

all of that effort is done voluntarily and even the executive secretaries, who carry the pivotal responsibility for keeping all things functioning smoothly, though paid a modest honorarium, contribute far beyond the call of duty. The activities that have been described in this section are crucial for making possible the interchange of ideas that occurs about the discipline through the programs of the Society. We will now look at the substantive content of the Society's work by examining the issues it has canvassed in the papers and panels that have constituted the programs at the annual meetings.

Part Three
Substance

Foundational Issues on the Programs

The third part of this history is concerned with the deliberations of the Society on the substantive issues of Christian ethics. The focus is still upon the Society as a professional group. All of the materials reported upon here and in the next several chapters were first presented as papers (or in panel discussions) at the annual meetings of the Society.

The programs of the Society have been a fertile seedbed of Christian ethical reflection in the past quarter-century. The substance of the papers and sessions has found its way into the main stream of the discipline. Sometimes this is obvious, as in the plenary sessions at which members of the Society have been asked to share ideas stemming from nearly finished but not yet published books. It was on this basis that Paul Lehmann discussed *The Transfiguration of Politics* at the 1974 meeting and James Gustafson, *Ethics in a Theocentric Perspective, Volume Two*, at the 1983 meeting. In other cases, scholars from both inside and outside of the Society have tried out ideas at its annual meetings they would later incorporate into books or articles. But papers and panels are not always trial balloons with which an author explores a topic before putting it into published form. They are sometimes condensed and truncated versions of themes already explored more fully elsewhere. They are frequently examinations of special matters that would not warrant treatment in a monograph. Panels bring together several scholars to share points of view. It is much easier to pull together a panel for a program than to put together a symposium in a book, and legitimate to do so on a less comprehensive basis.

Even if the account in this part of our history does not tell the whole story of Christian ethical reflection since 1959, it does shed light upon the extent to which particular topics have been of concern to an important group of scholarly ethicists. Such a catalogue of topics covered

ells us something that is quite important, even though it is slightly different from an examination of how issues relate to each other in a systematic way. In telling the story of the Society's deliberations we are faced with about four hundred presentations in the form of either papers or panels. It is valuable to observe the groupings into which such a large number of presentations fall when examined for their content and focus of concern. In order to handle the great number and complexity of materials we have devised rubrics for grouping the topics. Such rubrics have nothing immutable or final about them, and a number of the papers may be placed in more than one classification. Not even the Society of Christian Ethics has been able to keep the parameters of analytical categories clean cut, or see to it that the work of individuals conforms strictly to pre-defined agendas. Another account might very well sort out the topics differently. Moreover, to cover such a body of materials for the historical purposes of this account makes it necessary to give something that is more akin to a restaurant menu than to a book of recipes. Menus concentrate attention on what has been served, rather than upon how each dish has been prepared. They tell about the establishment more than about the ingredients in each dish. Even so, menus are valuable clues to the nature of establishments and the kinds of things with which they deal, as well as to the eating preferences of certain groups.

Over the years, the largest number of subjects appearing on the programs has fallen under the rubric "foundational issues." This term covers sessions that have been primarily concerned with the biblical, historical, philosophical, theological and social-scientific grounds for the doing of Christian ethics. While this group of papers is almost twice as large as any other single category, it still constitutes only about one-third of the total program content of the meetings. The discussion of theoretical issues by themselves has not been the chief preoccupation of the Society, but it must be borne in mind that papers addressing specific issues and problems often have a theoretical component as important as that of the papers discussed in this chapter.

Biblical Foundation of Christian Ethics

The first two discussions of the role of the Bible in ethical reflection were made before the Society by invited guests. Paul W. Meyer of the Colgate Rochester Divinity School addressed the Society in 1965 on "Some Considerations on the Role of Exegesis in Ethical Reflection." His paper was mimeographed and distributed to the membership. John L. McKenzie followed the next year with "Personal Dignity and

Personal Responsibility in the New Testament." (McKenzie's paper was not distributed and is not in the records.) Meyer noted the two biblicalisms which H. Richard Niebuhr rejected in *The Responsible Self*. He suggested that the most reliable exegesis of biblical materials depends upon putting it in text into its historical setting and understanding it in light of its theological meaning. He illustrated his method by looking at I Corinthians 15, examining how a number of theological commentators have interpreted it, and proposing his own exegesis.

Seventeen years later, another guest spoke to the Society on the role of the Bible in ethical reflection. By this presentation was also given at a plenary session. In "Discipline and the relevant literature was more extensive. In "Discipline and Patriarchy: Early Christian Ethos and Christian Ethics in a Feminist Theological Perspective," Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza of Notre Dame University placed the emphasis on the role of the church as a community of moral discourse. "The moral authority of the Bible," declared Professor Schüssler Fiorenza, "is grounded in a community that is capable of sustaining scriptural authority in faithful remembrance, liturgical celebration, ecclesial governance and traditions." This process is not without difficulties and miscarriages, as the paper showed by recounting how the Bible has been used in repressive as well as in emancipating ways. The argument also suggested that the biblical traditions, adequately interpreted through the joint efforts of biblical scholars and Christian ethicists, can be a helpful contribution to feminist liberation theology. This paper is published in *The 1982 Annual* together with the responses given by Bruce Birch and Thomas Ogletree. Professor Schüssler Fiorenza published shortly thereafter an article entitled "Feminist Theology and New Testament Interpretation," *The Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* XXII (1982): 32-46.

