

3

The Internal Productivity of the Society: Publications, Task Forces, and Interest Groups

This chapter examines several ways in which the Society has fostered scholarship and inquiry among its members and found ways to disseminate the results of that work to a wider scholarly community. It tells two stories: the first, about the extensive efforts across the years to launch some sort of publication, either under the auspices of the Society or as a direct consequence of its efforts; the second, about the creation from time-to-time in the life of the Society of special interest groups or task forces to probe an issue, to pursue some particular concern, or to concentrate the Society's attention on some particular responsibility.

Efforts to Undertake Publications

A ditto sheet in the files indicates that at the business session of the Society on January 27, 1961 (for which there are no minutes) a motion was introduced as follows: "The American Society of Christian Social Ethics shall undertake the publication of a journal of Christian ethics exhibiting a quality and depth comparable to that of *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik*, to be issued quarterly, and supervised by an editorial board selected both from members of the ASCSE and from leading figures in the field of Christian ethics in this country and abroad." To initiate this project it was further moved that funds (not less than \$15,000 to start) be solicited and that a journal committee be appointed to organize an editorial board.

The idealistic hopes embodied in that motion have been something of a visionary goal throughout the entire history of the Society, and a great deal of dedicated service has gone into efforts to bring about some form of regular publication under the Society's sponsorship. None of these efforts, however, has brought forth quite the kind of journal envisioned by the resolution quoted in the previous

paragraph. Throughout the years the discussion of publications has been a perennial feature of the meetings of both the Board of Directors and the membership as a whole. Perhaps no other single category of business, unless it be bylaw changes dealing with the Society's name or conditions for membership, has received as much attention.

In 1964 the Board of Directors, less visionary in its hopes, talked about the possibility of establishing a *Newsletter* for the Society, to be published two or three times a year. While the annual business meeting, on the board's recommendation, passed a motion to implement such an activity, no such instrument was forthcoming on a regular basis in the subsequent months. In 1965 the discussion revolved around the possibility of publishing a yearbook, perhaps in cooperation with The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, but no action on this idea was taken. Along the way a committee was appointed to consider again a possibility of publishing a journal in the field of ethics. This study group reported to the Board of Directors at the 1967 meeting. Its report called for the appointment of another committee (a) to prepare a specific plan for an annual volume, (b) to investigate the several publications that carry articles and monographs in social ethics, and (c) to report to the executive committee by April 1, 1967 with specific recommendations. This time the Board meant business! The executive committee of the Board was empowered to look at the report and then to canvass the membership as a whole for a decision regarding publication without waiting for the next annual meeting. The membership was to indicate by a mail ballot to be returned within twenty days whether to adopt the idea with a concurrent increase in dues, whether to disapprove, or whether to delay action until the 1968 Annual Meeting.

The committee appointed on the basis of this recommendation was chaired by Paul Deats, with James Gustafson, Gordon Kaufman, and Max Stackhouse as members. It did not exercise the option to begin publishing but reported first to the Board and then to the membership at the 1968 meetings. It recommended that a new committee be appointed to secure the funding for the kind of journal being envisioned and, if this funding effort was successful, that a new committee be formed to make a recommendation concerning editorial staffing. According to the minutes of the annual business meeting, the returning committee was "in essence recommending the publication of the annual proceedings of the Society."

The new committee called for by the old committee was chaired by Max Stackhouse, with Edward Duff, James Gustafson, and Prentiss Pemberton as members. It gave an intensive and

arefully prepared report to the 1969 meeting of the Board. This report was more hesitant in tone and modest in its proposals, and spoke of the need for some sort of bibliographical publication. The minutes indicate "the committee was undecided exactly what procedure to follow to implement the idea." After protracted and inconclusive discussion by the board, including the idea that the publication efforts should be limited to the preparation of bibliographic studies, Max Stackhouse is reported as noting, "At least no one questioned the desirability of a bibliographic publication." Stackhouse is also recorded as having suggested that a committee might be appointed to pursue the matter further.

