

A COMMUNITY OF FREETHINKERS

A HISTORY OF THE ETHICAL SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS 1886-1996

By James Alan O'Neal

Unpublished, unedited manuscript commissioned by The Ethical Society of St. Louis

Copyright 2006, The Ethical Society of St. Louis

Compiled from scanned images of a printed document and the initial text files of the writer by Matthew G. Hile

Table of Contents

THE FIRST ERA: 1886-1907	1
1: FELIX ADLER AND THE FOUNDING OF ETHICAL CULTURE.....	1
<i>Adler biography</i>	1
Introduction: A practical visionary	1
Upbringing.....	1
Awakening in a "New Country"	2
<i>Diversity in Creed, Unanimity in Deed</i>	5
Founding of Ethical Culture	5
Evolution of an Ethical Ministry	7
2: WALTER L. SHELDON APOSTLE TO THE ST. LOUISANS.....	9
<i>Introduction</i>	9
Sheldon's value to history of the Society.....	9
Biography	9
<i>Sheldon's formal thought</i>	11
A prophet of ethical religion - Sheldon's Philosophy of Being	11
Speaking of God in a Whisper	13
The True Destiny of the Human Soul	15
The Soldier at His Post	17
Christ as Ethical Culturist.....	18
Endurance and Happiness.....	20
<i>The Nature of Things: Sheldon's Social Philosophy</i>	22
Introduction	22
On Marriage.....	22
On the Rights and Privileges of Women.....	24
On Social Reform	25
On Materialism.....	26
<i>A Tortured Soul: Sheldon's journal</i>	28
Blunders! Blunders! Blunders!.....	28
The Wound in the Side	31
Alas	39
Alack!.....	39
A Different Coin	42
A Natural Hermit.....	43
A Calm Exterior	45
A Heart Grown Cold	46
Alone on the Heights.....	48
Equal But Separate.....	49
The Colors in the Raindrop	50
An Everlasting Barrier	51
A Curious Experience	52
A Bed of Pain	54
<i>Dusty Legacy</i>	58
Correlation between journal and formal writings	58
Addresses.....	59
Redeeming the Bible	60
<i>Working For The Visions Within</i>	61
3: A GRAVITATIONAL SHIFT - THE FOUNDING OF THE ETHICAL SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS.....	64
<i>Founding</i>	64
<i>A Moral Commitment</i>	65
<i>An Independent Platform</i>	66
<i>Children's Classes Begin</i>	67
<i>A Shoestring Operation</i>	67
<i>Onward</i>	68
<i>An Experiment in "Educational Philanthropy"</i>	69
<i>In the Vanguard</i>	70
4: THE SANCTITY OF DUTY - FORMATION OF THE ETHICAL SUNDAY SCHOOL	71
<i>Songs and Recitations</i>	71

<i>Sheldon's Curriculum</i>	73
5: CULTIVATING CHARACTER - THE SELF-CULTURE HALLS ASSOCIATION	76
<i>Classes and Study Groups</i>	78
<i>Culture and Frugality</i>	80
<i>The Wearisome Details</i>	80
<i>Coaxing the Latent Soul</i>	81
<i>A Clubhouse for the People</i>	83
6: ETHICAL MOMENTUM - FROM EXPERIMENT TO INSTITUTION	84
<i>Power to the People</i>	84
<i>Stooping to Conquer</i>	86
<i>Study Clubs</i>	87
<i>Public Lectures</i>	88
<i>A Little Esprit de Corps</i>	89
<i>Brainy Women from Big Cities</i>	89
<i>No Stepping Back</i>	91
<i>The End of the Beginning</i>	94
THE SECOND ERA: 1907-1933	96
7: A PLACE TO CALL HOME	96
<i>Need for a permanent building</i>	96
<i>A Generous Challenge</i>	96
<i>Building a Worthy Temple</i>	98
<i>Love and Leadership</i>	100
<i>A Home of Religious Freedom</i>	101
8: PERCIVAL CHUBB - A PASSION FOR UNITY	102
<i>Ethical Philosophy</i>	102
<i>The Spiritual Illumination of Common Things</i>	104
<i>The Cleansing Fires of War</i>	106
<i>Ethical Influenza</i>	108
<i>Chubbing the Press</i>	109
<i>The Paderewski Debacle</i>	115
<i>Conviction in Action</i>	119
9: SECOND WIND	121
<i>New Blood</i>	121
<i>Subgroups</i>	122
The Contemporary Literature Circle	122
The Child Study Group	122
The Women's Auxiliary	122
The Men's Club	123
The Young People's Association	124
The Drama Group	125
The Toy Shop	126
Scout Troops	126
<i>A Busy Intersection</i>	126
<i>A Collective Consciousness</i>	127
<i>Beating the Drum Softly</i>	130
<i>The Wolf at the Door</i>	131
<i>A Ripe Field</i>	134
<i>The Lyceum Dream</i>	136
10: MORAL THOUGHTFULNESS - THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNDER CHUBB	139
<i>Changes after Sheldon</i>	139
<i>Beyond Duty</i>	139
<i>Kindling Ardor for All That is Admirable</i>	141
<i>Active Learning</i>	142
THE THIRD ERA: 1933-1950	144
11: J. HUTTON HYND - A CHAMPION OF PURE ETHICS	144
<i>Character Profile</i>	144
Enthusiasm for a Fine Quality of Life	144
Dogging the Dogmatists	146

Ethics in the Caldron of War	149
Impenetrable Dignity	150
12: CONFLUENCE - FROM LECTURE CLUB TO COMMUNITY	154
<i>Community Life</i>	154
Handshakes and Head Counts.....	155
Soliciting Ink and Airwaves	156
An Incisive Observer	156
Breaking Bread.....	157
Hybrid Vigor	159
<i>Baptized In The Good Life: The Sunday School under Hynd</i>	162
Ideas in Search of Doers	163
Seeking "the Good" in the Arts.....	164
"Living Together": A Unified Curriculum.....	165
High Standards, Low Budget.....	167
<i>Expanding Minds - Maturation of the Platform Program</i>	168
Money Talks	169
A Potpourri of Piquancy	170
A Question of Questions.....	172
Paying the Piper, Breaking the Pipes	172
Red-Letter Days and Red Tape.....	174
Setting Clocks, Marking Calendars	174
<i>A Sluggish Movement</i>	175
Tightfisted Support	176
The Encampment: Initiation in Democracy	178
Substandard Standard?.....	179
<i>The Greater Community</i>	180
Taking a Stand on Taking Stands	181
Racial Integration: A Call to Integrity	183
Throwing Open the Doors	186
A Civic Institution	187
An Ethical Powerhouse.....	190
<i>A Prudential Path</i>	191
Tackling Challenges with Sparse Tackle	191
Of the Members, by the Members	191
A Block off the Ol' Chip.....	192
Slogging through the Depression.....	195
Cultivating Ethical Leadership	197
Opting for Youth	199
THE FOURTH ERA: 1950-1986.....	201
13: JAMES F. HORNBACK - EVANGELICAL HUMANIST.....	201
<i>A Preacher of Ethical Science</i>	203
<i>A Distinctly Ethical Humanism</i>	208
<i>A Bulwark of the Old Left</i>	211
<i>A Voice In The Wilderness</i>	214
<i>Stirring Up The Melting Pot</i>	220
Black and White	221
Zionism as Racism.....	223
A Homeland for Humanists	228
Countering the Counterculture.....	230
<i>Ethical Lieutenants</i>	232
George von Hilsheimer.....	233
David Norton	235
Norman Fleishman	236
John Moore.....	237
Robert Hoagland.....	239
Leaders, Not Followers.....	239
<i>The Passing of the Baton</i>	241
14: JOHN HOAD; A DILIGENT SEEKER	247
<i>A Growing Edge</i>	251
<i>Higher Innocence</i>	254
<i>Green Leaves</i>	258
<i>A Humanist Theologian</i>	260

<i>Ethical Midwifery</i>	264
<i>Tools of Reflection</i>	265
<i>Translating Morals into Manners</i>	267
<i>Crafting Justice</i>	270
<i>Cultivating Community</i>	275
15: A CRITICAL TRANSPLANT - THE MOVE TO SUBURBIA	278
<i>Testing the Waters</i>	278
<i>A Democratic Design</i>	279
<i>Reconnaissance Missions</i>	280
<i>Nailing Down the Dream</i>	281
<i>Costs and Benefits</i>	283
16: STEADY AS SHE GOES	284
<i>Looking Inward</i>	286
<i>A Rhythmic Stride</i>	286
<i>The One and the Many</i>	287
<i>Social Tapestry</i>	289
<i>Waves of Camaraderie</i>	290
17. ROLLING AND COASTING - SUNDAY SCHOOL FROM 1950 TO 1986	293
<i>Trial Balloons and Brass Tacks</i>	294
<i>What is Man?</i>	295
<i>Freedom and Disarray</i>	296
<i>An Upward Spiral</i>	297
<i>A Definitive Course of Studies</i>	298
<i>A Certain Place</i>	299
<i>Hitting the Books</i>	301
18. THE MAIN ATTRACTION - CONTINUITY AND EXPERIMENTATION IN THE PLATFORM PROGRAM	304
<i>The Lay Voice</i>	309
<i>New Wineskins</i>	310
<i>Chord Changes</i>	311
<i>Pagan Pageants</i>	312
<i>Odds and Ends</i>	314
19. PARTNERS WITHOUT PARENT - THE EVOLVING MODEL OF THE NATIONAL UNION	315
<i>Project Emerge</i>	316
<i>A Reluctant Contributor</i>	321
<i>The Humanist Subvention</i>	322
<i>A Collective Voice for Justice</i>	323
20: TOWARD RESPONSIBLE GIVING - FUND RAISING 1950 TO 1986	326
<i>The "YES" Campaign - Raising Consciousness About Raising Funds</i>	328
<i>Reliable Reservoirs: The Establishment of Reserve Funds</i>	329
21: SERVICE WITH A KNOWING SMILE - SOCIAL ACTION—AND INACTION—1950 TO 1986	332
<i>Books and Bedsprings</i>	333
<i>Yearning to Breathe Free</i>	335
<i>A Gift of Learning</i>	336
<i>Apple Butter and Humane Mascara</i>	337
<i>Joining Forces</i>	338
<i>The Sound and the Worry</i>	339
<i>The Nursery School</i>	341
<i>Debate and Consensus</i>	343
22: THE SHELDON EXPERIMENT - TAKING A STAB AT SOCIAL SERVICE	345
<i>A Blustery Wind</i>	348
<i>Humanism's Approach to the Urban Crisis</i>	350
<i>Herdsmen or Mavericks?</i>	354
<i>Tenacious Teamwork</i>	356
<i>A Discouraging Batting Average</i>	358
<i>Too Little, Too Late</i>	360
<i>Postmortem</i>	361
<i>A Heavy, Heavy Gem</i>	363
<i>A Graceful Phoenix</i>	364

The First Era: 1886-1907

1: Felix Adler and the Founding of Ethical Culture

Adler biography

Introduction: A practical visionary

Felix Adler, founder of the Ethical Culture movement, was a practical visionary. Like Emerson, he envisioned a religion focused on ethics rather than metaphysical beliefs; unlike Emerson, he took on the challenge of inaugurating such a movement. He brought to rational ethics a passion more commonly associated with sectarian crusaders and nationalistic warriors. His spiritual and intellectual quest set the liberal tone of Ethical Culture, and it serves as something of a paradigm for contemporary freethinkers.

Upbringing

Adler was born August 13, 1851, in Alzey, Germany. His father, Samuel, was a Reform Jewish rabbi. Like his father, two brothers, and father-in-law, the elder Adler was ordained in the Orthodox tradition; in the course of his intellectual development, however, Samuel embraced the reform movement and became one of its chief proponents in Europe. In 1857, the rabbi was elected to the pulpit of New York's Temple Emanu-El, which was in the vanguard of the American reform movement. During his career at Emanu-El, Samuel Adler instituted striking educational and liturgical reforms, including removal of the temple partition separating men and women. In his scholarly writings and advice to emerging Reform congregations, Adler made substantial contributions to the rise of Reform Judaism in the United States. He was a principal organizer of the Philadelphia Reform Conference in 1869, which established the fundamental principles of the reform movement. Benny Kraut, Felix Adler's biographer, describes that credo, which outlines the religious matrix in which Felix was raised:

Essentially, the Philadelphia Platform affirmed that the messianic mission of Israel was, not to restore the old Jewish state and divide the Jews from other nations, but rather to spread monotheism around the world and unite all people under God; that the Jewish dispersion was not a punishment for past sins, but rather a manifestation of Divine Will to enable the Jews to fulfill their mission; and that inner devotion and ethical sanctification comprised the essential components of religion. All of these ideas tended to minimize the theological, logical, and psychological necessity of practical ritual observances and furnished both an impetus and a rationale for continued religious reform in American Jewish life. (From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture: The Religious Evolution of Felix Adler, Benny Kraut, Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1979, p. 6)

In New York City, Felix Adler and his siblings grew up in an environment imbued with religious devotion and intellectual inquisitiveness. Felix and his older brother, Isaac, attended the Columbia Grammar School and Columbia College, both of which were private Christian institutions that admitted few Jews. The boys also attended the Temple Emanu-El Sunday School, and Samuel augmented their religious instruction with lessons in Hebrew and Jewish history as well as in the Talmud, the Bible, and works of Jewish scholarship. In addition to providing a rounded secular and religious education, Samuel and Henrietta Adler inculcated in their children a distinct humanitarian spirit. The rabbi was a co-founder of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York, one of many charitable causes he urged the temple congregation to support. Henrietta regularly offered food and other assistance to families in New York's squalid tenements; Felix later recalled the impact of the mercy errands he made with his mother:

My mother had often sent me as a child on errands of charity, and had always impressed upon me the duty of respecting the dignity of the poor while ministering sympathetically to their needs. I was prepared by this youthful training to resent the indignity offered to the personality of the laborer, as well as the suffering endured by him in consequence of existing conditions. (An Ethical Philosophy of Life Presented in its Main Outlines, Felix Adler, Ethica Press, New York, 1918, p. 12)

According to Horace L. Friess, Felix Adler's son-in-law and literary executor, "these excursions ... were not only lessons in charity, but gave the child an early and visible impression of the existence and meaning of poverty." (Felix Adler and Ethical Culture, Horace L. Friess, Columbia University Press, New York, 1981, p. 20)

Two other striking influences in Adler's youth deserve mention. First, he felt terribly lonesome and alienated in his school environment. As he wrote in his memoirs, "A Jewish boy from a family largely German among typically American boys of the wealthy class, I found I was forced back upon myself by lack of companionship." (Autobiographical notes of Felix Adler, quoted in Friess, p. 20).

When he entered college at age 15, his relative youth exacerbated his social awkwardness. In addition to encouraging the development of Adler's inner life, this alienation introduced the youth to the harsh realities of economic stratification and religious and racial prejudice. His later efforts to break through class distinctions and sectarian boundaries were no doubt partly fueled by his memories of isolation. Secondly, the Civil War broke out only a few years after the Adler family immigrated to the United States. Samuel Adler imparted to his children his passionate opposition to slavery, and reports of the war showed Felix with what ardor social reform can be resisted; as his moral indignation and social idealism matured, Adler knew what reactionary opposition he could expect.

Adler's undergraduate studies were less than enlivening. Columbia College, which had not yet become part of a prestigious university, offered a fixed course of studies which stressed rote learning. Adler was not encouraged to pursue his native interest in philosophy and religion, and he apparently found no mentor to assist him in synthesizing his studies. Nevertheless, he became an avid reader; in his journal, he quoted liberally from the works of influential freethinkers. He was especially fond of Francis Bacon, who he said revolutionized philosophy by advancing the proposition that the aim of all philosophy must be ... practical good to mankind." (Book of jottings, Felix Adler, pp. 21-22, quoted in Kraut, p. 13) According to Kraut, Adler adopted that principle as a cornerstone of his life's teaching: "To Felix, the ultimate value of religious doctrine and ethical philosophy was to be measured by the human good and welfare which they generated." (Kraut, p. 13)

Also, during his undergraduate years, Adler discovered and consciously developed his skills as a writer and orator. At Columbia, he participated in a literary society and was named class poet in his junior year. He also taught Sabbath classes at Emanu-El and delivered sermons at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum.

Awakening in a "New Country"

In his religious development, Adler adopted his father's beliefs as his starting point. The journal he kept during adolescence indicates he believed firmly in a providential God, an all-powerful being that mysteriously intervenes in the lives of individuals as well as in the grander affairs of the human race. Like his father, he considered theistic faith the only reliable impetus for ethical behavior:

If man were not restrained by the consciousness that God's eye is upon him at all times, he would say "my small affairs are too insignificant for this great God. I will follow my senses..." And thus the very foundation of society, its morality and values would be destroyed. (Book of jottings, Felix Adler, p. 23, quoted in Kraut, p. 20)

Felix embraced the Reform Jewish doctrine that the Jews had been entrusted with the sacred mission of spreading monotheistic faith throughout the world. This mission, he believed, justified maintaining a distinct Jewish identity. In an essay published in the Jewish Times in 1869, he railed against the custom of Jews erecting Christmas trees in their homes during the Christian holiday season. Titled "The Christmas Tree," the article expressed outrage that Jews should, in the name of cultural assimilation; mark a holiday that Adler believed signified centuries of Jewish martyrdom. But although he respected the integrity of Jewish culture, Adler began to dream of liberating the faith from its racial boundaries so that it might fulfill its missionary role.

However, Adler took to heart the doubts that arose during his quest. Samuel had imparted to his children his disgust for the indiscriminate perpetuation of orthodox customs and doctrines; in late adolescence, young Adler began to follow his father's iconoclasm to its logical conclusions. He questioned the value of fasting and performing sacrificial rituals on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement; he eventually asserted that social activism is the only genuine form of atonement. He also found it difficult to accept the validity of the Old Testament in toto. He could not reconcile his fundamental belief in a benevolent God with Biblical stories of divine retribution -- such as the turning of Lot into a pillar of salt -- and unethical dictums -- such as the command that Abraham kill his son. Such inconsistencies led Adler to question whether, as his father had taught him, the Bible is a divine revelation.

Inevitably, Adler came to question the very existence of a personal God. Looking about at the dreadful suffering of New Yorkers in the midst of postwar unemployment and inflation, he doubted whether belief in a caring, providential God was tenable. His introductory study of science, with its naturalistic explanations of biological evolution and the harmony of matter and energy, further undermined his need to invoke a deity that actively participates in the workings of the world. He retained, for a time, belief in an intelligent, omnipotent creator, but he stripped his God-image of the personality and loving kindness that had so appealed to him in childhood. According to Kraut, Adler noted in a memoir that "the anthropomorphic conception of God had already disappeared while I was in college. I stopped praying one day." (Autobiographical notes, Felix Adler, p. 1, quoted in Kraut, p. 35)

In 1870, Adler returned to Germany to undertake graduate studies. His brother, Isaac, had gone to Berlin two years earlier to train for a career in medicine. Samuel, then, looked to Felix to carry on the family's rabbinical tradition. It is not known whether Felix ever truly aspired to the Jewish ministry, but the Temple Emanu-El congregation clearly expected him to apply for a post at the temple upon his return.

The Hochschule fur die Wissenschaft des Judentums (Academy for Jewish Learning), the Berlin rabbinical school at which Adler had planned to study, was forced to postpone its opening because of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. In the two years before the Hochschule opened, Adler undertook secular studies at Berlin University. Although he specialized in semitics, Adler also studied philosophy, literature, and social sciences. The Hochschule opened in 1872, and Adler studied there for less than a year before transferring to the University of Heidelberg, where received his doctoral degree in semitics.

That Felix had mastered Arabic and received his doctorate summa cum laude fanned Samuel's hope that he might pass on his post to his son. In a letter dated May 13, 1873, Samuel wrote:

I was overcome with surprise and delight and gave thanks to the Almighty. Now, indeed the time has come to think of your future career. I believe you know that my dearest wish is to gradually retire, enjoy my old age in peace and see you take my place. (Letter of Samuel Adler to Felix Adler, May 13, 1873, Ethical Culture Archives, quoted in Kraut, p. 49)

Although Samuel kept up a steady correspondence with his sons, he failed to appreciate -- or refused to accept -- the change that Felix had undergone during his graduate studies. The European academic world had been rocked by the new paradigms of Darwinian biology and the emergent social sciences. Deism continued to hold sway in various forms, but the concept of a providential God was generally deemed irrelevant in light of fresh scientific discoveries. Physical scientists acknowledged that metaphysics, the study of ultimate causes and principles, was outside their ken, but their new constructs of the evolutionary process and the interplay of cosmic forces required no reference to a universal monarch; in fact, their discoveries challenged the age-old assumption that the universe is orderly and, therefore, ordered. Social scientists, for their part, had begun to interpret religions as manmade belief systems which fulfill utilitarian functions such as ordering authority structures and establishing commonly held ethical values. Again, most thinkers were not intent on debunking theism per se, but their broadening understanding of religion's cultural evolution and functional roles inevitably relativized the value of specific religions.

Adler eagerly examined these trends of thought; he listened closely, studied arduously, and submitted his faith to the scrutiny of reason. He came to see that Judaism, like all religions, evolved in response to a people's need to understand the world; it provided an overarching mythology within which human existence, striving, and suffering could be seen as meaningful. He saw religion as culturally useful, but he could not but doubt any religion's claim to substantial, authoritative truth. In his unbounded studies of both ancient and modern modes of thought, he decided that strict adherence to a single belief system deprives the mind of the depth acquired through eclectic experimentation.

Adler recalled his departure from mainstream Judaism as "a gradual, smooth transition, the unfolding of a seed that had long been planted.... The truth is, I was hardly aware of the change that had taken place until it was fairly consummated. One day I awoke, and found that I had traveled into a new country." (Ethical Philosophy of Life, p. 14)

In time, Adler rejected traditional monotheism. He found no firm, rational proof of the existence of a creator-God, and the notion of making a "leap of faith" struck him as intellectually irresponsible. While at the University of Berlin, he later recalled, "I ... undertook to grapple in grim earnest with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. The net outcome was not atheism in the moral sense, -- I have never been what is called an atheist, -- but the definite and permanent disappearance of the individualistic conception of Deity." (Ibid., p. 9) Along with theism, Adler

necessarily rejected the divine origin of both scripture and the "Jewish mission." He acclaimed prophetic writings of the Old Testament on the basis of their intrinsic validity, and he affirmed the value of channeling the moral momentum of Jewish history toward worldwide ethical evangelism; however, he denied that the Jews had been chosen, instructed, and sanctioned to carry out such a mission.

Like most ardent truth seekers, Adler felt a certain thrill upon dispensing with an "old wineskin":

The curtain that had intervened between my eyes and the world, on which was painted the image of an individual man-like God, slowly drew aside, and I looked upon the world with fresh eyes. (Autobiographical notes of Felix Adler, quoted in Kraut, p. 55)

There was a flip side to Adler's change in consciousness: In addition to a sense of relief and unprecedented freedom, he felt the grief that inevitably follows the surrender of certainty:

I look back with dread to that time when everything seemed sinking around me, when the cherished faith which seemed at one time dearer to me than life itself was going to pieces under me, and it seemed to me that I could save nothing out of the wreck of all that seemed holiest to me. (Autobiographical notes of Felix Adler, quoted in Kraut, p. 55)

Ultimately, Adler saved much of the "wreck" of his religious heritage. Despite his fundamental departure from Judaism, he never lost his reverence for the Jewish contribution to universal ethical values:

The prophets of Israel assigned to the ethical principle the highest rank in man's life and in the world at large. The best thing in man, they declared, is his moral personality; and the best thing in the world, the supreme and controlling principle, is the moral power that pervades it. (Ethical Philosophy of Life, p. 16)

Adler found a crucial refinement of that principle in Christianity, a religion to which he "came from the outside, with a fresh mind to receive first-hand impressions." (Ibid., p. 30) He put aside the "mythological idealization of Jesus ... as a thing that did not concern me," but he found in the teachings of Jesus a revolutionary contribution to ethical thought. (Ibid., p. 32) In Jesus' admonition to "turn the other cheek," Adler saw the introduction of a reflective, soul-searching approach to ethical behavior, as opposed to mere resolve to abide by moral dictates:

There is a way, [Jesus] says to the victim, in which you can spiritually triumph over the evil-doer, and make your peace with irresistible oppression. Use it as a means of self-purification; pause to consider what the inner motives are that lead your enemy, and others like him, to do such acts as they are guilty of, and to so violate your personality and that of others. The motives in them are lust, greed, anger, willfulness, pride. Now turn your gaze inward upon yourself, look into your own heart and learn, perhaps to your amazement, that the same evil streams trickle through you; that you, too, are subject, even if it be only subconsciously and incipiently, to the same appetites, passions, and pride, that animate your injurers. Therefore let the sufferings you endure at the hands of those who allow these bad impulses free rein in their treatment of you lead you to expel the same bad impulses that stir potentially in your breast; let this experience fill you with a deeper horror of the evil, and prove the incentive to secure your own emancipation from its control. (Ibid., p. 34) Adler saw Jesus as a prophet of what he came to call divine life, the ultimate reality, which manifests itself in the will to goodness. Jesus, he said, clearly perceived "the pure thing in man that thrusts out as alien to itself whatever is impure." (Ibid., p. 35) By sharing in Jesus' perception of the divine life in everyone, Adler said, the seeker finds that one's will to behave ethically is elevated to a new height, the height of love:

To love men is to be conscious of one's unity with them in the central life, and to give effect to this consciousness... To love another is to... think of him, and act towards him, as if he possessed the same capacity for purity with oneself. (Ibid., p. 36)

According to Adler, only the perception of divine life makes it possible to follow Jesus' admonition to love one's enemies:

To bless them that curse you, to bless them that spitefully use you, means to distinguish between their overt conduct, to see the human, the potentially divine face behind the horrible mask, and to invoke the influence of the divine power upon them in order that it may change them into their purer, better selves. (Ibid., p. 38)

Despite his deep and lasting reverence for Jesus, Adler always looked at Christianity from the perspective of an outsider. First, of course, he could not accept Jesus' characterization of a heavenly father who cares for the needs of his children; that image, Adler said, "raises expectations which experience does not confirm." (Ibid., p. 23) Secondly, he rejected the apocalyptic vision on which Jesus' ethics are predicated. Jesus taught that the material world is not the true home of humanity, that earth's inhabitants are living in exile as they await the day when they shall enter the "kingdom of God." By Adler's reckoning, that belief gives all of Jesus' ethical teachings an other-worldly cast, an implicit disdain for political, economic, scientific and artistic affairs. In addition to emasculating the respect due to all honorable human endeavor, this stance, Adler felt, leaves the person of good will without direction: "How shall an ethical person conduct himself in a world which his philosophy of life teaches him to reject, but with which the necessities of his existence compel him to come to terms day by day and hour by hour?" (Ibid., p. 40)

Thus, Adler found it necessary to make a fundamental departure from the Judeo-Christian tradition:

Religious growth may ... be compared to the growth of a tree. To expect that development shall continue along the Hebrew or Christian lines is like expecting that a tree will continue to develop along one of its branches. There is a limit beyond which the extension of a branch cannot go. Then growth must show itself in the putting forth of a new branch. (Ibid., p. 18)

Diversity in Creed, Unanimity in Deed

Founding of Ethical Culture

Although he rejected theism in its usual conceptualizations, Adler retained his urge to revitalize religion. If religion is an institution subject to the universal principles of cultural evolution, he reasoned, then the modern generation is obliged to overhaul the institution to serve the needs of its age. He adopted Matthew Arnold's depiction of God as a moral power, and he embraced Kant's supposition that ethical behavior is based not on faith but on an irrefutable moral imperative operating in the mind of every individual. He believed that this stance provided the foundation for a religion that would respect and incorporate intellectual advances while promoting social cohesiveness and ethical progress.

Members of the Temple Emanu-El congregation did not all share young Adler's enthusiasm for his newly wrought religious outlook. Upon his return to New York in 1873, the rabbi's son was asked to deliver a sermon at the temple. The congregation tendered the invitation so that it might assess Adler's fitness to succeed his father; Adler, however, used the opportunity to test the congregation's openness to his universalistic vision of religion. In the sermon, titled "The Judaism of the Future," Adler proposed that the Jewish faith serve as the driving force of a broader religion of ethics:

[This religion shall have] institutions ... bearing on all conditions and relations of life. [This] religion, not confined to church and synagogue alone, shall go forth into the marketplace, shall sit by the judge in the tribunal, by the counselor in the hall of legislation, shall stand by the merchant in his warehouse, by the workman at his work. In every department of life, wherever man's activity is unfolded its quickening influences shall be felt; religion and life shall be wedded once more in inseparable union.

...

We discard the narrow spirits of exclusion, and loudly proclaim that Judaism was not given to the Jews alone, but that its destiny is to embrace in one great moral state the whole family of man.... The genius of religion ... is the genius of Judaism; ... again shall it proclaim its great humanitarian doctrine, its eternal watchword: One Truth, One Love, One Hope in the Highest, One great brotherhood of men on Earth. ("The Judaism of the Future," Ethical Culture Archives, quoted in Kraut, pp. 77-78)

Nowhere in the sermon did Adler refer to God -- an omission that did not go unnoticed. The sharpest reaction to the sermon came from Gustav Gottheil, Samuel Adler's associate rabbi, who threatened to resign rather than share his responsibilities with the young rebel. When temple officials, responding to Gottheil's criticism, asked Adler to clarify his position with regard to the deity, Adler acknowledged that he no longer believed in the personal,

providential God exalted in the Bible. After that confrontation, he must have recognized that Temple Emanu-El was not the proper forum for his ideas; for he declared that he was not to be considered a candidate for a rabbinical post. He rejected as unethical the proposition of certain liberal congregants that he remain within the fold as a means of liberating Jews from sectarian beliefs:

This advice was repelled by every inmost fiber of my being, and could not but be utterly rejected. I was to publicly represent a certain belief with the purpose of undermining it. I was to trade upon the simplicity of my hearers in order to rob them of what they, crudely and mistakenly perhaps, considered their most sacred truth, by feigning provisionally, until I could alter their views, to be in agreement with them. Would this be fair to them or to myself? Was I to act a lie in order to teach the truth? (An Ethical Philosophy of Life, p. 26)

Despite Adler's theological departure, many of Emanu-El's congregants were deeply impressed by his erudition, social idealism, and oratorical skill. In October 1873, a month after his temple sermon, 47 congregants signed a letter inviting him to deliver a series of lectures "on subjects congenial to and connected with your line of studies." (Letter of October 21, 1873, quoted in Kraut, p. 86) Adler was gratified by the invitation; between November 1873 and March 1874, he delivered six public lectures at New York's Lyric Hall. The lecture series included talks on major world religions -- Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, as well as Judaism -- and a critical assessment of the prospects of religious growth in the United States. He drew heavily upon the philosophical and sociological works he had studied in Europe.

Adler used the Lyric Hall addresses to subtly provoke intellectual change in his primarily Jewish audiences. By outlining the evolution of religions within their narrow cultural matrices, he invited his listeners to apply the tools of critical reasoning to their own faith; only several years later did he openly debunk the underpinnings of Judaism and dispense with his Jewish religious identity. The lectures were well-received in the liberal Jewish community and among New York's intelligencia. The Jewish press gave the series prominent coverage, but its overall approval was tempered with criticism of Adler's derisive attitude toward belief in divine providence.

The notoriety Adler attained through the lecture series led to his appointment as a nonresident professor of Hebrew and Oriental literature at Cornell University. Beginning in spring 1874, he lectured for about six weeks each school year for three years. The texts of his lectures are not extant, but he reportedly included in his literary talks the critical assessment of world religions he had introduced in the Lyric Hall addresses. His Cornell lectures drew sizeable and appreciative audiences, but his religious liberalism antagonized conservative Christians both on the faculty and in the Ithaca community; the antipathy toward him resulted from a mixture of sectarian provincialism and bald anti-Semitism. As a result of the controversy, Adler's contract was not renewed after it lapsed in 1876.

The abrupt end of Adler's academic career was fortuitous, for it allowed him to turn his attention to the establishment of the "practical religion" he had long prophesied. In May 1876, Adler spoke at a meeting that had been called by liberal Temple Emanu-El congregants to organize a permanent lecture movement:

There is a great and crying evil in modern society. It is want of purpose. It is that narrowness of vision which shuts out the wider vistas of the soul.... It is the absence of those sublime emotions which, wherever they arise, do not fail to exalt and consecrate existence.... True, the void and hollowness of which we speak is covered over by a fair exterior. Men distill a subtle sort of intoxication from the ceaseless flow and shifting changes of affairs..., but there comes a time of rude awakening. A great crisis sweeps over the land...

[I]t is my dearest object to exalt the present movement above the strife of contending sects and parties, and at once to occupy that common ground where we may all meet, believers and unbelievers, for purposes in themselves, lofty and unquestioned by any. Surely it is time that a beginning were made in this direction. For more than 3,000 years, men have quarreled concerning the formulas of their faith.... [F]reedom of thought is a sacred right of every individual man. Believe or disbelieve as you list -- we shall at all times respect every honest conviction -- but be one with us where there is nothing to divide -- in action. Diversity in the creed, unanimity in the deed. This is that practical religion from which none dissents. This is that Platform broad enough to receive the worshipper and the infidel. This is that common ground where we may all grasp hands as brothers united in mankind's common cause.... (Address delivered by Felix Adler on May 15, 1876, at Standard Hall in New York City; Ethical Culture Archives)

In his proposal, Adler called for regular Sunday meetings that would include lectures and music; he explicitly ruled out the use of prayer and rituals. By the following fall, more than 250 people had bought subscriptions to the first lecture series, and on Feb. 21, 1877, the New York Society for Ethical Culture was formally incorporated. In its articles of incorporation, the society declared its purpose to be "the mutual improvement in religious knowledge and the furtherance of religious opinion which shall be in part accomplished by a system of weekly lectures, in which the principles of ethics shall be developed, propagated, and advanced among adults, and in part by the establishment of a school or schools wherein a course of moral instruction shall be supplied for the young."

While its founders intended to express those ideals in the institution's name, "Ethical Culture" always has struck many of its adherents as prim, antiquated -- and unfortunate. Interestingly, Adler himself referred to the term as "curious" and "inadequate." In an 1897 address, he explained that the name had been chosen to signify the "need of getting to work thoroughly and cultivating ourselves as you would cultivate the hard ground -- rake it up and make it fruitful and do not spare the sharp spade in digging." ("What Has Religion Done for Civilization?" November 14, 1897, pp. 10- 11; also "Social Changes and Social Conservatism," December 29, 1878, p. 6; quoted in Kraut, p. 111)

As the membership of the New York Society grew and stabilized, it undertook a variety of social services and reform activities. In addition to its Sunday school for the children of members, it ran a free kindergarten for the children of the poor. Its members and associate leaders founded two settlement houses to provide health, educational, and job-placement services to immigrants. A Guild for Aiding Crippled Children and an employment bureau for handicapped adults were organized. Henry Moskowitz, an associate leader of the New York Society for 15 years, was one of three principal organizers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909; several of his fellow Ethical leaders assisted in his efforts. In response to the abysmal health care system in New York's slum districts, the society organized the District Nursing Department, sending both volunteers and paid workers to tend to the needs of the sick; that agency evolved into the modern-day Visiting Nurse Association. Adler and his colleagues fought, often successfully, for legislation upgrading housing codes and guaranteeing the rights of laborers. Samuel Gompers, the first president of the American Federation of Labor and a member of the New York Society, said in 1894 that Ethical Society members were "first among religious and professional groups that supplied the best and most persistent advocate of the cause of labor." (Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States, Howard B. Radest, Frederick Unger Publishing Co. New York, 1969, p. 100)

In 1878, consonant with Adler's belief that the working class can advance only through education, the society founded the Workingman's School, an elementary and secondary school that combined training in industrial arts with ethics classes and a conventional pedagogy. After it began admitting paying pupils in the mid- 1890s, the school was renamed the Ethical Culture School. Its subsequent experiments in liberal arts education has earned it nationwide acclaim.

The movement expanded quickly after the founding of the New York Society. Between 1882 and 1886, ethical societies were founded in Chicago, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. Each society was begun by a leader who was selected and trained by Adler, and each patterned its Sunday services and educational programs after those formulated in New York.

In 1886, the American Ethical Union (AEU) was founded as a federation of the ethical societies in the United States. For much of its existence, the Union has served as little more than a channel of communication among independent communities; ethical society members, many of whom have rebelled against traditional religions, habitually resist institutionalization. Nevertheless, the AEU plays a strong role in the selection and training of leaders and coordinates nationwide educational programs.

Evolution of an Ethical Ministry

Just as the Ethical Culture movement has shifted the religious "center of gravity," the leaders who serve ethical societies have developed a mode of ministry profoundly different from that of traditional religions. Having no imperial directives from Rome or Tibet and little tradition to guide them, they have learned to serve the needs of society members according to their own lights. Wherever they serve, they face high expectations: They are asked to educate, stimulate, inspire, guide, console, and mediate; they are expected to foster fellowship, spur activism, administer a variety of programs, and coordinate public relations. The fiercely individualistic nature of the ethical movement puts its leaders in a trying position: They are asked to enlighten but forbidden to preach; they are asked to offer direction but forbidden to give orders.

Ethical society members brook no authoritarianism; like political officeholders in a democracy, ethical leaders serve at the will of their congregants. And, like constituents in a democracy, congregants do not speak with one mind. Elsie De Wald, a member of the St. Louis Ethical Society from 1962 until her death in (198?), said in an interview that it is virtually impossible for a leader to measure up to the varying standards of a society's members:

It's a very difficult row to hoe, to be a leader of the Ethical Society. My heart goes out to them. There's criticism on all sides; it's very unfair. Somebody doesn't like the way you talk, somebody doesn't like something else -- they expect too much. It's a 25-hour-a-day job. You have to have somebody who is highly intelligent, because it's a very intelligent group of freakish people. They're high-grade people, and you need stimulation [to get] people to want to come.

During most of his lifetime, Felix Adler hand-picked leaders, oversaw their training, and placed them in positions, largely at his own discretion. In making his selections, he emphasized the need for erudition:

What is needed in a leader is scholarship. A man should be versed in religion and in philosophy, for our religion is a way of life and to be a Leader is to know what people in the past have found or thought that they have found and expressed in their philosophies and their religions. (New York Board of Trustees, Minutes, November 1925)

At Adler's insistence, most of the movement's early leaders undertook graduate studies in philosophy at a German university. The next phase of training was an apprenticeship under Adler at the New York Society or one of the agencies spawned and maintained by that society -- the Ethical Culture School or one of a variety of social programs. Upon satisfactorily completing this apprenticeship, these leaders were assigned to permanent positions in New York or one of the fledgling societies in the East and Midwest.

If Adler minimized the value of typically pastoral attributes, his Socratic ideal of leadership was counterbalanced by the style of several men who served in his inner circle. Most notable among those early leaders is John Lovejoy Elliott, a native of Illinois who brought Midwestern earthiness both to the platform and to the social reform efforts he led on New York's West Side. Adler and his other associates concentrated on reforming political and philanthropic machinery, but Elliott worked directly with the city's poor. Leaving behind his uptown digs, he moved into the squalid Chelsea neighborhood in the mid - 1890s and began organizing the educational, recreational and employment agencies that came to be known collectively as Hudson Guild. In a talk before the New York board of trustees in 1925, Elliott reflected on the manner in which he altered Adler's vision of the ethical ministry:

Years ago, when I first met Dr. Adler at Cornell, he made a deep impression on me when he spoke of the "new profession of teaching people how to live." I would change that phrase now to the "profession of living with people," with people of all kinds, in sickness, people in trouble, in the most soul-searching kind of trouble. (New York Board of Trustees, Minutes, 1925)

De Wald, a graduate of New York's Ethical Culture School, at which Elliott taught, recalled the leader's warmth in an interview:

Everybody loved Dr. John he was "Dr. John" to all of us. We loved him. He'd sit in his office and we'd pass by the little children in the school -- and there was Johnny waving his hand to everybody: "Hello, dear heart," he'd say. He was adorable, a beautiful man. He was no speaker -- he was a terrible speaker -- but he held everybody in the palm of his hand. Dr. Elliott was tall and handsome -- oh, what a beautiful man he was! He was a bachelor, and he lived down in Hudson Guild. He had good friends down there. He was the soul of the whole community down there. He was very, very loving.

He had one of his "parishioners," as he would call them, a boy who was sent to Sing-Sing, which is a criminal prison. Every week, he'd go up to visit this man. He never missed a week. That was John Elliott. He was so darling. He was so sweet. He loved life. He was spontaneous -- he couldn't be anything but John Elliott. I think he was the most beloved person I've known.

By contrast, De Wald recalled Adler as an aloof, professorial man:

You couldn't say you loved the man. You had great regard for him. He was a cold man. He was very arrogant, quietly arrogant. I mean, he didn't parade it, but you knew that you were just a little pigeon on the walk.

He was a brilliant man. When he was dying, he read Homer in the original Greek -- that's the kind of man he was. He talked about everything. He would stop in the middle (of a lecture) and go into a sideline, and he'd come back again after five minutes of the most exciting, stimulating talk and pick up from the last word he'd said before his mind went astray. It was fantastic! But he was very withdrawn.

Throughout the history of the movement, Adler and Elliott have been held up as polar paradigms of leadership style. Seldom has a leader succeeded in blending the best qualities of both. The Ethical Society of St. Louis, in its first century, has had five principal leaders. Each has redefined the role and given it a distinctive character. With one exception, each has made leadership in the Ethical movement a lifelong career.

2: Walter L. Sheldon Apostle to the St. Louisans

Introduction

Sheldon's value to history of the Society

Walter Lorenzo Sheldon, the inaugural leader of the Ethical Society of St. Louis, was at once the most ponderous and most activist of the Society's leaders. He was a complex man, a stoic and rationalist with a profound appreciation of mystical experience. Though fettered by guilt and bouts of dark depression, he was a seminal thinker in the early development of Ethical Culture and a pioneer in the movement's education of children. He shared with the fellowship his devotion to free thought, the edification of working-class people, and cultivation of the inner life. If one searches for reasons why the Ethical movement has flourished in St. Louis while lagging and even disintegrating in larger cities, Sheldon's troubled but forceful personality stands out as an irreplaceable boon. By attracting hundreds of loyal members and making the society's influence felt throughout the city, Sheldon bequeathed to the fellowship two decades of vital momentum.

Biography

Sheldon was born in West Rutland, Vermont, on Sept. 5, 1858, the oldest of three sons of Preston and Cornelia Hatch Sheldon. When he was 6 years old, his father drowned in a sailing accident. His mother, a devout Congregationalist, nurtured him in evangelical Christianity. He was devoted to the church and, through much of his adolescence, planned on a career in the ministry. In a set of New Year's reflections written in 1875-76, he resolved to "more fully and more completely love and adore and worship my God, -- love and trust my Savior and the Holy Ghost -- love the Bible." (Sheldon papers quoted in "The Philosophic Sources and Sanctions of the Founders of Ethical Culture, unpublished doctoral dissertation by James F. Hornback, Columbia University, 1983). Before long, however, Sheldon's loyalty to the church clashed with his broadening appreciation of other religions:

In this year the whole course of my life has been changed by my resolve to go through college. There is growing within me a respect for all creeds and religions and I have grown much more liberal in my views respecting religions & creeds, but I fear that I have gone too far so that now in many respects my mind is puzzled and it is only by a slow process that I must feel my way forward or backward as must needs be best. (Ibid.)

At Vermont's Middlebury College, which he attended for two years, Sheldon maintained at least an outward fealty to the church. After he transferred to Princeton University in his junior year, a student humor magazine at Middlebury facetiously reported his death from "excessive swelling of self esteem" and "a too rigid observance of the rules of the Orthodox church."

While at Princeton, Sheldon abandoned orthodox Christianity. In an autobiographical note published in the *Sexennial Record of the Class of 1880*, he wrote:

Now that I have taken a stand so wide from the religious attitude of Princeton, I have felt that the college would not own me. Princeton taught me a great deal in many things, but while I was there

... I was taking an attitude that, by the time of my graduation, put me far outside the pale of its theology...

His career plans shattered; Sheldon felt adrift. After graduation, he traveled throughout Egypt, Palestine, and Europe with a classmate. In 1881, developing an inclination for an academic career, he began two years of graduate studies in philosophy, psychology, and literature at the University of Berlin. There he met S. Burns Weston, who had been sent there by Adler for the obligatory German sojourn before starting up the Philadelphia Society for Ethical Culture. The men became close friends, and Sheldon eventually caught his soul mate's fervor for the new religion of ethics. Sheldon transferred to the University of Leipzig in the 1882-83 academic year, but he kept in touch with Weston and accepted his friend's invitation to return to New York with him in the fall of 1883.

From 1883 to 1885, Sheldon worked with Adler at the New York Society; his principal role was as leader of the Society's Young Men's Union. During his apprenticeship, he continued his studies in political and social science at Columbia University. At the time, Adler was looking for someone who could lead an ethical society in St. Louis; a group there had sought to organize a society since 1883, and its request was prominent on Adler's list of expansion sites. Adler was favorably impressed with Sheldon's leadership abilities, but Sheldon, racked with doubts about the philosophical foundation of Ethical Culture, was not prepared to commit himself to a permanent post in the movement.

James F. Hornback, leader of the St. Louis society from 1951 to 1984, detailed Sheldon's tortuous philosophical search in his 1983 doctoral dissertation, "The Philosophic Sources and Sanctions of the Founders of Ethical Culture." According to that account, Sheldon's challenge essentially was to find within the human person a foundation for a system of ethics that would be as sound as is the voice of God in a theological matrix. He needed a firm reason to believe in free will and the human capacity to make moral judgments, but neither Adler nor the myriad philosophers he studied was able to satisfy that need. During his years in New York, he painstakingly drafted a system of thought he titled "The Ethical Constitution," which underscored the reality of consciousness and predicated ethics on the primordial sense of duty, which he defined as "truth to my whole nature." He considered conscience inherent in the human person -- not something taught or deliberately formed. Hornback describes the tenets that Sheldon drew from that starting point:

Man has four aspects in his total nature. He is, first, a physical being or structure, which is but a piece of nature following its laws without choice or duty. Second, he is a sentient organism, no longer just an effect but a vital cause, with the duty to maintain life through the satisfaction of the appetites, procreation, and struggle, while avoiding the giving or the suffering of unnecessary pain. Third, he is a man among men, a brother, who sees himself as an end in himself and ought to see and treat other men in the same way. Fourth and finally, he is a self, with special and even unique capacities, an individual striving for his highest possible effect and realization in the universe, in progressive equilibrium with the strivings of others.

Out of struggles, conflicts, and antagonisms among the aspiring consciousnesses raise the sense of duty and the "four great duties of men to one another, Truth, Benevolence, Justice and Cooperation." Even in the higher development of the self as unique, these basic duties apply, for there is always interrelation and struggle with an imperfect self, and with the environment. But if the whole universe had a single consciousness, or "an ideal to work out," according to Sheldon a sense of duty would not exist, for there would be no struggle against the environment. The end would come of itself."

Thus did Walter Sheldon arrive at an ethic of self-realization, in a multiplicity of consciousnesses to whom the earthly end is clear, though the means are cloudy approximations aimed at the greatest possible progressive equilibrium. There are no absolutes in ethics, whatever there may be in the great unknown and unknowable area formerly bound to ethics by religion. (JFH, p. 192-3)

Despite his satisfaction in working out this system of thought, Sheldon was not sufficiently confident of its veracity to continue in the Ethical movement. Intellectually stymied in his progress as an ethicist, Sheldon considered turning toward a medical career and, in 1885, enrolled at the school of medicine at the University of Berlin. In a letter written to Weston in September 1885, Adler revealed his dismay over Sheldon's departure and his frustration over Sheldon's scruples:

I too see Sheldon depart with regret. I cannot conceive that medicine should be his proper sphere. Sheldon despairs of an assured intellectual basis for his moral convictions. I on the other hand should despair of the movement without such a basis! You tell me that Sheldon "believes and would teach the freedom of the will, but when it comes to a philosophical explanation of it he finds contradictions which he cannot reconcile." With what confidence then can a belief be promulgated of which the teacher is aware that he cannot state it without self-contradiction?

I must work until I can get a satisfactory reason for the faith that is in me. But Sheldon refuses to do this, and what is more asks that his state of intellectual indecision be erected into a precedent and a rule in our movement. To this demand I can only return an inflexible negative. I need not repeat that in requiring reasons for his faith it is not implied that he should give our reasons, only strong reasons, reasons that will make him feel that he has a right to teach what he does teach, and that will guarantee the permanence of his moral convictions. (Letter from Felix Adler to S. Burns Weston, September 1885)

During his year at medical school, Sheldon warmed to Adler's calm attitude toward open-ended philosophical problems. He agreed that one can adopt a "religious attitude" while one's ideas are in the making. As he acknowledged in an essay written some years later:

Mind as mind would never have a religion, but only a philosophy of religion. In the long run, of course, there must be intellectual conviction behind the attitude we take. But the truth-seeking tendencies of our nature are not the forces which drive us toward it. No; it is the human will, seeking for guidance and support, which falls back upon religion.

...

The whole scheme of human thought is in the process of change. Philosophy is in a state of transition. But while all this is taking place, we want something to cling to. We are reluctant to look upon ourselves as out in the cold, barren of religious sympathies, unauthorized to have ideals or aspirations, solely because we are not convinced of the truth of one system of thought. I have ventured to assert that according to the real meaning of the term, and in agreement with the most fundamental standpoint of the human heart, we can still be religious while waiting for a philosophy of religion. ("Being Religious - What it Means to an Ethical Idealist," from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; pp. 32, 38-39).

In the spring of 1886, he returned to New York and informed Adler he had decided to make his career in Ethical Culture. He accepted the invitation of the nascent St. Louis fellowship to deliver a series of lectures in May of that year, and in November Adler and his disciple launched the Society's first season.

Sheldon's formal thought

A prophet of ethical religion - Sheldon's Philosophy of Being

Sheldon was devoted to his role as part of the founding generation of Ethical leaders. Along with Adler, Elliott, Salter, and Weston, he was shaping a religious movement which he expected to flourish in the centuries to come. Acknowledging the movement's roots in Greek and Kantian ethics, and its inspiration in the works of Emerson, he spoke of it as "in part only a revival," an orchestrated sounding of "a neglected chord in history." (*The Meaning of an Ethical Movement*, from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; p. 2)

He believed that Western civilization, and particularly America, was ready to hear that chord as never before. In explaining the movement, he distinguished between the "two great tendencies" of religion. The first, he observed, is to cultivate the "devotional side" of human nature, awakening "a spiritual exaltation or the rapture of self-surrender." (*Ibid.*, P. 3) In the Christian tradition, it places great emphasis on life after death and conceives of moral evil as "love of the world"; it stresses ardent loyalty to beliefs and urges spiritual culture through worship of God. The second tendency of religion, he noted, is to promote dedication to mitigating suffering and altering the conditions that produce it. It is this aspect of religion, he wrote, that "makes us acknowledge our mutual responsibility for all the evil in the world and our mutual share in it; and also to see that if anything is to be done, it is to be done by us, and not through some extraneous influence." (*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5) In every religion and every age, he wrote, one aspect or

the other takes precedence; looking beyond the organized movement he was working to form, he applied the term Ethical Movement to the general disposition to emphasize the ethical aspect of religion over the devotional.

At the outset of his career, Sheldon believed that Western civilization stood on the threshold of a new religious age. The development of industrial technology had strengthened humanity's sense of mastery over nature, and the burgeoning labor movement had given workers a new-found perception of economic power, fostering "a determination to establish a Kingdom of Heaven of some kind here and now." (Ibid., p. 8) He predicted that confidence in an afterlife that would set right the injustices of earthly existence would wane in the coming centuries, and that the only religious philosophy that could flourish in such an age was one that offered ethical direction to the drive for self-mastery. In light of the irreversible social changes of the 19th century, he said, religious teaching "must concentrate its attention upon the practical side of daily life and everyday needs. It has been too much disposed to think of morality all by itself as 'secular,' neglecting to emphasize the voice which speaks within, out of regard for the voice which speaks from Above." (Ibid, p.9). He refrained from predicting the success of Ethical Culture as such, but he felt sure that an alliance -- formal or informal -- would emerge among "serious and earnest individuals who... are becoming more and more willing to forget the other differences, to pass by diversities of theological or philosophical belief, in order to concentrate their attention upon rescuing and developing the moral ideal." (Ibid., p. 19) He believed that the Universal Church prophesied by Emerson would be modeled after the emerging prototype of an ethical society. The distinctiveness of the Ethical Movement, Sheldon contended, derives from its consummate attention to the driving force of all religion, "a common spiritual endowment" which he described as "the aspiration to reach a higher level of being, -- or, expressed more popularly, the desire on the part of each one "to be a better man and to have a better human society." (Ibid., p. 7) That impetus was for Sheldon the spark that ignites genuine religious fervor:

This desire is not something vague, mystical, or far away, taking us into the realms of the remote and supersensible. It is definite, concrete, and positive, in the original form in which it awakens within us. It may exist faintly at times, and seem almost to die away altogether. But it has been in us at some period or other in the course of our lives. A man in the very depths of his nature is not quite content with what he is at any one moment; he would always like to be something else, a trifle better, a little further along in the scale of being. From this standpoint the difference between man and man is only a matter of degree. We are haunted with visions of a "better self" and a "better human world." Our common meeting-ground, therefore, is in the mutual interest we take in "the good life."

The new Emphasis on Ethics would have for its aim to bring into the foreground this universal interest or desire, and to utilize all conceivable means for developing it and making it become a dominant factor in the conduct of every living man. (Ibid., pp. 7-8)

This Emphasis on Ethics, Sheldon wrote, would treat as sacred subjects all ethical relations of life, including the family, the state, property rights, individual rights, and reform efforts. Its sources of inspiration would be the greatest books of world literature, including the works of Shakespeare, George Eliot, Goethe, and Dante; the movement would seek guidance from recent statesmen such as Washington and Lincoln, just as the Hebrews had looked to David and Saul for wisdom grounded in everyday life; and it would value economics and political science as much as it would the study of ancient scriptures.

Apart from encouraging devotion to a deity, the movement he conceived would include the traditional elements of religion: Sunday morning meetings, moral instruction of children, social service and activism, and a trained clergy. He expounded on his definition in a statement of purpose which he proposed for adoption by all ethical societies:

An Ethical Society exists for the purpose of inducing people to think more about conscience, duty, justice, the cultivation of the higher nature, working for others, about High Conduct in all its phases, Morality in all its aspects. It exists supremely to emphasize the importance of Ethics.

An Ethical Society exists for the purpose of persuading people to do more than they are doing toward making themselves better men and women and toward improving the rest of the world.

An Ethical Society exists for the purpose of keeping public attention on the moral aspects of the Questions of the Day, and not allowing people to judge on such matters from their own personal interests or from purely material considerations.

An Ethical Society exists for the purpose of organizing practical educational work in social reform on a basis which shall be strictly neutral on all matters pertaining to religion. In all such effort the Society will seek to establish the motto "the work for the work's sake."

An Ethical Society exists in order to serve as a meeting-ground for people who are unable to agree in their religious beliefs and yet who are warmly interested in working together for their own moral improvement and for the moral improvement of the whole human race.

An Ethical Society exists for the sake of cultivating the sense of reverence and fostering the moral and spiritual nature of each person, while allowing every man to think as he pleases or as his judgment may compel him to think. An Ethical Society exists for the purpose of awakening and fostering higher scruples in one's conduct in the home, personal life, public affairs, commercial life, and in one's relations to the city, the State, or the nation to which one may belong.

An Ethical Society, amid the changes now going on in religious beliefs, exists for the purpose of persuading men to hold tenaciously to the great Moral Principles established by the experience of past ages, and approved by the voice of conscience, while at the same time always seeking light wherever it may be found.

An Ethical Society exists in order to accomplish these various purposes by means of lecture courses, educational clubs, classes for children, organized efforts for social reform, courses of reading or study, all concentrated on the one aim. (Ibid., pp. 17-18)

Speaking of God in a Whisper

Sheldon defied the traditional categories of religious disposition, refusing to call himself a theist, atheist, or agnostic. He considered himself deeply religious, and his scrupulous intellectual honesty forbade him to reduce his attitude to such neat terms. He found that the word "God" had become so laden with personification and superstition that it tended to trivialize the ineffable mystery it was intended to honor; he wrote that he rarely used the word, not "because it means so little to me, but because it means so much." ("How People Can Use the Word 'God,'" p. 84) He was tempted to avoid the use of the word altogether so as not to "degrade it ... and our own natures, by tossing it heedlessly about," (Ibid. pp. 85-86) but he feared that by doing so "we shall separate ourselves completely from many persons with whom we may be in close bonds of sympathy." (Ibid. p. 86) Aware that "God" is used to signify very different -- and even contradictory -- meanings, he was intrigued by the efforts of poets and philosophers to coin circumscribed substitutes -- Infinite Power, Supreme Being, the Absolute, the Ultimate Source, the Great Lawgiver, the Invisible Companion, and so on -- but he owned that such terms never had gained sufficient currency to be of use in common discourse. For his part, he chose to affirm certain specific conceptions, experiences, and beliefs the term "God" is used to designate. In an address titled "How People Can Use the Word 'God,'" he maintained that three aspects of human experience point to a reality which could, with proper caution and reverence, be termed "God." They are: the mystery of being, the unity of nature, and a universal force or tendency toward moral goodness. Of his experience of the "sheer mystery of being" he wrote:

It is not the process of development or evolution itself which overwhelms me with its mysterious grandeur, but the bare fact that anything exists at all. I look down at the paving stones under my feet, and ask myself how came they into being, what holds them there, -- not what they are made of, not the changes in shape or locality which their substance has undergone, not the conditions by which their chemical structure is explained, not what they are as contrasted with something else, but just the fact that they are! There is something so baffling and awe-inspiring in the simple fact of their existence, that when thinking about it I feel everything slipping away from me as I sink deeper and deeper and lose myself and all my thinking in this one bewildering circumstance. It gives me a feeling akin to fear, and yet allied to the sublime.

We have no sense of the strange or the mysterious in the thought of nothingness. But the step from nothing to something utterly dazes the mind. (Ibid., pp. 89-90)

Sheldon owned that some people lack awe before the fact of existence, and are moved only by awareness of organic life, or of the "self-conscious soul." But those aspects of reality, he insisted, are "mere phases" of the fundamental fact of existence. "The grandeur, the solemnity, the majesty of it all," he insisted, "is just as much in the atom or the wave motion of the ether as in this subjective life of ours." (Ibid., p. 91) He believed that awe before the mystery of

existence, rather than fear of some particular source of power, was the most primitive religious sentiment. When impelled to give a name to the mystery of existence, one may, he said, "with reluctance or dread, in fear of committing sacrilege in reference to what is deepest and most sacred.... speak of it as 'God.'" (Ibid., pp. 91-92) He made it clear that he applied the term strictly to the fact of existence; he did not apply it to a creator that supposedly brought into being all that exists, for such a designation would simply beg "the greater mystery of the being of that Creator." (Ibid., p. 91)

Mysticism and critical observation blend in the apprehension of the second aspect of deity, the unity of nature -- "the kinship between everything existing throughout the universe." (Ibid., p. 92). Sheldon credited Indian and Greek philosophers for crudely depicting the interrelatedness of things, a perception that would be refined by Newton, Darwin, and contemporary scientists and philosophers of science. For Sheldon, discoveries of the laws of physics and the evolution of organic life supported and clarified the mystical experience of oneness with the universe:

I do not see how any one can ever look at the skies in the splendor of evening without thinking of the fact which we now know beyond dispute, that the substance there, the very atoms of the stars are like the atoms of the earth we stand upon, that the chemical constituents are much the same there as here, that the quantity of matter throughout the universe is unchanged and unchanging. Or if we single out one of those glittering lights in the heavens, shall we not at once begin to fancy that it, too, may be a sun with planets like our own moving around it, that every one of those stars may be the centre of an evolving planetary system where organic life may appear, and where the great struggle for justice may begin, as self-conscious beings arise.

...

This sublime kinship, by which we recognize unity of substance and relationship in development everywhere, thrills us and possesses us in a way that no language can express.

...

At rare intervals I believe that the student of philosophy or the man of science in thinking of this unity will wait for an instant, and then whisper, "God." (Ibid., pp. 92-94)

In forming a construct worthy of the name "God," Sheldon deemed the preeminent element to be the "stream of tendency" in nature supporting moral goodness -- a tendency experienced personally as the aforementioned "desire to reach a higher level of being." He admitted, with some distress, that this aspect of Ultimate Reality could not be empirically substantiated. And while he repeatedly intimated that history validates the tendency toward righteousness, he presented no compelling evidence of the claim. That this axiom served as the bedrock of his lifelong philosophy of ethics helps to explain his unshakable faith in it:

No matter how unphilosophical this may appear, the human mind is strangely prepossessed with the conviction that, even if nature or the "cosmic process" is indifferent, there is a process of the process, or nature of things, on the side of those who devote themselves to the ideally Good.... We are led to assume that when we sacrifice our personal or transient interests in the cause of Duty, there is something in the universe or behind it which is aiding us and standing by us, that we are fighting in the cause of some fundamental principle in the universe.

A conviction of this kind seems almost ineradicable. The new science and new philosophy have had little effect upon it. They have shattered innumerable beliefs, torn away the veil from many a mystery, reduced a multitude of our prepossessions to fanciful illusions. Yet they have not shaken humanity's faith that there is a "stream of tendency" in the nature of things working in the interest of righteousness. The man who dies for a cause is satisfied that his effort cannot be altogether unavailing, inasmuch as he thinks it will be taken up and carried forward by such a stream of tendency. (Ibid., pp. 94-95)

He traced the belief in "fighting on the side of right" back to ancient cultures, including the Greeks, the Hebrews, and the early Christians. In its crude form, he wrote, the belief was manifest as trust that divine providence was "on our side" in a conflict. Through history, the belief matured into the "grander thought ... that we are taking sides with the divine providence or the nature of things." (Ibid., p. 96) He was mindful of the inevitable objection to his axiom: that in a war between people of different faiths, warriors on both sides believe they are sanctioned and empowered

by God and are fighting for a righteous cause. Though he did not directly address that objection, he warned against degrading the axiom into its primitive form, the tendency to "materialize the impression and think ... of the hand of a deity interfering in the conflicts of life, just as the gods in the stories of Homer entered here and there in the battles, and took sides with their favourite [stet] heroes." (Ibid., p. 97) He taught that one acquires faith in the power of righteousness only by actively fighting for justice. "The more groveling natures," he wrote, "know nothing of it." (Ibid., p. 96)

Because of his reverence for the elements of deity, Sheldon took umbrage at the cultural inclination to attach human attributes to that reality. "Some will personify it and speak of 'Him,' clothing that power with feelings of sentiment and loving care," he wrote. "They will fancy the sheltering arms of a Personal Father reaching out to them from the skies." That belief, which he spoke of as a child's conception, "would be a sacrilege to a mind like that of Spinoza or Goethe," he wrote. (Ibid., p. 98) He also decried as blasphemous the popular depiction of God as constable:

We shall only degrade the whole subject by dealing with theistic beliefs as a useful means for encouraging good behavior. There is something utterly repugnant to the finer moral sense in the famous saying of Voltaire: "If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent one," -- meaning, as I understand him, that such a belief is necessary to the preservation of "social order." Every argument for the existence of a deity from that standpoint will only be repellent to people of high character, while leading others to glaring, defiant atheism. No man can reverence a Power of which he is simply afraid, because of the penalties which such a Being can execute upon him. An "expediency" God means no God at all for any except the most inferior or most decrepit natures. Only a decaying civilization, which has lost its virility and is reaching out for any straw to save itself from utter collapse, will stoop so low as to drag down the grand conceptions associated with the idea of deity, by desiring to make such a Being a substitute for a police force. If there is not something implanted in human nature which can develop an inner strength and of itself furnish a motive for high conduct, then our civilization is doomed ... If we cultivate the belief in a deity because we need such a Being, for reasons of practical expediency, then in the higher sense we have surrendered manhood and Godhead alike. (Ibid., p. 100)

From Sheldon's perspective, then, it was reverence, rather than "mere unbelief or negative Agnosticism," (Ibid., p. 101) that restrained him from uttering the word "God." He encouraged respectful appreciation of the three elements of the deity as he conceived it, but he quietly discouraged use of the common term. When it seemed necessary to refer to an overarching reality, he preferred to speak of the "Power" -- that is, "the totality, the Being from whence everything came and to which everything returns, the Power whence springs the fact of law, the Source of the all-pervading Unity, the Guiding Energy which takes sides for justice and righteousness." (Ibid., p. 101)¹

Far from holding that belief in a deity, however conceived, is essential to the ethical life, he asserted that it is of no ethical relevance. All that is needed to carry on "the ethical cause," he taught, is the conviction that "the nature of things is on the side of Right" -- and that, he said, comes inevitably to those who engage in the struggle.²

The True Destiny of the Human Soul

Sheldon's conception of religion, though essentially this-worldly, was nevertheless imbued with spirituality -- what he described as attentiveness to sentiments that point to a higher reality, however inchoate. An ardent truth seeker who had "left the fold" of a creedal religion, he offered a fresh, if inconsistent, alternative to those whose religious doubts had undercut their sense of place in the universe. He delineated the hallmarks of true religion as: 1) a consciousness of what Wordsworth termed "moving about in worlds not realized"; and 2) surrender of the will to the "All-inclusive aim of the universe."

Sheldon spoke of being religious as a matter of character and disposition rather than of belief or piety. He deemed religious "those pure, deep, lofty natures," individuals of "serene, unselfish inwardness" who display "a certain steady loftiness of purpose." ("Being Religious -- What it Means to an Ethical Idealist," from *An Ethical Movement*, W. L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; pp. 23-24) Such natures, he held, arise in those who, while aware of their animality and essential oneness with matter, are yet conscious of "belonging to another order of existence." (Ibid., p. 29)

¹ But he was reticent even about that conception and manner of naming.

² Capitalizations are Sheldon's. The practice of capitalizing key words and terms was not uncommon among 19th century writers and poets.

His elevation of that consciousness placed him in a philosophical hinterland. Though he did not actually profess belief in a non-material order of existence, he was resolutely opposed to the philosophy of materialism, the supposition that all reality -- including thought, will, and feeling -- is essentially matter. "I may be tolerant of many creeds or many systems of philosophy, but for one attitude I have no toleration, and that is the thing called materialism," he wrote. "Toward this my feeling is one of disgust and loathing, and I mean to fight it till I die." ("What the Ethical Idealist Has to Fight For," by Walter L. Sheldon, *Ethical Addresses*, Vol. XIII No. 1, Philadelphia, 1905; p. 12) For him, materialism denoted brutishness, a compulsion to satisfy base cravings, a blithe at-homeness in the world devoid of regard for supreme values. So, he chose instead to call himself an idealist, a term which connoted for him ethical refinement. However, he recognized that he stood apart from the philosophical school of idealism, which holds that objects of perception are manifestations of an independent realm of essences or forms. He sought to resolve his dilemma by minimizing the theoretical distinction and focusing instead on the differences of character that he associated with the terms. The "Ethical Idealist," by his definition, is one who apprehends a higher plane of existence:

It is not that we are altogether of another world, not that we are absolutely unlike the earth whereon we dwell; but we are conscious that there are orders and degrees, -- as it were, a higher and lower everywhere. Our order is not the same as that of the outer world. This is what we imply in saying that the human being has a soul. It is not the same as the old distinction between this and another world, or between matter and spirit. Strictly speaking, as we know, there is only one world and one universe. But there is a difference in order or degree. We are higher or superior to what we look out upon, -- the earth, the air, the mountains, and the sea. The religious man is the person who is conscious of this difference. How religious he is, may depend on how strong an impression this fact makes upon him.

It is religion which emphasizes unity everywhere; only it is a unity of the spirit, and not of the fleeting pageant of the outer world. We belong to the truly real. It is this phase which connects religion with our thoughts of an Invisible Being. That Being is the great Spiritual Centre, and we belong to its order. The old conception is true, that man was made in the image of his Maker. We may not be able to have definite beliefs about that Being; indeed, it is far more vital that we should have such beliefs about our own being, its meaning and destiny and the laws it should obey. But our kinship is with the great Central Fact. Of that much we are assured.

That sense of belonging to a superior order of existence, the "starting point of all true Idealism," was of no worth to Sheldon unless it was allied with the other crucial element of religion, the surrender of the will. "Religion has its supreme value in that it serves as the agent for breaking and taming the wild caprices of the human will," he wrote. "It puts the soul of man into a harness." (Ibid., p. 31) The oft-heralded "aspiration to reach a higher level of being," he taught, must be informed and disciplined; it must be consciously directed toward a high aim. To devote one's energies toward a low aim, such as acquiring wealth or power, will produce a "cold, heartless nature." (Ibid., p. 34) To be religious one must surrender the will to a "Supreme Something" beyond one's personal satisfaction. That "Something," he said, need not be a personal deity, but it must represent what one understands to be the highest aims of humanity. In sum, Sheldon defined religious life as "the surrender of the will to ideal or sacred principles which are to us the expression of the true destiny or worth of the human soul." (Ibid., pp. 38-39)

Having established the essence of religion, Sheldon laid out a methodology for cultivating the soul, "the something in us which is not mind and is not body, and which separates us from all other animate or inanimate existence that we have any knowledge of." ("Methods for Spiritual Self-Culture," from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; pp. 23-24)

First, he advocated assembling a personal "Bible," a collection of literature which one finds "expressive of the whole struggling spirit of mankind." (Ibid., p. 206). His suggestions for inclusion in one's "Bible" ranged from the works of Plato and Marcus Aurelius to the plays of Shakespeare and the poetry of Wordsworth; he revered the Hebrew-Christian Bible, but he also found guidance in the Buddhist "Path of Virtue." He stressed the importance of regularly rereading the works in which one finds inspiration. "When you truly have a Bible," he wrote, "its thoughts, its sayings, will move you, thrill you, strengthen you, nerve you to tread the pathway of your life." (Ibid., pp. 208-209). He added that people who are especially moved by music should consider the musical selections that most elevate them to be part of their personal bibles.

Sheldon's second method for "spiritual self-culture" was appreciation of nature. He recommended spending time out of doors attending to one's interrelation with plants and animals, soil and sky. "We restrict the soul-life," he wrote,

"when somehow we do not get into some sort of conscious relationship with every form of existence to which we are in any degree whatsoever allied." (Ibid., p. 211) Even without leaving the bustling life of a city, he said, one can find a "healing power" in communing with nature by looking up at the stars or examining a green leaf. Sheldon himself found inspiration in walking along the shore of the Mississippi River:

Every city which has a river flowing along its borders, offers an opportunity for mingling with Nature. In its way it is as grand as the mountains or the sea. All the great poets have been conscious of this, and have talked about it and mused over it. A river is as suggestive and inspiring to the soul as the unclouded sky of evening may be to a lonely traveler on a country road. It is Nature! We watch the turbid, muddy stream and follow it with our mind's eye in its sinuous course through cities and states, until it pours its waters into the great sea. What is it but a suggestion of time and eternity! Does it not remind us of the stream of our own life, wending its way through time to the ultimate Something to which all must go? Does it not suggest the relationship of the finite to the infinite; or make us think of the soul of man yearning to lose itself and be swallowed up in the Divine? (Ibid., p. 214)

Sheldon also advocated the cultivation of a sense of mystery. "My idea of mystery," he wrote, "is that we come to a borderline beyond which we feel that we cannot go; while at the same time we are convinced that if we could get beyond it, we should find something more, something grander, than anything we know of now." (Ibid., p. 215) But while he often spoke of the sense of mystery as vital to the religious life, he sternly warned against all forms of occultism, which he referred to as "materializing the spiritual side of things until the truly spiritual has vanished from our conceptions altogether." (Ibid., p. 215) The best guard against slipping, he said, is to scrupulously adhere to scientific facts. "The man who reads Shelley," he wrote, "should also read Darwin." (Ibid., p. 216)

Solitude was another of Sheldon's methods for spiritual self-culture. One must spend time alone to expand one's awareness of the soul, he taught, for constant human interaction makes one self-conscious -- that is, attentive to the perceptions of others rather than to the "higher spiritual atmosphere of the self of the selves." (Ibid., p. 217) It is in that realm, he said, that one "will get in touch with the spirit land of all human nature." (Ibid., p. 218)

But for all his talk of mystery and the "spirit land," Sheldon believed that the principal arena for spiritual self-culture is the working world. The unrelenting battle for survival, he said, is the "grindstone on which our spiritual self is shaped." (Ibid., p. 219) The true self emerges through day-to-day conflict, through striving, disappointment, and physical pain. This, for Sheldon, was the paradox of paradoxes: that "active life in the world is the true nursery for spiritual culture. We must mix in the daily struggle; toil and labour with our fellows; go through their trials, their defeats, and their victories; jostle and be jostled, and so gradually develop the higher life at the same time." (Ibid., p. 220)

The Soldier at His Post

Many of Sheldon's addresses and essays were variations on his central thesis -- that religion consists of promoting and cultivating the universal impulse to do good. For Sheldon, this desire -- "this restless longing for something more, something grander, something deeper, something higher than you have yet realized" -- was the basis of morality. ("Duty -- to One Who Makes a Religion of It," from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; p. 60) In its raw form, he conceived of it as an evolutionary force leading humanity to ever higher planes of ethical behavior. In its refined, mature form, however, he perceived it as a static and absolute taskmaster, an inner Voice of Duty that commands unflinching obedience. His oft-used model of ethical perfection was the soldier at his post, the person who resolutely does what must be done -- even if the cost is life itself, even if the reasons are inscrutable and no reward is forthcoming beyond the satisfaction inherent in obedience.