In the intervening years nearly a dozen members of the Society have examined these and similar issues. In 1973 Carl E. Braaten argued in a paper entitled "Eschatological Ethics: Toward a Theory of Christian Ethics," that while the roots of Christian ethics belong in biblical eschatology, few contemporary ethicists acknowledge this and many of them completely ignore it. All members received this paper in mimeographed form. Braaten rooted his eschatological starting point for ethics in the kingdom of God preached to and showed how this idea can be reciprocally related to philosophical ethics to produce a more adequate view of the Christian life than was available when first enunciated by

Jesus. In 1983 Thomas Oglatree, himself about ready to publish a book, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics* (Fortress, 1983), returned to the theme with a paper, "The Eschatological Horizon of New Testament Social Thought," in which he delineated how the social radicalism and institutional creativity which are found in the New Testament can contribute to original thinking about social matters.

In 1976 Larry Rasmussen and Bruce Birch presented a session on "The Role of the Bible in Christian Ethics." They shortly thereafter published *The Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life* (Augsburg, 1976). In 1978 Stephen Charles Mott presented "Equalization Aspects of the Biblical Theory of Justice." In this paper, as in his subsequent book, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (Oxford, 1982), Mott argued against those views of justice that contrast it sharply with love and grace. Biblical justice, in Mott's view, is a creating rather than a preserving justice, and is therefore actively concerned for the protection of the weak and the afflicted. Karen Lebacqz contributed a paper in 1983 which examined the use of biblical parables, particularly the parable of the laborers in the vineyard found in Matthew 20:1-16, as sources of ethical insight on "Justice, Economics, and the Uncomfortable Kingdom." Her conclusion was that "justice requires redress of imbalance, not simply distribution on the basis of merit."

Raymond Anderson, in a paper at the 1979 annual meeting entitled "The Minimal Ethic Phenomena in the Gospels," examined the contention current among a number of biblical scholars that the content of ethical teaching in the Gospels is relatively meager. Examining the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of John he showed how strong were the tendencies in the early church against burdening the free and responsible life of the new covenantal people with too great an ethic. The same year Allen Verhey examined "The Use of Scripture in Moral Argument: Methodological Reflection on Walter Rauschenbusch." Verhey examined the way in which appeals to scripture in moral argument are always authorization—using arguments, of which three played a role in Rauschenbusch's thought. He also suggested that scripture cannot function authoritatively apart from tradition, community, reason, and experience. Hence, the use of scripture by Christian ethicists must remain constantly open to the criticism that comes from the Christian community and even from the scripture itself.

In 1980, George L. Frear, Jr. considered "Universalization and Biblical Particularities." He took issue with Barth's contention that the moral command is always special to each person and occasion. Frear argued that universalizing—that is, developing judgments about right and wrong

that are the same under similar circumstances and speaking about obligation in general terms—is central to moral reasoning. He showed how this process can make use of biblical materials. The next year, William M. Longworth developed a systematic account of the ethical perspective of Saint Paul. He looked at the entire Pauline corpus and showed that Paul gave more shape to a normative conception of the Christian life than has been commonly acknowledged and that Paul's method of moral reasoning operated throughout all the particular judgments that he made. This paper is published in *The Annual*. In 1983 Edward H. Schroeder discussed "Mosaic and Christic Ethos in the Gospel of John" indicating that though the Fourth Gospel contains no ethical teaching of the type found in the synoptics or in Paul--no Sermon on the Mount, no *Hausfatein*, no references to the decalogue, et al., it does shed light on matters of ethical import by showing that the human ethos becomes changed in a new world of grace and truth.

Historical Studies, the Uses of History and

Cultural Diagnoses

The group of papers dealing with historical materials or the nature of history is three times as large as the group of papers dealing with the use of the Bible in ethical reflection, but both groups of papers have some of the same disparate qualities.

About half the historically oriented papers have been studies of particular figures, movements, or periods of the history of Christian ethics. Below is a list of papers, in the years given, that come under this category. Of this group only four (marked below with an asterisk) were distributed to members, though a number were published, as will be indicated in the paragraph that follows the list.