The 1969 board did not let the matter rest. It asked Warren Reich to invite a representative of *Corpus Instrumentorum* to attend an adjourned session of the Board, and by the very same evening Warren Reich obliged by introducing Harold C. Gardner, editor of *Corpus Books*, with whom a friendly interchange followed. Afterwards, the Board acted on a motion calling for the incumbent and incoming presidents to appoint a publication committee having power to act (with the permission of the executive committee) to get some publication going "so long as such action entailed no substantial [financial] responsibility on the part of the Society." The new committee was also mandated to solicit the cooperation of foreign scholars and scholars not in the Society. When this action of the Board was reported to the whole membership at the annual business meeting, many suggestions came forth from the floor in the course of approving the action. None of these suggestions from the floor, however, shed much light on how a committee with the power to act could be expected to bring forth a significant achievement while deprived of the right to incur expenses.

The committee that was appointed in 1969 under the chairmanship of Warren Reich, demonstrated that a publication committee could do more than return with a recommendation that another committee be appointed. Reich, along with committee members Charles West and James Childress, worked hard on a number of fronts between the 1969 and 1970 meetings. The primary focus of its efforts was on cultivating bibliographic studies in various aspects of Christian ethics and finding a publication outlet for such studies. The committee proposed to the Board in 1970 that two editors, one from the Catholic and one from the Protestant tradition, be appointed, with modest honoraria, and it mentioned a number of possible avenues of publication, including a new journal that was being planned in the field. Edward L. Long, Jr. and Preston Williams were proposed for membership on the committee. Long accepted the assignment. A budget item of \$400 was allocated for the use of the com-

mittee, which became officially the Editorial Board on Bibliographic Studies in Christian Ethics. The journal mentioned in the report was being planned at the University of Tennessee by a group headed by Charles Reynolds and it would be known as *The Journal of Religious Ethics*. It did not contemplate being directly sponsored or sustained by the Society, but it did ask for the Society's active encouragement and interested consultation.

Within a year the editorial board was able to report that a bibliographical essay on Black studies had been prepared by Shelby Rooks of Princeton and Henry Mitchell of Bexley Hall/Colgate Rochester Divinity School. A year later it could report the prospects of even more bibliographic essays. Its work received the gratitude of the Board of Directors and a mandate was given to continue another year.

A public announcement of the launching of *The Journal of Religious Ethics* was made at the 1973 meeting. Its editors were to be Charles Reynolds and Roland Delattre of the University of Tennessee, Arthur Dyck of Harvard, and Frederick Carney of The Southern Methodist University. All were members of the Society, as were ten of the fourteen members of a proposed advisory council. A motion to automatically include a subscription to this new publication in the dues structure of the ASCE was defeated and a substitute motion to applaud the establishment of *The Journal* and publicize it in mailings to members was passed with enthusiasm. While the new publication was not to be directly sponsored by the Society, its members were encouraged to subscribe and were offered a special introductory rate as an inducement for doing so promptly. *The Journal* was planned to have a selected theme for emphasis in each issue and to include, as available, bibliographical studies of interest to persons in the field of religious ethics. Moreover, it was a promising avenue for the publication of the bibliographical essays on which the editorial board of the Society was working.

Warren Reich presented a written report indicating progress with the development of bibliographical essays and noting the publication of one by James F. Childress on non-violent resistance and direct action in *The Journal of Religion* for October 1972. The composition of the editorial board was changed. Warren Reich remained its chairman, with Frederick S. Carney, Robert M. Veatch, Stanley Hauerwas, and Alan Anderson named as the members.

The year 1974 saw the editorial board reporting on continued work on some thirty bibliographical essays and the publication of four. Warren Reich resigned as chairman and appreciation was expressed for his many years of service. Charles Reynolds became chairman and served for two years.