He was so passionately loyal to his belief in that "mysterious" Voice that he avoided examining it, even discounting his own knowledge of socialization. He evidently felt that calculated explanations of the phenomenon would diminish its purity, rendering it unworthy of the devotion he gave it. The very title of one of his addresses on the theme indicates how highly he exalted it: "Duty -- to One Who Makes a Religion of It." He opened that address by asking his listeners how the drive to obey one's Sense of Duty could be even stronger than love of life and fear of death:

Can you explain why it is that a man should value anything more than his own life? We know this to be true of an immense number of people. Some will give up their lives in one cause, others in another. It is not life itself which we seem most to care for. If it came to a choice, we should rather

die than be obliged to take a certain course of action. There is something in all of us that we would not surrender even at the cost of life ... We ask ourselves, How is it possible that a man can love this human life, care passionately for earthly existence, and yet prefer to do what may cost him his life? What interest should the outcome of his acts have for him, if he is no longer here on earth to share in it? ... What motive has he for making such a surrender? (Ibid., pp. 42-43)

In working toward an answer to that question, Sheldon asserted that the Sense of Duty is innate. "[W]e start out in life with an original measure of values," he wrote. "We do not come by it from thought or abstract reflection." (Ibid., p. 43) He spoke of Duty as one of the chief distinctions between human beings and other animals; because it leads inexorably toward high ideals, it is at war with animal desires. "We, of all creatures in the universe," he wrote, with more than a touch of mournfulness, "must be tortured and checked and held down, or urged along another line against our inclinations, by this relentless authority." (Ibid., p. 45) But while he often described the Voice of Duty as "persistent," "stern," or "severe," he observed that it also is gentle and reassuring. It can, he wrote, "soothe while it controls us" and "inspire while it dominates us." (Ibid., p. 49) He found that Duty conveys the sense that human beings do not belong to themselves, that they are part of a higher reality that exerts an overarching will. As noted earlier, he preferred not to name or describe that reality, venturing only that "what we have is a suggestion of something beyond, an order that is outside of us and yet includes us." (Ibid., 50) Obedience to that Voice, he wrote, saves us from alienation: It "puts us in touch with our fellowmen; yes, with all living things, with inanimate nature, with the whole wide universe. Duty no longer strikes us as something altogether stern and sombre. We are glad to obey it, because it adds more to our life and puts us in accord with life everywhere." (Ibid., p. 51) Sheldon acknowledged, though in passing and by way of illustration, the psychological and sociological underpinnings of Duty. He noted that a child learns to obey the will of his parents rather than his own because "greater happiness is given to him by belonging to the home than by belonging just to himself " (Ibid., p. 51) As we mature, he wrote, we learn that through obedience to the Voice of Duty "we join the world's family," obtaining peace and calm by fulfilling our roles in the Grand Order of Things. (Ibid., p. 52) However, he firmly denied that Duty is a worthy master only because it puts one in harmony with others, or that it controls one only in human relations. Rather, he claimed, it is a "grandly impersonal" force: "What we are commanded to obey is not a person, but a principle." (Ibid., p. 53) In other words, Duty, as a relation between each individual and the universal "rule of law," is innate and ever-present, but human interaction calls it forth and develops it. He believed that the Voice of Duty is utterly independent of social norms and expectations, so that "if there were no other man or woman on the face of the earth, if there were no Supreme Companion, yet, alone in space with no other conscious fellowship anywhere, the Voice of Duty would still exist in you and call for obedience." (Ibid., p. 55) Answering the question he posed at the outset of the address, he asserted that it is the deific omnipresence of Duty that compels one to obey it even at the cost of one's life. He recognized the validity of the theistic perception of Duty as the "Voice of God," but he found that such a conception tarnished the grandeur of the "universal law" by depicting it as a set of arbitrary decrees rather than the changeless, absolute structure of reality -- what he called the Nature of Things. His ultimate definition of Duty:

Duty is the command of our Highest Self, bidding us, in scorn of transient consequences, to act as if we belonged not to ourselves, but to a universal system or order, and to render unconditional obedience to the highest law or highest measure of value that we are conscious of. (Ibid., p. 57)

Having underscored the changeless nature of the "rule of law," Sheldon -- departing from a conviction of his youth -- owned that the long-prevalent conception of conscience as an innate ability to distinguish right from wrong was no longer serviceable. "The pathway of life is never perfectly illumined," he wrote. "It is not always a clear, plain course. We are obliged to think and brood and ponder, before we choose and decide." At the same time, however, he contended that everyday human experience usually makes clear the "true course" one must pursue; iniquity, he said, arises not from perplexity over conflicting obligations but from "the calm defiance of all sense of duty." (Ibid., p. 59)

For Sheldon, Duty was the linchpin of civilization. "When civilization begins to weaken and decay, this indicates not necessarily a loss of religious belief, not a spread of rationalism, but simply a decline in the regard men pay to the authority of their sense of duty," he wrote. "If men will only come to have the spirit of the soldier standing at his post, I feel that human society is safe and that the race of man will go on advancing." (Ibid., p. 59)

Christ as Ethical Culturist

Sheldon saw Christianity and Ethical Culture as sharing a common starting point -- namely, the longing to be good. His unpublished writings reveal that his own surrender of Christian faith was a frightful experience, a change that eviscerated his sense of meaning and of belonging to the universe. Much of what he wrote, both privately and for his

readers and listeners, indicates a lifelong effort to retrieve and reinvigorate whatever kernel of truth had endeared him to Christianity.

Sheldon observed that Christianity so thoroughly pervades Western culture that getting at its wellspring requires intellectual tenacity and a sensitivity to human nature. Because most Christians adopt faith in the central figure of the religion without examining the historical evidence of his life or questioning the plausibility of gospel accounts, Sheldon sought to understand what there is in human nature that predisposes people to believe in such a person. In doing so, he examined the two principal aspects of the popular conception of Christ -- the "mystical Christ," an incarnation of an Infinite Personal Father sent to save humanity from the domination of sin and lead it to a higher moral path, and the "human Christ," a gentle, patient man who endured great suffering and persuaded his followers to devote themselves to ideals of justice. The first aspect, he said, corresponds to the "tendency toward the Good," giving shape to the universal, original faith that "the nature of things is on our side in the struggle against evil." ("The Ethical Christ " from *An Ethical Movement* W.L Sheldon Macmillan and Co. New York 1896; p. 111)

In the second aspect he found an inspiring legend of one who surrendered life itself in devotion to a "sacred Cause." (Ibid., p. 115) For Sheldon, that aspect of Christ, compellingly illustrated by his death on the cross, expresses the universal yearning "to merge our wills and our individual purposes into a larger Will or larger Purpose." (Ibid., p. 117) Christendom, he wrote, bows before the image of Christ on the cross "because men have been driven to think that the religious life of self-surrender is the highest and most perfect life." (Ibid., p. 118)

In this way, Sheldon naturalized and humanized Christianity, virtually baptizing Christ in Ethical Culture. While he could not accept the divinity of the figure or believe that his death was salvific, he could without apology share in revering him as a composite paradigm of goodness. He saw in Jesus a man who embodied qualities to which human nature instinctively aspires –kindness, selflessness, devotion to universal brotherhood. Seeing Christianity as an enshrinement of the Ethical Ideal redeemed for Sheldon the rich heritage of the religion in art, architecture, music, and literature:

When ... I see another in prayer or worship before the image of Christ, I may have to say: I cannot pray your prayer or take your attitude of worship toward the Personal Jesus; whether all the events you believe in actually occurred, I do not know; but the motive which makes you revere this human Christ exists in me also. There is the same instinctive reverence on my part toward that image or picture. Like you, I should be glad to realize something of that ideal in my own life. I, too, aspire to live in that spirit, to have that gentle, yet heroic, endurance, to surrender myself to some larger Purpose, to deny myself and walk in those footsteps, and to do what I can to help my fellows towards the higher life.

To others this "human" Jesus will have occupied a very definite place at some one epoch in history, just as the "mystical" Christ will have assumed a realistic, concrete shape in their theology. But I look upon this sublime type of character rather as something which has developed through a long progressive series of impressions covering many centuries. In the very effort to interpret the meaning of this wonderful life, each man himself has helped to give more concrete shape to the picture; he has sought to clothe it by means of the very ideal which it has awakened and called forth. The Christ of Gothic architecture, of the painters of Italy, of Thomas a Kempis, is a conception which has grown out of the heart's own yearnings as well as out of the events which took place in Palestine some eighteen or nineteen hundred years ago. This, to me, gives it an even greater significance and makes the picture seem the more true in a universal sense. When you show to me a Christ, as a type of character such as you would like to cultivate in yourself, then I am one with you. I see in this image the story of a struggling humanity, seeking for a means to conquer evil, and endeavoring to picture for itself a form of life by which that conquest

...

We might call this other Christ which is left to us who are unable consistently or conscientiously to accept the conventional beliefs, the "Ethical" Christ. It must always be regarded as in part a creation of the ideal in ourselves, because unless such an ideal already existed in the human heart, men would not accept it when presented to them from the outside. In all candour I shall have to say that it appeals to me, moves me, and inspires me far more than when I viewed the subject in the conventional way. It gives me greater pleasure now to read the Scriptures which tell the story of that life. I enjoy listening to the music of Handel's "Messiah" more than ever before. The

paintings of the great masters, which illustrate that life, stir me more profoundly; the splendour of the cathedral architecture, which speaks for the new spiritual view of life, has an even greater hold upon me. I can even read the “devotional literature” of Christianity, and be more helped and inspired by it.

Formerly I was constantly led to think how much I disagreed with such writings; but now it is the other way, and I keep thinking how much I am in sympathy with them. As long as we have to dispute about points of philosophy or the facts of history, the disagreement will have no end. But when we come down to the issue, what our hearts hunger and crave for, then we draw close together. We who may be dubious about historic records which are perfectly satisfactory to others, will nevertheless be equally anxious to see this ideal type of character more and more reproduced in ourselves. (Ibid., p. 119-120)

For all his veneration of the “Ethical” Christ, Sheldon considered the image a limited portrait of ethical character. Positing that ethically heroic people exhibit the characteristics that are most needed in their historic times and places, he suggested that Jesus of Nazareth captured the popular imagination because forgiveness and gentle humility were efficacious qualities among oppressed Jews in the Roman Empire. However, Sheldon believed that modern civilization, in which social conditions provide opportunities for substantive change, has need of more “aggressive” virtues. “What is called for now,” he said, “is not merely a sublime humility or passive endurance, but also the aggressive energy, the determined will, the venturesome mind by which we may go forward and plant anew the garden of life.” (Ibid., p. 126)

Endurance and Happiness

Next to Christianity, Sheldon’s most revered model of religion was Stoicism. For Sheldon, this humanistic philosophy of life, born in the Roman Empire, was “the highest product of pagan thought, the noblest gift to the world from Europe in antiquity.” (“The Message of the Stoics,” from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; p. 129) Its chief virtues, by Sheldon’s reckoning, were its unblinking acceptance of hardship and its somber training of the human will. Stoicism, he wrote, “inspired the heart to endure nearly every form of trial. It sweetened the cup of pain and sorrow.” (Ibid., p. 129) One of his favorite Stoics was the slave Epictetus, a “houseless, homeless, friendless, cripple belonging to the undermost stratum of human society” who found serenity and happiness through endurance. (Ibid., p. 131) He marveled at—and, as evidenced by his private journal, clearly envied—Epictetus’ disregard for external influences; he celebrated the man for his ability to maintain emotional equilibrium amid terrible suffering and deprivation.

Sheldon found in Stoicism something of a corrective for Christianity. Unlike the humble submissiveness of Christ, the endurance of the Stoics struck him as “almost savage in its masculine quality.” (Ibid., p. 133) Stoicism represented for him a crucial refinement of Christian virtue because it did not preach trust in a benevolent deity but only acceptance of inevitable conditions; it encouraged aggressiveness when it was of avail. It taught that discipline and difficulty make for strong character rather than meekness. The Stoic, said Sheldon, “loved strength of soul, just as the athlete loves strong and steady muscles.” (Ibid., p. 134) Beyond the popular understanding that Stoicism urged suppression of the passions, Sheldon saw its ultimate aim as strong will. “It was by his struggle with the passions of his nature, in the effort to bring them under control, rather than to crush them out, that [the Stoic] could get the will-power, the possession of which was his keenest delight,” he wrote. “These passions furnished the rough and stony path over which he walked in his process of self-discipline.” (Ibid., pp. 134-135)

Inspired by the Stoics, Sheldon repeatedly observed that character is attained by overcoming adversity through devotion to one’s ideals. He saw illness, the loss of loved ones, financial collapse, and other hardships as opportunities to inaugurate a higher mode of thought. Such trials, he taught, force a reassessment of one’s values and goals; they challenge the status quo of the inner life and point the way to spiritual liberation. He advocated self-reliance, but always in the context of one’s duty in the Grand Order of Things. In a 1901 address titled “The Good Side to Adversity,” he taught that one key to accepting loss and hardship is the acknowledgement that one is part of something far bigger and more important than oneself:

There is a great deal in just being able to set one’s teeth in the face of calamity and wait. It is that sort of grit which carries a man through a crisis coming from those circumstances over which he has no control. To give way to despair may only intensify the calamity, and one may have still less resistance power for the next blow when it comes. We must get it out of our heads that the

universe has been tuned in key to our small systems. We shall do much better to try and tune our systems to the key of the great universe.

One good that comes from adversity lies in the fact that it does make a person think, and, what is more, think hard. And I can assure you, if you have not been aware of it already, that human nature is very much averse to thinking. It takes an excitement in order to get the brain into full activity. The tendency is for the blood to go to the muscles rather than to the head.

When one's calculations are all upset, then one's brain is in a turmoil as one begins to ask the what or the why or the wherefore. Under these circumstances some persons are led to cynicism and others to despair. But if one escapes either of these two catastrophes as an outcome of his adversity and his new thinking, he does get a quickening of his inner life and a wider horizon than he ever had before. He realizes, perhaps, for the first time that he is part of a system of things and that he must bend his will to the great system of which he is an atom or a member.

("The Good Side to Adversity," Ethical Addresses, October 1901)

While Sheldon was considerably more confident speaking of hardship than of happiness, he recognized that his listeners were somewhat more interested in the latter. So, while he made a career of extolling Duty, endurance, and the "higher life," he occasionally addressed the question of whether such a life would bring one happiness. But because—as he admitted privately—he thought himself a virtual stranger to *joie de vivre*, it was for him a sticky and rather embarrassing question. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that the desire for pleasure is natural. "We hunger for it as we do for meat and drink," he wrote. "We appear to need happiness as we do sunshine and the light of day." ("Does High Conduct Bring Happiness?" from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; p. 148) At the same time, he observed that happiness is never unalloyed, that it is always experienced in a bittersweet mixture. Most importantly, he did not consider it a worthy object of striving. He asserted that proper conduct could not be effectively evaluated according to the amount of happiness it brings, since ethical standards were developed—or rather, ascertained—without regard for their personal effects. Civilized human beings, he said, "had an ideal of what they wanted to make of themselves or of what they wanted to become, long before they had scrutinized the motives which led them to pursue at that aim, or the sensations which accompanied them in the pursuit." (Ibid., p. 151)

Sheldon taught that those who pursue the Ethical Ideal experience a rare sort of happiness, a deep satisfaction in being true to one's Duty and honoring universal law. "The lower class of natures," he said, content themselves with mere idleness and comfort—a standard of happiness beneath even that of a dog. The person of a "superior nature," by contrast, wins intense happiness by arousing to action latent capabilities in the service of a worthy purpose. "[T]he man gets his real joy," he contended, "while struggling after his purpose, rather than in the ultimate accomplishment of it." (Ibid., p. 160) However, he warned that such happiness requires sacrifice and diligence; to obtain it, one must renounce the lower kind of happiness enjoyed by those who devote themselves to material success. "If you pursue what gratifies the beast," he wrote, "then you cannot have the higher sensations of the man." (Ibid., p. 156) He was sincere in urging his listeners to make a conscious choice between devotion to high aims and the acquisition of ordinary pleasure, for he believed that seeking happiness on both planes—that is, demanding that the Grand Order of Things coincide with one's personal interests—is a prescription for the worst kind of sorrow:

Now and then unhappiness may predominate overwhelmingly in certain lives. When a man will not undertake to adjust himself to the inevitable conditions, when he insists that the outer conditions ought to adjust themselves to him, when he will not put his life in accord with the circumstances which envelop him, when he insists on securing one form of pleasure or none at all, -- then he will not get what he wants, and will cry out against the Nature of Things: "Why has thou deceived me?" Such a man is doomed to the very quintessence of misery. The most acute and prolonged wretchedness usually comes to those who simply sit still and chafe internally because they cannot have their own way or get just what they think they want. They literally burn themselves up by a slow internal fire. Some of the saddest failures in all history have been where men who were possessed of high natures, fine capacities, and deep sentiments, consumed and lost their lives in raging against the Universe or against God, endlessly crying out, "Why has thou deceived me?"

(Ibid., p. 157)

But again, Sheldon saw in unhappiness the potential for personal redemption. For beneath the frustrated desires near the surface of consciousness, he believed that the reflective person could identify "divine discontent," the longing to reach a higher way. However often life may disappoint one, therefore, one faces the option of changing one's ultimate aim to realization of the Ethical Ideal, and of taking on hardship as a means to work toward that end. "We have something to create, a block of manhood to shape and fashion into noble form," he wrote. "Only that could be the supreme aim, which would call forth all the highest capabilities of our nature and concentrate them on one purpose." (Ibid., p. 163)

The Nature of Things: Sheldon's Social Philosophy

Introduction

Sheldon considered himself a "radical" by dint of his unconventional religious beliefs, but in social ethics his thought ranged from conservative to reactionary. He was, above all else, a defender of Great Institutions of Western Civilization -- marriage, the family, the state, free enterprise. He applied the central precepts of his philosophy of the individual -- Duty, natural law, the "stream of tendency" supporting moral goodness -- to each of the institutions to which the individual belongs. He encouraged strong expressions of individuality, but always in the service of the good of others; as a spouse, family member, and citizen, one must assert creativity but defer to the mandates of the greater whole as expressed in custom and law. In his addresses on the individual's place in society, he expressed reverence for the institutions that have evolved to bring out the best in each of their members. His attitude toward political reformers was detached and paternalistic; he was sympathetic with the movements for women's and workers' rights, but he consistently counseled patience, warned against narrow self-interest, and condemned civil disobedience. Nowhere did he advocate a sharp departure from the status quo.

On Marriage

Sheldon spoke of marriage as the most potent factor in the quality of a person's life. "According as you act in this matter," he wrote, "your life may be a success or failure." ("Marriage -- In the Light of the New Idealism," from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; p. 230) The key to a happy marriage, by his reckoning, was self-surrender -- devoting oneself to fulfilling the needs of one's spouse. In one of his first talks on the subject, "Marriage -- In the Light of the New Idealism," he took a hard line on the requirements of marriage.³

In that address, Sheldon hammered away at his belief in the necessity of selflessness. One who is not capable of it, who is "not willing ... to give up the caprice of the eye and caprice of the heart in lifelong devotion to another," ought not marry, he asserted. He believed that it is "only as we gradually rise out of brute selfishness, that we become capable of this higher relationship," and that the human race is "only partially worthy of this ideal institution" because it has "only partially evolved." (Ibid., p. 234) However, in a later address titled "The Marriage Problem of To-Day" -- an address, it should be noted, written in 1902, after 10 years of direct experience of the

³ His response to complaints of dissatisfaction was to throw responsibility squarely on the complainant:

If you, as the woman, cannot make the home sufficiently attractive; if you cannot be sufficiently attractive yourself, to hold the husband there and keep him interested in you and your life, then the trouble lies with you and with the home you have made. You were thinking of yourself and about being made happy yourself, and you were not thinking about adjusting yourself to him so as to make him happy.

On the other hand, if you, the man, do not have a happy home, if the wife is not the wife you would like to have her be, if she gives you a cheerless hearth, if she seems more interested elsewhere than in yourself, we say to you again: you are to blame. You ought to have been thinking of her happiness and of giving her so much pleasure that she would have been eager to provide you with a cheerful hearth and a happy home. We ask you: What have you been to her? You were thinking of your happiness, of having a beautiful home for yourself; and you were not thinking of adjusting yourself to her needs and to her happiness.

Until this fundamental fact is realized, every marriage must be a partial failure. Three-quarters of the sorrow, bitterness, and disappointment which come in married life, have occurred from just that one mistake of thinking the other to blame. You dreamed of the husband who would yield to your wishes; you dreamed of the wife who would follow your fancies. You reversed the whole normal process, you overthrew the very basis of the whole institution of marriage. And then you wonder why you have made a failure of it! (Ibid., pp. 226-227)

institution -- he softened his tone considerably, stressing the need for tolerance and forgiveness. "There are not two people on the face of the earth to-day absolutely, unselfishly devoted to each other," he owned, "because there is not an unselfish heart anywhere. We are not made that way. We all have our streaks of imperfection somewhere." ("The Marriage Problem of To-Day," Ethical Addresses, Walter L. Sheldon; S. Burns Weston, publisher; Philadelphia, 1902; p. 106)

In both addresses, but especially the latter, Sheldon railed against the romantic image of love that saturated popular literature and music. Talk of two people being "made for each other" or discovering "two hearts that beat as one" struck him as obscenely silly and contrary to human nature. Noting that the sentiments trumpeted by popular culture are peculiar to courtship and the first few years of marriage, he denigrated what he called "the spasm-theory of marriage." Those who cling to it, he wrote, are apt to believe that their love has died once the "mad ebullition of passion" has passed. Only those lovers who remain faithful beyond that point can reap the profound but unheralded joys of marriage, he taught. "Time must be given for a further reunion to arise on a spiritual plane, but where prose and poetry must jostle together in the daylight of stern reality," he wrote. "In that second experience, it is no longer the sentiment-standpoint of two souls with a single thought or the two hearts that beat as one -- a fantastic impossibility -- it is an awakening to the actualities of life, and to all its possibilities. An affection may then arise which can admit of imperfections in the one for whom it exists, which can cling in spite of weakness and selfishness and caprice." (Ibid., p. 110) In the earlier address, he even suggested that by wisely attending to the inevitable shift in feelings, married lovers can discover "a sentiment transcending in value all the poetic dreams of early life." (Ibid., p. 228) By his observation, only bland, passionless individuals find themselves stuck in bland, passionless marriages.

Sheldon's attitude toward divorce also softened over the years. Essentially, he considered marriage vows irrevocable. Writing in an age when the accessibility and social acceptability of divorce were hotly debated, he initially dismissed those who questioned the permanence of marriage as plainly selfish. "The plea such persons make is not a plea for mankind," he wrote in the first address, "not for the welfare of the human race in the future, but rather a plea for themselves and for their disposition always 'to do exactly as they please.'" (Ibid. p. 224) He rigidly declared that "the sanctity of this institution is beyond debate and beyond discussion," and vowed to keep clear of the "unholy" men and women who attacked it. (p. 235) But while he stood foursquare on the side of the Roman Catholic Church in the debate, he insisted that his reasons -- though unspecified -- were naturalistic:

From a purely rationalistic basis I believe in the indissoluble sanctity of this relationship. What we have to do is to take our stand once more on the original sanctity of the institution. We must go back behind the Church itself, to the great law of Nature. We must surround the institution with every possible solemnity; we must rest it, not on the authority of Church or of society, but look for its basis in the Nature of Things. We must refuse to secularize it. We must make it even more solemn than it has been made by the Church. We must see in it the ideal surrender of self. We are to make it religious by connecting it with what is universal in religion. That is to say, we should associate it with the idea of Law and of reverence for the principles of Duty. When this is done, and done completely, we shall at last realize all the possible ideals in the Institution of Marriage. (Ibid., pp. 244-245)

He conceded -- again, in agreement with the Catholic Church -- that family life can be destroyed by certain kinds of behavior, such as infidelity, and that separation is sometimes justifiable. Even in the case of a separation, however, the marital bond perdures, for "it was registered for eternity." ("Marriage -- In the Light of the New Idealism," p. 244) Remarriage in the lifetime of the estranged spouse was unacceptable.

In the latter address, he changed his tone markedly and loosened his official policy, if only slightly. First, he entertained as legitimate the arguments of social philosophers for "monogamic unions, freely contracted and at need freely dissolved by simple mutual consent," and he empathized with unhappily married people who chafed against the "tyranny of tradition." Secondly, rather than baldly asserting that "Duty" commands everlasting union, he laid out an anthropological argument by which he claimed that the evolution of permanent monogamy had been in integral element of the advance of civilization. "I believe," he concluded, "that all the most careful study goes to show that those types of races or people will be the most liable to survive, where the tendency continues in the direction of tightening the knot of the marriage-relationship, or where, at any rate, that relationship has of itself a tendency to be an abiding one, lasting until the separation of death." ("The Marriage Problem of To-Day," p. 100) Lastly, beyond restating his position that two people may justly separate rather than "continue in hell," he opened the door to the possibility of remarriage. He considered the legal dissolution of a marriage to be legitimate but insisted that the "spiritual tie" is indissoluble; accordingly, he held that the "innocent party" of a dissolved marriage

should be permitted to remarry under state sanction -- but without religious rites. At the same time, he called for a national divorce law forbidding the "guilty party," the spouse responsible for the breakdown of the marriage, to remarry. He condemned the "loophole" by which states grant uncontested divorces without ascertaining guilt, calling the resulting freedom of adulterous or abusive spouses to remarry "an outrage on the institution and an outrage on human nature." (Ibid., p. 102)

On the Rights and Privileges of Women

Sheldon's views on sexual equality were less than progressive. He lumped the women's rights movement in with the labor movement and the socialist movement, calling attention to the collective "social problem" of the age. "All this agitation now manifest in so many directions have developed out of the intense individualism which is characteristic of the nineteenth century," he wrote. "It is this which is responsible for the demand of the new woman for emancipation, for equality, for the obliteration of all distinctions between men and women." (from an address titled "The New Woman," as quoted in *Thoughts from the Writings and Addresses of Walter L. Sheldon*; compiled by Cecelia Boette, Nixon-Jones Printing Co., St. Louis, 1919; pp. 40-41) He claimed to "sympathize with woman in the demand for right to her individuality," and he underlined the philosophical axiom that all individuals are centers of thought and will. "The great declaration of Immanuel Kant that every human being is an end in himself stands unrefuted and should stand forever even unchallenged," he wrote. "When Milton says of man and woman that 'he lives for God' and 'she for God in him,' it seems as if an indignity had been put upon all mankind." (Ibid., pp. 41-42) But though he was conscious of the "many idle, mischievous illusions which have checked woman's development," he warned against unthinking and unrestrained rebellion against tradition. (Ibid., p. 47) "In so far as the demand on the part of woman is for the opportunity of doing as she pleases, I have no sympathy with it," he wrote. "This is the one feature I dread more than anything else in this whole agitation pertaining to the new woman." (Ibid., p. 44)

He stopped far short of declaring women to be equal to men or deserving of the same legal and social rights. (Ibid., pp. 41-42) He dodged the question, claiming that the concept of equality could not be applied to such dissimilar beings. Just as the differences between male and female bodies "were fixed in the structure of the human being hundreds of thousands of years ago," he contended that there are "like distinctions in the mental and spiritual structure of man and woman." (Ibid., p. 46) Those differences in character, he held, equip the sexes for different roles: "Woman, as a rule, shows her peculiar character in art, or in the life of the home; man, on the other hand, expresses himself through practical life in the outside world. It is as natural for the one to care for the one, as for the other to care for the other." ("Marriage -- In the Light of the New Idealism," p. 239) He believed that these differences should be "cultivated rather than suppressed; so that woman shall be more truly woman and man more truly man." (Ibid., p. 47) He asserted that the distinct roles of the sexes arise from natural differences, and that neither sex can be said to be superior to the other. "You can no more compare them in that regard than you can determine whether poetry is a higher art than music, or painting than sculpture." (Ibid., p. 47)

He emphasized a crude, unscientific, and patently prejudiced distinction between the "fundamental facts" of the nature of women -- presumably, qualities related to child-bearing -- and "mere tendencies" of the sex. For instance, he noted that a girl's mind develops more quickly than a boy's, but that among adults over 30, men exhibit a tendency to continue their intellectual growth while women are vulnerable to "arrested development." Likewise, he observed that women are less apt to succeed in professional careers because, unlike men, they are disinclined "to plod on alone, slowly, determinedly, energetically, for a score of years, in order to realize one purpose." (Ibid., pp. 48-49) Unlike the immutable "facts" of womanhood, however, he believed that a secondary quality of the sex could be overcome. "Now if a woman would only appreciate this mere tendency, which is characteristic of the very structure of her being, physically, mentally and spiritually, then by knowing it in advance she might be able to conquer it," he wrote. "One cannot get around facts or laws, but one can get around tendencies, if you know them beforehand." (Ibid., p. 48)

Sheldon approved of the opening of career opportunities to women. "The time has come," he wrote, "when we should give woman a chance to show what she can make of herself. She should have the right to enter all the spheres of life and occupation pursued by man, providing she really desires to do so.... Nothing is more injurious to the advance of civilization than to check any human being in his rights because of some abstract theory that we may believe in." (Ibid., p. 42) He quickly added, however, that any woman interested in pursuing a career is morally obliged to remain single. As Sheldon saw it, the right of a family woman to pursue a career is cancelled by "the rights of the society to which she belongs." A woman who chooses family life is bound by the Nature of Things to devote herself to the responsibilities of home life. And while a man can shut up his office at the end of the workday, he observed, "the care of the home is a complete occupation in itself." (Ibid., p. 43) Even a married woman without children could not justifiably work outside the home. "On this point I am old-fashioned and conservative," he

admitted. "I am still convinced that there is the loftiest possible opportunity for a career on the part of woman just simply in the effort to help her husband to achieve a career." Women who follow that path, he averred, "get the most satisfaction out of life, in spite of all the disappointments which may have come." (Ibid., p. 45) About the only stand he took against conventional expectations was his exaltation of the single life for women. "Many a woman would far more realize the ends of her being, be a more complete character, by remaining single, than by yielding to the dread of prejudice and marrying a man wholly unworthy of her," he wrote. "Some of the grandest, noblest, most ideal women in the world have been those who have never entered into this relationship." (Ibid., p. 45)

He evidently maintained neutrality on the question of women's suffrage. Though a contemporary of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Carrie Chapman Catt, he avoided touching on the subject in his addresses, probably because his listeners held sharply divergent opinions on it. In "Citizenship and the Duties of a Citizen," a Sunday School textbook published in 1904, he merely made mention of the issue in the chapter on voting. In a note to the teacher, he suggested having students investigate the limitations of suffrage, making sure they learned that women could vote in local elections in three Western states. He then advised the teacher not to "go far into a discussion as to the wisdom of woman suffrage." (Citizenship and the Duties of a Citizen, Walter L. Sheldon, American Ethical Union, Philadelphia, 1904; p. 136)⁴

On Social Reform

Sheldon lived in a time of historic social change, a time of strikes, lockouts, boycotts, and mass protests; a time The address was originally released in pamphlet form under the title "Marriage and Its Ideals." The condensed and polished later version, "Marriage In the Light of the New Idealism," was published in An Ethical Movement, an 1896 Macmillan and Co. collection of Sheldon's signal addresses. All excerpts and page references are from the latter version when unionists and political progressives fought hard for a national minimum wage, child-labor laws, and guarantees of humane working conditions; a time when journalistic muckrakers attacked the "boss" systems of urban governments; a time when feminists battled for voting and property rights. In contrast to his colleagues in New York, he stood apart from the fray, intensely interested but determinedly nonpartisan.

What set him apart from reformers -- both within and outside the Ethical movement -- was his all-consuming concern for individual reform. He believed that changes in the external structures of society would have no direct effect on the moral caliber of citizens. Further, "visionary schemes" that appealed to the "masses" struck him as contemptibly ignorant of history and sociology. A thinker well versed in the social and political philosophies of Plato, Thomas Moore, Rousseau, and Marx, he saw popular social theories as "lacking in the scientific spirit or wanting in philosophy"; he went so far as to say that "sometimes they read more like wild, incoherent cries, than sober, well-considered schemes worthy of being given a trial." ("Social Ideals and What They Signify to the Ethical Idealist," from An Ethical Movement, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; p. 287) He was put off by fanatics, "people who are fairly seething with the desire to improve the conditions of their fellow-men, or to realize some Social Ideal." (Ibid., p. 284) At the same time, though, he felt sympathy with their aims and listened carefully to their arguments. The first duty of an Ethical Idealist, he taught, is not to attack or encourage a reform movement, but to study it, to "read between the lines" of passionate rhetoric to understand the conditions that call it forth and the motives that fuel it. "The supreme work of an ethical teacher on the labour program should be, to explain and point out the symptoms, rather than to suggest the remedy or cure," he wrote. "He must lay his finger on the wrong." (Ibid., p. 294) An Ethical Idealist, said Sheldon, could not throw oneself into a revolutionary movement because it is too narrowly focused on changing temporal conditions. "[T]o the idealist," he wrote, "such an effort is always a mere stepping-stone toward a more remote purpose" -- that is, the moral development of the individual. (Ibid., p. 295) After all, he noted, establishment of an industrial system which apportioned property justly could not ensure that individual beneficiaries of the reform would use their newly acquired property for moral ends. He did concede, however, that the stepping-stones of social reform are essential to advancement toward the higher goal. "It is idle," he wrote, "to suppose that men could have the higher, inner, subjective life of the soul, while being obliged to earn their daily bread, in defiance of the principle of justice, by trampling over their fellow-men." (Ibid., p. 299) And while he refused to subscribe to any particular utopian vision, he hailed the "millennial dreams" put forth by reformers because they awakened the "lethargic masses" to present-day injustice and mediocrity and stirred enthusiasm for what could be. He did not expect socialists, communists, or anarchists to succeed in their revolutionary aims, at least in the United States, but he did believe they would counter conservative economic

⁴ The address was originally released in pamphlet form under the title "Marriage and Its Ideals." The condensed and polished later version, "Marriage -- In the Light of the New Idealism," was published in An Ethical Movement, an 1896 Macmillan and Co. collection of Sheldon's signal addresses. All excerpts and page references are from the latter version.

forces, raising American life to a higher plane of justice. In "Social Ideals and What They Signify to the Ethical Idealist," an address published in 1896 but probably written several years before, he further predicted that the "historic wave-movement" of his day would usher in an age of heightened ethical concern:

I am inclined to prophesy that, by the close of the coming [20th] century, the enthusiasm may be for what I have termed the Ethical Ideal. The ambition or expectation of being able to establish a perfect system of government, or the ideal industrial system, will have exhausted itself. The structure of our political institutions will have been very much improved, and our industrial system will be on a far higher plane. Neither of them will have been revolutionized, and the dream of the radical will not have come to pass. But, in the meantime, a few men, ever increasing in number as years go on, will have become more and more eager to realize this other aim, to concentrate every energy on developing the higher individual personality. The subjective spiritual side of our nature will have asserted its rights, perhaps even secured a supremacy. The plans for altering industrial, political, or social institutions will be weighed, first and supremely, from this other standpoint. The problem will be in every instance: How will it serve in developing man? You ask: Why not both enthusiasms at the same time? I must answer: That cannot be. No man can hold two objects supreme, although he may work for both in various ways. It would imply almost as much as having two religions. Your energies, your heart, your being, will concentrate along one line or the other. This is natural and inevitable. (Ibid., p. 298)

On Materialism

In the years just before his death, Sheldon all but recanted his optimistic prophecy of an age of ethical preeminence. His doubt that economic reform would nurture moral character was, he believed, vindicated by the response of Americans to increasing prosperity. What grieved him was that progress on the material plane did not foster a deeper appreciation of things spiritual -- the mystery of being, the unity of nature, the universal tendency toward moral goodness. Instead, he saw the soul, the "man within the man," obscured or surrendered in the quest for wealth. Materialism, as a school of philosophy, was on the wane at the turn of the century, but by his reckoning, people more and more behaved as if they believed in it -- as if the deepest human longings could be satisfied by the acquisition of material goods. This insidious progeny of materialism, he wrote, "is eating at the very vitals of our civilization." ("What the Ethical Idealist Has to Fight For," by Walter L. Sheldon, Ethical Addresses, Vol. XIII No. 1, Philadelphia, 1905; p. 12)

At first, he expressed his concern in a measured, philosophical tone. As the nation pulled out of the severe depression of the early- to mid-1890s, he warned his listeners not to assume that their happiness would rise in proportion to their improved economic conditions. In an 1899 address titled "Why Prosperity Does Not Always Bring Happiness," he owned that steady employment, higher wages, and healthier business interests would make a difference in peoples' lives, that "having a little more money may make it more possible for us to get a little more happiness," but he anticipated that the improvement would be slight. ("Why Prosperity Does Not Always Bring Happiness," by Walter L. Sheldon, Ethical Addresses, Series VI No. 9, Philadelphia, 1899; p. 186) He further predicted that the wave of economic vitality would precipitate "an enormous amount of disappointment" and "a great deal of bitterness." (Ibid., p. 172) He founded his prediction on the observation that ease of life makes people more sensitive to hardship and more exacting in their demands. He spoke of his dread upon meeting men he had known in times of adversity, once-kind and companionable men whose material success had spawned selfish preoccupation with their comforts and discomforts -- a condition he termed "spiritual dyspepsia." That increasing prosperity brings with it increasing discontent is fortunate, he said, for it spurs individuals to work harder and fuels further scientific and social progress; nevertheless, he wrote, the inevitable dashing of expectations "gives a shock to the moral character" which could undercut commitment to ethical principles.

To his eyes, the national character that emerged in the dawning of the new century proved that his worst fears had been realized. Laborers had secured better pay and conditions, and the middle class was swelling and gaining political strength, but while he had hoped that such advances would predispose the American people to turn their attention to "the spiritual side" of human nature, he saw only a growing obsession with the craving for affluence. In an address delivered at the 1905 AEU assembly, he vented his disgust at the decline of moral values:

It is doubtful whether in all history the human race has ever reached quite as low a level of groveling materialism as it has reached at this precise moment. The conditions were bad enough twenty years ago; but they are worse to-day. There have been other periods, when special classes

of men have fallen low in their ideals. In our age it is no longer a matter of class, for the whole human race would seem more or less infected.

...

The earth has opened up its riches as it has never done before and may never do again. The change has come suddenly, almost as it were in a night. At the beginning of the twentieth century the race of man has waked up to find itself possessed of hoards of treasure such as even the Aladdin of earlier times never dreamed of. And the temptation has been too great for the soul to withstand. The human race has become convinced at heart that satisfaction is to be had out of "the world and the things of the world." It is determined to feed its senses with all that is to be had out of this life and the next one too. Mephistopheles is playing a deep game and his stake is high.

...

Mankind has never before had the opportunity to get a full taste of the earth's riches, -- eat them, drink them, wear them, parade in them, murder with them, glut itself with them. We can only learn from experience. The present generation must pay the death penalty with the rope around its neck, whereby future generations may take home the lesson and find their soul. ("What the Ethical Idealist Has to Fight For," pp. 8-10)

His doleful observations forced him to reassess the value and prospects of Ethical Culture. He told the assembly he had been drawn to the movement because of its practicality -- summed up in the slogan, "Deed, not Creed" -- and its respect for intellectual freedom. Early on, he had believed that "the religious millennium would begin to draw nigh" as the movement loosened the shackles of dogma. After 20 years of service to ethical religion, however, he was forced to admit that it had not been "winning its way," that in fact the world was "much farther away than it was twenty years ago, from all that is dearest and highest and most precious to me." (Ibid., p. 8) Belief in dogmas -- including the existence of hell and a vengeful God -- had declined, but not in the course of a search for truth. Instead, people were merely seeking and crafting "a comfortable religion, a soothing religion, one that shall make them feel safe in this world and safe for the next -- a religion that shall give them a sense of after-dinner comfort for body and soul alike." (Ibid., p. 10) He saw that Duty was not becoming the central element of religion. Instead, he said, "we have been getting art, a sensuous art, in the guise of religion, and an irrational mysticism in the place of creeds." (Ibid., p. 10) He recognized that, contrary to his earlier convictions, the abolition of creeds would not necessarily lead to spiritual regeneration and emphasizing deed over creed would not necessarily nurture a hunger for righteousness. He even doubted if the "practicality" of Ethical Culture was much of a guard against corruption: "There may be as much of formalism and conventionality, of make-believe and subterfuge in a religion of deeds as in a religion of creeds." (Ibid., P. 11)

His disillusionment did not shake his faith in the potential of ethical religion. On the contrary, he felt that his experience had made it a more personal gospel and a more worthy mission. After getting his "bearings," he decided that the movement's future lay in an inward direction, in discovering that "the deed like the creed must have its roots in the living soul." (Ibid., p. 14) Unless the movement promotes spiritual development, he concluded, its aims are too shallow to be called religious:

Behind the deed as well as behind the creed there must go a faith of man in himself, in his own spiritual nature. Without this, his honesty and rectitude are only mechanical, like the good behavior of the dog which growls at his feet. It has its value, but it is not religion. When, however, in the presence of the whole animal kingdom, in the presence of the dust he treads on, yes, in the presence of the whole physical universe, he can say and feel, "I am better than thou," -- at that moment he stands on another plane and his conduct acquires a meaning it did not have before.

The richest gift of the religious consciousness has not been the faith in a God, nor the hope of heaven, nor the decrees of conscience, but rather the belief in soul, -- yours and mine, soul anywhere and everywhere. It took the human race a hundred thousand years and more, to grow up to this conception. All the burden of all teaching of all religion of all time has centered in that one query: What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? At the present moment the human race is bartering its spiritual nature for simple dirt. It is the soul of man we are called upon to rescue, whatever our creed may be or distrust of creed, whether our religion be that of an Ethical Society or of the established Church, whether we are atheists, agnostics, theists, Jew or Christian. It is not

the God-belief, the Christ-belief, the belief in heaven which is menaced to-day, but just this faith in the human soul, in the worth of man's spiritual nature.

...

And so it is that I give my answer as to the direction in which every earnest religious teacher is called upon to throw the emphasis of his efforts. He must put up a new fight for the human soul. A bread-and-butter religion of simple philanthropy will not do. There is something worse than starving or aching bodies. There is something higher even than feeding the hungry or clothing the naked. If we do anything for men's bodies, its ultimate purpose is that we may reach the spiritual nature and build up the soul. (Ibid., p. 11 - 12)

A Tortured Soul: Sheldon's journal

In addition to his formal writings Walter Sheldon bequeathed to posterity a private journal, a painfully revealing collection of self-criticism and cries of despair. This slender, leather-bound book, as long as a reporter's notebook and slightly wider, contains nearly 700 entries, all written in pencil. Because he was writing for his eyes only, he made liberal use of abbreviations and was careless about punctuation and grammar. The script is so rough throughout as to require deciphering, and many of the entries expressing anguish are written in a frenzied hand; some words are simply illegible. Though he did not date any of the entries, sparse references to dates indicate he kept the journal from roughly 1887-91; his last entries describe his first encounters with Anna Hartshorne, whom he married in 1892. The journal tells little about the circumstances of his life. It does mention that he had a dog (it annoyed his neighbors), that he lived in an apartment building or duplex (he felt he had neglected the family that lived upstairs), and that he was chronically short of money. In the main, though, the journal is a chronicle of Sheldon's inner life: It served as a tool for self-improvement and a catharsis for the feelings he would not permit himself to share with friends. It presents a vivid portrait of a guilt-ridden, alienated man, a man of intense but repressed feelings, a man who yearned for affection and professional success but doubted he would ever attain them. One can only guess at his reasons for leaving it in his papers; in omitting the names of the people he most despised, he admitted his fear of its discovery. Perhaps he hoped that someone, safely removed by time, would finally understand and appreciate his torment.

Blunders! Blunders! Blunders!

Sheldon was self-critical in the extreme. The form of journal entry he made more than any other was marked with the codes "Me.," "E.," or "N.," evidently denoting "mistake," "error" and "note." He recorded all sorts of faux pas, from "the asinine remark to (longtime board President) Robert Moore about the weather at St. Louis Club" to "smoking in presence of the Goldmarks (the family of Adler's wife) even tho they are accustomed to it." If he ever believed himself to have behaved well at a social function, he did not make note of it:

E. of offering the lamb to Miss G before she had offered it to me

E. mistake last year of not calling on Mr. [E.N.] Plank [first resident superintendent of the Self-Culture Clubs] when invited

E. of not speaking to Mrs. Taussig [probably wife of James Taussig, vice president and de facto president of the board in 1886] at the wedding of R.J. Taussig

E. Carelessness of pointing with my fingers at persons when conversing with Mrs. B. at supper. [Possibly a reference to the wife of William Brandenburger, director of advertising for Anheuser-Busch Cos. and one of the Society's chief lay leaders.]

Me. at the reception of not taking away the chairs & introducing the people and moving among them

E. mistake not to rise when Mrs. Lackland came up to speak to me at Mrs. Plant's

E. of offering Mrs. Taussig my left arm when going out to dinner.

E. The mistake of the carelessness of housekeeping and carelessness at evenings of Social Science Club

Me. Mistake of going to the Leap Year Ball on Saturday evening the mistake in getting myself in that position when I could not get out

N. of showing Miss N. the gift of another friend to me which was prettier than her gift -- unkind & unfeeling thoughtlessness

N. when coming to dinner extremely hungry not sufficient restraint and self control over eagerness to quiet the physical unrest of hunger.

Me. My blunder in staying so late with Professor & Mrs. Ives [Halsey C. Ives was director of the St. Louis School of Fine Arts, where the Society met until 1912, and guiding force behind the building of the Palace of Fine Arts, which would become the St. Louis Art Museum after the World's Fair]

E. Not giving the armchair to Miss Boeck but keeping it myself

Me. The carelessness that comes upon me in table manners from eating alone. Stop it

Rem. [Remember] Black Wednesday. after visit to Mammoth cave. 1 arrival. rush of reminiscences of my failures and the conditions which led me. in a word the "ghosts" 2 the discovery of mistake toward Mrs. Dormitzer. 3 the hour of gloom before the fireplace in the afternoon under the depression of the influence of working with a man so much stronger than myself in what he can do. 4. evening -- spilling the coffee on Mrs. L's dress

Me. Blunders! Blunders. no end to the blunders!

Me. Another F.P. [faux pas] at the Greeley lecture about sitting on the platform.

E. of bowing to Miss R when apparently she did not wish to bow to me.

Blunders! Blunders! Blunders! [capitalized and underlined]

Me. Blunder at the Single Tax League one of the worst in my life. fortunately it has come early enough to teach me a lesson.

Blunders! Blunders! I wonder how I manage to keep alive here in spite of them all.

Perhaps no other single aspect of social intercourse caused Sheldon as much consternation as his clothing. His difficulty in dressing appropriately was to him a sign of his alienation. "I try to be like other people at least in dress," he wrote in one entry, "but even then I make a failure of it." He criticized himself for not wearing a dress suit to dinner at the Costes, and for being the only man at the wedding of 56

"Mr. N" -- other than the ushers -- who wore evening dress. He was chagrined at discoveries of disheveled clothing -- allowing his undershirt sleeves to stick out beneath his cuffs during a visit to "Mrs. L," having his socks down "in presence of ladies," going about with his necktie improperly tied, going to "Miss A's" with "untidy cuffs or wristbands," and speaking from the platform with a hole in one of his coat sleeves. On one occasion he believed he had spoiled an evening at the home of Washington and Martha Fischel, two of the Society's most supportive members, by failing to clean his boots beforehand. One of his many dislikes about St. Louis was that the coal dust that saturated the air in the late 19th and early 20th centuries left layers of soot everywhere; he resolved to keep his clothes carefully covered at night to prevent them from being soiled, and was angry with himself when he forgot. He revealed in one entry his "two supreme reasons why I must lay stress on elegance of dress." The first was "to obviate the suspicion of the crude or the vulgar in my radicalism"; the second was that, because he was generally lacking in social graces, he felt he had to take extra precautions to avoid being perceived as "a boor or indifferent to opinion of others."

Sheldon was intrigued by games but embarrassed by his ineptness while learning them. He scolded himself for "playing at bowling when not knowing anything about it at the club" and for "going into whist [a card game similar to bridge] when I was so poor a player, thus giving the impression of being an 'unfinished mind.'" Several times he resolved "not play as amateur a game with strangers where I cannot play well." Once he learned to play a respectable hand of whist, he became finicky about keeping to the rules, believing that allowing deviations "spoils you when you come to play with those who do follow the rules." His characteristic rigidity sometimes made him a trying partner; on one occasion he regretted "taking the game so seriously as to anger Malcolm by caring about the accuracy of the count and blaming him." And though he came to enjoy this innocent diversion, he worried that it encouraged him to let his guard down; he once upbraided himself for "playing whist too much and being too familiar" on a train trip.

It is easy to understand why Sheldon was perceived as stuffy and self-conscious; he regularly berated himself for speaking without proper restraint:

N. referring harshly of the South before one from the South.

Me. of reading my report at Bd meeting when it was not cared for. Should have laid it aside at once.

Me. wretched error of going to Mr. [John Calvin] Learned [Unitarian minister] about the case of Dr --. to think that I could be guilty of such indelicacy.

Me. error of mingling freely in dispute of the Board

Me. of my way of dealing with the elder Mr. Coste [father of treasurer Paul Coste] when meeting him and finding him ill.

Me. of alluding to my circumstances to Dr. [Charles W.] Stevens [board president in 1887]

Me. in speech at Round Table of alluding to president of U.S.A. and to capitalists so being personal indirectly (Mayor and John T. Davis)

N. grievous mistake of speaking to Mrs. [L.D.] Hildenbrandt [one of the principal fund-raisers for the Self-Culture Clubs] about "my conscience being free of the matter"

Me. of criticizing Mrs. Stone to Miss Lyon and Mrs. Hildenbrandt

Me. of mentioning to Mrs. [J.A.] St. J [Mrs. St. John was another principal fundraiser for the Self-Culture Clubs] the fact of the warning I had received not to deliver the lecture on Jesus.

Me. The egregious blunder at board meeting of saying of Prof. A. [Adler] "he will come when he pleases"

Me. I talk too much -- give too many explanations and reasons, especially to ladies

Me. of telling Mrs. [garbled name] what Mrs. Nelson had said about ladies getting contributions. [Mr. N.O. Nelson was the original treasurer of the Self-Culture Hall Association.]

Me. careless speech verging on indelicacy at dinner table at Beedes to Mr. F.

Me. repeating to Mr. D the very same remarks about Harvard I had made the last time I had met him.

Me. careless levity over the "flock"

N. Bite off my tongue for my brutal report of what was said to me about Mrs. Wiggins

Rem. Remark of [Thomas] Carlyle [19th century British writer] "Keep your mouth shut and you will feel so much more compact!"

Me. of the "letting down" Sunday night at Black's. when one lets down should do it alone.

N. That was a carefree and unfeeling remark which I made to Mr. F. in the presence of Dr. F [Washington Fischel, a prominent member of the Society and husband of Martha Fischel, a Self-Culture Hall instructor and later the first woman president of the Society]

Me. of speaking once too much at the Informal Club. "speech is silver, silence is golden"

Me. of arguing with housekeeper when she was half intoxicated

Me. I talk too much

Sheldon saw himself as disorganized, forgetful, and lazy. He chastised himself for his chronic tardiness, listing the inconveniences he frequently caused himself and others by missing trains, arriving late for meetings and social engagements, and making club members await his arrival outside the Society's rented quarters. Clearly an absent-minded man, he often noted with shame that he had missed appointments, forgotten to pass along information, and misplaced important items. At times he criticized himself for failing to make comprehensive plans; at other times he bemoaned his "waste of time thro having complicated arrangements." He was mortified by his frequent inability to remember names, a problem he attempted to rectify by listing the names of people he did not know well but was apt to encounter. He chided himself for his "absence of method" and "careless waste of time." He often criticized himself for a lack of preparation for talks before Self-Culture Clubs, Sunday School classes, and other gatherings sponsored by the Society. He set for himself a demanding schedule, yet he was forever frustrated with his habit of rushing to complete vital tasks. His procrastination in personal matters also was an endless bane: He told himself that his delay in having his eyeglass chain mended led to the breakage of the glasses, and that his dog collar was lost "thro carelessness in not taking trouble to lock it. Putting it off." He was upset with his "constant way of getting and spoiling nice things" -- including an oak table and washstand he had neglected, a rifle he had allowed to rust, and, of course, clothing that had gotten soiled and torn; he told himself he did not "deserve to have them." He often took himself to task for failing to keep his room tidy and his books properly arranged, a habit he considered "suggestive of a possible untidyness of my mind -- not keeping my ideas in shape and order -- not having a clearing out & clearing up of mind sufficiently often." He lamented that his "subjective nature" kept him from efficiently handling "more practical matters"; his response to his repeated shortcomings alternated between resolve to be more diligent and resignation to his habit of -- in the oft-quoted words of Wordsworth -- "moving about in worlds unseen."

The Wound in the Side

Underlying Sheldon's critical watchfulness of his speech and behavior was a tormenting consciousness of his self-interest. Believing that impure motivation turned a right into a wrong, he demanded that even his thoughts and feelings conform to his ethical ideals. He repeatedly castigated himself for desiring notoriety, for longing for the appreciation of Society members -- even for wanting a strong showing on Sunday morning. "I must watch my emotions," he resolved. "It is so easy to think I am doing something for a cause when I am doing it for myself." He even questioned his motive in taking note of his errant behavior, reminding himself that his penitence did not give him permission to forgive himself. "One needs to be careful in keeping a confessional book, just as attending confessional," he wrote. "The merely setting down the wrong does not atone. The shame of the guilt is still there." In other entries, he told himself that the practice of recording misdeeds was, by itself, shallow -- that he must "scrutinize and record the wrongs of inner feelings as well -- the very source of wrong." Guilt was such a constant that he sought to appreciate it as a helpful companion: "There is after all an element of laziness about me. I only do my best work when goaded by disappointment. What would the world be good for without pain. It is that which makes men have dep [sic] feelings and goads men into thinking." In a similar entry, he reminded himself "that a man is never going to do effective work unless he feels uncomfortable."

Sheldon's self-doubt seems to have been unrelieved. The journal is shot through with cries of sorrow over what he saw as a failed life. His uncertainty about his vocation, which earlier had prompted him to leave the Ethical movement and try his hand at medicine, would continue to plague him. In an entry he wrote upon turning 30, he noted that he had "fulfilled the condition of success of long preparation & waiting" but that his failure lay "in not taking the right direction." He regretted that he had "no permanent profession" and that he was "too far advanced in

life to learn a profession and have time or determination to make a success of it at an age when it is clear that I am not of the stuff ever to be at the top." In assessing the life of the mind at that milestone, he noted his success in "getting culture so far as it meant reading books yet failure so far as it meant reaching an equipoise on a higher level, so far as getting suavity of soul conditions."

Sheldon repeatedly declared a sense, if not a decision, that it was time to leave the profession and seek one less fearsome and harassing. One such collection of entries began after William Salter, the leader of the Chicago Society, spoke before the St. Louis Society. Salter evidently left at least one of his listeners in reflective or awestruck silence. "What would I not give," wrote Sheldon, "if some one were to say to me or of me too what Mr. N. [Charles Nagel, a prominent St. Louis attorney and founding member of the Society] said of Mr. Salter that he did not want to speak to him or anybody else for several hours after. But it will never be." The heartache Sheldon felt upon hearing Nagel's praise of Salter wore on for days, culminating in a tentative decision to find and train a successor in preparation for his departure. In a light, calmly written notation made sometime later, Sheldon identified the first of the following entries as having been written "the Sunday after S. was there"; the next two entries in the journal evidently sprang from an encounter with someone at the Informal Club, a group of liberal clerics that met monthly for luncheon discussions⁵

I have reached the turning point at last. It is settled now. Whether it is late or soon it does not matter. But I give it up. My spirit is broken. This day has decided it. It was all a mistake. Five years are nearly over. I am where I began. Now to hold myself together until I find my successor. My life is stranded. I must take the consequences. I have brought it upon myself I mistook my profession. Today was the test. I knew it was coming. This occasion decided it. From this time on my course is clear. To finish up what I have begun to fix the work so that it can stay of itself. No more care about establishing myself. No more thought about my personal hold. Absolute indifference about my own standing. That is over. But what of me now! My eyes had been dry but today not today

...

Ref. [Reflection] This Informal Club certainly has given me an experience, a good many experiences

...

Ex. [Exclamation] I am tired so tired, so very tired even to being almost sick. Worse still I am sick of myself so discouraged so disheartened with myself. I have struggled so hard agonized so much and yet accomplished so little. Saddest of all, worst of all I have suffered so much at my own failure that I have committed the most selfish act of my profession in not being able to be absorbed in the suffering of others. Is it possible that a man could strike lower depths than when I be face down and moan in my soul. Yet why don't I disclose it? Was it a mistake. He does not yet understand it. He has experience [sic] suffering from one kind of experience He does not yet see that the identical degree of pain may come from another cause [written in margin] And yet I have never been so tired as to be willing wholly willing to give it up and die

Q. [Question] Was that a mistake that Sunday afternoon with Mr. Nagel. I wonder. I wonder

Sheldon felt compelled to make a significant contribution, but he despaired of doing so. Many of his journal entries bemoaned his failure -- as a lecturer and clergyman, as a scholar, as a man -- and sought to explain it as inevitable. In one typical entry, he ventured that he was "too earnest to be successful on a large scale. Too subjective." In another he resolved to "go into the world to conquer this sense of being an unfrocked priest." His emotional pain kept him from working with "continued purpose," leaving him virtually convinced that he was inadequate to fulfill his role. He felt deficient in everything his vocation required: he considered his education wanting, his public speaking style stiff and dull, and his social skills abysmal. He feared that his unconquerable daydreaming -- his habit of "moving about in worlds not realized" -- rendered him incompetent at directing the practical affairs of the Society and the Self-Culture Halls, yet he never let go of his yearning to be both "a man of culture and a man of the world."

⁵ The Informal Club continues to meet under the name Sandwich Club. All leaders of the St. Louis Society have belonged.

Only rarely were his expressions of despondency and self-doubt countered by words of encouragement to himself:

Me. of selection of a subject for lecture in New York. That word "much improved." why is it that I always appear young and yet feel so old.

Rem. with frail human nature such as it is be content with limited results many may be climbing the hill but many stop & digress in the ascent

Rem. the factor in in [sic] my failure is my want of persistence the factor of my success is my restlessness. encourage the last keep up the causes of the restlessness, but discourage the causes that cause the want of persistence.

Me. mistake of my life effort to be a man of the world when I am not that at all.

Rem. The reason that makes success so much harder for us than men in the world (politics or business) is That we are restricted to purity of methods -- hence so harassing.

Rem. the world loves most the man who works with All the life that is in him never stopping to breathe or rest. To be widely loved one must be a Chas. Kingsley> [I 9th century English novelist] or Robert Ekmere.

Ex. How it digs into me, this impression as though I were offering myself where I am not wanted. what a relief it would be to be in a work where what I did was something which the world not only needed but wanted

Rem. I wanted to be a man of culture and a man of the world but I was not large enough to be both and I must choose till there is no doubt where my choice lies

Suppose I was to begin all over again. Suppose Tolleton was right

Rem. My mistake of youthfulness, not giving the impression of maturity

Reg. [Regret] I wish I had given a full year to mathematics at Cambridge, England

Ex. How it makes me jump or sits me ajar when a letter on matters of business comes from St. Louis to my retreat in the mountains. Will I be able to be [a] man of affairs as well as [a] man of thoughts?

Ex. How utterly impossible it is to be the man of thought and the man of affairs. instance. getting settled in the fall -- [garbled word] how it irritates me!

Ref. I can never succeed because I can never "fill the gallery" and yet that is essential in order even to keep up the courage of the serious. (But the gallery does not mean the poor who cannot afford better seats)

Ref. I simply dare not do it and cannot even think of it. A financial crisis, the loss of three or four friends from change of sympathy, the death of three or four, the whisper of a false scandal, and where am I then? stranded. I cannot please the multitude, even the few only partially. Each one sympathizes with only part of what I do or one direction. The deepest that I can do, my best, I cannot do because those for whom or with whom I could do are shut away from me by a wall of suspicion. Where I touch on what I know most about and feel the most deeply I have the least hearing. And yet I cannot move hand or foot. To whisper my own doubts of my own capacity would increase the doubts of others. In this country a man must believe in himself before he can make others believe in him. Yet I must stay till I find another to fill my place. But each year I wait it will make it more and more difficult to do anything with myself when I must step out. I have nerve and pluck, but where would be the years for the new apprenticeship. Oh that figure -- "the wound in the side"

Ex. I have nerve, energy, will, mind, gift of speech, belief in what I am doing. But others with the same gifts do three times as much. ergo _____

Rem. One thing is certain. If I do not succeed the defect lies wholly with myself. People have treated me as well as I deserve to be treated. If I cannot awaken their enthusiasm I may be worthy of it but I have lacked the power in my self to call it out

Ex. A man can smile and smile, and yet be awfully unhappy. That gnawing sense that I mistook my vocation!

Ex. This sense of depression, of gathering oneself together for a pull when one is torn in pieces internally where in the depths have I not been this last fortnight. And yet it is not physical. It has its reason. It is the sense of defect, the littleness of results beside what I have been working for! Oh my God I keep saying it over to myself why not here I suffer so much myself that I have not time to sympathize with the suffering with others

Me. I don't get time to do any reading am falling behind. Where will I be in a few years

Q. Am I a "disappointed man"? What does that mean? defeat in one's main life-purpose? The accomplishment of only a small part of what one sets out to accomplish? Certainly I have defeats enough. How many efforts I have made which only drove me back into the same haven from which I started. How many times I feel "knocked down," struck to the earth. Perhaps "a disappointed man" means one who has not accomplished what he has felt himself capable of. But that would include the failures both of fools as well as geniuses

Q. Remember that remark. You are doing this work because you desire to establish yourself " find a position or sphere of work for your faculties in the world. 'How much does that mean

Q. I try to analyze my motives. I seek to stifle all unworthy suggestions

Rem. If a man is to know and influence the world he must move near the center of the whirl, where the forces are the most concentrated. The sources whence the energies move out which control the events

So much effort is used up in just trying to be like other men, and I know I am not like other men.

Q. It is true of a strong teacher that he is filled to overflowing with one idea. He wants to put it forward. Have I such an idea, or do I just want to be a teacher and find the idea afterward.

Q. It does come to us all at times the feeling. Are they worth it. is it worth the while. Can we do anything. My God! My God -----

Ref. I suppose the one elemental difference between the successful & the unsuccessful man is that the one always looks for the obstacle in himself. The other in conditions.

Ref. Self sacrifice comes hard. When it does not help the growth of the receiver but merely makes up for his defects at the same time that is not merely giving up a satisfaction to the other but surrendering his own opportunity or means of growth. Then the problem is hard.

E. That awful point of confusing one's cause with one's personal ambition.

Rem. A man may delude himself by giving dignified names to very unworthy feelings.

E. What a ludicrous dream one can build up and see it vanish like a bubble come and gone -- it leaves no void. only a dream

Ex. I may as well face the truth. My effort has been a failure. In my work I am a failure. I have now worked four years and have not established a work. It still hangs by a thread. A cloudy sky or

a concert or an uninteresting subject and they stay at home. I have put all my soul in it and am burning up inside. My hair is getting grey. I have suffered over it all the agony which usually men only suffer when they taste the bitterness of grief. I do not know how to smile, have almost forgotten what it means in St Louis. I ache all over in spirit. I cannot find a method. I try everything. I have given up my soul to this. I know not how to go ahead. I know not how to stop. How long will it take for me to wear out

Oh! but a man does feel so shackled!

Res. There is just one thing for me to do. I am so unlike the other men in my work that I can be of no good or consequence to them. I must push out in a new field where they do not reach. I gain influence so slowly that were I am not alone I can do nothing. I am adapted to a certain class of minds and they are not the kind which the other men bring or which the movement in its present spirit would draw. I must work and wait and find my own field. It requires some philosophy to hold the will firm in the face of the kind [of] looking-down-from-the-height feeling which I receive from the men with whom I feel myself equal. But then it's a small matter. It is not for the esteem of others that I work. But yet I am that human that I would like to do one special piece of work which could distinctively bear the imprint of myself

Ex. It's so pathetic that a man can help the world more with his second-best than with his first-best

Ex. Oh this wound in the side. My God! My God! It takes so much energy and so little comes

Ex. After all what it's all worth! a man must say it sometimes. It comes like the tears and brings relief I pull so hard and it won't come

Q. Is it right to dissemble to appear gay or lighthearted when my heart is like lead. No wonder Mrs. G thinks I think the world about right! Yet I can't show the truth. For myself I can see no future I must inevitably retire sooner or later. I have no profession no means of permanent livelihood I cannot have a home. My life is going to be a failure (although for the sake of the cause I am consecrated to, I may not for a moment disclose my feeling). Yet I could stand up against this if I saw the world getting better. But I can't even see that. I work in the spirit of that young Captain of the Salvation Army, but without the buoy and faith

Ex. I feel as tho I were bleeding all over. I ache in my very soul.

R. I'm not working from the heart now, but from the will. It tells

Me. Of showing my consciousness of the size of my audiences

What a curious thing it is my [encountering] a business man and asking him the question "What do you think of the silver question?" me!!

Ref. I am so disappointed in myself. I accomplish so little! And I seem to waste so much time. I get scarcely more than a half dozen hours a day. I don't keep up with the world. My brain does not improve as a self acting instrument. If I go to the country it sleeps. I love to travel, to be on the move, to be in the whirl in order to have the incentive to think. I am not one thing or another.

Good God! I have given my life blood to this thing for five years and I am half dead. I have given my all and yet -- and yet -- Well I suppose it must go as it is. I see men with less devotion make more and better friends. I can't make myself understood. Sometimes I even think I am an unselfish man after all. But this trying to please people, be what they want to have me be, trying to go in four directions at once Oh I'm tired I'm tired. Somehow it seems as tho --. well I can't do anything but go it alone. but I shall tumble ere long and my light go out. But if my work can go on, I shall be at peace. It is a wonder as it is, stranger in the world as I am that I have accomplished anything at all. I had no right to expect it, to expect anything.

If only I could ever catch up People want so much and expect so much If only I could get to the point where people would have faith in me without wondering why I do it this way or that way or the other way. But there's no use It cannot be. Never mind what people may not be to me. What I am to think of is what I can be to them.

The Nucleus of the Earnest

Sheldon's guiding aspiration was to make his mark as an Ethical leader. That vocation, which he defined as spurring people to rise above mediocrity, was the path by which he hoped to raise himself above mediocrity. Whatever may have been the actual source of his lingering sense of despair, he interpreted it as the sober recognition that he was failing on both counts. "I suppose there is about as acute misery in this profession of religious teacher as a human could suffer," he wrote in the very first entry in the journal. "It is silent but it is intense. The awful, awful jar which makes the soul ache, ache so much." In many other entries throughout the journal, he explored the hardships and disappointments of his work:

Rem. that the nucleus of the earnest is very small at all times. The Savonarolas must be alone in their cells even while they live in this world. [Girolamo Savonarola, 1452-98, was an Italian monk, a religious and political reformer who was burned at the stake for heresy.]

Rem. the penalty of isolation attached to my profession. in the very need of being impersonal whereas it may be the duty of men in other professions to regard & allow their course in consideration for the feeling of others, for us it is a duty to disregard such feelings, to take the one path (hence reason for not marrying) see effect of Beecher's political course & his loss of friends [Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe and an early contemporary of Sheldon's, was a clergyman and lecturer]

Rem. whereas for the artist (e.g. Professor L.) policy being polite, diplomacy would be a duty. for me in my profession it would [be] a crime [Professor Halsey C. Ives was director of the St. Louis Museum and School of Fine Arts, where the Ethical Society met in rented quarters]

Rem. the chief value of our work must be in the new direction in which it leads. the wastes of unitarianism is in adapting to the old. All that is new that we give may live. the old will not live. it is purely for the present. Will the time ever come that men believe in me, not in what I teach but in me as a man

Ex. What wears a man out is that sense of defeat in winning people that will hold. The loss of a man's hold on people is what wears him out. It isn't the work that wears

Ref. How inevitable it is. to accomplish a result one needs to arrange and plan and work desperately hard with a view to twice the results one actually gets and not only that as a stimulus he needs to expect twice the result he will actually get and then keep up his courage when only the I comes.

Ref. What eats into a man is this dread uncertainty of a I or losing hold on people. A man never knows just where his work stands or how near it is to the brink of a precipice

Ex. What a melancholy experience this is, the working down of a man's spirit to adjust himself to the niche he must occupy

Q Ex. [Query and Exclamation] This sense of homelessness since I came into the Ethical Movement a "stranger in a strange land." My life is divided into two labors

2. Would I regret that I ever came to the Ethical Movement if I found there was no place for me there? Do I begin to regret it now? Sometimes I feel as tho I had been entangled in a [sentence unfinished]

Ref. The most melancholy epoch in a man's life is when he is beginning to realize the limitations of his powers. That no effort he can make will lift him above mediocrity. It is the critical period,

for it determines whether it will check his ambition. Res. If the hour should come when in the work of my society I did not realize it growing and gaining strength in the community, or when the next year was to go on doing the same work as last year, then let me stop or die, for I shall be dead in soul already.

Ref. When asked how my work goes I have but one answer "splendidly." It ought to be written on my tombstone

Ref. It worries me to think that I never can do any great work. I have discovered my limitations. It comes hard to come down to the connection that I must be one of the rank and file, to do just the work others do or have done. It is not that I would care to have a name. I think it would be just the same if I could do a great work and yet never have it known that it came from me. I should know it. That would be enough. Now comes the struggle to accept mediocrity of result and yet keep up enthusiasm

Ex. It is beginning all over again. I thought it would be different this year. This gnawing sense that I am unable to make myself an essential factor to others, to make them feel they need me. My fourth year I have been here and yet even this year my work begins and even my stipend is not voted Oh but it hurts! hurts! Yet I alone am responsible. I am not strong enough to make them feel me worth it.

Ref. Here it is, the first Sunday noon with that sense of sick exhaustion. To continue 30 Sundays! What am I to do [?] Ach Golt!

Ex. What worries me more than anything else is the fear lest I be sidetracked, lest my work may be not on the main line of progress. work may be progressing but not on the main line and so not tell on the future.

Ref. The great difficulty in such work is always to keep heart that it is worth the while; that men are worth doing it for. We have to conquer the craving for personal appreciation or gratitude. we never doubt that *some* are worth it. the hardest part is to feel that *mankind* is worth it

I have started from the one thought men are careless with their lives, they just exist from day to day. They don't live up to the best in themselves. The finer elements which distinguish us from the brute men let them die. When they are young they lay plans but later on they do not carry them out. They sink back to the unequal level and live to get a living I did want to urge men to be something more. I felt that the existing teaching did not do this. Could not give this spur. I wanted to do it. But how? how? How

Ref. I am dominated by one ambition, to accomplish some specific result, to do some definite, effective work in the world: just to live -- for that I do not care, unless I can show a product. and the worry, the dread is, lest I may not -- lest I cannot do it. I am learning so much, my own restrictions and limitations. a man could hurt me more by striking at my work than by striking at me

Ref, The saddest thing about leadership and power is that it develops arrogance, even of religious leaders. he is cordial according to the degree of deference shown to him

Q. I wonder if this work makes a man cold or selfish. I do so hunger for something. But I can't have it I can't have it. My soul is exceeding [sic] sorrowful even unto death

While Sheldon's talents as a scholar, writer and lecturer made him well-suited to the work of an Ethical leader, founding the St. Louis Society forced him to develop his much weaker administrative skills. Until 1891, when Robert Moore ably began his 30-year stint as the Society's president, the community's members and lay leaders expected Sheldon to guide its financial affairs and handle many of its organizational tasks. Sheldon accepted the role resentfully:

Rem. that a man who founds a Society is not likely to be able to continue the leader of it because in the necessity of his working to push the practical machine into working operation he is thrown into a light that alters his influence purely as a teacher. R[esolve] Work therefore to build up a Society and then be ready to step out for a successor who can be to the people what the first cannot be by reason of his double functions.