- 1962 Donovan Smucker, "The Permanent and the Transient Elements in the Social Gospel"
- 1962 Arthur C. Cochrane, "Natural Law in John Calvin"
- 1964 Frederick S. Carney, "The Fifteenth Century Background of Reformation Ethics"
- 1966 Theodore W. Olsen, "American Social Theory and Theology: Holism and Particularism"*
- 1969 C. C. Goen, "The Intellectual History of 18th Century American as Rewritten by Alan Heimart"
- 1972 Roger L. Shinn, "Reinhold Niebuhr's Criticism of Utopianism: A Reassessment"*
- 1974 Max Myers, "Classical Liberalism and Hegel's Concept of Freedom"
- 1974 Richard L. Spencer, "Hegel and Moltmann: The Dialectic of Need and the Dialectic of Hope"

- 1978 Theodore W. Olsen, "Millennial Ethics and the Holy Community"
- 1978 Ernest Best, "Ethics in a Whiteheadian Context"
- 1978 George W. Forell, "Christ Against Culture: The Political Ethics of Tertullian"*
- 1979 Dennis McCann, "Ernst Troeltsch's Political Ethics"
- 1978 Edmund Leites, "Conscience, Morality and Human Rights in Locke and the Levellers"
- 1981 George W. Forell, "The Ethics of Early Christian Monasticism: Symbol and Reality"*
- 1981 David Trickett, "Jonathan Edwards and an Ethics of Universal Responsibility"
- 1981 Philip J. Rossi, "Autonomy and Community: A Kantian Foundation for Moral Theology"
- 1982 Timothy F. Sedgwick, "F. D. Maurice and Anglican Social Thought"

(The number of papers from this list that were published, or prompted publications on related material by their authors, is fairly significant. C. C. Goen's paper was published in *The Journal of the Liberal Ministry* IX [Fall 1969] 24-31. Roger Shinn's, as "Realism, Radicalism, and Eschatology in Reinhold Niebuhr: A Reassessment," *The Journal of Religion* 52 (October 1974): 409-423. A related article by Dennis McCann appeared under the title "Socialism--Ernst Troeltsch," in *The Journal of Religion Ethics* IV [Spring 1976]: 159-180. Edmund Leites published "Conscience, Leisure, and Learning: Locke and Levellers," in *Sociological Analysis XXXIX* [Spring 1978]: 36-61. Part of Philip Rossi's material is incorporated in *Together Toward Hope: A Journey to Moral Theology* [Notre Dame, 1983] and George Forell's, in *A History of Christian Ethics*, Volume One [Augsburg, 1979]).

None of these papers was sought as a contribution by a guest scholar, as were three of the papers dealing with biblical materials. Very few members of the Society would deny the importance of remaining abreast of the history of Christian ethics. But a graduate student preparing for compressives would probably find the programs of the Society an insufficient source of materials with which to prepare, and the materials distributed to the members a still less adequate resource.

The members of the Society have not been uninterested in history--particularly recent history. One of the most popular Sunday morning plenaries was a panel devised in 1977 at which three elder statespersons in the field were to reminisce about the developments which they had seen take place in the period from the 1930s to the 1970s. One of them, John Bennett, had to withdraw because his wife was

ill, so the sessions consisted of presentations by James Luther Adams and Walter G. Muelder. Each spoke autobiographically, to the delight and edification of those attending. Muelder has left a manuscript of his remarks, which end with an eloquent plea for taking cultural wholes and global interdependence seriously.

In 1964, James Gustafson gave a paper entitled "Direction from the Past: An Essay in Favor of Christianity in 'Post Christian' Ethics." In 1969 Jan M. Lochman gave a guest paper on "The Significance of Historical Events for Ethical Decision." Lochman was that year the Fosdick Visiting Professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Interest in his presentation was heightened by the speaker's well-known efforts to maintain Christian integrity in a Marxist setting.

Two papers from the 1978 meeting, both readily available in printed volumes, addressed the fundamental question as to how historical data and knowledge are useful for doing ethics. James T. Johnson's paper, "The Uses of History for Religious Ethics," has been published in *The Journal of Religion Ethics* 7 (1979): 97-115. Waldo Beach's presidential address, "The Old and the New in Christian Ethics," is found in the 1978 edition of *The Selected Papers*. Beach examined the tremendous conceptual changes--or "major revolutions" as he called them--that have affected our view of reality. These consist of a new cosmology, the loss of a vivid sense of a continuing individual destiny, belief in the power of citizens to determine the social and governmental structures under which they live, the Marxist awareness of how much economic institutions determine social norms, and the rise of technology. Beach argued that in face of these changes three abiding affirmations of Christian faith remain: trust in a transcendent beneficent divine will, the belief that the sources of moral good and evil rest on voluntaristic foundations, and the contention that the norm of *agape*, as exemplified in the person of Christ, remains the abiding standard of Christian behavior.