The concerns for publication covered not only materials generated by members of the Society but also ways to make papers from the meetings available to members. Prior to 1975 the papers selected from the annual meeting had been distributed in mimeographed form to members by mail after the meeting. Duplicating and mailing these papers had long been an onerous task for the executive secretary. Beginning in 1975 those papers from the annual meeting selected for distribution were printed in a neat paper bound volume called *The Selected Papers*, which was produced by the Scholars Press at the University of Montana. While this arrangement relieved the executive secretary of considerable work, the editorial preparation of the papers and putting them into camera ready form remained a large burden.

The year 1975 was also the year in which plans for the publication of *The Religious Studies Review* were announced, with James Gustafson as editor of the ethics section. The Board voted to support that new publication with a one-time grant of \$300.

By 1976 the editorial board became known again as the publication committee. It reported that a bibliographical essay on Black theological ethics by J. Deotis Roberts had been published and that all the other essays either had not been finished or had been rejected. It was decided to cease encouraging the preparation of more bibliographical essays. Little of importance appears about publication in the minutes of the next three years except some talk about commissioning a history of the Society--first contemplated for the twentieth anniversary. The main thing to report is that beginning in 1977 *The Selected Papers* started to be printed on the equipment of the Council of the Study of Religion instead of by The Scholars Press.

At the 1980 meeting, Douglas Sturm submitted a written proposal to revise *The Selected Papers* to become *The Annual of the American Society of Christian Ethics*. According to Sturm's proposal, *The Annual* would be composed of at least four sections: selected papers from the annual meeting, bibliographies, course descriptions, and reports from task forces of the Society. Those attending the annual business meeting voted unanimously to establish this new procedure and to empower the Board to proceed towards publication, beginning with the appointment of a three-person publications committee. The first annual was published in 1981 and was edited by Thomas Ogletree, with assistance from Alan Anderson and Lisa Cahill. The 1981 Board received a report of the publication committee calling for certain changes in the bylaws to provide for the appointment of an editor for *The Annual* for a three-year term and to provide for an editorial board of four persons. With the new structure in

effect Larry Rasmussen was appointed to a three-year term as editor of *The Annual* and Lisa Cahill to a one-year term on the editorial board, Alan Anderson to a two-year term, David Hollenback to a three year term, and Peter Paris to a four-year term. In 1982 Jane Garry Peck replaced Lisa Cahill and in 1983 Robin Lovins replaced Alan Anderson.

In 1981 it was pointed out to the Board that the cost of producing and mailing *The Annual* would go up considerably in 1982, and that the costs of travel for the editor to attend the annual meeting would also increase. The Board decided to keep the pattern and size of *The Annual* the same for 1982, but to have the executive secretary bring to its 1983 meeting a projection of expenses contemplated for the next two or three years. It may be quite difficult to continue the publication and distribution of this valuable aspect of the Society's work without significant readjustments of some sort.

The Society's encouragement of publication took on a new venture in 1983. A *Journal of Law and Religion* was being planned, bringing to fruition hopes of many members of the task force on Ethics and Law. The new venture asked for help from the Society towards founding costs. The Board agreed to provide a one-time grant of \$500 and also to extend to the new journal the same courtesies which were extended to *The Journal of Religious Ethics* at the time of its founding.

No one could have foreseen, when the original idea of publishing a journal patterned after the *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik* was conceived, the many different directions in which the publication efforts of the Society would move. Some may feel that the seeming inability of the Society to develop a highly visible, consistently formatted, and traditionally conceived journal has been a major failure. Others will feel that the different patterns that have been devised have served the profession well. Whatever the fate of the Society's own official publication plans, individual members have consistently taken their place in the ranks of those publishing materials useful for the advancement of the discipline.

