriculum, faculty and student time, etc.) without being too clear about our goals. In the case of the Core Group the reverse was true and something substantial was accomplished.

Initially then I would like to suggest some specific goals in the light of which I approach the question of resources. These are what I consider alternative goals which can be generalized for a school that is teaching and learning theological skills.

The fundamental need of this culture is to learn to use its new environment for the people's benefit rather than their and its destruction. It is well known that at the present time we are destroying our environment almost faster than it can be rebuilt. I use the term environment in its broadest sense.

A few illustrations of the destruction of our environment: we are making rivers and lakes into open sewers; we are pouring poisonous gases into the air; we are inflicting noise pollution on ever wider numbers; we are bringing the global combustion rate perilously close to the global photosynthesis rate; we are upsetting the ecological balance of the sea from which we obtain 66% of the earth's oxygen; we have over-crowded our cities, inflicting unmeasurable strain on the human psyche; we have begun destroying the ecological balance of other countries through resource exploitation; we have through the draft and our educational institutions either incapacitated or turned into dangerously narrow persons a large number of the younger generation; the younger generation has alienated a large portion of the older population;

we have encouraged polarization of intentions and goals of ethnic, economic and sexual groups; the list goes on and we have seen it before.

I think we are beginning to learn that these problems cannot be dealt with piecemeal or through political power as we have known it. It is abundantly clear that to use political force or the threat of political force today only increases the dangers of polarization (backlash and repression).

Therefore, we are left with the more difficult task of envisioning and acting out a kind of social organization which relies more on the ability of people to create decisions through dialogue rather than through mandate.

The problems listed above are the effects of a decision-making system in which people who will be immediately affected by decisions do not have an opportunity to make those decisions. The same system operates with little regard for feed-back about the possible long-range effects of particular decisions (GM, Ford and Chrysler are still producing internal combustion engines when by now they might have perfected electric, atomic or at least turbine engines). Basically the system operates to exploit resources far beyond the limits of intelligent use.

We need, therefore, to find ways of educating the country in the intelligent use of resources, individual, corporate, economic and natural. This will amount to a fundamental shift in the values and behavioral patterns we have lived with for centuries.[3]

When we are learning these new values and patterns at Union we should be

devising ways of teaching them in the culture. We will make use of developing

communications media: audio and video tapes, small-audience radio and TV,

underground press, local news collection services, interlinking of private

communications networks, packets of materials at various levels of difficulty

on particular topics, extended use of cable TV, bibliographies of written,

audio and visual materials available through computer and easy-access devices

such as that just announced by Honeywell (New York Times 12/5/68, front

page business section; IBM has a similar device using a typewriter terminal).

In other words I can see Union using its knowledge of how cultures have

operated and its imagination as to how this one could operate to educate

this culture in the new methods and patterns of human relationship which are

so painfully needed. In this regard the work of community members in "soul"

exegesis, historical models of cultural change, communications media, etc.,

should be interlinked with the work of people outside the community.[4]

We need to think of the target of Christian education efforts as the culture,

not simply the church. As theologians we should seek outlets for accurate

information on current issues like poverty, health, education, human rights,

and urban living, not to mention international issues. This need to move

relevant information will be absolutely essential in light of the inevitable

effects of the task given Herb Klein.

Most important we should develop a style of human relations which is based

on process and cooperation rather than force and competition. The industrial

age was based on a fragmentation of society into competing individuals and

groups. It was assumed that this process would encourage if not force the

intelligent action required for human development. Now we are learning
that human development can be accomplished through cooperation and
communication.[5] We know a great deal now about the inner logic of the
communication process; we are in the process of deciding to use it.

As the seminary learns to function with a communications rather than a
power model of organization it will find reason to use its resources
differently. We can, for instance, hire some consultants to advise on the
feasibility of computerizing all automatic and routine decisions currently
made by people. We might work out a computer time-sharing plan with the
National Council of Churches.