Res. I must bend every energy first for one or two years to building up the Ethical Society in members and finances so that it shall be on an existing basis Then I must think of my standing with scholars and the outside world. My existence here will depend on my prestige among that class. My personality is so unlike that of other men that I can not rely on it to sustain me.

Ex. How I dread those Board meetings. If only I could bathe in the ether after coming away from them. That I must not only be the teacher of religion, but have to show them how to raise the money.

Rg. [Regret] If I could only get to the point where I would not be haunted with the consciousness that my work looked as tho it were for the purpose of getting a living. I have to push the Society at the top and also at the bottom and that sort of thing eats into a man. It is not the work that wears a man out, but the nervous chafing that goes on inside of me while doing the work.

The Ethical Society of the late 1800s, like the city at large, was a heterogeneous community marked by conflict between native-born Americans and recent immigrants. Some of the most vocal and active members of the Society -- German-born freethinkers and ethnic Jews -- tended toward cliquishness, and Sheldon, a New Englander of Protestant upbringing, felt ill-equipped to cope with the inevitable conflicts that at times seemed to threaten the community's continued existence:

Rem. The three different elements to be met in my Society. (1) the radical German the (2) conservative American and (3) the Hebrew. how to blend them.

Rem. If failure comes, it comes through the fact that in dealing with the diverse elements we may not as in politics or the press use diplomacy.

Ex. Baffled, baffled by this Hebrew question! cramped by it and never can get away from it

Ex. What a turn my life took when I swung away from the old moorings. The old human relations. Now I am a stranger among H's & G's [Hebrews and Germans]

Ref. I begin now with "the wound in the side." Oct 21. Yet let me not own it outside to nobody but the leader. Let me throw all I have into the rest of the year and then stop. Even if I go on it would be idle. Perhaps if I had started two years ago more fully fledged as I am now it would have been different What with my own nervous exhaustion, the Hebrew difficulty, the anti-radical feeling, the listless indifference of those who are outside of the churches and my own want of personal attractiveness there's exhaustion enough

Sheldon also was perplexed but what he saw as a class conflict in the needs and appeal of the young Society: To survive, it had to attract people wealthy enough to make substantial contributions, but the very people who were most apt to become wealthy were least inclined to join such a community. "The misfortune of our work," he wrote, "is that we make it so expensive that it depends on the membership of the rich and how can we expect many of that class when naturally we appeal to the most refined natures and the art or method of getting rich requires thick skin a rough & tough sensibilities." By Sheldon's reckoning, that conflict did not augur well for the future of the Ethical movement: "How can we expect to get the financial support from the very classes which we propose to find fault with, to expect them to pay us for chiding them for their neglect of their duty [?]" In looking over "the class of the rich" in St. Louis, Sheldon noted that he could identify only about a half-dozen "refined gentlemen," affluent men who exhibited commitment to ethical ideals; the only Society members he numbered among them -- "John T.D." and N.O. Nelson -- were "2 in 1,000." It disturbed him to think that men drawn to the Society at a young age might be dissuaded from ever joining that elite. "I wonder is there danger, in our work of making persons too tender skinned to be able to cope with difficulties to meet [garbled word] in their struggle for a living," he wrote. "We run a risk in discouraging a young man from wanting to be rich." Elsewhere he noted that "the difficulty is to induce a refined nature to have push and self assertion."

Alas

Sheldon felt he was particularly lacking in organizational and motivational skills. He was frustrated by his inability to inspire Society members to do more for the community. "Alas it is disheartening," he wrote. "I have been at work three years and yet I have not been able to induce ten persons, no not five, to do steady work for others. There is so much talk about philanthropy but so little done of the actual thing from one man to another." He worried that the Society's reliance on a handful of volunteers rendered its continuance precarious. "How true it is that only a few men constitute the running force of the world," he mused. "Take out certain 10 men out of it would wreck any society it would wreck any church." Further, it seemed to Sheldon that even those who did give generously of themselves tended to concentrate their energies in narrow areas of the community's life. "How alone a man is who is carrying a multitude of aims in mind in each of which separate persons are working," he complained. "Each one thinks his part the chief if not the whole. scarcely one of them enters into the aims and central thought of the leader." Some of the "blunders" he listed indicate that he had trouble marshalling volunteer assignments and activity schedules. Committee work only multiplied his distress: "Me. [Mistake] if only we had had persons, not committees to do the work."

He especially feared that his poor administrative skills would hurt the progress of the Self-Culture Clubs Association. He chided himself for his "lack of determined enterprise in connection with the Reading Rooms" and the "unbusinesslike methods" with which he managed them. "I shrink from going ahead," he once wrote, blaming his ineptitude on "this accursed subjectivity."

Sheldon consistently fell short of his aims as a pastor. He observed, probably correctly, that his preoccupation with his ambitions and his inner turmoil kept him from attending closely to members of the community. "Unlike the true 'minister,'" he wrote, "instead of being full of the troubles of others I am full of thought of my own success or failure." Suppressing his sorrow sometimes required stoical discipline. "Never show tears in the eyes before another unless they are tears of sympathy for another," he resolved. "In oneself for oneself they indicate want of pluck. rem[ember] the instance of the laborer Fenton who came to see me." He complained of his difficulty in paying attention to people in conversation while harassed by concerns about the Society as a whole. Similarly, he worried that his devotion to his scholarly work undercut his effectiveness on a person-to-person level. "There is danger lest in doing so much for my work for mankind in general I do little or nothing for individuals in particular," he reminded himself. "What persons have I helped [?]" In an effort to overcome his tendency to "move in worlds not realized," he made resolutions to accomplish specific pastoral tasks, such as calling on Society members who had stopped coming to platform meetings, paying visits to gatherings of women's clubs, and keeping himself posted on the health of ailing members.

Sheldon's difficulty in accepting human nature is evident in several of his reflections on his vocation. "One reason why a man can not do effective work if he is of thorough culture is because the people whom he might help are not of thorough culture and do not want it," he reflected. "They want 'just a little.'" He also expressed exasperation with students and discussion club members who wanted him to "do the talking"; he once observed that his "great failure as a teacher is in drawing others out and inducing them to talk so as to interest others."

Although devoted to the ethical education of young people, Sheldon felt he could neither understand them nor appeal to them. "Why is it that I do not win children [?]" he asked himself after an upsetting encounter with children at the Keene Valley retreat. "Is it because instead of entering into their mood I let myself be worried by their restless presence [?]" Toward the end of a particularly stressful week, he expressed repugnance at the "awful nightmare" of teaching children's classes over the weekend. He blamed himself for the dissipation of the first young men's club and the first girls club he started, concluding that he should have had "someone else start them and not myself so securing their push and enthusiasm." One entry shows that his intricate instructions on proper behavior -- as in his "Lessons in the Study of Habits" -- stemmed from the demands he placed on himself. "Every time I prepare the lessons for the children about the state of things which others do not see, cleanliness, dress, neatness, etc. am reminded of myself. where am I"

Alack!

The platform service was the focus of Sheldon's attention. He wrote his addresses with care, combining his extensive knowledge of philosophy, religion, and world literature with anecdotes. "The Oelement of success in a lecture," he noted, "is in the proper combination of principle with facts of every day experiences everybody has the experiences. a few know the principles. very few know them properly together."

Never confident of his speaking ability, Sheldon continually experimented with changes in his style of delivery. Though stung by criticism, he took to heart the observations of his colleagues: M.M. Mangasarian, who replaced William Salter in Chicago from 1892-96, told him that he held his hands too stiffly, failed to modulate his voice, and stood still instead of moving about the platform; S. Burns Weston told him, after he delivered an address in Philadelphia, that he had a tendency to assume "awkward postures" and repeat words and phrases; James Taussig, the Society's de facto president in the 1880s, confirmed that he repeated himself, and added that he covered too many points in a single address, that his style was "too strained" and "too florid," and that the audience was put off by the "prolonged intensity" of his delivery. He tried to rein in his tendency to speak didactically, "as tho instructing or laying down the law." He generally committed his addresses to memory to avoid the "crude & rough delivery" that resulted from reading them, but he allowed himself to keep the manuscript before him when he was tired. On at least a few occasions he experimented with what he called "the nervous method," evidently an informal style in which he allowed "more free play to method natural to self." In doing so, he may have hoped to emulate the charismatic speakers he envied, men who had the "curious power" to "pose with commonplaces and yet make the world listen to them as tho the utterances were the mark of genius"; that skill, he believed, was "not wisdom or genius but personality."

A low turnout at a platform meeting was a source of grief for Sheldon. "It is those missing faces that wear on a man," he wrote. "He feels so much the limitations of his power." Clearly the fluctuations were real, as he noted several occasions when lay leaders expressed their concerns about attendance, deepening his chagrin. His anxiety was not solely self-centered, however; he believed that a strong showing at meetings underscored for regular participants that they were part of a vital movement. "I can never succeed because I can never 'fill the gallery,'" he wrote, "and yet that is essential in order even to keep up the courage of the serious." He had yet-another reason to hope for high attendance: A small gathering of loyal members created an atmosphere of intimacy that unnerved him because it made his formal oratorical style seem inappropriate. "When congregation small," he told himself, "either read or stand behind the desk."

In selecting topics for his addresses, Sheldon took into account his strengths as well as the preferences of his listeners. Recognizing his inclination to speak about literature (his inventory of his first 25 addresses in St. Louis includes talks on Robert Browning, Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," and Shakespeare's "King Lear"), he made a concerted effort to "give stress to philosophy, so to keep the balance." It was with difficulty that he rounded out his offerings with a third category -- what he called "the Social Problems"; he often told himself that one of his chief failings was in not sufficiently grasping -- or speaking out on -- current issues in the nation and on the global scene. In 1888, the year that Benjamin Harrison claimed an Electoral College victory over the winner of the popular vote, incumbent Grover Cleveland, Sheldon faulted himself for "taking abstract subjects and not themes in connection with what everybody was thinking about, at election time." For Sheldon, to speak on "practical subjects" was to risk exposing his ignorance and offending political sensibilities:

Rem. A democracy makes it impossible for the leaders to be more than a little way ahead of the people just so in politics just so in religion. how can we touch on social questions when even the best of the multitude know so little and feel so intensely about them Yet what is my work worth if I [avoid them] in my speech [?]

As badly as he wanted to win the approbation of the membership, Sheldon came to take their suggestions and complaints regarding platform topics with a grain of salt. For one thing, he discovered that there was "not a single subject in which my congregation as a whole has an interest That is where I am handcuffed." (In deliberating over topic selection, Sheldon once reminded himself of a man who would no longer come to the platform meetings because he "did not want to hear any more about Jesus Christ." The reminder prompted him to exclaim, "alack! alack!") Further, he genuinely feared that letting the membership dictate his choices would lower the caliber of the platform program. "Whatever work is for the multitude and yet is above them and aims to draw them up to it cannot be supported by them for they will not see the value of the higher plane till they get there," he reminded himself. "If a man follows his inclinations he will not walk up hill".

In a couple of entries, Sheldon admitted a concern that he might run out of original ideas. "Sometimes I worry in fear lest there will be nothing left to say," he wrote, referring to his writing as well as his public speaking. "All the best thots [thoughts] will be said or printed by the others. Well in that case all the better unless the time comes when I shall have thots which are so much a part of myself that others can't say them. I wonder did that anxiety ever worry Emerson?" In one entry, he consciously soothed his fear that the membership would tire of him. "I need never be troubled in my self if people think they now possess all that I have to say," he asserted. "So long as each year I am in

my self conscious that I myself can be advanced to higher & higher standpoints. If they do not see it, it may be due either to my want of power in showing it by not knowing how to say it or by their own want of advance."

Next to lecturing, Sheldon held writing to be the most important aspect of his vocation. Though an erudite man whose library numbered some 3,000 volumes, he recognized that he was not a groundbreaker; he saw his mission as making philosophy and religious studies comprehensible and relevant to people of limited education. "In literary work which is not exploration of knlg [knowledge], importance of form of expression," he wrote. "Even tho not have great learning if we can in single sentences say what others feel, or crystalize. their experiences for them we still do a great work. It was the work of Emerson." Again, in expressing his admiration of Emerson and poet-essayist Matthew Arnold, he reminded himself that "half of the power of the essayist the thinker the reflecting mind as contrasted with the systematic mind of science or philosophy lies in the choice of expression ... The keenest observer might not be able to say anything." One entry expresses his sentiments succinctly: "I would rather have been Emerson than Kant." Because he so appreciated the power of a well-turned phrase, he reminded himself of the importance of jotting down thoughts and sentences as soon as they came to him. "If a thought in reflection comes," he resolved, "catch it in its first expression as it occurs in the mind." While he was no doubt gratified to have several books published by Macmillan and Co., he did not expect them to reach a large audience. That Emerson's books sold poorly during Sheldon's lifetime, in contrast to popular novels, confirmed for Sheldon that "effrontery & the commonplace do succeed in this country."

One singular entry in the journal, a record of evening engagements, shows how thoroughly is Sheldon's social and professional lives were interwoven:

Record of evenings for a month --

Monday Informal Club 6 - 10. Mercantile 10 - 11. Mr. Nagels 12 - 1

Tuesday Unitarian Club Dinner at Mercantile Club

Wednesday Piano Club. afterwards at Prof Ives

Thursday lecture to S. Bdway [S. Broadway Self-Culture Hall]. afterwards at Mr. Nagels supper with Plank [E.N. Plank, resident superintendent of the Self-Culture program]

Friday Mr. Taussigs at supper. Lecture afterward [garbled word or name]

Saturday Supper at Nelsons. Then home

Sunday D Carels here. then at Dr. Fischels. 10-11

Monday Supper here. Reform Club. Afterward Nagels 10-12:30

Tuesday Planks for supper. P Office. then Civics Club

Wednesday Supper at Meaux Then to meeting at Bringham studio

Thursday Supper home. Call on Arnstein. Mercantile Club/ 11 - 12 at Nagels

Friday Campbell at supper. not go out

Saturday Plass for supper. then to Salvation Army. Standard Theatre [garbled word]

Excursion night

Sunday Whole evening at home!!

--

Monday Supper at Mr. Nelsons. Then home. St. Louis Club till 11:30

Tuesday Supper at home. Call on Mrs. Stone. Art Museum Reception then Fischels 12:30

Wednesday Supper at Learned's. Address to Knights of Labor

Thursday Lecture of Factory girls. Then home. St. Louis Club

Friday Supper & evening with Moore & [garbled name]

Saturday night on train to Chicago. Coste at supper

Sunday On train to St. Louis. Supper at Salters

Monday Supper at Mr. Taussigs. home rest of evening

Tuesday Civics Club. Then Mrs. Allen's Reception

Wednesday Biography Club -- Nagel home I a.m.

Thursday Symphony concert

Friday Mr. Nagels to [garbled name]

Saturday Round Table

Sunday Dr. Holland's Church

A Different Coin

Sheldon lived on a tight budget, receiving a stipend of only about \$1,200 a year in his first few years in St. Louis. He often failed to make ends meet, and was forced to borrow from friends, including S. Burns Weston and James Taussig, and a relative, his Uncle Charles. Long before the invention of the credit card, Sheldon learned the hazards of buying on credit. "Let no bills collect," he resolved. "Pay at the place where purchase made. wait the purchase till I have the cash in the bank." To induce himself to stop buying on credit, he reminded himself of the "the confusion and trouble which came into my accounts thro letting my bills collect in '87" and the "the embarrassment of being harassed about bills in the fall of '87 and being obliged to borrow." If bill collectors were the stick that kept him in line, the carrot was the thrill of hard cash: "What a curious feeling it is when I go down to the bank and get some money. I feel so much power come back to me, a sense of exhilaration in [garbled word] having the money tho I knew it was there before."

He second-guessed his spending decisions, scolding himself for his "stupidity" in accumulating library fines of up to a dollar, his "careless waste of money in selection of ill-fitting shoes," and his "business blunder of taking this house." Then, as always, the Big Apple was particularly hard on the pocketbook; he resolved to "stop running out of money and having to borrow when visiting New York." He chided himself for squandering money on "luxuries," but he mentions few non-essential expenses; a list of expenditures over the course of a few days includes 15 cents for streetcar fare, 20 cents for cigars, 15 cents for envelopes, \$3.08 for postage, and 30 cents to have his eyeglass chain mended. When he wasn't angry with himself for buying luxuries, he was angry with himself for not getting much luxury for the dollar:

I am haunted, haunted by the feeling that in the comforts of the world I have more than my share, or at least that I have more opportunities to get comforts. Tho I doubt whether I use my money with the common sense way of getting comfort or luxury to the amt that most persons get who do not expend one quarter the amt of money. I am squandering privileges (or money, which is the same thing) It may be as much wrong to waste money as to spend it on one's selfish comfort. Think what other strugglers could do with it.

In addition to the "irritating necessity of not being quite sure of making ends meet," Sheldon was perturbed by his inability to be generous with friends and to contribute to worthy causes. "It does worry me very much that I spend so little money for others," he wrote. "My work is for others and I spend it in fitting myself to do my work. But I ought

also to share my privileges." On some occasions, however, he had to restrain his tendency to use his personal funds for the work of the Society and the Self-Culture Clubs. "If I am to make ends meet I must stop throwing money into the Reading Rooms," he resolved. "I subscribed \$25 twice, but in the last 12 months they have probably cost me \$125.00." He repeatedly resolved to sharply reduce his expenditures so he could set aside money to carry him through a stretch of unemployment or a sharp drop in his stipend, which was set anew each year. Because his income depended on the health of the Society and the generosity of the board of trustees, he considered moving into a home "in the cheap neighborhoods with the working men" so that the hardship of a slashed stipend would not be compounded by the need for a sudden move. "The hour may come at any moment when my income may be reduced 50 or 60% and the sudden necessary change would throw me in bad plight," he warned himself. "I should be where the change would not require any change on the outside. Then too I should have a reserve fund to fall back on. a too sudden relapse is liable to break the spirit."

He had mixed feelings about the nature of his employment. On the one hand, he wanted to be so pure in his devotion to the cause that he would not concern himself with his income level; on the other, he envied professionals in other fields whose income was determined by the market value of their services rather than the uncertain generosity of contributors:

Rem. that remunerations must depend on the amount of work a man can do. I can do scarcely one third what A [Adler] can do. The man can do more, needs more remuneration so as to better equip him for the larger work.

Q. Is my desire that my work shall reach that point where I can have an adequate salary for what I consider my needs an indication of a mercenary spirit? Rem. We who are in the lead in matters of religion must work for the cause only without recognition without remuneration. The recognition & remuneration falls to the "safe men" the men who keep the line up to where the leaders left it but never carry it ahead They are the men who never jump the tracks. They do their work, a good work, and they get their pay So do we only in a different coin

Rg. [Regret] If I could only get to the point where I would not be haunted with the consciousness that my work looked as tho it were for the purpose of getting a living.

Ref. What wears is that sense that people have to beg others to support us. In serving people's personal interests one makes oneself wanted but there's no profession more humiliating than that of a reformer. People have to be begged to support it. It would be such a relief to be actually earning one's living by serving people where they can see that they need [garbled words] that's the way in other professions but in ours we seem to live on charity. It hurts.

A Natural Hermit

Sheldon's loneliness was constant and crushing, at least during the time he kept the journal. He was frightfully ill at ease in social -settings, whether formal or informal- He was alienated, feeling himself too different from others and "too largely in the subjective life" to form friendships. He expected perfection of others, as he did of himself, and his inability to accept human frailty left him bitterly disappointed. Wounded by criticism and hobbled by envy of highly respected peers, he sought -feverishly but unsuccessfully -- to find an inner tranquility that did not depend on loving relationships. He ultimately renounced the path of celibacy and solitude when, in defiance of all reason and contrary to his longstanding intentions, he fell in love.

As the leader of a religious community, Sheldon felt obliged to attend the Society's rare social functions, but they were for him occasions of abashment and dismay. He once resolved to "beware of receptions" because they "accomplish little and seldom do the right kind of people come." Assemblies of the American Ethical Union, which included leaders' meetings as well as dreaded receptions, especially unnerved him because they tended to deprive him of solitude. "I do not enjoy those Conventions," he wrote after one. "A man feels himself common after it is over. no separate private life for his soul ... as tho he were on exhibition." Characteristically, he promised himself that in the future he would travel to assemblies by himself and stay in private quarters. At one assembly, probably in 1889, he felt he had committed "an awful blunder ... totally destroyed the weight of my words by speaking too long. It was so awfully stupid." To help establish the Society's place in the larger community, Sheldon also accepted invitations to St. Louis society events, but they flustered him to the point of anguish. He once reminded himself of "the misery at the V.P. Ball from sense of isolation -- acquainted with many, yet everywhere a stranger." Ever bashful, even fearful, he found that mingling at such events magnified his loneliness. "It tries a man's soul to call on

a person when he does not know how he is going to be received, or to be moving among people who do not wish to recognize him," he wrote. "It is worse than being among actual enemies." His lack of worldly knowledge, coupled with his shyness, left him all but incapable of making small talk. "I wish I knew how to be a man of the world," he wrote, "to talk tunnels & mines!"

While acknowledging that his "peculiar ways" inevitably would be noticed, he sought to fit in, to "be as much like the rest of the world as I reasonably can without going back on my real self." At times, however, he resolved to "stop forcing appearance of sociability which I do not feel"; he once averred that to feign congeniality was to do "violence to my own nature. shy, a recluse, a natural hermit. I try to put on a savoir-faire and go into the world. But it does not succeed." In addition to attending society functions, Sheldon frequently accepted outside speaking engagements. He noted that in a single year he had spoken before a committee meeting of the Post-Dispatch Charity Fund and at meetings and banquets of the Knights of Labor, the Carpenters Council, the Rationalists Club, the Single Tax League, the Informal Club, the Medical College, the Artists Guild, and the Round Table. As a "radical" clergyman, however, he was never confident that even a kind reception was genuine; after someone remarked at the sectarian funeral of Dr. Charles W. Stevens, a one-time president of the Society, that "those heathen" were to have a word, Sheldon marveled at "what an amt of silent dislike must exist for me in St. Louis."

His journal shows he was as harshly critical of others as he was of himself, and whatever belief he had in the native goodness of people was more theoretical than actual. "After all," he reflected, "the hardest thing is to keep up one's faith in the divine in human nature. I am more impressed by the slow cattle like sluggishness." He recognized that his "want of sympathy for all sides of human nature" put people off, but he found it "so hard to esteem or love men who do not have pluck, who wilt under difficulties and curse the world," and noted that "what wears on the mood is dealing with the 'weaker brethren.'" Even those he most respected could not fulfill his superhuman expectations. "I am inspired by people till I know them personally," he observed, "then somehow they dwindle before me." Sooner or later, those he knew best let him down: "It is painful to find a friend human," he wrote, "yet inevitable." Elsewhere he noted wistfully, "We would so like to have some men just perfect!" His disappointment was not unrelieved, however. In examining the distress of "finding people out," he owned that "we like them or we love them just as before. They are stronger in some ways & weaker in others. But they are different from what we thought. It is that difference which is painful."

Further, Sheldon was racked with envy of successful and well-loved people, for he felt all the more insignificant by comparison. "It is not that I am not truly glad at the success of the other," he wrote in reference to an unidentified colleague, "but it does make one so weighed down with disappointment over himself." He acknowledged his envy only in the context of seeking to eradicate it; he asked himself if there was "no way of conquering these accursed little feelings which play on the surface of the consciousness when preference is shown to others." He felt ashamed that he could not "exult" with a man he identified as "Y" when Y had achieved some sort of social success; he admitted that he even had "a passing sense of gratification at a possible calamity that might level things." He was humbled by the recognition of his streak of malice: "Do all men have these brute feelings," he asked, "or is it the curse of this subjective life [?]" Another man, identified only by a dash, engendered distrust "so intense as to make the repulsion almost a sin"; he accepted the distrust as justified, but resolved to overcome the feeling which accompanied it. Several times he reminded himself of an experience he had had in the woods near his boyhood home in Salisbury, Vermont, when someone he identified as "J" came to tell him that J's father had been injured; because he was haunted by guilt over his emotional reaction, it is reasonable to guess that Sheldon felt elation at the possibility that his friend would lose his father, as Sheldon had in childhood. He once thought of the incident in the context of exploring his invidiousness: "Q. Does this depression at another man's success come from jealousy or does it come from sadness over my own incapacity [?] Rem. the experience in the Salisbury woods."

One colleague especially aroused Sheldon's envy and anger. Throughout the journal, Sheldon referred to this man, a public figure whose popularity he coveted, only as "G."⁶ Sheldon's dislike of G was instantaneous. Early in the journal, apparently not long after meeting the man, Sheldon told himself that he should "never hope to have relations

⁶ A couple of journal entries mention social engagements with a G. Meorse, a man who has not been identified independent of the journal. Because the G. of the envious passages was a public figure of considerable renown, the initial might have designated John H. Gundlach, a powerful businessman and politician who was active in the Society; Sheldon's custom of referring to known subjects by the first letters of their last names adds weight to that hypothesis. However, Sheldon's observations about the man reveal a direct sense of competitiveness -- an indication that G was a fellow religious leader. Considering that, the initial might have referred to the Rev. George R. Dodson, a Unitarian minister who ultimately succeeded John Calvin Learned -- one of Sheldon's few friends in St. Louis -- as pastor of the Church of the Unity.

of mutual harmony with G. The inevitable nails in the heel will show themselves. Silence, silence and patience!" He further reminded himself of the "inevitable experience when he visits me" and cited a particularly unpleasant encounter at a reception. He apparently had trouble following his own advice; he told himself he had committed a "grave error" by engaging in a "confidential talk with G. at the hotel supper." While he described G as arrogant, he chided himself for his antipathy. He sought to counter his ire by reminding himself that "the work is larger than the man." Nevertheless, it was with difficulty that he restrained himself from undermining G's stature by venting his anger behind the man's back. He asked himself if he had been wrong in speaking freely of G to "Mr. 7 -- probably James or Joseph Taussig. And in the very next entry, he asked himself if he was justified "in telling Mr. H something about G when I know it might shake his faith in him just a little. was my motive pure [?]" He envied G's earthy manner of public speaking -- his ability to "play with and use the foibles of men" -- and he admitted feeling a "sinking at heart" when he learned that G had been warmly received at a speaking engagement in New York. In other passages, however, he dismissed G as a showman: "The secret of Gs power," he wrote, was that he was "not a public speaker but an actor, a soliloquizing Hamlet on the platform." Most of all, he envied G his personal strength and the esteem in which he was held. "People believe in G are are [sic] overpowered by him," he wrote. "Yet I can't see the grade of difference in the work. It must be in the men, in the degree of will power, to stand being in the wreck and yet not wearing out to keep the spirit up and the mind firm under every strain. I can't do it. I wear out."

At times, Sheldon tried to convince himself that his spontaneous emotions, however base, were morally neutral. He initially told himself he must have been "low down" to have felt such intense anger at "S." -- possibly William Salter, leader of the Chicago society, or Rabbi Samuel Sale of Temple Shaare Emeth in St. Louis -- when S told Sheldon he could not accompany him to Europe one summer; "it's bad very bad and I feel mean & ashamed," he wrote of his reaction to the news, "tho it is only a bad feeling." He also attempted to soften or dilute his bitterness, making it more nearly acceptable. "It is so hard to feel just pity and nothing more for people who show themselves very small," he told himself, "and yet that is all they are worth."

Sheldon was hypersensitive to criticism, especially of his professionalism. He was so distressed by comments about his stilted public speaking style and his "difficulty in coming to a point" in conversation that he jotted them down -- sometimes repeatedly, as if probing a wound -- and he once remarked that the face of a critic often "crowds before the mind with some unpleasant remark or experience" as he was working. He complained that "jarring conflict with people" so wore him down that he collapsed "in exhaustion." For Sheldon, the most grievous hardship of being a public figure -- besides having to attend balls -- was opening himself to criticism in newspapers in an era when journalists freely expressed their opinions in news stories; one such "attack" on him in the St. Louis Republican haunted him with a "sense of isolation." His sensitivity further drove him to seek refuge in solitude. "If I didn't undertake to live with men," he wrote, "then there would not be the need to be dissatisfied with me." He once assuaged his hurt feelings by reminding himself that "others are not my conscience nor my judge, but they are simply the aids by which I can appear more truly before the inner seat of judgment." In moments of calm, he seemed able to accept his frailty. "Well I suppose I am human too," he reflected. "People get disappointed in me as I in others. They discover in me what gives them pain."

A Calm Exterior

Sheldon hid his feelings assiduously. "How very very seldom it is that I expose my real self to people," he noted. "I talk chaff or I talk business or I talk ephemeral but I never feel aloud. Indeed I am rarely my self save when alone." Perhaps because his severity caused people discomfort, he tried to mask it as a way of muting his self-consciousness. "I laugh on matters which I feel about the most deeply," he wrote. "It is my way of hiding myself in the crowd." His notes on the observations of others indicate that he often succeeded in appearing sanguine, and he believed that he alone knew the truth about his anguish. "My joking or laughter or light speech is a play or screen behind which I can hide my real & sombre self," he wrote. "A man can smile and smile - and yet be very miserable." The very success of his masquerade sometimes struck him as absurd. "What a curious feeling this is," he noted, "to ache and throb in every nerve of the soul and yet wear a calm exterior -- the same quiet face through it all." He wryly marveled at the presumptuousness of people who "get used to a man's face and so by & by they think they know his soul too. And yet they have never crossed the threshold." Generally, he felt "glad & fortunate ... that my exterior does not give away my feelings." At times, however, he feared that his masquerade might fail, that he was "too introspective to appear strong & firm & calm -- chafe too much inwardly." He also questioned the moral value of his studied disingenuousness: "I jest about what I feel most deeply in order not my real self be seen [sic] is it wrong [?] Well I am a sober man. My laughter is made up. I can be jocose when in the very depths."

Even with those he liked and respected, he rarely permitted himself to express his feelings. He 'N dearly wanted to confide in colleagues and acquaintances who made friendly overtures, but he forbade himself to give in to the desire,

telling himself that a cleric should concern himself with the sorrows of others -- and should never impose his own on them. While conversing with an inviting friend, he observed, "my brain half reels with emotions that I may not express." When he did reveal his feelings to a friend, he invariably regretted it as a "loss of control" and vowed not to let it happen again. "I told Mr. N. [N.O. Nelson, a lay leader and friend] just how the whole situation was last night," he recalled after one such lapse. "But it was selfish on my part. I am here on the plea of helping others and yet cry for help myself. That is all wrong. Am I really unselfish [?] I begin to doubt." On another occasion his weariness prompted him to let his guard down: "Blunder that I should again have gone to some one when I was tired. I must not must not do it. No matter how solitary I am, [I must] stay by myself." And when once he told someone of his debilitating fatigue, he cursed himself for his "stupidity," demanding of himself, "Why didn't I hold my head up like a man [?]" Similarly, he accused himself of "lalling" (a contemporary colloquialism meaning to babble or whimper like a baby) to John Calvin Learned, the Unitarian pastor of the Church of the Unity, about his "want of success." One unnamed friend was a particular source of exasperation because, while Sheldon wanted "an explicit understanding of a modus vivendi by which we meet just as minds," this man insisted on meeting "both ways" -- that is, sharing feelings as well as ideas. "How I shrink from [this man]," he wrote, drawing a dash in place of the name. "How I shrink!" Writing in his journal was the only outlet Sheldon permitted himself. "I call this book my confessional," he wrote, "but it has become rather the book I cry into as I can't cry in the presence of others. It takes the place of crying with tears. It is curious I do not remember having a good cry that way for 20 years. But the tears come occasionally." He considered keeping the confessional vital to his well-being; after not having written in it for five months, he told himself that he "must begin again and go deeper. I shall be in greater danger than ever before."

A Heart Grown Cold

Sheldon was disturbed and puzzled by his lack of empathy. He was unfazed by two calamities that occurred in 1889 -- a disastrous flood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and an outbreak of yellow fever in Jacksonville, Florida -- and he wondered if his emotional detachment was evidence of his "over subjective habit which makes external things slow to reach my mind." In these instances, he concluded that he was more sensitive to spiritual ruination than to natural catastrophes: "It is the slow, long working evils and disasters I feel, not the sudden shocks. The slow dying of millions affects me more than the sudden death of ten thousand." In another reflection in which he sought to apprehend "what is wrong with me that I do not have more sympathy," he ventured that he had not suffered enough; "I certainly have suffered mentally -- agony enough there," he owned, "but perhaps not enough physically." He elsewhere attributed his coolness to the demands of his work: "There is no sadder experience for me than the fact that my feelings and attention are so absorbed in the success or defect of my efforts to build up the Society that no time or space is left to be worried or saddened by the trials and troubles of others." He felt his inability to empathize was a prime factor in what he considered a failed career. "If I had the sympathy of Mr. L [Learned] and the sweetness of life of Mr. S [again, probably Salter or Sale] along with my own intellectual life I might succeed," he wrote, adding that "people do not come to me when in trouble as they do to Mr. L." Those occasions when he did feel compassion for someone who confided in him made him more acutely aware of what he saw as a woeful character flaw. "It knocks my own inward pain all to smithereens," he wrote after one such encounter. "What business have I to be thinking of myself. Alas for me! a religious teacher and yet not learned the first lesson of thinking of others' sorrows instead of my own suffering." In another entry he ruefully admitted to himself that he was "too impersonal for my profession. I cannot enter into all the little moods." In lieu of genuine empathy, he wondered if "one must sustain one's love for his race by cherishing ... a kind of high pity for it all." He once jotted down, without comment, an excerpt from a poem that expressed his perception of himself as unfeeling: "From the contagion of the world's slow stain/ He is secure; and now can never mourn/ A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain."

Sheldon was introspective to the point of narcissism -- and he knew it, if not by that name. "My supreme defect or mistake," he wrote, "[is] that people interest me abstractly and not as persons. So it is that they are interesting to me more when absent than when present. Would it be possible to try the other method [?]" He was committed to perfecting himself, to reaching an ever-higher plane of spiritual refinement, and he wondered at times if his intellectual or moral superiority prevented intimacy: "I see now the secret of my failure I attract [garbled word] because few men interest me. shall a man take the unction to himself that he [is] above others and therefore exceptional, or put it plainly that he is more restricted in his sympathies, narrow, and therefore exceptional [?]" It actually grieved him to recognize his need for friendship; he evidently wanted to reach some sort of nirvana, and he felt that human intercourse held him down in his quest:

Q. What is the reason that when I meet early friends I always feel a certain sense of internal distress, mental distress. Is it because I each year outgrow or grow above the earlier self and the

friend treats or deals with me as the earlier self and so compels me to go back on the old level of myself and so I feel pulled back [?] I feel the same attachments to earlier friends but yet for that reason do not find the same pleasure in their company unless the friend appears exclusively from his new level and so gives the incentive to larger friendship again. [Applies] also for my relation to my bro [brother] for that reason advisable in meeting old friends unless they heartily and fully respond to one's new added life better not allude to it at all for it thus gets the new life small in the inner vision.

Q. I begin to think I ought to break away from many of these earlier connections & associations. In the last year I have grown into a new life. now to go out and develop into still newer life where I can work out from my new plane and not constantly be drawn back on my old plane.

Q. Why is it that I have to look to external stimulus (a conversation, a book, a poem, a novel) in order to get into a higher state of inner feeling? Could I by self thinking, by a process of contemplation thro my own imagination, effect the same thing [?]

Q What's a man like myself to do who lives to see the spirit himself yet wants to influence men who live in the world

I flounder so when I come down to earth.

Ex. What an isolation it is! solemn yet terrible. This being ahead of the world or being outside of its general feelings think of all the pain that has been suffered in the process in making the new species whether in the animal or the spiritual world

Ex. I can't get en rapport with people I am never happy save when alone and yet when alone I long for an unknown something It was always so even when I had the faith and the God. At the same time pure humanism does not fill & satisfy. I want something more than human society

[written in margin] a person comes in and I feel myself drop into a new atmosphere I can't keep upon the level where I was when alone

Rem. People seem to have such a way of standing still. I get back to my natural self when I get to the mountains to the undefined & illimitable

Ref. Every time that I meet people to talk with them I seem to myself to come down.

Ref. I am fond of being alone and yet when the end of the day comes I gasp for company

Ex. As soon as I come in the neighborhood of people I know then I feel this appalling sense of loneliness. I want to come near people and yet shrink from it It is as tho I felt myself dwindle in stature when I am with others. Yet the world is a desolately lonely place

Oh the solitude of the pathway

Ref. The trouble with me is my feelings center around ideas not men. I live in myself and there is my failure.

Me. My great defect is that I do not have within myse4(the stimulus for thought. I have to read or travel in order to have my mind aroused to thought. After I have been in one place a certain length of time or in environment my mind stagnates. every winter I need to go to N.Y. every summer to travel. It is a misfortune

Here among my books and thoughts I am myself

Ex. "When I am alone then am I least alone." But this is not the feeling for a man who wants to influence people.

Ref. It is not an ideal condition when in the rare intervals the tears comes [sic] to the eyes that it should never be for others but over one's own disappointment. Even the struggle to help others seems to concentrate a man's attention on himself

Sheldon's yearning for euphoric solitude alternated with a maddeningly unconquerable craving for companionship. "After all I am weak," he admitted. "I can't hold out to be alone. Later in the evening I do so crave company. How I long and long to go and see Mr. N. Well I'm not much of a philosopher." He sometimes wondered, briefly, if his sense of isolation stemmed from his renunciation of Christian faith. "Lord! but life is awfully lonely," he once exclaimed, then asked himself if it would be any different if he still believed in God and could pray. "No I doubt it," he answered. "The want is the want of human relations. I am near to no man." The incessancy of his loneliness is underscored by two lines of a German poem which he entered repeatedly throughout the journal: "Allein! Allein! Ach Gott ein einzig wesen/Um dieses Hampt an seine Brust degen" ["Alone! Alone! Oh God in such a way/this head on your breast to lay"]; one such entry was followed by the words, "Cold -- cold -- ice cold." Sheldon's feeling of being odd and unaccepted ("My God how like an outcast on the face of the earth I feel myself to be!") was lifelong. "From earliest boyhood people have always misunderstood me," he wrote. "I have always had to explain myself." In one entry he traced his history of alienation:

Ref. My life is an awfully solitary one -- I wonder if it comes because I work for results so far ahead and so never have much to show. But I win the esteem and trust of so very few persons. The school boys drew away from me because I was so abnormally conscientious and they did not know what was going on within. In college I was just a "hard worker." In N. York A [Adler] never had confidence in me. Now my colleagues distrust my intellectual capacity. When I assert my work I do it so blunderingly it looks as tho it was self assertion. Even in St. Louis they only half trust me. There is always an interrogation point I am all inside and that is the trouble. I must wait and fight it out. Slowly I make a few believe in me to some extent. But it comes a little hard, to [be] cool & composed on the outside when I am burning up within.

Weary of "explaining himself" and "trying to be like others," he pined for "just one person who would take me for what I am and think I must be right." He frequently bemoaned his inability to gain people's trust, and hoped to win them over by sheer persistence. "This long waiting," he reminded himself, "is the price I pay for the long time it takes me (owing to my peculiar nature) to make men have confidence in me." He took some comfort in the feeling that he was unappreciated because he was out of his element. "When in the life of the spirit and using his eye of spiritual discernment his [esteem] is very high," he reflected, apparently writing of himself as an archetype, in the third person. "When in the life of the flesh or of the world he is of the inferior grade. Just about the average. So according as he is met in the one or the other sphere is he judged."

Alone on the Heights

Sheldon wrote about failed and obstructed friendships to the near-exclusion of healthy ones, perhaps in part because of the cathartic nature of his "confessional." In St. Louis, his favorite companions were Learned, the Unitarian minister; Robert Moore, who served as president of the Society through most of Sheldon's tenure but apparently was not on the scene during the time Sheldon kept the journal; and N.O. Nelson, a lay leader he designated as "N" or "Mr. N." At one time he thought of Nelson as "the one friend of my mature years," but he did not feel fully accepted by him. "I am so unlike other people that I somehow cannot receive the same trust as other men receive," he wrote in a typical entry, adding that "even N only half trusts me." He feared a disagreement would rend the friendship. "How I dread the hour when Mr. N. & myself may come to a radical difference of opinion," he wrote. "With him it will mean 'to part company' for with him convictions are the man. Yet I could love him in spite of convictions. For me if it ever comes it will be one of the saddest moments in my life." He evidently saw every relationship as doomed; after voicing fear that his friendship with someone called "K" would fail, he asked, "Can men not be familiar without the inevitable decline [?]"

He often felt that his vocation, his dedication to ethical religion, so consumed him that he could not pledge loyalty to a person. "How this working for a cause hinders the action of the sympathies," he wrote in exploring the decline of one friendship. "I love the man, his joy is my joy, and yet because what would please him would not be well for the cause, or what would be the best thing for his interests would not be best for the cause, I may not encourage or help him. The larger work forbids the sympathies. So it is we are alone for the friend can never be quite satisfied that our love for the cause is not care for our own interests.... On the heights one is alone." Sheldon interpreted that sense of being "alone on the heights" as a kind of "consecration" analogous to priestly celibacy. "Why is it that I fail to make men love me," he once asked himself. "I hardly know of any man who has so few have the feeling of love for him."

And yet I love others. How much I think of N. of W. [S. Burns Weston, leader of the Philadelphia Society] of V.N. [unknown] of P [probably Paul F. Coste, treasurer of the board of trustees] of Mr. L. [Learned] Is it because I am cold or because I am 'consecrated' [?] "

He wrangled with his introspection, seeing it alternately as a worthy undertaking and a bar to companionship. On the one hand, he claimed that a man of the spirit "must husband his resources and spend [them] on his own development"; on the other, he reminded himself that "my danger is to excuse myself by the plea of need for my own development." He believed that egocentricity was, in part, an inevitable tendency of aging. "As we mature we become self absorbed in our aims," he observed. "They take our sympathies and we have left less to give to others. in youth with unformed purposes we give our sympathies freely. But the sad part of it is we each see the self absorption in the others and forget that it is also in ourself."

Apart from the few men he deemed intellectual and spiritual peers, he felt he could interact with people only in very limited ways. "We cannot have full friends with men of less breadth than ourselves unless the man be conscious of his lack of breadth," he reflected. "We can be friends with men on their own sphere but when outside of that if they do not know their limitations we cannot be at home together." He scrupulously avoided making friends out of selfish motives. "Remember the saying of the person in St Louis neglecting people till had need of them then began to go around and renew acquaintances," he reminded himself. "Don't ever do that. When the most successful be the most gracious." And he took to heart Kant's ethical principle that one must treat people as ends in themselves and not solely as means to one's ends:

Q. Are the "men of success" the men of the highest inner moral refinement? Doubtful. So one will have to choose: one can't be both. "Success" where it has to be won can only be achieved by treating other men as tools or instruments & so sacrificing the "man in the man" in them & thus losing respect for the "man in the man" in himself.

Equal But Separate

Even his relationships with other Ethical leaders, his comrades in the cause, were strained. Adler was for him a father figure whose respect he coveted but feared he would never have. He compared himself unfavorably to Adler, expressing envy of his sagacity, equanimity, and stamina. "I can see the strength of A now," reads one such observation. "It is not in intellect, but in will His heart never sinks. he always appears as tho he felt strong." Likewise, he dreamed of emulating "the masterly way by which A is able to get men to serve him and his purposes and yet to have them feel as though he was doing the favor to them." Sheldon dreaded Adler's visits to St. Louis because the movement's guiding spirit always attracted an exceptionally large audience; he knew an address by Adler would bring out "the ghosts -- the many faces that used to come but now come no more." He was stung by Adler's criticisms -- such as his observation that Sheldon was a "creature of nerves" -- but he fought his inclination to defend himself; he once berated himself because he "did not remain absolutely silent instead of rebelling" when Adler found fault with him. But while Adler's private confrontations were unsettling, Sheldon apparently did not suspect him of backstabbing; he once wrote that "one of the reasons for Adler's success" was that he "never expresses criticism of others." All of the entries that identify Adler by name or initial are essentially positive. However, contrary to form, Sheldon did not identify the subjects of a few of his most spiteful entries. Most of these do not establish the subject's place in his life, nor do adjoining entries offer any definite clues. But the subject of one such entry clearly was an authority figure in whom Sheldon had a considerable emotional investment; if it does refer to Adler, it shows that Sheldon's admiration for "the chief" was mixed with rage:

Ref. How I do loathe that man. He gives me a moral nausea. I dread to look at him to listen to him. And yet I can obey. But it does make a man sick at heart.

Sheldon also questioned his competence vis-a-vis his other Ethical colleagues -- Salter of Chicago, Stanton Coit of London, and Weston, his one true friend among the leaders. He once advised himself to begin from "the standpoint of resignation," to admit that he could "never equal Adler or Coit" because he possessed "neither the tact, the capacity for work nor the diversity of sympathies." In a similar vein, he bemoaned that he had not "the worldly tact of Professor A, nor the personal sweetness of W, nor the objective personality of C." Excepting Weston, he felt his fellow leaders did not hold him in high regard. "It cuts hard this distrust of my mental capacity among colleagues," he lamented. "Intellectually I am their equal (of any [of] them) but I lack the gift of showing it, of figuring before men." He continually fought to squelch his instinctive attempts to win their favor. "Work by myself," he resolved. "Make no effort any longer to impress Salter, Coit or Adler of what I can do. let them find out for themselves. in their presence unless I feel impelled or am addressed remain silent." Similarly, he vowed to "stop letting Salter,

Adler & the rest treat me as a youth and an apprentice. It was needful at the start to learn from their experience. Now it defeats that end. Not that I should not feel young, but I should not continue to go for advice as tho I did not know my own mind."

Sheldon and the other leaders customarily gathered each summer at the Adler-Goldmark estate in Keene Valley in New York state's Adirondack Mountains. Adler led the colleagues in planning sessions and philosophical discussions, but most leaders came primarily for rest and relaxation. Sheldon, however, felt compelled to spend most of his time studying and preparing addresses -- one of his self-critical entries indicates he sometimes read even during meals -- and he frequently complained in his journal that he was distracted by the levity of his colleagues. In one entry he expressed regret at having allowed his love of the mountains to lure him to the gathering, which had been for him "an unsatisfactory working season." Several times he resolved to limit his visit to the duration required by Adler. He once decided he had erred in choosing to spend his summer "among acquaintances where they are at leisure and I at work. Puts me in a false light of seeming discourtesy [sic]. Should go among strangers." The constant interaction at the retreat grated on Sheldon; in a rather playfully ironic entry written during one vacation, he cited the chief flaws of his colleagues: "Salter is too much in the air, Adler too much in himself, Weston too much with ladies, [M.M.] Mangasarian [a virulent anti-Catholic who was to replace Salter in Chicago from 1892-96] too much in Constantinople, Sheldon too much in his cabin, Szycki [unknown] too much in the utilitarianism, Black [unknown] is too much at and too long at one Station. Coit is alone amenable to experience."

Sheldon cherished Weston's friendship. He wrote appreciatively of Weston's gentlemanliness, his "matchless delicacy" in considering the feelings of others. He referred to him as "the only man I seem never to weary of." He was deeply saddened when the friendship fell, at times, to what he called "the bread and butter level," and he repeatedly asked himself what he might do to "fetch it up." He observed that what he perceived as coolness in his friend had the marked effect of "reducing the level of one's inner life." The shared summers in Keene Valley magnified the tensions in the friendship. "What can I do to sweeten and elevate the intercourse between W & myself," he asked himself in the summer of 1888. "It is argue, wrangle, dispute etc all the time and yet there is deep affection between us. one thing is certain we ought not to take vacation together ... with him it is pure vacation as for me I am still moving in worlds not realized' and so the jar." While he later noted with satisfaction that he had gone a full week without arguing with his friend, he concluded at summer's end that he had frittered away his time by engaging in "too much idle chat with Weston." Later that year, he resolved to spend the following summer in London or somewhere else where he might find "companions with strong minds. I dwindle by giving way to so much froth. W. is at his best where at a distance. But I do love the man. He is so pure & genuine."

The Colors in the Raindrop

Curiously, Sheldon explicitly mentioned his mother only once in the journal. That mention -- "the feeling at my mother's death" -- is included in "Things which stick in my memory," a list of eight recurring memories noted without embellishment. The first item in the list -- "the handful of sand when 7 years old" -- may indicate that he witnessed his father's drowning, or that he was playing in the sand onshore when he learned of it.⁷

One other passage -- near the end of the journal but before his first references to his future wife -- likely expresses Sheldon's need for his mother's love: "Oh if only I could go home and put my head on her shoulders for five minutes just rest it there and rest."

The only other entries he wrote about family regarded his Uncle Charles, from whom he borrowed money, and his unnamed brother, for whom he had little affection. He mentioned "the feelings that come on me when I receive the melancholy letters from my brother," but he never named those feelings. His brother had an illness of some sort, evidently a mental illness which Sheldon referred to as "a disease of the will"; typically, Sheldon noted his "want of deep fraternal sympathy" when he learned of the illness and wondered if "this subjective life" rendered him cold. He did feel a certain pity toward him, however, writing of him as "my poor, poor brother" and reminding himself that he must treat him as a sick man, & sick mind -- not as a natural man." For years he struggled with the question of how far he would go -- and how much he would sacrifice -- to help his brother. "The grand query with me," he wrote, "is in how far I am to let my brother's condition interfere with doing a complete life work. I am not responsible for what

⁷ The reference to his mother's death is the fifth item on the list. The eighth was mentioned previously: "the feeling I had in Salsbury at Lake D when J came to tell me of his father's injury." The others are oblique references to experiences in Europe and the Middle East. For readers who might care to divine their significance, they are: "2) the cigar incident at Grenada; 3) the donkey ride on the Nile; 4) the letter from Dresden; 6) the supper on the way to Jerusalem; [and] 7) the opera incident at Milan."

he has done. his condition [is] his shortcoming. But on the other hand he is my brother." His brother often reminded him that he -- Walter -- was "much better off than him and accused him of duplicity for expressing concern about the poor. "He does not understand," Sheldon told himself "Comfort is a state of mind, not furniture." Sheldon did give his brother money on at least one occasion, but his brother's apparent spitefulness and ingratitude deprived Sheldon of any satisfaction in making the gift:

It is true I have not been generous to my brot[her]'s family in money. Perhaps I have been wrong but I meant to do right. As long as he spent \$2,500.00 he could not be poor. altho always like myself in distress for money because we both spend more than our income. and so as it was a question of inclinations, I did not do it because I took no pleasure in it. Gift was taken as a matter of fact way. [sic] it gave none of the pleasure of the real gift. The constant reminder on their part how much better off I was than they were took the pleasure away of mutual sympathy and giving was no pleasure. And so their charges -- of my selfishness and want of feeling spoiled the relationship. I love my bro -- but his love for me has been so mixed with fault finding that it makes impossible that cordial intercourse.

Sheldon maintained his detachment to the end. He believed that his brother's death was somehow hastened because he had succumbed to his emotions. "A man with a work cannot allow himself to feel or give way to his feelings," he wrote after the funeral. "He must hold his nerves taut. My experience at my brother's grave! He did allow himself to feel and alas the consequences! " His only other reflection on the death was in the form of quoting two lines of poetry on the ephemeral nature of life: "The colors in the raindrop on the grass/ The wind comes, they are gone!" Sheldon's lack of "cordial intercourse" with his brother's family made for a tense gathering at the funeral. "It's a curious thing a woman's understanding of the world," he wrote, apparently in reference to his brother's wife or another relative. "They wonder why the world does not stop or come to a standstill if a near calamity comes to them. A man involved in numerous responsibilities shakes himself free after a desperate effort goes a thousand miles to offer his sympathy and aid; and then is blamed because he did not arrive a day earlier for the funeral." He noted that the relative thought him "unfeeling" for not dropping everything to travel East as soon as possible. Privately, at least, he defended his behavior. "I can feel," he wrote, "but certainly I do not show it as others show it. I feel in a different way. If only a man could be allowed to be himself."

An Everlasting Barrier

A well-educated, professional man of meager means, Sheldon felt alienated from both the working class and the wealthy. He often pondered class distinctions, trying to come to terms with his mixed feelings and conflicting loyalties. Both in his way of life and his professional service, his sense of place in the social order was ambiguous.

As evidenced by his founding of the Wage Earner's Self-Culture Clubs, a network of educational programs, Sheldon was committed to raising the intellectual and cultural awareness of working-class people. He was genuinely moved by the plight of laborers. From the window of his home on Delmar Boulevard in the city's West End, he could see a silk factory that, according to his notes, employed 300 women who worked 12 hours a day for 20 to 22 cents an hour. "They have so little," he wrote. "We have so much." But while "self-culture" was one of his dearest ideals, Sheldon hoped the working people he served would stop short of acquiring the sensitivities that he felt rendered him vulnerable and ineffective in the working world. "It would not be safe to have the majority highly developed in soul," he reflected. "It weakens the will in dealing with practical affairs. The refined get beaten in the struggle. A certain rough vigor is necessary because the practical affairs must always constitute the largest part of life. The refined get driven to the wall."

He praised the grit and ingenuity of working people and rebelled against the snobbishness of the educated people he moved among. He found it "curious" that the "cultured and refined form a class which does not admit the more rough shod worker in literature, art, religion. But in the next generation or century the work of this former rough shod class is the intellectual nutriment of the new refined class." He cursed "these polished elegant aristocratic followers of religions and teachings or political doctrines which had their origin down at the bottom or among the common people!" Similarly, he found it "depressing always so depressing to see so many people (comfortable people) visiting the tombs of the martyrs (e.g., Savonorola) as one of the 'sights' when these very persons would be the first to begin the persecution if another [garbled word] those martyrs came forward."

In one of his first entries on the subject of class, Sheldon referred to 1888 -- the year he founded the Self-Culture program -- as "the epoch when I met and learned about the working class." He quickly retreated from that assertion, however, bemoaning his difficulty in communicating with people whose experience of life was so different from his

own. He fought the temptation to "win the working men by saying things to please them," and he noted with exasperation a colleague's comment that "the working men don't think me sincere because I don't come out!" meaning, perhaps, that he taught them, but he didn't go drinking with them.

In all, Sheldon was able to accept his status as outsider among working people, but he struggled for a way to move and work among the wealthy without sacrificing his integrity. A populist at heart, he derided the attitude of an old-money family that objected to its daughter's marriage into a family that "had earned its own money," and he found it "curious" that his "two most intimate friends" -- probably Nelson and Weston -- came from "the people enamored of the social aristocracy and now marry there." But although he was committed to the cause of the working class and repulsed by elitism, he identified with the culture of the upper class, and he sometimes admitted a longing to fully take part in it. "The saddest thing to me," he wrote, "is that my peculiar position and work shuts me off from the sympathy of the most refined, with whom I feel most akin. An everlasting barrier stands between us."

His ambivalence is illustrated by his feelings about one John T.D., a "perfect gentleman" who, because he exemplified the class in which Sheldon thought he ought to feel at home, deepened his sense of ostracism. "Yet whenever I see him," he continued, "it brings home to me the feeling how much force has to be whittled away in order to make so perfect a gentleman. Such men make splendid figures to run the machinery but not to invent it. Whittle away just a little more and there would not be force enough to run the machinery." His economic philosophy likewise was shot through with contradiction. He held to the principle that social reform must begin with self-culture, and one of the personal reforms he firmly advocated was to live simply; in his journal, however, he puzzled over the fact that a sharp drop in the demand for luxury goods -- such as the talking dolls that recently had become popular -- would put wage earners out of work.

Philosophically, Sheldon's loyalty to the working class predominated. "I must conquer this desire to be one of the 'classes' and must keep firm hold of the fact that I am to be a man of the people," he resolved. "My lot is with them. It is here the classes have the refinement and I hunger for that, but the people have the energy, the will, the future belongs to them. If the choice comes I must choose the people." In practice, however, he continued to move in both worlds as an alien. On the one hand, he chastised himself for trying to fit in with the wealthy, for "spending my full income and more in order to make people believe I belong to their class." On the other, he despaired of being "left or lost exclusively in the lower class I live among." In his work, he worried that Ethical Culture repulsed the very class of people for which it was best suited. "Our movement is on a grade for the cultured and conventional classes and they are just the ones who are afraid of it because it is so explicit and 'pronounced,'" he wrote. He observed that people choose religious associations as much for social status as for philosophical compatibility. "There's no hope of getting people from the upper classes," he reflected, "for you must have 'our set! They will not go just for the thing itself." At times, he voiced fear that the peculiar nature of ethical religion kept it from finding a stronghold in any class: "After all we cannot reach the religious classes. they are afraid. We cannot reach the business men because we are 'theorists.' we cannot reach the workingmen because we are not workingmen."

A Curious Experience

Sheldon's general discomfort with people became acute in the company of women. While he agonized over the difficulties of establishing friendships with men, women were such foreigners to him that his thoughts of intimacy with them were more in the realm of fantasy than intention. He tried to minimize his constant "blunders" in his dealings with women by adhering to the Victorian code of conduct governing relations between the sexes. "One of the mistakes of my life," he told himself, "is treating women without distinction of sex -- rem[ember] that [a] woman has to be treated with a kind of respect totally unlike the respect shown in the presence of men either recognize that fact or do not go into women's society."

His feelings about the possibility of getting married were sharply ambivalent. He often wrote of being "consecrated," marked by fate to live a solitary life. "My God! My God!" he exclaimed, "here I am -- devoted, doomed, manacled as much as tho I had taken the vows or were in prison for life. burning up inside. no way to turn. here I stand I cannot speak what I feel even to the nearest and dearest." Not surprisingly, he had difficulty conceiving of himself as a lover. "How inevitable it is that I shrink from the regular contact with individuals," he wrote. "What a strange person I would be as a married man." When friends suggested that he consider marrying, he dismissed the notion as preposterous. "They don't know what I feel," he told himself. "I can ask no one to share this awful struggle. I will fight it out alone." Further, he constantly worried that he might be fired or that an emotional breakdown would force him out of the profession, and he wanted to remain "in a position, to withdraw if need be with no power pulling me from behind and showing the need of means of subsistence." But believing in the necessity of celibacy did not relieve the pain of isolation. "It is so fortunate that I am not married," he reflected, "and

yet so dreary!" Bouts of depression intensified both his relief and his sorrow: "Q. Why is it in all these depressed moods every time it strikes me when I feel myself beaten down, despair coming over me I exclaim how fortunate that I am not married. And yet -- and yet -- Oh my God In several entries in the latter part of the journal and a cluster of exceptionally long entries at the very end, he confronted his assumptions about his forced celibacy, wrangled with the seemingly bizarre effects of love and sexual attraction on otherwise sane people, and bewailed his own experience of coming under that strange spell:

Q. Why is it that even in the finest natures to receive unrequited affection gives an element of satisfaction. surely it ought to make them feel only pain in the pain they give by not be [sic] able to reciprocate. Is it because it makes a man or woman conscious that she really has worth to excite that affection [?]

Ref. One man eating out his heart for a woman the woman eating out his [sic] heart for another man. The other man eating out his heart for he knows not what. How things do get mixed up

Ref. The crisis of my life has come. A choice seems to [be] upon me. A man thinks in a vague way he can take the consequences. He doesn't know what it means till it comes. Ideally it is grand to have a purpose so high that this or that in one's circumstances don't signify. But it is more serious when the actual experience comes and we taste the reality, what it means to be one of the souls "who stand alone." I hear the voice plainly enough saying "You can't do it because of your vocation." That fixes your condition You cannot step outside of it. The world which "does what other persons do" has no room for you because you cannot do what others do. That world disapproves of a departure even in politics, it disapproves still more of a departure in social conventions, it disapproves worst of all of a departure in religion. And we must go to the world which welcomes what we want to do. Tho in what we are we may be more at home in the other world the refinement does draw me, the richness of life comes so natural to me. It has what I want but it does not want me, that is, it does not want my work. And yet it is just this work which has refined me. But I must accept the Inevitable. All the soul I have is in the work. I am this or nothing. A man can give up a joy which is only a thought. That is one kind of resignation. But it means something else to give up what he begins to understand by actual feeling what his whole being wakes up to the existence of and craves -- that comes hard.

Ref. Well this is a curious experience it sets at defiance every theory of self dependence. Suddenly almost without reason a man loses control of his mind can't work connectedly can't stay quietly by himself, is [garbled word] & consuming from [desire] to be with another just to get to that other's presence! can't think of anything else, sees that face all the time coming between the book and himself, in defiance of reason with no special occasion to bring it about, no particular community of sympathy, remotely separate in tastes, life interests & convictions, just mastered by a force, or voice, or face or motion or personality. It isn't pleasure it is pain. The unaccountable restlessness and longing. And still it is almost purely psychical, save in the wish to be with the other. It may be sufficient if the person is in the room tho there be hundreds of others. The Consciousness is there. A region is desolate if the person is gone. It can't be reasoned away. Reasons have no effect. No wonder it has played a great role in history

Ref. Think a moment. I know one man who would rather die than go thro another such year. in love with a woman who has said yes and then said no and is in agony because she cannot say yes I know another woman eating out her heart for years for a man and another man eating out his heart for her in vain. I know a third woman loving another for fifteen years never giving up hope desperate even to the grave. I know a man caring for another woman he can never have. And now I see a father's heart breaking as he sees his child slipping from him to go forever. How can a mortal ever be happy?

Ref. What a curious feeling the intense overpowering desire to be with a certain person, so that one would be willing to circle the globe only to be with that person for half an hour! It seems to have no reason

Ex. My God My God what can I do what can I do all thy waves have gone over me now. For the first time actually I have tasted the poignancy of suffering. I know now what others feel. I never knew before. Just think! to lean my head up against the window and to cry like a child In a few

short months to have one person take precedence over every other and to shake me all over with a feeling like this

With those words, Sheldon closed the book. On May 18, 1892, he married Philadelphian Anna Hartshorne, younger sister of Weston's wife, Mary. The marriage no doubt spawned at least some measure of happiness and relief as well as panic and fear, but he evidently stopped committing such experiences to a "confessional" once he found a flesh-and-blood confidante. It is known that Anna, heir to a modest fortune her father had made as a vice president of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, relieved her husband -- and the Society -- of worry over Sheldon's meager compensation. Also, Sheldon did reveal in a letter to his friend N.O. Nelson that the marriage was religiously mixed:

I have an awful confession to make. I feel as tho I had done something unpredictable, wicked and I don't know what else. But during the last few months I have actually found a woman who is willing to take the awful risk of venturing to have her life [garbled word] tied to mine. I am scared in my very soul at the responsibility. I suppose the women of St. Louis will think I have no right to marry a woman, but ought to be married to a man. She comes from Philadelphia. I hope my friends of the Ethical Society will take to the fact as philosophically that she is a devout Episcopalian as she takes it philosophically that I am an Ethical lecturer. (undated letter from Walter L. Sheldon to N.O. Nelson; from N.O. Nelson papers, Missouri Historical Society)

A Bed of Pain

It is evident from what Sheldon reveals about his "nervous condition" that he was chronically depressed, and possibly manic-depressive. He was never inspired to write when overcome with elation, but entries he wrote in the dark, agonizing depressions that followed indicate that his "high" periods were brief, intense, and precarious. Apart from those highs, he generally felt fatigued and despondent. Unable to find effective medical treatment, he tried to ameliorate his condition by changing his personal habits, bracing himself with stoical declarations, and reminding himself that his pain goaded him to do his best. Depression hit Sheldon in waves. It came on suddenly, "just like a return of a pain in the body," and grew stronger by the day; as wave upon wave laid him down, it seemed to Sheldon that that it took him longer and longer "to pull out of it." He tried to override his depressions, telling himself to straighten up, to stop appearing before others "in negligé mood" or "in unstrung state of mind." Though compelled to attend closely to his inner life, he was unsure if his introspection was a help or a hindrance. "Is it selfishness this falling in on oneself," he asked, "or is it necessary in order to retain steadiness of purpose and strength [?]" The syndrome was so familiar to him that he did not specify the symptoms -he simply bewailed its return. The journal is pervaded with exclamations of grief-

Res. Take care about these hours of physical exhaustion in allowing the moments of depression. remember that it is the physical exhaustion which is the cause. go out. go somewhere. remember that the melancholy can prey like a disease and become a disease. it eats out the strength of the will.

Q. What does this mean, this curious silent inner laughter at myself Last year the tears came to my eyes. This year there is as much cause and the sinking of the heart even heavier yet the eyes are dry

Ref. It is at the moment when I seem nearest defeat that I pull up and do my best work. It seems to require that sense of intense depression to goad me to find the new steps. The nightmare from which I shall never recover are [sic] the B- Me s. ["Me s." denotes "mistakes"; "B-" may be a kind of expletive deleted, such as "bloody."] how it does dig into me. it comes on me with a sense of weariness and prostration similar to that after a long mountain climb and I want to fall back & bathe in the infinite & rest there

"Pain! Pain! Err! forever!" Prometheus

Ref. I wish that I could escape that state of feeling as tho I had lost care for much of anything. Remember that it is often due to physical depression.

Ref. Strange it is. we after all make our own bed of pain. I have enough money. I could retire to the country. live content and comfortable in mind. I would not be miserable. Yet here my life is

steady inward mental suffering always pain. I could give it up. No outward force would cause me fear no anxiety about penalties of judgment. What others would say would not trouble me. I am driven on just by my own inward impulsion. The mere shrinking from sinking back, of vegetating. The sense that I owe myself to this work --just naked duty. Is not this the secret of all mental pain. Every man could just live. but he wants more than just to live, and then comes the agony. When I find that I go to sleep readily at night that worries me and I fear that I am slipping back. The thoughts come, the deep feelings, only in these times of intense inward commotion. They tell me I do not like St Louis they blame me for being gone so long. But they don't understand. This pain wears me out

Rem. And still it is true it requires the goad to make us do our best

Ref. How true it is that a mere thought, a possibility, which has no ground for it may yet worry the mind like a sliver in the finger

Ex. Tired of thinking: I used to be given to dreaming. Now I can hardly ever do it for a moment save now & then a little of one dream. [presumably, a reference to the dream of living in the country]

Ref. unhappy me, unhappy me! Surely it is no sin to say it here! I will fight the fight bravely.

Ex. This sense of depression, of gathering oneself together for a pull when one is tom in pieces internally where in the depths have I not been this last fortnight. And yet it is not physical. It has its reason. It is the sense of defect, the littleness of results beside what I have been working for! Oh my God I keep saying it over to myself why not here I suffer so much myself that I have not time to sympathize with the suffering with others

Ref. I suppose a man can shed tears internally just as he can bleed internally

Ex. My God! My God! it is beginning over again

Ex. Sick in mind. Sick at heart!

Ex. The worst difficulty is that I cannot laugh. It is not that I lack the feeling of intensity. But the world is too awfully behind on the road I cannot get over the fact

I know the trouble is in myself But where? where? If I could only locate it only only mend it

Ex. I feel as tho I were bleeding all over. I ache in my very soul.

Ref. It would be so pleasant to have all the rest of the world happy because one might allow himself the luxury of feeling wretched himself without thinking that it must be selfish to feel so

Ex. I am so dissatisfied with myself, so disappointed with myself

Rem. A part of this depression comes from physical exhaustion not enough nerve force to hold up against it It is curious what silent man this profession makes one and the silence makes the life intense. It wears on the soul If I speak I say it wrong

Ref. Oh I'm so sick at heart, so sick so sick. And yet not of love nor grief This has been a time of acute misery I am so tired of wearing an even face. Not one mortal in the city knows what I have been feeling. And yet I must keep on hang on. But Oh if only I could get away somewhere anywhere, just creep into a hole and be there and rest. What it does mean that awful sense of defeat. powerlessness. it is more crushing than grief for it leaves not even the self to lean upon. Oh my God my God!

Ref. Well the week is over again. Oh how I shiver! it is cold so awfully cold what a lot of lead can settle in on a man's being and weigh him down and then again I am burning up

Ex. Just think when will it stop. Each Sunday begins the agony over again Oh those missing faces.
I'm tired and sick. This wearing a smile in the face of failure comes hard. But it is all right.

Ex. It does take will and grit and belief to move on this way knowing what one knows but giving
no sign that one does know. Through distrust or trust through criticism or sympathy to move on
straight ahead Oh God I'm tired

Ex. When I give way it will come with a snap.

Ref. Back again comes the pain. just like a return of a pain in the body

Sheldon's depressions often included bouts of extreme agitation, a "restlessness" characterized by roiling emotions and confused thoughts. "How I bum inside of me!" he exclaimed. "Up in the brain and down in the heart! There is a meaning in the old figure a 'consuming fire.'" When Adler wrote to Salter that Sheldon was a "walking volcano" who "must be permitted from time to time to emit fire and smoke," he revealed that Sheldon was not wholly successful in suppressing his turmoil:

N. Alas how I am torn and tossed by this inward conflagration The man of the world and the man
of the spirit. Who would guess that while I am talking calmly I am in that state of tension that I
want to stamp on the floor. The cold sombre face of the scholar and thinker but all on fire within. I
may be talking intently on one subject and yet being agitated and up heaved by a second wave of
thought going on inside.

Sheldon reported moments when his depression lifted when he felt contented, confident, and vital. Those moments were rare, short-lived, and draining. "What hinders me so is that I am nervously in time, on my height, only for a limited time," he lamented. "Then I feel like a dried sponge." While he usually saw himself as hopelessly ineffectual, times of elation gave him a sense of greater capacities. "A little more worldliness," he wrote, "a little more savoir-faire and what mountains I could move!" He found that he sometimes could precipitate such moments by reading edifying books or listening to music, but he regretted the need for such influences. "I am so disappointed with myself," he wrote. "I so seldom get on the heights and can stay there only for so short time. Even then I require a stimulus to draw me up there. My own mind does not furnish the power." Several times he noted that he had dispelled a moment of lightness out of guilt. "Curious," began one such entry. "For a moment I felt as tho things were going to go all right. I felt a surcease of worry. I was contented and happy and then suddenly it was as tho I was a little sorry I did not have something to be anxious about. I felt ashamed to be content." Sheldon's energy and drive -- what he called "nerve force" -- was forever sapped by "nervous strain." He apparently lived in an almost constant state of fatigue. "The secret of my failure is want of surplus vitality," he wrote. "My strength gives out so soon. if I walk I cannot read. An extra exertion drains every drop of vitality. As limp as a wet rag." He complained of sleepless nights, and sought to find the cause in his diet or other personal habits. He wrote of being worn out from the "up and down movement" of his emotions and from "always working for twice the result I accomplish." Because of his weariness, he often had trouble concentrating on his reading or paying attention to conversation; again and again, he berated himself for teaching classes or leading discussion groups in a state of exhaustion. He exerted a tremendous force of will to push on through. "God, God, God I am so tired and discourge [sic]," he wrote in one of many such passages. "Yet say nothing, say nothing -- work ahead! But oh the weariness of it!" Sundays were especially draining. "It does not seem as tho I could stand another year of this nervous strain," he once exclaimed. "Each Sunday seems to take a month out of my life."