Task Forces

One of the most productive instruments for doing the work of the Society has been the appointment of a group of members to inquire into some particular issue or to undertake some special inquiry. In some cases these have been called "interest groups" and in other cases "task forces," but it is not until the Board minutes of 1981 that the difference between them was explicitly articulated. According to those minutes: "interest groups are formed at the

affiliative of groups of members and are assigned a time slot at the annual meeting, usually Friday night after the presidential address. Task forces usually meet at the same time and in addition are budgeted funds by the Board, report to it, and ordinarily do not continue as task forces beyond three years." The constitutional warrant for having task forces and interest groups stems from the president's power to appoint "other committees."

The first task force to be formed was constituted by the tenth annual meeting, when Alan Geyer asked the Society to consider sponsoring a Consultation on Theological Education and International Affairs. The president was empowered to appoint the membership of a task force to pursue this matter, and the group was given expense money up to \$50.00 and asked to report back in a year. In 1970 the group indicated that the matter of funding such a consultation was still being pursued. In yet another year it had given up trying to obtain funding for the special event but had arranged and produced a special issue of *The Christian Century* (April 23, 1969) on the subject. The task force was dissolved with thanks and Alan Geyer was commissioned to serve on a continuing basis as a liaison person with groups interested in the study of international affairs.

The second task force to be formed by the Society came about in response to a motion from the floor at the annual meeting in Atlanta in 1970. This motion called for the creation of a Task Force on White Racism. Its purposes were (1) to explore what it means to be a white Christian ethnist, (2) to share and develop strategies and tactics to combat white cultural and intellectual racism in educational institutions, and (3) to share and develop course designs to understand and combat white cultural and institutional racism. The discussion which preceded passage of this motion indicated that some members did not understand its import and that others had doubts about its advisability. Robert Terry was subsequently appointed chairman of this group and the members were Robert Batchelder, William Charland, Henry Clark, George Crowell, Donald Shriver, David Snider, and Glen Stassen. Preston Williams agreed to serve as a consultant.

This task force reported at the 1971 meeting and indicated plans to develop a more aggressive anti-racist attitude in the Society, "while acknowledging the basic scholarly function of the ASCE." These plans included five recommendations: (1) that the Society announce its intention to transcend a stance of "color blindness" and engage in a deliberate struggle to deal with the meaning of being Black or white humans; (2) that the Society call its

members to attack racism within their respective spheres of influence and power; (3) that it encourage its members to develop the needed skills for doing these things; (4) that it include in its annual meeting an opportunity to report how some of its members have done so; and (5) that it encourage research and the writing of articles about this agenda. The task force was asked to compile and distribute at the next annual meeting course materials germane to this undertaking. It was commissioned to award up to four stipends of \$50.00 each to members of the Society wishing to attend training conferences aimed at developing skills of the appropriate sort, and it was asked to plan a major session on these matters for the 1972 program.

The program planned for 1972 included a paper by Robert Terry and a panel led by Henry W. Clark. Both were placed under the rubric "Reflections on White Racism." Also during 1971 and 1972 some members of the task force attended a conference on white consciousness, did research on white racism, prepared a bibliographic essay on the issue, and disseminated information to many persons seeking it. It considered sponsoring regional two-day conferences in teaching methods, but these did not materialize. As a result of its experiences, and prompted to do so by a paper prepared by Norman Faramelli, the group became interested in the broader issue of how action and reflection are related in social change. When a motion to create an interest group on action/reflection models was introduced, the Task Force on White Racism gave its support and ceased to exist. (The work of this committee or, as it became, interest group on action/reflection is discussed in the next section).

The third task force to be related to the Society came out of a motion presented by an *ad hoc* group of members at the 1971 annual meeting. The motion expressed concern over the implications of the Harrisburg conspiracy trial of the Father Philip Berrigan and others--particularly over the possible effect of the trial on academic freedom and civil liberty. The motion put the Society on record, acknowledging those indicted to be persons of moral integrity and personal courage, but not as prejudging the legal issues. Instead, the motion asked that a way be found to "undertake, through the creation and funding of a special task force, to investigate this trial, to report to [the Society's] members the moral issues of this trial, and to prepare deliberations for the next Society meeting on the moral issues of civil disobedience and the use of the law to stifle political dissent in America."