When we have decided on the number and kind of goals for the seminary, we
can decide who has the knowledge to execute them and where we need feed-back
procedures. The Union Commission is quite rightly the policy-making
center of the seminary. Authority for execution of policy should be
delegated by the Commission to persons it feels can fulfill the functions
necessary to execute the policy. The standing committees, among which will
be included the board of directors, concerned with fund-raising, should
receive feed-back from the executive personnel as to how policy made is
and can be carried out. The working committees of the standing committees
will collect feed-back from specialized functions and help collect and
germinate new ideas for the elaboration, discontinuation or alteration of
existing policy and execution techniques.

It will be noticed that these ideas differentiate structure according to
function and competence rather than personal status, age, or wealth. The

functions will be elaborated when we have decided on goals. I would suggest that the standing and working committees which are currently studying goals be used as policy-interpreters after the former task has been accomplished.

Obviously the ability to manipulate curriculum is our major resource to be activated toward fulfilling our goals when these are solidified. But prior to a discussion of curriculum we should follow the logic of our idea that student is also teacher and teacher is also student by replacing the concept of a core curricular material (the firm rock of the enculturation process) with the idea that a student by himself and in conversation with other students and professors is capable of choosing what courses and directions of study he needs in order to fulfill his potential. After all, a 21 year-old person is capable of deciding what he needs to know, particularly in an educational environment as stimulating as Union.

This will also free us up to allow students to offer courses, seminars or lectures in areas of their interest and competence. If they have something significant to offer they will be heard. If not, they will be ignored. The preparation of instructional material by students should be taken into account as partial fulfillment of degree requirements.

As it is now, many of the ideas and much of the energy for reforms of all sorts are supplied by the students; their efforts should be recognized either through pay or through some academic compensation (industries carry persons on salary while they are trainees). For instance, I think students who take part in any seminary reform measures should be paid a regular consultancy fee. This will be a transitional step toward a recognition that

being a student is similar in degree to any other form of work and therefore
merits compensation or at least unrepayable minimum support in the way of
food, clothing and shelter.

As the ultimate motivational factor of this society becomes learning to live
rather than earning to live, this idea will become a recognized extension
of our understanding that all are teachers and all are students. It is
also an implication of the fact that in an environment rapidly transversed
by large amounts of accessible information we will no longer say some learn
and others teach. All are students and all are teachers. We will view the
whole educational environment as a locality of information exchange -- rapid,
accessible and dynamic.

We have already learned that education in an acculturated environment is
characterized by participation in knowledge creation and action rather
than simple objective observation and analysis. This, of course, is one
implication of our idea that the universe is a field of interrelated,
interacting forces. We are all in that field, constantly thinking and
acting.

Roger Shinn has given substance to this idea with the notion that a student
should preferably have some experience in field work or practical theological
situations before and as he decides on an academic major. Dean Shinn
reports that now the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley has decided to
adopt this idea which has been in use at Union for some time.

Tom Driver has remarked about a close connection between diagnosis and

therapy, again recognizing this principle that we cannot separate thought
and action. Indeed, Peter Putnam, from his studies on a functional
description of the operation of the nervous system, concludes that thinking
is precisely motor patterns taken into transference. Doug Ades and I try
to use this idea in our self-concept as actor-reflectors.

Basically we can devise a curriculum by taking a tough-minded look at the
needs of this culture, then extending the idea that we are all participants
in a field of interacting forces.

Members of the community should have time and resources to develop whatever
educational materials they think are needed. The funding for these projects
should be supplied by the corporations and institutions known to the people
on the board of directors. Since these people are genuinely interested in
helping the seminary to educate the culture, they would be willing to find
support for immensely relevant projects.

Following are some very useful projects:

Development of a rationale and organizational design for home-rule units
(not only schools but police, fire, prisons and other services) in large
metropolitan complexes.

Development of educational materials (print, audio, video, etc.) for specific
issues like poverty, health, education, etc.