Mindful of his tendency to pack his schedule, working for weeks at a time without a day off, he frequently made conscious efforts to minimize and accommodate his fatigue. Believing himself to be "l'extremely limited in the am't of steady work" he could do, he reminded himself that when he foresaw a need to be fresh in the evening he would have to remain idle in the afternoon, and that when he needed to be fresh in the forenoon he would have to restrict his work the previous evening. Similarly, he observed that "for every extra strain, be it a Princeton supper or a lecture, I must pay the penalty in the loss of a day after." He repeatedly instructed himself to plan his schedule accordingly. "Rem.[ember] that if I have one day of unusual or very steady creative activity of mind it must be followed by an off day," he wrote. "It is a waste to try to escape the necessity. I lose the rest & yet accomplish nothing." His low store of energy, he owned, made it "inevitable that I cannot do large work in the world and I must take care that wherever I place myself I can limit the am't of work I have to do & so be able to do it well." The insistent repetition of such advice indicates that he never succeeded in countering his compulsiveness. When he gave rein to his natural patterns of energy and fatigue, he found that his work -presumably his writing -- was most productive when he stayed at it "without stopping" and then took an extended rest. He did get away once or twice a

year -- he mentions a trip up the Mississippi, a visit to Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky, and a journey to the West -- with mixed results. While he often returned feeling just as exhausted as before, some trips -- such as one to his hometown of Salisbury, Vermont, where he wrote of being waited on -- had a salutary effect. Successful respites dramatically improved his attitude. "How much difference it makes whether a man is in full physical strength," he observed after a holiday over the traditional post-Christmas break in the Ethical season. "When I leave in the midwinter I feel as tho a feather weight would be just enough to overthrow me. When I go back I feel for the first week as tho a block of granite falling on my head couldn't kill me." But for all his complaints of weariness and his yearning for more vigor, one particularly telling entry V shows that he actually saw restfulness as a sign of personal decline:

Me. Am worried at the decline of ambition stealing on me. Is it in the atmosphere? A man is not induced to do his best when his next-best will do as well. but the danger is to myself. I shall shrink to the level of my next best. That is the danger. Am not thin and pale enough at this season. It shows that I am weakening not straining enough. I look too well

One of the ways in which Sheldon sought to accept his "nervous condition" was to correlate its oscillations with the seasons or the weather, taking comfort in the inevitable passage of both. Always fearful of a poor showing at the platform service, he felt utterly desolate when rain clouds rolled in. "On rainy Sundays I enter into the depths," he wrote. "I feel as tho in the Book of Infinite Wisdom, the Almighty [sic] had written me down a fool." He reflected that "ministers must be glad indeed that in heaven at least there can be no 'rainy Sunday' -- when a stormy Sunday comes I feel as tho I had been knocked over by a block of wood." To guard against that incapacitating effect, he several times resolved to "absolutely never read the weather bulletin." Upholding that resolution in the face of a near obsession required "a regular struggle at the end of the week." While weather forecasts were merely hazardous, the calendar year was a veritable landmine. Several times he referred to January as a time of such heavy exhaustion that "even quantity of sleep does not restore me." But he struggled through "the inevitable state of exhaustion about the middle of the winter" only to face "the invariable letting down of strength and courage as Spring approaches." The Christian holidays were an annual nadir. "My Christmas season of despair is coming on," he observed one year. "Tis a long number of years since I passed a joyous Christmas season." He counted on the summer to provide at least a few "odd moments" of lightheartedness, but he actually felt more himself in the harshness of winter. "In winter," he wrote, "I think I live for the summer and count the days till then -- In summer, I chafe and long for the harness and think I live for the winter." When he did allow himself to shrug off the anxieties of the Ethical season, he felt guilty about it:

R. Curious the contrast. In the summer when I get away by myself I scarcely understand the positive agony of the last season. None of those terrific days of mental pain come over me. I seem just quiet. I was even asked the other day whether I ever was serious. In the winter I ask myself could I ever be anything else but serious. But it seems selfish This momentary lull I am not feeling the world's misery enough.

Sheldon believed that living in St. Louis, which he depicted as a rather dismal frontier outpost far removed from the intelligencia of the East, exacerbated his solitude and depression. "I must remember that I am isolated from other men here in the West," he told himself, "and so must take great care to keep up in general culture." He always looked forward to getting away from St. Louis: "The best substitute for the company of great and leading men -- which I cannot have -- is (1) books & (2) travel but especially travel. that largeness of view that comes of mingling with many men may perhaps be secured to some extent thro travel." His return trips to what he dubbed "the city of restrictions" were less than joyous. "God! This sinking of the heart on the first arrival in St. Louis," he wrote after one homecoming. "My wings are clipped, my feet are tired. I was repeating over this summer, 'My soul is an uncharted boat.' Where is it now my soul! "

He bemoaned "the blighting effect of St. Louis on ambition" and reminded himself that "the test of work achieved in St. Louis [is] no test of a man's strength." The region's harsh heat waves drove him to spend his summers in the mountains of the East, but he could not altogether escape its mosquitoes; to put up with them for the sake of the cause was for him a mark of sainthood. "Curious," he reflected, "but of all the trials that would come to a man who gave up his life to the poor and lived with them I always think first of the suffering & torture from insects. One can be a St. Francis in enduring pain and giving up pleasure. But this other is terrible." At times, however, he acknowledged that his surroundings could not be the primary cause of his sorrow. "How natural and inevitable it seems here, to fall back and swear at St. L," he exclaimed. "It is in the very atmosphere. Yet it is weak. The trouble is in myself."

Acting on the hypothesis that his "mistakes & lapses" stemmed from his "irregularity of life all round," Sheldon worked to moderate or eliminate personal habits that contributed to his ill health. He tried, apparently unsuccessfully, to keep to a diet of gluten bread and coffee for breakfast, gluten bread and tea for supper, and one full meal per day. He blamed a variety of late-night excesses for his poor sleep: Too much hearty food ("Should just eat crackers"), too much cognac, too much English breakfast tea. Though his notations on daily expenses indicate he was fond of cigars, he was wary of their effects. "Rem. [ember] that when I smoke a cigar one day," he noted, "I am quite sure to lose the most of the next day in reaction." Likewise he wondered if a diminishment of his marksmanship indicated that he was "losing my steadiness of nerve thro too much coffee & tobacco." To compensate for his insomnia, Sheldon tended to sleep late when sleep did come -- and when his schedule allowed. But recognizing that his irregular hours put him out of synch with his colleagues, he instructed himself several times to rise early (like an acquaintance, one Mr. Fusz, who rose at 6 a.m. regardless of when he retired) and begin the day by reciting a poem or taking a walk.

He also tried to cultivate habits that would sharpen his critical judgment ("Res. Put to myself problems for solution or books to criticize when on a walk"), increase his efficiency ("Rem. the immense loss of time through not doing up things at once when downtown"), or help him maintain his vigilance in the face of potential opposition ("Res. Carry Mr. Ts letter in my pocket as a warning for the future of the thorns in the pathway"). Recognizing the effect of his environment on his state of mind, he once resolved to add a decorative article to his home each fall -- something in the range of \$22 to \$50 ("This year it was The Dog"). And in his quest for orderliness, he kept lists of various kinds -- a roster of people he was likely to encounter, inventories of his addresses and the many books in his collection, and summaries of travel highlights (when in London he stayed at Charing Cross Hotel, and on trips to New York he visited the Statue of Liberty and took in a Broadway production of "As You Like It" that featured Julia Marlowe).

One cluster of entries indicates that Sheldon sought medical treatment for his disorder, but that he found the experience humiliating and exasperating. "How his visits make me quiver," he wrote. "No feeling of sympathy, no helping hand, no 'rejoicing with me when I rejoiced' no 'weeping with me when I weep' just looks me over, feels my pulse, sets me down.... God I feel as tho I had been handled over like a piece of goods or used as a foot mat." Whatever advice the physician offered, Sheldon dismissed it as perfunctory: "It is like tapping a vein, taking a bowl of blood flow, then telling a man to go ahead just as before." His relationship with the man was "like an iceberg -- no community of feeling no reciprocity."

In the absence of sound therapy, Sheldon was left to cope with his illness through self-examination and determination. The mysteriousness of the condition frustrated him. "I know the trouble is in myself," he wrote, "but where? where? If I could only locate it only only mend it [sic]." Had he had access to competent medical or psychological treatment, he might have uncovered the source of his anguish and had an opportunity to heal. Psychoanalyst Paul DeWald, former director of the Psychoanalytic Institute of St. Louis and a member of the Ethical Society of St. Louis, analyzed Sheldon's disorder from the information available in the journal; though a century too late to help Sheldon, the diagnosis underscores the intensity of the battle he fought:

"That Sheldon suffered from such a disorder can hardly be seen as a diminishment of his character. On the contrary, his greatness lay in serving the Society -- through "naked duty" -- in spite of it. Though ever tempted to give up his post and find refuge in a quiet country cottage, he persevered, writing, teaching, lecturing, and administering a nascent religious community that would thrive like no other of its kind. He deemed his achievements paltry, but time has proved him wrong.

Before the publication of this book, Walter L. Sheldon was to members of the Ethical Society little more than a portrait hanging in a side gallery at the meeting house. His books and addresses had not been in circulation for generations, and only a few members of scholarly bent had even been aware that the journal was extant. Consequently, these revelations about his suffering, his personality, and his foibles will not demolish a cherished icon. Instead, it is hoped that they will bring to life a man who served his ideals in the face of unrelenting sorrow."

A Dusty Legacy

Correlation between journal and formal writings

In addition to providing a penetrating look at Sheldon's inner life, the journal shows how this reflective man wove his life philosophy from the threads of his experience. Though he forbade himself to publicly speak or write of his

suffering, he freely used the knowledge he gained in his struggle to forge and promulgate ethical religion. From his feeling that, like it or not, he was consecrated to the service of Ethical Culture came this reflection: "[T]here is fixed in our consciousness a feeling that we are to stay in a certain niche and do a certain work. It may be irksome, and we may not like it. If it were wholly a choice for our own sakes, we should not stay there. But it is because of this something outside of ourselves to which we belong, that duty exacts it of us in spite of ourselves." ("Duty -- to One Who Makes a Religion of It," from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; pp. 49-50) His sense that his alienation resulted from his commitment to high ideals spawned this observation in an address titled, "Does High Conduct Bring Happiness?": "The man who sets a high aim for himself must expect to stand squarely on his own feet and do without popularity In order to be universally liked, you would be obliged to give in to the common weaknesses of human nature." ("Does High Conduct Bring Happiness?" from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; pp. 165-166) Paying heed to the dangers of narcissism he so often fought, he warned his listeners against excessive introspection: "The trouble with much self-culture," he wrote, "is that it drives one still deeper into one's self, -- and thus, in another way, into the life of the world." ("Methods for Spiritual Self-Culture," from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; p. 202) Finally, this man who believed his heart had grown cold came to believe that the sorrow he shared with all human beings was the very source of religion: "[I]t is in the anguish of our sin-stricken, sorrow-laden souls that we reach out for anything whatever that may lift us away from this awful burden bearing us down," he wrote. "It is because men have suffered and agonized that they have been drawn together, that they are fond of brotherhoods, that they have developed religions." ("The Attitude We Should Take to the Religious Beliefs of Others," from *An Ethical Movement*, W.L. Sheldon, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1896; p. 78)

Addresses

During Sheldon's life and for several decades afterward, his writings were cherished by members of the Society. He prepared his addresses with such fastidiousness that they could be published with little revision. Scores of unpublished drafts of his lectures remain in the archives of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, but those he and his listeners considered most signal made their way into print. In 1896, the tenth anniversary of his leadership, he bound the transcripts of 16 of his favorite lectures in a volume titled "An Ethical Movement." Macmillan and Co. distributed the book in both the United States and England, and clippings in Sheldon's scrapbooks indicate it received at least 18 favorable reviews. "A Study of the Divine Comedy of Dante" comprised transcriptions of a series of lectures he gave on the work in 1905. Dozens of other addresses were printed in pamphlet form and distributed to other ethical societies; many were included in a series of volumes of addresses by various ethical leaders. In a 1919 book titled "Thoughts from the Writings and Addresses of Walter L. Sheldon," Cecelia Boette, a longtime assistant of Sheldon's in the Ethical Sunday School, brought together inspirational excerpts from his works on topics ranging from marriage, family, and friendship to reflections on immortality and the nature of consciousness. His books for children and youth -- "Lessons in the Study of Habits," "Citizenship and the Duties of a Citizen," "Duties in the Home and the Family," and "Story of the Life of Jesus for the Young" -- served as the basis of the Sunday School curriculum for two generations; teachers were guided by two pedagogical books, "An Ethical Sunday School: A Scheme for the Moral Instruction of the Young," published by Macmillan in 1900, and "A Scheme for Class Study and Readings in the Bible," published by Unity Publishing in 1901. As an aid to the habit of meditation he advocated, he also compiled poetic excerpts in "A Sentiment in Verse for Every Day in the Year" and collected pithy sayings from Emerson, Marcus Aurelius, Thomas a Kempis and other contemplative philosophers in "A Morning and Evening Wisdom Gem for Every Day in the Year." Finally, a compilation of the letters and photographs he sent his wife during a 1906 visit to Japan was privately and posthumously published under the title "Summer Greetings from Japan." After Sheldon's death, his widow endowed a fund with which his writings were reprinted, stocked, and cataloged in the Ethical Society library throughout the first half of this century. The endowment was transferred to another fund after Society members lost interest in the founder's works, and only a few volumes remain extant.

Sheldon was more an orator and essayist than scholar. Nevertheless, he made a few well received contributions to the intelligentsia of his day. In January 1903, he presented an oral overview of recent ethical philosophy before the Academy of Science of St. Louis. Titled "A Bird's-Eye View of the Literature of Ethical Science Since the Time of Charles Darwin," the presentation included synopses and assessments of more than 60 books, which by his estimate accounted for "probably three-quarters of the whole literature and practically all of its leading works." (Sheldon, "A Bird's-Eye View of the Literature of Ethical Science Since the Time of Charles Darwin," *Transactions*, p. 92, quoted in Hornback, p. 220) Not being one for false modesty, he included in the bibliography his own "An Ethical Movement." In his concluding remarks, he bemoaned what he deemed an overuse of the "doctrine of evolution" in explaining social phenomena and reasserted -- though "softly and in a whisper" -- his belief in free will. (*Ibid.*, pp. 120-21, quoted in Hornback, p. 224)

One of Sheldon's most far-reaching contributions to the intellectual community was his chairmanship of the Social Science Section of the Congress of Arts and Sciences at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904-5. His list of speakers included Max Weber, who was in the vanguard of turn-of-the-century sociology, and Felix Adler. He invited several fair guests, among them representatives of China and Japan, to speak before the Ethical Society and its subgroups.

Redeeming the Bible

Perhaps Sheldon's most fervent intellectual undertaking was the "redemption" of the Bible for the edification of believers and unbelievers alike. He saw in the Bible an unparalleled collection of histories, ethical studies, and literary masterpieces, and he grieved at the decline of its usage because of the bias against supernaturalism among free thinkers. Drawing upon the 19th century's radical scholarly approach to the Bible -- then termed the "Higher Criticism" -- he sought to counterpoise the prevalent "believe it or leave it" attitude toward the Bible with a level-headed, unintimidated appreciation of Western civilization's most influential book. Characteristically, he scrupulously avoided challenging anyone's beliefs in scriptural theology or divine revelation; he found in the historical method a way to make the Bible accessible and valuable for every open-minded reader:

There is a splendid freedom for the mind in the ethical attitude -- according to which our one purpose is to find light on the pathway of the true life and to learn how to lead the best life possible. No anxiety need concern us as to where our light comes from on this score, so long as we know that the light is genuine. I feel no hesitation in talking enthusiastically over the literature of the Bible and the light which I find there -- all the more for the reason that I feel no constraint as if I must find the light there, whether it is there or not.

No authority requires it of me that I should place this literature higher in importance than the literature of other religions or other races. I turn to its pages as I would turn to the pages of the literature of the Stoics, or the Buddhists, or to Plato. (*The Story of the Bible from the Standpoint of Modern Scholarship*, Ethical Society of St. Louis, 1916, p. 170)

In the late 1890s Sheldon delivered a series of nine lectures that presented, in popular form, the latest findings in Biblical scholarship. He was aware -- and unabashedly proud -- that the Ethical Society took the lead in publicizing this nascent science in St. Louis. Nevertheless, he wrote in the prefatory note to "The Story of the Bible," the collected transcriptions of those lectures, that the series was "inaugurated with fear and trepidation lest they should prove of little interest." (*Ibid.*, prefatory note) He was gratified that attendance at Sunday platform meetings swelled during the series.

In the early lectures, Sheldon laid out the methodology and some of the principle findings of biblical scholars. His listeners learned that the Bible is not a cohesive book but rather a compendium of an ancient culture's most significant literary works; they learned that the books of the Bible are arranged so as to maximize their impact, not in the order in which they were written; they learned that most of the books are themselves amalgams of disparate documents sewn together and embellished by successive writers. They also learned that the strict science of chronicling history is a relatively late development in Western civilization; apocryphal story-telling was -- to the writers of the Old Testament, at least -- an effective mode of edification that bore no taint of dishonesty.

In later lectures, Sheldon recounted the social and intellectual development of the Jewish culture by interpreting excerpts from the Bible and non-canonical works of the same era. He detailed the slow transition of the Jews from primitive polytheism to a belief in a preeminent God among gods to a clearly defined monotheism. With cool candor, he showed how folk Judaism apparently adopted beliefs in immortality, divine judgment, and heaven and hell from the Zoroastrian religion of Persia in the centuries before Jesus, and he showed how Paul and the author of the Gospel of John recast the teachings of Jesus by drawing upon contemporary Greek philosophy. He put Old Testament prophecy in its place by examining some of the linguistic machinations by which New Testament writers claimed the coming of a spiritual messiah had been foretold for centuries. And drawing upon the historical and sociological training he had received in Europe, he showed how the religious revolution of Christianity occurred at a time and in a manner that is characteristic of all revolutions. In sum, he took part in the demythologization of the Bible that allowed freethinkers to appreciate a book to which rational prejudice had barred access.

Sheldon's principal delight in biblical literature -- and, for that matter, in all theological writings lay in its exposition of the sociological development of ethics:

I may as well own first as last that beliefs about God have a fascination for me. I like to meet with them in poetry, in the Bible, in the early classical literature; and whenever I come upon those beliefs my attention is held at once. In fact, I can never let the subject alone. I like it and want to study it, and I find it more and more interesting as the years go on. It continues to draw me, to move me, to inspire me. What makes the study of the beliefs about God so interesting is just this: By means of those beliefs we are able to trace the steps of growth of the moral sense. That is the secret of my enthusiasm for the study of theology. (Ibid., p. 88)

Sheldon drew correlations between the evolving God-concepts and ethical precepts of the ancient Jews. He saw in their primitive depiction of a vengeful God a personification of an embattled tribe's defensiveness and hegemonic drive. He found in the Song of Deborah the gratitude of ruthless warriors toward a God of cruelty, and he noted how that God-image was later ousted by the stern God of justice -the God who taught Jonah a lesson in racial tolerance, and who sent Nathan to chasten David for his inhumanity. The Old Testament depiction of God, he taught, reached its zenith in the psalmists' vision of a God of tenderness and mercy, a God who was pleased not by burnt offerings but by family loyalty, tribal peace, and acts of compassion. Like Adler, Sheldon exalted Jesus as the greatest revolutionary in the history of ethics. Condemning the formalism, pretense, and hypocrisy of the pharisees, the most legalistic of the prevailing Jewish sects, Jesus taught his followers to "clean the inside of the cup," to cultivate a charitable disposition. Sheldon noted that Jesus, by redefining the essence of the "good life," reinvigorated a people in despair; he proffered both a reason to live and a way to live:

In turning over the pages of this New Testament as the closing portions of the Bible, you feel that the emphasis of the teaching of the New Prophet lay in one supreme direction. It was to call the attention of the human race to the value of the spiritual side of life and to make man feel that the spiritual life as such was the one life worth living. It is this which has made the gospel of Jesus essentially the gospel of the poor, because the import of its teaching is to point to the value of the inside things. When you say in your despair, if you are hungry or houseless, or homeless, if you have lost all you ever had, are penniless and without work -- when you say, "I have nothing, absolutely nothing, it is all gone," then this teaching of Jesus, the New Prophet, gives you reply. The answer comes: "Stand up; you have got your soul, and it is worth more than all the possessions you have lost, or all that wealth you dreamed of and never got."... And with that doctrine of the soul in man, went the beautiful, sublime humanitarianism of the New Prophet. (Ibid., p. 168)

Again, Sheldon rendered no judgment on the validity of belief in Jesus' salvific death and resurrection. By noting the scholarly opinion that no New Testament writer knew Jesus firsthand, and by elucidating the archaic standards of that era's "historians," he subtly cast doubt on such a belief, but he made no frontal attack on Christian doctrine. Instead, he sought to shift the attention of his listeners from theology to ethics:

The number who believe in the mystical significance of the death of Jesus, could perhaps be counted by the hundreds of millions of the people today. But the number who undertake to live out fully and completely the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, could be counted in the hundreds with the millions left off. And if Christianity survives as a world religion, it will be owing to these hundreds, rather than to the hundreds of millions. (Story of the Bible, Page 161)

Working For The Visions Within

By his own admission, Sheldon brought little original thought to his work in biblical criticism and speculative philosophy. As his sense of ministry developed, his desire to break new ground in modern thought gave way to his evangelical mission. Hornback, in his critical assessment of Sheldon, noted that his predecessor minimized philosophical clarity in favor of heartfelt ideals:

As a philosopher, Sheldon was clearly a popularizer and an eclectic, despite his ability to rise on occasion to competent scholarship and criticism. His sources were ... varied ... , and many which he accepted with apparent enthusiasm were mutually exclusive. His sanctions were deeply felt rather than closely reasoned

The guilt or disappointment he felt over the loss of a boyhood Christian faith could be satisfied with nothing less than a heroic demonstration of goodness and love for man, and the repeated assertion that such goodness and love justified his existence. (Hornback, p. 227-8)

Nathaniel Schmidt, a Cornell professor and an influential writer and speaker in the Ethical movement, believed his colleague's preference for insight over scholarly sophistication served well the needs of the Ethical Society. In an introductory note to the third edition of "The Story of the Bible," Schmidt praised Sheldon's approach to adult education:

Mr. Sheldon had a rare capacity for making things plain. As lecturer of the Ethical Society of St. Louis for more than twenty years, he covered an astonishingly wide range of topics. But whether he dealt with the Bible or Dante, with Aristotle or Spencer, he always knew how to extract the meat and to give, in a simple and effective manner, what he felt that men were most in need of. He had little taste for subtle distinctions, minutiae of criticism, chronological details, or elaborated elegancies of style. He saw things in the large and took his hearers to the heart of every subject he treated. Everywhere he searched for the moral value; and when he found it, he set it forth interestingly and impressively. ("The Story of the Bible," Ethical Society of St. Louis, St. Louis, 1916; Introduction to Third Edition, Nathaniel Schmidt, Cornell University)

In addition to the edification of adults, Sheldon took an active interest in the moral education of children. He started the Sunday School in the Society's first year of existence. For several years, he conducted the children's classes himself. In time, volunteer teachers were recruited from the membership, but he always supervised the school's curriculum and pedagogy.

Like his mentor in the East, Sheldon was not content to focus all his attention on the welfare of Ethical Society members. From the start, he encouraged the fellowship to take part in philanthropic enterprises. The most influential social program he launched was the Self Culture Halls Association. Begun in 1888, this experiment in "educational philanthropy" gave working-class St. Louisans an opportunity to expand their intellectual horizons through book loans, lectures, debating clubs, and classes in home economics. In the first decade of the century, Sheldon also initiated the Philosophical Club and the Colored People's Self-Improvement Association. These programs will be detailed in a later chapter. For now, it is worth noting that Sheldon overrode his shy, bookish nature to promote the educational opportunities offered by the society; with the boldness of a cultist, he approached strangers on the street and workers returning from lunch break:

In a word, it has meant work, hard work, indeed, the hardest kind of work, for a long while to bring home to the artisan class the value of the facilities we were offering to them.... We tried every method one could think of. I have gone out in an evening to the street corners, and seeing a band of young fellows standing chatting or chaffing with each other, have stepped up to them like an old friend, talked to them like a Salvation Army captain, asking them to come in to an illustrated lecture. As a rule, they are not disagreeable, and may answer, "Oh, Yes, we'll come." You go back to headquarters, and in three cases out of four they never materialize. But here and there one does make his appearance. You begin to get used to averages in all such undertakings.

We worked through individuals whom we knew in special factories; possibly a foreman who believed in our cause, or some exceptional artisan who appreciated it, and would do his best to bring his comrades there. Gradually we got the respect of the superintendent or the office force of large manufacturing establishments. When this was accomplished, a great gain had been made. They have allowed us to go into the factories at noontime and distribute our circulars. Once and again at such times we have mounted a box or a barrel like a stump-speaker, with an assembled throng of working girls or working men around us, just from their lunch, and talked to them for five or ten minutes about our work, the value of self-culture, urging them to come to our lectures, distributing our programs in their midst ...

[W]e have kept at it year after year, trying all these methods; going perhaps to meetings of trade unions, getting the privilege of addressing them and telling them of our work; or distributing our programs at the doors of factories when the throng of men and women are coming out at evening time. They may take us for Salvation Army officers, and think that we are distributing tracts. We go on the principle that this is another kind of Salvation Army. I feel no hesitation in going after people in this way, following them even to their homes, catching them wherever possible, and

persuading them, if I can, to come and avail themselves of these privileges for self-improvement. ("The Wage Earners' Self-Culture Clubs of St. Louis: A Sketch of their History," ethical addresses, March and April 1900)

True to his principle of devoting oneself to a worthy end, Sheldon spent himself in his writing, lecturing, and organizational efforts. His death at the age of 48 probably was hastened by his untreated anxiety disorder. He died on June 5, 1907, of heart disease; he had been confined to his sickroom for nearly a year after a strenuous tour of Japan under the auspices of the Ethical Society of Tokyo. These are reported to be his last words: "Goodbye. All is well! My love to you all. Auf Wiedersehen." In dying during the St. Louis Society's infancy, he fulfilled his own definition of "What It Means to Work for a Cause":

It means, most of all, to be willing to work for an outcome that he will never see, to be willing to walk blindfolded all his days, to work for the visions within, and to go down in death while the work is not yet done, while the battle is going on, while not one gleam has come to him of the fruits of his labors.

There can be no banquets for those who are working for the big causes, no toasts to be drunk there, no assemblages of the workers to rejoice over the victory, working without seeing any victory. In those centuries to come as in our day, there must always be the few who work for the big causes, live for them, live in them, die with faith unshaken; and yet who do not see the end. ("What It Means to Work for a Cause," Ethical Address, December 1904)

In a memorial address, William Salter recalled his colleague as an independent and industrious man who lived by the gospel he taught:

Mr. Sheldon was one of the most individual of men.... He was so much so that we came near losing him from our movement at an early day, and he always remained a unique figure in it. He would not follow another's lead. He had to map out his own course. He would listen to you and weigh, no doubt, what you had to say, and then go his own way....

[I]t was because he was so essentially and thoroughly a modern and progressive man in his views, that he had the rich, sane influence on his community and time that he had. Intellectually speaking, Sheldon was of no common order. If he had not found a practical outlet for his energies, I surmise that he might have done no mean work in philosophy or some of the social sciences.

But he was not only a thinker. This shy man, with almost the manners of a recluse when I first knew him, had a rare power of seeing men as they are and conditions as they exist. He knew how to estimate a situation. He knew what might be done and what he had better not attempt. He was prodigious, lavish in his energies, but along practical lines. He did not identify himself with causes that would not go.

But the things he did undertake he pushed to the end. There was something dauntless, untiring about him, as if he would weary heaven and earth rather than not get what he wanted. He did not allow himself to be discouraged....

[B]ehind all and deeper than all was the soul of the man with its far-reaching visions, its reverences, its absolute trust. His philosophy taught him that the disposition to mutual helpfulness was a part of human nature and prior to any specific religions -and love and justice were an immediate reality to his mind. To them he bowed, of them he expected the final victory, in the life found its meaning -- they were to him man's higher self on which he can ever rely.... Man must act from his highest self -- this was his feeling. It is a new version of the old commandment, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

(Walter L. Sheldon Memorial Address by William Salter, Ethical Addresses, October 1907)

3: A Gravitational Shift - The Founding of the Ethical Society of St. Louis

Founding

St. Louis of the post-Civil War era was an increasingly industrial and cosmopolitan city emerging from its roots as a frontier trading post. Many of the structures and institutions that would shape and characterize the city in the coming century -- the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Post-Dispatch, the Missouri Botanical Gardens, Forest Park, Eads Bridge, the Veiled Prophet celebration -came on the scene in the 1870s and 1880s. Religiously, successive waves of immigrants had brought Protestantism and Jewish culture to this once exclusively Catholic city. Some of the city's freethinking intellectuals were drawn to the St. Louis Philosophical Society, which promoted German idealism and educational reform through classes and treatises, and the St. Louis Freie Gemeinde (the German School Association and Free Community), but neither institution could meet the needs of religious liberals from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. Publicity surrounding the founding of the New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia ethical societies piqued the interest of progressive Jews and other St. Louisans who shared the dream of a religion of ethics. In 1883, Felix Adler reported to the New York board that "some of the best and strongest" citizens of St. Louis were prepared to form an ethical society but lacked a qualified leader. St. Louis remained prominent on Adler's list of potential expansion sites, and he kept an eye open for a suitable leader. The man he chose was an intense, ponderous young apprentice named Walter L. Sheldon.

In April of 1886, the St. Louis group held an organizational meeting at the offices of Charles Nagel Sr., a politically powerful attorney who later served as U.S. Secretary of Commerce and Labor under Taft. S. Burns Weston, leader of the Philadelphia society, advised the group on the formation of an ethical society and introduced his friend Sheldon. The next month, at the group's invitation, Sheldon returned to deliver a series of lectures intended to clarify the aims and principles of the Ethical movement. The lectures were delivered at Memorial Hall in the Museum of Fine Arts, which was then located at 19th Street and Lucas Place.⁸ On Friday, May 21, he delivered an address titled "The Possibilities of a New Religious Movement in America"⁹; on Wednesday, May 26, he spoke on "The Old and the New Prophecy"; and on Sunday, May 30, he outlined the tasks faced by the group in a lecture titled "A New Basis for Religious Organization." Each of the lectures was attended by about 50 people. Following the lecture course, a committee set to work to arouse interest in the cause of the Ethical movement and to secure funds with which to begin active work in the fall. According to the annual report of the inaugural season, "as it was found, during the summer, that quite a number of prominent business and professional men were in sympathy with the proposal, it was decided in the autumn to take the initiatory steps towards final organization." (First annual report of the Society for Ethical Culture of St. Louis; Ethical Society archives)

On November 13, Adler launched the first season of the St. Louis Society with a Memorial Hall address on "The Aims of the Ethical Movement." The address was followed by an organizational meeting at which a committee was appointed to prepare a Constitution and By-Laws for a Society for Ethical Culture in St. Louis. At that meeting, the founding group decided to invite Sheldon to serve as its lecturer for the season, and plans were made for a course of Sunday morning addresses during the winter. On November 21, Sheldon delivered his first address of the inaugural season in the lower hall of the Pickwick Theatre, which was located on the north side of Washington Avenue just west of Jefferson Avenue; reflecting the shift from the theoretical to the actual, the address was titled "Our Society for Ethical Culture." The change of venue was necessitated by the refusal of the museum's board of control to grant the Society continued use of Memorial Hall. Because of the board's reservations about the newly formed band of religious deviants, the Society met at the Pickwick until January 21, 1887, by which time the de facto president of the Society had persuaded the board of control to rent Memorial Hall to the Society for the remainder of the first season. As the Society had use of the hall only on Sundays, it established its headquarters in the parlor floor of Sheldon's centrally located residence at 2646 Pine Street. These rooms served as Sheldon's private office and as a gathering place for educational classes and board and club meetings.

On November 27, 1886, a Saturday evening, the Society for Ethical Culture of St. Louis was formally organized at a meeting in the Pickwick Theatre hall. James Taussig, a law partner of Louis D. Brandeis and principal mover of the

⁸ Lucas Place was an exclusive residential stretch of Locust Street. It was later made a public thoroughfare and subsumed into the latter.

⁹ While this title is the one found most frequently in historical notes, including Sheldon's memoirs, a few documents refer to it as "The Relative Advantage of America as the Field for a New Religious Movement" or "The Relative Advantages of America Over Europe in Developing a New Religious Movement."

organizational efforts, presided. In addition to adopting a Constitution and By-Laws, the group elected its first board of trustees, which in turn elected the first slate of officers. Although commonly acknowledged as the society's chief administrator, Taussig declined the post of president and served instead as vice president. Manning Tredway was elected president in name only. In an unguarded letter to a later president of the board, Sheldon referred to Taussig as "the first real President of the Society ... He was nominally Vice President, inasmuch as he had put up a 'dummy' in the person of Manning Tredway as President, who never acted and never even paid his promised subscription." (Letter from Walter L. Sheldon to Robert Moore, dated Feb. 20, 1896; Ethical Society archives, University of Missouri-St. Louis) Despite his skittishness about bearing the higher title, Taussig provided the encouragement and pragmatic guidance the nascent organization needed. According to Sheldon, "if it had not been for his presidency that year, the Society would have broken up by the middle of the winter." (Ibid.) Thomas M. Knapp was elected secretary and Paul F. Coste, treasurer. The remaining board members were Nagel, Albert Arnstein, H. Daughaday, Joseph Emanuel, F.H. Hunicke, M. Kotany, and L. Methudy. For practical purposes, this meeting marked the founding of the Society; however, it was on May 14, 1887, that the Missouri Department of State granted a certificate of incorporation to the Society for Ethical Culture of St. Louis. (To reflect popular usage, the community would be formally renamed the Ethical Society of St. Louis in 1896.)

The Constitution adopted at the founding meeting reflected the movement's deliberate shift of what Percival Chubb, then a teacher at the Ethical Culture School in New York, termed religion's "center of gravity": "Whereas, It is our desire and purpose to aid in developing, apart from the churches, a new movement, which shall put morality into the foreground in religion, and shall rest upon a basis of ethics independent of theology; Therefore, We, who are here assembled, do hereby organize ourselves into The Society for Ethical Culture of St. Louis, and adopt the foregoing declaration as and for our Constitution." The Society's first annual report celebrated the community's departure from tradition:

The phrase "apart from the churches" was not designed to express it as the special purpose of the Society to antagonize those organizations, but simply to express the freedom of the movement from the authority of supernatural revelation, as the final criterion of moral truth. Great as may have been the work which they have accomplished, it is doubtful whether the churches are adequate to meet the religious needs of the advancing world, and to give to ethics a scientific basis. This movement, while it leaves the churches to go on in their own way, desires for itself to try the new methods -- to take a new start -- in the effort to put morality into the foreground in religion, by finding for it the same kind of authority as that whereon rest the truths of natural science. (First annual report of the Society for Ethical Culture of St. Louis; Ethical Society archives)

In a flier circulated in the first season, Sheldon clarified the Society's distinction from churches, emphasizing its exaltation of conscience:

Ethical Culture recognizes that not only as a matter of right and duty, should personal morality be taught and cultivated primarily, but as affording the only solution of the gravest practical problems which confront the world at the present day. Of all needed reform the beginning must be made in the moral life of the individual. The movement affirms no creed new or old, and denies none. It does not deal directly with theology. The question whence man derived the power of knowing right and wrong it leaves open to such belief as may be entertained, without concerning itself at all therewith. For Ethical Culture it is sufficient to know the fact that such a power does exist in man, and with the presence of that power it begins, developing moral law and applying it to the affairs of human life independent of Theology and therefore "apart from the churches."

A Moral Commitment

Formal membership in the Society indicated a moral commitment to building one's character and a broader commitment to advancing Ethical Culture and serving the community at large. Only members could hold office, chair committees, and participate in board and by-law elections. A handful of people who became members in the first season looked upon the Society as a sort of fraternal club and resigned when its essentially religious character became evident. To prevent a continuation of ill-informed membership applications, the membership at the end of the second season passed a by-law revision requiring applicants to hold the status of associate member for one year before applying for full membership. There is no record of a membership applicant being turned down. At the time of their acceptance, members made financial pledges, which they paid annually or semi-annually in advance.

Originally, the by-laws stated that "every member who has the means to do so shall subscribe something annually to the support of the Society, the amount of subscription to be at the option of the member." At the second annual meeting, acting on the assumption that any sincere membership applicant could afford at least a token donation, the membership voted to strike from that rule the words "who has the means to do so." Annual contributions ranged from one dollar to \$300; most members pledged \$5-10.

At its inception, the society was made up of 93 members; of these, 86 were full members and seven were associate members. By the summer of 1887, that number had more than doubled to 196, despite the departure of first-year dilettantes. The St. Louis Society's growth outpaced that of its predecessors: New York had had 125 founding members and 178 by the end of its first year; the Philadelphia and Chicago societies, each of which began with 60 members, grew to 100 and 140, respectively, during their inaugural seasons.

The makeup of the Society's membership was democratic but predominantly middle-class and educated. Although all of the charter members were men, women quickly came to make up a substantial portion of the membership. In the Society's first year, the board appointed a Ladies Committee to assist the general membership committee in soliciting members. With its emphasis on individuality, the Society never was content to enroll only heads of households, as was the custom in New York; each family member who sympathized with the aims of the movement was urged to sign up. For example, six members of the Taussig family had become full members by the Society's second year. In line with the ecumenism of the movement's leaders, many of the Society's early adherents held joint membership in churches and synagogues.

Although the national movement already had caught the attention of the academic and clerical communities, the St. Louis Society sought to enhance its standing in the public eye by enlisting the vocal support -- and, preferably, the membership -- of prominent citizens. In addition to Nagel, notables among the Society's early supporters included Adolphus Busch, president of Anheuser-Busch Companies and for years the Society's largest single contributor¹⁰; active member John H. Gundlach, a North St. Louis businessman and key civic promoter who later served as president of the City Council; active member Dr. William Taussig, prime mover in the construction of Union Station and principal partner of James B. Eads in the construction of Eads Bridge; contributor John C. Learned, Unitarian pastor of the Church of the Unity and the Society's first ally among established St. Louis clergy; and active member Hugo Muench, a circuit court judge.

An Independent Platform

The pattern of the Society's exercises was the same as that established in the East. A typical Sunday service included an organ recital, a song by a quartet choir, readings, and an address. Announcements of the services were run in the St. Louis Republican and the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. Charles Kunkel, the organist for the first season, directed the music. The song lyrics were written by Ethical leaders, including Adler, to the tune of classical compositions. The readings were selected from the works of Emerson, Wordsworth, Kant and other modern writers as well as from the Bible. Sunday services were held at 11 a.m.

Following the pattern of the Eastern societies, which held services from mid-October to mid-May, the St. Louis Society held its last platform meeting of the first season on April 24, 1887, and wrapped up the season with the first annual all-member meeting on April 27. Before the advent of air conditioning, the summer break was cherished in St. Louis, whose enervating heat each year drove the Society's first three leaders to the highlands of the East. In the summer of 1887, during his first annual retreat in the Adirondacks, Sheldon wrote in a letter to a board member that it had been "hard to think of the insufferable heat of St. Louis, and painful to think of it, too, when I remember the friends out there who are experiencing its effects. Here in the mountains we are only too glad as evening approaches to put on our heaviest flannels and sit around a warm fire. The thermometer falls close to 50 degrees every evening." (Letter to Paul F. Coste, treasurer of the Society, dated Sept. 1, 1887, from Salisbury, Vt.; Ethical Society archives) His consolation no doubt received a chilly reception.

In the first season's addresses, Sheldon proffered the movement's fresh attitude toward morality as a distinctively religious way of life; he set the Society's approach in contradistinction to that of established religions, while at the same time exalting the wisdom and virtue found in Western religious heritage. Among the topics of his addresses that year were "What Attitude Shall We Take toward the Churches?"; "What Attitude Shall We Take toward

¹⁰ Busch was not a member of the Society and is not known to have attended meetings. He contributed out of regard for William Brandenburger, his director of advertising and a devoted member of the Society.

Christianity?"; "The Ethical Significance of the Christmas Festival"; "The Poet Shelley and his Idea of God"; "The Success and Failure of the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments)"; "The Historic Jesus"; "The Ideal Jesus and the Christ That is to Be"; and "The Starting Point of the New Ethics." Outside speakers during the year were Adler, Weston, and Learned; William M. Salter, leader of the Chicago Society; and Dr. Stanton Coit, founder of the London Ethical Society and a member of the New York Society's leadership team.

The Society took great pride in its standing as the only religious institution in St. Louis that placed no doctrinal limitations on its lecturer and guest speakers. Conservative clergy and religious periodicals derided the Society's liberalism, but its supporters insisted that only scrupulous intellectual honesty could restore to religion the credibility that dogmatic rigidity threatened:

The reception with which the undertaking has met is a plain indication of its need in our city. The inference which is now so commonly made by large numbers, whether true or not, that the teachers in the pulpits may not utter fully and freely the convictions which they have in their study, is threatening to imperil the very existence of moral and religious truth in the world. There is need of a platform which, by its attitude of independence from the original church organization, shall be free of any ambiguous committal to convictions which the modern world in its private thought is not disposed to accept, and yet at the same time have as the aim to preserve and develop that which is eternally true, by putting into the foreground the ethical aspect of religion. (First annual report of the Society for Ethical Culture of St. Louis; Ethical Society archives)

Children's Classes Begin

The basic adult program having been established, the Society opened its Sunday School in February 1887. The first department organized took in children from 7 to 14. Because the supply of teachers and instruction materials was limited, the school could not accept all the children who applied for admission. Sheldon had proposed to hold classes on a weekday afternoon, when he was free from his responsibilities to the adult members, but the membership preferred the convenience of having children's classes on Sunday mornings. As an experiment, the students were divided into two classes which met at 10 a.m. Sundays at Memorial Hall. Each was taught by a woman member of the Society. This arrangement continued into the second year, but Sheldon, who considered the direct instruction of children one of his principal duties, eventually reached a compromise with the board under which he held classes at 3 p.m. Sundays at his office.

In the first two years, children's classes centered on a discussion of the ethical values expressed in Aesop's fables and other folk tales. Gradually, Sheldon introduced the older children to stories of the Bible. His approach, which was based on that of other ethical societies, was to emphasize the ethical import of biblical tales without rendering any judgment on their theological content. In some instances, stories were recited and students were expected to remember the details. At other times, Sheldon and his associates used the stories as starting points for broad discussions of morality.

The Sunday School -- or, as it was officially called, the School for Ethical Instruction of Children -- was more formally organized at the start of the Society's second season. A second department was created for children over 14. In addition to instructing children, Sheldon trained the teachers and supervised both departments. To help parents appreciate the program's offerings, and to court admissions, Sheldon devoted three platform addresses in fall 1887 to the ethical education of the young. On Oct. 23, he spoke on "How Shall We Deal with the God Idea in the Religious Education of the Young?"; Oct. 30, "How Shall We Deal with the Old Testament in the Religious Education of the Young?"; and Dec. 18, "How Shall we Deal With the Story of Jesus in the Religious Education of the Young?" On Dec. 25, the pupils of the school took to the platform to render "Ethics for Children," a set of ceremonial responsive readings written by Sheldon.

A Shoestring Operation

The Society's expenses for the first season amounted to \$2,380.30. That sum was met by 124 contributors, most of whom were members. In the 1887-88 season, the first for which a breakdown of expenses is extant, the outlay totaled \$3,235.09. The greatest single expense was Sheldon's salary of \$1,200. This was followed by: hall rental, \$700; music, \$577.90; rental of headquarters, \$240; and lecturers' fees and travel expenses, \$120. Other expenses included printing, postage and advertising; secretarial help; travel and lodging costs for delegates to a convention of ethical societies in Chicago; furniture for the Sunday School; and dues paid to the Union of Societies for Ethical

Culture. Regular member subscriptions accounted for \$2,203 of the second-year income; special donations, and a carryover of \$35.80 from the first fiscal year, brought the total to \$3,287.20. That left a surplus of only \$52.11. More importantly, the Society avoided running a deficit. The board, betraying its uncertainty about the Society's future, adopted a "pay as we go" policy that kept the Society in the black during its formative years.

Sheldon felt an almost morbid embarrassment over the fact that the board set his salary according to the Society's projected income, which meant that membership growth was reflected in his paycheck. Hoping to maintain the purity of his motivation and reputation, he asked Coste, his "right-hand man," to have the figure set without his consultation before he returned for the start of the Society's second season. "If the matter is to come up at all," he wrote, "I wish to ask you to have it settled before I come out so that there need be no further allusion to the matter. I will adjust myself to whatever the board may decide, only I beg to have it decided and out of the way. You cannot realize what an embarrassment of mind it is for me to be harassed by the consciousness that the growth of the Society can be of financial concern to me personally. I do not want to have the consideration in mind." (Letter from Walter L. Sheldon to Paul F. Coste, dated Sept. 1, 1887, from Salisbury, VT, Ethical Society archives)

Onward

In its second season, the Society quickly escalated its programs. In addition to the expansion of the Sunday School, the second year saw the addition of clubs for mothers, young men and boys; and committees on finance, music, and printing and publication. The Ladies' Home Club, which met on alternate Wednesday afternoons at the Society headquarters, held discussions on parenthood and family life. Literary works and books on the moral education and nurturing of children served as the common ground of discussion. In the first season, participants debated the merits of Rousseau's "Emile." The meetings drew an average of 25 women. The Young Men's Section was devoted to the study of ethical topics in literature. In the club's first year, the men studied Tolstoy's "My Religion" and Plato's "Republic." The club met on alternate Wednesday evenings. Sheldon initiated both clubs, but he encouraged the members to direct the discussions themselves; although a qualified academic, he generally avoided lecturing to auxiliary groups. The Boys' Debating Club, which numbered about 20, met on Sunday afternoons at the homes of its members. The group's purposes were to facilitate critical reasoning and foster self-confidence in presenting one's ideas. A Young Women's Section for the study of literature also had been planned but did not come off.

The board elected a new slate of officers in its second year. Charles W. Stevens, a well-known physician, replaced Tredway as president; Albert Arnstein was elected secretary and Leo Levis, treasurer. It is unclear whether anyone held the title of vice president, but James Taussig remained a principal decision maker. Taussig, himself an ethnic Jew, had reservations about the number of Jews on this slate of officers. Mindful of the New York society's early reputation as a sort of liberal arm of Reform Judaism, he wanted to check the participation of Jews on the St. Louis board to ensure that gentiles would feel welcome at the Society. In a letter to Paul F. Coste, who remained on the board after resigning as treasurer, Taussig wrote: "In the organization of the board, in the selection of officers of the board and creation of committees, we ought never to lose sight of the rule not to give preponderance to the Jewish element, although it may be the most enthusiastic in the matter of work and the most available. I think that this rule has worked well in the past and may as well be adhered to." (Letter from James Taussig to Paul F. Coste, dated Aug. 30, 1887; Ethical Society archives) While both Jews and native Germans maintained social cliques within the Society for decades, there is no evidence to indicate that an ethnic power structure ever held sway.

Sheldon had no voting authority on the board, but his opinions regarding its composition were solicited and respected. This, too, caused him no little consternation: "It relieves me of a great embarrassment if I do not have to take part in the selection of men and thus be forced to display a discrimination of persons. For me as the lecturer, there ought not to be the semblance of respect for persons' save as they are each and all members of a Society to which I am responsible. At present, however, I must, I suppose, make my suggestions, as the ideal system can only come in the course of years." (Ibid.) It happens that the one man Sheldon especially wanted to see on the board's second slate of officers was a departing member of the Church of the Unity; out of regard for his Unitarian friend Learned, he quickly withdrew the suggestion.

Services continued to be held at Memorial Hall, which had been secured for Sunday mornings from mid-October to mid-May. In addition to Sheldon, platform speakers included Adler, Coit, Learned, Salter, and Charles W. Stevens, the president. The Society's emerging self-definition continued to dominate the platform. Sheldon's addresses included "The Future of Religion"; "Is Ethics Without Religion?"; "Are We Atheists?"; "Are We Materialists?"; "Why We Cannot Pray"; and "The Substitute for Prayer." Advancing the Society's reputation for radicalism, he also spoke on Charles Darwin and the provocative American freethinker Robert Ingersoll. Salter spoke on "Courage" and

"What Have We to Offer in Place of the Old Faith?"; Adler spoke on "Are We Agnostics?" and "The Old Testament from a Human Standpoint"; Coit spoke on "The Social Responsibilities of Young Men" and "The Social Responsibilities of Young Women." Proposed "Members' Sundays," on which lay members of the Society were to speak on various ethical themes, did not materialize.

The Society's liturgical program received a strong boost in its second year with the installation of William Henry Pornmer as music director. Pornmer, who had studied at the Leipzig Conservatory of Music and under Anton Bruckner at the Vienna Conservatory, later achieved distinction as a composer, supervisor of music instruction for the St. Louis Public Schools, and professor of music at the University of Missouri. His compositions included piano works, sonatas, trios, choral works, songs, and at least one symphony. While serving the Ethical Society, Pornmer directed the quartette that performed weekly. He wrote at least one choral composition based on a lyric statement of the Ethical movement. The quartette also performed similar compositions by musicians serving the New York Society. Some Society members questioned whether such inspirational music was in accord with the Society's intellectualism, but Sheldon insisted it was vital to the effectiveness of the platform service. Still, Society members seemed more willing to receive inspiration than to provide it: Taussig attempted to drum up volunteers to replace the paid quartette, but there is no indication that such a group formed during the founding years.

An Experiment in "Educational Philanthropy"

In its second season, the Society launched the grandest of its philanthropic undertakings, the Self-Culture Hall Association. This program, which Sheldon termed "educational philanthropy," was intended to give working-class people an opportunity to enhance their intellectual life through reading, lectures, discussion groups, classes and concerts. Sheldon formed a committee consisting of himself, Taussig, J.A. St. John, and N.O. Nelson to steer the program. It was agreed the Ethical Society board of trustees would oversee the project, but the association had its own treasurer and accounts. The committee elected Nelson as its first treasurer. Sheldon was director of the project, but he never received any salary from the organization, nor from any of the funds with which it was administered. In preparation for the program, a circular was issued in the fall of 1887 setting out the purposes of the project:

Philanthropy is at its best when it is educational. Our city is supplied with admirable institutions to meet the distress of poverty; but there is missing to a large degree that other form of charity, which is mainly preventive and curative in its aim. We miss in our city what is known as educational philanthropy.

It is proposed this winter to initiate such an undertaking by opening a public reading room for workingmen. The chief reading room of the kind, the Public Library, is altogether too remote from a large portion of the residences of the classes for whom it is provided for them to be induced to avail themselves of the privilege, although under these circumstances it is largely patronized. Such rooms need to be placed in the neighborhoods where the workingmen live. They ought to be scattered in different localities all over the city, each to become a centre of educational interest for the families in the neighborhood. Ultimately they should become, if properly managed, self-supporting, although this cannot be anticipated at the outset of the undertaking. In reading and educational matters, it is often the supply which creates the demand, and not the demand the supply.

It is probable that the first of these rooms thus started will be under the auspices of the Society for Ethical Culture of this city, inasmuch as the committee who offer the plan are members of that Society. The philanthropic undertakings under the auspices of a similar Society in New York are known all over the country, and receive a large share of their support from people quite outside of that organization. A prominent feature of such readings rooms will be that they will be wholly non-sectarian in religion and nonpartisan in politics. The rooms will not be used to give any bias or exert any leading influence in questions of this nature. What is needed is to stimulate the intellectual interests of the working classes. If the means are adequate it may be also advisable to add the feature of lectures and entertainments of Art, Science and Home Culture. For the purpose of making the start in the undertaking it is needed that we raise \$ 1,000, and it is anticipated that the public will meet the plan with their approbation.

Three women, identified only as Mrs. J. A. St. John, Mrs. James H. Green, and Mrs. L. D. Hildenbrandt, canvassed the community and secured pledges amounting to \$1,015.50. The largest contributions were \$100 from Taussig and

\$50 from Adolphus Busch; the rest, ranging from \$5-25, came from businesses as well as private citizens. In 1888, the committee rented quarters on the second floor of the Union Dairy Co., 1532 Franklin Ave., stocked them with books and current newspapers, and opened them to the public as free reading rooms on March 3. The suite, which was connected to the street by a private stairwell, included one small room fitted up as a library and a lecture hall capable of seating 100 people. In the beginning, the rooms were open weekday evenings and all day on Sundays.

Once the rooms began to draw a steady number of readers, the committee inaugurated lecture courses on Friday nights. Topics of the lectures were wide-ranging; series were given on American history, art history, the physical sciences, engineering, biographies, and health. The first season's offerings included "An Hour in Picturesque London"; "How Insects Help Plants and Trees to Bear Their Fruit"; "Picturesque Berlin" (by Sheldon); "Popular Readings; Humorous, Dramatic and Poetic"; "English Parliament Buildings and the English Parliament"; and "Astronomy: The Earth compared with other Planets." In this pre-motion picture era, the illustrated travel lectures were among the most popular offerings. Volunteer lecturers included Washington University instructors, public school teachers, lawyers, physicians, clergy, and business people. In the program's first year, tickets to a full course of lectures cost 50 cents; about 100 tickets were sold. The money, which was collected by a committee of workingmen, was spent on books for the library. The classes in "Home Culture" projected in Sheldon's leaflet were initiated Dec. 28, 1888.

Martha Fischel, who later would serve as the first woman president of both the St. Louis Society and the AEU, taught girls domestic skills such as cooking, sewing, housecleaning and laundering. In the following decades, the Self-Culture Halls Association incorporated as a separate entity from the Ethical Society, purchased halls on the North Side and South Side, and added coursework and study clubs to its educational offerings.

Another suborganization founded in 1888 was the Ladies Philanthropic Society, whose first undertaking was the establishment of an "underage kindergarten" for children under 7 (under prevailing Missouri law, 7 was the earliest age at which children could enter the public school system) at the free reading rooms; the concept was still a new one, as Susan Blow had established the nation's first kindergartens in St. Louis in 1873. The first kindergarten class at the readings rooms was held November 26. Mrs. L.D. Hildenbrandt, president of the Ladies Society, oversaw the project.

In the Vanguard

In its second season, the Society formalized its association with the parent organization. The American Ethical Union had yet to be formed, but the first three societies had established a federation called the Union of the Societies for Ethical Culture. At the union's annual convention in November 1887, the St. Louis Society was accepted into the federation after its five delegates endorsed the union's constitution. The union's principal functions were to provide leadership training and an interchange of speakers. Adler held leadership colloquiums at his summer retreat in the Adirondacks, and the leaders also took part in a "School of Applied Ethics" that was held each summer from 1891 to 1895 at Plymouth, Massachusetts. Adler was a leading director and teacher, but the program was not limited to the Ethical Fraternity. Philosopher-psychologist William James, who had a profound influence on Sheldon and other ethical leaders, was a regular participant. Sheldon participated as an instructor in the department directed by Adler. Another function of the Union was the quarterly publication of addresses by ethical leaders. Subscriptions cost \$1 a year, and all Society members were expected to subscribe. With two full seasons behind them, the Society's organizers felt confident that they had launched a tenable institution. However, they were not self-assured; they knew the Society would advance only if members' steady interest evolved into wholehearted commitment. Stevens and Arnstein, in the board's second annual report, issued a call for that zeal:

We feel that we are in the right direction; that we have the basis on which all religious effort for the future will develop. When compared to the churches, it is true that we are small in numbers; but the greatness of an effort consists not at the outset in the number of its supports, but in the intrinsic worth of the idea which it represents. The numbers come when the work is done. We, however, who believe in it, and are assured that the idea at the basis of our work is to be the basis of the religion of the future, propose, whatever be our membership, to give our strength, our energy and our enthusiasm to doing the work; to be in the vanguard of that great work. Here, and here alone, we feel that we can be loyal to our convictions and faithful to the highest interests of our posterity. (Second annual report of the Society for Ethical Culture of St. Louis; Ethical Society archives)

4: The Sanctity of Duty - Formation of the Ethical Sunday School

In the 1890s, Sheldon developed a fixed course of study for the Sunday School. Equally dissatisfied with secular civics texts and sectarian catechisms, he wrote a series of books for the ethical instruction of children. His task, as he saw it, was to inspire in children the same reverence for Duty -he habitually capitalized the word -- that the God image commands in explicitly theistic religions. The ethical precepts he taught were recognizably Judeo-Christian, right down to the "thou shalt not" phrasing, but he presented them without reference to supernatural sanction. Rather, he repeatedly referred to them as "the truths of the lessons in ethics which have been found out from thousands of years of experience on the part of the human race." (*Lessons in the Study of Habits*, Walter L. Sheldon, W. M. Welch Co., Chicago, 1903; p. 16; italics added) Although the Bible was his principal source of moral teachings and illustrations, his frequent use of texts from Buddhism, Confucianism, the Stoics, and modern philosophers of the West bolstered his contention that justice is a universal and self-evident law. The "God problem" was not introduced until the last stage of the program.

Sheldon considered the ethical instruction of children a sacred task. To fail to provide it, or to provide it badly, was for him far worse than common crimes of selfishness. He took to heart the biblical admonition that it would be better for one to "be drowned by a millstone around his neck, in the depths of the sea" than to lead a child astray. (Matthew 18:6; New American Bible) By modern estimation, he took the task too seriously. He clearly delighted in the moral nurturance of children, but his concessions to their childishness were more pragmatic than sympathetic. Cleverly used, songs and lighthearted dialogues served to garner attention and secretly edify even the most unwitting child; fun as fun had no place in the program.

Songs and Recitations

The instructional session that Sheldon developed lasted for an hour and a quarter on Sunday mornings. The session began with a religious service that corresponded to the adult program. Singing was a regular feature of the service. Because most sectarian songs were inappropriate, Sheldon relied on songs arising within the Ethical movement, such as Adler's "City of Light." He advised teachers to use innocuous ditties on motivational themes when they were "desperate ... to arouse the children." To balance such fluff, he wrote, "we may strike a deeper chord, with a faint touch of solemnity in it, as we introduce a song dealing with the experience of stern, inevitable toil by which men must earn their subsistence, reminding us of the injunction laid upon the whole human race: 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread.'" (*An Ethical Sunday School: A Scheme for the Moral Instruction of the Young*, Walter L. Sheldon, Macmillan Co., New York, 1900; p. 8) The children's service also included a recitation by a student of a poem, essay, or scriptural passage. Another feature was a brief talk by the superintendent or a guest speaker on the "Beautiful Thought" for the day. The aphorisms that formed the bases of these talks were drawn from classic literature of the East and West. For example:

No man securely doth command, unless he hath learned readily to obey. -- Thomas a Kempis

If you wish for anything that belongs to another, that which is your own is lost. -- Epictetus

How long I shall live depends upon accident; but it depends upon myself how well I live. -- Seneca

The superior man thinks of virtue; the small man thinks of comfort. The superior man thinks of the sanctions of law; the small man thinks of favors which he may receive. -- Confucius

Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. -- St. Paul

What fools say is pleasure, that the noble say is pain; what fools say is pain; that the noble know as pleasure. -- Buddha (*Ibid.*, pp. 14-15)

Sayings of Jesus were conspicuously absent from the collection: Sheldon wanted those sayings to stand out in the minds of the children from all other classes of literature. When the children regrouped after their formal lessons, the "Beautiful Thought" for the day was recited by a member of each class, and then by all the children in unison. This repetition, of course, was designed to help the students commit the aphorisms to memory.

Frequently, the children's service also included a responsive exercise that called for the children's assent to ethical commands and devotion to Platonic ideals. Sheldon claimed to share in the popular distaste for rote learning, but he maintained that this exercise was needed to "lodge at once in the minds of the young the few main, fundamental principles underlying our whole scheme of instruction." (Ibid., p. 3) Because it amounts to an Ethical Society catechism, the exercise is worth quoting in full:

RESPONSES

Superintendent: "Truth is the strong thing, Let man's life be true.

The School: The Sense of Duty we should place above everything else in the world.

Superintendent: "Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong, and the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and strong.

The School: The Good Life for its own sake, without thought of reward, is what we should most care for.

One of the Teachers: "Where your treasure is," Though the cause of evil there will your heart prosper, yet 'tis truth be also. "alone is strong."

Superintendent: COMMANDS WE ARE TO OBEY

The School:

1. Thou shalt not lie.
2. Thou shalt not steal.
3. Thou shalt do no murder.
4. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
5. Thou shalt not covet what belongs to another.

One of the Teachers:
"The Eternal seeth not" Whoever fights,
as man seeth; for man whoever falls,
looketh on the outward Justice conquers evermore,
appearance, but the Justice after as before."
Eternal looketh We should all
on the heart." love Justice.

Superintendent: COMMANDS WE ARE TO OBEY

The School:

1. Thou shalt obey thy conscience.
2. Thou shalt revere the soul in thyself and in all others.
3. Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.
4. Thou shalt respect the laws of thy country.
5. Thou shalt make thyself of service to thy fellow man.

One of the Teachers:
"Look not outside of"
yourself for a refuge;
be a refuge to yourself."

One of the Teachers:
To thine own self be true; |
Thou canst not then be false
to any man."

Superintendent: WHAT WE ARE TO LOVE

The School:

We are to love the Good with a supreme love.

We are to love knowledge, and to seek Truth wherever it may be found.
We are to love the Beautiful; but even more we are to love the Good and the True.
We are to love these as if they were one: the True, the Beautiful and the Good.

One of the Teachers:
"The Soul itself is the "
witness of the Soul, and
the Soul is the refuge of
the Soul; despise not thine
own Soul, the supreme
witness of men."

One of the Teachers:
I do nothing but go
about, persuading old
and young alike, to care
first and chiefly for
the greatest
improvement of the soul."

Superintendent: WHAT WE ARE TO DO

The School:

1. We should think first of our father and mother.
2. We should labor for the welfare of our own home.
3. We should help those who are weak or in trouble.
4. We should work for the good of our country.
5. We should believe in the Brotherhood of Man.

One of the Teachers:
"He that is greatest"
among you shall be as
one that serves."
May we always be ready
to serve.

One of the Teachers:
Now abideth
faith, hope, love,
these three;
but the greatest
of these is love."

Superintendent: WHAT WE ARE TO STRIVE FOR

The School: To be true to ourselves, true to our home, true to our country, true to our fellow-men.
We are to strive to be true in everything.

Superintendent: "Truth is the strong thing, Let man's life be true.

(Ibid., pp. 4-5)

In these services, as in their adult counterparts, Sheldon sought to create an atmosphere of reverence. In his instructions for the use of lantern slides, for instance, he recommended dwelling on Greek statues and the madonnas of Raphael to conjure a sense of the sublime. Likewise, he incorporated recitals of classical music, talks on the Egyptian pyramids, and other presentations that promised to arouse "solemn, mystical feelings." These devices, he wrote, helped the children "associate the sentiments belonging to the Eternal, the Infinite, the Absolute, with the distinctions between Right and Wrong, with the thought of the Moral Law." (Ibid., p. 10) He did not put much value on the meditative mood per se, but he believed it made the pupils especially receptive to the serious business of their ethical lessons. He deemed these "warm-up" exercises so powerful that he called for a kind of "cool-down" exercise after the lessons -- perhaps a short story that would "'let the minds down' from the high level we have been endeavoring to keep them on during the study time." (Ibid., p. 18)

Sheldon's Curriculum

The ethical lessons consisted of Bible stories and studies in ethical duties. The youngest children, generally ages 7 to 9, studied Sheldon's "Old Testament Bible Stories for the Young." Sheldon's rendering of those tales minimizes references to the Deity: "Yahweh," in his rare appearances, comes across as a mythical figure on the order of Zeus. The stories were presented much the way fables are told, without mention of their historicity. Sheldon chose the Bible over other possible literary bases because he found in it a comprehensive collection of ethical illustrations. Furthermore, he was mindful that children of Ethical Society members were being raised in a peculiar religious environment, and he feared they would be at a social and intellectual disadvantage if they never learned the classic tales their peers studied in sectarian Sunday schools.

The next stage of the program introduced the study of personal duties. Sheldon's "Lessons in the Study of Habits," the teacher's manual for this stage, was intended to foster reflective, deliberate character formation. The 31 chapters that made up the body of the text were devoted to expositions of such virtues as truthfulness, perseverance, and bravery, and such vices as laziness, cheating, and exaggeration. Each chapter included a list of applicable proverbs, a list of duties to be committed to memory and faithfully adopted, and an illustrative poem. The substance of each lesson was given in a hypothetical teacher-pupil dialogue, which was intended to help the teacher elicit the students' ethical insights. Those insights, however, invariably were guided toward preconceived precepts; Sheldon's belief in an absolute "Moral Law" was reflected in his presumption that right-thinking students would always arrive at the same moral conclusions. The purpose of these lessons, as Sheldon stated in his suggestions to parents and teachers, was "to influence the moods and temperament, the feelings or character of the young people." (Ibid., p. 15) Students were encouraged to examine their motives and weigh conflicting values. The loss of friendship and respect is repeatedly presented as the price of immoral behavior. With its Puritan severity and elevation of self-abnegation, "Study of Habits" is something of a children's version of Thomas a Kempis's "Imitation of Christ," one of Sheldon's most revered books on the inner life. An excerpt from the dialogue on "Humility" illustrates that tone:

[W]hen a boy or girl is anxious that other people should look at them, point them out, and say how smart they are, how much more they know than other boys or girls; what persons are they really thinking of most of all? You or me, for example? "No," you say, "they are thinking about themselves."

Yes, but in what way? Is such a person thinking about improving himself, forming better habits for himself, or blaming himself for some mistake? "No," you answer, "that is not it at all. It is self-admiration."

At the age of 10 or 11, Sunday School pupils were introduced to the next stage of instruction, "Duties in the Home and the Family." In this section, teachers stressed the uniqueness and sanctity of family relations. The children were taught that obedience to their parents was the most fundamental of moral commands. "When the final question comes as to why one should obey," Sheldon wrote, "this theme always ends with the one crucial answer: Because they are my father and mother." Obeying the letter but not the spirit of parental orders, or obeying them only when in the presence of authority -- what Sheldon called "eye-service" -- were roundly denounced. Nor did the obligations of a child end with independence: The lesson plan underlined "how mean and base those people are who neglect their aged parents." Furthermore, the children were taught that "obedience is a great, universal rule of life, and that all persons of all ages are obliged to obey."

Turning to sibling relationships, the course promoted harmony and "mutual service." Teachers pointed out that, in some families, brothers and sisters dissolved their ties as they grew to adulthood; the children were exhorted to consciously maintain those bonds. This section also detailed common courtesies, such as table manners and points of thoughtfulness to be remembered during times of sickness and grief. To minimize lapses of attention, Sheldon urged teachers to tell animal stories from time to time. The blood relations of animals, he said, underscore the universality of family ties and point to the superiority of human life. Another relief measure used in this section was the study of holidays - Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays, and memorials. Significantly, Christmas was presented as the birth of Jesus, whom Sheldon forever held up as the world's greatest teacher, but Easter was described as a timeless festival marking the renewal of life.

Jesus of Nazareth was the focal point of the course for 11- and 12-year-olds. Sheldon collaborated with associate teachers and the mothers of pupils in writing "Story of the Life of Jesus for the Young told from an Ethical Standpoint," which was first published in 1895. The book, a Sunday . School staple for decades, portrayed Jesus as an ethical revolutionary, a man of exemplary kindness and mercy. His teachings, which Sheldon termed "the rarest jewels of ethical experience that the moral nature of man has ever evolved," were italicized to facilitate memorization. (An Ethical Sunday School, p. 102) Sheldon drew upon his Palestinian sojourn in describing the story's geographical and cultural setting, and he took broad liberties in extrapolating the thoughts and feelings of Jesus and the apostles from New Testament accounts. Sheldon found that the story of Jesus, which he frequently referred to as "the most beautiful story in the world," illustrated every ethical precept he held dear. He expounded on each of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, contrasting the "higher way" Jesus taught with the brutishness of what Plato called "the unreflective life." Although he portrayed all the principals of the story sympathetically, Sheldon held up Judas as the archetype of greed and disloyalty; the Pharisees represented shallow self-righteousness; and Pontius Pilate, haughty indifference. In the story of Martha and Mary, Sheldon found an illustration of his own reverence for the inner life over material comfort.

In keeping with the Society's metaphysical neutrality, the book is innocent of theology. It may be the world's only account of the life of Jesus that makes no mention of God, prayer, miracles, or resurrection. Sheldon defined the "kingdom of heaven" as the inner peace enjoyed by those who live lives of charity. When Sheldon's Jesus was baptized, "he fancied he saw in the sky a grand and solemn face looking down upon him," and the being that tempted him in the desert was not Satan but "the weaker, lower self within him." (Story of the Life of Jesus for the Young told from an Ethical Standpoint, Walter L. Sheldon, S. Burns Weston, Philadelphia, Second Edition, 1909; pp. 33, 38) Miracles also are related in naturalistic terms. For instance, Sheldon wrote that Jesus, with his extraordinary tranquility, calmed his frantic apostles, not the stormy sea; "years afterward," he wrote, "they said that it seemed to them at that instant as if the storm itself had subsided and the sea become calm." (Ibid., p. 64) Likewise, he wrote that Jesus's compassion had such a marked effect on the sick and lame that "many persons, after being visited by him and having felt that gentle hand, dated their recovery from that very moment." (Ibid., p. 59) As always, Sheldon did not attack beliefs in supernatural events, but he gently noted that "when a person of this kind appears in the world, he is so strange and unlike other people, so much above them and different from them, that they only partly understand him; and so it is that they may be very much confused about what he said and did, and may have told it sometimes in one way when he said it or did it in another." (Ibid., pp. 18-19)

At the age of 12 or 13, students moved on to "Citizenship and the Duties of a Citizen." Based on another of Sheldon's instructional books, this section was intended to inculcate in students a love of country and a determination to uphold the standards of civilized society. Like "Study of Habits," its chapters included teacher-student dialogues and lists of duties to be committed to memory. In this case, the duties included voting, paying taxes, obeying laws, and performing military service. Ethical points were illustrated by historical tales of civil service and wartime heroism; excerpts from classic political orations; and poems expressing patriotic sentiments. Though not intended as a civics text, the book outlined the principles of American government as a base for ethical reflection. The children were taught to extend their regard for the family to the state: "We want to do away with the old, crude conception about 'government being a necessary evil,' by trying to have the young see in their national life a certain element of sacredness," Sheldon wrote. (An Ethical Sunday School, pp. 126-127) He underscored this point by insisting that an American flag be ceremoniously hung in the classroom each Sunday. He pointed out that patriotism demands the willingness to die for one's country, but he emphasized the equal value of living for it by fulfilling civic responsibilities. The course included four to six classes on the history of St. Louis; this segment was capped off by a trip to the Missouri Historical Society to inspect artifacts from the founding of the city. The course was not entirely provincial, however: The final lesson focused on loyalty to the entire human family, and stimulated hope for "the time to come in future ages, far, far distant, when all cities and all states and all countries are to unite in one great, universal, human brotherhood." (Ibid., p. 132)

The next course in the series, "Duties to One's Self," formally introduced students to principles of introspection. Now in their early to mid-teens, the students were taught to attend closely to their thoughts, feelings, and motives. Sheldon's psychology was primitive: he treated the mind, body, "heart," and will as somehow distinct. But he was honest enough to disclaim psychoanalytic authority, asserting instead that character development no more requires intellectual certainty than it does theistic faith. Students were taught to show proper regard for the body in hygiene and dress, but the "mind-life" always was deemed pre-eminent. Likewise, the "rights" of the senses were recognized, but love of knowledge was shown to be a higher and more lasting pleasure than sensual satisfactions. Sheldon was a stern advocate of Self Mastery, and his denunciations of such "evil feelings" as anger and jealousy were lacking in sympathy and delicacy. The principle lesson of the course, he wrote, was to make it clear to the students that "they can control their feelings if they choose to do so." (Ibid., p. 155) He was not entirely devoid of emotional sophistication, however. He took pains to illustrate the way feelings arise from mental preoccupations, and taught that "we can shut out one subject by calling up another, and in that way shut out a bad feeling by calling up a good one." (Ibid., p. 155) His proposed dialogue on "The Importance of Feelings" illustrates his insistence on one's responsibility for one's character:

Where do our feelings come from? "Oh," you reply, "they are born in us, of course; we get them just as we get the shape of our body or the expression of our face." All of our feelings, do you mean, every one of them; are they all born in us? "No; perhaps not quite all of them," you say, "but some of them, at any rate." Yes; you are right; some of them are born in us. But where do the others come from, if they are not born in us? "Why," you answer, "they come by growth, little by little, according to what we think or say or do."

...

How does it happen that certain feelings that were very weak in us at the first, became very strong, and other feelings which were very strong became weak and seemed to die away?

"Well," you answer, "that depends somewhat on the way we conduct ourselves, on what we do, what sort of experiences we have." Can you give me an illustration of what you mean?

Do you suppose, for instance, it ever happens that a person who seems to be born with a good temper, as we say, with no special disposition to be irritable or to become angry -- do you think it might happen that such a person later on in life might have a bad temper, be inclined to be cross or out of sorts, to show anger or to be irritable?

"Yes," you say, "it might happen." And how about the other side? Do you consider it possible that a person might be born with a bad temper, inclined to be cross, irritable with everybody, and yet, when the person grew up, really not to have such a temper at all? "Yes," you reply, "that might be possible."

Which happens more often, do you suppose -- the change where a person loses a bad temper; or where a person not born with it, acquires a bad temper? "Oh," you answer, "probably it more often happens that a man gets a bad temper, instead of losing it." I am afraid that you are right. At any rate it appears, after all, that all the feelings we have do not depend wholly on the feelings we were born with; some of them we get ourselves.