Many members of the Society, including the spokesman who presented the motion on behalf of the *ad hoc* group (who here writes autobiographically), were concerned with how to

balance concern about the issues with the scholarly stance of the Society. The minutes of the meeting show that this problem was resolved by interpreting the mandate of the task force to be one of advising the membership about the issues and what appropriate actions they might take as individuals rather than of taking public stances on the Society's behalf.

President Charles Curran appointed Edward L. Long, Jr., the vice president of the Society, to chair the task force and to appoint its membership. It was further stipulated by the Board of Directors that the expenses of the task force would be funded up to an amount of \$200 and that the task force should not accept any money for its work from partisan or advocacy groups.

Almost immediately after the annual meeting, Long wrote to the entire membership of the Society, enclosing a copy of the resolution and asking those so inclined to suggest how the study should be conducted and what issues it should address. His letter also invited interested members to volunteer their services. Thirty persons responded, several of them indicating that they had no suggestions to make. Three members of the Society expressed doubts about the wording, intention, or legitimacy of the resolution. Sixteen made some general observations and eight of those sixteen offered some sort of help. Two other letters (each of which apologized for its brevity!) gave major substantive suggestions and a careful analysis of the issues. Eventually, about a dozen members of the Society worked on different aspects of the issues, with coordination by two sub-chairmen, James Childress and John Raines. Al Denman, James Johnson, and Larry Rasmussen produced written materials to be used. The three foci of the investigation were: the trial itself; the bearing of the trial on civil liberties; and the problems faced by individuals who come to feel protest beyond the normal limits of dissent is a burden of conscience.

Dieter Hessel, of the Department of Church and Society of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., brought some members of the task force together with interested persons from certain church and ecumenical agencies for a consultation that was held in June 1971 at the Krisheim Conference Center near Philadelphia. Extensive conversations were held and the materials generated from those conversations became the foundation for a paper prepared by Edward Long, Jr., that was published in pamphlet form as "Occasional Paper Number 7 of the Presbyterian Department of Church and Society" under the title U. S. vs. the HARRISBURG Conspiracy Prosecution for Illegal Dissent. Free copies

of this pamphlet were made available by the Presbyterian Church to members of the Society.

The Society's task force also arranged for the Sunday morning program at the 1972 meeting, when the problems related to the trial were looked at by Professor Thomas Emerson of the Yale Law School, and Ronald Goldfarb, a Washington attorney who once had worked for the U. S. Department of Justice. This program concluded the work of this task force.

At the 1973 annual business meeting, Dieter Hessel introduced a proposal to establish a task force on the Ethical Dimensions of the Nation's Bicentennial Observance. Concerned that the bicentennial would be used to legitimize a self-congratulatory binge of civil religion, the movers of the motion asked that a task force be appointed by the president to (1) disseminate to members of the Society bibliographical and curricular information on the history of, and prospects for, the American Revolution; (2) explore the need for and author research papers dealing with critical ethical issues involved, and (3) recommend and help plan pertinent sessions for the 1974 and 1975 programs at the annual meetings. This task force began its work without budgetary support. (It was known that a number of denominational groups were interested and able to finance the process.) The task force that was appointed was chaired by Dieter Hessel, with the following members: Harry R. Davis, James Finn, Ronald Green, Allan Parrent, Donald Shriver, Ralph Smelzer, Preston Williams and David Wills. James Smylie of the faculty of the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia attended some of the sessions at which the idea of the task force was discussed and indicated that The American Society of Church History might possibly be interested in collaborating on this undertaking. John Howard Yoder also indicated that the Mennonites might possibly be interested.