Development of materials which suggest specifically the shape of the
"new consensus" (Nixon, who perceives but does not understand it) which is
replacing the liberal consensus. What this means for political, industrial
and educational organization.

The transcription of introductory courses and subject bibliographies onto
teaching machines which would also be available, for a fee, for anyone
to use.

Research on the most effective use of magazines, dialogue journalism, small
audience radio and TV programming with instant feed-back procedures.

Development of synergy games to be used on place-mats in restaurants, airplanes, refectories, subway walls, etc., and to be sold as party games and games for school children and teachers.

Development of alternate designs for colleges, industries, governments (particularly a world government) -- using the knowledge already highly developed, at least for industry, by European intellectuals. Specifically we need a fully elaborated alternative to confrontation tactics and their implied system. This work must at least include knowledge derived from studies of the nervous and communications systems.

Development and use of computerized translation facilities so that we can easily put European, Asian and African information into English. I believe IBM is working on this but only for scientific materials. The same must be done for theology if it is to keep up.

Development of alternate places and techniques for attitude change. We already know that we cannot change attitudes via changing behavior (Putnam). We also know that we cannot effect permanent attitude change in a particular, designed direction (Theobald). We also know there are two requirements for attitude change: new information given to a group in which people trust each other (Bateson). We do not know all the places and methods where these two requirements can be simultaneously present.

Development of centers for inter-cultural exchange. One student here is presently creating a retreat center in Harlem for white suburbanites. Projects of this sort should be funded by various means and supported by seminary resources.

Development of educational materials on the feminine revolution, specifically aimed to teach men how the difference in styles and goals between men and women can be synergized instead of repressed. Some men are just beginning to realize the incredible waste of creativity potential which has followed on the American male's stupid and repressive view of women. Efforts to correct this situation should plug in with groups like Women Power in Action organized by the McCall Corporation.

Development of materials dealing with ecological problems. These efforts could be coordinated with the United Nations General Assembly which is planning an international conference on eco-problems in 1972. We should work out a dove-tailing of concepts from biblical theology, eco-system and communications system theory as a step toward demonstrating the usefulness of theological knowledge.

Development of interlinks with other groups dealing with the same and related problems: the American Lutheran Church for a packet on Human Rights; the Nebraska Council of Churches for local media centers; Achievement Motivation Systems in Chicago for techniques on actualizing group and individual potential; Center for Curriculum Design, Kendall College, Evanston, Illinois, for various curricular implications of the communications environment; Esalen Institute, etc. Information from these groups should be catalogued and their availability publicized -- again a computer retrieval system may be desirable.

Obviously the list could go on and other people could add many more alternatives

It is said that theological schools want to avoid the theological ghetto and

therefore make every effort to maintain academic excellence, certification

standards and the rest. In my opinion we are already in a theological

ghetto precisely because we are measuring our worth in categories maintained

by an educational establishment (colleges and universities) which has

become irrelevant to the real needs of our common cultural environment.

Of all places -- with the Christian tradition, the spirit of prophesy,

the accountability to God, the eschatological stance toward the forms of

this world, and all that -- a seminary, we are learning, is the one place

where we should be able to set our eyes firmly on what this culture needs

and go out to accomplish it. The real problem with theological education

is not that it doesn't know what it should be about but that the institution

is just now learning that it must deliver on its theological rhetoric or

be ignored. The proof is in the pudding, as Tom Driver likes to say.

Regarding degrees and grades, I would think that if we follow the

acculturation concept and Driver's idea that diagnosis and therapy are

inseparable dimensions of creative action, then we can conclude that because

material creation and information exchange are joint student-faculty efforts

the decision as to whether a student has achieved a skill or set of skills

should be made by faculty and student concurrently.

Some beginning precedent for this has been established by a student-faculty

group in which the faculty have asked the students to supply the criteria

by which they would like their work graded. This is a first step in the right

direction and seems much the more sensible way than what we all agree is a

highly frustrating grading system.