A third group of papers dealing with historical matters may be characterized most succinctly by the phrase "diagnoses of culture." These papers try to read the nature of the milieu in which we live and think. Robert Lee had the first paper which can be classified in this group. In 1964 he read "The Problem and Meaning of Leisure in America," portions of which appeared in *Religion and Leisure in America* (Abingdon, 1964). Two years later Harvey Cox shared "Second Thoughts on the Secular Society." In 1972 Gibson Winter gave a paper at the opening plenary session on "Foundation of Ethos: Social Ethics in an Era of Cultural Transformation." Franklin Sherman and John Giles Milhaven

responded to this paper. Winter's paper analyzed the historical cultural situation in which the human sciences do their work. It identified the basic informing motifs of our age as the recovery of earth, the notion of society, and the centrality of praxis. A crisis develops when these are subverted. Some of the themes later to appear in Winter's book, *Liberating Creation* (Crossroads, 1981), are evident in the 1972 paper, but they undergo considerable refinement in the intervening years. (Gibson's paper may be equally germane to the discussion of societal and social scientific matters that are looked at in the last section of this chapter.) In a paper delivered at the 1976 meeting under the title, "Roots of the American Revolutionary Tradition: A Critical Analysis," John M. Gessell argued that the concept of liberty that motivated the American revolution has been largely lost to the general American consciousness of the present and that liberation thinkers provide the most promising opportunity for recapturing its essential dynamic in the social order.

Individualism has twice been the topic of analysis. In 1978 Eric Mount gave a paper, "The Pitfalls and Possibilities of American Individualism." This has been published in a revised form in *The Review of Religious Research* 22 (June 1981): 362-376. Robin Lovin's paper "Empiricism and Christian Social Thought: The Epistemology of Individualism," was printed in *The 1982 Annual*. The Presidential Address of 1980 by Donald Shriver, which appeared in the March 26, 1980 issue of *The Christian Century* even before it was released in the Society's *Selected Papers*, was on "The Pain and Promise of Pluralism." Shriver showed that the rationalism associated with a liberal (and essentially Protestant) America wrongly presumed to be universalistic, and he offered certain suggestions for responding to the loss of its influence. He urged theological ethicists to maintain intellectual comradeship with the physical, biological, and social scientists who are engaged in a search for the scope and limits of the human. He upheld the importance of cultivating empathy and the art of forgiveness in politics. In this paper we can see the beginnings of a break with the tendency of Christian realism to portray political life too harshly--a break that has since become increasingly evident in Shriver's thinking.

Christian Ethics and Philosophical Understanding

The members of the Society of Christian Ethics have seldom been unaware that moral philosophy is an important aspect of ethical reflection--though they cannot be accused of having focused attention on any one way of doing philosophy, be it existentially or analytically. The interest in

philosophy, while not dominant in the programs, has at times been given unique visibility. In two instances, philosophers whose thinking has been of particular interest to Christian ethicists have been invited as guests of the Society and to engage in a discussion of their work in a plenary session on Sunday morning. The first of these occurred in 1973, when Hannah Arendt responded to papers on her thought prepared by William W. Everett and Roland Delattre. Two years later, William Frankena of the University of Michigan was present to converse with Stanley Hauerwas and Frederick Carney.

While having philosophers present in person to respond to discussions of their own work has been unusual, it has not been unusual to have papers dealing with the thought of moral philosophers. The thinking of John Rawls on justice has been considered in two papers. In 1974 Wayne Proudfoot offered "A Theological Critique of Rawls' Theory of Justice." A version of his paper was published under the title "Rawls on the Individual and the Social" in *The Journal of Religious Ethics* II (Fall 1974): 107-128. Three years later Merle Longwood and Henry Clark gave a joint session entitled "Two Critiques of the Ethics of John Rawls." A paper on Polanyi scheduled for 1982 had to be cancelled.

The greatest number of papers dealing with the thought or the influence of a particular philosopher have been the ones about Karl Marx and his influence. The thinking of Marx has undoubtedly been taken into account in sessions dealing with both economic matters and East-West relationships, but the relationship of Marxism to Christianity has been a subject of frequent inquiry and has been on the following programs of the Society in a quite wide range of treatments.

- 1968 Jürgen Moltmann (with James Luther Adams and Dan D. Rhoades responding), "Freedom in Christian and Marxist Perspective"
- 1972 Thomas Ogletree, "Ideology and Ethical Reflection"
- 1973 Marx W. Wartofsky (a guest from Boston University) "The Present State of Marxist Ethics"
- 1978 James Will, "The Principles of Concretion in Marxist and Christian Ethics"
- 1980 Nancy Bancroft, "Does Marx Have an Ethical Theory?"
- 1981 Paul Peachey, "Individual Personality in Soviet Social Theory"
- 1983 Ruth L. Smith, "The Individual and Society in Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Marx"

The paper by James Will, entitled "Christian-Marxist Ethical Dialogue from a Process Perspective," was published in *Encounter* 42 [Autumn 1981]: 353-367. The paper given by Jürgen Moltmann was published in a revised form in Thomas Moltmann, ed., *Openings for Marxist Christian Dialogue* (Abingdon, 1969). The paper by Nancy Bancroft was published in *Soundings* LXIII [Summer 1980]: 214-229).

In addition to the papers listed, a presentation by Raymond L. Whitehead was given at the 1983 meeting on "Ethics in Post-Mao China: Modernization and Humanization." This paper is pertinent to this topic but approaches the issues he discusses more through social analysis than philosophical inquiry.