Hessel reported to the 1974 board meeting that the task force was proposing that the ASCE join with the ASCH and an ecumenical task force coming from church groups to plan a three-day conference to be held at Princeton early in 1976 on the theme "Religion and Revolution Internationalized." To facilitate cooperation, a planning group of four (composed of Dieter Hessel, Allan Parrent, Gayraud Wilmore, and Charles West) was named and a budget of \$200 provided from Society funds. At the business meeting, in response to the questions from the floor, it was made clear that the Society's sponsorship of the Princeton meeting would not be allowed to interfere with the scheduling of the annual meeting of the Society for that year. There was also talk about having a special conference in Washington immediately

prior to the annual meeting of the Society, but plans for that never materialized. There is no report in the Society's minutes of the subsequent work or disbanding of this task force.

The next task force to be established came into being at the 1976 meeting and was concerned with the relationships between law and ethics and law and theology. This task force has given a complete and careful account of its work over the years in the 1981 Annual of the Society, pp. 237-241.

Written by James Bresnahan, this account of the group's founding, its role in planning significant parts of the programs of the annual meetings in 1977, 1978, 1980 and 1981, and its sponsorship of a special pre-meeting conference in 1979 on "Legal and Ethical Dimensions of Religious Freedom" should be consulted by those interested in its work. At the time Bresnahan wrote, he judged the task force to have been more successful in bringing people together and contributing to conversations between the two disciplines than in nurturing the publication of materials. However, Bresnahan himself, inspired perhaps by the agenda of the task force, did produce a contribution entitled "The Interaction of Religion and Law: A Post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Perspective." This was part of a larger symposium on Religion and Law published in *The Hastings Law Journal* 29 (July 1978): 1257-1660. Since Bresnahan wrote his report, plans to initiate the publication of *The Journal of Law and Religion* have come to fruition, and this will do much to make further contributions to the discussion of the relationships between these two important areas. Later, Wilson Yates and R. Kenneth Manning became co-convenors of the religion and law task force, and been followed in turn by R. Kenneth Manning and Howard S. Vogel.

Another task force, which was created in 1979 for a three-year period (subsequently extended for two more years), grew out of an interest group on ethics and economics that first met in 1978. This task force was authorized to expend up to \$300 in 1979, has had a mailing list of some eighty names, and an active core group of between twenty-five and thirty persons. Jon Gunemann was the first convenor of this group and Daniel Finn, the second.

One purpose of this task force was to exchange course syllabi, bibliographies, and papers. This was done chiefly in the first two years of the group's existence. Another purpose was to foster discussion with economists. This was achieved by having papers given at the annual meeting by guest economists such as Robert Lekachman, Harvey Segal, Jerome Kurtz and William Tabb. A third purpose of the task force was to generate papers by, and discussions among, members of the Society on matters of ethics and economics.

papers by Warren Copeland, William Everett, Daniel Finn, Jon Gunemann, Donald Jones, John Raines, and others have appeared on recent Society programs. (The topics of the papers by both the guest economists and the members of the Society addressing these issues are examined in chapter nine.)

From the beginning of its existence, the task force has been divided between those who wished to focus on economic policy and those who wanted to focus on business ethics. By the third year there was a consensus that the work of this group should focus on national economic policy, but this did not prevent a wide range of economic thought to be represented in the materials generated by the task force.

In 1980 a task force was established with the title "Jewish and Christian Ethics Task Force." This emerged at the time the proposal was made to change the name of the Society to include the phrase "Jewish and Christian Ethics." When the decision was made to retain the title "Christian, Franklin Sherman was asked to chair a task force on this subject as a means of responding to the concerns that were back of the movement for a name change. He asked Ronald Green to be named co-convenor.

At first the group had the idea that it should involve a significant number of Jewish scholars in the annual meetings of the Society--thus stressing the inclusiveness of its name. This idea proved more difficult to carry out than to propose. There is no recognized discipline of "Jewish ethics" that corresponds to the discipline of Christian ethics, and hence it is difficult to identify those at work in the field. The meeting schedule of the Society makes it difficult for orthodox Jews to attend, and the Society sometimes meets very far from the main locations in which Jewish scholars work. But the task force generated considerable interest in the subject, and (as will be noted in chapter ten) has prompted several papers on the programs in recent years.