Instead of an arbitrary time period for acquiring certain skills the student and faculty should decide when a student is prepared to leave the seminary. This decision, again made concurrently, should be based on a judgment about when the student's potential has peaked or become actualized relative to this particular environment so that he should move on to another. This will place limits on the number of students admitted -- most likely well below the present level.

Upon graduation and at the completion of courses, instead of a grade a student should receive a certificate testifying to his acquisition and development of certain skills. Included with the certificate should be statements by himself and persons with whom he worked detailing estimations of the extent to which he has and has not fulfilled his potential.

Footnotes

1. Webster's Third International

2. From a speech titled, "Lamps to be Lighted: Some Curricular Implications of the Generation Gap," delivered at Kalamazoo College, July 25, 1968, by Noel McInnis, Director of the Center for Curriculum Design, Kendall College, Evanston, Illinois.

3. We will be learning: (1) to release individual potential through critical reinforcement rather than uncritical, slow grinding down of individual initiative; (2) to share power; (3) how to create social change through dialogue rather than mandate; (4) how to manage the global eco-system rather than suicidally raping it; (5) how to live without a "job," that is defining anew what constitutes work, play and leisure; (6) how to manage an economy of abundance rather than an economy of scarcity; (7) new myths which reflect the real nature of our environment; (8) how to live with real cultural pluralism in such a way that the richness of diversity is allowed to enrich the life-goals and satisfactions of all people; (9) how to learn, what to learn, when to learn and where to learn; (10) how, what, when and where to teach; (11) how to use the technical gadgets and languages which will become the lingua franca of the cybernetic society; (12) the values and behavioral patterns appropriate for a cybernetic society; (13) how to create a self-organizing system.

4. Students at Union have been saying all along that we need much more contact with work being done in anthropology, sociology, games theatre, communications theory, and the list goes on. Since it is unfeasable to bring people from all these fields to Union we should set up means of moving relevant information from these fields. Actually, this will involve only formalizing what already occurs below the vision of our present curriculum.

5. From a speech titled, "Communication to Build the Future Environment," delivered by Robert Theobald at a conference of the same name jointly sponsored by Town Meeting, Inc., and the American Institute of Planners in Minneapolis from November 20-22, 1968.

THEOLOGY   ECOSOPHY

By David R. Graham
January 1969

The following statement was prepared for the Commission on Stewardship
of The National Council of Churches of Christ as background for that
body's participation in the ecology movement. The title used here was
given by the author in 1983 and reflects his estimate of the significance
of this statement in his own, personal history. The statement itself is
given as edited by the Commission on Stewardship in October 1969.

At its Biblical roots the Christian tradition has been concerned with
mishpat, which we translate "justice." The more ancient meaning of the
word is "order," specifically the cosmic order of creation. As a verb
(shaphat), the word means "to judge," or, more to the point, "to do
justice." Around the concept is a feeling of action, process, movement
along a road, movement in time. There is also a feeling of making decisions
which bring about changes and affect the environment (Isaiah 11:3b-5).
Far from being an objective norm to which we can look back for guidance,
justice is something people do with each other; it is more a type of
action than a norm for behavior (Micah 6:8). Mishpat is more an operational
than a substantive category. One never is just, one does justice.

Justice is an operational characteristic of the environment created by
God and man in the covenant (Hosea 2:18-20; 2 Cor. 13:11). It is similar
in nature to grace, love, faith and fellowship. (Indeed, all these partial
words may reflect our inadequate ability to comprehend the central organizing
principle of the universe.)

This concern with operations rather than states shows up in the church's

liturgy of confession: "I have done those things which I ought not to
have done and I have not done those things which I ought to have done."
"We have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, through our own
fault, our own Lord, our own most grievous fault." The same concern
appears in the Benediction: "The God of Peace ... Make you perfect in
every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing
in His sight."