(Ibid., pp. 150-152)

The final course in the Sunday School dealt with religious beliefs. This course was for 15- and 16-year-olds, though Sheldon worried that, even at that age, the students may be too young to grasp the subtleties of religious thought. Naturally, the course presented no metaphysical creed; its purpose was to give an overview of religious history and to "start certain tendencies of thought or belief" that would evolve into a mature transcendentalism. Sheldon felt it was critical to point the youngsters in the right direction before they entered the world. Without the proper start, he wrote, they might become "out-and-out atheists" or "go off on a side-track and return to a supernaturalism that suggests the fetish worship of thousands of years ago." (Ibid., p. 176) The course traced the development of cultural beliefs about gods and God. It included a study of the Bible, the Koran, the writings of Confucius, and the Buddhist "Path of Virtue." The students were taught to hold these writings in special regard.

A brief account of anthropological history set the stage for the study of beliefs about divinity. The students traced the evolution of beliefs from primitive nature worship to pantheism to monotheism. They examined the ways in which theistic beliefs can affect human behavior -- sometimes inspiring virtue, sometimes inspiring bizarre rituals and irrational acts. They studied the manifestations of superstition in contemporary culture. Through it all, they drew correlations between the evolution of the God-concept and the growth of ethical sophistication. For instance, Sheldon noted that the belief in a plethora of capricious gods was matched by a philosophy of "every man for himself." By contrast, he taught that the most advanced religious attitude -- that is, appreciation of the interconnectedness and ultimate unity of things -- had found expression in the comparatively orderly civilization of the Industrial Age. Sheldon took no stand on the existence of a Supreme Being, but he taught that beneath the prevalent belief in a Judgment Day lay a reliable intuition that "the Universe, or the Power behind it, supports the Cause of Right." (Ibid., p. 186) He left it to parents to tell their children whether that Power is personal or "too grand, too lofty, to be described by any one word or any one name." (Ibid., p. 206) The belief he counted as universal and self-evident, the culminating assertion of the course of instruction, was that Duty, "the God who speaks on the inside," is deserving of unqualified devotion.

5: Cultivating Character - The Self-Culture Halls Association

As a body, the Ethical Society of St. Louis has not consistently engaged in activism. In this regard, it stands in the shadow of its parent the New York Society, which has had a pronounced impact on its community through a variety of service projects. For most of its history, the St. Louis society's chief contribution to community welfare has been in the field of communication: By sponsoring forums for provocative speakers and social events that foster the cross-fertilization of activist plans, it has helped socially conscious individuals direct their energies to worthy tasks. On occasion, however, the fellowship has undertaken community service as a body. The society's most activist era was its first few decades, when the spirit of Felix Adler came to town in the person of his protege Walter Sheldon. Like Adler, Sheldon believed a religious fellowship is hollow unless it is bound together in action:

The enthusiasm for unity and brotherhood ... will mean nothing unless it calls forth a unity and brotherhood to some definite purpose; otherwise it will sink into an old-time religious emotionalism. I see no purpose in religious organization unless it can alter and refine the very foundations of human society. ("The Religious Beliefs of Others," *An Ethical Movement*, pp. 81-82.)

Sheldon's most expansive undertaking was the establishment of free community schools called the Wage Earners' Self-Culture Clubs. As noted earlier, this program began in 1888 as an experiment in "educational philanthropy"; it offered educational opportunities that were then available only to the affluent. Program offerings included reading rooms, lectures, course work, debating clubs, excursions, concerts, and social gatherings. The program employed no examinations and bestowed no certificates. Cultural and moral edification, rather than training in employment skills, was its object:

What we wished to call out or foster was the latent manhood or womanhood of the artisan class, which tends to die away or never appear at all, owing to the monotonous grind in the routine of daily toil, or to the restricted sphere in which their lives are cast, or to the cheap and often vulgar amusements to which they are attracted. It was the belief of the management that opportunities for intellectual self-improvement worked in the direction of upbuilding of character. By opening out a wider area of interests, connecting what they know of the present by a knowledge of the past; by fostering interest in the physical world around them through the study of natural science, an element of soul is called forth, the man or woman side is aroused, a sense of personal dignity and self-respect is awakened, and the individual from that time forth stands on another plane of life. What he gets may be the most fragmentary knowledge, scraps of information, only a glimpse here and there into history, literature, or the laws of nature. He may come to us for only a few months, and disappear forever from our ken. But I venture to say that in almost every such instance a new impulse has been given, or the foundation laid for higher possibilities of advance in that one man. He will never be quite the same commonplace creature he had been before." ("The Wage Earners' Self-Culture Clubs of St. Louis: A Sketch of Their History," By Walter L. Sheldon, *Ethical Addresses*, undated volume; pp. 45-6.)

Although administered by Sheldon and Ethical Society members, the Self-Culture program was not an exercise in Ethical Culture propaganda. In fact, Sheldon insisted the program maintain strict neutrality regarding religion and politics. Neither religious organs nor anti-religious periodicals were permitted in the reading rooms. Believers and unbelievers were equally welcome in the program, and no attempt was made to sway their beliefs. As with the theological neutrality maintained by the Ethical movement itself, this policy did not mean that religion was a taboo topic or that clergy were unwelcome. Priests, ministers and rabbis were frequent lecturers, but Sheldon noted that, to his knowledge, they said nothing "which could be considered as denominational language that might in any way jar on the people who come there, representing practically all the religious phases in St. Louis." Unless they had special academic knowledge to share, clergy were asked to offer their listeners non-doctrinal folk wisdom. In the 1895-96 season, for instance, Bishop D.S. Tuttle of Christ Church Cathedral spoke on "How to Enjoy Life in a Sensible Way"; and Rev. S.J. Niccolls of Second Presbyterian offered advice on "How One Can Get the Most Pleasure Out of Life While Having to Work Very Hard."

At the outset, the program consisted of free reading rooms at 1532 Franklin Ave. which were open weekday evenings and all day Sundays. The rooms were stocked with the St. Louis daily newspapers; weeklies such as *Nation*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Scientific American*, *Age of Steel*, *Puck*, and *Judge*; and monthlies such as *North American Review*, *Forum*, *Arena*, *Century*, *Scribner's*, and *Popular Science*. In its first season, the program expanded to include lectures by Washington University professors and other local professionals. Proceeds from the lectures were used to build up the rooms' nascent library. In the program's second season, weekly classes were added. The first of these were classes in Domestic Economy under the direction of Martha Fischel, a prominent member of the Ethical Society.

When the project outgrew its quarters in 1892, it was moved to 1730 Washington St., a former residence on the southeast corner of 18th and Washington. This building, also rented, became known as Self-Culture Hall. In addition to a library -- which now boasted 1,200 volumes -- and reading rooms, it had a lecture hall, baths and a gymnasium. It housed a piano for use at concerts and parties. Sheldon continued to supervise the project, but in the fall of 1892, the Ethical Society hired E.N. Plank Jr. to assist him both in his platform duties and in the direction of the Self-Culture program. To maximize his availability to program participants, Plank lived at the building.

On June 1, 1893, the Self-Culture Hall Association was incorporated as a distinct entity. The association's board of trustees was composed of 10 to 12 "representative citizens of St. Louis," which meant that not all of them belonged to the Ethical Society. Among its long-term presidents were James Taussig, the first administrator of the Ethical Society; and Dr. William Taussig, a brother of James, who was president of the St. Louis Bridge and Terminal Association. The board selected the director and superintendent, and gave them virtually free rein in developing educational programs. Most of the trustees were middle-class philanthropists, but eventually a few blue-collar workers undertook administrative responsibility after participating in the program and serving as officers of workers' social clubs. The newly formed corporation's first item of business was the purchase of the headquarters building on Washington.

In May of 1895, the association and the Ethical Society board agreed that the association would henceforth assume full responsibility for its increasingly demanding financial affairs. In its official capacity, the Society's board of trustees no longer helped the association raise or administer funds. Nonetheless, the association's volunteer administrative force continued to be drawn primarily from Society membership. The following October, Plank resigned from his posts as associate lecturer of the Society and resident superintendent of Self-Culture Hall. He was replaced by William H. Lighty, who also served the Ethical Society as superintendent of the Sunday School.

After experimenting with a satellite program in rented quarters at 2004 1/2 South Broadway, the association in 1895 purchased a building at 1921 South Ninth St. to serve as a second Self-Culture Hall. At the opening ceremony on October 17, St. Louis Mayor Cyrus Walbridge spoke on "What We Can All Do to Improve St. Louis." This building, which came to be known as the South Side Self-Culture Hall, had about 10 rooms, including a lecture hall that accommodated nearly 200 people. It also had a classroom, a reading room, a kitchen for cooking classes, and a basement equipped with showers.

The next fall, the association moved its headquarters from the Washington Street building to a larger facility at 1832 Carr St. on the North Side. The Carr Street building, which previously served as a hospital, had 27 rooms and a basement equipped with shower baths and a rudimentary gymnasium. The two largest rooms served as lecture halls, each with a seating capacity of about 100. Other rooms included a library; a reading room; a game room for children; a men's club room equipped with pool and billiard tables; and club rooms for women, girls, and boys. A photographic darkroom eventually was added. Both halls had playgrounds equipped with swings and see-saws; the grounds were planted with flower beds to which the children attended. Lighty and his family lived on the second floor of the North Side Hall; a "lady superintendent" also resided in the building. Each of the permanent halls had a librarian who performed clerical work and stocked and issued books. The North Side Hall served as a sub-station of the St. Louis Public Library: Neighbors filled out request slips, and the janitor retrieved the necessary books from the main library every few days.

The association also conducted satellite programs at several rental halls. Over the years, these included Marten's Hall, 921 Old Manchester Rd.; Apollo Hall, 3809 North Ninth St.; and a hall in the Tower Grove neighborhood. In addition, it was given free use of Power House Hall, an entertainment hall located over the power house of a streetcar firm at 3700 N. Broadway, on condition company employees could participate in all Self-Culture programs free of charge. Reflecting the association's sober idealism, these auxiliary programs were initiated where and when the need existed and were allowed to lapse when neighborhood interest declined. Some lasted for only two or three years.

Classes and Study Groups

In the association's heyday, lectures were offered five or six evenings a week at various locations. At each of the permanent halls, separate evenings were reserved for men's and women's lectures. Addresses at satellite sites were open to men, women, and children alike. The schedule followed at the Washington Street site in 1892 was typical: The debating club met Monday evenings; Tuesdays were for entertainment and talks for boys ages 10 to 15; Thursdays, lectures and entertainment for women; Fridays, lectures and entertainment for men and their families; and Saturdays, Domestic Economy classes and social gatherings. Women generally preferred lecture courses in art, literature, and family relations, while men preferred courses in history, law for the layman, engineering, and architecture. The men formed a weekly study group in civil government; over the years, this group examined the U.S. Constitution, studied biographies of statesmen, and investigated city government. In this latter effort, the men used the city charter of St. Louis and the mayor's annual report as their guide; the project was aided by a series of speakers from City Hall. Women's study groups focused on the plays of Shakespeare; the history of painting, aided by a collection of stereopticon slides that came to number more than 1,000; and biographies of great women such as

Florence Nightingale, Charlotte Bronte, and Joan of Arc. If both sexes expressed an interest in a course, lecturers were asked to repeat it. For instance, when a female physician -- a rarity in that day -- captivated the women with a course in "Physiology and Health," it was repeated for the men at their request -- but by a male physician. Some courses were more inspirational than educational; one season, a series of notable citizens addressed the topic, "Why Some Men Succeed and Other Men Fail." Sheldon and his associates, eager to sustain interest in the program, were responsive to participants' requests. If attendance fell, they changed the topic, sometimes disrupting a sequential course to inject an isolated lecture by a charismatic speaker. Sheldon considered a single-sex lecture a success if 50 to 60 people attended; lectures open to men, women and children sometimes drew as many as 200 people.

By the turn of the century, fifteen to thirty study groups, each with its own volunteer teacher, were in progress at a time. Membership ranged from five to 20 participants per group. Courses in reading, elocution, and English composition were taught to those who already had a command of the language; courses in French, German, Spanish, Italian, and English as a second language were offered as demand warranted. In addition to academic subjects, lessons were offered in singing and dancing; calisthenics and gymnastics; and piano, mandolin, and guitar. The association also offered a few classes in employment skills such as stenography, bookkeeping, and mechanical drawing, but Sheldon minimized these offerings, and stretched a point in calling them elements of the program's "general upbuilding method."

Once the association acquired permanent quarters on both the North Side and South Side, Fischel implemented an elaborate curriculum in the Domestic Economy Schools. Each Saturday, 100 to 150 girls attended the school at each of the permanent halls. Each location had its own superintendent. Twenty-five to thirty volunteer teachers served the schools; an early member of the South Side volunteer corps was Lilly Anheuser Busch, the wife of Adolphus Busch, president of Anheuser-Busch Cos. Courses were taught in cooking, sewing, laundering, money management, and other aspects of homemaking. Reading and music were provided while the girls worked "in order to bring to bear the special refining effect that comes from such influences"; often the girls sang while they worked. A few years into the program, Fischel started advanced classes designed to help older girls make a transition into the adult Self-Culture program.

At the North Side hall, four or five rooms were set apart for the exclusive use of the Domestic Economy School. In the furnished bedroom and parlor, the students learned how to sweep, dust, clean lamps, make fires, polish furniture, manage house plants, and decorate. They studied cooking in the kitchen, which was equipped with essential appliances and utensils and adorned with cooking charts. In the dining room, they took turns setting the table, waiting on their classmates, and clearing the table. At the smaller South Side hall, these arrangements were simpler and temporary. Housekeeping lessons included lessons in applied science: "Poetry is thrown into the menial task of making a fire, when at the same time they learn about the match that is used to kindle it.... where the wood comes from, what materials are used, and how many different persons are employed in the manufacture of every single match. When they are washing the tumblers they learn about the making of glass..." (Pamphlet, "Ethical Society of St. Louis: What It Is and Its Work," St. Louis, Nixon-Jones Printing Co., 1893.) As always, Sheldon made it clear these classes were intended to teach the girls skills for personal use, not for employment. Success was marked when a girl attended class in a dress of her own making, not when she got a job as a seamstress.

In the association's formative years, other children's activities were limited to the Underage Kindergarten, run on weekday mornings by the Ladies Philanthropic Society of the Ethical Society for children ages 3 to 6; and supervised use of playgrounds, gymnasiums, and game rooms during after-school hours. To counterbalance the Domestic Economy Schools, the association experimented with boys-only courses in handicrafts and military exercises. That program was slow to gain steam, probably because it lacked a director of Fischel's vitality. Sheldon, however, laid the early failure of the boys' program to the inherent rowdiness of boys. "Only after they have gone to work," he wrote, "and some of the wild animal spirits in them have been toned down by the routine of toil, do they usually begin to show ambitions in a higher direction." By 1908, however, the association offered children of both sexes a full program of after-school and Saturday-morning activities, including boys' classes in carpentry, woodcarving, iron working, basketry, and gymnastics; girls' classes in cooking, sewing, basketry, singing, and gymnastics; and co-ed classes in story-telling, dramatics, clay modeling, and dancing. In addition, association volunteers took the children on field trips and led them in organized games. Participation in the program cost only 10 cents a month; pupils paid an additional 10 cents for piano lessons and 2 cents for use of soap and towels for taking baths.

Another educational experiment of the Self-Culture program was the debating club. The young men who took part in this club met once a week, usually under the supervision of a public school teacher or administrator, to discuss topical issues. It was a rule with the club that every person present give his opinion on the subject. Participants chose

the topics of debate by vote. Among the issues they debated were: "Should the Education of Children be Made Compulsory?"; "Is the Employment of Women in Stores, Factories, and Workshops Detrimental to the Best Interests of Society?"; "Should the Right of Suffrage be Extended to Women?"; "Has the Invention of Machinery been Advantageous to Wage- Earners?"; and "Is a Protective Tariff Immoral?" Sheldon encourage debating clubs as a spur to critical reasoning, but he noted that they never lasted long: "Only a limited number care for such a department; still fewer care to talk; and the result is they talk themselves out and tire of listening to each other."

Culture and Frugality

In addition to educational programs, the Self-Culture association sponsored a variety of cultural events. Classes in civic history were augmented by field trips to the Missouri Historical Society museum. Excursions also were made to the Museum of Fine Arts, the Washington University Astronomical Observatory, the prehistoric mounds of southern Illinois, and manufacturing plants. Each June, the association sponsored a train trip to a rural area for a day of recreation; these "Country Rambles" drew several hundred picnickers.

In the late 1890s, the association began offering concerts at its halls and satellite sites. The St. Louis Musical Club, the Union Musical Club, and the Rubinstein Club volunteered their services in various years, and scores of other musicians provided solos and accompaniment. Sheldon reported that the working-class people who attended the concerts found that they enjoyed "really good music as well as the cheap worthless kind they often hear elsewhere in the city." Program participants who were learning to play instruments at the Self-Culture Halls sometimes gave concerts of their own; Sheldon charitably noted that, at those concerts, "it has to be taken for granted that the music cannot be of the same high order." In its quest to upgrade the use of leisure time, the association also sponsored dancing classes. These doubled as incentives for studiousness: Only those who had attended a class or lecture within the preceding seven days were permitted to attend. Dances and other social gatherings had no such strings attached.

In an effort to encourage thrift -- yet another of the Puritan virtues Sheldon extolled -- the association opened a Savings Department. When a participant succeeded in squirreling away the tidy sum of \$3, the money was deposited in the St. Louis Union Trust Co. to draw interest. Children who participated in the Penny Savings Department received account books when they saved one dollar. To dispel participants' fears for the safety of their savings, the association found three "influential citizens" to guarantee the fund up to \$10,000. In the 1901-02 season, 36 participants deposited a total of \$2,793.70 in the fund. Of the 137 children who took part in the Penny Savings Department that year, 43 succeeded in opening bank accounts.

The Wearisome Details

The Self-Culture Clubs -- the social units of program participants -- were loosely organized. Members elected an executive committee and a secretary for both the men's club and women's club associated with each of the permanent halls. The presidents, however, were appointed by Sheldon or his associates. To charges that this practice was autocratic, Sheldon responded that pure democracy was inappropriate in a club that existed primarily for educational purposes; he considered it his duty to ensure that authority be vested in the best-educated members. The issue itself was academic since it appears the clubs had little more than an advisory role in curriculum planning and the management of volunteers. However, they did take part in putting out a monthly bulletin. Begun in October 1897, this eight-page publication contained essays on moral character by Sheldon and other program administrators; announcements of lectures and special events; items of news regarding the association and club members; literary quotes; and letters from members. A 1901 edition contains an essay on the good life by John Lovejoy Elliott, founder and director of the New York Ethical Society's Hudson Guild; a listing of the more than 200 lantern slides acquired in conjunction with a lecture series on the Civil War; plans for holiday celebrations; a message chiding a club member for skipping classes after his nuptials; a note of thanks for donations of potted plants and a photographic exhibit; and announcements regarding the formation of a glee club, an instrumental musical group, and a needlework guild.

More than 500 people belonged to the four permanent Self-Culture Clubs at the turn of the century. Separate clubs were formed by the Stationary Engineers Brotherhood, which met monthly at Power House Hall, and by participants in a satellite branch at the manufacturing town of LeClaire, Ill. Now and then, the clubs' organizational structure disintegrated entirely, but Sheldon was unconcerned; he valued group cohesiveness only insofar as it facilitated the institution's educational aims.

Like the platform services of the Ethical Society, the educational programs of the Self-Culture Halls Association were suspended over the summer. The season ran from the first of October until the first of June. Even still, Sheldon noted, it required "the greatest possible exertion not to have the lagging time begin by the middle of April." During the off-season, women's clubs continued to hold informal meetings and social gatherings about once a week. As for the men, however, "it would . . . be practically impossible to drag them inside the building for any educational work during the summer months."

The program cost about \$5,000 a year. Most of the budget was raised through donations of \$2 to \$50 annually from private citizens. Formal appeals stressed the program's non-sectarianism and promotion of good citizenship. In addition to cash donations, books and periodicals were contributed regularly by business people and the St. Louis Club. Fund-raising was the principal responsibility of the trustees who served on the finance committee; when their efforts fell short of budgetary requirements, they often made up the difference out of their own pockets. Club members also did what they could to offset deficits: When the furnace at the North Side Hall went on the fritz in the 1902-03 season, they raised the \$600 needed to replace it by throwing a bazaar.

To encourage the broadest possible participation, program fees were kept to a minimum. Most lectures were free and open to the public, but participants who wished to join study groups, take field trips, or use the halls' recreational facilities were required to enroll as club members for a fee of less than a dollar a year. About three-fourths of the teachers were volunteers, and their classes were free. For classes taught by paid teachers, the association charged enough to at least offset the additional cost. Students paid for their textbooks and study materials. At Power House Hall, where participants numbered 300 to 400 a year and operational costs were especially high, club members bought booklets containing coupons for each lecture and concert in the season. Fees for the use of the shower baths and gymnasiums covered the cost of maintaining those facilities.

Volunteers made the program possible. Had all the teachers and assistants been paid, Sheldon estimated the program would have cost at least twice as much. By Sheldon's count, more than 300 volunteers had taught classes, given lectures, or performed music for the association by the turn of the century; an additional 100 to 150 volunteers assisted in putting on the concerts. In an average year, about 50 teachers volunteered their services once a week; 70 to 80 people gave occasional lectures; and dozens more provided auxiliary services. Most of the lecturers were Washington University instructors, physicians, lawyers, clergy, and other local professionals; some were prominent citizens, ranging from postmasters to foreign consuls. Among their number were Gen. John W. Noble, secretary of the Interior under Harrison; Judge B.R. Burroughs of the Illinois Appellate Court; F. Louis Soldan, superintendent of the St. Louis Public Schools; Bishop D.S. Tuttle of Christ Church Cathedral; composer William H. Pommer; and Congressman Richard Bartholdt. Sheldon credited these volunteers with making the program a success:

I can recall the devotion with which business men ran up and down the city, canvassing for funds, or labored in the executive management, attending to the wearisome details essential to such a complex institution. And I know today also, what hearty devotion our committees are rendering, and what labor their efforts involved, and how much they are doing for us. Looking over the long list of co-workers, helpers in the cause, who have rendered service in many ways, it certainly stirs a feeling of the profoundest gratitude to one and all of them -- although naturally most of all to those who have sacrificed not only a single evening in the season, but whole days or scores of evenings in our cause.

What, after all, makes the success of such work is not the management at the head, but the devotion of the colleagues, the superintendents, and the volunteer workers. And if there has been anything unique in our institution, it has been the intense ardor of those who have served the institution in this way in devoting themselves to its purposes. The superintendents take hold of it as it were a matter of life or death. The work itself seems to arouse a certain inspiration and love for it, which grows as the time goes on. (Ibid., pp. 77-78.)

Coaxing the Latent Soul

Most of the club members were laborers. Censuses taken on random evenings turned up carpenters, tailors, cooks, machinists, factory workers, telephone operators, and teamsters. A smattering of teachers, clerks, and other white-collar workers also took part. One census showed that participants represented about 161 businesses and factories. Few construction workers took part in the program, leading Sheldon to question whether "the irregularity in employment among the building trades does not foster a certain indifference to self-improvement." In its first

year, the program was open only to men; in successive seasons, the proportion of women and men in the program was about even. Membership was higher at the North Side site than on the South Side, which had a higher proportion of non-English speaking immigrants.

While Sheldon boasted that "members of nearly all the races who speak the English language" participated in the program, he bemoaned its exclusion of African-Americans. Missouri had abolished slavery only 23 years before the Self-Culture program began. Many St. Louisans -- some of whom had sided with the Confederacy -- refused to mix with blacks in any social setting. In Sheldon's words, "the peculiar conditions here in a locality once a part of the South, make the race lines very sharp, and it would be practically impossible to carry on clubs where the two elements were thrown together." (Ibid., p. 45.) To offset the effects of white exclusiveness, Sheldon inaugurated the Colored People's Self-Improvement Federation in 1893. This institute adopted Booker T. Washington's attitude that blacks could overcome their harsh disadvantages only through the slow process of education. According to an 1893 Ethical Society pamphlet, "the main idea underlying their plan is to encourage that race to look to themselves for the advancement of their cause, instead of constantly appealing to the white race for assistance." (Pamphlet, "Ethical Society of St. Louis: What It Is and Its Work.") An average of 200 people took part in the federation's annual lecture course. Lectures were held fortnightly at Central Turner Hall.

In all, tens of thousands of working people took advantage of Self-Culture programs. In its annual report, the Self-Culture Hall Association listed the following attendance figures for the 1900-01 season:

Total attendance at all branches 37,035

Total attendance at weekly lectures, concerts, socials 10,531

Total number baths taken (over 12 months) 9,693

Total attendance in adult classes 8,562

Total attendance in boys' and girls' classes 7,528

Total number men enrolled in classes 259

Total number women enrolled in classes 297

Average weekly attendance, Domestic Economy School:

North Side Hall 110

South Side Hall 107

Daily average at free reading rooms 23

Estimated daily playground attendance 40-50

The following season, total attendance rose to 39,351. Despite these figures, Sheldon lamented what he deemed intellectual sluggishness among working-class people. He never expected Self-Culture to catch on like the phonograph, but he worried that industrialization was smothering the native curiosity of urban laborers:

It is often said that people are hungering for opportunities of enlightenment. But our experience was precisely to the contrary, and to many would have been profoundly discouraging. It has never struck me that there was any great rush for self-improvement from the artisan or any other class in this country.

It was not that the wage-earner opposed us but the latent soul I have spoken of, is often very latent, indeed, hidden far down under the surface, out of sight even of the person who may have it. This element of higher manhood doesn't come surging to the front at the start. The conditions of life have seared it over with the majority of boys and girls in these classes, before they have entered their teens. The soul for them was nipped in the very bud. (Ibid., pp. 49-50.)

Sheldon and his cohorts approached prospective participants on the streets and in factories; they distributed leaflets and spoke of the value of self-culture, taking pains to ensure their listeners that they were not being lured into some sort of religious meeting. In one instance, Sheldon reported that more than 100 young women attended a lecture after he spoke to them in their work place, but his joy was dashed when only two or three of them returned the following week. When discouraged, he took consolation in the belief that the association had a leavening effect on the entire community. "The working class of the city are generally aware that there is an important educational institution known as the Wage Earners' Self-Culture Clubs," he wrote. "The very fact of the existence of such work is an impulse, or suggestive of a standard or possibilities of self-improvement, to thousands who may not come directly under the influence of such a movement. I believe the effects of the existence of this association can be seen on the artisan class at large in St. Louis." (Ibid., p. 67.)

A Clubhouse for the People

In 1888, the year the first reading rooms were opened, the Ethical Society board of trustees noted in its annual report that the rooms had become "a kind of neighborhood Guild" and projected that, in time, "the entire neighborhood may look to them as a literary centre of refining and educating influence for the families of the neighborhood." An 1892 flyer referred to the Washington Street facility as "A Club House for the People." Throughout its existence, the association was directed according to that model, as distinct from the social settlement model according to which New York Society members had built Hudson Guild. The association never offered food, housing, or job counseling to the thousands of immigrants arriving in St. Louis in the late 19th century. It stuck to Sheldon's principle of inviting participants to expand their intellectual horizons; it provided the impetus, rather than the tools, to better one's lot. Sheldon considered adopting certain features of the settlement-house model, but he demurred on the grounds that such a program "can only be fully successful here and there in the rare instances where a peculiarly and unusually gifted individual of independent means can take the lead, and throw his whole life into the work." (Ibid., p. 47) However, he added, "those who may not have gifts for strictly charitable work, or know how to go into the homes of people in the slums and give assistance there, may yet have intellectual gifts or knowledge of some special kind, making them willing and glad to do some work for the self-improvement of their fellows." (Ibid., p. 47) Some of Sheldon's colleagues believed that the association's approach to bettering lives was the key to a just and egalitarian society. Sheldon's assessment of its value was more restrained, but he did contend "that it can render a profound service in this direction." (Ibid., p. 78) Sheldon measured the success of the program in barely perceptible changes in character:

Now and then it goes to one's heart in special instances where a truly fine, noble nature turns up out of those surging throngs pouring out of the doors from the factories at evening time. Here and there an individual of this other higher type welcomes the privileges, and shows himself glad at heart for the opportunities. And as the months go by, we can see the manhood coming out through the crust which had hidden it under the surface. I have known, too, of young women whose lives seemed to have been transformed by this means. Some of them who had been attending our clubs for years have remarked on the peculiar change coming over the young people after they have attended our lecture courses for a few months; the sense of dignity appearing in them in a way that had not shown itself before; an unconscious improvement in their conduct toward one another. (Ibid., p. 52.)

Sheldon continued to head the Self-Culture Halls Association until the fall of 1905, when he retired from the work and turned over the reins to the resident superintendent; he continued as an ex-officio member of the association's board of trustees until his death. Lighty, suffering from ill health, resigned later that season after 11 years of service; his resignation "was most reluctantly accepted by the Trustees, who felt that they were losing a worthy, able and conscientious co-worker, whose enthusiastic and philanthropic spirit, coupled with intelligent discrimination, pervaded the whole institution." (18th annual report of the Self-Culture Halls Association, 1905-06) Drawing on his experience in St. Louis, he later helped develop the extension program of the University of Wisconsin, one of the country's leading ventures in adult and community education. Lighty was succeeded by Roger Baldwin, a professor of sociology at Washington University who, in league with John Lovejoy Elliott of New York and Jerome Cook and Rose Jones of the St. Louis Society, would later establish the American Civil Liberties Union. Because Sheldon was confined to bed during the year before his death, he and Baldwin never met; however, Sheldon's wife, Anna Hartshorne Sheldon, did work with Baldwin in the Self-Culture program.

The South Side Hall evidently closed in the 1905-06 season. The North Side Hall was subsumed into the Neighborhood Association, which has endured to this day. Lighty resigned both his posts in the spring of 1906, but

he retained his enthusiasm for Ethical Culture. While working in the extension program of the University of Wisconsin in 1911, he submitted to the American Ethical Union a plan for a correspondence bureau to serve residents of cities that had no ethical societies; he proposed to direct the program from Madison. The plan was not adopted.

Roger Baldwin, a teacher of sociology at Washington University and later director of the American Civil Liberties Union, replaced Lighty as director of the Self-Culture program. Baldwin oversaw the institute's transition into the wholly independent Neighborhood Association. Although he was a frequent guest speaker at the Society for decades, he did not serve in the capacity of associate leader.

6: Ethical Momentum - From Experiment to Institution

The Society was anything but cautious in its experiment in ethical religion. The ambitiousness of the Self-Culture Halls Association was reflected in all the community's endeavors, including the formation of study clubs and the presentation of public lectures. Every new, untried idea backed by a few faithful supporters was enacted in the spirit of adventure; while some projects petered out, others were to endure for generations. Before Sheldon's tenure drew to a close, members of the community acquired faith in the institution as well as the man.

Power to the People

In the Society's early years, Sheldon was chief administrator as well as minister and lecturer. He handled most of the Society's financial transactions, including renting and furnishing meeting quarters; he was, reluctantly, the political kingpin, making decisive recommendations for board officers and committee chairmen; he oversaw the Sunday School, even writing the texts that formed the curriculum; and he supervised the Self-Culture program and the Society's other philanthropic ventures. When he was exhausted by these responsibilities, as he often was, he complained only to his "confessional." However, he worried that the concentration of authority in his person placed the Society's future in jeopardy. He wanted members of the Society to recognize the institution as theirs, not his. At the end of the fifth season, he put out a call for greater cooperation and initiative. Asking that the Society "regard itself in a certain degree independent of him and his work," (Fifth Annual Report, 1891, drafted by Paul F. Coste) he handed primary responsibility for administration to the board. He called for an end to the Society's policy of planning its projects only after counting its receipts. Instead, he wanted Society members to dream of long-term endeavors and then dig down deep to fund them. He insisted the board institute a permanent management system so the Society could "feel that it has a root here for all the coming century." (Ibid.) He also asked that committees assume more responsibility, and he assured them their authority would be respected.

This transition of authority was made possible by the emergence of a circle of dedicated laymen who, true to Sheldon's wishes, looked upon the Ethical movement as a personal mission. In practical affairs, Sheldon often turned to Paul F. Coste, who served the Society as treasurer off and on from its inception until his death in 1906, and to Joseph S. Taussig, who began a long stint as secretary in 1889. In the development of the Sunday School, he collaborated with William Brandenburger, director of advertising for Anheuser-Busch Cos., whom he "loved as a younger brother," and, later, Cecelia Boette. (Story of the Life of Jesus for the Young told from an Ethical Standpoint, Walter L. Sheldon, S. Burns Weston, Philadelphia, Second Edition, 1909; note to children by Anna H. Sheldon) But the man to whom he turned for guidance in matters of philosophy and ethical ministry was Robert Moore¹¹, who began a 30-year term as president of the board in 1891 after stints by Tredway, Stevens, and Nagel.¹²

Moore was an engineer and professor of engineering at Washington University; he served for a time as president of the American Society of Civil Engineers. He was a Renaissance man who regarded the reflective life as highly as he did the laws of nature. In his leadership of the engineers' society, he frequently stressed the necessity of broad education and character development. Perhaps his most succinct expression of those values is found in the speech he

¹¹ Sheldon, geographically isolated from the-Eastern Ethical leadership, considered Moore his truest colleague. "Down in my heart," he wrote Moore in a letter, "I have had the feeling as if you and myself were the educational leaders of the society, rather than myself alone, so that I think of you as an associate lecturer for our cause, as well as the president of our society." (Letter from Walter L. Sheldon to Robert Moore, dated May 2, 1899, Ethical Society archives)

¹² Actually, Moore was known as chairman. He was the first to hold that title; just before his election, the executive committee was renamed the board of trustees, and the office of president was renamed chairman. Years later, the office again became known as the presidency.

delivered at the laying of the cornerstone for Cupples Hall No. 2, which housed Washington University's School of Engineering:

The saying that man cannot live by bread alone is nowhere truer than in technical education. Fed on the bread-and-butter studies alone, the mind is narrowed and the soul starved. The lawyer, the physician, the engineer, to reach the highest success even in his own profession must have a broad general knowledge of other things. He must know something of the experience of mankind and its lessons as taught in history; he must know something of what the world's thinkers have thought as taught in philosophy, something of Plato and Aristotle, of Kant and Spencer; he must know what science has revealed concerning the history of the earth and the relation of man to other forms of life. He should be trained not only to think for himself but to enter with full sympathy into the thoughts and feelings of others, into the dreams of the poets and into the moral ideals of the prophets and apostles. In the high society of all who have led or uplifted the world he should feel himself at home ... For the highest success, the professional man needs the widest outlook based upon the broadest culture. (Pamphlet issued by Washington University, dated May 25, 1901)

In addition to his service to the Ethical Society and the engineers' society, Moore served on the St. Louis Board of Education from 1897 to 1913, a period during which it molded an antiquated school system into a national model of excellence. In 1906 and 1910, he served as president. During his tenure on the board, he lobbied for state legislation that substantially upgraded public school facilities; supported compulsory education, the provision of free textbooks, manual training in high schools, and medical supervision; and fought for the establishment of a teachers' college, facilities for special-needs students, and the center for juvenile delinquents that came to be known as Bellefontaine Farms. As in his leadership of the engineers' society, Moore constantly exalted character development. In a report to the board, he noted that excellence in education required teachers who were "qualified not only to train the minds of their pupils, but also to inspire them with the love of that which is noble in character and the desire to serve the community in which they live." (Quoted in address by Edward C. Eliot at the memorial service for Moore at Sheldon Memorial, October 8, 1922. Ethical Society archives.)

Moore's zeal for ethical religion seems to have matched that of Sheldon. In his talks before the membership and conventions of the Union, he hailed the movement as the religion of the future. His handwritten draft of his 1895 report to the membership reveals his depiction of a religion based on spiritual laws that he deemed as real and uncompromising as the physical laws that bind engineers:

No result of the great awakening of the human mind which has characterized the last hundred years has been more marked, nor at first blush more melancholy and disastrous, than the havoc which it has wrought upon all current forms of religious belief. When examined in the clear light of modern scientific criticism, the sacred histories of the nations have been one by one resolved into incoherent masses of unverifiable traditions, and the theological systems which have been erected upon them, in some cases with masterly skill, are left without foundation. Much as we may regret this result -- and to one reared in the old faith, as most of us have been, it is at first, and very naturally, a source of deep disquietude -- there is no help for it. For one who has followed with any care the results of modern historical investigation there can be no returning to his old creed in theology any more than to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy or to the chemistry of the alchemists. The old temples, once overthrown, cannot be rebuilt. But in the midst of this overthrow, which seems at first to leave nothing unshaken, two great facts stand forth immutable, whose importance and significance as we study them continually grow. These are the physical universe, the wonders of which science is just beginning to unfold, and the universe of mind, glimpses of which we catch in the varied powers of our own minds but to the possibilities of which, under other conditions or in other beings, we can set no limit. As we study the outer world, we find it to be animated with ever-unfolding life and governed by unchangeable laws. And turning to the study of man, who combines in one being the properties of both mind and matter, we find the same thing to be true. His life is an orderly development.

Animated by hidden but irresistible forces, it is unfolded to a plan and governed by laws from whose jurisdiction there is no escape. On the physical side, obedience to these laws brings health, beauty and strength of body; on the spiritual side, obedience to the laws which govern in that realm means health, beauty and strength of soul; whilst in either realm disobedience brings in its train disorder, disease and ultimate death.

A recognition of these elemental facts of the moral life, sometimes dimly, sometimes clearly seen, has been the animating principle of all religions worthy of the name, and sustained the souls of the saints and heroes of every age and nation. The only error has been in mistaking their origin and significance. They have been heretofore treated as arbitrary enactments by some power outside the soul itself and made known to man through some supernatural revelation. So that any questioning of the reality of this revelation has been thought to place the moral law itself in question.

A deeper study, however, has made it clear to many in this latter age that the laws which govern man's spiritual nature are a part of the very essence of things and are no more supernatural than are the axioms of mathematics or the laws of number. They are natural as human life and the external world are natural, and divine only as these may partake of the divine nature.

To read these laws as written in the individual consciousness and exemplified in the lives of men and the history of nations, to help each other so far as may be to embody them in our own actions, to teach them above all to the young, to stand in a world infected with moral skepticism as a witness to this deepest and most comprehensive of all faiths, faith in the essential righteousness of the universe, is the mission of [a] society like ours. Surely no work can be more worthy of our best endeavors, none more attractive to one anxious to help bring in the new age of nobler manners and better laws.

Sheldon also had two formal associates in his career. The first, E.N. Plank, was hired in the fall of 1892 as resident superintendent of the Self-Culture program. He lived at the first Self-Culture Hall on Washington Street. Sheldon remained director of the program, but he delegated much of his administrative authority to Plank. Although Plank's title was associate leader of the Ethical Society, his duties apparently were confined to educational outreach. Plank resigned in May 1895 and was succeeded the following October by William H. Lighty. Unlike Plank, Lighty was employed directly by the Self-Culture Halls Association, now an independent corporation. In addition, he served as superintendent of the Ethical Sunday School from 1895 to 1904.

Ironically, though he did not inherit Plank's title of associate leader, he directed several of the Society's in-house educational programs and often presided at Memorial Hall services in Sheldon's absence. Lighty resigned both his posts in the spring of 1906, but he retained his enthusiasm for Ethical Culture. While working in the extension program of the University of Wisconsin in 1911, he submitted to the American Ethical Union a plan for a correspondence bureau to serve residents of cities that had no ethical societies; he proposed to direct the program from Madison. The plan was not adopted. (Roger Baldwin, who replaced Lighty as director of the Self-Culture program, was a frequent guest speaker at the Society for decades but was not a member and did not serve in the capacity of associate leader.)

Besides his formal associates and advisors, Sheldon maintained friendships with two local colleagues in the liberal ministry, Rabbi Samuel Sale of Temple Shaare Emeth and Rev. John Calvin Learned, first pastor of the Church of the Unity. In 1894, Moore eulogized the latter as "a preacher of righteousness and a shining example of a simple, manly, and noble life. ... Though not formally connected with our movement, he was always our hearty co-worker and friend." Sheldon's regard for Learned is underscored by his compilation of a book of excerpts from Learned's writings, which, like Sheldon's, revered conscience as "king of the creeds."

Stooping to Conquer

As the Society grew more stable, its self-consciousness gave way to a broader attentiveness to ethics. Instead of continually defining the Ethical Society, Sheldon turned his attention to social mores and political institutions. Never one for the scientific detachment of the sociologist, Sheldon interpreted history as a series of moral progressions and regressions. In his frequent addresses on American statesmen, for instance, he asked the audience to ponder the moral character of the men and women whose ideals shaped American government. He also spoke on controversial issues such as race relations, the growth of trade unions, and municipal reform.

Sheldon attempted to maintain a balance among addresses on religion, the inner life, social criticism, and literature. A talk on "The Pursuit of Happiness" was followed by one on "The Plays of Ibsen" or "The Meaning of Justice." He had difficulty accepting the mixed receptions with which his addresses were met: Cerebral members appreciated his scholarly style, but he perceived that some members found him stiff. In an 1891 letter to Moore, he expressed his resolve to give his addresses wider appeal:

I have made up my mind that it would be necessary for me to be a little more popular in my methods and subjects Sunday mornings. It is essential that the Society be first built up in point of numbers. You and Mrs. Moore will therefore be a little disappointed in the material that will be given at Memorial Hall this winter. I have during the past years "struck high," but there is a certain need that, without descending morally, I should be willing to "stoop to conquer." Particularly I shall choose subjects that will be interesting to the Germans of the city, as they are the more easily reached at the start. Later on, I hope to reach the American element. But I see plainly that we must first get the Society on its feet in point of numbers. (Letter to Robert Moore, dated Nov. 10, 1891; Ethical Society archives; Western Reserve Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri-St. Louis.)

Ethical leaders regularly toured the circuit of societies. During Sheldon's tenure, frequent visitors included William M. Salter, who alternately served as leader of the Chicago and Philadelphia societies; S. Burns Weston, founding leader of the Philadelphia Society and later a publisher and managing editor of the *International Journal of Ethics*, as well; Stanton Coit, leader of the West London Ethical Society; and John Lovejoy Elliott, of the New York Society. Adler came to speak every year or two. Sheldon also invited academics to address the Society. Among the regulars were Frank Taussig and Josiah Royce of Harvard; and Charles Zeublin, Paul Storey, and J. Laurence Laughlin of the University of Chicago.

Study Clubs

Although the platform service was the centerpiece of the Ethical Society, Sheldon considered it a relatively weak form of intellectual stimulation. He ceaselessly urged Society members to read books on philosophy, religion, ethics, and politics, and he formed study groups to facilitate discussion. Although a man of strong convictions, he often refused to voice his opinions before the groups he moderated; he believed the greatest service he could render was to encourage participants to think for themselves.

Carrying his fascination with character development from the platform to the classroom, Sheldon in 1890 oversaw the formation of the Biography Club, in which young adults read and discussed the lives of exemplary people. The club, which met once a month on a weeknight, initially concentrated on the American founding fathers -- George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Patrick Henry. Participants presented short papers on the subjects' lives and work, and then assessed the ethical development of each man. After its first season, the club elected a more varied reading list. When Lighty took over the group in the 1895-96 season, it began meeting on Sunday mornings, before the platform service, in the Society's rooms at the museum. The following season, Lighty expanded the young adult program with the formation of the Young People's Union. This group, which first met on February 3, 1897, conducted Sunday evening lecture courses and musical and dramatic entertainments. During the off-season, it held poetry readings on Sunday mornings. The club's membership ranged from 75 to 100.

On October 20, 1891, Sheldon conducted the first session of a women's study group called the Greek Ethics Club. In the group's inaugural season, the women met fortnightly on a weekday afternoon for lectures and discussions on Greek thought regarding politics, theology, art and architecture, and women and the family; the authors they read included Sophocles, Euripides, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Homer, and Pericles. In its second year, the club undertook Roman ethics as taught by the Stoics, the Cynics, and the Epicureans. In successive seasons, the women studied the evolution of Western philosophy through the writings of Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Hume, and contemporary writers. The group's discussions were considerably more personal than those of a strictly academic class. Participants weighed ethical theories and dilemmas in light of their own experience. For instance, the study of "Antigone" led to a debate on the rightness of defying laws and customs. Sheldon called it a class in "applied ethics." The Greek Ethics Club, which kept its name even after turning to non-Hellenic literatures, became one of the Society's most popular attractions; attendance averaged 150-200.

Sheldon's experience with the Young Men's Section taught him that men were more interested in current political and business affairs than in abstract ethics. Accordingly, he initiated for them a Political Science Club in the fall of 1892. The men also met fortnightly, but on a weeknight. At times, the group devoted itself to a systematic study of political science based on a reading list drawn up by Sheldon. In the group's first season, Sheldon delivered a series of lectures titled "Outlines of Economics." For the benefit of men who had not attended college, Sheldon also invited professors from Washington University and the University of Missouri to give detailed lecture courses on politics and economics. In addition, local lawyers, businessmen and government representatives shared their

firsthand knowledge of politics. Among the group's guests were St. Louis Mayor Cyrus P. Walbridge; David R. Francis, a former Missouri governor; Charles Nagel, President of the St. Louis City Council and former president of the Society's executive committee; John W. Noble, a Civil War general who had served as secretary of the Interior from 1889 to 1893; and James O. Broadhead, a former U.S. ambassador to Switzerland. In addition to attending lectures, club members debated timely issues in light of the political and economic thought of writers ranging from Aristotle to John Stuart Mill. Discussion topics included: "Slavery: Its Origin and the Service it has Rendered in History"; "War: Its Causes, Basis and Justification"; "The Origin of Private Property"; and "Should Immigration Be Restricted?" The club built up a library on economics and political science and subscribed to periodicals such as *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Attendance averaged about 50 men per meeting. The club did not command as much loyalty as the Greek Ethics Club, but it continued, in one form or another, until 1900.

Sheldon and Moore were greatly encouraged by the success of these study groups. In his report to Society members at the 1894 annual meeting, Moore said that "nothing ... can be more gratifying or more full of promise for the future than the prompt and hearty response with which our appeal to young men and women has been invariably met. The Greek Ethics Club and the Political Science Club ... have been particularly successful, both as to number of members and the quality of the work done, and both bid fair to become permanent ethical schools of the utmost value not only to the members themselves but to the whole community."

The Political Science Club was succeeded by the Men's Philosophical Club, which held its first meeting on January 29, 1900. This club shifted its form and focus several times. Initially, it invited academics from the University of Illinois and the University of Missouri to deliver isolated lectures. For several years, Professor Frank Thilly of the University of Missouri delivered a course of lectures on the history of philosophy. Later, the group conducted a formal class under the direction of Professor A. O. Lovejoy of Washington University. In the 1905-06 season, the club formed a study group in experimental psychology under Professor Edgar J. Swift, also of Washington University. In its later seasons, the club had about 20 active members. Beginning in the fall of 1902, it was augmented by the Men's Discussion Club, whose weekly meetings drew as many as a hundred participants.

For those more interested in *Paradisaeidae* than *Parmenides*, the Nature Study Section was formed in 1902. This club met once a week on a weeknight and had an average attendance of about 150. In addition to holding lectures and classes, the group organized summertime field trips for young people.

Public Lectures

In addition to spawning the Self-Culture Halls Association, the Society sponsored numerous short-term educational programs for the public. Beginning February 5, 1893, it conducted an annual series of four Sunday afternoon lectures on science. For the first two seasons, the lectures were held at the Grand Opera House; in 1895 and 1896, they were held at the Entertainment Hall of the Exposition

Building. In the first two seasons, St. Louis scientists spoke on astronomy, earth science, microbiology, and electrodynamics. In successive series, lectures on birds, fishes, insects, and prehistoric human races were delivered by scientists from the Smithsonian Institution, the American Museum of Natural History, and several Eastern universities. Like the Self-Culture program, these courses were intended primarily for wage earners. Attendance ranged from 600 to 1,000 per lecture. In the first season, tickets for the full series cost 50 cents; about 1,200 were sold.

In later years, the Society broadened the scope of its public lectures. In 1898, the Greek Ethics Club sponsored a series of three lectures on "The Meaning and Scope of Sociology" by Professor Franklin H. Giddings of Columbia University. Held December 29-31, the lectures drew 284 subscribers. The following year, renowned educator John Dewey of the University of Illinois delivered a three-lecture series titled "Child Education." This series, also held under the auspices of the Greek Ethics Club, was conducted December 7-9, 1899, at the Odeon Theatre. To accommodate interested schoolteachers, the lectures were given in the afternoon. In 1901, the Ladies' Auxiliary Committee of the Ethical Society sponsored a three-lecture series on "The Story of the Pentateuch" by Nathaniel Schmidt, a Cornell University professor and associate leader of the New York Ethical Society. This series had been requested by the Greek Ethics Club, which, inspired by Sheldon's Sunday morning series on biblical criticism, had devoted that entire season to study of the Bible. Held February 27-March 1 at the Odeon, each of these lectures drew about 200 people.

In 1903, the Society sponsored an eight-week series of Sunday evening lectures. Professors from the University of Missouri delivered lectures on a variety of topics. Attendance averaged about 100. Shorter Sunday evening courses were held in other years. One season, local clergy delivered a series of talks on their respective religious denominations. One of the most popular offerings of the Ladies' Auxiliary Committee was its 1903 course on "Facts about Health and Sickness," in which local physicians delivered talks and answered health-related questions. Held on five consecutive Tuesday mornings beginning March 3, these presentations each drew 250 to 300 women.

The blockbuster of the Society's lecture offerings was its introductory series on the World's Fair in 1904. Each Tuesday morning from January 26 to February 23, directors of various departments of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition gave illustrated lectures on the exhibits and programs they were planning. An average of 500 people attended each lecture.

In addition to opening its (rented) doors to the public, the Society frequently reached out to the community in the person of its leader. Besides giving more than a dozen lectures a year in the Self-Culture program, Sheldon chaired a branch of the St. Louis Civics Club and frequently addressed such organizations as the Knights of Labor, the Single Tax League, and the Nationalist Club.

A Little Esprit de Corps

In its first decade, the social interaction of Society members was largely limited to participation in educational programs. Sheldon was ill at ease in social settings, and he had no inclination to organize any gathering that might be termed lighthearted. Fortunately, Moore appreciated the value of socializing for its own sake, and he initiated the Society's first strictly social events. On March 4, 1896, he orchestrated an all-Society party at the site of the first free reading rooms. That suite, located above the Union Dairy Company at Jefferson and Washington, had been taken over by the Wednesday Club, an elite women's association that included many Ethical Society members; Martha Fischel was a founding member. At Sheldon's prompting, five women formed a Hospitality Committee to make arrangements. In a letter to Moore regarding these preparations, Sheldon acknowledged that "in this whole matter of a social gathering, if ever there were a fish out of water, I am that fish." (Letter from Walter L. Sheldon to Robert Moore, dated Feb. 20, 1896; Ethical Society archives.) Reflecting his own distaste for parties, he noted he would appeal to several Society members to attend "as an act of personal friendship." He did admit that a successful gathering would "at least start a little esprit de corps such as we have not had before." Moore placed great significance on the party. In his address at the 1896 annual meeting, he reported:

[I]ts complete success in bringing pleasantly together a large number of our members who had before been strangers to each other was to all a delight. It proved that we were in closer sympathy with each other than we knew; and if the hint which it gave as to the duty of holding such meetings at more frequent intervals hereafter be followed out, it will mark the beginning of a new era of good fellowship and mutual helpfulness, the value of which to the members and to the society as a whole it would be hard to overestimate. For what better basis is there for enduring friendship than a common pursuit of high ideals; what more helpful than the fellowship of those with like aims?

And what better work for a society like ours than to give an opportunity for such fellowship and a house for such a brotherhood? (Ibid.)

Brainy Women from Big Cities

Also in 1896, the Society's tenth anniversary, it held its first convention of the Union of Ethical Societies. Billed as an "Ethical Congress," the convention included five public forums. The first of these, "Woman's Influence on Public Affairs," garnered the greatest share of public attention. A newspaper story under the subheading "Gathering of Brainy Women from Five Big Cities" noted that the audience on the morning of April 23 was full of "young women and elderly women and women betwixt and between, but all of them earnest and thoughtful. They represented the intellectual side of woman's life in St. Louis, and in the cities of the Union." ("Ethics Under Discussion," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 23, 1896.) A handful of men also attended the conference. Of the more than 200 people in the audience, only about 25 represented ethical societies.

The keynote speaker was Lydia Avery Coonley, president of the Women's Club of the Chicago Ethical Society and a vocal suffragist. Coonley examined the detrimental effects of sexual inequality and urged her listeners to be

diligent in acquiring political power: "The farmer did not cease to sow his grain because his first planting failed to come up," she said. (Ibid.) Coonley also asserted that winning the vote would not radically change the role of women; they would wield substantial social influence only when they regained some of the monetary control they customarily relinquished when they married, she said. Coonley was followed by Mary H. Wilmarth, also of the Chicago Society. Wilmarth applauded the industriousness of women in starting the Women's Sanitary Commission, which cared for the wounded during the Civil War, and the temperance movement. By participating in efforts such as these, which fell neatly into women's traditional roles, women acquired the savvy needed to expand their sphere of influence, she said. By way of illustration, she noted that politically active women had initiated the drive for highway improvements in Chicago. Wilmarth also urged women to take advantage of their increasing opportunities for higher education. The Rev. William Short, rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, took a conservative stand on the role of women: "Woman is the natural home-maker, and the home is the cradle of civilization," he said. "From her home, woman saw dirty streets. She set about securing clean ones." (Ibid.) The wife of the Rev. J.C. Learned, pastor of the Unitarian Church of the Unity, supported Short in contending that "woman's influence should be felt behind the scenes." (Ibid.) The Post-Dispatch noted that the next speaker at the colloquium, the Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones¹³, head of the People's Church of Chicago and an advocate of women's suffrage, was known, "half-humorously and half-solemnly, [as] the 'moral cyclone of that city.'" ("An Ethical Congress to Assembly in St. Louis," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 29, 1896) Jones championed the provocative position that "women had the ascendancy over men and ... it remained for woman to raise man up from the unwholesome places into which he had fallen." ("Ethics Under Discussion," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 23, 1896.) Ethical Society member Martha Fischel rounded out the symposium with an account of her experience with the women's reform movement in New York and St. Louis. U.S. Labor Commissioner Carroll D. Wright had been slated to deliver a paper on "Woman in Industrial and Mercantile Life," but he apparently did not attend.

The second public forum of the assembly focused on municipal reform. Held the afternoon of Friday, April 24, the meeting was attended primarily by St. Louis lawyers and businessmen. Speakers included Albion Small, head of Chicago University's Department of Social Science, and W.A. Giles, a prominent Chicago businessman. The evening session on "Ethical Views of Life" also was open to the public. That meeting was addressed by William M. Salter, leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society; M.M. Mangasarian, leader of the Chicago Society; and G. Stanley Hall, president of Massachusetts' Clark University.

Along with the conference on women, the big public draw of the assembly was a symposium on "Moral Education in the Schools" held Saturday morning, April 25. Among the educators who addressed the meeting were Hall; F. Louis Soldan, superintendent of the St. Louis Public Schools; J.M. Greenwood, superintendent of the Kansas City Public Schools; and Washington University Chancellor W.L. Chaplin. In his keynote address, Hall urged that children be taught to appreciate -- and even revere -- nature and warned against the early indoctrination of children in religious beliefs. Although a firm theist, Hall held that love of "the creator" should be allowed to arise naturally from a child's sense of wonder at clouds, trees, and flowers. Likewise, he said, moral principles develop as children, through the study of biology, discover "the universal kinship of all living things." ("Moral Teaching in the Schools," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 25, 1896.)

The concluding conference of the assembly on the morning of April 26 also was open to the public but, like the conference on "Ethical Views of Life," it attracted mainly Ethical Society members and delegates. Speakers included Sheldon, Salter, Weston, and Elliott.

In an era marked by burgeoning collectivism in the form of government bureaucracy and labor organizations, Sheldon and Moore intended the Ethical Congress to underscore the value of individual character and moral values. And against the cynicism prompted by widespread political corruption, they held up personal reformation as a vehicle of hope. Moore, reflecting Sheldon's dissatisfaction with calculating social science, said in his welcoming speech that "ethics, or the science of duty, is distinguished from all other sciences by the fact that it deals not only with that which is real but with ideals by which the present reality may be surpassed and urges us to this realization. It is the science which points toward the better. It gives the upward impulse; it is the spirit of evolution; it is the life of all life." (Welcoming speech of Ethical Congress, Robert Moore, handwritten notes dated April 23, 1896, Ethical Society archives) He deemed the success of the congress indicative of a bright future for Ethical Culture:

In number of delegates, in importance of the subjects discussed, the ability with which they were treated and the consequent interest on the part of our own members and the public at large, [the congress] was by general consent the most important gathering of the forces of the Ethical movement which has yet been held, and its effect in

¹³ Jenkin Lloyd Jones was a cousin of architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

deepening the interest of our own members and extending the influence of the ideas for which we stand cannot but be great and lasting. It was a further demonstration, if such were needed, that the times are ripe for an organization of the moral forces and aspirations of men which shall be based not upon history or tradition or any outward authority but upon the living words of reason and conscience as revealed to us today. More and more, men are saying in those early words of Emerson, V/ spoken now sixty years ago, "Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should we grope among the dry bones of the past ...? The sun shines today also.... There are new lands, new men, new thought. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship."

But whilst the number of those who join with us in these words is rapidly growing, we must not shut our eyes to the fact that we are yet a very small minority, and that nothing moves more slowly than the minds and hearts of men; so that for many years all the zeal and faith and patience we can command will be required to uphold and advance the standards under which we have enlisted.
(Minutes of Annual Meeting of the Ethical Society, May 4, 1896)

No Stepping Back

Despite the enthusiasm reflected in the congress, the study clubs, and the Self-Culture program, the Society was financially strapped. The establishment of the working surplus Sheldon had called for was stymied by the severe depression that hit the nation in the 1890s. Humbled by those developments, Moore regularly congratulated the membership on minimizing the Society's debts and maintaining its credit. While attention shifted from progress to solvency, Moore projected substantial growth would follow the depression: "With a larger expenditure we could so greatly improve and extend our work that we do not permit ourselves to doubt that, upon the return of business prosperity, our members and friends will rise to the occasion and place larger resources in the hands of the committee." (Annual report of the Ethical Society for 1893-94; read at the May 14, 1894 annual meeting) The fellowship relied almost solely on contributions; admission fees rarely exceeded the costs of educational programs, and club dues amounted to only a few hundred dollars after expenses.

The Society was not averse to coaxing members with shame and honor. Beginning in the early 1890s, on treasurer Joseph Taussig's initiative, the Society distributed lists showing each member's annual contribution. This list, said Taussig, would "enable members at a glance to see what others are subscribing, and should they find their friends and equals in means in a higher class than themselves, possibly thereby to become induced to raise the amount of their own subscription." (Letter from Joseph Taussig to Robert Moore dated May 19, 1892, Ethical Society archives) A finance committee was responsible for soliciting and collecting members' pledges, but its members generally served reluctantly and without enthusiasm; when impending debts spurred panic, the committee habitually asked a handful of reliable members to close the gap. Giving patterns were grossly lopsided: Of the \$5,355 contributed in 1895, \$1,755 came from 199 members who gave from \$1 to \$50; the remaining \$3,600 was given by 23 members who contributed from \$50 to \$500. In an effort to even the burden, Sheldon regularly invited visitors to become members and pressed members to meet their pledges. The Society also looked to civic-minded non-members, distributing solicitation tracts warning that deficient funding threatened the Society's community programs. To encourage regular giving by non-members, the executive team of Moore, Coste, and Joseph Taussig started a program called the Envelope Fund. Begun in 1898, this initiative provided contributors with numbered envelopes to be deposited weekly at Memorial Hall; the offering in each coded envelope was credited to the sum promised by the corresponding contributor. This system allowed non-member contributors to make the equivalent of a yearly pledge without committing themselves to formal membership.

In the Society's first 20 years, its annual receipts rose haltingly from \$2,400 to nearly \$6,400. Expenses exceeded receipts in eight fiscal years in that period, though all but two of those deficits were covered by carryovers from preceding years. The depressed economy, erratic Sunday collections, and reliance on one-year pledges that often went unfulfilled discouraged the board of trustees from initiating long-term projects. To offset that uncertainty, a small group of Society members in 1896 signed three-year pledges totaling \$1,600. Because the signers -- who included Moore, Nagel, J.W. Morton, and Adolphus Busch -- had been reliable contributors for years, the promise added little to the board's confidence.

Sheldon was particularly disturbed by the Society's precarious finances. He envied the permanent facilities of sister societies and was frustrated by the fellowship's inability to commit itself to buying quarters of its own. The situation improved in the fall of 1895, when Sheldon succeeded in securing the museum's western basement room for the Society's exclusive use. The quarters were still cramped, however, and in 1897 Sheldon asked members and friends of the Society to contribute \$5-25 a year beyond their regular subscriptions to help fund a proposed museum

addition which would provide permanent space for the Society. In the ensuing year, less than \$400 was contributed to the fund -hardly enough to influence the museum's board of control.

Sheldon's patience ran out in November 1898 when the board decided on a policy of retrenchment. Harried by encroaching debts and the deaths of several major contributors, the board decided to sharply reduce funds for printing, visiting lecturers, and professional music -- the Society's costliest non-essential expenses. A newspaper account referred to these areas as "the favorite departments of Prof. Sheldon," (St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Dec. 11, 1898) but it is difficult to imagine alternative cuts that would have met with his liking. In the 1898-99 budget, after the lecturer's salary of \$3,000 and rental fees of \$1,000, the largest single expenditure was \$461 for the Sunday School -Sheldon's dearest love. Sheldon simply would brook no retrenchment. On Sunday, November 27, a few weeks after the board meeting, Sheldon announced from the platform that he intended to resign at the end of the season. In a statement published in the Globe-Democrat the next day, he laid his decision entirely to the Society's finances:

It is true that I contemplate resigning, but I have not resigned. The talk to that effect grew out of an announcement which I made yesterday morning. I thought that it was best to prepare my people for action in that direction. I will probably leave the city in May or June, and did not wish to leave without preparing my people for action in that direction. It is not true that I have already resigned. To resign I will have to go before the board of directors and tender my resignation. No such action has been taken by me as yet. I could not resign to the congregation attending the services Sunday morning. I could only indicate to them my intention of doing so.

The reason I have for wishing to resign is that the society has decided upon a policy of retrenchment in some directions, and I have felt that such a policy could best be carried out by a new man. The movement will not be affected in any way by my action. It will go right ahead as before, except that a new man will be at the head of the movement. There has been a constant deficit which the society has had to face each year, and I have been expecting the action taken by the directors for some time. The directors felt that, in view of this deficit, it could do nothing less than retrench in some particulars. As the action has been expected by me for some time, I did not have to consider long, and that is the reason why I acted so promptly on the matter.
(Globe-Democrat, November 29, 1898)

Paraphrasing Sheldon more bluntly, the newspaper reported that "he took the stand ... that he had had a hand in the building up of the society, and he did not propose at this time to be a party to tearing it down." (Ibid.)

The announcement stunned the membership. Sheldon's contention that "the movement will not be affected" by his departure convinced no one: Despite his protests to the contrary, to many members Sheldon was the Ethical Society, and his departure would portend dissolution. Moore called an emergency meeting of the membership on December 8 to address the crisis. Sheldon had asked that the meeting be held before December 11, when he planned to follow the platform service with an informal social hour; if the emergency meeting were not held before that date, he feared talk of his departure would dominate conversation and mar the spirit of the affair. In his suggestions to Moore regarding the membership meeting, he reiterated his wish that the members concentrate on the preservation of the Society without regard to his presence:

[It would] be well to summon [the meeting] without any reference to finances but just with the announcement that such a meeting was necessary in order to make plans for the future of the Society in consideration of the announcement I had made with regard to the step contemplated by me at the end of the season. What our members need to feel is that they and not myself constitute the Ethical Society; that they and I together have been supporting a common cause and that it is their Society rather than mine. It is important that there should be another tie between our members than the indirect tie through my personality. This has been a serious misfortune on our Society here in St. Louis. A good many of them have felt that they were helping me in the cause rather than helping their own cause itself. They ought to feel therefore that it is their cause which is at stake now and disconnect it from my presence or absence with it. It would be a great deal better if they would look upon me as the one who had been their lecturer for the time being, while the Society was theirs as a movement which they had to carry on and keep a going [sic] for generations to come. I think you and I both feel that we should like to believe that the Ethical Society in St. Louis would be in existence 100 years from now....

I believe that it would be worthwhile for the Executive Committee to say outright at such a meeting, bold and explicitly, that the financial side of the Society had broken down, so that the members shall fully realize the whole situation and not feel that they could tide it over just by raising enough money to pay for the [lecturers'] Exchanges this year. I am simply trying to think out a way ... by which those who belong to the Society may feel in every possible way that it is their cause rather than just mine; that it is a cause which ought to be able to go on independent of me.... To you and me, this cause is a religion. (Letter from Walter L. Sheldon to Robert Moore dated Dec. 2, 1898; Ethical Society archives)

Those attending the meeting promised to contribute a total of \$700 above their standing pledges, and members who could not attend sent in promises of several hundred more. In addition, a committee consisting of Leo Levis, Louis Bry, Julius Seidel, F.A. Bayer, and Cornelius Skinner was formed to solicit more three-year pledges. In the pledge appeal circulated in January, members were told the Society needed a guaranteed income of at least \$6,000 a year. However, the current year's pledges, minus those of major contributors who recently had died, provided a guarantee of less than \$4,500. Of that year's 265 pledges, 60 were for amounts less than \$5, and 143 were for amounts from \$5 to \$10. At the same time, the Society spent about \$21 per capita. The appeal asked members to carry their fair share of expenses and to sign multiple-year pledges, thus providing the stability Sheldon demanded. Coste slated another meeting for February 23, 1899, to "determine what kind of an assurance the [Executive] Committee may be able to give [Sheldon], with a view towards convincing him of the Society's financial ability to go on without yielding any of the ground which has been gained." (Letter from Paul F. Coste to Robert Moore dated Feb. 20, 1899; Ethical Society archives) By March, Moore was able to report to the membership that the crisis had been averted:

[Y]ou have been informed of the fact that in consequence of the loss by death of several of our most valued friends and supporters, the finances of the society had reached a crisis which threatened a restriction of its activity, and the possible loss of our leader. In view of these dangers, the committee appealed to every member and well-wisher to aid in averting results so disastrous to the Society and to the cause of a purely ethical religion.

To this appeal the response has been so general and so earnest that the Committee are able to report to you that the difficulties which threatened us, have been so far overcome, that they feel assured that the Society will be able to go forward without retrenchment and with no change of leadership.

This, however, does not mean that everything necessary to secure our future has yet been accomplished. It means rather, that with a continuation of the interest and activity recently manifested by our members, and particularly by our young people, whatever is necessary can be accomplished. It means that the permanent establishment of the Ethical Society in St. Louis as a home for the highest truth, both old and new, and a fountain of good influences for the whole community, is within our power, and that your Committee believe it will be attained. Resting upon this assurance which we have given him, Mr. Sheldon now sees his way open to go forward as our Leader, with enlarged plans for an aggressive campaign. It remains for us to justify his faith.

Whilst, therefore, we wish to sound the note of hope and confidence, it is only to call you to renewed activity. Though the Society is stronger today than ever before, we must not forget that to live, we must grow, and what we have done, must be counted as but the beginning of what we hope to do. (Statement read Sunday morning, March 5, 1899, by Robert Moore; reprinted in *Globe-Democrat* March 6, 1899)

Despite Sheldon's public pronouncements, it is doubtful that the Society's finances were his only reason for contemplating resigning. The despair and vocational doubt he revealed in his journal, coupled with the relative financial freedom he attained through his marriage, may have prompted him to consider another career path; he probably feared that the Society's financial woes reflected a lack of charisma on his part. At the time Sheldon forced the issue at the Ethical Society, the Rev. John Snyder, a colleague of Sheldon's in the liberal ministry, was under fire for failing to increase attendance at the Unitarian Church of the Messiah. The drop-off in that congregation's revenues was so great, and so widely attributed to Snyder's pastorate, that he was forced to resign in January 1899 after occupying the pulpit for 26 years. The Ethical Society, by comparison, was growing -- its membership numbered about 300 at the turn of the century -- but contributions had not kept pace with the head count. If Sheldon worried that he, like Snyder, was held responsible for the fellowship's poor financial health, the strong response to his threat gave him the approbation he sought.

However, as he had feared, the rise in contributions was short-lived. In the 1899-1900 fiscal year, Sheldon won most of the assurances he had sought, including funds for decorating and furnishing a room that was to serve as a fellowship parlor; fees for retaining William Henry Pommer, the most capable of the Society's choral directors, as well as a professional string quartet; and increased expenditures for study-club teachers, newspaper advertising, and the printing of lecture extracts. In addition, the Society agreed to pay half the salary of an educational assistant to serve under Sheldon in both the Ethical Society and the Self-Culture Halls Association. But contributions dropped the following season, and the Society ended the 1900-1901 fiscal year with a small deficit. Again, the deaths of early stalwarts accounted for most of the loss. The surplus that had been raised in response to Sheldon's threat more than covered the debt, but the drop-off indicated that the year-to-year struggle for survival would continue. To ease the threat of deficits, the board set up an Emergency Fund. In 1905, Moore and Joseph Taussig gave the fund a tremendous boost by donating \$5,500 in U.S. Steel Corporation bonds which bore 5 percent interest.

The End of the Beginning

The first years of the century saw a marked increase in membership. By the end of the 1902-03 season, the membership mark topped 360. Moore credited the Society's younger members with bringing in most of the newcomers; he found in that increase "evidence of vitality and recuperative power that is of great promise for the future." [Annual Report of the Chairman and Treasurer, fiscal year 1902-1903, archives] The rise in membership kept the Society in the neighborhood of solvency, but the substantive improvements Sheldon had envisioned -- a permanent building, additional full-time associate leaders, and a broad expansion of the Society's community services -- were not to be realized in his lifetime.

Its modest growth notwithstanding, the Ethical Society of St. Louis had become a remarkable success. The fellowship overcame the inevitable misgivings of a conservative community by providing an arena for free thought. The Self-Culture Halls and the Society's lectures and study groups earned the fellowship a widespread reputation for progressive intellectualism. The Society's Sunday School, its most concerted experiment in ethical education, offered a unique alternative to sectarian religious instruction. In short, the fellowship lived up to its name by helping men, women, and children learn to cultivate "the good life." In a rare display of gregariousness, Sheldon arranged a celebration of those successes on May 5, 1906, the close of the Society's twentieth year. The celebration consisted of a few addresses in Memorial Hall followed by a reception in the art gallery. Moore presented an overview of the Society's history, and representatives of the Women's Auxiliary and Greek Ethics Club briefly addressed the fellowship. To speak for the younger members of the Society, Sheldon called on Ernst B. Filsinger, a board member and international trader.¹⁴ In preparing for the event, Sheldon pleaded with Moore not to focus attention on him:

[T]here is one particular favor I beg for most beseechingly and that is that in all the exercises, there may be as little reference as possible to me or my name. I should wish this for my own feeling's sake and also as a matter of principle. We should take the occasion to make the members feel that they personally constitute the Ethical Society and that the lecturer is simply an officer of it for the time being, while the real future of it is in their hands. On the other hand, any strong personal word with regard to myself would only distress me. Such a meeting as I witnessed in New York in connection with the anniversary there, would have given me the blues or made me sick for months after, if I had in any [way] been the center of it. Whatever regard or good will may be felt for the lecturer should be taken for granted and ... not [be] voiced on such an occasion. The key note should be rather "our" Society, "our" care for it, "our" hopes for its future.

Sheldon's words were unknowingly prophetic: The anniversary celebration marked the last time he would mingle with the community in good health. Shortly afterward, he embarked on a seven-week tour of Japan that ended in his incapacitating illness. Upon his return to the States, he initially went to his summer home in Vermont. He later decided to return to St. Louis, whether to work or to die. During the 1906-07 season, though confined to his sick room, he continued to oversee the work of the Society, choosing visiting lecturers, selecting platform readings, and advising board members. According to Moore, "Those who visited him during these weary months found him always cheerful, always interested in what others were doing, with almost nothing to say about himself. So that such a visit, however saddening, was even more inspiring. For one could hardly fail to catch something of the faith which animated and sustained him -- a deep and abiding faith in the ultimate triumph of the true over the false, of the better

¹⁴ Filsinger was fated for adverse notoriety via his stormy marriage to St. Louis poet Sara Teasdale. The wedding was performed by Percival Chubb, the second leader of the Society. Teasdale left Filsinger before committing suicide.

over the worse." Sheldon yearned to address the community one more time. On May 5, the closing Sunday of the season, he managed to sit on the platform during Adler's address and then read "in clear, strong voice" (Annual Report of the Ethical Society for the 1906-07 season) the closing words of the service a poem by William James Linton that served as his parting words of encouragement:

Be patient, O be patient, go and watch
the wheat ears grow
So imperceptibly that ye can mark
nor change nor throe;
Day after day, day after day till the ear
is fully grown,
And then again day after day till the
ripened field is brown.