The task force met three years and had eight to twelve persons at its meetings. Unlike the task force on ethics and economics, which began as an interest group and became a task force, this group that began as the task force on Jewish and Christian Ethics has now become an interest group.

When the Task Force on White Racism saw its work in a larger theoretical perspective it allowed itself to be transformed into the Action Reflection Interest Group. This interest group has been concerned to examine how action and reflection interrelate in the life and work of the Christian ethicist. The first coordinator of the Action Reflection Interest Group was David Snider. The group arranged for two

sessions in the 1974 program, one session in which Joseph Hough and Dan Rhoades reported on Project Understanding, a program to combat racism, and another session in which Duane K. Friesen delivered a paper on "Peace Studies: A Typology of Approaches."

In 1975 George Crowell was coordinator of the group and three items were successfully suggested for inclusion in the program. John Bennett and Gayraud Wilmore spoke from their own experience about "Social Action in the Vocation of the Social Ethicist"; Richard Taylor described "The Movement for a New Society"; and Charles Brown gave a paper on "Action Reflection as a Way of Doing Ethics."

For the 1976 meeting, Robert Breese coordinated the group. At its suggestion, two concurrent sessions were planned. Henry Clark presented a paper, "Pressure for Change: Ethical Reflection on American Life Style." Jane Garry Peck presented a paper on "Successful Social Change in School Desegregation: A Model and Case Study." The Action Reflection Group also proposed the plenary session at which Ronald Mueller, co-author of *Global Reach*, spoke on "Global Interdependence, Social Stability, and the Future of U. S. Democracy: The Dovetailing of Ethics and the Human Sciences."

For the 1977 meeting in Toronto, the group planned a tour of the city that ended in a discussion with members of the City Council over key issues in city politics. It was again being coordinated by George Crowell, who remained its leader for several subsequent years. It also arranged for John Dillon, who works with GATT-Fly, a small action organization supported by the churches of Canada and working for change in Canadian global trade policies, to address a concurrent session on "The Struggle for a More Just Trade Policy."

By 1978 the contributions of this interest group to the program of the annual meetings appeared to be declining. It helped to arrange one session, that with George A. Chauncy of the Interreligious Task Force on U. S. Food Policy. At the 1978 meeting, the group convened jointly with the Interest Group on Professional Ethicists in Non-Academic Professions, because the convenor of the latter group was not present. Out of the joint meeting came the plans for a program session in 1979 with Howard Mills and Karen Leback on "Professional Ethicists in Non-Academic Roles." In 1980, Richard Snyder of the Action Reflection Group planned a Friday morning tour of the churches of New York City's upper Manhattan. The group met jointly that same year with the Human Rights Interest Group and made a number of suggestions for the 1981 meeting in Iowa. George Crowell reports that nothing came of those suggestions, nor of similar

suggestions made for 1982. The year 1982, when a discouragingly small number of people attended the announced meeting, was the last year when this Interest Group functioned.

The Action Reflection Interest Group had a long and sustained period of activity. Its presence in the Society witnessed to an important issue that has been of concern to more than its own membership. In a letter, George Crowell reflects about these experiences as follows: "[There are a number of reasons for [the decline in the group's role] participation in the group had been dwindling, and we had become less successful in getting our suggestions included in the program. On the other hand, there had been an increase in the number of items in the program with an action reflection emphasis quite apart from any initiative from us." As explained in the description of the group handed out in 1977, the purpose of the group was to balance attention paid to theological issues and selected social issues with considerations of strategy and tactics in social change. The Action Reflection Interest Group made a significant contribution to the life of the Society during the period of its activity.

