

## Background, Founding, and Early Years

The American Society of Christian Social Ethics in the United States and Canada, which through two subsequent name changes has become the present Society of Christian Ethics, was founded at a meeting in Washington, D.C., January 30-31, 1959. That meeting is taken as the official birthday of the Society, the twenty-fifth anniversary of which was celebrated at the annual meeting in Philadelphia, January 20-22, 1984.

There were several years of professional interaction among seminary professors of ethics and social ethics before 1959. Indeed, the 1959 meeting at Wesley Theological Seminary was as much the last meeting of an old group as it was the first meeting of a new organization. While the purposes and programs of the old group were remarkably similar to those that were to be characteristic of the new group, its organizational qualities were different. . . . In a letter dated June 6, 1983, Paul Elman has written " . . . in the early days, the Society seemed less an organized body than a group of people who had common interests and tried at all costs to avoid the institutional stereotype: minutes, membership, publication. As I recall, we used to pride ourselves on its informal structure."

That looseness of structure does not help the historian to reconstruct the story with great detail! However, the things done and the associations made during the 1950s in that group were highly significant for the shape which the new Society would take, and it is important to review as much as can be reconstructed about what took place in those years.

### *The Forerunner of the Society*

In the early 1950s, and perhaps even before that, seminary teachers of social ethics met as part of a group called Seminary Professors in the Practical Fields. The social



ethicists tended to get swallowed up in that group and they soon sensed a strong desire to form an association of their own. Among those who were instrumental in the discussions leading to a separation from the larger group of teachers in the practical field were James Luther Adams, Das Kelley Barnett, John C. Bennett, E. Clinton Gardner, Karl Hertz, Henry E. Kolbe, Murray L. Leiffer, William H. Lazareth, Victor Obenhaus, Prentiss Pemberton, Liston Pope, John Satterwhite, Kenneth L. Smith, and Kenneth Underwood. Undoubtedly there were others who were active, but their names do not show up in the few documents that remain in the very early years. Most of the participants in that group felt a kinship of some kind with Walter Rauschenbusch and others of an earlier period who stressed the necessity for a social emphasis in Christian thought. Some felt that the use of the adjective "social" to modify the term "Christian ethics" involved a redundancy, but after heated discussion about the organizational name the advocates of including the term "social" won this round. Within a few years, however, the term "social" would be dropped from the title of the new Society.

The Edward W. Hazen Foundation of New Haven assisted the group with grants to support the travel costs of those attending its meetings. These grants were modest, but very helpful in the economy of that period. The first grant for \$350.65 was made in 1950 and approximately that same amount was given to the old association almost every year through the decade of the 1950s. In fact, the Hazen Foundation continued to give travel money on into the 1960s to support the more formally organized Society.

The records of the meetings for this period are few and far between. There is a letter from Kenneth Underwood of the Yale Divinity School, dated March, 1953, that reports he was elected "president" (the more common phrase used of early leaders was "chairman") at a meeting held early in that year at Yale and indicating that the conference in 1954 would be held at Union Theological Seminary. Underwood's letter indicates that twenty-six persons were present at the Yale meeting, which decided, among other things, to initiate a critical and constructive study of the National Council of Churches' report on Christian ethics and economics which was to be published soon. There are no records of other aspects of the 1953 program.

The 1954 meeting at Union Seminary heard papers by both Reinhold Niebuhr and Liston Pope. A number of people remember this meeting because it was one of the earliest public appearances made by Reinhold Niebuhr after his stroke. Since copies of the program have not been discovered, little else can be reported. Oscar J. F. Seltz of Bexley Hall was

elected chairman and Harold W. Fildley, vice-chairman and secretary of the Association.