One of the subjects that has received probing treatment in the programs of the Society has been the nature of justice. Two presidential addresses have been devoted to this issue. In 1965 Prentiss L. Pemberton spoke on "Concerning the Historical Problem of Knowledge About Justice." Pemberton was concerned with how ethicists and students of social processes may discern early enough the misdirections that cause enormous subsequent changes in a society, and more particularly the consequences that are likely to ensue because America has never sufficiently clarified her ideals of justice and freedom. Delving into the biblical and historical backgrounds of an adequate view of justice, Pemberton showed the ambivalence and uncertainty in modern liberalism about this matter and suggested the need for the United States to put its conceptual understanding in order if it is to deal with the problems of the future.

In 1981, Douglas Sturm, speaking on "The Prism of Justice: *E Pluribus Unum?*," was pursuing a similar theme. Noting that the Word of God involves a demand for political justice, Sturm suggested that thinking about justice requires several strands, not dissimilar to the bands of light refracted by a prism. The four strands, together with representative advocates, identified by Sturm are: justice as liberty (Nozick and Plathman); justice as equality (Honore and Rawls); justice as community (Gould and Johann); and justice as wisdom (Strauss and Voegelin). Sturm argued that the principles of liberty and quality are centrifugal in character and must be balanced by principles of community and wisdom which are centripetal in their effect. Sturm's address achieved the distinction of eliciting a subsequent paper by another member in which Sturm's scheme was amplified and extended to apply to thinking about economics as well as to contemporary politics. Warren Copeland's topic in 1983 was "The Economic Policy Debate and Sturm's 'Prism of Justice'."

Other papers on the programs dealing with justice in

philosophical terms have been Merle Longwood's "Compensatory Justice: A New Mode of Social Response" (1971) and Drew Christiansen's "On Relative Equality" (originally planned for 1983 but postponed to 1984).

The nature of moral reasoning has also been examined a number of different ways in papers given at the Society's meetings. In 1974 Frederick Garney presented a paper "On the Nature of Moral Argument." In 1974 Donald Evans considered "Christian Ethics and Linguistic Analysis." The presidential address of James Luther Adams in 1969 was entitled "The Pragmatic Theory of Meaning: One Approach to Method in Christian Ethics." Adams traced this theory back to Charles S. Peirce, showed how much it stresses consequential rather than metaphysical measures of adequacy, and brought the discussion into contemporary times by noting ways in which the thought of both Nowell-Smith and Brathwaite is colored by similar assumptions. Adams then chided the pragmatists for being too individualistic, thus neglecting social consequences, and set down certain principles that he contended must be kept in mind if Christian ethicists are to embrace the pragmatic theory of meaning without introducing distortions into the doing of ethics. In conclusion, Adams reminded the members of the Society that the consequences of belief depend very heavily upon the distributions of power that are at work in any historical situation and that no one configuration of power is to be so trusted as to exempt it from religious criticism.

While he did not use the terminology, Edward L. Long, Jr. in his presidential address in 1973 developed a pragmatic view of the authority of the Christian ethicist. Concerned with "Christian Ethics and the Problem of Credibility," he considered the ways in which the work of the ethicist commends itself. Suggesting that appeals to external sponsorship have lost their power, that the use of reason no longer produces a consensus, and that identification with a special group or tradition no longer indicates commitments outside of the convictional circle involved, his treatment argued that the credibility of the ethicist is grounded in competency rather than correctness, in comprehensive adequacy rather than in unquestioned authority. He also emphasized the importance of *praxis* and looked to the development of a discipline that is not marked by the insistence that there is only one approach to its subject matter.

Attention to phenomenology as a mode of ethical analysis has appeared in two papers dealing with foundational matters. In 1975 E. Clinton Gardner discussed "Phenomenological Analysis and Normative Ethics in Selected Theological Ethicists." The ethicists studied were Thielicke,

Lögstrup, H. R. Niebuhr, Mandelbaum, and Winter. Two years later Thomas Ogletree's paper, "The Claims of the Other: A Phenomenological Account of the Meaning of Moral Expertise," (appearing in *The Selected Papers 1977* as "Hospitality to the Stranger") explored the relationship of selfhood and socialization with special reference to the work of Immanuel Levinas, who was concerned with the significance of the other as a moral actor for the development of the moral self. While appreciatively explicating the views of Levinas, Ogletree took issue with him for seeming to deny the reality of a moral agent before its encounter with the other, and cited Tillich's thinking on this matter as a helpful alternative. In 1969 William M. Longworth gave a paper with the broad title, "Religious Beliefs and Moral Judgments." In this paper he acknowledged the independence of religion and morality while pointing to the fact that in practical ways religious beliefs and moral judgments overlap. He focused on recognizable interrelations at the level of discourse, identified five sets of variables that affect those interrelations, and illustrated how these variables appear in the thought of the eighteenth century British theologian and ethicist, Samuel Clarke.

A number of other papers have dealt with a variety of moral and philosophical issues. Dianne M. Yeager's paper at the 1982 meeting, "Tragedy, Suffering, and Ethics," looked at the problem of universalizing a definition of the right and suggested that while it is relatively easy to get agreement about positions that are wrong, it is impossible to arrive at universal agreement concerning what is "right" in an ethical situation. John Badertscher dealt with foundational issues in 1982 in a paper called "Freedom and Virtues."