Another Interest Group, on Human Rights, has been almost as active over recent years, but not as successful in getting sessions into the annual program. Its aim has been to focus the attention of the Society on human rights questions. In 1980 the program had a concurrent session on "The Inviolability Principle: Human Needs and Human Rights," convened by Richard John Neuhaus, and with a paper by the leader, George R. Lucas, Jr. At the same meeting a bibliography on the subject prepared by Lucas was made generally available to those attending. In addition to working with the Action Reflection Interest Group, the Interest Group on Human Rights has also cooperated in recent years with the Task Force on War, Peace, Revolution and

A new Interest Group on War, Peace, Revolution and Violence was convened at the 1976 annual meeting by James Johnson and John Howard Yoder, who have since remained convenors. The immediate context of this action was the founding of an informal organization at the 1975 meeting of The American Academy of Religion of persons working in the broad field of ethics and violence--a group also chaired by Johnson and Yoder. It was felt that many of the people would be involved in both groups and that being associated with both parent bodies would enable them to meet twice a year to discuss their common interests.

This interest group has evolved into a regular feature of the Society's life. Meeting after the annual banquet it has frequently engaged in discussions with a variety of

formats. In 1982 and 1983 the topic was the U. S. Catholic bishops' letter on war and peace. The topic planned for 1984 was "peacemaking." Through its convenors the group has several times made suggestions for plenary topics and several times made suggestions for half-a-dozen in 1976, speakers. Growing from a membership of half-a-dozen in 1976, the group now numbers approximately fifty.

In 1977, an interest group with John Satterwhite as convenor sponsored a session on "COCU and Compensatory Justice for Minority Church Groups." Since 1980 an interest group on ethics and the Black Liberation struggle has been meeting, convened for the first three years by Charles Brown and in 1983 by Riggins Earl, Jr. Peter Paris has also been active in the leadership of this interest group.

In 1980 Thomas Shannon wrote to the executive secretary offering to convene a task force or interest group on medical ethics. This group first met in 1981. In 1983 John R. Wilcox polled members of the Society concerning the possibility of starting an interest group on Christian ethics and the professions and time will tell more about this venture. Two other interest groups have recently appeared on the programs of the Society. One is found listed under the title "Social Ethics" in the 1982 and 1983 meetings, with Richard E. Hoehn as convenor, and one, on environmental ethics, is listed in the 1983 program with David Rickett as convenor. There is also an interest group of recent origin on sexuality chaired by Robert Blaney and James B. Nelson. During 1983 William Spohn and Thomas Byrnes wrote the executive secretary about starting an interest group at the 1984 meeting on American Theological Ethics. The formation of interest groups seems to have become far more casual and more prolific than it was in earlier years of the Society's history.

A group calling itself The Working Group on Feminist Ethics was formed in 1976 and a letter sent out by Jane Gary Peck to all women listed as members of the Society at that time. The letter indicated an intention to facilitate direct contacts between women working in the field. Each person to whom the letter went was asked to furnish biographical information and data concerning professional interests and commitments and involvement in specialized theological ethical studies--primarily those related to the feminist movement. The group that has been drawn together by this process has gathered informally at Society meetings and to discuss the development of feminist perspectives and methods in the field, to discuss curricular matters and share syllabi, to report on work-in-progress, and to serve as a placement network. There has been no formal membership. Women who have been interested have been asked to send a dollar to defray the costs of duplicating and distri-

buting materials. A spin-off from these activities has been the annual Boston regional meeting of a Consultation on Ethics in Feminist Perspectives that has met each year at Andover-Newton Theological School, bringing together twenty to thirty women from the Boston, New Haven, and New York areas.

This working group has occasionally been attended by a few men. It has proven supportive of women who have been isolated in graduate school programs or in teaching positions by helping them develop feminist methodology in ethics and work on liberation content in courses and writing. The group has worked for feminist input in the programs of the Society and has been gratified as women have been nominated and elected as members of the Board of Directors and more recently to key offices in the Society. It provides a fine example of what can be accomplished when people of common interests seek to pool their information and resources. The next chapter will report on several other ways in which the members of the Society have worked among themselves and with others to further the scholarly enterprise.