For the Biblical writers the world is created in mishpat because God works
mishpat. The divine justice holds together the cosmos. Man has every
right to trust God's actions will create justice. Man doesn't have to
worry about God, only about himself. The rainbow of Genesis 9:13 is the
visible sign that God will create justice. Man is supposed to be a
steward of God's mishpat, that is, man, like God, is supposed to create
justice and order. Man lives in the divine initiative and should respond
to it by doing likewise.

This cosmic, environmental order which is held together by God's justice
and man's response to it is quite another thing from the order of the
assembly line. Order on the assembly line is linear, static, channeled.
It is an order pre-set by design, allowing minimum variation and ensuring
maximum uniformity.

The order of God's justice allows for rich diversity and uniqueness.
It is created by voluntary covenants between persons and things possessing
their own integrity.

This idea is particularly important when we discover that the Bible
considers that all things have a soul. In fact, rather than saying man
has a soul, we should say that man is a soul. The soul is the center
of creativity and power. Indeed, the earth, animals, plants and man are
all souls (Genesis 12:5; 14:21; Exodus 23:9; Proverbs 12:10) since they
all participate in making new life, they all have a unique integrity
which can be developed but must not be violated.

For this reason, the relationships between different souls are governed

by covenants which are, broadly speaking, environments for actions. The participants in a covenant voluntarily accept responsibility for the total well-being of each other (Joshua 24:1ff; 1 Cor. 11:23-32). What distinguishes Israel from her animistic neighbors is the idea that the participants in a covenant are free from needing to manipulate each other. Magic is unnecessary because the context of the covenant with God is the promise of a functioning society and economy.

In Israel's covenant with Yahweh, each party undertakes to perform certain deeds which will create justice for the other party to the covenant. Although both Israel and the New Israel have become famous for not fulfilling their terms of the covenant, the idea should be particularly useful for understanding the issues of environment or ecology.

In Biblical thinking, all the parts of the world environment have their own creative dynamic and integrity. God holds the cosmos together by doing justice in the form of righteous deeds (Psalm 104). Man is responsible to do the same (Isaiah 5:7). Like God, man has domination over the resources of the world (Genesis 1:26ff), but he cannot violate the integrity (nephesh) of those resources. The law code recognizes this at the point of cultivation (Lev. 25:1-7). God is the giver, the world is the gift, the gift must be worked with, rather than worked over.

If man does not respect the earth, but pushes it beyond its natural boundaries, then he has attacked its soul and kills it. The earth becomes barren with throns, thistles and weeds (Job 31:38-40; Exodus 23:10-11). Earth needs rest like man, not as non-productive time, but in order to follow its own cycle rather than conform to man's will. In rest its blessing is replenished (Lev. 20:22). To kill the earth's soul is to destroy the cosmic mishpat.

The contribution of the New Testament writers to the concept of the covenant is the fullness of the Spirit of Christ. The new covenant moves beyond the stipulation of man's duties. The one exception is the Gospel of John where men are required to love each other (John 13:34), but even here we notice the covenant, that which creates an environment

favorable to man's life, is prior to love.

In the New Testament, there is an urgency about the in-breaking of the
Christ with the fullness it brings. A key note is sounded by Paul:
man is to live as if the Kingdom has already come although he must
recognize that it is not yet fully here. Paul cannot "hear" the argument
that to follow Christ is neither "practical" nor "realistic." He argues,
in rebuttal, that the (apparent) foolishness of Christ is wiser than the
wisdom of the world. Paul calls us to live according to the potentials
of the situation rather than its "actuality." We should act as if we
are "free of reality" and set loose in the non-authoritarian environment
made visible for us by Christ.

The Bible in Three Pages

By David R. Graham, June 1970

This document stems from a challenge put to me by a group I have been working
with in El Paso, Texas. I stated that most books have little content
compared to their bulk and that I'd like to see the bible in three pages.
Although the remark was made casually, they challenged me to do it. I
happily accepted and hope the following results are useful.

The bible is a critical message: the message is that man lives within
abundance. The bible has its own style of stating this message. It uses
a set of myths which were precious to people in biblical times.