One of the things that can be learned from scrutinizing the ways in which the members of the Society have handled foundational issues is that many of them move rather freely and without great scruples from the philosophical to theological realms of discourse. Robert W. Bertram's paper, "Responsibility: A Confessional-Ethical Splice," is a case in point. Joseph Allen's treatment of "H. Richard Niebuhr's Value Theory" in 1963 would be hard to pigeon-hole under just one of the rubrics, even though it observed that Niebuhr himself thought of his work as primarily theological in genre. Roger Hutchison's 1983 paper, "Mutuality: Procedural Norm and Foundational Symbol," was an autobiographical account of the experience of mutuality and an appreciative portrayal of Gibson Winter's accomplishments in the book *Liberating Creation*. Both Bertram's and Winter's approaches might well be considered theological by many philosophers and philosophical by many theologians. The members of the

Society have, it seems, been more free to use a greater variety of approaches in their work than might have been the case had they been under peer pressure to be self-consciously concerned about some pure methodology for the discipline. In moving, therefore, to the next genre of papers dealing with foundational issues, we are not suddenly leaping across a gulf of clear and immutable dimensions.

Theologically Formulated Issues

A casual observer of the years we are discussing might think, given the publicity accorded to the movement, that the discussion of situation ethics was one of the most prominent aspects of recent ethical thinking. That judgment is not substantiated by an examination of the programs of the Society. To be sure, John C. Bennett did give a presidential address in 1961 on "Ethical Principles and the Context" and George H. Easter did give a paper in 1965 on "New Frontiers in Protestant Contextual Ethics," but these are the only papers in the entire period in which the terms "contextual" or "situational" figure as the central focus of attention. Easter's paper was a discussion of the types of contextualist ethics and even indicated in one section how principles were being reintroduced in much contextualist thought. The record simply does not indicate that the scholarly deliberations of the Society were at any time dominated by plumping for a situationalist way of thinking.

However, many of the issues germane to a broader approach to a relational ethic did get canvassed. Two papers dealt specifically with divine command morality and these have been published. Glen C. Graber's "Philosophical Basis for a Defense of 'Divine Command' Ethics" appeared the year after its presentation in a revised form in *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLIII (March 1975): 62-69, and an article based on a reply to it by John P. Reeder is found in *The Journal of Religious Ethics* III (Spring 1975): 157-163. Janice Marie Idziak's paper, "Divine Command Morality: An Historical Reappraisal," presented after her book of readings on the subject was published by Edward Mellin Press in 1979, showed that the history of divine command morality has been sadly neglected. Along with the ethics of love and natural law theory it has been a major strain in Christian ethical thinking and does not depend upon asserting that the power of God is the primary quality of the Godhead in relating to human beings.

In 1965 Max Stackhouse asked in a paper, "The Role of Technical Data in the Formation of Ethical Norms and Judgments," whether technical data is useful for the definition of norms themselves, and not merely for the strategy used to apply norms in action. Stackhouse contended that the

prevalent ethos in which any ethicist works so affects thinking about norms that it is necessary to make an empirical analysis of that ethos in order to understand them. Consequently, norms cannot be adequately comprehended only in theological or ontological frameworks. While we must not reduce Christian ethics to sociology alone, we must take into account technical data to see the provisional norms already operative in a given ethos, the societal factors involved in understanding that ethos, how the factors thus understood affect judgments, and the kind of data that may be important for looking to the future. This attention to empirical data does not, according to Stackhouse, warrant a total relativizing, historicizing, or situationalizing of norms nor a reduction of the ethical task to emotive or primarily existential responses. In 1978 Stackhouse was again, in dialogue with David Little, looking at similar issues. In a paper entitled "The Category of 'The Fitting' in Religious Ethics" he argued that there are not two, but three, modes of ethical discourse: the deontological (dealing with right and wrong); the teleological (dealing with good and evil); and the ethological (dealing with the fitting and the unfitting). Situationists and contextualists are to be commended for calling renewed attention to the importance of the third way, but to be resisted in their efforts to make it alone the foundational methodology. Little put a stronger reliance on the Kantian element than Stackhouse, and warned that too great an emphasis on the fitting would tend to collapse ethics into sociology. Thomas Ogletree extended this discussion the following year with a paper, "The Conflict of Interpretations: A Challenge to the Ethics of the Fitting," published as "The Activity of Interpreting Moral Judgment," in *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 8 (Spring 1980): 1-26.

Several papers given before the Society have been concerned with natural law. In 1962 Donald V. Wade discussed "The Revival of Natural Law in Contemporary Protestant Ethics." The following year Douglas Sturm gave a presentation on "Naturalism, Historicism, and Christian Ethics: Action on 'Naturalism, Historicism, and Christian Ethics: Toward a Christian Doctrine of Natural Law.'" His paper was published in *The Journal of Religion* XLIV, (January 1964): 40-51. Two years later, an invited guest, Robert Johann presented a paper on "Natural Law and the Person." Johann had been asked to share with members of the group current trends in Roman Catholic thinking, but he preferred to offer a wider treatment. His paper indicated that while there are limitations to the traditional "natural law" theory and while its orientation needs radical modification, this modification situates the theory within a wider context that preserves its deepest insights intact.