The Association held its 1955 meeting January 21-22, 1955 at the College of Preachers of the Washington Cathedral. The theme for that meeting was "Preparing the Minister to Work Toward an Unprejudiced Society." Friday afternoon Frank D. Dorey of Howard University School of Religion gave an opening presentation on "The Dynamics of Prejudice." Harold W. Fildley of Oberlin and Murray D. Leiffer of Garrett responded. Friday evening, Samuel C. Kincheloe, of Chicago Theological and Race Prejudice--Sociological paper on "The Local Church and Race Prejudice--Sociological Aspects" and Joseph F. Fletcher of Episcopal Theological Seminary and Karl H. Hertz of Hamma Divinity School responded. On Saturday morning the subject of the paper was "The Minister's Task--Pastoral Community Counseling" presented by Frank S. Loescher of Temple University. The discussion panel consisted of Albert T. Molligan of Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia and John H. Satterwhite of Hood Theological Seminary. The registration list shows that twenty-two persons were present at this meeting. A list to be used to make contacts with persons teaching in the field was drawn up. It consisted entirely of persons related to member schools of the American Association of Theological Seminaries.

The 1956 meeting was held at the Graduate School of Theology at Oberlin. The dates were April 27 and 28, the only time in the life of either the early Association or the subsequent Society which broke with the January pattern. Harold W. Fildley planned the program and hosted the meeting. The agenda of Friday afternoon and evening consisted of six presentations on the impact of various factors on Christian social ethics. Walter Marshall Horton of Oberlin spoke twice, once in the afternoon on the impact of theology, and the other time in the evening on the impact of historical studies. Walter W. Sikes of Butler University considered the impact of economics, and Karl D. Hertz of Hamma Divinity School, the impact of sociology. Edward L. Long, Jr. of Virginia Polytechnic Institute turned attention to the impact of current world trends, and Harold W. Fildley of Oberlin, to the impact of Group Dynamics Research on the discipline.

Saturday there were three papers and a panel. Lewis Smythe of the College of the Bible discussed "The Communion of Ethical Insight to the Laity"; Frank B. Lewis of the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, "The Task of the Christian Social Ethics Professor with the Present Seminary Student Generation"; and E. Clinton Gardner of the Gandler School of Theology, "Helping Seminary Students to Present



the Idea of Christian Vocation." The panel, which was chaired by Victor Obenhaus of Chicago Theological Seminary, considered "The Present Status of Christian Social Ethics Departments in our Schools, and Ways to Improve the Understanding of our Students in this Field." Karl Hertz was elected chairman of the Association and assumed the main role in planning for the 1957 meeting that was held at the Western Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, January 25 and 26.

At Pittsburgh, provision was made for early arrivals to have an informal "gossip session" (to quote the program) on professional problems. On Friday afternoon the main part of the program began with an analysis of the ways in which the organized church brings about change. The speaker was Harold C. Letts, Secretary of Social Action for the National Council of Churches. "The Local Community as a Scene of Social Change" was considered by a guest speaker, Elmer J. Thompson, Executive Secretary of the Health and Welfare Federation of Allegheny County. On Friday evening, John Bruere, minister of Calvary Presbyterian Church in Cleveland, spoke of "The Role of the Minister in Social Change," and Eleanor Rider, of the Commission of Human Relations of Pittsburgh, on "The Role of the Layman and Citizen." The use of guests, not members of the teaching profession as such, which appears for the first time in this 1957 meeting, was to become an important feature of many future programs.

Saturday morning Das Kelley Barnett of the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest led the group on the subject "Theology and Ethics as Ways of Understanding the World and Communicating our Understanding"; and Albert T. Rasmussen, of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, was scheduled to speak on "Theology and Ethics as Instruments for Motivating Social Action," but he had to cancel the engagement because of illness. The weekend was concluded with an informal roundtable on "The Educational Task Re-evaluated." John Satterwhite of Hood Theological Seminary was elected chairman and Gilbert G. Rutenber of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, vice-chairman. Expected attendance at the Pittsburgh meeting was diminished because of bad weather.