The message of abundance was stated this way: God fashioned the heavens
and the earth; he made a covenant with a group of people which required
that they help him demonstrate the world's abundance; and finally, in the
man Jesus of Nazareth, God made himself human to show that man is responsible
for enriching the world's abundance.

We can now state the bible's critical message in terms of cybernetics,
system theory: the world functions in such a way that each system has an
environment in which it can be self-corrective. This statement assumes
that each system has its own purposes -- deriving from its inherent nature
-- so the important thing is whether a system has adequate feedback and
feedforward opportunities to ensure that it can fulfill and change its
purposes during its life cycle.

The bible uses one main word to describe the environment in which systems
can be self-corrective: covenant. A covenant differs from a contract.
A contract is an agreement to provide certain specified services. A
covenant, however, is a committment to provide whatever becomes ncesssary
for the parties to fulfill their purposes.

Each system of the world lives with some covenant relationship. Man can

choose to ignore the covenants of other systems: e.g. with plants, animals, air, water, etc. But when this occurs man imperils the entire covenantal pattern of the world. Covenants are communication systems: within them systems develop, change and die.

The covenant relationship creates freedom and duty. Importantly, freedom and duty are not abstract, impersonal things: they are generated within the contexts in which one works. For example, the covenant I have with my community (those with whom I share values and purposes) gives me freedom to help build and enrich my community; the same covenant gives me a duty to ensure that others in my community have their freedom to act.

The bible states, therefore, that our overall purpose in living is to build and enrich our community. Another way of saying this would be: our over-all purpose is to enrich the world's abundance. This is the statement God made when he incarnated himself in a man, Jesus of Nazareth.

A critical distinction must be made here. Most of the bible is clear that God is a party to the covenant rather than the covenant itself. God is not the environment in which systems can be self-corrective; God is a party who helps create this environment. Paul, on the other hand, shifted God from being a party to the covenant to being the covenant: this is what he means with his idea of salvation in Christ. Augustine and most of the church have followed Paul.

Today we must reestablish the critical distinction between God and the covenant. Otherwise we are forced into two pathologies: (1) we must accept an abstract, authoritarian God, and (2) we can disclaim responsibility for our actions in the world.

(Most of the bible is concerned with sanctification first and redemption second. Paul reversed this priority scheme. For us today, Paul's mistake was not in separating man's mind and body, as is so often claimed, but in perceiving what man's mind/body needs first, sanctification or redemption.)

When we attempt to work out our over-all purpose we, in effect, spread abundance around our community and around the world. The bible talks about this activity as doing justice (creating order), acting graciously (patiently healing) and acting righteously (helping others to get themselves together).

Who and where is your community?

Your community is that grouping of systems which act to create an environment in which you can be self-corrective. This statement resolves the works/grace controversy which has plagued the church since Paul identified God with the covenant and therefore put redemption in front of sanctification.

Thus your community can be in a small area or spread over the globe or both. In the cybernetic era we have entered, space is not necessarily a determining factor in shaping a community since we can interlink ourselves electronically. Your community can involve different types of people in different areas of the globe. It depends on your purposes.

The bible states clearly that we must move toward seeing the world as one community unified because of its differences. Unless different communities cooperate and create environments in which individual communities can be self-corrective, the whole world has destroyed itself.

Who is your brother and your sister? Any system which lacks an environment in which to be self-corrective. In cybernetics terms, this is another way of stating the parable of the good Samaritan.

RELIGION BEYOND THE CHURCH

By David R. Graham,   April 1971

Five and six years ago a heady optimism was being carried around by liberal
Protestants and Catholics in the north and the far west. Many were happy
that Barry Goldwater had been defeated, the civil rights movement was under
way and people like Harvey Cox were calling us to a bright, new, secular
future. It was a time of confidence for many liberal churchmen.

But now all that seems to have disappeared. You don't find the "We'll
do it" attitude very often these days. What happened?