Sheldon died on June 5. The memorial service on October 12, a Saturday, was the first fellowship meeting of the new season. Moore presided over the service, which included tributes by Adler, the Rev. George R. Dodson, successor to Sheldon's friend J. C. Learned as pastor of the Church of the Unity; Rev. Samuel Sale of Temple Shaare Emeth, the rabbi who taught Sheldon Hebrew; Professor M. Anesaki, a member of the Tokyo ethical club that had sponsored his tour of Japan; Dr. William Taussig, longtime president of the Self-Culture Halls Association; William A. Brandenburger, a board member who grew up in the Society and who recently had become superintendent of the Sunday School; and Fanny M. Bacon, principal of the Marquette School and a participant in the Greek Ethics Club. In his report to the membership for the 1906-07 season, Moore set out the buoy that was to guide the Society during its only leaderless era:

The year has, indeed, been a very anxious and critical one. But the Society has borne the test in a manner that is full of hope for the future. The additional funds necessary to meet our increased expenses have been promptly and willingly contributed; the attendance upon the Sunday morning lectures has been undiminished; and above all our Sunday School, thanks to the admirable organization perfected by Mr. Sheldon and to the unwearied and unselfish labors of the Superintendent and the teachers, has more than held its own. So that today the Society is more united and stronger than ever before.

During the next year we shall greatly miss the presence of our Leader, but the memory of his life and work will remain with us as a continual inspiration; and we cannot suppress the hope, which with him was a conviction, that each year will find us stronger, and that for years to come the Society will continue as a source of strength to its members and a living witness for all that is best in life and character. (Annual Report of the Ethical Society for the 1906-07 season)

The Second Era: 1907-1933

7: A Place to Call Home

Need for a permanent building

Sheldon's death required the lay members of the community to do what he had wanted them to do -- take charge. For four years, Robert Moore and other members of the executive committee ran the Ethical Society without benefit of a formal leader. The Program Committee brought in platform speakers, and other committees tended to social programs and adult education. Cecilia Boette, a Sheldon protege, took the reins of the Sunday School. Sustained attendance at Platform meetings and in the Sunday School allayed fears of disorganization and dissolution. Contributions dropped off, and study clubs grew less active, but those setbacks were expected consequences of the loss of leadership. In time, panic gave way to sober, plodding labor. This period marks the maturation of the community; members who had looked to Sheldon as their father and guide now exerted the initiative he had instilled in them.

As the community's family feeling grew stronger, more and more members adopted Sheldon's dream of building a permanent home. The New York Society was proceeding with its plans to build a school and meeting house on its property on Central Park West, and the West London Society was preparing to acquire a church building. The Ethical movement was becoming an established force in religious life, and St. Louisans wanted to share in this new phase of growth.

Ironically, the World's Fair, which had so captivated Sheldon and the community, indirectly forced the executive committee to think more concretely about finding a long-term home. In 1905, Halsey C. Ives, director of the St. Louis Museum and School of Fine Arts, had announced plans to sell the museum building at 19th Street and Lucas Place and move the collection into the Forest Park structure that had served as the Palace of Fine Arts during the fair. As those plans progressed, the Ethical Society's tenancy became precarious. In 1908, the executive committee began negotiating with Temple Shaare Emmeth, Rabbi Sale's congregation, for use of its building at 620 Washington Ave. on Sundays. The talks hit a snag when the congregation refused to change the schedule of its Sunday School to permit the Ethical Sunday School to use classroom facilities before the platform service. Temple representatives suggested the Society conduct its Sunday School in the afternoon, a move that Moore said, "would probably disband the school." (Letter from Robert Moore to Temple Shaare Emeth, dated June 30, 1908, archives) The executive committee, anxious to secure adequate quarters in a central location, raised its offer from \$1,500 a year to \$2,000 -- twice what the Society had paid for the use of Memorial Hall. Noting that the offer "goes to the very limit of our resources, and possibly even beyond the limit of prudence and safety," (Ibid.) Moore pleaded with the congregation to reconsider. It did not, and the Society contracted with Memorial Hall for another year.

Society members agreed that buying or building a structure would be a preferable solution, but the -community's finances indicated that that dream was many years away. In the year following Sheldon's death, pledge contributions dropped nearly a thousand dollars to \$4,917. That figure was augmented by Sunday collections, interest on bonds, a donation from the Greek Ethics Club, and a fund-raising entertainment put on by the Sunday School, but total receipts still lagged behind previous years. The termination of Sheldon's salary, which had been the largest single budget item at \$3,200, offered some budgetary relief, but the Society paid out nearly that much in the 1907-08 season for guest lecturers and a \$1,200 stipend for Sheldon's widow, Anna Hartshorne Sheldon. As the old habit of dodging deficits continued, constructing a building seemed far beyond the Society's means. Most members agreed that only substantial membership growth could provide the funding needed for a permanent home.

A Generous Challenge

Anna Sheldon was not a party to that pessimism. She believed that the members and friends of the Society had the necessary funds, and that all that was needed to make the dream a reality was a sharp impetus. In March 1909, she provided that impetus by offering to donate \$37,000 [equivalent to about \$1.2 million in 2021] toward the erection of a building. The offer was made on two conditions: The Society had to acquire a suitable lot with separate funds, and it had to secure enough pledges to complete the estimated cost of the building. To ensure swift action, Anna Sheldon said the offer would be open only until Nov. 1, 1909. The executive committee lost no time in responding to her challenge. Moore, Rudolph Schmitz, and Joseph Taussig formed a Site Committee, and a Ways and Means Committee consisting of George Durant, Jesse Williams, and Ernst Filsinger began drumming up funds.

In a report delivered to Moore at the end of March, the Ways and Means Committee estimated the total cost of the lot, building, and furnishings at \$90,000. Subtracting Anna Sheldon's gift, the committee set its goal at \$53,000. The executive committee officially lowered the total estimate to \$75,000, presumably to make the terms of the gift more nearly attainable, but it left the goal at \$50,000. In a flyer sent to members in April, the executive committee noted that the goal was about ten times the amount received yearly in pledges. Acknowledging that few members would be able to contribute ten times their yearly pledge, the committee called on members of means to give at an even higher rate. Pledges were to be paid in three installments -- the first on the call of the executive committee, and the balance in equal payments one year and two years after the date of the first call. By tying its actions to pledges instead of cash, the committee hoped to begin construction within a year.

At that time, the Society had about 400 members. Of that number, about 50 provided two-thirds of the Society's income. Acting on the assumption that the same core would contribute the lion's share of the building fund, the Ways and Means Committee called for a membership meeting at which the largest pledges could be announced. The hope was that a healthy start would inspire all members to contribute to the fund. At that meeting, held April 9, members pledged a total of \$10,350. The need for extensive fund-raising being evident, Moore appointed a Building Fund Committee to take over the work of the provisional Ways and Means Committee. The larger committee was made up of Moore, Schmitz, Durant, Filsinger, William Brandenburger, C.W. Staudinger, W.E. Fischel, Fred J. Herzog, O.L. Teichman, George Levis, Herbert Morrissey, Mrs. R.M. Noonan, Bertha Buddecke, Mrs. J.H. Amerland, and Joseph Dormitzer. By the next membership meeting on April 29, this committee had succeeded in matching the first round of pledges. The total pledged, including Anna Sheldon's gift, came to \$57,425. The biggest contributors were Moore and his wife, who gave \$3,000; longtime contributor William Morton, \$2,000; and Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Schmitz, Dr. and Mrs. W.E. Fischel, William Brandenburger, and Mr. and Mrs. George O. Carpenter, each of whom pledged \$1,000. About 20 individuals and couples gave amounts ranging from \$200 to \$600. An update released a few weeks later listed pledges of \$1,000 from Adolphus Busch, a longtime business associate of Brandenburger's, and \$250 from August A. Busch. Boette passed along \$15 contributed by five Sunday School students and \$100 from a charitable fund to which students had been contributing for 10 years. The Young Women's Self-Culture Club, though independent from the Ethical Society, contributed \$25.

Even as the pledges were being counted, the need for a permanent home was becoming more urgent. The Palace of Fine Arts and the collection it housed were dedicated to the city in 1909, and the collection housed at Memorial Hall was moved to the new structure. The St. Louis School of Fine Arts, which belonged to Washington University, was preparing to join in the move to the new campus on the city's western boundary. The Society was assured it could retain use of the museum building during the 1909-10 season, but it was put on notice that its lease would be nullified as soon as the building was sold. Solicitors, holding up the specter of eviction, implored Society members to help erect a new building for the start of the 1910-11 season -- a dream even they must have recognized as impossible.

By June, a total of \$67,000 had been pledged. Contributions continued to trickle in over the summer, and by the start of the new season the Society was only \$2,700 short of its official goal. The executive committee closed the gap by pledging that amount from the general fund. Anna Sheldon's gift now was assured, but the executive committee called for an additional \$15,000-\$25,000 to ensure that the building would be first-rate. In September, the executive committee called in the first round of pledge payments. Because Anna Sheldon's gift could be used only for the building, the Site Committee could not negotiate for real estate until a substantial portion of contributors made their payments.

The Site Committee concentrated its search on Washington Avenue and Lindell Boulevard between Grand and Spring avenues. It settled on a lot on Lindell near Spring, but its best offer was refused. It then negotiated for a lot on Lindell just east of the St. Louis Club -- the site later occupied by the American Auto Association of Missouri -- but its offer of \$25,000 cash again was turned down. Finally, in January 1910, the Society bought a site on the south side of Washington just west of Grand. The lot then consisted of two rental properties designated as 3646 and 3650 Washington; the compromise address was 3648. The Society paid \$25,000 for the property. First-round pledge payments covered the \$1,000 paid up-front and the \$12,000 that came due upon the execution of the deed, but according to the terms agreed upon, Anna Sheldon would not release her gift until the lot was paid off. However, not wishing to postpone construction by insisting on literal compliance with her terms, she agreed to take up the \$12,000 deed and advance \$20,000 for the start-up of construction; these payments were to be considered part of the gift she originally pledged. Again, she tendered the offer conditionally: She was to select the architect, and the executive committee was to pass a resolution restricting the use of the building's auditorium to "spiritual, literary, scientific and educational purposes, to the exclusion ... of dramatic or similar entertainments or performances." The

executive committee agreed to those conditions. (Fortunately for the Society's future standing in the arts, the resolution permitted "the rendition of sacred and classical music and the like.")

Building a Worthy Temple

Anna Sheldon chose as the architect Louis Clemens Spiering, a native St. Louisan who had studied at l'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Spiering had helped design structures for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition; he had served as a staff designer for the fair for a year and a half and had been the supervising architect for the French and Austrian governments. He later had served as a consulting architect for the Missouri Capitol. Among his other accomplishments were Stephens College in Columbia, the Soulard branch of the St. Louis Public Library, and a number of Central West End residences. From 1903 to 1910, he taught in the School of Architecture at Washington University. Unfortunately, Spiering became ill after beginning work on the Sheldon Memorial. His illness postponed the start of construction. He died in March 1912, just a few months before the project was completed. William B. Ittner was hired to supervise the completion of the building. Spiering had worked for a commission of 5 percent of the total building cost; Ittner's wages were deducted from the fees Spiering had yet to collect, and Spiering's mother, mindful of her son's passion for his last project, donated the remainder to the Society to be used in cultivating a garden.

With Anna Sheldon's gift in hand, Moore appointed a Building Committee to oversee the design and construction of the building. Moore was chairman ex officio; the other members were William Brandenburger, Charles W. Staudinger, Rudolph Schmitz, and Fred J. Herzog. In June, Spiering distributed his preliminary plans to construction bidders and Building Committee members. He based the exterior of the building on a classic Greek design, with two-story columns and a facade of Bedford stone. The spacious, two-story auditorium, the heart of the structure, would be encased in a steel skeleton. An assembly room would be situated above the auditorium. Two flights of stairs would connect the ground-floor vestibule with the auditorium balcony and the landing that led to the assembly room. On the first floor, behind the auditorium, would be the leader's study, a committee room, and a library large enough to accommodate 6,000 books. On the second floor, the rear of the building would be occupied by two study rooms and a large conference room. The assembly room on the top floor would accommodate about 500 people and would include a stage, dressing rooms, restrooms, a kitchen, and a storeroom. Classroom alcoves would line the seating area.

Fund-raising efforts continued in 1910. Most of the new pledges came in small amounts from first-time contributors, but some of the largest contributors increased their subscriptions still more. Moore raised his pledge by \$1,000, Rudolph Schmitz by \$2,000. The Women's Conference, successor to the Women's Auxiliary, conducted benefit dinners. The Society also asked the community at large to contribute to the cause. Local publisher William Marion Reedy wrote an editorial in *The Mirror*, an international literary magazine, calling on "St. Louisans of advanced tendencies" to "emulate their orthodox fellow citizens ... by coming to the support of the project ... All who strive for social justice can and should help to build for it here a worthy temple..." [*The Mirror*, June 16, 1910]

Even before the construction bids were in, executive committee members realized the cost estimates they had used to fulfill Anna Sheldon's challenge -- \$25,000 for the lot, \$50,000 for building and furnishings -- were much too conservative. When treasurer Joseph Taussig expressed his anxiety over the looming debt, secretary Fred J. Herzog responded with worldly calm: "There is not doubt [sic] that the cost of the building will exceed our subscriptions, but almost every institution or business must have some kind of debt or else they don't seem to be healthy, and if we were to be able to pay for our building outright without any debts hanging over us, I think we would feel too comfortable for the next two or three years." (Letter from Fred J. Herzog to Joseph Taussig, dated March 17, 1910; Ethical Society archives) When the bids were opened in August, the committee's fears were confirmed. The lowest bid for general contracting was \$75,771; six other bids ranged from \$80,666 to 89,990. The lowest possible total, using the low general-contracting bid and including the lowest bids for electrical work and heating and ventilation, plus the costs of fixtures, seats, decorations, organ, and the architect's fee, came to \$105,780 -- more than twice the executive committee's estimate. The committee rejected all bids, and Spiering began modifying his plans. He estimated his revised plans, including the substitution of a cheaper heating system, would bring the total cost down to around \$84,000.

In the fall, the executive committee issued the second call on pledges and urged another round of fresh giving. Most contributors honored their pledges, bringing the building fund up to about \$30,000, but the call for still more money went largely unanswered. Despite that disappointment, the committee decided to begin construction with available

funds. Committee members privately banked on the belief that once the structure was begun, Society members would be compelled to see it through to completion, if only to spare themselves embarrassment.

On April 1, 1911, the Building Committee contracted with J.W. Wilson & Son and the other low bidders in the second round of bidding. The cornerstone of the building was laid on the morning of July 12. Present were executive committee members Moore, Brandenburger, Herzog, Rudolph Schmitz, Otto Teichman and George Levis. In a steel box set beneath the cornerstone, Brandenburger placed Sheldon's ashes and that day's editions of the *Globe-Democrat* and the *St. Louis Republic*.

In the fall, the executive committee reported that expenses already incurred or contracted for amounted to just under \$80,000. Existing pledges nearly matched that figure, but another \$35,000-\$50,000 would be needed to complete the building. As the available cash disappeared, the committee decided against its plan to let the project fall idle. Instead, it began shopping for loans. With the membership's approval, it borrowed \$40,000 from A.G. Edwards & Sons at 5 percent interest. The loan was made in the form of a bond issue. The final price tag for the project -- including the costs of the lot and building, fees for architects and engineers, loan costs, insurance, landscaping, and seating, -- was \$120,000. The final pledge total was \$82,848, but actual receipts fell a few thousand dollars short of that. Since the first year's interest on the loan was paid out of the building fund, still more cash was needed for the finishing touches. The final fund-raising campaign, in 1912, solicited gifts of specific furnishings and decorations. The costliest memorial gift was the organ, which was donated by secretary Fred J. Herzog and his aunts and uncles in memory of his mother, Carrie R. Herzog. Herzog selected the organ, which was built by George Kilgan & Son and modeled after that used by the Second Baptist Church; it was amplified by an experimental tone chest which, in later years, defied repair.

Ethical Society members got their first chance to inspect the building at a music recital and reception held there in September 1912. The crowd of 300 strolled through the auditorium, climbed the elegant staircases to the assembly room, and poked into the alcoves and club rooms that they soon would occupy. An acoustics expert had been hired to advise Spiering on the design of the auditorium, and members were anxious to test his success. On the consultant's advice, the seating area had been built to slope toward the speaker's platform, which jutted into the hall, and a two-foot pocket of air was left between the floorboards and the foundation to facilitate the reverberation of sound; the balcony was made concave -- at the cost of additional seating -- so it would absorb sound rather than deflecting it back into the auditorium. According to an article in the *Globe-Democrat*, a test of the acoustics proved satisfying: "Addresses were plainly audible throughout the building, and the most delicate tone shading in selections by the Waechtler Quintet could be heard in every part of the auditorium." (*Globe-Democrat*, September 13, 1912) In his greeting, Moore commended the community for completing the structure and expressed his hopes for the progress it made possible. "It now is our ambition and hope to make this home of ours the center of the best and noblest thoughts of the community," he said. "We want Sheldon Memorial Building to be recognized for the influences for good which radiate from it. Here should be the focus of the spread of intelligence in St. Louis." (*Ibid.*)

Once the building was completed, attention turned to payment of the Society's debt. In addition to the yearly interest charge of \$2,000, the community would have to pay off \$3,000 of the principal each year beginning in 1914. In the spring of 1913, the executive committee sold a \$ 1,000 bond held in the Emergency Fund to help make the interest payment. As a more permanent method of meeting the debt, executive committee member Otto Teichman proposed the establishment of a redemption fund. Teichman opened the fund by donating two \$500 bonds. Moore, Herzog, and Levis formed a committee to administer the fund.

The most extravagant fund-raiser in the whole campaign was a three-day "Bazaar of the Nations" held November 6-8, 1913, at Sheldon Memorial. The event featured music, entertainment, exotic food, and a flea market. Sale booths were decorated with the traditional ornaments of seven nations. Lighthearted plays showcased Ethical Society talent, and the Young People's Association presented "vaudeville that is at once charming and free from all objectionable things on the score of vulgarity." (flyer, Ethical Society archives] Dozens of students and amateur musicians took part in performances of classical and popular music. For the children, the bazaar featured story-telling, Punch V Judy shows, and carnival games. Organizers called on all hands to participate in the event: Those who could not act or sing were commissioned to cook, donate goods, or wait on tables. The bazaar was such a success, financially as well as socially, that it became a regular event on the Ethical Society calendar.

Love and Leadership

While preparations for the Sheldon Memorial were under way, the executive committee also was charged with replacing its namesake. Given that Sheldon was widely regarded as a departed father, choosing a new leader was a touchy matter. Some members wanted a leader who, like Sheldon, would lecture regularly and devote himself to the Society's educational programs. Others, pleased with the variety of speakers they had been exposed to since Sheldon took ill, wanted a more administrative leader who would continue presenting that variety. Moore first asked Adler about possible replacements in January 1907, when Sheldon's death was inevitable, but the search did not begin in earnest until the following year. While the search was under way, Moore and Anna Sheldon filled the ceremonial role of the leader. Anna Sheldon was paid a stipend of \$1,200 in the 1907-08 season, but it is unclear what duties she performed. She also was allotted \$250 a year for a "young lady assistant." She was paid \$800 for her services in the 1908-09 season, but she later returned the money.

During these years, virtually every leader in the Ethical movement addressed the Society, some for two or three consecutive Sundays. The membership took the opportunity to assess the qualifications of these people, and one or another's fitness for the full-time post was a frequent topic of discussion. In 1908, the Society offered the position to Alfred W. Martin, a member of New York's seven-person leadership team. Martin, a Harvard Divinity School graduate and former Unitarian minister, had made a powerful impression on the membership, but he preferred to remain in the East. John Lovejoy Elliott, Adler's endeared assistant and director of the Hudson Guild settlement program, also was asked to consider the post. Elliott, a native of Illinois, found the proposal appealing, but Hudson Guild was in debt and heavily dependent on him. However, he said the offer, though tentative, had "perhaps brought me the greatest satisfaction and one of the greatest trials of my life; satisfaction in that you thought I was in any way fitted to undertake such work, and a trial that I must say that even if such an offer were made me I should be obliged to decline it." (Letter from John Lovejoy Elliott, apparently written to Jesse Williams, dated Nov. 4, 1908; Ethical Society archives) The executive committee also considered offering the post to the Rev. George Rowland Dodson, pastor of the Unitarian Church of the Unity and a frequent guest speaker at the Society. Anna Garlin Spencer, the only woman on the New York team, apparently was not considered for the job. In his response to Moore's first inquiry about possible candidates, Adler's only reference to Spencer was: "As Mrs. Spencer, I suppose, is excluded..." (Letter from Felix Adler to Robert Moore, dated Jan. 22, 1907; Ethical Society archives) Spencer, a suffragist and a vice president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, was admired by the membership in St. Louis. Nevertheless, it seems Ethical Culture, for all its liberality, was not ready to accept a woman as sole leader of a society.

Percival Chubb, assistant to Adler and a teacher in the Ethical Culture School, had been a candidate from the start, but his love of teaching outweighed his interest in pastoral work. In addition, Adler had reservations about his leadership qualifications. In a charitably worded response to Moore, Adler said of him: "... as to fitness, I say this of course confidentially, the question has been raised whether Mr. Chubb possesses the executive ability necessary for the sole Leader of the Society. He is fine-grained and most capable in the place he fills; but a position largely executive might not be suited to his particular genius." (Ibid.)

It is a fact of life, even for Ethical Society members, that weighty decisions are not made by reason alone. The Society's ultimate decision to hire Chubb, and Chubb's ultimate acceptance of the post, were to some extent precipitated by a more private decision: In July 1910 Chubb married Anna Sheldon. He had been a friend of Sheldon's and had spoken in St. Louis almost annually since becoming an Ethical leader in 1905. He was a widower with three children; his first wife, the former Louise Walston, a native of Decatur, Ill., died in 1905. After the wedding, the couple lived at Anna's summer residence in Vermont and Chubb's home in New York. Chubb's candidacy for the St. Louis role had been batted about, but he told a Post-Dispatch reporter in June that he planned to stay in New York for at least a year, "and for that time Mrs. Sheldon's St. Louis friends will have to possess their souls in patience." (Post-Dispatch, June 25, 1910)

In November, the executive committee directed Moore to offer the position to Chubb. After a few weeks of thought and consultation, he accepted. His response explained that his reluctance to leave the classroom had been his sole cause of hesitation; St. Louis, he said, had given him an opportunity to fulfill "the hope that I might bring my work in this field to a fitting and effective close by devoting myself mainly to the ethical work which has had a comparatively small share of my energies." (Letter from Percival Chubb to Robert Moore, dated Dec. 19, 1910; Ethical Society archives) In accepting the offer, Chubb took a substantial cut in pay. Together, the New York Society and the school paid him \$4,000 a year; lecture fees and a part-time lectureship at New York University

added another \$ 1,000. St. Louis was to pay him only \$3,500 in the first year, with a vague promise of an additional \$500 in subsequent years.

Chubb accepted the post on a condition that pleased most members of the executive committee: He would not deliver more than about 12 lectures per season. "I am not primarily a speaker or a platform man," he wrote. "My methods are rather those of the writer; and I should not wish to have to put too much time on the preparation of lectures when there are other valuable forms of work to be undertaken." (Ibid.) He said his experience in New York indicated that a broad spectrum of platform speakers, alternating with one frequent lecturer, would best satisfy the membership's needs. Moore responded that the additional expense of this condition had concerned the executive committee, but added that "the advantages of this plan seemed to be on the whole so great as to fully warrant undertaking it." On January 10, 1911, the committee unanimously ratified the decision to hire Chubb.

Percival Chubb was born in Davenport, England, in 1860. Educated at Stationer's School in London, he received a technical education for English civil service and served for 10 years on the Local Government Board of London. A writer and political activist, he was a founding member of the Fabian Society, a precursor of the British Labor movement which sought to establish socialism through gradual reforms. He was raised in the Church of England, but his exposure to Emerson and Matthew Arnold led him to more liberal religious communities. Among these was London's South Place Chapel, an independent free church that joined the Ethical movement when Stanton Coit, an American disciple of Adler's, took the helm in 1887. Coit, who organized the International Foundation for Moral and Religious Leadership, recruited Chubb into an informal leadership role. Chubb gave a lecture tour in the United States in 1890 and returned a few years later to teach in New York. He started at the Manual Training High School, and later joined the English department of the Ethical Culture School. In 1899, he became principal of its branch school. He was named assistant leader of the New York Society in 1905. Unlike Sheldon, Weston, Coit, and other members of Adler's early circle of colleagues, Chubb had little formal education. He acquired his command of literature, philosophy, and politics through reading and conversation. His participation in British reform led him to associate with such thinkers as playwright George Bernard Shaw and psychologist Havelock Ellis.

A Home of Religious Freedom

Chubb undertook his duties in St. Louis on October 1, 1911. A year later, he organized the dedication of the memorial to his predecessor. The weeklong celebration began October 6 with the commencement of the American Ethical Union's annual assembly. In addition to Chubb, speakers at the dedicatory service included Adler, Weston, Moore, and leader Horace J. Bridges, who then was serving the South Place Society in London. Weston's speech, a tribute to Sheldon, preceded the unveiling of a bronze bas-relief tablet honoring Sheldon. The tablet is inscribed with a quote from Sheldon:

"It is good to have lived and loved and labored. It is good to be missed from the ranks while the march is going on. It is good to have worked with all the energy at our command; and it is good to rest when that work is done."

Between the addresses, the Waechter String Quartet performed such works as Mozart's "Ave Verum," Bizet's "Adagio," and Tchaikovsky's "Andante Cantabile." Students of the Children's Sunday Assembly, dressed all in white, sang a dedicatory hymn as they walked in procession down the aisles:

Spirit of Truth, we raise to thee
This temple built in trust and hope,
That nurtured here, our lives may be
Of finer strain and ampler scope.

(Unidentified newspaper clipping)

On the evening of October 6, visiting delegates addressed the inaugural supper held in the Assembly Room. A "Civic Dedication" on October 7 featured addresses by St. Louis educators and civic leaders, including Mayor F.H. Kriesmann and Ben Blewett, superintendent of the St. Louis Public Schools. On October 9, ministers and congregations from St. Louis churches and temples were invited to take part in a "Fellowship Dedication." A chamber music concert was given October 10, and a celebration of the Young People's Association the following night included a dance and a performance of scenes from Shakespeare's "As You Like It."

In his dedicatory address, "Our Faith and Its Future," Chubb hailed the structure as a symbol -- and a vehicle -- of religious progress:

We reach our maturity and go forth from the home of our childhood into one especially provided to meet the needs of maturity ... We represent a new type of religious attitude. We are not adding to the religions of the world upon the same basis as that upon which they have multiplied in the past. The path of advance takes a new turn. We signify the fact that the more progressive spirits of our age have outgrown the religion of dogma ... We are happier and freer because we have no compromises to make, no hostages to give, no difficult explanations to offer, no fine distinctions to draw ...

We are in the direct line of religious evolution, and trace our ancestry through Emerson and the advanced Unitarianism of William Ellery Channing, to the natural expansion of thought for which great figures in the history of culture stand -- a Spinoza, a Lessing, a Goethe, a Kant, a Coleridge, a Wordsworth, a Shelley, a Carlyle and an Arnold -- to mention a few of the most suggestive names. These may be styled the prophets of modern humanism. He who reads the writings of these sages and seers is conscious that he breathes a distinctly modern atmosphere of freedom. To read the writings of the man who more definitely than any other proclaimed the advent of ethical religion, our own Emerson, is to breathe the ampler air of the high regions where these great men dwelt.

Not only is the ethical movement and our ethical religion the natural outgrowth of these forces, but it is essentially the logical counterpart of that movement of thought which issued in democracy and the political embodiment of democracy which has been wrought out in this country When kings were dethroned, so were the Gods who had been appealed to as the sources and justification of kingly rule. Henceforth the many of democracy were to supersede the one or the few of monotheistic, trinitarian or oligarchic religion. It is impossible to develop the bearing of a thorough-going democratic faith upon religious conceptions, but one thing seems clear, . . . that it leads to the abolition of sectarian religion in favor of a new universal type based on the underlying fact of manhood, by virtue of which each one of us is regarded as possessing the right to life, labor and the pursuit of happiness

There are undoubtedly those who, like Cardinal Newman, cannot conceive of religion apart from dogma, but since Newman's time, there has emerged into clear light that view of human life which, logically interpreted, makes stationary dogma an impossibility for the finer intellectual conscience. Life, according to the evolutionary reading of it, means essentially growth, progress. Man's long history is the history of slow growth from an originally brutal state. The future must also be a future of continuous growth, and the man who jeopardizes his growth, who cries "Halt" in his quest after truth and knowledge, is guilty of intellectual impiety.... The stand which the ethical movement takes in instituting a religion without dogma is, we believe, the necessary consequence of assimilating that view of the world which has taken shape practically within our own time....

The basis of our human faith is deeper than any dogmas to which we subscribe. ... We of the Ethical movement maintain that there must be ... a religious organization which shall permit of fellowship on the ground of our common allegiance to the great uniting ideas of human character. Our new home is to be the home of such a faith for all those who feel its great and inspiring appeal. It is to be a home of religious freedom. The home of a faith for the free. (Typewritten draft of address, "Our Faith and Its Future," by Percival Chubb; Ethical Society archives)

8: Percival Chubb - A Passion for Unity

Ethical Philosophy

Percival Chubb was fired by love of the human family, "a mystical sense of union with his kind as deep as the ecstasy of the theological mystics." (On the Religious Frontier: From an Outpost of Ethical Religion, Percival Chubb, Macmillan Company, New York, 1931; p. 124) A self-professed radical, he came to America to take part in what he saw as a courageous uprising -- a drive toward emancipation from repressive creeds and the founding of a

revolutionary religious democracy. Relentless in his criticism of an aimless society, he acquired local renown as a proponent of ethical values, cultural sophistication, and progressive politics.

Chubb published several books -- including an English textbook, a book on producing festivals and plays, and collections of writings by Lincoln and Twain -- and countless pamphlets and pastoral letters; his magnum opus was "On the Religious Frontier: From an Outpost of Ethical Religion." Though published in 1931, "Frontier" remains a provocative piece of humanist literature. In imaginative, impeccable prose, Chubb declared creedal religion impotent and proclaimed the time ripe for a new model of spiritual community. The "frontier" of the title refers to the "border land between the zone of orthodox religion and the region beyond, where men live unattached to any distinctively religious institution and are not united in any religious fellowship." (Ibid., p. vii) Like the settlers of the westward expansion, these rebels have left behind old ways of living and must cut a new path. To them -- the dubious and the disenchanted, the liberated and the isolated -- Chubb offered "a new simplified type of religion which exacts no conformities of creed, is hospitable to new knowledge, fronts the challenges and perplexities of the life of to-day in all their concreteness, and allows for fluctuating diversities of individual conviction." (Ibid., p. vii)

Chubb hailed the rationalists of recent centuries who, through their advances in science, history, and critical scholarship, cleared ancient superstitions from the path of intellectual progress. He averred that science had rent biblical creationism and supernaturalism; more fundamentally, the spirit of the scientific method -- with "its fearless disinterestedness and inquisitiveness; its demand for convincing verification; its exaction of doubt and its exactitudes of proof" (Ibid., p. 19) -- mocked the innocent faith that sustained creedal religion. History and anthropology, by broadening the scope of human vision beyond the Judeo-Christian chronicle, forced a reinterpretation of humanity's relation to the universe. The evolution of civilization, said Chubb, "is a connected and self-explanatory story, which discards those interventions of managing divinities assumed by the earliest religions"; appreciation of humanity's struggle to control its environment -- and its own animal nature -- obviates such doctrines as the Fall and the Atonement. Finally, wrote Chubb, advances in comparative religious studies debunked Christianity's claim to uniqueness by bringing to light its cultural creditors; furthermore, biblical scholarship pushed aside the fantastical legends and philosophic biases that veiled the historic Jesus, revealing "something greater and more humanly helpful than the Christ of Christology." (Ibid., p. 22) But Chubb was no mere iconoclast: He rejoiced in liberation from the constraints of dogma because it made possible a clear, expansive world view. Ethical religion, he wrote, "seeks to build a new edifice for the spirit of man in which there need be no cramping of the mind." (Ibid., p. 25)

Chubb was bolder than his predecessor in challenging the validity of the traditional Western God-concept. After Darwin, he wrote, "Nature could no longer be regarded as the beneficent power which the eighteenth century had conceived it to be; she revealed a battleground, a slaughter heap, on which the unfortunate and unfit had perished." (Ibid., p. 110) Adopting the critical perspective of science, modern thinkers acknowledged that natural events occurred without reference to supplications and moral values; divine providence was dismissed as a gratuitous interpretation of the evidence. For Wordsworth, Bergson, and others, the image of an external God who intervenes in human affairs gave way to a God of immanence, an inscrutable power that underlies evolution, human character, existence itself. "This change," wrote Chubb, "helped us to seek the supreme revelation of the power at work in the world, in human reason and love, and not in a Nature external to man.... [I]f God is to be conceived as reason and love, he is to be so conceived by virtue of what we know of reason and love in man -- the only palpable knowledge we can have. The gateway is Man." (Ibid., p. 121-123) Apart from this apprehension of the highest realities as manifest in the human person, Chubb minimized the "quest for God." He was not averse to metaphysical speculation, but, mindful that philosophic knowledge is always tentative, and scientific knowledge always incomplete, he vowed that the religion he espoused would never sanctify opinions with the stamp of eternal verity. Though he rarely used the word, he was an enthusiastic proponent of agnosticism. Preoccupation with ultimate answers, he reckoned, was a guarantee of hopeless anxiety. Conversely, he taught that deep tranquility can be found by shifting one's attention from the meaning of life to the living of life:

If we ... try to run down this issue of the place of belief in the economy of the spiritual life, we may state it in most general terms as turning upon the assumption of man's intellectual responsibility for solving the problem of the universe. It is as if we conceived of the universe as serving notice on man that he is expected to find out its meaning, that there is only one meaning, and that he is in peril if he does not find it. He must justify his presence in the universe by solving the riddle it propounds.... The universe is not his affair. He has been mysteriously born into it. He doesn't know why. It was not with his consent. He was not consulted. (Ibid., p. 142)

...

It is, I say, with a blessed sense of relief from this anxiety as to belief that the mind is freed when the axis of the mind is changed from belief to conduct. The challenge is now thought of as the challenge of life to meet its problem, How to live? And man, if he accepts life, does so with the faith that it will justify itself by virtue of the satisfactions it will bring in the endeavor to meet its practical problems. To ask why life is, why anything is, is vain. Why am I here? Why am I at all? are equally futile questions. Faith is the acceptance of life as carrying its own justifications, or as promising to do so. Man's dealing shall be with life as adequate to its own meanings. Life is a sufficiently impressive fact, and needs no authentication by an extraneous scriptural and pontifical authority. He will deal with it at first hand; and will refuse to believe that it is there only to puzzle him and to force him to recognize the ascendancy of an authoritarianism or a priestism into whose only keeping the solution, the carefully guarded and otherwise unsolvable secret, is given. (Ibid., p. 143, 144)

Hence the objection urged by critics of a "mere" religion of ethics, that it doesn't believe anything about the universe, or its Maker, or its guarantee of immortality, becomes a leading recommendation. It has dismissed the fear of misbelief. Its spirit of tranquil acceptance is combined with a supreme faith in the value of the effort to live aright. The gate to belief is active loyalty to the human task. Acceptance is not resignation; it is an acceptance of the invigorating call to life and the challenging demands of living. (Ibid., p. 148)

In his insistence that belief is subordinate to conduct, Chubb considered himself in good company. He was fond of quoting Jesus' admonitions that "you can tell a tree by its fruit" (Matthew 7:20; New American Bible) and "anyone who says he loves God but hates his neighbor is a liar." Regardless of whether a higher being may inhabit the cosmos, Chubb was confident that no purpose could be higher than the service of humanity, which "is at the same time the service of that something in man whereby he can erect himself above himself to the height of some superself, some ideal, some Highest." (Ibid., p. 121-123) Like Sheldon, Chubb honored Jesus for his singular attention to charity, his advocacy of living by love instead of straining to satisfy legalistic mandates of belief and behavior. Conversely, he condemned Jesus' spiritual heirs for reconstructing – in his name – the very sort of pharisaic devices he had railed against. The most contemptible crime of these heirs, wrote Chubb, is "the enlistment of hate and cruelty in the enforcement of doctrines arrogantly held to be necessary to salvation.... It is a pitiful and revolting record this, which identifies religion with the bloody compulsions of dogmatic violence." (Ibid., p. 31)

Though Chubb had scant regard for metaphysical beliefs, he validated mystical experience, the "heightening of the sense of being" that "may be linked with that consciousness of a deeper and wider selfhood." (Ibid., p. 58) Like Wordsworth, he sought to nurture "the enveloping consciousness that this life by which we live shares in the life that flows through all things and throbs in our hearts as it pulsates in the motions of the far-off galaxies." (Ibid., p. 26) Most of all, he advocated a profoundly humanistic mysticism, a perception that "comes of our imaginative, spiritual identification of ourselves with man, flesh of his flesh and soul of his soul, in all its heights and depths." (Ibid., p. 124) He considered all mystical intuitions natural, and cautioned against giving them supernatural interpretations. Their touchstone, he taught, was finer conduct -- not strengthened belief.

The Spiritual Illumination of Common Things

Ethics, according to Chubb, is the conscious nurturing of health and wholeness. It is much more than morality -- more than distinctions between right and wrong, more than rules, compulsions, and conformity. Pointing out that the word derives from the Greek *ethos*, meaning the character of an individual or group, he defined ethics as "the interrelation and interplay of all those subtly interdependent powers of sense and soul, of intellect and emotion, of reason and imagination which go to the make-up of character; disciplined -- yes, firmly disciplined and organized character, whereof the fruit is to be masterful personality expressed in right conduct." (Ibid., p.52) Unlike Sheldon, he discerned nothing evil in human emotions. In contrast to Sheldon's instructions "To shut out a bad feeling by calling up a good one," Chubb advocated the transformation of base impulses through consistent exposure to sublime ideals. The life project of the ethical person, he wrote, is to "accomplish his second birth into the spirit, aiding the transmutation of these rude endowments of energy and impulse into the image of the archetypal man -- desires into ideals, appetites into aspirations, wonder into science, fumbings into art, and sex into love." (Ibid., p. 83) To foster a taste for "the values by which alone men can live harmoniously together," (Ibid., p. 43) to transform "impulsive love" into what Dante called "love intellectual" -- that is the business of ethics.

Chubb held that those preeminent social values -- which he enumerated as truthfulness, justice, and good will -- are "self-commending." Like the rights enshrined by the framers of the Constitution, they require no external validation: "No God can authenticate these values; for there is nothing more ultimate by virtue of which they can be authenticated. Like Beauty, they are their own excuse for being. They live by the spell they exercise on the souls of men." (Ibid., p. 44) Furthermore, he taught that virtue is its own reward," and that the attempt to elicit it through sanctioned incentives and threats belittles that reward. Truthfulness, for Chubb, included "integrity, sincerity, candor, and the courage required in the exercise of these virtues." (Ibid., p.40) It also connotes a humble devotion to learning: "We have not believed that the truth (always some particular brand) should make us free, because truth is a growing, expanding force in a growing nature; besides which, the truth has found diverse and conflicting expressions in the rival religions and philosophies of man. Rather is it the spirit of truthfulness, deep down in character, that we have cherished." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, June 10, 1932) Good will be defined as "the spirit of fellowship in pursuit of the Highest Good, which is the Good Life, a collective Good.... [It is] the passion for perfection in that finest of the fine arts, the art of living." (On the Religious Frontier, p. 136, 137)

The religion Chubb espoused was as big as life, encompassing and integrating all areas of human experience and conduct. Like zen masters and Christian mystics, he taught that one's religion -- one's "way" -- is lived in every action. [O]ur high task is the spiritual illumination of ... common, concrete things," he wrote. "The religious man is he who handles nobly and well, not just his Bible or his Sabbath, but his life and himself -- his citizenship, his family, his business, his war; who is bent on qualifying, not for another world, but first for this, -- 'one world at a time.' " (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, September 1, 1918) He knew that ethical religion, to be viable, must address "the old eternal and primal facts of our human drama, birth and death, and labor and sorrow, and all the great recurrences that are the warp upon which we weave the patterns of life." (On the Religious Frontier, p. 94) It must minister to those in grief, despair, and confusion, and it must do so bravely and directly, without attempting to invoke miracles. To the common criticism that "mere ethics" cannot satisfy the human longing to be comforted, he replied that genuine religion "is not ... an escape, a refuge, a narcotic, a compensation; it is an incitement to the handling of life so as to educe from it the highest spiritual values." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, September 1, 1918)

Chubb believed that the supreme service of religion is to bring people together; he never wearied of exalting the strength and joy found in solidarity. Just as traditional preachers insist one can be whole only by achieving union with God, Chubb taught that wholeness consists in human communion. "Our organization would not exist were it not for the primal need of fellowship in making the best and most of ourselves," he wrote. " We can get the greatest thoughts by remaining at home with a book; but that is to miss the human presence and the choral participation in human striving." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, Sept. 1, 1930) Although the Ethical Society's intellectualism is one of its distinctive virtues, Chubb worried that it discouraged the warm human contact Society members secretly sought. However, when, within a year's time, his wife died and he suffered a confining illness, the outpouring of sympathy he received revealed to him the community's latent kindness. In a 1924 pastoral letter, he underlined the need for a religious association and urged Society members to more consistently offer each other their support and concern:

[Y]ou have made me feel so deeply this year, so many of you, how rich is the wealth of warm human sympathy that exists among us, that I have been asking myself whether such resources might not be made to count for more in coloring and bracing our common life. Never again shall the charge that the Ethical Society and its member are "cold" go without my instant and confident contradiction; for I am now full-armed with demonstrations that it is not so. But can we not make this less timidly apparent? Cannot this warm-veined humanity be more of an encompassing power with us?

As may of you know, I had unexpectedly to go into hospital captivity this summer, to find myself one of a large company of those who suffer and must face darkness and peril. Again, -- in a more public way --I was deeply impressed by the forces of rescue and comfort, of love and friendship and compassion, which rally at the call of distress. And this led to further meditations on the possibility of a larger and bolder ministration of these forces, -- especially among groups of people associated, as we are, to make life mean, through our fellowship, more than it might otherwise mean in fineness, fullness and elevation. Cannot this fellowship be more vividly humanized, -quite simply and naturally, -- without fear of social complications and embarrassments? Can we not have more social-heartedness to give soul to our social-mindedness?

...

So I saw with new clearness how much we all need some such larger world to live in as our spiritual association in an Ethical Society tries to provide. We need a varied human world outside of and overarching our family world, and above all, outside our "set"; yes, above our business or professional, our club or party circle, each of which tends to stereotype its typical grimace and gesture upon us. I say "spiritual association" as hitting at the unique and supreme feature of such a religious group, -- namely, that it supposes that we meet above the plane of our ordinary selves, on the plane of our best selves, our total selves.

The Cleansing Fires of War

That Ethical Culture was founded one hundred years after the Declaration of Independence held great significance for Chubb, for he considered the movement the perfect religious parallel to America's fresh political venture. Like American democracy, Ethical Culture was founded on the inalienable worth of the individual; it respects the convictions of each, and accords dominance to none. It is a democratic religion, "an all-inclusive fellowship in which all men of good will may find a place." (On the Religious Frontier, p. 78) His model of leadership echoed the American ideal of the statesman as a servant of his equals: "I have never regarded myself as pastor of a congregation, but as a member and functionary of a fellowship," he wrote. (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, June 10, 1932) But as much as Chubb loved America, the birthplace and paradigm of ethical religion, he was disappointed in Americans, for they had failed to heed their native son Emerson. Instead of directing its course according to the principles it ostensibly espoused, this people had devoted its energies to profit-making and militarism. During Chubb's tenure at the Ethical Society, the nation faced a series of ethical challenges -- World War I, women's suffrage, Prohibition, the Great Depression. Again and again, he urged his listeners to reassert the primordial virtues of the American character.

Chubb saw the Great War as "a religious scandal," (On the Religious Frontier, p. 11) an indictment of the institutions that failed to avert a horrifying conflict. "Our trust in humanity and in the efficacy of reason, justice and good will suffers the rudest shock," he wrote. (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, September 21, 1914) In accordance with his view of religion as "an incitement to educe spiritual values," he told Society members that "the paramount ethical task of the hour ... is to live through this awful crisis in human affairs so that we may wring from our distress and our doubt the full measure of spiritual discipline.... The fires in which the world is being tried must be for us cleansing fires, burning up the dross of our smaller selves, and clearing to a steady light upon our path of duty." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, Sept. 27, 1915) In the first years of the war, before the United States entered the fray, he taught that Americans could best serve the cause of peace by maintaining the nation's exemplary tolerance. "Our American citizenship calls on us to lift our thinking to the highest plane of international disinterestedness and inclusiveness," he wrote. "We must confront the national antagonisms which rend Europe by our American conception of the pacific world-state in which these racial antagonisms are transcended and silenced, and by our actualized fellowship here of Teuton and Slav, Latin and Saxon, Jew and Gentile." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, September 21, 1914) He frequently spoke on the war in platform addresses, stressing America's overarching commitments -- to "union and unity; to democracy and not to feudal or class government; to republicanism and not to kings and princes by divine right; to industrialism and not to militarism." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, September 27, 1915) He took pains to avoid antagonizing the many German-Americans in the community, and he urged partisans to listen to reason over "the cries of ancestral blood." (Ibid.)

As the sentiment to enter the war intensified, Chubb grew more vehement in his call for restraint. On June 3, 1916, he helped organize an "anti-militarism" demonstration on the steps of City Hall; the rally was intended to counterbalance a parade held earlier that day to whip up support for war preparedness. An estimated 5,000 citizens attended the peace rally. (Globe-Democrat, June 4, 1916) Chubb, then vice president of the Missouri Peace Society, was the principal speaker. His address, as reported in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, reflected the socialist position that the drive toward war was fueled by the profit motive:

Chubb said in his address that as the "matter and clatter of the preparedness parade of the afternoon had subsided, everyone could now consider the country saved."

"That great swashbuckler of politics, the big noise -- the Colonel, came here to prepare us for the preparedness parade," he said. "He prepared us by spreading bad feeling and calling those who are most loyal to the peace and happiness and welfare of our country traitors."

"History repeated itself in the pre-parade here, for it was the same as that of New York -- the slaves of big business were the marchers. The business houses herded their employees together to make a showing for a sentiment they favor because of business reasons. "

Chubb said the parade was composed completely of "poor fellows" who "marched to please the boss," and "society dames, whose pictures we so frequently see in the newspapers."

He said the purpose of the meeting he was addressing was to make it known in "a quiet way that there are tens of thousands in St. Louis who protest against this abominable business."

Preparedness, he said, is the same bloody banner under which millions have marched to slaughter in the European war. Those who advocate it, he declared, are traitors to the pacifist traditions of America.

Preparedness cannot be for peace, but must be for war, he said. It is the duty of the United States to insist that the quarrels of nations henceforth be decided on the principles of right, justice and humanity and not to carry a message of further preparedness for war, he declared.

"We are asked to make a change to militarism at a time when our friendship is more precious to the nations of the world than ever before," he said. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 4, 1916)

Many Society members shared Chubb's pacifism. In January 1917, as the United States stood on the threshold of war, the Society hosted a rally conducted by the National League to Enforce Peace. Once the war was under way, however, the Society supported the military effort: The Women's Auxiliary contributed heartily to relief projects, temporary leader George O'Dell promoted the purchase of liberty bonds from the platform, and the Red Cross was offered free use of the Assembly Room. (Minutes of Board of Trustees meeting, April 1918) About thirty of the Society's young men -- including Chubb's son, R. Walston Chubb -- fought in the war; Y.P.A. members sent them letters and gifts, accorded them ceremonial honors, and welcomed them back to civilian life. For his part, Chubb attempted to wring wisdom from the cataclysm; he hoped the tragic results of irrationality would prompt a reconsecration to reason. "Making democracy safe depends upon making it think," he wrote. "The war is an inescapable challenge to straighter and stronger thinking. Bad thinking or the absence of thinking is its principal cause; only better thinking can deliver us and give us a more rational, just and humane world." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, September 1, 1918) In his platform lectures, he addressed the ideals over which the war was being fought; the social reconstruction indicated by international hostility; the changing conceptions of death and divinity in the face of unrelieved suffering; and the duties of citizens in wartime. Upon the war's denouement, he delivered an address titled "The Religion of Young America During the War -- and After." In it, he predicted the war would change irrevocably the nature of American religion. First, the nation's crisis had unified its citizens in a cause that transcended sectarian boundaries; Chubb hoped this esprit de corps would carry over as an enduring spirit of religious tolerance. Secondly, he wrote, the war strengthened the conviction that the common good -- rather than individual salvation -- ought to be the primary concern of religion. Finally, because teamwork and ethical principles literally had become matters of life and death, the war made religion a more integral part of American life. But Chubb's appreciation of the war's potential benefits did not alter his essential pacifism. As evidenced by the responsive reading he wrote for Armistice Day platform services, he wanted the war to be remembered as a shameful calamity:

LEADER: I sing the song of the great clean guns that belch forth death at will.

RESPONSE: Oh, but the wailing mothers, the lifeless forms and still!

LEADER: I sing the song of the billowing flags, the bugles that blare their tune.

RESPONSE: Oh, but the shattered cities where ruin came so soon!

LEADER: I sing the clash of bayonets and sabers that flash and cleave.

RESPONSE: But will you sing of the injured, too, who go with pinned-up sleeve?

LEADER: I sing of noted generals, their battle deeds intone.

RESPONSE: Oh, but the fields of crosses where lie the men unknown!

LEADER: I sing of hearts victorious, long ranks of marching men.

RESPONSE: But can you sing of the silent men who never can march again?

ALL: Were half the power that fills the world with terror, Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts Given to redeem the human mind from error, There were no need of arsenal or forts.

Chubb stated his attitude in a more positive manner when he wrote that "if the glamor is to be taken out of war, it must be by making peace glamorous. The heart must be won for peace, and nothing less than World-peace." (Afterthoughts, pastoral letter published in pamphlet form, p. 5)

Chubb believed the war had shattered the credibility of creedal religions, both because they had failed to maintain peace and because their assurances amid worldwide suffering rang hollow. The world, he said, was "eager for a religion more adequate to its vital needs than those types of other-worldliness which failed it in the recent crisis, -- a religion attuned to the exigent realities, the new knowledge, and the broadened vision of the modern-minded man." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, September 1, 1918) He recounted stories from the trenches indicating that servicemen, who daily faced grave danger and stark inhumanity, had no use for sweet platitudes; they entered battle with stern devotion to their homeland, a stance that was "firm-set on the soil of human reality." (p. 15, "Religion of Young America") In the aftermath of the war, Chubb watched that devotion turn to cynicism. The disillusionment of the nation's youth, he believed, left them yearning for the sort of frontier religion he proffered:

[T]he youth of to-day are not in a natural and normal state of mind and emotion. They -- or at least those whom we style the "intellectuals" or the "intelligenza" -- are in a state of revolt. This revolt of youth is a fruit of the war. The feeling which the war bred in youth was that they had been trapped and sacrificed in a cause represented as "holy." They found themselves betrayed. It had been trumpeted as the War to end War, and to save Democracy. The event led to no such results: they were forgotten. Instead, it led on to the fear of another war, to increased armaments in defiance of general bankruptcy, to Fascism and battling Communism. Youth drew its conclusion; there was something false and hypocritical in the morality that had sacrificed the youth of the world on its smoking altars of failure. They would cast these things from them. They would go their own better way, the way of freedom and friendliness. They would rally the youth of the world to the recognition of a common cause by war-resistance and pledges of cooperation. [T]hey ... gathered on the frontier. (On the Religious Frontier, p. 48, 49)

Ethical Influenza

The religious reawakening Chubb prophesied did not occur. instead, cynicism mounted: Prohibition fostered contempt for the law, Teapot Dome and other political scandals undercut Americans' regard for officeholders, and the Great Depression revealed that even the nation's industrial economy was a crumbling fortress. The Depression, by Chubb's reckoning, was a manifestation of "spiritual bankruptcy." It resulted, not from flaws in the machinery of commerce and finance, but from "a lack of social vision, ethical vision, false first principles, a shallow reading of life." (On the Religious Frontier, p. 102) He hoped the misery of that era would at last spur the nation to re-examine its course, to remember "that the voice of an Emerson was once heard in the land." (Ibid., p. 89) He believed that the need for ethical religion was more apparent than ever:

Never in my memory has there been a time when the contribution which the Ethical Movement (which means our Society in particular) may make toward the common welfare and deliverance has been so convincingly called for. Of the ethical implications of the collapse of capitalist industry I will not speak. Not only Karl Marx, but the prophets and sages persuaded me long since that it carried within it the seeds of its own destruction. The Great War announced its doom. If this profiteers' game of greed and grab was to go on prospering, then the earth was pillared rottenness. The War and the Peace have together exposed the rottenness. Our resources of soundness are on trial.

The accompanying demoralization is too obvious; and the way of repentance, religiously speaking, seems equally obvious. The call upon religion is to divest itself of its accretions of irrelevancy and to address itself to the task of promoting plain righteousness, yes, just simple honesty and integrity. In these all spiritual values are rooted. The contemporary exhibitions of corruption in business and politics, the brutalities of crime, the indecencies of self-indulgence, the vulgarities of popular pleasuring, all announce the withering of fundamental morale. And the absence of any widespread and agitating indignation and contrition is at once the handwriting on the wall that threatens ruin and the summons to a new way of life. (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, June 10, 1932)

For Chubb, this lack of indignation -- which betrayed a general failure to critically assess contemporary culture -- was as despicable as any willful moral transgression. American consciousness, he said, was afflicted with ethical influenza and moral sleeping sickness." (New York Times, Dec. 2, 1929; dateline Philadelphia, Dec. 1) He, of course, had an opinion about virtually every social trend, and he never hesitated to voice it. In 1913, he took William Marion Reedy to task for publishing a sexually libertine essay in *The Mirror*. "I cannot understand why in your pages you should allow anyone to wallow on all fours in this filth of depravity," he wrote. "The bestial thing is a slap in the face to all of us who are working for clean manhood and womanhood." (April 18, 1913, "The Mirror") When Henry Ford introduced the five-day work week, Chubb began railing against the unhealthy use of leisure time. Though no temperance crusader, he was infuriated by the widespread disregard of Prohibition. "Manly objection to the law, one understands, and organized effort to alter it," he said, "but to make a supposedly unwise law an excuse and cover for bootlegging and indulgence, and for young people's imitation of their intemperate elders, is humbug and hypocrisy and witlessness." (St. Louis Star, Nov. 1, 1926) In 1926, while lambasting the Board of Education for demoting three administrators without explanation, he referred to a recent city mayor as "a Mussolini." (unidentified clipping, around April 11) If he sometimes overstated his case, he did so with calculation: He was more concerned with stirring thought and debate than with winning agreement.

Chubb was no ivory-tower philosopher. He deemed responsible participation in civic affairs an essential of the ethical life. "For the master mind of Aristotle, politics and religion are at heart one," he said in a 1926 address. "Politics meant the attainment through the state of the supreme good, because the state is the highest form of human association and exists to make life not merely possible, but good." ("Religion Needed in Politics, Chubb says," *Globe-Democrat*, Nov. 1, 1926) He said the notion that the constitutional separation of church and state requires citizens to keep their religious convictions private was a "confusion of mind," for "if religion is a way of life, then it must inspire and help us to find and keep the right way in all our human relations and affairs." (Ibid.) Accordingly, he often addressed campaign issues and partisan policies from the platform. He also took part in a variety of civic enterprises. In 1915 and 1916, for instance, he directed a juried competition for a city flag design under the auspices of the St. Louis Pageant Drama Association. In 1913, he persuaded the Society's Men's Club to join the St. Louis Federation for Good Citizenship, a non-partisan group that disseminated information regarding candidates, officeholders, and pending legislation; Chubb himself served on the federation's executive committee. In addition, he chaired the League for Independent Political Action in the early 1930s. He freely distributed to Society members the political endorsements of these councils, and the board supported him in arranging political forums at Sheldon Memorial.

Chubbing the Press

Chubb kicked up a public storm in 1916 when he attacked the caliber of St. Louis journalism. In an address delivered on January 16, he denounced local newspapers as superficial and sensational. He said they neglected sound reporting of deliberations at St. Louis City Hall and the Missouri General Assembly, and that they gave insufficient attention to the labor movement, literature, and cultural events. He decried the state of arts criticism as "pitiful." The worst grievances, by his estimate, were the lurid reporting of crime and the salacious packaging of "girl stuff" -- news about misbehaving debutantes, forbidden elopements and "marital misadventures." (The "girl's column" was a staple of many daily newspapers of the era. As an example of the custom, two days after Chubb's address the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* ran -- at the top of its front page -- an illustrated story on a 16-year-old art student who had eloped to Clayton with her 19-year-old boyfriend; within an hour of the ceremony, the two had been detained by police and ordered separated by the girl's father, a prominent businessman.) ("Art Student, 16, Is Married, Arrested, Separated in Hour," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 18, 1916) He urged his listeners to pay attention to the profound influence wielded by newspapers. "The newspaper is so much with us and is so much taken for granted that we do not realize what an immensely potent force it is in coloring our minds and shaping our characters," he said. "Its scale of values tends to standardize ours." ("The Newspaper as One of the Social Forces that Fashion Character," *St. Louis Labor*, date unknown; Ethical Society archives) He complained that the city's

"educated minority" had to turn to the New York Times and other Eastern newspapers for thorough coverage of national and world events, as well as for cultural events, a cultural and intellectual sustenance.

While all of the city's five daily newspapers carried reports of the address – firsthand accounts, summaries of competitors' reportage, or interviews with Chubb – only the St. Louis Labor, which considered Chubb a valued ally, reprinted his address verbatim:

[N]ewspaper owners and editors must face the fact that a great deal of distrust and discontent is prevalent among the better class of their readers. In this community in particular there is a large body of educated people who are deeply discontented with our great newspapers -- so much so that large numbers of them are subscribers to the great Eastern daily papers. I know of one institution in the city where, as I have been told, thirty copies of the New York Times are subscribed for.

It is of the sins of omission rather than of commission that I shall speak for the most part on this occasion. Our newspapers defend themselves by the customary argument that these so-called "high-brow" malcontents represent a negligible minority. The great majority get what they want: a seemingly plausible defense, yet based on mere guesswork and an assumption both unproved and unprovable. It was assumed in New York that the people wanted rag-time music at the municipal concerts in the parks; it was found when good music was offered they preferred it. Assume that a child is bad, and it will act accordingly -- every teacher knows that. Assume that it is fine, and it will be proud to justify your good opinion. You can treat the public in the same way.

The newspaper's public function is to get into line with all other similar institutions -- the schools, libraries, art museums. It must educate, and not pander; it must lead, and not slink in the rear of the crowd.

It is sometimes retorted that its function is the simple one of supplying the news. But what news? The test of a newspaper that professes to be no more than a purveyor of news is in the selection of its news and the relative emphasis put upon it. How much does crime figure? Sordid gossip? Where does it figure? -- front page or last? A newspaper must come to judgment on this issue.

How do we fare in this city on this score? Is this community as a whole, and in all the varieties of its population and interests, fairly reflected in any of our newspapers? Is justice done to the worthier elements in our life? Are its outreachings registered -- the strivings of its best forward-moving citizens? The answer will be emphatically in the negative. The record of the gossip and scandal of the town -- the frivolities and foolishness of the town -- are out of all proportion to the record of the finer sides of life! We resent this; we are ashamed of it. If we have been making a sojourn in the East, and have been using the papers there, we return and take up our local papers with a sense of mortification. We are not so bad as these papers make us out to be. They depress our standards. They hold us back. ("The Newspaper as One of the Social Forces that Fashion Character," St. Louis Labor, date unknown; clip in Ethical Society archives)

Chubb argued that the business offices of newspapers dictated editorial judgment, subjugating journalists to advertisers bent on promoting their commercial interests. While acknowledging hope in the increasing professionalism of journalists -- as evidenced by conventions addressing longstanding ethical issues -- he called for some sort of public control of the press. Calling the newspaper "a public institution akin in some ways to a public service corporation," he suggested that newspapers be endowed and run in the manner of a public library. "Think of a newspaper which represented on its board of management, in the interest of the largest public ends, men and women from every section and calling -- the business men, the professional classes, and above all the labor men; a board which represented not only the conservatism of a community, but its radicalism," he offered. "It would give the better element in the community more of a representation than they get to-day." (Ibid.)

Reaction from the press was swift and vehement. The Globe-Democrat's January 17 account of the address, which began in a single column at the top of the front page, openly mocked the speaker. "Wholesale denunciation of the St. Louis press, to the effect that the newspapers here are so poor that 'the educated minority' seek 'Eastern papers,' was uttered by Percival Chubb, at the Ethical Society, yesterday morning," the story began, "Presumably his own slender congregation, with so many vacant seats that the back pews were roped off to compel people to sit nearer to the speaker, was regarded by him as a part of this self-styled 'educated minority.'" ("St. Louis Press Denounced By

Percival Chubb," St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Monday, January 17, 1916) The writer touted the speaker as a "modern Jeremiah" and took him to task for incorrectly dating a quote from a Globe-Democrat editor. In a subsequent interview published in the St. Louis Star, Chubb reviled the Globe-Democrat story as "mean, petty and inaccurate. The story was not handled in true sportsmanlike fashion.... The article ... was jumbled in a maze of personal animus in an effort to criticize me. This is the sort of thing I complained against." ("Chubb Praises Star's Crusade Against Quacks," St. Louis Star, January 17, 1916) To Chubb's chagrin, portions of the Globe article, though biased and largely inaccurate, were reprinted by other papers in follow-up stories.

The Post-Dispatch, in an editorial published in its January 17 evening edition, dissected its entire Sunday edition, giving ample evidence that its coverage emphasized news of the war and other matters of public import, and that its cultural reporting was exemplary. The editorial asserted that the Post business office had no influence on the judgment of editors and reporters. It invited Chubb to investigate the newspaper and report his findings in its columns. "Meanwhile," the editorial concluded, "Mr. Chubb should read papers that are not filled with cheap sensationalism. Newspapers are not all alike." ("Mr. Chubb's Inaccuracies," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 17, 1916) In an interview with a Post reporter published the following day, Chubb acknowledged that he could find little to criticize in the newspaper; his critical remarks, he said, "were based on an average of the local papers and were not meant for the Post-Dispatch." However, he stood by his observation that even the Post gave insufficient attention to civic and educational movements." ("Chubb Explains His Sunday Talk On Newspapers," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 18, 1916)

Newspapers would not let the controversy die quickly. Each of the city's daily papers carried several stories and editorial responses in the days and weeks after the address. While the Post declared its innocence of unsavory reporting, other papers defended their practices as responsive to the needs of diverse readers. This editorial, from the Globe, exemplifies the reaction of the press:

THE CHUBB IDEA

There is usually an infinite deal of nonsense in the criticisms of newspapers by transcendental idealists. There is more nonsense than usual in Mr. Percival Chubb's latest periodical arraignment of journalism, a profession which has never been conducted to his entire satisfaction, and, we fear, and hope, never will be. For a newspaper modeled on Chubb lines would appeal to an "educated minority" so small that it would be compelled to hold out its hat for the endowment or state control and support that Mr. Chubb advocates. There are a number of state-controlled journals in the world, but it would be a libel to call any one of them a newspaper, for they are so fettered by censorship that they do not dare to print anything but perfunctory statements of official acts.

The idealistic critic, of the Chubb order, always overlooks the fundamental purpose of a newspaper, which is the publication of news. And it cannot confine itself to news that will interest and meet with the approval of none but a highly educated and supercritical class, unless it expects to limit its circulation to that class. There are newspapers that do this, a few, and excellent papers they are, in certain qualities, but their field is narrow, their influence, however great within that field, does not extend beyond it, and with one or two exceptions, they are notoriously unprofitable. Nor are they newspapers in the full sense of that term. For the word "news" is not, and ought not to be, limited in its application to "the good, the pure and the beautiful." A knowledge of the existence, character and extent of evil, in all forms, is as necessary to the progress of mankind, as is an acquaintance with the ethical influences that promote advancement. A newspaper, a real newspaper, must tell its readers what is going on in the world, the bad as well as the good.... It is the newspaper that truly reflects life that is most successful and most influential, and it deserves to be, for it speaks to the whole people in a language they understand, and its influence is constant for good.

At the outset, the papers allied against Chubb. As the debate continued, however, each of several papers affirmed certain of Chubb's criticisms but fixed blame on its competitors. At least two bashed the Post-Dispatch for its assertion that its editorial department was wholly free from the influence of its business office; said one, "as to that sassy and independent newspaper which the P-D pretends to be -there ain't no such journalistic animal." (unidentified press clipping, Ethical Society archives)

The newspapers took advantage of the debate as an opportunity to poke fun at Chubb and the Ethical Society for what some staff members deemed moralism and excessive intellectualism. One editorial, headlined "All Are Not

Chubbs," chided the lecturer for attempting to foist his narrow tastes on the community; the editorial claimed to spell out "the logic of the situation ... in the same comprehensive, argumentative way that all ethical culturists admire." ("All Are Not Chubbs," unidentified newspaper clipping; Ethical Society archives) Another response was headlined, "A Publisher Chubblisher." Several papers produced remarkably creative lampoons. This from Bart Howard, a columnist for the *St. Louis Republic*:

THE CHUBB PAPER

Were Percy in the swivel,

The seat of high command,

He'd print no hint of scandal

Of social Goth or Vandal,

Nor dull commercial drivél

About what business planned,

Were Percy in the swivel,

The seat of high command.

If Percy, on the paper,

Held down the city desk,

Page one would never feature

That debutantie creature,

However gay her caper,

Or garb how picturesque!

If Percy, on the paper,

Held down the city desk.

If it were Percy's billet,

A Sunday ed. to be,

He harbors the conviction

He'd chuck the art and fiction.

The space -- just how he'd fill it

I don't know, nor does he,

If it were Percy's billet,

A Sunday ed. to be.
Were Percy the gazimbo
That ran the sport etude,
The present style, rococo
From "spokes" clean up to "boco,"
Were banished to the limbo
Of well-known desuetude,
Were Percy the gazimbo
That ran the sport etude.

As owner, Mister Percy
Would have the sheet endowed,
Then, smashing the custom's fetters,
He'd raise the torch of letters,
And, though they begged for mercy,
He'd scorn the vulgar crowd.
You're right on one thing, Percy --
Your sheet must be endowed.

("What Y'May Column," by Bart Howard, *St. Louis Republic*, date uncertain)

In its January 18 edition, the Globe carried a cluster of cartoons satirizing Chubb on the front of its second section. Beneath it was printed the work of an unnamed scribe:

The Ballad of the Cultured Minority
or
Page One or Bust

It was a Sunday afternoon,
And gathered there sedate,
The Cultured Minor Leaguers sat
To hear P. Chubb orate.
And most of them were women folk,

With here and there a hubby,
And some were lean and some were de
Riguer by being Chubby;
And as the faithful crowd drew close
In fond anticipation,
P. Chubb bucked up and let this fly
(His bit to save the nation)

We can live without girls, we can live without crooks,
But demand an occasional classic on books;
High art, not high heels, is the stuff we crave,
Not light stuff or bright stuff, but solemn and grave.

Then someone in a sheltered nook
Let out a stifled murmur;
But soon his better half prevailed,
And Chubb spoke all the firmer.

He dwelt on how he'd make page one
An object of delight
Until the lone reporter there
Collapsed, too proud to fight.

And as the Cultured Minors sat,
His fiery phrases eating,
P. Chubb talked on as if he knew
The subject he was treating:

We can do without stories of love and divorce,
And baseball and boxing and other things coarse,
We don't want descriptions of how a thief stole,

But demand an occasional theme on the soul.

(St. Louis Globe-Democrat, January 18, 1916)

Not to be outdone, Post-Dispatch columnist Clark McAdams produced several "issues" of an ersatz newspaper modeled on Chubb's ideals. Called "The Daily Chubb," it was printed in McAdams' corner of the editorial page. The masthead identified the publication as "A Newspaper for Highbrows"; its motto was, "If You Don't See It in The Chubb, It Isn't Worth Knowing." Naturally, The Chubb carried news of the arts and delicately avoided mentioning details of crime and war. Stories were written in a lofty tone and loaded with high-sounding words: "The educated minority," as defined by an editorial in The Chubb, "are free from that sort of ignoratio elenchi and amphiboly that has produced so many circulos in probando, to the despair of all true thinkers." (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 25, 1916) The Chubb's fictional newsboys, forbidden to hawk the paper by "caterwauling," reportedly engaged in polite conversation with prospective buyers. Some nuggets from The Chubb:

The Paderewski Debacle

The cultured aristocracy of the city rises as one man in protest against a deplorable omission noted in Mr. Paderewski's program for next Wednesday night. By a singular oversight the pianist proffers not a single composition by Mendelssohn, to whose eminent virtues of breeding even so uncouth a person as Wagner at constrained to pay tribute in the gratifying words: "Mendelssohn has nothing to say, but he says it like a gentleman."

Instead, the program is compiled from Liszt, who, it is lamentable to recall, never belonged to an Ethical Culture Society in his life; from Chopin, whose ethics were not all that they should have been; from Schubert and Schumann, who enjoy so detestable popularity among the vulgar; and from Couperin, who had the misfortune to die nearly two centuries before he could avail himself of the uplifting benefits of the modern ethical movement- We once had high hopes of Mr. Paderewski, but we fear he is lost to the higher artistic consciousness. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 20, 1916)

...

There was a murder in the West End last night. Persons morbid enough to care about the details may get them from the Police Department. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 20, 1916)

...

The 18th prox. will be a bad day for local low-brows. Miss Harriet Monroe, editor of the Poetry Magazine, will be here that day. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 20, 1916)

...

There is great joy among the literary people over the enthusiasm of the crowd which heard Witter Bynner read his "Iphigenia in Tauris." That event sent more brows up than anything that has happened in St. Louis this winter. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 20, 1916)

...

It is not the intent of The Chubb to dignify the war with too much space, as the vulgar popular newspapers do. We will content ourselves with announcing who won, when somebody does win. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 20, 1916)

Responding to Chubb's criticism that libraries and arts organizations could not get the newspapers to carry announcements of their programs, The Daily Chubb outlined its policy on calendar announcements in doggerel form:

YOU CAN GET IT IN THE CHUBB!

Would you like to reach the people
 In some good and worthy cause
 That the other local papers
 Are not greeting with applause?
 Be of cheer, ye noble-hearted,
 Or ye literary club;
 The way to do it opens -
 You can get it in The Chubb!
 Is there art, perhaps, despairing
 Of its modicum of space?
 Is there aught would meet the people
 In the paper face to face?
 Is there something out of Boston,
 That great literary hub?
 Be of comfort, ye that labor,
 You can get it in The Chubb!
 While the darkness broods about us
 There shall be a light to bum.
 Ever promising the weary
 That the road's about to turn.
 Though we dwell within the shadow,
 One with old Beelzebub,
 Be ye still of deathless courage --
 You can get it in The Chubb!

(St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 25, 1916)

While some items in The Chubb were wholly fictitious, many actually reported albeit wryly on book releases, concerts, and other news of the arts. It even reproduced several newly published poems. The irony was not lost on The Mirror, a St. Louis-based literary weekly, which observed that The Chubb, "a debonairly humorous satire upon Mr. Chubb," was "doing actually the thing for which the lecturer of the Ethical Society pleaded -- giving real news about things of interest to the educated minority. For all its blithe raillery, The Daily Chubb is a news sheet giving the news of poets and artists and their works. It applauds Mr. Chubb, and takes its cue from him, even while poking gentle fun at him." (Undated excerpt from The Mirror, quoted in "The Daily Chubb," Post-Dispatch, February 2, 1916)

The brouhaha became the source of such widespread humor that the papers took to making snide allusions to Chubb, even in unrelated stories. A story relaying criticism of the Post for not reporting an arrest noted that the chief of police felt "quite percivalchubbish" after a reporter pointed out that the story had indeed run. And when a Jesuit priest criticized the state of St. Louis journalism in a lecture at St. Louis University, one newspaper headlined its account of the lecture, "Press Is Chubbed By A Fresh Critic."