In September of 1957 Gilbert Rutenber wrote to John Satterwhite to say that everything seemed in order for the 1958 meeting at Eastern Baptist Seminary near Philadelphia, January 31 and February 1. (He also indicated that the room charge would be \$1.50 and that the three meals would cost a total of \$3.00!) The program as planned, however, suffered several last minute alterations. Edward Heimann of the New School for Social Research spoke to the first session on Friday afternoon on the subject "Christian Foundations for

the Social Sciences." Heimann was substituting for Paul Lehmann, who could not attend. H. Richard Niebuhr of Yale gave the second address of Friday afternoon, dealing with the "Theological Basis of Christian Ethics." Kenneth Thompson addressed the group Friday evening. There is no topic indicated for Thompson's presentation, possibly because he was a last minute addition to the program. Kenneth Underwood of Wesleyan University closed the Friday evening period with a paper on "Protestantism, Politics, and Economic Policy."

On Saturday morning William Muehl of Yale spoke on "The Christian Citizen and Practical Politics." Kenneth Smith of Crozer, who had become involved in Pennsylvania politics, had tentatively secured Senator Joseph Clark, a three-term U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania, to speak to the group on Saturday morning. When Senator Clark was unable to keep the engagement, Kenneth Smith spoke in his stead on "The Theology of Politics."

Twenty names show up on the memo of registrations, though at least one of these had to cancel. The gatherings of the Association of Seminary Professors of Christian Social Ethics attracted about this number of people each year. This was not, however, a good representation of those teaching in the field at the time. Harold Filley had made a list in 1954 of those teaching ethics either full or part-time in the seminaries of the United States and Canada and found a total of 127 names. Clearly, while the Association of Seminary Professors of Christian Social Ethics was having valuable programs and providing benefits to those coming, it was far from reaching the potential it ought to have had as a professional association. One of the people to see this most clearly was Das Kelley Barnett, who was elected at the 1957 meeting to chair the Association. The decision was made to hold the next meeting at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. in January of 1959, and Chairman Barnett spent many hours working toward making the 1959 meeting the founding session of the American Society of Christian Social Ethics in the United States and Canada.

#### *The Founding Meeting*

Considerable effort went into the preparation for the meeting that officially organized the American Society of Christian Ethics. Most of this effort was expended by Professor Barnett, who wrote to a list of over a hundred seminary teachers of Christian ethics and Christian social ethics to solicit interest in the founding of a new society and to encourage attendance. The response was quick and impressive, and more than fifty professors (all men and all



teaching in seminaries) indicated they would plan to attend. Some names, such as that of Paul Ramsey who was already active in the group, are not found on the list used. While general observation was made that teachers of Christian ethics in colleges were a source of potential membership for the new Society, there is no evidence they were systematically contacted and only those who happened to have other contacts knew about the effort to found the new society. Some forty other persons expressed regrets that they could not attend because of other engagements, but indicated a strong interest in forming such a society.

Nor was Chairman Barnett slack on other fronts. In addition to securing the renewal of the grant of \$350 that the Hazen Foundation had regularly offered the Association to support the travel costs of its members attending the meeting, Barnett obtained a grant of \$3000 from the American Association of Theological Schools to defray in part the cost of planning and holding regional meetings of the new Society during 1959 and 1960. Barnett also secured money from other sources--gossip had it that he knew wealthy oil tycoons in Texas--and the statement of expenses for the founding meeting in Washington lists a total of \$586.35 from anonymous donors given for honoraria and the travel expenses of guest speakers at the meeting.

A printed program, quite similar to the one that has been used at most subsequent annual meetings of the Society, was prepared, though it bore the heading "The Annual Meeting of the Association of the Seminary Professors of Christian Social Ethics." Das Kelley Barnett gave what became, both in substance and in title, the first presidential address. It was devoted to the history of the life of the old Association and to the prospects for the envisioned society. Barnett stressed the need to make a more formal organization than had existed in the past. At the business meeting that followed, a consensus in favor of forming the new group was reached, and the following decisions were made concerning its character: First, it was decided that the Society would be strictly professional; second, it was decided that the purpose of the Society would be to further the study and teaching of Christian social ethics; third, its aims would include promoting research in the history of Christian ethics, in theological and social ethics, in sociology and ethics, in comparative religious ethics, and also to promote the discovery of more effective pedagogical and research methods; fourth, membership would be open to men [sic] actively engaged in teaching social ethics and having professional training as well as to those now engaged in affiliated professions such as the departments of Christian

social relations in various denominational and ecumenical organizations; fifth, the name of the group would be the American Society of Christian Social Ethics in the United States and Canada; and sixth, the annual dues would be five dollars.