That seems to be the central question for many people today. In church
journals, writers are posing explanations, placing blame and calling for
reforms and movements. Of course, a large number of people today,
particularly the young, aren't involved in the search churchmen are. Some
time ago they satisfied themselves as to what was up and since then they
haven't cared much what the churchmen do.

Nonetheless, the discussion among churchmen seems to be getting into
high gear. The soul-searching at Christianity and Crisis was picked
up by Time.

I'd like to add my thoughts to the discussion. They may be useful because
I'm one of those rare persons who has been in the liberal and the
conservative consciousness and has moved beyond them both.

Vacuum in the Church

The feeling I get today is of a great swirling vacuum at the center of
the church, in the north, the south and the far west. However, the vacuum
is most consuming in the north and the far west, that is, among the

liberals and the radicals.

The vacuum can be described in many ways. Shortage of money. Shortage of courage and daring, particularly among the intellectuals. Abundance of conceit and stubbornness. Shortage of patience and gentleness. Abundance of anger and wilfulness. Shortage of communication with non-churchmen and non-religious intellectuals. Shortage of new ideas and ways to get them in view. Shortage of self-confidence. Shortage of interest in the accepted religious roles. Shortage of interest in accepted religious ideas. Abundance of words.

Within the church today there is a shortage of faith and an abundance of theology.

In addition, churchmen seem unable, or unwilling or un-something to speak about issues. America, Western Europe and much of Latin America are nearly bankrupt. Britain has collapsed. The war in Indochina was over in 1968 when Lyndon Johnson quit. The United States effectively lacks a central government, and while this may not be a bad thing, the harsher consequences of the fact haven't been faced by churchmen. The education system in the West has collapsed. Corporations must continue, but right now all they know is how to rip-off everything in and around them. There isn't an official group in the government or the private sector (including the schools) which, as a group, understands the environmental catastrophe we are living in.

But even if churchmen were to speak usefully about these issues, they would almost be talking to the wind. As large and critical as these issues are, the real game of the future is in another ball park. Consider, for example, the following.

Darwinian evolutionary theory has been discredited by physics and cybernetics. As an individual and even more so as a species, man <u>chooses</u> his evolutionary course. The same is true, in varying degrees, of other animals and even plants. Life is deliberate -- and so is death.

Most young people today live in a new space/time matrix from which the attitudes of many older people seem irresponsible and ignorant.

Artists and scientists have become one again. This is a major fall-out of the space program. The coming together of these fields parallels the coming together of other fields, e.g. theology and cybernetics, philosophy and physics, history and drama.

A new kind of knowledge has emerged. It is visual, highly compacted and panoramic. Knowledge from intuition is as valid as knowledge from thinking. Knowledge from sensation is as valid as knowledge from feeling. Indeed, a mature person uses all four sources of knowledge.

The computer is an amplifier of human and natural intelligence. It is in its infancy but already shows signs of eventual independence. We must prepare ourselves to make covenants with computers just as God in the bible had to prepare himself to make covenants with men.

The noosphere exists. Micro-wave and laser circuits are outward manifestations of communication channels which have existed all along but without wide-spread recognition of the fact.

Life has been synthesized. Much of the knowledge required to generate complex, self-reproductive organisms exists. The development of this knowledge occurs exponentially.

Attitudes have changed. Few people today believe that a person is wise or trust-worthy because he or she holds a position. Authority, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Authority depends on personal contact and good vibs.

Sex isn't what it used to be, particularly for young people. Really, it doesn't exist any longer. Sex exists for the hung-up.

Mission Accomplished

Some people would like to start with the present vacuum in the church
and build out from there. That's fine, of course. Personally, I'd like
to start from outside the church, from a very different ball park, and
build in from there. So the rest of this space will take that point of
view.

From my point of view, the vacuum in the church developed because of the
church's success, not its failure. The mission of the church has been
completed. Those who wished to hear the Word have heard it. Those who
don't wish to hear the Word have made up their minds. The task for which
the church was formed has, therefore, been successfully completed.