Chubb's lone ally among the city's newspapers, St. Louis Labor, called the lampoons published by the dailies "childish and clumsy." In an editorial accompanying its reprint of Chubb's text, Labor voiced agreement with Chubb's assertion that the profit motive distorts editorial judgment. "The daily newspaper," it said, "is commercialized, like an axle-grease factory, a rolling mill, a munitions plant. As Ferdinand Lassalle remarked: the modern newspaper has become a profit-making institution which differs from other profit-making concerns in this one particular point: it poisons the minds of the people whenever its business interests demand it." ("Percival Chubb and the Press, St. Louis Labor, undated press clipping; Ethical Society archives)

The glut of attention evidently boosted attendance at Sheldon Memorial. In a report of Chubb's January 23 address, one newspaper noted that "Chubb's audience had grown like the loaves and fishes. It seated itself in the whole house and overflowed to the galleries. Compared with the remnant that heard the sad newspaper discourse a week before, there was but one conclusion: 'It pays to advertise.'" ("Percival Chubb Discovers 'It Pays to Advertise,'" unidentified press clipping, January 24, 1916) It is worth noting that Chubb's January 23 address on "The City," in which he called for public ownership of utilities and decried a proposed racial segregation measure, raised no stir whatever.

Though uncomfortable with his notoriety, Chubb did not fall silent. In an interview displayed prominently in a Sunday edition of the New York Tribune a few weeks after the address, Chubb again detailed his objections to

contemporary newspapers. The reporter, Edward Alden Jewell, wrote that he had interviewed Chubb because he wanted to hear a wholehearted indictment of his profession; even Felix Adler, he wrote, could give him only "a mild and half-hearted flogging at best." ("Manifold Are The Sins Of Newspapers," New York Tribune, February 6, 1916) Again Chubb stated that newspapers failed to take their cue from "the minority which defends the culture and ethics of a community." (Ibid.)

He said he did not object to the reporting of news, as some St. Louis newspapers had charged, but argued that "the empire of news ought to be expanded so as to embrace, and raise also to a more vital dignity, reports of those finer and subtler activities which do not invite lurid verbal investiture." (Ibid.) He repeated his observation that the business interests of newspapers dictate editorial judgment; "Advertisers must be catered to," he said, "and thus the stamp of the dollar is placed upon opinion, making it dishonest or biased." (Ibid.) He also condemned the dressing up of scandal and crime, as well as the "absurd juxtaposition" of "girl stuff" with legitimate international and civic news. But going beyond his January 16 address, Chubb called for the abolishment of Sunday newspapers, which he called "a desecration of the Sabbath"; "The day of rest and meditation," he said, "is whipped into a day of feverish mental turmoil" by the surfeit of massive Sunday editions. He also launched into another peeve that he had wisely omitted from his St. Louis address for fear of distracting attention from his central thesis: The comic supplement, "an evil of long standing," should be eliminated, he said, "Or rather it ought to be replaced by a supplement presenting humor instead of inanity"; he charged that the "stupid gambols" depicted in the comics educated youth "to a chronic disrespect for age and distress and chivalry." (Ibid.) Finally, he called for an end to the use of newspapers in the classroom since they cultivated devotion to base materialism and diminished students' appreciation of high culture. St. Louis newspapers carried synopses of the interview; one was headlined, "P. Chubb Tells His Troubles To N.Y. Editor."

But even that interview was not to be Chubb's last word on the subject. In meetings of the Public Question Club and the Open Forum held amidst the controversy, he reiterated his complaint that the newspapers were deficient in coverage of legislative debates and labor issues. He also took another swipe at local art critics. "There is really no technical critical knowledge of art in St. Louis, and it is disgusting to all artists," he reportedly said at the Public Question Club. ("Chubb Again Hits Press Because It 'Suppresses News,'" unidentified press clipping; Ethical Society archives) After a lively exchange with other participants in the club, he admitted that he was "blinded by the glare of publicity and craving for the gloom of the shade." (Ibid.) A few years later, however, he accepted an invitation to speak at a dinner meeting of the St. Louis Association of Journalists at the venerable Planters Hotel; in addition to repeating his usual criticisms of reporters, he castigated young professional men generally as "dependent, or kept classes" who allowed themselves to be "entirely muzzled by commercialism." One of the news stories on the meeting noted that "Mr. Chubb's views on journalism were sought by the association because several years ago his criticism of the local press led to an interesting controversy." (Undated, unidentified newspaper clipping; Ethical Society archives) Though angered and amused by Chubb's criticism, writers by no means discounted the leader. Because his opinions were so strong and so eloquently expressed, reporters often asked Chubb to comment on public issues; he became an unofficial spokesman for "the cultured minority" as well as intellectual pacifists and socialists. An icon of high culture, he was widely admired and ridiculed in his day. The Mirror, which deflated pomposity even as it presented fine contemporary literature, was particularly fond of caricaturing him as a sanctimonious defender of classicism: Contributor Edgar Lee Masters, author of the Spoon River Anthology, wrote poetry and commentary for The Mirror under the fictitious name of "Elmer Chubb, L.L.D., Ph.D." Chubb canceled his subscription in anger, and several Society members wrote to Charles J. Finger, the assistant editor of the publication, urging him to stop to the long-running satire. This poem, evidently published in The Mirror and attributed to Chubb, exemplifies the exquisite derision he came in for:

Strophes From Styxside

By Yorick

PERCIVAL CHUBB
AN ETHICAL CULTURIST

The ribald multitude moves on
And I lie here,
Under the chastely graven slab,
Which roofs my eternal resting-place.
The refining touch of Death
Passed over my mortal lineaments

And fixed them in a marble immobility
Austere and noble
As some old effigy of the Cinquecento.
Even my sparse and faun-like beard,
The only incongruity
In my otherwise blameless exterior,
With its mild suggestion
Of the great god Pan,
Or that drunken roisterer
Silenus,
Is shrunken and subdued
To a sort of sculptural and stony
Stiffness.
Pass on, oh vulgar throng!
And heed me not.
Used I am to neglect,
And to the jibes and jeers
With which the unthinking proletariat
Is wont to greet
The intrepid heralds of a higher culture.
Oh! I know even my knightly name
Aroused your unholy risibilities,
As though I had been consecrated at my christening,
To the mockery of your maudlin mirth.

But I take solace in this sweet thought,
That even while you scorned me,
And Despite the debasing influences
Of that saffron-tinted press
Which reflected all too cunningly
The sensations, the shams and the frivolities
Of the scandalous age In which I lived,
Despite the crass vulgarity
Of steaming, smoking, reeking,
Mighty America,
That little band of the faithful
Yclept so sneeringly, the Educated Minority
Increased in numbers and in force.

Even before my exit from the stage,
The Drama had advanced by Leagues.
Also the ancient art of Pageantry
Had been resuscitated.
The Spirit of Romance and Chivalry Began to stir,
And Festivals and Feasts
Of olden time
Renewed our Springs of Beauty.

That I might not be considered
Too fond an Antiquarian,
I quoted Emerson
In the mazes of the Morris Dance,
And discoursed of Damaged Goods
Around the May-Pole.
But never could I be brought to admit
That the Rag-Time of to-day
Might become the Folk-Song of the Future.

You will not heed me.
So -- on with your Modern Dances,
Flippant Fools!
Eat, drink and be merry
For to-morrow you die.
To die; to sleep; perchance to dream,
Aye, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come.

P. Chubb.(unidentified clipping; Ethical Society archives)

Conviction in Action

Chubb was held dear by Society members. At the 1920 annual meeting, chairman Fred Herzog offered him "grateful acknowledgement and affectionate thanks for the devotion, self-sacrifice and unstinted labor which he has given us, and because of which the Society finds itself today staunch, vigorous and flourishing." (minutes of annual meeting, October 8, 1920) Beyond fulfilling the movement's professorial ideal of leadership, he developed the caring, nurturing attributes of the traditional pastor. A more sociable man than his predecessor, he heightened the geniality and intellectual intercourse of the community. He was responsive to his "constituency," even to the point of pleading for suggestions and criticisms. "In all decisions, including those as to what to speak about on Sundays, my endeavor is to feel after your needs and outreachings and to try to meet them out of what is most alive and abundant in myself," he wrote in a pastoral letter. (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, Sept. 10, 1925) Though membership dipped in the last years of Chubb's tenure, his public speeches and civic service brought the Society the favorable profile it had long coveted. At times, Chubb's ardor precipitated painful frustration. He criticized members of the movement for being "too cautious and conservative ... not having acted as people with the fire of a new faith burning in them." One of the movement's principal impediments, he believed, was Felix Adler's authoritarianism:

The Chief... has kept the Movement isolated, detached, lacking in friendliness and appreciativeness. He has been so keen about being "unique" -- different -- superior. I really think he does not know the contemporary world. He is so intent on the eternal.

...

We none of us want to hurt the Chief's feelings. There is no personal issue and yet it would be taken personally. The Chief is touchy, shies at dissent, and is very self-opinionated ... the spirit of freedom is lacking.... We are suffering from frozen assets. (letter from Percival Chubb to John Lovejoy Elliott, dated Aug. 31, 1931; Ethical Culture archives)

He also was dismayed by signs of tepidity in the St. Louis community -- so much so that in 1923 he considered offers to serve the Brooklyn and Boston societies. He told an alarmed Martha Fischel that he was not anxious to leave St. Louis, but he owned that he was discouraged by the poor attendance at platform meetings and the "small response to his great efforts." (minutes of board of trustees, June 1923) Furthermore, he complained, the demands of leadership had kept him from his writing. To make matters worse, Anna Sheldon Chubb, who served as his secretary without compensation, had fallen ill, and he told the board he was not prepared to take on another year's work without her support and assistance. He also acknowledged displeasure with his salary; the raise he had been promised at the time of his hire was not granted until 1921, and even then it amounted to only \$750. In an effort to retain him, the board in late 1923 brought his salary up to \$5,000, but he still refused to commit himself beyond the season.

Early in 1924, while on a speaking tour in the East, he formally submitted his resignation. Fischel traveled to Philadelphia to urge him to stay on, but he would consider no more than a part-time commitment. At his insistence, the board agreed to hire AEU executive secretary George O'Dell as associate leader; O'Dell was familiar with the community, having filled in when Chubb took a sabbatical in the 1917-18 season. Under the arrangement agreed upon by Chubb and the board, Chubb's salary was to be halved, and O'Dell and his wife would jointly be paid \$4,000. Chubb was to lecture in St. Louis for periods of about six weeks in the fall and spring. During the rest of the season, Chubb would serve as associate lecturer -- with Henry Neumann -- of the Brooklyn Society, and O'Dell would occupy the St. Louis platform and arrange for guest speakers.

The arrangement did not come off as planned. O'Dell took ill over the summer and was advised not to work for at least six months. Chubb agreed to extend his lecture periods in St. Louis and to return for Christmas festivities, but he still had to uphold commitments to Brooklyn and other Eastern societies. A variety of academics and liberal clergymen filled out the platform schedule in O'Dell's absence. Chubb was pleased with the revised arrangement, and he persuaded the board to continue it into the 1925-26 season. However, illness forced him to remain in St. Louis throughout the second half of that season, and the time-sharing arrangement never was resumed. Chubb agreed to stay in St. Louis on full salary, provided he receive a midwinter vacation during which visitors would occupy the platform.

Chubb continued to plead for an assistant, even offering to forego \$1,000 of his salary to make the addition possible. In 1928, his wish was granted in the person of W. Frank Swift, a leader-in-training who had been recommended by Chicago leader Horace J. Bridges. Because Swift's service would prepare him to serve the movement elsewhere, Adler underwrote \$1,000 of his \$2,400 salary for two years. Swift was one of the movement's most enthusiastic newcomers. Just before coming to St. Louis, he visited New York, meeting Adler and his associates and touring the settlement houses and the Ethical Culture School. At the annual meeting in October 1928, he told the membership "he felt more and more convinced that this was a movement into which he could enter most heartily; there was no need to look farther or to seek a wider field." (minutes of board of trustees, October 1928) Notwithstanding the praises of St. Louis he had heard in New York, he expressed amazement at the scope of the Society's activities. Swift replaced Cecelia Boette as director of the Sunday School, helped organize youth activities, and occasionally spoke from the platform. He left St. Louis at the end of the 1929-30 season to work in the New York Society. The following year, he was named leader of the Boston Society, and in 1933 he began assisting S. Burns Weston in Philadelphia. In December of that year, he was killed in a car wreck on an icy road while returning from a leaders' meeting in New York.

Even with Swift's assistance, Chubb continued to feel restless in his post. In the 1929-30 season, he spent about fourteen weeks touring the Eastern societies; he covered the cost of the additional speakers needed in St. Louis out of his salary. When possible, visiting Ethical leaders spoke from the platform on two consecutive Sundays, providing additional leadership services in the intervening week. In late 1930, Chubb announced he would retire within a few years. He offered the board two alternatives -- either he would retire at the end of the 1931-32 season, or he would take a sabbatical in that season and return for one year in an advisory capacity. The latter alternative had the advantage of allowing the membership to review leadership candidates during Chubb's absence, then hire a replacement before he stepped out of the picture altogether. A Leadership Committee was formed to conduct the search. The first potential candidate invited to St. Louis was J. Hutton Hynd, another protege of London leader Stanton Coit. Hynd, a Scotsman who had studied philosophy at the University of Perth, first spoke in St. Louis in early 1931. The Ethical movement had no other leaders to offer. Apart from Hynd, the candidates for the post were a professor from the University of Wisconsin and the ministers of several Unitarian and Congregationalist churches.

Hynd, clearly the front-runner for the post, was under contract to the London Society for the 1931-32 season, so Chubb postponed his sabbatical until 1932-33. During that season, he was replaced jointly by Hynd and Nathaniel Schmidt, an auxiliary leader from New York; as during the Society's last period of leader limbo, a Platform Committee arranged for additional speakers. Within a month of Hynd's arrival, the board authorized president Alexander Langsdorf to offer him a permanent position. Hynd agreed to take the job in February 1933, and the membership ratified the hire that same month. He became permanent leader at the start of the 1933-34 season.

Chubb spent his sabbatical touring Europe and visiting friends in England. In September, he sent the Society his final autumn pastoral. In it, the lengthiest of his career, he thanked the members for the twenty-two years he had spent in their service and offered his most mature reflections on the nature of personal growth and ethical communion. Self-realization, he said, can be achieved only in interaction with soul mates. Therefore, the Society, in order to fulfill its purpose, must be a "high-hearted and wholehearted fellowship." (Afterthoughts, pastoral letter in pamphlet form, p. 4) He envisioned the Society as a microcosm of the utopian harmony its members idealized:

Religion I have defined for myself as conviction in action, our highest wisdom incarnated in living or conduct. That view of it would commit us not merely to an intellectual acknowledgment of this basis of fellowship, but to the embodiment and exemplification of it. We are to be a fellowship, live in fellowship. We are not merely to seek the vision; nay, not merely to live accordingly in all our human relations; but -- and this is my emphasis -- to live it together in our little community; to exemplify it and typify it among ourselves in this community. Our life together is to be a collective confession of faith, so far as the restricted sphere of association and activity will permit of our making it so. The soul of meaning in such a fellowship is to focus and burn to a flame of

light and warmth, creating the climate in which a small company pursue their quest of the Best Life. It is to commit us not only to seek the Way, but exemplify the Life in our collective endeavor. (Afterthoughts, pastoral letter by Percival Chubb published in pamphlet form, p. 10)

9: Second Wind

The stability provided by Sheldon Memorial greatly strengthened the institutional health of the Ethical Society. The board of trustees began to meet monthly instead of sporadically. Study and social clubs, having freer access to meeting quarters, grew steadier. The building's Assembly Room made possible frequent dinners and dances. The community now had a home, and its members came to feel more and more at home.

New Blood

The Society's authority structure grew more democratic after Sheldon and Robert Moore left the scene. Without these strong-willed leaders to attend to the details of running the Society, trustees and officers had to exercise more initiative than ever. Subcommittees proliferated and took on more authority. Drafting the budget and performing audits and inventories, keeping the building and grounds in shape, fielding requests for rentals, purchasing supplies, overseeing hospitality services, publicizing events, providing music for assemblies and platform services, stocking and cataloging the library, raising funds, coordinating group activities -- all these responsibilities were borne by standing committees. The board retained its right to check major decisions, but it generally respected the actions of committees.

Despite this delegation of authority, power was not always shared freely. To ensure both continuity and freshness, all board members served three-year terms, and one-third of the seats came up for election each year. However, the Nominating Committee was made up of board members, and it often nominated only incumbents. Furthermore, its slate usually included exactly as many nominees as available seats. Society members had the right to add nominations from the floor before voting on this slate at the annual meeting, but they rarely exercised that right. In consequence, most trustees retained their seats for as long as they wanted them. The process became fairer when, in 1917, the board prohibited more than one trustee from sitting on the Nominating Committee. In the 1920s, this committee began nominating about two candidates for each available seat. The board further broadened its base of representation when, in 1929, it began exercising its long-standing authority to appoint as many as three Society members to one-year terms on the board. These auxiliary trustees, though not elected by the Society membership, had full voting rights.

In 1914, at the direction of the board, the Nominating Committee first included women on the ballot. At that year's annual meeting, Martha Fischel became the first woman elected to the board; she later would become president. Women were not entirely at ease holding the sort of authority they were denied in the political arena. At the 1915 annual meeting, Edith Glatfelter, a schoolteacher and leader in the Y.P.A., moved to withdraw her name from nomination. Trustee Jesse Williams, "in a neat speech," and Anna Sheldon Chubb persuaded her to reconsider, and she became the second woman on the board. And when the committee elected new officers in 1925, Fischel asked the committee to consider temporarily replacing her as president because "it would be more fitting to have a gentleman at the helm during the anniversary celebration." Despite her protest, she was unanimously re-elected. After Fischel and Glatfelter broke the ice, it became common for women to serve on the board.

The idea of holding board meetings each month -- regardless of the workload -- was proposed in 1915 but was not well-received. The following year, however, newly elected president Hugo Muench instituted monthly meetings. This regularity facilitated an administrative rhythm: Society members seeking approval for their proposals learned to lobby trustees in advance, allowing time for study before the issue went to a vote. To provide for decision-making between meetings, the board in 1924 established an advisory committee made up of the board president and two other trustees.

Moore retired from the board in 1916 for health reasons. Upon his retirement, the board named him chairman emeritus. He died in 1922. Hugo Muench, Lambert E. Walther, and Fred J. Herzog succeeded him in relatively brief terms. In 1923, Martha Fischel began a seven-year tenure. Fischel was deeply devoted to the Society. Though in her seventies when she took office, she spent countless hours organizing meetings and events and advising group leaders. At the 1925 annual meeting, trustee Charles Staudinger said Fischel served as "everything from janitor up. I have occasion to come here often and I always find her. I always look for her cot and trunk." After receiving a rising

vote of thanks, Fischel vowed, "I shall work for the Society as long as I have breath; my life is consecrated to the Ethical Society." (minutes of annual meeting, October 11, 1925)

From the start of her tenure, Fischel solicited the ideas and criticisms of Society members, often urging them to attend board meetings. She also took a great interest in AEU affairs. In 1927, she visited each of the established societies to discuss national matters such as leadership training, finances, publications, education, and potential new subgroups. She retired from the presidency in 1930 at the age of 80. Like Moore, she was named president emeritus. She was succeeded by Alexander S. Langsdorf, who had served as vice president since 1927.

Subgroups

The Contemporary Literature Circle

The Greek Ethics Club, which had suspended its activities after Sheldon's death, was reconstituted by Society member L. Maude Eoff when the community moved into Sheldon Memorial. After studying historic works of philosophy and literature under Sheldon, members of the group sought to undertake a more direct examination of social and ethical issues. Chubb engineered this shift in the 1911-12 season by conducting a series of discussions on "Woman and Labor," a topical book that traced the history of women's economic roles. Each spring thereafter, a committee drew up a reading list comprising contemporary fiction, poetry, essays, biographies, and plays. Reflecting this shift, the group was renamed the Contemporary Literature Circle. Like its predecessor, the group met fortnightly on Tuesday afternoons. Before each meeting, Chubb and member assistants drew up synopses, reading suggestions, and lists of questions to facilitate discussion. Ethical leaders and St. Louis educators were asked to address the group on books with which they were especially familiar. Ethical leaders Henry Golding, Henry Neumann, and Nathaniel Schmidt were favorites. Men were welcome to join the club, but it remained essentially a women's group until 1931, when Society members asked its leaders to hold evening meetings to accommodate job schedules. Only about half the group's members belonged to the Ethical Society. In the teens and 1920s, the group had about a hundred dues-paying members. Leaders donated their services; dues were used to buy books that were then loaned to members for a nominal sum. The club also made an annual contribution to the Society. An ephemeral offshoot of the group, the Junior Reading Circle, built a similar program on young adult literature.

The Child Study Group

The Ladies' Home Club, one of the Society's earliest study groups, also was revived after the move to Sheldon Memorial. Society member Elsie Langsdorf organized the new club, the Child Study Group, in 1921. In their discussions of parenting and psychology books, group members shared their experiences and tested the theories of renowned experts. By its third year, the group boasted more than a hundred members. On average, thirty to fifty people attended the semi-weekly meetings. Like the Contemporary Literature Circle, the group was not confined to Ethical Society members; also, like the reading circle, it was, in effect, a women's group. In addition to its regular meetings, the group held a yearly luncheon with a keynote speaker. In 1925, the group joined the National Federation for Child Study; half of each member's \$2 annual dues was used for subscriptions to the parent organization's magazine. As the group's reputation grew, Langsdorf became a popular speaker on child-rearing; in the 1924-25 season, she delivered thirty talks to civic groups. Offshoots of the group sprang up in the city and county. Members of the original group gradually entered neighborhood satellites, and the Ethical Society group dissolved in 1929.

The Women's Auxiliary

The strongest and most influential women's group was the Women's Auxiliary. Formed before women were elected to the board of trustees, this group originally provided services then considered "women's work." After the move to Sheldon Memorial, it hosted monthly membership dinners, children's entertainments, and seasonal festivities. It oversaw the Society's fund-raising events, including bazaars, work auctions, Christmas sales, and bake sales; it also presented benefit plays and music recitals. Through its various enterprises, the Auxiliary raised as much as \$ 1,000 a year for the Ethical Society's general fund. Members of its Visiting Committee looked in on Society members who were sick or isolated. For its own ranks, which ranged from about 50 to 80, it held teas, monthly board meetings, and an annual luncheon.

The Auxiliary maintained the charm and usefulness of Sheldon Memorial by furnishing the kitchen, decorating meeting rooms, keeping up the garden, and providing flowers for the platform. The Sheldon Memorial garden was

its pride. An independent Grounds Committee oversaw the development of the yard, but Auxiliary members provided most of the needed funds and much of the labor. Full-scale gardening began with a tree planting in 1920. The trees, donated by the Auxiliary and four other Society subgroups, were dedicated at a spring festival. These were followed by flowering shrubs such as California privet and Japanese honeysuckle. The following year, a pergola was built with funds from the Auxiliary, a private donor, and the Society's current fund; at its base, the women planted wisteria, clematis, and climbing roses. The club also procured a bird bath, benches, and a trellis. The garden was "a riot of color" planted with iris, tulips, snapdragon, chrysanthemums, zinnias, petunias, and asters. In the warm months, it served as the setting for festivals, plays, dance recitals, and wedding receptions. So beautiful was the garden that nearby apartment tenants vied for units that overlooked it. (Minutes of Annual Meeting, October 5, 1924)

The Women's Auxiliary was the Society's most charitable group. It hosted luncheons to benefit the Tuberculosis Society, the Visiting Nurses Association, and other public welfare organizations. During World War I, it sold hundreds of dollars worth of war bonds, entertained disabled soldiers, and assisted in campaigns for Liberty Loans, the United War Loan, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and European relief organizations. Its Philanthropic Sewing Group donated hundreds of garments to City Hospital, the Children's Aid Society, and relief and detention centers; it also prepared surgical dressings for the Visiting Nurses Association. A separate sewing group made clothing for sale at bazaars. The Auxiliary also made isolated donations of money, food, clothing, and toys to needy families. On "Women's Day," a Sunday on which the platform service was devoted to women's issues, the Society donated part of its collection to the Auxiliary for its charitable work.

As a unit of the Board of Religious Organizations, an interdenominational civic and philanthropic society, the auxiliary formed subgroups that assisted the juvenile court system by helping place delinquent girls in foster homes and by making follow-up visits; provided cultural orientation for immigrants on the city's North Side; and distributed refreshments and donated clothing to patients at the city's infirmary and sanitarium. The Ethical Unit of the B.R.O. included a chairman, a secretary, and representatives to the board's Child Welfare, Family Welfare, Institutions, Publication, and Legislation committees. The unit also included a representative of the Young People's Association.

On the cerebral side, the auxiliary sponsored lecture courses by local professionals and prominent academics. Usually held on weekday mornings or in conjunction with luncheons, these lectures drew women of all religious affiliations. Health, child-rearing, and social issues were favorite topics. Because of its financial health and energetic membership, the group often was asked to arrange benefit lecture courses featuring such charismatic speakers as sociologist Charles Zeublin. Auxiliary members such as Edna Gellhorn were among the leaders of the St. Louis chapter of the League of Women Voters, and the groups sometimes collaborated in presenting lectures on politics and urban development. In the 1929-30 season, the Women's Auxiliary and its counterparts in other ethical societies joined a nationwide group for the study of the causes and cures of war; the national group was directed by Carrie Chapman Catt, who had led the National American Women's Suffrage Association to victory ten years before.

The Men's Club

The men of the Society never matched the organizational industry of the women. Sheldon repeatedly organized men's discussion clubs that focused on philosophy and politics, but participants were slow to take charge of their union. After arranging sporadic gatherings for years, Jesse Williams formally established a Men's Club about 1908. Its stated purpose was "to promote the welfare of the Ethical Society, to afford opportunities for the men of the Society to meet together in Social intercourse, to build up the Society, and to devise plans for strengthening it in membership and influence, to the end that the great work of advancing the moral life of St. Louis by a continued consideration of all great questions from their ethical aspect, inaugurated by it, may endure." (Constitution and By-Laws of the Men's Club of the Ethical Society; archives) The club had an executive committee comprising a chairman, secretary, treasurer, and two other members, one of whom was the acting leader of the Ethical Society. At the time of its organization, the club had about 80 members. Club members entertained visiting lecturers and debated platform topics. The club also sponsored all-Society benefit dances. The club lapsed for lack of consistent interest but was revived in the 1918-19 season by Dr. George Gellhorn. This time, the group attracted about 25 members. Once again, however, its meetings were poorly attended. Records of annual all-Society meetings indicate members of the Women's Auxiliary were fond of goading the men to copy their success and that of the New York men's club. Some of the men were defensive about their lack of enthusiasm. At the 1925 annual meeting, John Gundlach, though a dynamo in civic activities, offered to contribute \$ 100 for special platform music if only the Men's Club would be permitted to die in peace. The chairman accepted the gift but not the provision. The club died anyway.

In 1928, board chairman Alexander S. Langsdorf again organized a men's club, this time on a basis that ensured high membership: All men belonging to the Ethical Society were registered as members of the club, regardless of whether they paid their \$1 annual dues. Members of the Women's Auxiliary conspired to raise attendance at the club's meetings by providing dinner. Under the leadership of Dr. Frank Hinchey and Gaston DuBois, the club finally acquired some stability. Club members came to enjoy talks by visiting lecturers and discussions of current events and recent platform topics. R. Walston Chubb, son of Percival Chubb, brought to the club a talent for provocation. As evidenced by the notes of secretary J. C. Edwards, club members cultivated repartee:

Walston Chubb: Until all our doubts are resolved, I call my belief The Philosophy of the
Meanwhile.

Dr. Frank Hinchey: Ford is paying his men too-high wages -- he raises their pay without their
asking for it!

Hermann Schwarz: Five days shalt thou labor -- or at least see to it that thine employees do; on the
sixth thou shalt avocationalize in the woods and cause much chatter among the birds by thine
intrusiveness into their privacies; and on the seventh thou shalt repose in the Ethical Society and
imbibe wisdom. This is the Grand Life!

Julian Glasgow: [Philosopher-biologist Ernst] Haeckel defines God as a gaseous vertebrate.

Professor Nathaniel Schmidt: It isn't ungentlemanly to kick around a dead person.

Percival Chubb: After being an optimist, I have to be a pessimist for an hour or two.

The Young People's Association

The Young People's Association, an outgrowth of the Young People's Union initiated by William Lighty at the turn of the century, also gained steam after the move to Sheldon. The Y.P.A. held two or three functions each week during the Society's regular season and occasional functions during the summer. Hiking was a favorite activity: Group members frequently gathered after platform meetings to explore nature reserves and river valleys; their walks often began at the endpoints of streetcar lines and wended toward such rural outposts as Black Jack and Valley Park. In warm weather, hikes culminated with picnics; in cool weather, Society members living in the far reaches of suburbia opened their homes to the hikers. The group also conducted skating parties, treasure hunts, hayrides, riverboat excursions, and athletic events. About once a year, the association sponsored trips to wilderness resorts featuring swimming, hiking, and horseback riding. For years, it held monthly dances. The association encouraged cultural enrichment by arranging outings to the art museum, symphony concerts, recitals at Washington University's Graham Chapel, and Muni Opera productions. Artistically inclined members formed an Aesthetic Dancing Group, a Folk Dancing Group, and a Dramatic Group. All these troupes performed at Y.P.A. and all-Society entertainments. The Drama Group, in addition to presenting shows, conducted a Dramatic Reading Circle, which informally performed contemporary plays. Many of the group's dramatic presentations were unadorned one-act plays, but some, especially those directed by Percival Chubb, were extravagant productions. The group's repertoire ranged from Greek tragedies to contemporary comedies by G.B. Shaw and A.A. Milne.

The Y.P.A. also conducted study and discussion groups. Over the years, these included a Nature Study Group, a Bible Study Group, a Travel Club, a Music History Group, and, in the wake of World War I, an International Peace Study Group. A pre-platform class on Sunday mornings was devoted to the study of ethics. The most enduring of the association's discussion groups was the International Relations Group; founded by Paula Wilhelmi (later Moody) at the request of Percival Chubb, it sponsored dinner talks by platform speakers and other experts on foreign affairs. Of more local interest was the association's Civic Forum, which focused on topical issues such as pending legislation, taxation proposals, and women's political rights; Chubb expressed hope that this group would produce civic and political leaders.

The tenor of the Y.P.A. reflected the highbrow humor of the Men's Club and the Society at large. A notice of a Peripatetic Round-Table dinner promised "cerebral calisthenics for all," and the announcement of a 1926 treasure hunt admonished members not to act "unseemingly" but to conduct themselves with "studied audacity." An item in a newsletter noted that the young woman who helped Sunday School pupils build a doll house was "uncertain as to

whether Ibsen's spirit will haunt the house when completed." (Y.P.A. program leaflet, February 1930; and December 1934 newsletter; Ethical Society archives)

The Y.P.A. played an integral role in the Ethical Society. For years, it was the Society's largest single source of Sunday School teachers. In addition to presenting its own plays and dances, the association helped organize parties for children and assisted the Women's Auxiliary in putting on bazaars, work auctions, and social suppers. Each year, it donated to the Society a few hundred dollars out of its profits from plays, recitals, and rummage sales. The Y.P.A. also performed a few community services, such as reading for the blind and assisting in projects of the Board of Religious Organizations, but its efforts never approached those of the Women's Auxiliary. Once a year on "Y.P.A. Sunday," the association took charge of arrangements for the Ethical Society platform service; traditionally, the group invited a speaker to address the needs and obligations of young people. Chubb looked to the Y.P.A. to help maintain the loyalty of Sunday School graduates. In response to that call, the Y.P.A. in the 1919-20 season formed a class called The Eso-Pograds (an anachronism for Esoteric Postgraduates), which, under the direction of Dr. Edith Weaver Johnson, delved more deeply than the Sunday School into matters of philosophy and religion. In the seasons Johnson led the group, 20 to 25 young people took part in the Sunday evening classes. In later seasons, Y.P.A. members took turns leading a Sunday morning Post Graduate Group in discussions of world problems and applied ethics.

The Young People's Association was central in the social lives of its members, many of whom met their spouses at Y.P.A. functions. The association's by-laws limited membership to Ethical Society members and their immediate relatives, but the restriction was not enforced. Initially, membership was dominated by college students and recent Sunday School graduates who ranged in age up to mid-30s. But because the group sponsored such appealing activities, few members elected to resign. In time, the Y.P.A. took in Society members of all ages; like "Greek Ethics Club," Y.P.A. became a misnomer. In the teens and 1920s, Y.P.A. membership hovered around 150.

From time to time, the St. Louis Y.P.A. took part in nationwide organizational efforts. At the 1921 AEU convention in St. Louis, Y.P.A. members helped form a national federation of young people's groups. James Gutmann, a teacher in New York's Ethical Culture School and later an associate leader of the New York Society, was elected the first president of the federation. News notes from member groups were published in the AEU organ "The Standard." A few years after the St. Louis convention, thirteen members of the St. Louis group went to a Chicago convention at their own expense to attend a rally of the federation. With the assistance of the St. Louis delegation, young members of the Chicago Society established an association of their own.

The Drama Group

In the mid-20s, the Y.P.A. Drama Group swelled with young people who belonged to neither the Y.P.A. nor the Ethical Society. Rankled by the parent group's control of its treasury, the Drama Group agitated for independence. The board of trustees instructed the group to submit drafts of a constitution and by-laws in preparation for the secession; the group was slow to fulfill this requirement, and the board suspended its activities and barred it from the building until its leaders complied. When the paperwork finally was completed in December 1925, the board granted the group semi-autonomy. The chairman and vice chairman of the group had to be members of the Y.P.A. executive committee, but the group elected its officers and administered its own treasury. Membership no longer was limited to Y.P.A. members, but only Y.P.A. or Ethical Society members could vote and hold office in the group. Membership applicants were required to audition.

The board of trustees supported the group's ambitions by authorizing stage improvements, providing space for prop storage, and purchasing the lumber with which members built a loft over the Assembly Room kitchen. For several seasons, the revived group annually presented two or three entertainments consisting of plays and dances. The group took on more ambitious productions, such as Chekhov plays and the Chinese opera "Little Almond-Eyes," and occasionally entered productions in tournaments of the St. Louis Art League. Unfortunately, casting was hampered by the group's disproportionately female membership. The level of attendance at the group's entertainments was discouraging, and it dissolved around 1930. In 1932, the board of trustees approved the formation of a new Drama Group, but it stipulated that the group be limited to members of the Society and its subgroups. The cooperative group that evolved took in members of the Y.P.A., the Sunday School, the Women's Auxiliary, and the Junior Auxiliary. Rather than presenting its shows as independent events, this group performed at all-Society gatherings. During the Depression, it also performed gratis at neighborhood centers for the unemployed.

The Toy Shop

Members of the Women's Auxiliary, the Y.P.A., and other Society subgroups joined forces in maintaining the Toy Shop, one of the Ethical Society's most consistent community services. Begun in 1916 by Josie K. Wangelin, the Toy Shop produced and reconditioned thousands of toys for distribution to sick and needy children. A dozen or more regular volunteers fashioned dolls, doll houses, wagons, picture books, and games out of such simple materials as cigar boxes, spools, fabric scraps, and discarded magazines. Society members donated money, materials, and used toys. Each year, the shop presented an exhibit of its handiwork on the Sunday before Christmas. The shop annually distributed about a thousand toys to such institutions as City Hospital, St. Louis Colored Orphanage, Neighborhood House, the Salvation Army, and Good Will. A community center in Appalachia also was a regular recipient. In addition, the Women's Auxiliary gave toys to selected private families. Some of the toys were sold at bazaars to benefit the Society. Wangelin freely offered her expertise to other St. Louis associations initiating similar ventures. She also exported the project to other cities: After hearing her report at the New York Society's fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1926, the New York and Philadelphia societies organized toy shops of their own.

Scout Troops

For the children, the Society sponsored Boy Scout and Camp Fire Girl troops. The girls' troop was initiated the year the Society moved into Sheldon Memorial, but its progress was halting. Its strongest incarnation began in 1926 under the Indian-sounding name Petruchee -- an acronym for persistence, trustworthiness, and cheerfulness. Cecelia Boette, one of the first Camp Fire guardians in St. Louis, helped Emily Bausch form the group; three other Society members assisted with the program. The troop averaged 10 to 15 members. In addition to their weekly meetings at Sheldon Memorial, the girls went on hikes and camping trips; held parent-daughter dinners; and exhibited their handicrafts and outdoor skills at Society bazaars. As a member of the National Needlework Guild, the troop donated handmade and refurbished clothing to the needy. Lacking consistent leadership, the group became an informal club, meeting in the homes of its members and having little to do with the Camp Fire organization.

Sons of Society members participated in a Scout troop that rented Sheldon Memorial for years before the Society started its own troop. Society member Curt Wilhelmi formed the first troop in the teens. In 1923, a reconstituted group under the direction of Erwin Schmidt was formally dedicated as Troop 21 of the St. Louis Council. A troop committee of five Society members assisted Schmidt with the group's finances, training courses, and excursions. The troop started with 12 members and grew to number about 35 by the end of the decade. At its weekly meetings, the troop followed the standard course of instruction in outdoor skills, but it had the extraordinary advantage of owning its own cabin in the woods. The boys built the cabin in 1925 on a farm near Manchester, Missouri. Society member George Koebel granted the troop use of the land. The cabin was located on high, densely wooded ground; a nearby spring provided drinking and cooking water. A professional carpenter volunteered his assistance in the project. The large, sturdy structure, dubbed "Wahoo Lodge," was dedicated at a parent-son cookout on February 6, 1926. The site was used for camping trips and merit-badge instruction. In addition to its hikes, urban diversions, and weekly meetings, Troop 21 took part in jamborees and St. Louis Council gatherings. For a time, uniformed scouts patrolled the intersection of Grand and Washington on Sunday mornings, escorting Sunday School students from streetcars to Sheldon Memorial. A subgroup of the troop, the Sea Scouts, was formed in 1932.

A Busy Intersection

As the Society's clubs grew bigger, livelier, and more numerous, tensions began to arise. By 1925, there were more than a dozen groups, each with its own officers, meetings, and dues; an average of forty-five meetings were held in Sheldon Memorial each month. Meeting and activity schedules conflicted, dividing the loyalties of members. Some groups complained that the board overlooked their needs. Martha Fischel, president of the board from 1923 to 1930, made group harmony a priority. She appointed an Organization Committee, composed of board members and group representatives, to mediate conflicts, coordinate schedules, and stimulate group activities. At least once a year, Fischel invited the leaders of groups to attend a board meeting devoted to integrating Society activities. The leaders reported on their groups, discussed ways in which they might assist each other, and aired disagreements over Society policies. Fischel encouraged the groups to nominate representatives to board seats. In addition, she asked ad hoc committees of group representatives to advise the board on proposals that would affect them all. In the late twenties, when the board began appointing auxiliary members, Fischel promised the groups preference would be given to the candidates they recommended.

Fischel also laid down stringent regulations. As of 1924, the groups were required to submit membership and address lists as well as itemized records of their income and expenditures. All changes in leadership were to be reported to the board. The groups also had to fill out questionnaires regarding their purposes, activities, dues, and meeting schedules. Building use was tightly controlled. Except for the Toy Shop, no group was permitted exclusive use of any meeting area. As rentals provided a substantial source of revenue for the Society, groups had to defer to the needs of guests; when concerts were held in the auditorium, meetings were prohibited in the Assembly Room. The board set the time of building closure and established standards of acceptable behavior. For instance, dancing was prohibited on Sundays because it was considered contrary to the religious nature of the day, and prizes could be awarded at card parties only by special permission. Board approval also was required to promote an event as an Ethical Society benefit. When an event was so billed, the board demanded a full disclosure of the sponsoring organization's gate and expenditures. Some groups, particularly the Y.P.A., were less than pleased with these demands, but Fischel's approach was effective. As group interdependence increased, tensions eased. The groups exchanged membership lists to determine which members of the Society were left out of group activities; an all-Society social calendar minimized scheduling conflicts; and groups sponsored more activities jointly. Periodically, the Organization Committee held informational meetings for the membership at large.

Fischel insisted that all subgroups share the aims of the Society as a whole; she would not permit them to develop strictly social or recreational programs. "The Ethical Society exists for the promotion of ethical worth, for a higher sense of duty and relations to each other, and not [as] a place of amusement," she said. "We cannot do the things the Society stands for if we have a lot of people, or groups, who are not interested in the Society." (minutes of the board of trustees, March 10, 1925) Many groups included people who were not members of the Society; some, such as the Child Study Group, were composed predominantly of outsiders. The board accepted this openness in the belief that it would ultimately increase Society membership, but it demanded that the groups be led only by Society members.

A Collective Consciousness

Chubb made the supremacy of community the hallmark of the platform service. An aficionado of the theater who served for a time as president of the Drama League of America, Chubb deeply appreciated the emotional impact of ritual -- the orchestration of symbols, space, and movement. He insisted that the community's meeting place and services be simple, befitting the austerity of ethical religion. He demanded promptness and decorum, frequently running rules of conduct in Society bulletins; he would not have members behave as if they were attending a secular event. Quiet, he taught, facilitated recollection and the overarching consciousness of communion:

The setting must not dwarf or stun the participants. It is their inward vision that must be helped: and for that, concentration is the essential. In this mood of focalized attention life in its unity and totality is to be a recovered reality. The scattered, fragmentary, and distracted self of daily routine and trivial diversion is to be reknit and made whole. The process of outward-going concern with a multitude of externalities is to be reversed; there is to be a return movement toward the center. The mind is its own place. Its splendor is its inward richness.

But this act of self-collection is to be performed with others. We are in the presence; the presence of companion personalities and fellow voyagers. And this communion is to awaken the consciousness of that larger social selfhood which is the real self. Fellowship means that; is the visible symbol of it. We live in and through our relations with others; and the sense of this relationship is to dominate us as we gather together. We really are members one of another in a corporate humanity; and we are to participate in a collective consciousness of the common life that breathes around us. (On the Religious Frontier, p. 63-65)

Chubb left intact the basic elements of the platform service developed by Sheldon. Ordinarily, the address was the dominant element. As he had vowed, Chubb maintained a ceiling on the number of lectures he prepared each season. Most years, he made extensive tours of the Eastern societies, repeating for them the addresses he had introduced in St. Louis. During his absences, the St. Louis platform was occupied primarily by Ethical leaders -- Adler, Algernon Black, Horace Bridges, John Lovejoy Elliott, Henry Golding, Alfred Martin, David Muzzey, Henry Neumann, and Anna Garlin Spencer. Nathaniel Schmidt, an archeologist, linguist, and Cornell University professor affiliated with the New York Society, was perhaps the Society's most beloved visitor; beginning in the 1897-98 season, he spoke in St. Louis annually for more than thirty years. Occasionally, St. Louis helped finance American speaking tours for Stanton Coit, leader of the London Society, and Lord Harry Snell, a Laborite member of the British House of Lords who was active in that society. Most other visitors were academics and liberal clergy, but a few Society members -- such as Washington University dean Alexander S. Langsdorf, civic leader John H. Gundlach, and journalist William A. Kelsoe -- also graced the platform from time to time. Chubb instituted regular observances

focusing on the needs and contributions of women, youth, and parents. Sheldon Sunday, or Founders Day, featured a talk on the Ethical Movement, and Recognition Day honored Sunday School graduates. Chubb also devoted platform services to commemorations of outstanding artists and writers such as Emerson, Shakespeare, and Goethe; complementary music and readings augmented the address, which generally highlighted the subject's contribution to ethical thought. In addition to the lecture, excerpts from great works of literature were read "to remind us of that aristocracy of the spirit that must be preserved against the dead set and the downward pull of mass conventionalism and averagism." (On the Religious Frontier, p. 67, 68)

Fine music remained a highly valued element of the platform service. At Memorial Hall, music most often had been provided by the Lichtenstein and Waechtler string quartets; after the move to Sheldon Memorial, the Anton Quartet performed regularly. At the start of the 1913-14 season, with the new Kilgen organ in place at Sheldon Memorial, the Society hired a staff organist. After that time, additional musicians and vocalists were hired only for special occasions, such as holiday festivals and commemorations of Bach and Beethoven. (One Society member, a great lover of chamber music, resigned in protest of the change.) As the Society's budget provided little funding for music beyond the organist's salary, these presentations usually were underwritten by contributors; when the Society began presenting public chamber music concerts in 1930, proceeds from the concerts went to the special music fund. For nearly a decade, organists stayed with the Society for only a season or two; some were not invited to return (an artist who auditioned for the Music Committee in 1916 "elicited the remark that our organ had been heard for the first time," indicating that his predecessor was less than a virtuoso), and others managed to improve on the \$300 or so the Society paid per season. In the 1922-23 season, Florence Jewett began a seventeen-year stint; by the mid-20s, her salary had leveled out at \$400 a year.

Chubb frequently incorporated congregational singing in the service. He believed that most Society members enjoyed singing, but he had difficulty shuffling the few songs the community knew to avoid monotony. At his urging, a choral group was begun in 1925 to help expand the Society's repertoire. The use of congregational singing, in addition to frequent responsive readings and the passing of the collection plate, brought loud protests against the encroachment of "churchiness." As an illustration of the fury these experiments aroused, a board member resigned from the Society over Chubb's introduction of a candle-lighting ceremony. Chubb noted that these protests came most often from older members who had rebelled against the church affiliations of their youth. He believed that the community's younger members, being less rebellious, could benefit from "some appeal to the imagination." (minutes board of trustees meeting, October 8, 1915) Chubb's philosophy of aesthetics was nowhere more evident than in the cyclic festivals he developed. Noting that religious celebrations meet the need to communally acknowledge perennial cycles of nature and human life, he founded rituals on the primal concerns that underlay sectarian rituals: Springtime was welcomed in a celebration of hope, the new year was approached in a reflective "Quiet Hour," and graduation from Sunday School was marked with the Festival of the Dedication of Youth. As an example of the universal values he extolled, the responsive readings he wrote for the Winter Festival called upon the season itself to warm hearts and spread good will:

Leader -- Welcome once more, season of returning light!

Response -- Shine forth, new-risen sun; lead in a year of happier days!

L. Shine out upon the world, new sun; on old and young, on rich and poor, on say and gay;

R. On home and hall, on hearth and feast, on brightening bough and glittering tree.

L. Melt every frost-bound heart till it glows with the warmth of generous desire.

R. And let thy comforting light shine on the dark places of want and woe.

L. Welcome rich season of bounty and good cheer!

R. Wreath every life with garlands of innocent mirth.

L. Crown with green leaves of joy the brows of those we love;

R. Weave in red berries of health, and the bright star of hope.

- L. Welcome, blest season of peace, that bringest a truce to strife;
- R. And may thy white wings of peace spread over the waiting earth.
- L. Link all peoples and nations in the sure bonds of brotherhood;
- R. Shed peace and good-will, good-will and peace, on all mankind.

The most profound reinterpretation Chubb rendered was that of Thanksgiving. As always, he focused on the feeling that inspired the traditional celebration -- in this case, the feeling of gratitude, "a high form of joy." (On the Religious Frontier, p. 106) His challenge, of course, was to develop a ritual that would express thanksgiving without reference to its usual object, God. Again, he summoned the mystical sense of union with the universe, a universe that, with or without intention, provides beauty and sustenance. But he owned that this vague appreciativeness is a dissatisfying variant of gratitude; a "law-pervaded cosmos," he wrote, may evoke awe, but it does not inspire love. His solution was to turn the attention of participants to an indisputably worthy object of their thanks: the human family. Chubb sought to revive the sanctity of Thanksgiving by transforming it into a celebration of the wondrous achievements of the race:

[T]he original cosmic providence, by which the cosmos is, has been supplemented by a more significant human providence; more significant, because it is more impressively the expression of man's creative mind and emotion and imagination. ... Thus there emerges that new conception of Thanksgiving for which I wish to plead; an outpouring of the heart toward this secondary but closer and more appealing providence of man. (Ibid., p. 113)

...

Strange that there should so seldom flow forth from our hearts a gratitude to that human power which we ought to thank in the first instance for all that is included under the term civilization; those blessings of safety and peace, of justice and equity which we owe, not to any divine intervention and help, but to the steady, dogged persistence and valor and heroism of our race, our brother man! Strange that no such note should sound in our Thanksgiving proclamations! Do we forget that it is man who has conquered not alone the wild beast in the jungle but also the brute in himself, who has stayed the flood and the tornado, the plague and the pestilence, whose intervention and labor have achieved the wonders which make our modern life so much more livable and resourceful than was that of our ancestors? (Ibid., p. 118)

Like his predecessor, Chubb was acutely conscious of the size of Sunday crowds. He told a trustee that he felt obliged to speak on moral values and politics even if the public was "too indifferent, disgusted, or bored" to attend, but he deliberately interspersed "sensational" topics -- such as the young science of psychoanalysis and the Scope's "Monkey Trial" in Dayton, Tennessee -- to attract newcomers. (letter from Percival Chubb to Elwood Street, dated November 8, 1926) He was perturbed by distasteful popular conceptions of the Society. For instance, the St. Louis Republic marked the dedication of Sheldon Memorial with an editorial describing Ethical Culture as "something akin to ancient stoicism" imbued with "the cold cheerlessness of the merely biologic outlook upon existence." (St. Louis Republic, October 13, 1912) Chubb responded with a forceful apologia printed on the editorial page, but he recognized that a good deal more ink would be needed to rectify the Society's image problem. Wryly noting that the 1928 fire at Sheldon Memorial had done more than years of quiet service to "heat people's curiosity" about the Society, he told the membership that increasing the Sunday turnout was "largely a matter of making the Society, its purposes and activities, more widely known." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, September 1, 1928) To that end, he enlisted the aid of board member Elwood Street in publicizing platform addresses. In the twenties, Street designed the Society's newspaper ads and acted as a go-between to get Chubb's addresses printed in Monday editions of local papers. Chubb would spend hours drafting readable transcriptions for this purpose, and he was infuriated by the severe trimming they often underwent. Street, however, reported that the city editor of the St. Louis Star regarded Chubb as "the George Bernard Shaw of St. Louis" and that his counterpart at the Post-Dispatch contended the Society received more publicity than any other religious institution in the city. (letter from Elwood Street to Percival Chubb, April 2, 1927) In the early thirties, the local newspapers ceased reprinting religious addresses as a matter of course; the Globe-Democrat offered to carry reprints for a fee, but the cost was prohibitive.

Besides buying display ads, the Society distributed cards announcing the speaker and topic of each lecture. In addition, announcements of the Society's platform services were regularly carried in the church notices of

newspapers. Not surprisingly, the papers had difficulty finding an appropriate category for the Society. (The problem had been an irritant even to Sheldon. "I have been trying to get the daily papers to put our Ethical notice of the Sunday lectures along with the Non-Sectarian Church under a separate heading as 'Undenominational,'" he wrote to Robert Moore. "According to present methods, our Society is put in with Christian Science Associations, Spiritualists and every other queer thing.") (letter from Walter L. Sheldon to Robert Moore, November 6, 1899)

Beating the Drum Softly

The Society, as a whole, always has been reluctant to actively recruit members. Many members had a religious allegiance thrust upon them in childhood, and they do not wish to likewise ensnare their children and friends. Indeed, the intense devotion Sheldon and Moore professed to the institution never has been widespread; members are more apt to identify themselves with rationalism and humanistic ethics than with Ethical Culture. Furthermore, the movement does not lend itself to the neat, facile evangelism employed by some traditional religions. Most recruitment efforts have been indirect: The Society makes itself known by means of its lectures, concerts, and educational programs. At times, however, the community has ventured to blow its horn, for those who have found a home in the Society know that many of their contemporaries would likewise feel drawn to it if only they understood it better. Seekers who venture into the Society unawares often express surprise and gratification that such a place exists. That sense of discovery is keenly expressed in a membership application submitted in 1908:

I am only sorry I did not learn of your society sooner. [I] have lived here for eight years and have often wondered why a city of this size had no society of thinkers... In case I am accepted, I know I can bring several new members who are agnostics and also some of the Faith who are beginning to look for light (truth). (letter from E.A. Macmahon, manager of Macmahon Roofing Co., to J.H. Arnstein, Men's Club Secretary, January 8, 1908; archives.)

Word of mouth and occasional newspaper ads accounted for the Society's early growth. In later years, the board of trustees invited members to turn in the names of associates who might be interested in receiving pamphlets and platform notices. "Hospitality and Inquiry" meetings, in which longtime members explained the principles of the Society to visitors, were held on Sunday mornings. In 1905, the board of trustees sent each member a series of three letters -- written with graduating urgency -- asking him or her to introduce at least one person to the Society; the mailings included publicity brochures. At annual membership meetings, the leader and president customarily urged members to help swell the ranks, but no concerted recruitment was undertaken until the start of the 1911-12 season. At that time., the board of trustees formed a Membership Committee whose stated purpose was to conserve and increase membership in the Society. In the 1912-13 season, mindful of the need for members who could afford to offset the Society's debts, the committee specifically asked male members to recruit their business associates. In addition, newspaper accounts of the erection of Sheldon Memorial, plus the sight of the elegant structure going up in midtown, increased public awareness of the Society. In the year after Sheldon Memorial opened its doors, membership jumped by more than a hundred to a new high of 498. The following season, spurred by the mortgage perhaps more than by missionary zeal, the board launched another membership drive. By January 1915, membership reached 579. Deducting from that figure the handful of people who had allowed their memberships to lapse, the treasurer reported in October that membership had risen 86 percent -- from 301 to 561 -- since the slump following Sheldon's disappearance from the platform. Membership did not long remain at that high-water mark. Within two years, the figure had leveled off at about 500, and a slide in the late twenties and early thirties left the Society with about 400 members. The goal of 800 -- roughly the seating capacity of the auditorium -never was reached.

Many membership applicants were drawn into the Society through its sub-organizations. Each year, ten to twenty recent Sunday School graduates became members. The Young People's Association, which sponsored dances, hikes, and study groups, also provided a strong draw. Of the 28 people who joined the Society in the 1919-20 season, 16 had first been members of the Y.P.A. and four others had teamed of the Society through their children's involvement in the group. The Women's Auxiliary also took an active role in membership recruitment, and its open social events exposed hundreds of St. Louisans to the Society.

Membership in the Ethical Society always has been a sign of commitment, not a tool of exclusivity. Nevertheless, for many years the Society required each applicant to secure two member sponsors who could vouch for the applicant's character and sincerity. Often, the sponsors were the members who introduced the applicant to the Society. A newcomer who came on his or her own initiative easily secured the sponsorship of trustees or rank-and-file members.

The Membership Committee formalized the Society's procedures for acknowledging membership applications and resignations. Before its formation, applicants sometimes had to repeatedly contact board members to ascertain their acceptance. To help welcome and integrate newcomers into the Society, the Membership Committee in 1919 proposed that new members receive special attention at community dinners. The same year, the committee also began assigning each new member a mentor to introduce the newcomer to Society members and programs. Both customs have endured to the present. Also in 1919, the committee was expanded to include a representative from each of the Society's principal subgroups, enabling it to present newcomers with an even introduction to group activities. Although interviews with the leader were not yet part of the application procedure, Chubb made it a point to meet new members shortly after their induction.

The unlovely task of weeding the membership list also fell to the Membership Committee. In accordance with the Society's by-laws, a member who did not pay the minimum dues or otherwise express interest in the Society for more than two years was dropped from the membership roll. With the opening of Sheldon Memorial, it became especially important to regularly weed the list so that building privileges would be extended only to bona fide members. When a member failed to meet the criteria or formally submitted a resignation, the committee communicated with the member and made a recommendation to the board of trustees; because of the delicacy of approaching members for nonpayment, the committee sometimes asked the delinquent member's sponsors to intervene. Dues delinquency became widespread during the Depression, but the board often agreed to carry without dues members who tendered their resignations solely for financial reasons. Those who neither paid dues nor pleaded their case to be carried without dues were unceremoniously dropped. Exception was made for servicemen on active duty, all of whom were kept on without dues.

The by-laws provided for an auxiliary class of membership: Associate members were regular contributors who made no explicit assent to the Society's principles and who did not wish to vote or hold office. Active members called to account for dues delinquency sometimes transferred to associate status, thus maintaining an affiliation while surrendering rights they did not exercise anyway. In 1927, after a yearly dues minimum of \$ 10 had been instated, members approved the establishment of a Junior Membership with a yearly dues minimum of \$5; this status, which did not bestow voting rights, was intended for college students and recent Sunday School graduates. Yet another status, that of honorary membership, was adopted in 1932. Honorary memberships, which carried no dues requirements, were conferred on the recommendation of three or more Society members in recognition of outstanding service to the community. This development spared devoted Society members the indignity of delinquency proceedings.

Given that most trustees were among the core of contributors whose pledges greatly exceeded the Society's per capita costs, their sympathy for parsimonious members sometimes was strained. In a letter to secretary Fred J. Herzog, treasurer Joseph S. Taussig said he had pruned the membership list because "there is no use spending the money for postage and pamphlets for people who do not take enough interest in our work to contribute the trifles that most of them promise." (letter from Joseph S. Taussig to Fred J. Herzog, dated October 15, 1908; Ethical Society archives) Trustee Charles W. Staudinger bluntly echoed that sentiment in a request for a complete list of delinquents: "I see no good reason why we should keep these names on our membership list if they do not come across with the dough." (letter from Charles W. Staudinger to Hattie Clark, executive secretary, dated July 28, 1927; Ethical Society archives]

The Wolf at the Door

The Society's financial status ranged from precarious to critical. In the teens, members were hard-pressed to meet both their annual pledges and their special pledges to the Building Fund. Annual operating deficits often ran from \$ 1,000 to \$2,000, and meeting interest payments and redeeming Sheldon Memorial bonds created an annual frenzy of creative financing: The board of trustees learned to juggle accounts, appease creditors, beg, borrow, and refinance. Dodging new debts became something of a sport; the Society secured tax-exempt status on Sheldon Memorial, and a congressman's intervention spared the Society a war tax imposed on door receipts, but there was no getting around the city controller's \$1,550 pro-rated bill for the widening of Washington Avenue. Contending with an almost constant state of emergency, the committee often withdrew from the Emergency Fund \$1,000 a year -the maximum amount allowable under the terms on which it was instituted. As the fund approached depletion, frenzy turned to desperation. Well-heeled Society members, among them Anna Sheldon Chubb, frequently came to the rescue with hefty donations, bequests, and low-interest loans. In a singularly magnanimous gesture at the 1918 annual meeting, Percival Chubb offered to forego \$1,000 of his \$3,500 salary if the membership would pledge at least \$4,000 on the spot; the membership complied. In a similar proposal in 1922, Anna Sheldon Chubb offered to contribute \$500 if

members would answer the challenge with twice that amount, but the board declined to present the offer to the membership. After his wife's death in 1924, Chubb frequently donated funds for speakers' fees, teachers' stipends, and other special needs.

Pledge drives took two forms -- general appeals to the membership via mailings and platform announcements, and specific requests put before the Society's staunch benefactors. The dual demands of the building debt and the current fund often required several drives per year; trustees constantly weighed the need for funds against the danger of exhausting the good will of the membership. The tradition of appealing to members via their bellies began after the move to Sheldon Memorial, when the fund-drive kickoff dinner became a regular event. All-member canvasses first were conducted about 1915, but the canvass was not made an institution until decades later. For years, the task of canvassing members was carried out by a committee of the Women's Auxiliary. To the Society's credit, its dire financial straits did not spawn strong-arm tactics. Pledges were called in with tact, and members who paid at least a portion of their pledges often were forgiven the balance. The unsavory custom of publishing members' contributions in the annual address book was discontinued in 1912. As of 1915, long-term delinquents were given three notices of indebtedness before being dropped from the membership list.

Fund-raising events helped take up the slack in pledges. The not-quite-annual bazaar brought in from \$2,000 to \$4,000, making it an invaluable aid to the Society's debt retirement. Other periodic fundraisers included rummage sales and work sales. Lecture series featuring notable academics also netted substantial sums. A subtle method of magnifying contributions was the institution in 1913 of formal collection-taking at platform meetings. Another modest source of funds was tapped in 1918 when members were given savings banks in which to deposit spare change.

Rental fees were a consistent source of ancillary revenue: The board of trustees contracted with booking agents to rent the auditorium and Assembly Room when they were not used for Society functions. The terms of Anna Sheldon Chubb's donation to the building fund limited rentals to concerts, lectures, and religious meetings, so requests for lucrative bookings such as secular conventions were denied. Further limits were imposed in 1928, when the Society learned that it jeopardized its tax-exempt status by renting the building to profit-making organizations. Pending clarification of the tax regulations by city officials, the board temporarily banned all rentals.

The Society had a rare taste of solvency in 1919, the first year in many that ended with a cash balance, but contributions immediately took another slide. In 1921, the Society's 35th anniversary, members contributed more than \$7,000 to a "Birthday Fund," allowing the board of trustees to satisfy recent debts, spruce up Sheldon Memorial, and grant Chubb a long-awaited raise. Within a few years, however, fresh debts forced the committee to borrow several thousand dollars and dip once again into the Emergency Fund. When, in 1923, building and financing debt had been reduced to \$13,000, the membership authorized the board to refinance the mortgage with a \$15,000 loan. The new mortgage was to be repaid at the rate of \$1,000 a year for four years, with the balance due at the end of five years; this package gave the Society some respite from the annual rush to pay off maturing bonds, but it pointed up the need for long-term funding plans. No such plans were implemented: Within a year, the Society had to borrow another \$2,000 -- including \$1,000 from board president Martha Fischel -- to meet current expenses. Record deficits forced the board to consider raising the minimum membership dues. Because dues requirements were set by the Society's by-laws, they could be changed only by a vote of the membership; the minimum annual pledge had been lowered from \$5 to \$1 in 1909, and a 1912 attempt by the board of trustees to bring back the higher figure was voted down by a large majority. The proposal never died, however. Trustees preferred to rely on members to contribute according to their consciences, but the results were consistently disappointing. In 1924, Finance Committee chairman Fred Herzog reported that more than half the Society's members contributed \$10 or less per year. Of 420 members, he noted, thirty-seven made no pledge contributions that fiscal year; of the remaining 383, 112 -- nearly one-third of the membership -- gave \$5 or less; one hundred members gave \$6 to \$10; and 72 members paid \$10 to \$25. Trustee Charles Staudinger noted that a trustee of a local synagogue recently had called the Society "crazy" for imposing only a \$1 dues minimum; the synagogue, he said, required \$35 of every member, and more from those of means. Staudinger conceded that the Society could not demand such high dues because it could not "guarantee that you will get to heaven," but he recommended a \$10 minimum be instituted. (minutes, annual meeting, October 5, 1924) Fischel thereupon appointed a committee to draft a by-law amendment incorporating the increase. Under the proposed amendment, members who failed to pay the minimum amount would be barred from voting or holding office until the debt was met; delinquency for two years "without reasonable explanation" would result in loss of membership. A draft of the amendment was circulated in a letter announcing a special election on the issue. An acerbic response to that announcement revealed the sentiments brewing among some members:

Dear Ethical Society:

Your circular I received in reference to the proposed amendment. I favor it. It will increase the budget, and, at the same time, make the Society more exclusive; as only the rich and those in good circumstances can belong. It will eliminate the riffraff, and put the Society on a strictly commercial basis. After all, why should the poor be affiliated with any church or society?

As I shall be unable to pay the dues, will you kindly take my name from the book? (letter from Mary Newnam, dated October 23, 1924)

At the election meeting, trustees and Society members engaged in one of the most heated debates in the Society's history. Opponents called the proposed increase degrading and a contradiction of the Society's ultimate regard for personal freedom; the imposition of any dues, they said, put the Society on a par with non-religious clubs. Proponents countered that members are ethically bound to help pay for the benefits they receive, and that the Society has a duty to maintain itself through businesslike means. All present agreed that putting the Society on a sound financial basis would be a boon to the entire membership, and opponents of the increase proposed no alternative means to that end. The measure was approved by a vote of 23-7. (minutes of special meeting, October 26, 1924) In interpreting the by-law, the board accepted the \$ 10 minimum as sufficient for the joint membership of a husband and wife. (minutes of January 13, 1925) An unfortunate side effect of the regulation was that some membership applicants regarded the minimum amount -- which was far less than the Society's per capita operating cost -- as the standard contribution. Consequently, the board in 1930 elected to omit mention of the minimum on the application form; the following year, it reinstated the notice but subtly tacked on a mention of the Society's per capita costs.

When Anna Sheldon Chubb died in 1924, she left the Society \$7,000 to be held in a building fund and \$3,000 for a "Walter L. Sheldon Library Fund." Proceeds from the latter fund were to be used for the periodic reprinting of Sheldon's books and for the upkeep of the Sheldon Memorial Library, which comprised the books Sheldon had amassed as well as volumes contributed since his death. In addition, the residue of Anna Sheldon Chubb's estate after the disposition of legacies -- about \$24,000 -was left in a trust that would revert to the Society after Percival Chubb's death; Chubb, who received only the income from the trust, placed its administration in the hands of the board. Under the terms of the bequest, the board was permitted to spend the principal of both funds, but it immediately invested the lion's share of the money in bonds and real estate. Holdings bought with the larger bequest were held by the newly instituted Reserve Fund, which was to be used to pay off building debts. Because the board spent little money on the library, the smaller fund often was used to buy investment bonds from funds needing liquid cash.

Neither the bequest nor the \$10 dues minimum stopped the Society's financial decline. In the mid-20s, annual deficits of about \$4,000 were common. In 1926, Finance Committee Chairman Herbert Morisse headed up an ad hoc "Committee of Thirty" to induce members to raise their contributions. The committee's efforts brought in a few thousand dollars in increased pledges and contributions to offset the previous year's deficit, but the Finance Committee had to borrow heavily -- using the Society's bonds and real estate holdings as collateral -- to meet current expenses. The Society's debts reached crisis proportions in 1928. The bulk of the mortgage taken out in 1923 -- \$11,000 -- now came due. In addition, the Society had borrowed \$8,000 to pay off yearly deficits and interest charges. Added to the \$ 1,000 borrowed from Fischel, these liabilities totaled \$20,000, half of which was due immediately. In addition, the Society faced a current operating deficit of nearly \$6,000. Members were informed that they must sharply increase their contributions, solicit a substantial number of new members, or authorize another mortgage. Pledge increases offered in response to that call amounted to less than a thousand dollars. At a special meeting called in May 1928, the 55 members in attendance authorized the board to secure another mortgage of up to \$75,000; the board had requested the high ceiling so it could secure additional loans without reconvening the membership. With a five-year, \$35,000 loan, the board paid off the Society's most pressing debts, releasing its bonds and real estate holdings for liquidation. Part of the excess was invested, but most of it was devoured by ensuing debts. In a letter sent out in the fall of 1928, the board noted that the Society would need about \$19,000 a year to meet its operating expenses and maintain a sinking fund to protect the mortgage notes and pay off interest. Divided among the Society's roughly 400 members, that tab came to about \$47 per capita -- a figure more than 50 percent higher than the current average pledge.

In 1929, a standing Ways and Means Committee was established to develop more consistent fund-raising. Headed by Morisse, the committee circulated pleas for pledge increases and spurred special collections, carnivals, and other fund-raisers. The committee was made up of about 25 members, and these were wise enough to draw still more Society members into the canvassing process. A smaller committee, also led by Morisse, was formed to recommend

cutbacks. The committee found little fat in the budget: In September 1929, it reported that "there are only a few items that we feel can be reduced without retarding the work of the Society." Salaries, the largest single budget item, had topped \$11,000 with the addition of associate leader W. Frank Swift, but the committee maintained that these workers flare all necessary to carrying out our work properly, and their compensation is such that no changes are recommended." The work of these committees helped minimize the Society's operating deficits, but the impact of the Great Depression put solvency out of reach; periodic short-term loans were unavoidable, and paying off the mortgage was unthinkable. When the \$35,000 loan came due in 1933, the Society was forced to renew it for three years at an interest rate a full percentage point higher.

Such a burden were mortgage payments and maintenance costs that the possibility of selling Sheldon Memorial emerged in the late 1920s. In 1927, a five-member Real Estate Committee was formed to keep tabs on the building's sale potential in light of the neighborhood's burgeoning land values. At the 1929 annual meeting, the chairman of this committee told the membership it would be impossible for the Society to remain in Sheldon Memorial without great increases in membership and contributions.

A motion to put the building up for sale was made and seconded but was withdrawn after lengthy debate. In a standing vote taken to gauge the inclination of the membership, 27 members favored selling the building, 12 opposed the idea, and 16 were undecided. (minutes of annual meeting, October 20, 1929) After the historic stock market collapse hit the nation a week later, however, it became evident the Society could not hope for a fair sale price. At a special meeting called in January 1930, an overwhelming majority of members opposed selling the building, and the matter was put to rest. (minutes of special meeting, January 6, 1930)

The Society made no structural improvements at Sheldon Memorial during this era. For years, members dreamed of installing an elevator to make the balcony and Assembly Room more accessible, but the cost -- estimated at \$5,000 to \$7,000 -- was prohibitive. After the board in 1928 refused to support the purchase, members raised a special fund; by 1931, pledges totaled \$2,250. At a special meeting called in April 1932, members voted on whether to authorize payment of the balance out of the strapped Reserve Fund. Because of the Society's enormous building debt, and because an elevator would add little to the building's questionable sale value, the proposition finally was scotched. Apart from cultivation of the garden and periodic painting and redecorating, the only substantial improvements made at Sheldon Memorial were an amplification system that provided headphones for the hearing impaired and artificial lighting for memorial windows. A fire on June 29, 1928, caused about \$6,000 in damages to the building and organ, but most of the repair costs were borne by insurance settlements.

As implied by the terms of her bequest, Anna Sheldon Chubb cherished the Sheldon Memorial Library and hoped it would continue to grow. The Library Committee initially recommended greatly expanding the facility, but later decided that the degree to which it was used did not justify the expense. Instead, it used the non-invested portion of the fund to bind pamphlets and addresses written by Sheldon; replenish Sheldon's books and keep his collection in good condition; collect the works of other Ethical leaders; bind back copies of *The Standard*, and buy books needed by the Sunday School and other Society subgroups, on the approval of the leader or Library Committee chairman. (March 1926 minutes) In 1930, the committee established a children's library in an alcove of the Assembly Room. (minutes of March 11, 1930) And in 1932, former Sunday School director Cecilia Boette was hired on a part-time basis to rebind selected books and recatalog the collection. (minutes of April 1932) These improvements, however, used little of the money tied up in the Walter L. Sheldon Library Fund, and a long succession of board members was exasperated by the nearness of so much unspendable cash.

A Ripe Field

Despite the Society's debts, a proposal to build an annex to Sheldon Memorial was given serious thought. The idea began in 1926, when Felix Adler offered to contribute to the Society \$1,500 to \$2,000 for some form of community service. In response, the board appointed a Committee for Community Extension to ascertain the needs of the neighborhood surrounding Sheldon Memorial. Committee member Elwood Street reported that "the Society, situated almost on the boundaries of two poorer districts, badly in need of help, had unlimited possibilities for assistance." He added that "there was a ripe field ready and waiting for workers." (minutes of annual meeting, October 31, 1926) Sheldon Memorial, said Street, could be used for a variety of educational, recreational, and arts programs. He was confident that the Society could obtain an adequate number of volunteers, and he suggested that programs begun by the Society could grow into independent organizations -- as had happened with the Self-Culture program. Street, the director of the Community Council of St. Louis, was asked in 1927 to oversee a study of neighborhood needs by various service agencies. Community leaders recommended that the Society proceed slowly,

minimizing its costs -- and risks -- by coordinating its efforts with ongoing neighborhood programs. However, other members of the Extension Committee, after attending a meeting of the National Community Center Association, formulated plans for an annex in the rear of Sheldon Memorial that could be used as a community center.