Henry E. Kolbe of Garrett Biblical Institute was elected president of the Society and Frank B. Lewis of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia was elected vice-president. William H. Lazareth of Philadelphia Lutheran Seminary was elected secretary and treasurer. Das Kelley Barnett was designated executive secretary. The earliest governance arrangement consisted of regional directors, and those elected to these positions included Douglas E. Jackson of Perkins School of Theology, Albert T. Rasmussen of the Pacific School of Religion, Walter W. Sikes of Butler University School of Religion, Kenneth L. Smith of Crozer Theological Seminary, and E. Clinton Gardner of Emory University. The regional structure for governance was to be important for a brief time, but was later modified.

The program of the 1959 meeting consisted of two panels, and (as was to be the case for several years thereafter) arranged entirely in plenary sessions. This meeting pattern made it possible for everyone who attended to remain in one group and to think about the issues together. The first panel addressed the topic "A Christian Ethic for an Affluent Society." It was chaired by Douglas Jackson and consisted of John C. Bennett of Union Theological Seminary and two guests: Leon Keyserling, formerly chairperson of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, and Robert B. Wright, Chief, Economic Defense Division, Office of International Resources, Bureau of Economic Affairs, United States Department of State. The point of departure for the discussion was the book by John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Houghton Mifflin, 1958). The other panel was entitled "The Moderate's Strategy in Race Relations" and was chaired by John H. Satterwhite of Wesley Theological Seminary. E. Clinton Gardner of Emory University and Guy H. Ranson, formerly of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and at that time visiting professor--elect at Duke Divinity School, were participants in this panel from the Society's membership. They were joined by four guests: Robert R. Brown, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Arkansas, Will D. Campbell of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations of the Division of Christian Life and Work of the National Council of Churches, Brooks Hays, a member of Congress for a number of years and more recently a delegate to the Tenth General Assembly of the United Nations (1955), and W. Astor Kirk, former Legislative Assistant to Senator Earl Douglas and Professor of Government in the



Huston-Tillotson College in Austin, Texas. Each member of the panel presented some particular facet of the problem of segregation and how it could be ameliorated. The remarks of Guy Ranson were published in revised form in *The Kentucky Western Recorder* for July 16, 1959.

#### *The First Annual Meeting*

The numbering of the annual meetings of the Society designates each meeting by the anniversary of the founding. Hence, while the founding occurred in 1959, the first annual meeting was held January 29-30, 1960 at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Forty-two men attended from all regions of the United States and Canada, slept three to a room for \$3.50 each at the Paris Hotel, and ate meals at the seminary "at prevailing prices."

John C. Bennett of Union Theological Seminary in New York was elected the new president of the Society and Frank B. Lewis of the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia was re-elected vice-president. Lewis Smythe of the College of the Bible was elected recording secretary. The work of the executive secretary was expanded to include the handling of funds, and Das Kelley Barnett of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest was re-elected to the enlarged office of executive secretary. The policy of having regional directors was continued, and to the list that was elected in 1959, the names of C. Douglas Jay, Emmanuel College, Toronto, and Frank H. Gardner, Drake Divinity School in Iowa, were added. It was also decided to elect directors-at-large. James Luther Adams of Harvard, Joseph Fletcher of the Protestant Episcopal Seminary in Virginia, T. B. Maston of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Paul Ramsey of the Department of Religion of Princeton University, and John H. Satterwhite of Wesley Theological Seminary were elected to these positions.