The church is like an organization whose mission has been accomplished.
It has a choice of making make-work projects to keep a few hangers-on
busy or of disbanding so other organizations can evolve. I believe there
would be considerable virtue in disbanding.

However, religion itself should not be forsaken. Indeed, there's no
cause to worry that it might be since religion is the center and substance
of each person's life, whether he understands it or not. I have a simple
definition of religion: whatever is important to you.

Thus while I believe the church should be disbanded, I also believe that
the rich and beautiful traditions which the church carried should not
be abandoned. These traditions should be transformed, where there is a
desire, into something suitable for the new space/time matrix we have
entered, or are considering entering.

Examples

Here are two examples of what I mean by transforming the traditions.

First, wherever possible, let us use the traditions as illustrations or typologies of systemic processes. For example, from the bible, we can view the conflict between Israel and Judah as conflict between the principles of decentralized and centralized system control. Homeostatic systems, of course, use both principles simultaneously. But Israel and Judah failed to achieve that kind of maturity -- as the prophets pointed out.

From the creeds, we can view the rise of trinitarian thinking as an expression, in the terms of the day, of the synergy phenomenon. If we look at the discussions and formulations of trinitarian thinking with the eyes of both a theologian and a cybernetician, we see that some people then understood that, to use our mathematics, one plus one can equal three plus.

From systematics, we can view many of the theological systems as mathematics about systemic processes. It is theoretically possible to wire Aquinas' Summa into a circuit board so that it could be seen as a complete electrical diagram. That diagram could be translated into a computer program and used, as such, to process information. We would have the functional equivalent of Aquinas himself. He could learn and change.

From the liturgy, we can view the process of liturgical formation and the effect of using a liturgy as typologically the same as genetic evolution and genetic communication. If they but knew it, theologians could look into their own material and discover explanations of systemic processes which would help geneticists.

If it continues to develop, all knowledge leads to the same conclusions. Looked at with the eyes of a cybernetician, religious knowledge differs in expression but not in kind from hard-science knowledge.

The second example of transforming the traditions focuses on biblical studies. The human brain/body is, admittedly, a super-complex system. A few things are known about how it works, however, One bit of knowledge is that the brain/body works both objectively and subjectively. That is,

it both evaluates input (subjective function) and generates output
(objective function).

Further, it is known that these objective and subjective functions condition
or affect one another because they are both parts of information loops.
Each comes back on the other.

Thus, I use the evaluation I make of input to select the output I generate
and the output I generate serves as a screen for input which might come
my way to be evaluated. If I like a person's vibs, I'll let them know
in some way and the way I let them know will affect what they say or do
to me. The same thing works for the other person.

What all this jargon has to do with biblical studies is simply this:
eisegesis is as valid as exegesis. Indeed, eisegesis is the process
without which exegesis couldn't exist. Each objective function must have
a subjective function for otherwise there would be no continuing input
and communication would cease.

The popular definition of faith as "investing experience with meaning"
is a statement about eisegesis. The decision that there is something in
the bible worth exegeting is a "reading-in," an eisegesis about the bible.

Eisegesis is used, should be used and has to be used. Let's get it together
with exegesis and get on with the business of reading the bible and
getting out of it what we need.

The human brain/body can only work both eisegetically and exegetically.
It would be unseemly for those representing a major sector of knowledge
to persist in denying the validity of half our epistemological process.

Feedback

These ideas have been presented briefly and, for the most part, without
supporting arguments. The lack of supporting arguments is part of my own

mode of communication. I've found that, in fact, the brain/body works in quick, packed images and beeps rather than in turgid arguments and copious footnotes. So I don't believe in "proving" things.

I do believe in discussing things because my understanding of things is extremely partial. Instead of seeking The Truth -- which I believe does not exist in a way to which my brain/body has access -- I seek more complete understanding of things.

I would like to end, therefore, with a request that if you feel provoked, please let me respond to your comments on this article.