Whether or not Paul Elmen took all these things in and pondered them is not clear, but his presidential address in 1966 on "Law and Miracle" did start with a reference to John Bennett's earlier presidential address and to Paul Ramsey's raising of similar concerns in the book published the previous year in Scotland under the title *Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics*. Noting that both Time and *Commonweal* had just carried popular articles about this, Elmen indicated that he would like to have avoided entering the discussion, but found it impossible to do so. Elmen, however, did not simply rehearse the arguments, but added a unique dimension to it by contrasting law with miracles rather than with situations or contexts. A miracle, like a situation, is concrete, occurs in the singular, and interrupts the regularity of law. The category of miracle can, therefore, do justice to the uniqueness of each person and to the emergence of the radically new element in history. Elmen noted that if the exceptional is made the standard it is no longer the exceptional. Therefore, argued Elmen, only by keeping law and miracle in tension, without reducing either to the other, can the value of both for ethical thought be preserved.

Three years later the problem of norms was still of concern to the Society and a panel consisting of Frederick Garney, Arthur Dyck, Richard McCormick and Gibson Winter canvassed the subject, with David Tracy responding, discussed James Bresnahan, with Tracy responding, discussed "Karl Rahner's Ethics: Natural Law and the Teleological-Deontological Controversy;" this was published, in a revised form, in *The Journal of Religion* 56, (January 1976): 36-60. In 1977 Stanley Harakas treated "Natural Law in Christian Ethics: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective" and in 1981 Dennis P. McCann took "A Second Look at Middle Axioms." The first of these presentations was published in *The Selected Papers and the second, in The Annual*.

Methodology in doing Christian ethics was a major concern in the mid-1970s. Roger Shinn's presidential address in 1975 looked at "The Style of Christian Polemics" and in 1977 J. Philip Wogaman examined "The Integrity of Christian Ethics." In the intervening year a concurrent session was devoted to a look at Paul Ramsey's work, which has often been pivotally concerned with the role of norms in Christian ethics. For Ramsey's rejoinders at that session see *The Journal of Religious Ethics* IV (Fall 1976): 185-237. Shinn considered why the ethicist engages in both irenic and polemics, acknowledged the presence of empirical elements in the way ethicists go about their work, took account of the motives that influence those who do the arguing, and suggested a posture for engaging in moral argument without

destructive self-righteousness. Wogaman, raising the question as to whether there is any intellectual integrity possible in Christian ethics, indicated that what we believe about reality as-a-whole reflects aspects of the reality we have experienced and tends to shape our idea of what lies beyond immediate experience. Contending that the historical figure of Jesus Christ is bound to be central to Christians in their understanding of reality, even though it does not constitute the only metaphor they use, Wogaman held that it is in some way special, and posed the question whether Christians can rely upon their metaphors of reality with intellectual integrity. While Wogaman acknowledged that Christians can agree with people of many other persuasions about a great many specific judgments, they need to be able to answer for the faith they hold with reference to their most central object of value.

In 1976 Max Stackhouse gave a paper entitled "Modes of Justification in Ethical Arguments." Ideas drawn from that paper can be found in "The Location of the Holy: An Essay on Justification in Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* IV (Spring 1976): 63-104. The relationship of Christianity to ethics was discussed two other times on the programs. In 1969 E. Clinton Gardner's paper on "A Critique of Christocentric Models of Ethical Analysis" was an early version of a theme Gardner wrestled with for many years and finally published in his book *Christocentrism in Christian Social Ethics: A Depth Study of Eight Modern Protestants* (University Press of America, 1983) with a note of gratitude in the preface for the collegiality he has experienced in the life of the Society. In 1980 Max A. Myers gave a paper on "The Meaning of Christology for Ethics."

The remaining papers to be mentioned under the rubric of theological treatments cover widely separated issues that are not part of an identifiable stream of discussion. That in no way make them less important. Indeed, it may be a mark of creative originality to have produced a paper that do not fit into the same category as a lot of others. The record surely requires that they be listed, in the order they were given.

- 1971 Rubem Alves, "Crisis of Imagination in Western Ethics"
 1978 Marjorie Maguire, "Immortality and Ethics**"
 1979 Joseph Allen, "The Inclusive Covenant and Special Covenants**"
 1979 James Gaffney, "Temptation as an Ethical Category"
 1979 Robert M. Adams, "Eros in Agape"
 1980 Rolf Ahlers, "Theology as Interested Knowledge"

- 1980 Paul F. Camentisch, "Gifts and Gratitude in Ethics"
 1981 Raymond K. Anderson, "Christian Approaches to an Ethics of the Imagination"
 1981 Gilbert Meilander, "Friendship and the Problem of Preferential Love"
 1982 Elizabeth Bettenhausen, "Three Interpretations of Sin in Ethics"
 1983 James T. Johnson, "Agape as Creator of Community: A Reorientation"

(The substance of the paper by James Gaffney was printed in the *Annual Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* [1980] under the title "Experimenting on Morality." The paper by Paul Camentisch was published in *The Journal of Religious Ethics* IX [Spring 1981]: 1-34. The paper by Meilander bears a title very similar to that of the first chapter in his book *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics* [University of Notre Dame Press, 1981]).