The program for the 1960 meeting centered largely on the teaching of ethics and did not include any guests from outside the discipline. A panel on Friday afternoon discussed the teaching of Christian ethics. Waldo Beach, of Duke Divinity School, Edmund Smith of Northwest Lutheran Theological Seminary, and Henry Stob of Calvin Theological Seminary were the participants. The most remembered part of the program was the address at the dinner meeting on Friday by Reinhold Niebuhr. One of those who was there writes, "He was not the old Niebuhr that I had heard many times when he visited Yale, but he went over his familiar themes and kindled the flames for social justice in us. I think this was his last time to address the Society, and it was a touching time for those who had known him and learned from him and

his books and lectures." The Saturday morning session was devoted to a review of community projects organized by teachers of Christian social ethics and was led by Charles G. Chakerian of McCormick Theological Seminary and Lewis Smythe of the College of the Bible.

The annual meeting of 1960 did some preliminary planning for the regional meetings to be held within the ensuing year, using the grant of \$3,000 secured for this purpose from the American Association of Theological Schools. The Board of Directors recommended that five such regional meetings be held. These regional conferences were to follow a format of three sessions. In one, the discussion was to center on the relationship of Theology and Christian social ethics, with a paper from either a member of the Society from the region or a visiting lecturer; in a second session, there was to be a discussion of various theological and practical problems in the field; in a third, attention would be directed to the methodology of teaching Christian social ethics, and materials such as course syllabi and bibliographies were to be exchanged.

#### *The Regional Meetings*

A Report on the regional meetings is included in a 1960-61 Yearbook prepared by the executive secretary. This mimeographed, spiral-bound document was some sixty pages in length and included a report on each of the regional meetings, a report of the second annual meeting, and a report on the growth of the Society. The year 1960 was one of the busiest in the Society's history and also one of the best documented.

The projected five regional conferences were reduced to four in number, each concerned with the broad rubric "Problems and Trends in the Teaching of Christian Social Ethics." Each of these regional meetings was planned by a regional director and hosted by a theological school. On March 11 and 12, 1960, the Perkins School of Theology was host to the Southwest region of the Society. Douglas Jackson made the arrangements. T. B. Maston of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary presented a paper "Teaching Social Ethics," the full text of which was printed in the 1960-1961 Yearbook. Albert C. Outler of Perkins gave a paper on "Words from Theology to Teachers of Christian Social Ethics." Considerable discussion followed these papers concerning the place of social ethics in the seminary curriculum, the nature of Christian social ethics as a discipline, the responsibility of the teacher toward the church, the denomination, and the secular political order. The problem of dealing with students who strongly accept the status quo and look for pat answers from the church was also discussed.



Three other regional conferences were held in April of 1960. The first of these convened at Vanderbilt University, April 1 and 2. E. Clinton Gardner arranged this meeting and gave a paper on "Problems in Christian Ethics," which was concerned with the relationships between theology and ethics, with the difference between indicative and imperative modes for doing ethics, and with the contrast between the Christian and the secular orders. Gardner chided the church for its failure to deal effectively with economic, political, racial, and educational problems of the time. In reporting on the Nashville meeting, Theodore Weber, also of Candler, indicated that several considerations dominated the proceedings. A great deal of attention was devoted to defining the nature and scope of the discipline, particularly on how to obtain precision and clarity with terminology and how to relate the sociology of religion to the theological disciplines. The proper role of the Christian social ethicist was discussed, particularly the relative importance of being an academician and being a social activist. The problem of communicating with those who do not hold to the Christian faith was raised, as were issues of curriculum design. There had even been a long discussion of the most appropriate format for such meetings themselves. Weber concluded his report by indicating there had been a widespread feeling at the Nashville gathering that the regional gatherings were more productive than the annual meeting because they were smaller in size and hence facilitated better discussions. They were also more unified and less disjointive than the sessions of the national group.

Another regional gathering was held April 22 and 23 at Emmanuel College in Toronto, and professors from Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian and United Church theological colleges in Canada participated. C. Douglas Jay was the planner and convener. Two papers were presented at the Toronto meeting. The first, by William Morris of Huron College, evaluated four theological positions foundational to Christian social ethics. These four positions included biblical theology (Barth, Brunner), liberalism (Rauschenbusch), neo-orthodoxy (Reinhold Niebuhr), and paleo-orthodoxy symbolized by the Incarnation rather than by the Cross. Morris himself defended the fourth position. The second paper, by Prentiss Pemberton of Colgate Rochester Divinity School, was entitled "The Importance of the Behavioral Sciences in the Development of a Social Ethic." Pemberton suggested that the Church's resources of worship, doctrine, and responsive love must be related to, and supplement, the reasoned insights of the behavioral sciences. Two discussions, one led by Donald Wade of Knox College and the other by Arthur Boorman of United College in Montreal, dealt with specific problems of

course design, syllabi construction, bibliographical matters, and involvement in community activities. Like the Nashville meeting, this meeting made known its strong preference for the regional gathering.

The fourth of the regional meetings was held at the Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, the last weekend in April. Thirteen professors from the Middle West attended. This meeting was chaired by Henry E. Kolbe. Paul Elman, of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, gave a paper dealing with the contrast between an ethic of principle and contextual ethics. While the paper made no effort to resolve the thorny issues between these two approaches, the minutes indicate it "elicited considerable discussion." Walter W. Stiles, of Butler School of Religion, gave a paper using the population issue as a case study of a social problem. He based the paper on the book by Richard Fagley, *The Population Explosion and Christian Responsibility* (Oxford University Press, 1960). This meeting, as all of the others, engaged in "shop talk" and in discussion of the field. Syllabi were exchanged between members, and problems of defining the field of Christian social ethics were canvassed. Both the Nashville meeting and the Toronto meeting took great pains to note the attractiveness and usefulness of the regional meeting idea. But it seems that even as their accolades were made, the obituary was soon abandoned, practice of having regional meetings was soon abandoned, undoubtedly with the exhaustion of the grant funds from the American Association of Theological Schools. Only a Pacific Coast section would, some years later, meet regionally--and that largely because the difficulty and cost of travel precluded many members teaching on the West Coast from getting to the annual meetings that were generally held east of the Mississippi. Like shrubs that grow rapidly and blossom profusely, these regional meetings undoubtedly raised hopes but did not prove to be enduring. They may well, however, have given the fledgling national society a needed boost at a critical period in its life.

#### *The Second Annual Meeting*

The program of the second annual meeting of the Society, which was held at Garrett Biblical Institute on January 27 and 28, 1961, was practically identical in format to the meetings of the Association of Seminary Professors as well as to the 1960 meeting of the Society. Friday afternoon President John Bennett presided over a symposium on "Religion and the Political Order, 1960." E. Clinton Gardner of Emory University, T. B. Maston of Southwestern Baptist Seminary, and George W. Forell of Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary were present and presented papers.



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McLeod Bryan of Wake Forest College and John W. Turnbull of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest could not attend but submitted papers that were included in *The Yearbook*, along with the papers by Gardner, Maston, and Corelli.

The presidential address by John C. Bennett was entitled "Ethical Principles and the Context." Bennett's address was later published, slightly revised, as a chapter in the book *Storm Over Ethics* (United Church Press, and Bethany Press, 1967:1-25). The book was a response to the publication of Joseph Fletcher's *Situation Ethics* (Westminster Press, 1966). It is interesting to see that a presidential address given to the Society in 1961 was pertinent to a controversy that reached its zenith five years later.

Saturday morning Joseph Fletcher was scheduled to give a presentation on "The Use of the Case Method in Teaching Christian Social Ethics," but he was unable to attend. The time was given to Paul Ramsey's presentation of "The Just War and the Nuclear Dilemma." Professor Ramsey has indicated that his presentation was work in progress for a chapter in the book edited by John Bennett, *Nuclear Weapons and the Conflict of Conscience* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), and was some version of his "Hatfield and McCoy's" parable.