Personal and Social Factors in Morality

Linking treatments of psychological and sociological factors in moral understanding together may not seem entirely adequate, despite the fact that both are normative sciences, but there are precedents for doing so. When John Satterwhite entitled his 1971 presidential address with the rubric used for this section, he was pointing to the fact that these factors have often been linked together in the Society's deliberations. Satterwhite took up a theme from the presidential address of the previous year, in which James Gustafson had explored "The Burden of the Ethical: Reflections on Disinterestedness and Involvement." (Published in *The Foundation* LXVI (Winter 1970): 8-15.) Gustafson had commented on the relationship between action and reflection which had been of concern over the years to many members of the Society. His contention that the personal and the social cannot be separated was echoed by Satterwhite, who traced the Black religious experience as an instructive example of having kept these two factors together. Satterwhite held up the Black agenda to the whole membership as one worthy of its allegiance. To that point we shall be returning in chapter six.

The papers discussed in this section have been concerned in different ways with either the personal/psychological elements in morality or with the societal/sociological ones. Ralph Potter and Steven M. Tipton canvassed the interplay between these factors in 1983 in a session on the subject "Moral Anthropology: The Social Location of Modes of Ethical Reasoning." In the course of the years two papers

have focused more specifically on moral development. In 1973 T. J. Bachmeyer considered "Christian Ethics and Developmental Psychology: Implications of the Thought of Lawrence Kohlberg." This paper explicated Kohlberg's six stages, showing how someone at each of the six might make a decision about an act of mercy killing. Bachmeyer saw in Kohlberg's work a description of moral growth which raises a question as to whether a theoretical treatment of Christian ethics couched primarily in universalized principles can be communicated to people who have not yet achieved a stage of moral growth enabling them to comprehend general principles. Bachmeyer also suggested that Kohlberg's theories help us to think through problems involving a compromise of ethical principles and to devise moral pedagogies. The two formalistic criteria of the good--universality and impartiality--are implicit in Kohlberg's theory. Bachmeyer published his argument "Ethics and the Psychology of Moral Argument" in *Zygon* VIII (June 1973): 82-95. In 1980, another paper on Kohlberg was presented by Walter E. Conn which was published later in *The International Philosophical Quarterly* XXI (December 1981): 379-389, under the title "Morality, Religion, and Kohlberg's 'Stage Seven'." This paper reported on and discussed the implications of Kohlberg's efforts to identify a seventh, or religious, stage in development. It may come as some surprise to realize that the programs of the Society have, perhaps as has the discipline of Christian ethics in general, paid little attention to moral development theory.

Societal issues have been treated more often, but in a great variety of ways. Certainly the programs of the Society of Christian Ethics have not approached these matters with the same self-consciousness about sociological method as might be expected in The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. Some of the presentations have been theoretical, some autobiographical, and some have even consisted of speculative readings of the future. The list of papers in this category will show that diversity.

1962 Kenneth L. Smith, "The Churches and the Sociology of the Sixties"
 of the Sixties"
 1962 James Luther Adams, "The Evolution of My Social Concern"
 1963 Edward L. Long, Jr., "The Concept of Power in the Radical Right"
 1964 J. Phillip Mogan, "Ethics and Planned Social Change"
 1965 A panel with James Luther Adams, James Gustafson and Widick Schroeder, "New Frontiers in Ethics Research"

- 1966 Franklin H. Littell, "Right Wing Threats to America: Historical Perspectives"
 1967 Edward L. Long, Jr., "Emerging Trends in Social Policy"
 1967 Paul Abrecht and Charles West, "Central Issues for Christian Ethics from the World Council of Churches' Conference on Church and Society"
 1971 A panel with Donald Evans, Daniel Maguire, David Ramage and Gayraud Wilmore, "Legitimacy of the Social Authority of the Churches"
 1975 Paul Abrecht, "On Society: New Directions in Ecumenical Social Ethics"
 1977 Norman Faramelli, "The Religious, Social and Ethical Implications of Contemporary Sociology"
 1977 Stuart D. McLean, "The Implications of Reference Group Theory for Doing Ethics"

(Of these, McLean's paper is available in *The Amover Newton Quarterly* XVIII [March 1978]: 211-221).

The plethora of papers mentioned in this chapter reveals not only how many kinds of issues are of foundational interest to Christian ethicists but also how diverse are the ways in which they approach them. The account of the programs of the Society may take on greater manageability as we look at the ways the papers have dealt with specific social issues and problems.