In the business meeting on Friday evening, E. Clinton Gardner of the Candler School of Theology was elected president, Kenneth L. Smith of Crozer Seminary was elected vice-president, and Das Kelley Barnett was re-elected to the post of executive secretary (and treasurer). The office of recording secretary dropped out of the listing. It was relatively easy in those days to juggle such matters since there was as yet no constitution for the Society. Not content to let contextualism win over institutionalism on such a matter, the Society made efforts following the 1961 meeting to produce a constitution embodying its statement of purpose and by-laws. The "regional directors," as they continued to be called, for 1961-62 were John C. Bennett, Robert E. Fitch, Douglas E. Jackson, Henry E. Kolbe, T. B. Maston, Victor Obenhaus, Paul Ramsey, John H. Satterwhite, Walter W. Sikes, and Donald V. Wade. Without the strictures of a constitution it was also comparatively easy to blur the distinction between regional directors and directors-at-large, so a differentiation considered very important the previous year was casually laid aside.

There was no doubt that at the end of two years of existence the Society was alive and well, giving promise for the future. The membership by this time numbered 117. Ninety-six of these were teachers in theological schools or on faculties of divinity. The remaining twenty-one were either teachers in college or university departments of

religion, executives in denominational agencies or social action groups, or undesignated. The exclusive grip of theological education on the identity of the Society had been broken.

The story of the life and work of the Society that followed the events reported in this chapter is told in the next two parts of the book. The three chapters which constitute Part Two deal with the growth of the Society and treat among other things: the demographic, religious, and sexual characteristics of its membership; its leadership; its financial; the dates, places, and formats of its annual meetings; the work of its special interest groups and task forces; and actions which the Society has taken on matters affecting its own life or the larger world of scholarship. These details help us to understand who composed the Society, how it has managed its affairs, and the impact it has had on American scholarship, on the wider public life, and on the religious situation in America.

Part Three, consisting of six chapters, gives a detailed report on the substantive content of the programs of the annual meetings. The primary arrangement within this part is by topics. Both the theoretical (or foundational) issues that have been discussed in papers given before the Society and specific social problems that have been addressed on the programs are reported. The chapters, each of which contains one or more topics, are ordered according to the frequency with which the papers dealing with the subjects they discuss appeared on the programs. For instance, the largest number of papers dealt with various foundational issues--hence those issues are discussed first. Within each of the topics the arrangement is basically chronological, so that changes in the approach to various subjects across the years can be appreciated.

The account of the programs is fairly complete, though clearly it has not been possible to report on all of the papers and panels in the same detail. Papers that have not been located by the search for materials are mentioned by author and title in the appropriate place. In the case of papers that have been printed for general distribution, either in the Society's own publications or elsewhere, usually only the gist of the paper is given, since those wishing to have a fuller grasp of the content of such papers can follow the bibliographical documentation to the printed version. Presidential addresses, even though most of them are available either in the archives or in a printed form, are discussed a bit more fully since the Society has always granted them a special visibility. In the case of papers that are available only in the archives, a somewhat fuller



synopsis of the paper is usually given because it is not possible for the average reader easily to secure the original. Interestingly enough, there are no papers available from the 1959 and 1960 meetings and only one from the year 1962. In contrast, the archives are complete for the years 1961, 1967, 1968, and 1969. A good proportion of the papers given in each of the other years is available, considering the difficulty of collecting materials so long after they were presented. Even though it has been impossible to gather a total record, it has been possible to construct a reliable and informative account of the issues to which the Society has paid attention.

Part Four of this book consists of an interpretive analysis of the Society's achievements and the role it has played in relation to Christian ethics and Christian social ethics in America. It briefly considers the directions in which the life of the Society may move in the next period of its activity.

## Part Two

# Morphology