At the same time, Chubb called for expansion of the Society's facilities to accommodate the growth of the Sunday School and increased group activities. In particular, Chubb noted that the production of children's plays had been suspended because rehearsals could not be held in the Assembly Room during platform services, and rental of the auditorium had forced the cancellation of many meetings, dances, and socials scheduled in the Assembly Room. In addition to easing those conflicts, he said, an annex would provide adequate space for the tots' groups and Sunday morning study groups. The second building also could provide the neighborhood with a reading room, a game room, a site for dances and athletic events, and perhaps a nursery school and playground. In a memorandum to an ad hoc Committee on Building Expansion, Chubb presented the proposal as a moral challenge: "Thus at the crossroads, the Society must make up its mind whether it shall dare to expand and go forward, or whether it shall restrict its activities within the limits of its present facilities. Can it and will it brace itself to new enterprises and become more missionary and militant?" (Memo by Percival Chubb; Ethical Society archives)

In its meetings during the summer of 1927, the Expansion Committee evaluated a variety of building proposals. It found that the cost of a brick structure was prohibitive, and the city would not allow the erection of an all-wood building. Finally, it settled on a temporary structure of galvanized iron. In October, the board agreed to ask the membership to authorize up to \$3,000 to build and equip a temporary annex; it also would request up to \$3,000 for the employment of a community service director. However, at the annual meeting in October, board vice president Alexander S. Langsdorf reported that the Expansion Committee's building plans did not meet building code requirements. (minutes of annual meeting, Oct. 23, 1927) He estimated that a 50-by-30-foot building that conformed to code would cost \$3,500 to \$4,000, not including heat and furnishings. After a "lively discussion," the membership unanimously authorized the board to spend up to \$6,000 for the project; the proposal to hire a social worker was tabled. The New Building Committee commissioned several architects to draft practicable designs; under the plans submitted, the building, though temporary, would have cost about \$9,000. The board decided to reject those plans and instead ask the membership to authorize the expenditure of \$25,000 for a more durable structure. Given the Society's existing debts, that expenditure could feasibly be undertaken only if the membership pledged an additional \$4,000 a year. The Society members present at a special meeting in November approved the plan contingent upon the Finance Committee's success in securing adequate pledge increases. (minutes of special meeting, November 27, 1927) Chubb and board members pledged a total of more than \$2,000 to the cause, but the plan did not catch fire among the membership at large. By the end of the season, the project was abandoned.

The idea of providing recreational programs for the neighborhood was revived in 1933. Again, a committee was formed to supervise a survey of the area, but, again, the project failed to get off the ground. The Society did provide a few neighborhood services -- the Women's Auxiliary sometimes hosted entertainments for neighborhood children, and a few Sunday School teachers conducted summer classes in arts and crafts -- but a concerted, ongoing service program never materialized.

The Society did provide a substantial community service by granting use of the building free or at cost; requests were weighed on a case-by-case basis, and the board's decisions were unpredictable. Civic and minority groups were frequent beneficiaries, as were nascent church groups. When the neighboring Third Baptist Church was damaged by fire in 1928, the congregation immediately was invited to use the entire building throughout the summer; in gratitude, the congregation later made a contribution to the Society. Some avant-garde religious organizations -- such as the theosophical New Thought community -- were welcome at Sheldon Memorial, but a group sponsoring an institute by a yogi purported to possess miraculous powers was told it "did not come within the scope of our limited renting clientele." (Globe-Democrat, May 26, 1917; letter from executive secretary to Dr. D. Louis Allen, Plaza Hotel, Chicago, dated March 9, 1927; undated news clip) Organizations that included Ethical Society contingents -- such as the St. Louis Council of Organizations Promoting Peace and the League for independent Political Action -- were given free use of the building as a matter of policy. The peace council, in fact, was granted free office space in Sheldon Memorial for a disarmament campaign it conducted in the 1931-32 season.

One of the most visible -- or, more accurately, audible -- of the Society's community services was a chamber music series begun in 1930. The first series was proposed by Rudolph Schmitz, chairman of the Music Committee, which until that time had concerned itself solely with music for festivals and platform services; Chubb enthusiastically encouraged the undertaking as "a contribution to the musical culture of the city." (Undated handwritten notes, apparently in preparation for a promotional talk prior to the 1939-40 season; Ethical Society archives) The inaugural presentation was to be simple, consisting of three evenings of seldom-heard works by Bach and Beethoven. The

board approved the plan provided that Schmitz raise a guarantee fund of \$200 from subscribers outside the Society; the board would not support the program with Society funds, nor would it permit the committee to solicit guarantees from the membership. Schmitz raised the requisite cash, and the concerts were held in November 1930 and January and March of 1931. To avoid violating the Society's tax-exempt status, Schmitz billed the series as "educational concerts arranged for [Society] members and their friends." (minutes, June 10, 1930) More than half the tickets were bought by non-Society members. The few hundred dollars the series produced covered the cost of special platform music during the season. The second series was less lucrative. Receipts covered the cost of special music for one Sunday, but the committee later ran a slight deficit. Upon the conclusion of the second series, Schmitz immediately launched a pledge drive to amass a guarantee fund for a third. The newly formed Concert Committee barely broke even on the third series, and the board, though it favored the program, told Schmitz it would be abandoned if he failed to make it pay for itself. Although the annual series was to continue for 50 years, this touch-and-go pattern continued behind the scenes.

The Lyceum Dream

Percival Chubb believed that the Ethical Society, as the most liberal and unrutted of religious fellowships, was ideally suited to host forums at which the public could hear – and voice – divergent opinions on social problems. He and others attempted to formalize these forums, to make them a St. Louis institution; but fluctuations in finances and enthusiasm kept them from becoming more than sporadic events.

The Society's thirtieth anniversary celebration in 1916 was more subdued than its 1896 colloquium. It included only one public forum, but that forum was close to the hearts of its organizers. Titled "Conference on Ethical Instruction and Moral Education," the May 6 forum examined the propriety of ethical instruction in schools and illustrated practicable courses of study. Teachers from private schools, public schools, and Sunday schools were urged to participate. Citing the charges of moral laxity that arose in the nation's debate over its preparedness for war, the May 1916 edition of the Society's *Monthly Bulletin* underlined the gravity of the problem and the Society's competence in addressing it:

Many educators are agreed that the great outstanding problem in American education today is that of moral discipline and ethical training. This has received new emphasis in the discussion of "Preparedness. "It has been astonishing to find so many pacifically minded people who have been won over to the cause of preparedness in its more militaristic form because they are convinced that our American youths are going "soft," becoming slack and fiberless, lacking in respect for authority and law and order; and that a soldierly severity alone can mend matters. "Nothing less than a militaristic rigor will be effective," said the father of four sons who, with the ordinary school and college education, had come to show symptoms of the prevailing moral slackness. His was a cry of despair. The remedy is a desperate one. Are we so bankrupt of disciplinary power in home and school? If so, is it because the home and school are in their nature inadequate to the moral training of the young? Or is it because the school and the home are mismanaged and parents and teachers inadequately equipped for their task? Are our methods of living and our courses of study and school methods defective?

These are the grave questions which will be in our minds in discussing this all-important subject at the Conference on Ethical Instruction and Moral Education The discussion is not only nationally opportune in its bearing upon the "Preparedness" issue; but it is locally opportune because the schoolmen and teachers of the city are now engaged upon a revision of the course of study for the public schools of Saint Louis, including the course in ethics. We have gathered from conversations with teachers that there is a wide difference of opinion as to the desirability of direct and systematic instruction in ethics. Probably the Ethical Societies -- and particularly the parent Ethical Culture Society, of New York -- have a wider basis of experience and experiment to draw upon than any other institution. For twenty years or more the work has been conducted in the Ethical Culture School in New York, one of the generally recognized experiment stations and pioneer schools of the country. Dr. Felix Adler's book on "The Moral Education of the Young" was the first book of any weight published on the question in this country, and has held its place as a standard. That is why we feel warranted in promoting the discussion of this matter. (Ethical Society *Monthly Bulletin*, May 1916; Ethical Society archives)

The conference was held in two sessions. The topic of the morning session was "Direct and Systematic Ethical Instruction." Speakers included J.L. Meriam, professor of the School of Education at the University of Missouri; John Lovejoy Elliott, a leader of the New York Ethical Society and a teacher of ethics in the Ethical Culture School; Henry Neumann, leader of the Brooklyn Society; J.J. Maddox, principal of the Wyman School; and the Rev. George R. Dodson, pastor of the Unitarian Church of the Unity. The afternoon session, "The Responsibility and Cooperation of School, Home and Sunday School," included addresses by five local educators, including E. George Payne and Fanny L. Lachmund of the Teacher's College and Rev. Samuel Sale of Temple Shaare Emeth. Each session included discussion periods.

Enthusiasm for the education conference inspired a hankering for regularly scheduled public forums. An item in the same edition of the Society's bulletin -- probably written by leader Percival Chubb or executive committee Chairman Robert Moore -- challenged the Men's Club and the Young People's Association to arrange "a series of Sunday evening meetings to be in the nature of a People's Forum, at which leaders of thought on the great social, political and economic problems of the day will be asked to speak. We are ready for this step. Something of the sort is needed in the city. The downtown businessmen can hear such addresses at the City Club during the luncheon hour; but there is little opportunity for others to hear our national leaders of thought in these fields." Neither of the groups took up the challenge, but an independent civic organization did. At the repeated urging of Society member Mrs. Albert Greensfelder, the Society's board of trustees agreed to permit the use of the Sheldon Memorial auditorium for the St. Louis Community Forum, which its promoters envisioned as a local version of a program conducted at Boston's Ford Hall. The Society's principal contribution to the program was its provision of the auditorium at cost.

The forum proposal came up again after the Society presented two public programs as part of its 35th anniversary celebration, which it marked by hosting the American Ethical Union's annual assembly in October 1921. The first of these programs was the Child-Life Exhibit. Arranged principally by Dr. George Gellhorn, Grace Anderson, and Louise Boette, the exhibit highlighted community programs devoted to the health and education of children; among the institutions profiled were Children's Hospital, the city library, and other public agencies, as well as the American ethical societies. The second public program was a round-table discussion of the role women should play in the nation's restoration after World War I. Edna Gellhorn, Society member and president of the St. Louis chapter of the League of Women Voters, presided over the meeting. Speakers included the president of the St. Louis Board of Religious Organizations and Judge Florence Allen of Cleveland. At the annual meeting held a few weeks later, board president Martha Fischel suggested the Society seize the public attention the programs engendered by launching a series of forums on social problems. Board member Fred Herzog suggested the Men's Club could oversee such a program, bringing in community leaders to spur debate. That plan did not materialize in the ensuing year, so Fischel helped revive the Community Forum, which again rented the auditorium for its Sunday evening programs.

The Society's fortieth anniversary celebration in 1926 included five public symposiums. The St. Louis chapter of the Child Study Association of America, which was headed by Society member Elsie Langsdorf, presented the first of these, "Symposium on Recreation for Children," on the afternoon of October 7. Henry Neumann, leader of the Brooklyn Ethical Society, delivered an address titled, "Recreation in the School and Home"; Society board member Elwood Street, director of the Community Council and the Community Fund of St. Louis, spoke on "Recreation and the Ethical Society"; and Bertha Howell, assistant director of the Community Council of St. Louis, addressed the topic, "Recreation and the Delinquent Child."

That evening, Charles Nagel, a prominent attorney and a charter member of the Society, presided over a public meeting highlighting the role of the Ethical Movement in society. The Rev. Dwight J. Bradley, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Webster Groves, spoke on "The Ethical Society as Viewed by a Non-Member"; and Henry J. Golding, a leader of the New York Society, spoke on "The Ethical Ideal as a World-Force." The Steindel Trio provided musical entertainment.

On the morning of October 8, Edna Gellhorn presided over a public conference on "Women's Participation in Civic and Social Welfare." Representatives of St. Louis civic organizations took part in a round-table discussion of the question, "Should the Volunteer Philanthropic Work of Religious Bodies be Done Independently or Under Other Organizations?" Speakers included Mrs. Gilbert Fox, of the Board of Religious Organizations, a women's philanthropic agency which included an Ethical Society unit; Mrs. George Hitchcock, Children's Aid Society; Mrs. M.M. Hart, Civic Union; Blanche Renard, Community Council; Mrs. George B. Mangold, League of Women Voters; and Mrs. J.B. Shapleigh, Neighborhood Association, the successor of the Self-Culture Hall Association. Anna Garlin Spencer, a Columbia University lecturer and associate leader in the New York Society, closed the colloquium with an address on "Woman's Place in the Life of the Present."

The highlight of the assembly was an ecumenical symposium held the evening of October 8. Alfred W. Martin, a leader of the New York Society, introduced the theme "The Search for Religious Unity" in an address. A number of St. Louis religious leaders took part in a discussion of the theme; among them were the Rev. Russell H. Stafford, pastor of Pilgrim Congregational Church; Dr. W.L. Sullivan, pastor of the Unitarian Church of the Messiah; Rev. M. Ashby Jones, pastor of Second Baptist Church; Rabbi Samuel Thurman of the United Hebrew Congregation; and Rev. Karl M. Block rector of St. Michael's and All Angels Episcopal Church. A song recital rounded out the program.

The final public symposium of the assembly, "Ethical and Religious Training in the Home, the School, and the Sunday School," was held the morning of October 9. Anna Garlin Spencer spoke on "The Home"; Lewis M. Dougan, principal of the Eugene Field School, spoke on "The Public School"; Wilford M. Aiken, principal of the John Burroughs School, spoke on "The Private School"; John Lovejoy Elliott, an associate leader of the New York Society, spoke on the Ethical Culture School of New York; and Henry Neumann, also a New York Society leader, spoke on "Ethical Training in Schools Throughout the Country."

In 1931, the Society marked its forty-fifth anniversary with an assembly that included a public speech and discussion on "Disarmament, the Versailles Treaty and Security." The meeting, held the evening of October 9, was led by Henry Neumann, leader of the Brooklyn Ethical Society. Frederick J. Libby, executive secretary of the National Council for the Prevention of War, addressed the meeting. The assembly also featured a public display of exhibits by social agencies titled "Some Aspects of Human Relations." Exhibit themes included plans for the beautification of St. Louis; recreation and leisure; neighborhood life; health protection; education; social planning; family and childcare; delinquency and readjustment; and international understanding. Displays also were presented by Ethical Society subgroups including the Women's Auxiliary, the Junior Auxiliary, the Sunday School, the Toy Shop, the Boy Scouts, and the Camp Fire Girls.

In addition to its forums, the Society continued to sponsor lectures and lecture series. These, too, were isolated events: After Sheldon's death, the Society never sponsored another comprehensive educational program for the public. In November 1917, temporary leader George O'Dell attempted a small-scale revival of the Self-Culture program when he initiated a Sunday afternoon lecture series for wage-earners at the St. Louis Public Library's Divoll Branch on North Grand. Despite a modest use of advertising, the lectures were poorly attended, and the program lapsed after a few meetings. O'Dell attempted to restart the series the following spring, but the response was the same.

For several years in the teens, the Women's Auxiliary sponsored lecture courses on weekday mornings during the Lenten season; health and child-rearing were favorite topics. The Young People's Association also sponsored public lecture courses. These offerings were intended as fund-raisers, but the income was discouragingly slim. In February 1913, the Auxiliary sponsored a series of lectures by Richard T. Wyche, president of the Storytellers' League of America and author of a book on storytelling, and poet-dramatist Percy MacKaye, who, like Chubb, was an ardent believer in the efficacy of pageants and plays in building community spirit. To make the lectures accessible to educators as well as mothers, the Auxiliary held them in the afternoon and evening. The series succeeded in exposing a few hundred citizens to the Ethical Society, and the Auxiliary more than broke even on its costs, but the gate proved "that our community is not a very fruitful field so far as pay-lectures are concerned. There are too many free-meals perhaps. The Ethical Society has itself been a liberal provider of them. When distinguished visiting lecturers may be heard on our platform for nothing, or for the nickel or dime which scores of our casual patrons drop into our collection trays, why pay?" (April 1913 newsletter)

The popularity of another course offered at the Society that season -- a series of lectures on French philosopher Henri Bergson by the Rev. George R. Dodson -- indicated that in-house lectures by local authorities and visiting Ethical leaders were worthier efforts than grand public programs. Not until 1930 did the Society actively promote another lecture course. This series, held in February and March, focused on the arts: Victor S. Holm, a Washington University sculpture instructor, lectured on American sculpture; concert pianist Gottfried Galston spoke on "Characteristics of the Music of Various Nations"; and Meyric Rogers, director of the St. Louis Art Museum, lectured on "Development of American Decorative Art." The Society's \$182 take confirmed that as fund-raisers go, lectures are excellent community services.

10: Moral Thoughtfulness - The Sunday School under Chubb

Changes after Sheldon

The Ethical Sunday School -- formally known as the Children's Sunday Assembly until 1929, when it was renamed the Junior Sunday Assembly -- thrived in its new home. In addition to classroom cubicles, Sheldon Memorial provided the children with facilities for playing and producing pageants. (As several graduates of the school have recalled, it also provided a fearsome but irresistible challenge -- walking the fourth-floor ledge around the building, risking injury and punishment.) William Brandenburger, a longtime executive committee member who had assisted Sheldon in the school, served as superintendent during the Society's leaderless years. Cecelia Boette, also a Sheldon protege, served as associate superintendent and superintendent from about 1907 until 1929, with a couple of leaves of absence. One of the Society's few paid employees, Boette received a salary of \$500 to \$600 a season. Boette was devoted to the school, and her familiarity with its history -- as well as her acquaintance with virtually every family in the program -- provided a continuity that bridged changes in setting and staffing.

The rise in adult membership after the move to Sheldon Memorial brought a corresponding jump in Sunday School attendance. In the 1910-11 season, 110 children were enrolled in the school; average attendance was 85. In the year after the move, those figures rose to 145 and 102, respectively. Enrollment peaked at 175 in the 1916-17 season, when attendance ranged from 110 to 130. Attendance then dropped steadily to about 70 in 1920. Given that only about 80 Society members had children of Sunday School age, the attendance rate was not especially poor, but Boette and executive committee liaison Philip Rau complained the committee did not give the school sufficient moral and financial support. In response, a three-member committee was appointed to determine means to increase attendance. Proposals included canvassing parents, attracting more -- and more enthusiastic -- teachers, and offering extracurricular activities as direct incentives to children. In an effort to bolster the morale of teachers, the executive committee authorized funds to entertain them at monthly dinners. Attendance continued to slide, but not altogether because of apathy. The problem was that most adults did not arrive at the building until the platform service began, more than an hour after the school started, and many of them no longer felt it was safe to send their children into the heavily trafficked neighborhood without adult companions. Furthermore, the drift of the population beyond the range of streetcars made transportation problematic. Boette and a few allies on the executive committee fought for years to establish bus service for the students, but the plan never was adopted. Nonetheless, the slide in attendance stopped, with the average hovering around 10 in the 1920s.

The main lines of Sheldon's curriculum were maintained after his death, but Boette and the dozen or so teachers in her charge softened his stern Victorian pedagogy. Old Testament stories were balanced by the return of legends and fairy tales, and the focus on the life of Jesus opened out to encompass ethical heroes -- both men and women -- throughout history. "Duties in the Family" carried over into "Friends and Neighbors," and Sheldon's use of animal stories in the family class grew into a full-fledged "Ethics in Nature Study" class. Classes in "Art and Ethics" and "The Right Use of Leisure" also were introduced. The emergence of these diverse courses reflected the change in leadership. In directing the Sunday School, Chubb replaced Sheldon's autocratic style with the art of encouragement. He asked Society members to share their unique gifts and interests with the students, if only for a semester or two; he referred to teaching in the Sunday School as "the best form of Adult Education we can offer our members." (pastoral letter by Percival Chubb, Sept. 1, 1928) He maintained the basic requirements of the program -- the consideration of virtue and vice, the introduction to world religions, and so on -- but he was happy to permit occasional detours into auxiliary studies. He considered Boette his associate, not his lieutenant, and she treated group leaders in like manner. In training programs and monthly dinner meetings, the teachers received information and support, not directives. The manual of course outlines they produced in the 1925-26 season comprised such an effective pedagogy that the Brooklyn Society used it in developing its own program.

Beyond Duty

Chubb and Boette approached curriculum planning with avant-garde sensitivity to developmental psychology. In a 1927 pamphlet, they laid out the principles on which the school was run:

We are trying to reach below doctrines, below the intellect, below knowledge, to the very roots of character; which means that, negatively, we are not trying to indoctrinate these young, helpless souls, or to herd them into our domicile so as to swell our numbers in the Census, but rather to serve them more disinterestedly.

What we are trying to do is to help these children to grow into freedom, self-mastery, and personal responsibility by giving a bent and quality and sort of savor to their natures and their behavior. We are trying to develop in them a moral "taste," a wholesome preference and liking for rightness and uprightness; for what is straight, square, and well-proportioned in conduct and character. This means going deeper than what is ordinarily called "belief"; it means reaching down to the sub-soil of impulses -- desire, ambition, hope and aspiration. These are the dynamics of character. Character is primarily a matter of likes and dislikes. Worthy character is rooted in a liking for high and honorable things and persons, and a consequent aversion to what is false and mean. Ideas and reasonings, knowledge and experience are, of course, involved; and so an attempt is made to implant true knowledge and sound ideas in the service of this end ...

All the teaching aims at promoting moral reflection and considerateness. Moral thoughtfulness must be our chief objective. The Course of Study selects those matters about which it is important to foster such thoughtfulness. These are studies in human relations. We can help the children to know the facts about the typical ethical situations which they will have to meet. We can acquaint them with the strong and fine types of character, heroic and serviceable lives, and great instances and events. We can give them the stuff out of which ideals are fashioned. We can acquaint them with the great religious Scriptures and teachers, and the course of religious history in the world.

The school was divided into elementary, intermediate, and advanced sections. Curiously, school policy was to divide children "according to their 'moral age, which does not always accord with their physical age or even their mental' age." (Ibid) The elementary section, which included children age 3-7, was begun in the mid-20s. Initially an informal child-care program, this section grew into three supervised classes. Using as starting points the ethical issues that naturally arise in group activities, teachers led the children in discussions of cooperation, sharing, acknowledging the rights of others, and making sacrifices for the welfare of the group. Activities included singing, games, storytelling, artwork, and parties. During the course of instruction, pupils graduated from fairy tales and folk legends to historical anecdotes. They learned selected mottoes and proverbs by heart. A couple of times a year, group leaders held mother-and-child receptions to demonstrate their methodology and coordinate efforts at ethical training. In the intermediate section, for children age 7-11, the emphasis on group loyalty expanded to community consciousness. In addition to their studies, the students were supervised in "lend-a-hand" service projects. Virtues introduced at the elementary level were taken up systematically in the three courses in this section. The first course, "Living Together," stressed the interdependence of all creatures and planted the desire to contribute one's share to the common welfare; the course was based on a Unitarian text of the same-name. Old Testament stories formed the basis of a two-year course that introduced students to knotty ethical dilemmas and laid out the components of heroism. The third course, "Habits and Initiative," incorporated the Socratic questioning of Sheldon's "Lessons in the Study of Habits" to inculcate such virtues as courage, truthfulness, industry, and generosity.

In the advanced section, students age 11 to 17 were guided into a deepening consciousness of selfhood. Teachers were especially sensitive to the problems of adolescence -- the development of intimate relationships outside the family, peer pressure, emerging sexuality, and inevitable self-doubt. The first course in this section was based on Sheldon's "Duties in the Home." The study of the life of Jesus, also a Sheldon-era staple, was followed by studies of all sorts of heroes -- thinkers, scientists, social reformers, artists, athletes, and explorers. Staff members distributed monthly calendars commemorating heroes and historic acts; students were encouraged to investigate and present the lives of their personal heroes. "Nature Study from an Ethical Standpoint" used biological information and concepts to foster an appreciation of one's relationship to the world of plants, animals, and natural resources. Through hikes and field trips, this course sought to cultivate both wonder and a sense of stewardship. Member Philip Rau, a self-taught expert on the wasp, taught the nature course for years. The next course, "The Personal Life," was an updated version of Sheldon's "Duties to Oneself." This course balanced the group loyalty stressed in earlier courses with a celebration of individuality. Ideals of health, self-control, and cultural enrichment were presented in a give-and-take format. Separate classes were held for boys and girls. The older students in this section applied the tools of the "higher criticism" to the study of the Bible. As always, ethical enlightenment was the primary goal of these courses, but they also promoted understanding of the cultural impact of the Judeo-Christian tradition and an appreciation of the Bible as literature. The crowning course was an explicit study of the history and principles of the Ethical movement. Students were taught to consider religious affiliations with a discerning eye, and purely ethical religion was held up as a universally satisfying and practicable way of life.

Kindling Ardor for All That is Admirable

Sheldon Memorial's spacious Assembly Room facilitated the tradition of holding opening and closing assemblies. The General Assembly, as it was called, consisted of songs, responsive readings, and talks by the superintendent and guests such as civic leaders, artists, scientists, and visiting Ethical leaders. About once a month, the assembly was devoted to recitals by the Society organist and volunteer soloists. Most assemblies included the entire student body, but occasionally separate assemblies were held for the younger and older students to allow for "more intimate talks with the seniors." The ecclesiastical air cultivated by Sheldon gave way to a more down-to-earth tenor, but the stated purpose of the assemblies remained "to inform and deepen the emotions of the children, and kindle in them a generous ardor for all that is admirable." (Ibid.) Many of the assemblies were based on special all-school projects and topics of study: Recurring themes included Avocation Sunday, Home Sunday, Child Welfare Sunday, City Day (or Civic Sunday), Bird Sunday, Parents' Day, Toy Sunday, Pioneer Sunday, Scout Sunday, Camp Fire Girls Sunday, and Patriots' Day. Rally Sunday, a yearly staple, kicked off the new season with songs and addresses; the ever-enthusiastic Mr. Chubb initiated the event as "an old-fashioned Revival to stir things up." (minutes of Annual Meeting, October 1919) This first get-together, often held a few weeks before the season's first platform service, included an exhibition of summer avocational work such as butterfly collections, pressed flowers, sketches, snapshots, craftwork, and poetry. On Flower Sunday, the children marked the coming of spring by decorating the Assembly Room with wildflowers and flowers picked from family gardens. On Sheldon Sunday (or Founders' Day), the students honored the men who started the Ethical movement; ceremonies included the laying of a wreath on a bust of Sheldon. On Easter Sunday and the Sundays before Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Easter, the general assembly was given over to festivals that gave a cross-cultural interpretation to the holidays. The Easter festival, for example, incorporated an overview of the diverse origins of Easter symbols and customs. It also included a custom peculiar to the school: The younger children brought flowers for the older children, and the seniors reciprocated with colored eggs.

Recognition Day was the annual graduation service; the "Festival of the Dedication of Youth," again orchestrated by Chubb, became the Ethical Society's counterpart to such rites of passage as confirmation and bar mitzvah. Traditionally, the graduates entered the hall in a procession through a Boy Scout honor guard. The Leader of the Society addressed the graduates on the responsibilities of adulthood, presented them with keepsakes, and led them in responsive sentences:

Leader: Fair day of larger light,

Life's own appointed hour,
Young souls, bud forth in white,--
The world's a'flower:
Thrill, youthful hearts: soar upward, limpid voice;
Blossom time is come -- rejoice, rejoice, rejoice!

Response: Oh, that we as right and true might be
As a flower or a tree;
And that the sweetness of the Spring
Into our souls might pass,
And the clear courage of the grass:

Leader: All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone:

Response: And know we not what argument
Our life to our neighbor's creed has lent.

Leader: There is a destiny that makes us brothers;
None goes his way alone:

Response: All that we send into the lives of others
Comes back into our own.

Leader: Keep thy heart with all diligence;
For out of it are the issues of life.

Response: He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty;
And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

Leader: Stand fast together therefore, having girded your loins with truth,
And having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Response: To this end have we been born,
And for this cause come we into the world,
That we should bear witness unto the truth.

In a celebration of the continuity of ethical education, the "torch of loyalty" was passed from the Post Graduate Group to the graduating class and then to the incoming senior class. Representatives of the Post Graduate Group and the Y.P.A. then welcomed the graduates into their associations. Because it represented a communal validation, this event was held in the auditorium and served as the platform service for that Sunday -- often the closing Sunday of the season. The service was followed by a "coming out" reception for the graduates and their parents and friends.

Chubb carried his love of music and drama into the Sunday School. "We want to make Song, and music generally, a more dominating power, integrated with the rest of our teaching and emotional nurture," he wrote. "To ... make song ... a cultural force at the very heart of our larger ethical purpose, must be our aim." (pastoral letter, Sept. 1, 1928) The regular use of song began in the tots' groups and was later incorporated in the plans of higher grades. He also considered acting an effective tool of self-realization and ethical exploration. Holiday festivals usually incorporated plays, some written by Chubb. The school's Annual Entertainment included two or three one-act plays; parents, teachers, and other Society members assisted with costumes, set design, lighting, music, and choreography. In the late 1920s, the Society employed a drama director to produce the school's festivals, ceremonies, and poetry readings as well as its plays. Under her direction, the children entered one of their productions in a local drama tournament in the 1929-30 season. On occasion, the post-graduate groups produced full-length plays as independent troupes.

Chubb and Boette finally put fun on the Sunday School agenda. Parties frequently were held during the General Assembly, and occasionally in the evening. The school year was capped with a field day at a city park or country retreat; Chubb, an avid swimmer and hiker, encouraged vigorous recreation. Beginning in 1930, the annual outing usually took the form of a riverboat excursion.

Active Learning

Community service was an integral part of the Sunday School program. Each group initiated its own "lend-a-hand" project; the children contributed and raised the necessary money and directed its use. Over the years, these projects spanned a wide range of charitable and activist endeavors. Younger students made colorful scrapbooks for bedridden children at City Hospital, and a group of older students donated a wheelchair to the children's ward. Similarly, young students made toys and clothing for Appalachian children, while older students threw a fund-raising party to help an Appalachian community school keep its doors open. A group of girls made and repaired infant garments as a member unit of the National Needlework Guild. One group subscribed to the National Child Labor Committee and invited one of its lobbyists to address the school, while another group visited the Missouri School for the Blind and devoted its contributions to a vocational training program. Two groups joined the Humane Society and visited its animal shelter; as their enthusiasm for animal welfare spread, the school sponsored exhibits of birdhouses and taught the students to build and stock them. Another group supplied a baby with a month's supply of milk, and yet another gave its funds to the Provident Association of St. Louis for the care of a destitute family. As a body, the children also donated special collections and Christmas caroling receipts to charitable causes.

To give the children a role in directing school activities, a Student Council was formed in the teens. The council was composed of boys and girls over 14. Each group in the advanced section elected a representative to the council; the representatives, in turn, elected the officers who made up the Governing Committee. The full council met once a month. A single teachers' representative was present to relay the students' comments to group leaders. The students made suggestions regarding parties, plays, festivals, and outings; discipline problems; and incentives for attendance

and promptness. The council's only direct authority was in producing a handful of general assemblies. Beyond that, its role was advisory, but its advice was taken seriously. For instance, when the annual drama-and-dance entertainment -- a load of work for parents and teachers -- was replaced with simple motion picture showings, an outcry from the council brought back the more elaborate format.

A Sunday School publication was begun several times, first in 1908 and again in the 1913-14 season. The magazine, which came to be known as "Twice-a-Year," included announcements of coming activities; messages from the school directors; essays by students; inspirational and nature poems; reports of extracurricular activities; and personal notes regarding members' education, employment, travel, and volunteer services. As an experiment, the publication was placed in the hands of a committee selected from the Student Council in the 1919-20 season. This committee also raised the funding for the publication by selling advertisements. The students' business and editorial skills proved wanting, and the publication languished until the newly formed PTA began underwriting it in 1925. Adult volunteers took over the editing duties. "Twice-a-Year" became a comical misnomer when it slipped to once-a-year publication; in 1929, it was renamed "The Torchlight," after the "torch of loyalty" used in the Festival of the Dedication of Youth.

The broadening scope of Sunday School activities required increased volunteer help. In the spring of 1923, a group of five parents circulated a petition calling for the establishment of a patrons' association. The following fall, a separate group of parents and teachers inaugurated a "Normal Course in Ethical Instruction," which consisted of about ten fortnightly lecture-discussion meetings. The two groups joined forces as the Parents' & Teachers' Association in January 1924. All parents of Sunday School students were members, regardless of whether they paid dues, and membership was open to all adult members of the Society. Each year, members elected four members of a governing committee; these four chose three additional committee members, and from among themselves these members elected a chairman, secretary, and treasurer and appointed the chairmen of standing committees -- Membership, Program, Drama, and Entertainment. The leader of the Society was an ex officio member of this executive committee.

The PTA brought parents into the educational process by organizing their support and integrating the ethical training provided in the home and school. It organized the spring outing, the Twelfth Night party held each holiday season, and the Annual Entertainment. Members volunteered childcare, transportation, and supervision for school activities. With funds raised through dues, donations, and proceeds from the Annual Entertainment, the PTA financed the school publication and provided the school with such amenities as a movie projector, an aquarium, educational toys, and Recognition Day mementos. The PTA also provided moral support: In its mailings, it encouraged children to attend classes regularly and promptly and invited parents to participate in the General Assembly; once a year, the group put on an appreciation dinner for the teachers. In their monthly meetings, PTA members were brought up to date on school topics; they also heard talks on child-rearing by Ethical leaders, educators, and mental health authorities. Some of these meetings were held jointly with the Child Study Group. A customary meeting held in the spring offered parents an overview of wholesome summertime diversions for children. About 1927, a related association called the Parents' Sunday Morning Group was formed. By gathering just after dropping off their children at the Sunday School, members were able to make use of the idle time before the platform service. The group was led by Society member Marguerite E. Grimmer, who served on the staff of the city's Psychiatric Clinic. In addition to addressing the group and guiding discussions on the ethical development of children, Grimmer shared her expertise in private consultations.

The Third Era: 1933-1950

11: J. Hutton Hynd - A Champion of Pure Ethics

Character Profile

If the Ethical movement were to establish a seminary of its own, it might well seek the likes of J. Hutton Hynd to head up the Department of Homiletics. Hynd was an impeccable orator. He wrote out his addresses to the syllable, and he delivered them with studied elocution and gestures. To ensure crisp timing, he often practiced his orations on Saturday nights, orchestrating his greeting, address, and closing words with the interludes of longtime organist Carl Werner. For Hynd, the platform service was a holy event, a sacrament of sorts; he was known to acknowledge latecomers with a long, cool stare and a mortifying pause in an otherwise flowing address. He had not Walter Sheldon's consuming introspection or Percival Chubb's fiery indignation; he distinguished himself through his synthesis of the arts and sciences, and through the fastidiousness and consistency of his lectures. No blazer of intellectual trails, Hynd was devoted to inspiring listeners; with clarity, conciseness, and cleverly turned phrases, he provided Society members with a steady diet of thoughtful nutrition. Those who regularly attended Hynd's addresses received an ongoing education in history, literature, philosophy, and comparative religions. Recalled Mabel Jones:

I loved him. He was my mentor. If I ever had a mentor in life, it was he. Anything that he mentioned, I would go and either buy the book or get it from the library and read it on my own. He introduced me to ideas.... I didn't go college, so I was ripe for all this stuff. I was 34 years old when I joined the Society, so I drank it in -- I was ready for it. I really took it all very, very seriously. I didn't even form friendships until I'd been there about five years, because I sat in like I was going to college." (Interview with Mabel Jones, August 11, 1986)

Hynd acquired his noted erudition through a varied course of training in his native Scotland. He earned a degree in philosophy from the University of Perth, and later studied engineering at the University of Glasgow. In World War I, he served as a mechanic in the Royal Air Force. After studying at Edinburgh's Congregational College and Germany's Merburg University, he was ordained a minister in the Congregational Church of Scotland. During his ten years of service to the church, he mastered the florid, inspirational style of oratory then prevalent among Celtic clerics. Before coming to the United States, he spent four years assisting Stanton Coit in London's Ethical Church; like Chubb, Hynd was deeply influenced by Coit's reverential style and creative use of ceremony.

Enthusiasm for a Fine Quality of Life

The overriding theme of Hynd's oratory was that authentic religious values are those that are immediately apprehended -- not those that rest on belief in revelation or cultural mythology. He repeatedly defined religion as "an active enthusiasm for a fine quality of life." In so doing, he offered a straightforward, naturalistic answer to the ageless question of the "meaning of life." He belittled the popular assumption that human life has meaning only within the context of a fixed cosmology; it is not necessary, he said, to grasp some extra-rational explanation of human origin and destiny to appreciate life's self-evident goods. Further, by Hynd's reckoning, to hold fast to the belief that human fulfillment must be found in an afterlife is to preclude the fulfillment that may be found in the present. He likened the preoccupation with an afterlife to a dreary business trip: If the sole purpose of the trip is to reach a destination and carry out an assignment, then the traveler will disregard the scenery and pass up the human encounters one cherishes on a pleasure trip. Although he shied away from existentialist phraseology, Hynd recognized that one of the functions of belief in everlasting life is to provide relief from absurdity -- the enervating sense that life is rendered futile by the very fact that it ends. As an alternative to that belief, he proposed the calm acceptance of the life cycle as a microcosm of the universal cycles of change:

We are here as parts of the universe -- as parts of a dynamic process of change which proceeds within cycles of the seasons of the year, and of day and night. In such a system of cycles we are not going anywhere; we seem to be "going round and round" -- a fact which need not disturb us unduly! Life can be as meaningful in terms of a circle as in terms of a straight line! We are here -- and we are always in the present.... If we as individuals are not always here -- Mankind is always here. Individuals come and go, but Mankind remains, always in the present. At this moment, you and I represent Mankind; soon others will be the representatives of Humanity -- which lives an eternal life that is charged with the dynamics of change....

The meaning of life is to be found in life itself -- in life as a process of dynamic change within the finite and infinite cycles of our universe. The meaning of life is to be found in a certain way of living your life ...

We are offering the suggestion that the meaning of life, and therefore the purpose of life, are to be found in the emphasis upon the quality or kind of life we may know here and now. And this is a suggestion which gives denial to the implication that the meaning of life is to be found in the years of retirement and rest, or in the silent tomb, or in another world, or even in a far-off state of ethical perfection. We would give denial to the pernicious implication, this fallacy of futurity, that our life has no meaning apart from an existence other than the one we know here and now. If life is to be likened unto a journey, then the meaning and purpose of life are to be known along the way -- as in certain kinds of experiences which seem to have a special value, and which seem to have a special claim upon the attentions of intelligence and conscience and common sense; certain experiences which seem to give quality to life. ("Life: A Journey Without A Goal," address given at New York Ethical Society, Jan. 12, 1947.)

In address after address, Hynd extolled "the good things" of life -- the joys of beauty and adventure and companionship, the deep satisfaction that comes of contributing to human welfare, the serenity that attends emotional and intellectual maturation. According to Hynd, these goods are self-validating realities; the yearning for supernatural goods merely underscores the potency of the yearning for natural goods. Hynd outlined this philosophy most explicitly in a 1936 address titled, "What Are 'The Realities' of Religion?" In the address, Hynd asserted that the "realities" exalted by revelatory religions -- such as divinity, salvation, and immortality -- are imaginative embellishments of natural values, and that such embellishments tend to obscure and degrade nature. For example, on the most basic level of human experience, he noted that belief in a providential care for bodily needs simply expresses the drive to survive; as science strips away mythological explanations of the workings of nature, that drive is directed toward industry rather than supplication.

The same principle -- that supernatural beliefs express fundamental needs -- applies in what Hynd unabashedly termed "the spiritual life."¹⁵ The belief in a personal God, he said, simply expresses the need for sympathy, approval, and all other positive elements of human community; the frustration of that need spurs the lonely and rejected to seek satisfaction in a superhuman sphere:

[T]he need for human fellowship is the central reality. Men may seek the divine, but this seeking merely serves to throw into bolder relief the need of the human. The longing for divine fellowship is verily the longing for a more perfect human fellowship. Let the human fellowship be more perfect, more congenial, more sympathetic, more just, more merciful, more patient, and the deepest spiritual need will be satisfied -- indeed, satisfied to such an extent that, in the circumstance of human fellowship, the most orthodox believer will exclaim that he is "in the presence of God." There is a line of thought in the New Testament which brings this humanistic matter home to us, as in the statement, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The human fellowship itself, especially when it is of a high moral kind, is the reality of religion, since it is from this fellowship that all ethical and spiritual values come, and all emotional patterns radiate. The emotion of "enjoying the divine presence" radiates from the experience of human fellowship. ("What Are 'The Realities' of Religion?" first published in pamphlet form in 1936 by the AEU; pp. 6, 7)

Hynd traced the manifestation of this principle from its ultimate application through all subordinate values: The doctrine of divine forgiveness expresses the deep spiritual need for human forgiveness and restoration to community; prayers of supplication give voice to the yearning for understanding and guidance; consecration to God through celibacy echoes the desire for fidelity in love; and the belief in immortality underlines the extraordinary need for human consolation experienced by those in grief. In Hynd's vision, the perfect religious community -- as

¹⁵ Hynd, whose bent was toward pure reason, employed the term "spiritual" in a loose, poetic manner. He explained his use of quasi-mystical terminology in a 1942 radio address titled "Living in a Fool's Paradise": "When we speak here of 'spiritual resources,' we refer to the resources of thought and feeling. We do not wish to imply that the spiritual life is something apart from the physical, as though the 'soul' were a ghostly presence having an existence apart from the 'body.' The term 'soul,' or 'spirit,' is used conveniently to signify thought and emotion -- the general quality and disposition of a person." (Address broadcast Feb. 15, 1942, on KMOX's "Church of the Air" program)

distinct from the "superstitious community" - fulfills needs and celebrates values directly, without reference to non-empirical "realities." Naturally, the community he envisioned is most nearly exemplified by an ethical society.¹⁶

In accordance with this naturalism Hynd applauded the roles of science and critical reasoning in purifying ethical values. In "The Fundamentalists Are Right," another signal address, he cleverly agreed with the rigid declamations of the orthodox: Judaism, he said, is the belief in such doctrines as the Mosaic law, the Chosen People, the Promised Land, and the Messiah; Christianity, likewise, must be defined as belief that humanity is innately corrupt and that salvation can be obtained only through faith in the divine incarnation and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. He dismissed as dishonest the attempts of liberal theologians to "stay within the fold" while minimizing such dogmas in light of scientific discoveries and intellectual trends. His intention, of course, was to separate the supernatural constructs of dogmatic religions from the "fundamental fact of religion" -- namely, what Chicago Ethical leader A. Eustace Haydon described as "the creative drive of human desire for the values of a satisfying life." ("The Fundamentalists Are Right," p. 14) Accentuating that "fact," Hynd urged his listeners to engage wholeheartedly in the humanistic cultivation of "the good life":

This interest in the good (as in what life should be, extending beyond what life is) is a dynamic interest which leads to definite activity, and to the building up of certain institutions, which become the custodian of the traditions and techniques by which a good life is to be achieved. "Science" is the name we give to man's dynamic interest in finding the facts and knowing the truth; "Art" is the name we give to man's dynamic and creative interest in proportion and beauty; "Religion" is the name we give to the dynamic and creative interest in the good. Science, Art, Religion -- each with its own institutions -these three; and perhaps the greatest of these is Religion,¹⁷ since it is the religious impulse which should direct and consecrate the activities of mankind to the service of the good life. ... I do not speak here of any particular religion -- I speak of religion as such, as having its own fundamental fact and feature, by which mankind may yet be united in its creative drive for the values of a satisfying life for all, in terms of worth, achievement, and fulfillment. Through the generations, man, seeking the good life, has tried to be creative in his magic, in his supernaturalism in his superstition; now let him try to be creative in terms of his scientific knowledge, his technical skill, his political knowledge, and his ideals of the good; thus giving expression to the religious interest and activity, as a vital part of a people's culture. "The Fundamentalists Are Right," published in pamphlet form in 1950 by the AEU; p. 14)

Dogging the Dogmatists

Though commonly perceived as anticlerical, Hynd was genuinely committed to purifying and fortifying religion, not abolishing it. He candidly acknowledged that he did not believe the metaphysical tenets of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and he was less than scrupulous to avoid offending believers, but he was not out to negate theism per se. Rather, his criticisms were aimed at self-serving institutionalism and cowardly other-worldliness -- tendencies which obstruct "the creative drive of human desire for the values of a satisfying life." In his most stinging indictment of

¹⁶ Hynd's heady naturalism, as expressed in "Realities," might be more compelling were he willing to acknowledge its limitations. For one thing, he discounts a characteristic function of symbol and myth -- namely, providing a focal point toward which one's longings and gratitude may be directed. When he urges the penitent to seek "human" forgiveness, his argument rings clear, but the principle of demythologization does not apply so cleanly to the bestowal of homage; the Taoist may be accustomed to an Ultimate Reality too vast to be objectified, but the typical Westerner attempts to locate a central source of creativity. Instead of encouraging the Western mind to broaden its breadth of awareness, Hynd attempts to redirect its habitual focus, as when he suggests that "a Boulder Dam, or a Tennessee Valley project, imperfect as it may be, may stir the emotions of the intelligent person more deeply than all the prayers for rain that were ever said." ("Realities," pp. 4, 5) Another of Hynd's weaknesses is his squeamish reluctance to acknowledge angst: It is the terror of mortality -- not solely the pain of bereavement -- that the belief in immortality soothes; similarly, he declines to mention that even those fortunate enough to experience intimate love and "high moral fellowship" can hardly hope for a humanistic nirvana free of existential loneliness. Overstatements are common in Hynd's addresses, indicating his overriding concern for hortatory inspiration, even to the neglect of philosophical integrity.

¹⁷ Note: This passage illustrates two of Hynd's favorite homiletic devices -- the effective use of repetition through the echoing of successive phrases, and the fresh recasting of traditional religious sayings (in this case, Science, Art, and Religion parallel the "faith, hope, and love" of I Corinthians 13:13).

ecclesiasticism, he contended the Christian establishment stultifies the liberating spirit of Jesus when it forbids progressive thought:

[I]nasmuch as the organized traditionalism of Christianity, which hitherto has controlled the moral experience of the people, is forcing upon us to-day the view of a fixed and final tradition, it is actually hindering the moral development of the race. Christian ethics has become a matter of sacred manuscripts and superstitious sanctions. The sanctimonious quotation of a text is the only solution offered for the most pressing problems as of slavery, war, divorce and birth-control. Bibliolatry is a blight upon the spiritual nature of man. Mere biblical commentary enslaves the mind. The free intelligence is not allowed to play upon the elements of the ethical life. The Church has so committed herself to her supernatural traditionalism that she has lost the perception of the true nature of her witness, and has become insensible to the responsibility she carries as the professed custodian of moral traditions. She has relentlessly condemned every spontaneous expression of moral experience outside the circle of her orthodoxy. Her severest anathemas and excommunications have fallen upon the doubters and disputers who have dared to question the absolute finality of her doctrines and interpretations.

In all this she has been disloyal to her great traditions. There is a sense in which orthodoxy is disloyalty. Christian orthodoxy, in accepting the Bible as a finality, tried to destroy the scientific tradition; to-day, she tries to thwart the enrichment of the moral inheritance. She misunderstands her stewardship. She buries her talent. She is an unfaithful servant. ("The Great Tradition of the Ethical Movement," a reprint in pamphlet form of an article published in the Standard, p.4)

Hynd frequently accused institutionalized Christianity of divisive chauvinism. In a 1946 radio address titled "Ideas of Brotherhood," he denounced the Christian proclivity to "divide Mankind into two classes or groups -- the saved and the unsaved, or the children of God and the children of the Devil." (script of radio address; Feb. 24, 1946, KMOX "Church of the Air"; Ethical Society archives) The only way to cultivate a universal sense of community, he countered, is to recognize a "mystical bond" that transcends alliances of blood and belief. The narrowest of Christian dogmatists infuriated Hynd by expressing contempt for political approaches to world harmony. In "That We May Have Peace," he argued for a realistic commitment to the establishment of universal law as against the rigidly sectarian assumption that the "unsaved" are incapable of upholding any sort of moral law. (May 1, 1949, script read over radio station KWK; Ethical Society archives) And in responding to the orthodox equation of "godlessness" with amorality, Hynd noted that atheism is a relative term: Early Christians were deemed atheists by the Roman religionists whose idols they denigrated, and contemporary Christians are called infidels within the Islamic world; likewise, rational humanists can be termed atheists only insofar as they question the validity of the prevailing Western God-concept. With due respect for devout theists, Hynd acknowledged that "beliefs regarding the Universe and its mysteries are important," but he stressed that such beliefs ought to be "freely and openly discussed in the spirit of toleration, open-mindedness, and humility." ("When Christians Were Called 'Atheists,'" KMOX "Church of the Air" broadcast, May 27, 1945) He called for an end to schoolyard name-calling, contraposing the attitude that morality, not belief, ought be the touchstone of human goodness. Just as Jesus taught that the compassionate Samaritan -- an "atheist" vis-a-vis the Jewish culture of that time and place -- was the paradigm of neighborliness, so Hynd pleaded with adversarial Christians to judge "heathen" humanists by their deeds. As always, he elevated the natural goods upon which all can agree:

Let it be observed that we are more likely to be united in our ideas of Good because such ideas lie more intimately within the range of our knowledge and experience. The ideas of Good may be proved. "Prove all things," says the Bible, "hold fast that which is good." Goodness seems to lie within our human comprehension and implementation. For example, we know in a general way when our health is good -- and when Life is good. We seem to be able to prove it! And it is in relation to the Good Life that men and women know their most certain responsibilities and duties -- because the Good Life is a matter of everyday practice and experiment. Yes -- it may be true that we can never be united in our conceptions of God, but let it be known that we may be united to a remarkable and practical degree in our conceptions of Good: for here are ideas to be discussed -- with a sense of certainty, with a sense of responsibility, and with a sense of unity.... Religious unity is not to be achieved in common conceptions of God but in common conceptions of Good. (Ibid.)

Hynd did not confine his critiques to the power structure of orthodoxy. Challenging complacent believers, he mocked the psychological gymnastics by which theism might be used to dodge humanitarian obligations:

Mention should be made ... of a favorite trick which human nature plays upon itself with remarkable success; it has played this trick upon itself for ages now, and still seems to enjoy being fooled by it. Human nature does not mind being fooled, so long as it may escape from a task it does not wish to perform!

Here is the trick. Man has an emotion which he does not wish to follow -- since obedience to it may be difficult or costly. The reaction is natural enough. In order to escape from the ordeal, he proceeds to project his emotion outward as an abstraction of himself. He projects it upon vacancy -- and he may give it a name. A favorite name has been the word "God." The projection of himself stands out there as an idol, or as an idea; and then he proceeds to call upon his projection to do what he finds so difficult to do. He knows that he should practice the law of kindness in his dealings with his fellows -- but it is difficult, it is irksome, it is embarrassing; accordingly, he proceeds (feeling very virtuous the while) to call upon his projection to be kind. "O God, be kind to the poor and the needy, to the sick and the aged. O God, be kind to the people who are compelled to live in the slums, and to those who are in prison. O God, be kind to the people of Africa, and the peoples of China. O God, be kind and gracious and merciful." And Man, having played this neat little trick upon himself, is inclined to leave it just at that! He has escaped from his duty -- from his responsibility -- as in the practice of kindness! That same emotion which might have impelled him to do great things for his fellowmen is projected upon vacancy; and he proceeds to make his fervent appeal to his own emotion. A neat trick; and popular! It seems to be easier for men to ask God to be kind than it is for them to be kind! It seems to be easier for a man to ask God's forgiveness than it is for him to apologize and make amends to the person whom he has wronged! ("The Quality of Kindness," transcription of platform address delivered Dec. 19, 1948; p. 4)

Again, while it may appear that Hynd disputed the very idea of divine intervention, his intention was to rouse humanitarian ardor.¹⁸ In "The Quality of Kindness," the address quoted above, Hynd (echoing a contention of Percival Chubb's) pointed out that the centrality of religious leaders -- notably, Christ, Krishna, and Buddha -- indicates that human beings can only comprehend goodness insofar as it is embodied in exemplary human beings. The purpose of religious legends, he said, is "to bring the projected emotions back to earth again." (Ibid.) For Hynd, the validity of these legends lay, not in historical accuracy, but in their expression of ethical truisms: "the kindness and compassion represented in the Christ of the Hebrew-Christian literature must be born in US -- must be made manifest in US -- and must work through us, to become an effectual grace among men, seeking to save mankind from its sickness and sorrows, without respect of persons. This is the suggestion that is offered to mankind in the literature and legendry of East and West." (Ibid.) Beyond criticizing the errors of traditional religious institutions, Hynd called upon Ethical Culturists to help incorporate the values of the Ethical movement in American secular institutions:

As members of Ethical Societies, we have respect for certain contributions which have been made to the religious culture of the nation by Christian, Hebrew, and other organized religions; but we see the religious life of this nation emerging and moving as something that is different from the fragmentary state religions of other times, other places, other peoples; and we hold that this religious life should find definition and direction in new forms of organization, as in new institutions, new statements of belief, new codes of behavior, new services and ceremonies of orientation and consecration, and in new methods of education and administration -- none of these being final, but all of these being of such a kind that the scientific knowledge, the technical skill, and business and professional ability, and all the natural and human resources of this great nation, may be rightly directed, YEA RIGHTLY DEDICATED, as to the common good, or greatest good of the greatest number

[W]hatever may have been the part played by others by others in other centuries, whatever may be the part to be played by others in centuries to come, whatever may be the part to be played by others in this present century, we say -- because we can do no other -- that the more democratic, naturalistic, rationalistic, moralistic, humanistic aspects of the religious life must be formalized and organized, within the political and cultural setting of which they are such a vital part, in order

¹⁸ Hynd's reference to "vacancy" seems to reveal an atheistic assumption, but the context of the quoted passage makes it clear that his concern is psychological, not metaphysical; he is judging the manner in which the God-concept is spawned and used, not whether a reality corresponding to that concept exists.

that the potentialities and possibilities of each succeeding generation may be brought to finest and fullest expression; and therefore we say, without uncertainty, without hesitancy, without apology, that this is our part in this country, OUR PART IN THIS CENTURY.

("Our Part in this Century," closing address of the annual AEU assembly, Brooklyn, May 22, 1949)

Ethics in the Caldron of War

Hynd hoped that the tragedy of World War II would advance the purification of ethical values. Religious leaders of all stripes addressed the terror, cynicism, and jingoism of the war era; characteristically, Hynd's response to the tenor of the times was a renewed call to human responsibility. Taking as his foil the popular wartime saying that "there are no atheists in foxholes," Hynd asserted that the essence of religion is not the fearful cry for supernatural aid but the courageous devotion to a noble way of life. The genuinely religious soldier, he said, is not the one who prays for deliverance from harm but the one who consecrates himself to the values he defends:

This man has made the issues clear to himself. He sees his country: he sees the folks at home, his family, you and me; he sees the institutions that are cherished by free men and women. He sees his native land and all its precious values under threat of violence, invasion, and spoliation by a ruthless and arrogant enemy. He sees it clearly, vividly. He sees a certain kind of life. It is a kind of life to be preserved: It is the kind of life he wants to live for -- and it is the kind of life he is willing to die for. This man has a concern for certain values -- and he makes the great commitment of himself, of his life, to the defense of these values. With this vision of human life before him he prepares himself to engage the enemy with resolution and with courage. It is the religious vision of a normal man who wants to live the best kind of life -- and who is willing, if need be, to make the supreme sacrifice for its preservation. The vision commands his supreme reverence, his supreme devotion, his supreme sacrifice.

And now, following this silent and sincere commitment to a certain quality of life, he finds himself, shall we say, in a fox-hole, under the fire and fury of his foes. Some men may offer prayer, some may curse and swear -- but this soldier stands in grim determination -- afraid, yet mastering his fear by the convictions of his faith. There are men such as this. And I would say, in all fairness to them, that such men are truly and deeply religious. ("How Fares Religion in the Fox-Holes?" broadcast May 23, 1943, on radio station KMOX's "Church of the Air" program.)

While he exalted the "religious" devotion of fighters¹⁹ and civilian supporters of the war effort, Hynd placed an even higher premium on the responsibility to wage peace. Just as Chubb, during World War I, taught that "the fires in which the world is being tried must be for us cleansing fires, burning up the dross of our smaller selves," so Hynd contended that the indiscriminate brutality of the second war undercut supernaturalism, challenging humanity to champion a more self-accountable realism. (pastoral letter, Sept. 27, 1915; Ethical Society archives) In a 1944 radio address, Hynd underscored human responsibility by flatly contradicting the earnest belief that prayer saves lives:

[T]here are those who say, in the name of religion, that our sons can be saved from cruel wounding and untimely death by prayer and miracle.... And since religion is concerned with the saving of life and the fulfillment of life, they speak of prayer for the saving of life as the supreme religious obligation.... But is it not so that this war has brought a very severe test to the saying that it is by prayer that our sons are to be saved? . . . In this war, men are praying for themselves as never before; and they are being prayed for as never before.... The voice of prayer is never silent -- but the slaughter of men does not cease! The men who pray, and the men for whom prayer is made, are numbered among the dead and the dying....

As I look at the facts in the face I learn the lesson that our sons are not saved by prayer and miracle. It may comfort me to imagine that they are saved by prayer and miracle -- but why should I deceive myself or others by vain imaginings and false consolations?

Now, someone will say at this point -- This is a cruel and a hard saying; it is cruel to say to the persons who pray for their sons that their prayers are of no avail. Well -- the facts are cruel

¹⁹ In 1942, Hynd, though a resident alien and in middle age, registered with the Selective Service Board.

enough; more cruel indeed than any words of mine can ever be! And I would suggest that it adds considerably to the cruelty of the facts when we lead the praying mother to believe that her son will be saved -- it is cruel, I say, to treat her so in face of the fact that she may rise from her knees to receive the telegram which tells her that her son has been killed in action

And let me add here that the cruelty of this situation is extended and deepened when the mother who has lost her son begins to accuse herself and to think that perhaps her prayers were not answered because she was not good enough, or did not have "faith" enough, when she prayed.... The telegram comes to "the just and the unjust." This is the fact to be faced; and it is a fact from which we may learn the bitter truth that modern warfare, when we allow it to come, involves the wholesale slaughter of millions of men -our sons, our brothers, our husbands, our friends. In the threatenings and thunderings of modern warfare, in the din and dust of bombs and bullets, rockets and shells, grenades and mines, and many other hellish devices which we fashion with our hands -- which under certain circumstances we MUST fashion with our hands -- the voice of prayer is of no avail. The sooner we learn this lesson concerning life and religion the better it will be for all concerned. Learning this bitter lesson, we may come to see that we have been too prone to place the responsibility for our sons' salvation on the shoulders of the gods rather than upon the shoulders of men. The responsibility is OURS. ("The Only Way to Save Our Sons," broadcast Oct. 29, 1944, on radio station KMOX's "Church of the Air" program.)

Despite his qualified support of the war effort, Hynd abhorred the ugly necessity of it. Member Ted Anderson recalled that Hynd once pounded on the lectern and shouted, "I hate war!" (That, said Anderson, was the only emotional outburst he could recall Hynd allowing himself on the platform.) (Interview with Ted and Ruth Anderson, Sept. 15, 1986) Hynd declared that "war in 0 its forms, legal or illegal, should be thought of as a monstrous crime ... a crime which we charge to mankind as a whole." ("The Light of Hope in the Darkness of War," KMOX "Church of the Air" script, Nov. 17, 1940.) Worldwide guilt for the war, he said, lay in humanity's failure to establish "the conditions, under which, by law and its enforcement, war might be averted." ([ibid.] He admonished his listeners to atone for this crime by working toward an enduring peace. "Our supreme religious duty," he said, is to engage in concrete efforts to build up international harmony; he urged support for the work of governments, the United Nations, and the business community to establish a global system of justice and social interdependence. ("The Only Way to Save Our Sons") "It is only as we rise from our knees to fulfill the higher religious duty of world-citizenship," he said, "that we can hope to save our sons, and our sons' sons, from the massacres of modern warfare." (Ibid.) On a deeper level, Hynd pointed up the need for postwar spiritual reconstruction:

This war should give us a sense of history -- it should give us an awareness of what is going on within the Soul of Humanity.... Old nationalisms and militarisms are struggling in desperate defiance of new internationalisms and humanitarianisms. We feel the tensions of this struggle in our own souls. And even when the war is over, and the victory is won by the new against the old, we shall feel the tensions of conflict within ourselves. These tensions are not our private and personal tensions merely; they are the tensions of the universal human spirit; they are the tensions within the historical process; they are the travailings of a new world waiting to be born within us ... [L]et us have a sense of history -- an awareness of what is going on within the Soul of the human race; and let us try to resolve the tension as a spiritual problem universal in its scope, international in its implications. Let us remember that, in history, things do not merely happen TO us, they happen THROUGH us. THROUGH us, let the new international spirit be born; THROUGH us, let the new humanitarianism come; THROUGH us, let history fulfill itself in terms of the Universal Man who shall live his life according to the spirit of freedom, justice, and peace. ("On Having a Sense of History," transcription of platform address given Oct. 3, 1943)

Impenetrable Dignity

The "J" in J. Hutton Hynd stood for John, but no one ever called him that. For that matter, no one was ever heard to call him Hutton. Even his wife, when in public, addressed him as Mr. Hynd. At leadership meetings, colleagues who refused to indulge his formality settled on addressing him simply as "Hynd." Asked to describe the man, nearly every interviewee used the adjectives aloof and austere. ("Formidable" ran a close third in the adjectival survey. And for all Hynd's advocacy of religion as "an active enthusiasm for life," the word "enthusiastic" never came up.) All agreed he was a man of dignity -"impenetrable dignity," in the words of one Society member. He was a regal, rather humorless man who allowed himself to be seen -- and photographed -- only in a stiff collar. Charles "Bud" Blake recalled Hynd as "unapproachable. You did not ever feel that this was a buddy of any kind. He was always a person

on high -- sort of a priest like character.... I could not possibly imagine the man in shorts or doing something like sweeping the walk or using a vacuum cleaner." (Interview with Charles and Garnet Blake, July 1986)

The fastidiousness that characterized Hynd's addresses carried over into his other pastoral duties: He insisted on a formal rehearsal even for so simple a ceremony as the Ethical naming service for newborns. (Ruth Anderson, whose daughter Linda was named in an Ethical ceremony, recalled that Hynd "did a very good job, although he looked terribly awkward holding her; I had to laugh. He didn't have any children, and he held babies like they going to crack in two.") (Interview with Ted and Ruth Anderson, Sept. 15, 1986) Member Mildred Smith recalled that full-scale festivals called for correspondingly finer daintiness:

Hynd was a detailist. He must have thought every spare moment about order, and organization, and the details of the Society. When we had a festival -- on Thanksgiving and Christmas -- you had a sprig of holly. Every child held it by the right hand at a certain height, and you were all lined up down the front steps [of Sheldon Memorial]. When the organ played a certain note, with the right foot you entered and went down the steps [of the auditorium], and you all sang at a certain given note. He was a stickler for detail. (Interview with Mildred Smith, August 11, 1986)

Likewise, Mabel Jones recalled how Hynd demanded that Sunday School students participating in candle-lighting ceremonies stand erect in marked locations, holding their candles perfectly upright; on Hynd's cue, the children meticulously intoned inspirational verses. "That pleased me mightily," said Jones. "I knew a lot of people criticized all that, but to me that was just wonderful order, and I dovetailed into that." (Interview with Mabel Jones, August 11, 1986)

Other Society members, while impressed with Hynd's conscientiousness and enchanted with his rich accent, found his Britannic primness out of place in this unpretentious Midwestern community. Society member Jane Hanke recalled discovering that broad red bows she had put up as part of a yuletide display had been inexplicably removed; upon inquiring about their fate, she was told that Hynd had ordered the ribbons taken down and ironed. One anecdote, recounted often and with varied embellishments, illustrates Hynd's need to project a professorial bearing. As the story goes, Dee Simpson, a gregarious and rather eccentric Society member (she was given to addressing all acquaintances as "honey"), bluntly asked Hynd who cut his hair; Simpson was married to a barber, and she evidently deemed the cut of Hynd's sparse locks below par. As Bud Blake recounted the incident, Hynd "looked like he'd been slapped in the face. He drew back to his 6 feet 3 inches and peered down on her and, in this voice from above, said, 'Whom I have cut my hair is my own business!'" Blake surmised that Hynd, with typical Scottish frugality, had his wife cut his hair but was chagrined by the fact. He added that Hynd undoubtedly found the question altogether too personal. "You couldn't have offended the man more if you had reached up and kissed him," Blake said. "I've never seen a guy quite so embarrassed as he was, and so affronted." (Interview with Charles and Garnet Blake, July 1986) Even Mabel Jones, who admired Hynd's precision in ceremonial matters, owned that his fussiness clashed with American ways. "He would come to a picnic with his straw hat and his coat and jacket and everything --very formal," said Jones. "He didn't come to a picnic like he was picnicking." (Interview with Mabel Jones, August 11, 1986)

For all his "impenetrable dignity," Hynd was not incapable of a certain restrained playfulness. Once, at a Sunday School assembly, he donned a kilt and did a few steps of a Scottish jig to the accompaniment of a bagpipe. And former members of the Young People's Association recalled with amusement that he joined in exactly one of their many soccer games. (The youngsters played on a stubble field, and thought nothing of fielding twenty or thirty players at a time. Hynd played about ten minutes before giving up in exasperation; an experienced player by English rules, he expressed disgust with the association's lackadaisical approach to the game.)

Hynd's compulsion to maintain privacy, control, and a dignified stature contributed to his overall poor rating as a pastoral servant. He and his wife lived at the former Coronado Hotel in midtown, a stone's throw from Sheldon Memorial, but Society members felt they were unwelcome at the couple's home. While living in the United States, the couple never owned a car, making it difficult -- some said conveniently difficult -- for Hynd to call on congregants. He was seldom seen "offstage," leading many members to assume he was uninterested in their welfare. The deeper truth is that Hynd was most at ease performing predictable, well-rehearsed tasks: At committee meetings, he was left nonplused by unexpected outbursts; in the presence of troubled and bereaved congregants, and even at the heartiest of dinner parties, he was apt to find himself at a loss for words. In a man who sustains studied dignity, this lack of competence in the arts of listening and making small talk bears a striking resemblance to disdain. It is not surprising, then, that Hynd often was perceived as uncaring. One member recalled stopping him in a stairwell to introduce him to her children; his flustered response, she said, left her feeling that she had acted

impudently. Another member said she would never forget being summarily dismissed from his office when she asked him to help obtain a box of holiday candy for a young guest of hers. "I had this feeling that he was not a very compassionate sort of person," she said. Ironically, Hynd cherished the community feeling he found in the St. Louis Society. Upon returning from a trip to Britain in 1948, he bemoaned the highbrow air of the movement abroad:

I would say that the Societies in England lack "the personal touch." I mean that the tendency is towards the intellectual and academic expression of morals and religion. This aspect, of course, is extremely important ... but the "family feeling," the feeling of "religious community," such as we have here in high degree in St. Louis, is lacking.... Because of this situation in London, there is a feeling that the day of ethical societies, as religious or "church" communities, is over, and that concentration should be made on conferences and publications. In other words -- it should be a matter of streams without any fountain or source! It would seem to me that some sort of emotional and spiritual fountainhead is necessary. (Leader's report to the Board of Trustees, Feb. 9, 1948)

Beyond appreciating the extraordinary warmth of the St. Louis Society, Hynd hoped to contribute to it. He once vowed in a platform address that he would resign and return to Scotland if he felt members could not turn to him with their problems. "He was sincere when he said that," one member woefully recalled, "and yet he did everything to turn you off. It's really kind of tragic." Hynd's esteem for human community was genuine, but he did not equate community with indiscriminating personal interaction. Indeed, he explicitly stated that fellow-feeling does not preclude discrimination and a careful regard for privacy:

[C]oncern and compassion will leave wide room for the due recognition of differences between persons ... [B]rotherhood does not make us merely sentimental or mawkish in our relationships -- as when we may try to be fulsome or foolish in our friendliness toward all men. Brotherhood will have respect for likes and dislikes -- since these point to legitimate evaluations and discriminations. We may choose our friends -being more intimate with one groups of persons than with another (as may even happen in a family when a brother will seem to have a closer kinship with one than another). And brotherhood will have a certain respect for privacies -- especially the privacies of personality; it is a respect which will prompt us to keep our distance -- as a protection for ourselves and for others against aggressive and thoughtless persons. ("Ideas of Brotherhood," script broadcast Feb. 24, 1946, on KMOX's "Church of the Air" program)

Although he did not project a welcoming air, Hynd did respond to congregants who made their needs known to him. Members who dropped by his office unannounced may have met with a chilly response, but those who scheduled appointments found him at least dutifully responsive. He was a willing -- if unsophisticated -- counselor, and he was capable of rising to heartfelt pastoral care. Recalled Hilda Dreifke:

I liked Hynd very much. So many people thought [the Hynds] were rather unfriendly, but I never found them so. My husband was not a member of the Ethical, but my husband died of lung cancer, and several weeks before he did die, Mr. Hynd came out to the house -- he was home at that time. Mr. Hynd came out to see him this one afternoon and spent at least an hour or an hour and a half with us. He was very friendly. My husband had built our house -- he was not a builder, but it was really a very pretty house -and Mr. Hynd said the house was a "monument to a man." It was a beautiful little old English house with a great big fireplace and beamed ceilings; I did the designing of the house, and Mr. Hynd immediately fell for the house because it reminded him of home. (Interview with Hilda Dreifke, Oct. 28, 1986)

Hynd's wife, Anne, helped compensate for his reserve. An active member of the Women's Auxiliary, she was tireless in her tending of the Sheldon Memorial garden. When the Society sponsored a Girl Scout troop in the thirties and forties, Anne Hynd taught the girls sewing, table-setting, and other domestic skills. Though often remembered as mousy, she touched many members of the Society. "Mrs. Hynd was very friendly with me," recalled Hilda Dreifke. "I remember ... she brought a very beautiful handmade dress for my first grandchild; that was a nice thing for her to do." (Interview with Hilda Dreifke, Oct. 28, 1986) Member Robin Jones also was struck by Anne Hynd's thoughtfulness:

She came [to the hospital] when our first child was born, and I was quite ill. But I was glad to see her. She had on a beautiful hat -- of course, that was when women wore hats. But she always wore fancy hats with some kind of big ribbon on it or something. I was feeling very ill, and I said, "I'll

close my eyes, but talk to me." So she stayed and she talked. I thought afterwards: "Anytime I go see someone in the hospital, I'm going to wear something bright and pretty." I've remembered that the rest of my life. (Interview with Robin Jones, Sept. 24, 1986)

If the Hynds were less than affable by the standards of the American Midwest, it was not because of any innate coolness. Emsy Rubin was impressed by the couple's depth of affection:

He was rather austere, you know, and she was a very sweet person, and I would catch the loving looks they would give each other.... I'd catch some little glance that she'd give him or some little glance that he'd give her, and I knew they were a couple deeply in love with each other. (Interview with Emsy Rubin, Sept. 30, 1986)

For their part, the Hynds perceived the Society as anything but unfriendly. After returning to Scotland in 1950, they corresponded with -- and welcomed visits from -- Society members until their deaths. In a letter to Clarence and Audrey Anderson written shortly after his wife's death, Hynd expressed both his love for Anne and his fond memories of the couple's years in St. Louis:

It was kind and thoughtful of you to write your nice letter to me, and so to send your gracious word of sympathy and concern; also to express your warm and affectionate regard for my dear Anne. Her sudden, unexpected, and untimely death, just a few years from the beginning of our retirement, leaves me very sad and lonely and desolate. Her LIFE had meant so much to me that now her DEATH must mean that any adjustment is very difficult. Nothing, just nothing, can take the place of the living presence of the beloved. There is no final consolation for a deeply personal bereavement of this kind; and even though memories are very precious, they do not assuage one's grief. But I am truly grateful for the wonderful years we had together; and among the happiest are the years in St. Louis, when we were so greatly privileged to make so many friends -- your good selves among them -- friends who have written to us to express their condolences; such letters bring their own kind of sustaining grace, and I do appreciate every one of them. Thanks ever so much for your letter; and I want to thank you and the members of your family circle for all the kindness and friendship which you extended to Anne during her time in St. Louis; especially your sisterly friendship, Mrs. Anderson, in the fine fellowship of the Women's Auxiliary. Anne cherished your friendship greatly.²⁰ (Letter dated March 25, 1968)

Hynd deemed oratory his consuming obligation; managing volunteers was not his long suit. He took a profound interest in the administration of the Sunday School, and he consistently offered direction to lay organizers. When he ventured into committee work, however, he tended to exhibit an authoritarian concern for detail, and the Society's "movers and shakers" sometimes discouraged his involvement. His shortcomings as an organizer may be laid in part to a self-conscious wariness of spontaneity, but he came to view that role as a minor aspect of his vocation:

The Leader's relation to the groups is purely advisory When the need for a group seems to arise, the Leader may make suggestions and advise; he may not 'impose' a group upon the members. We have the Business and Professional Women's Group as an example; the need arose, and a spontaneous organization of the group was made. When some of our men-folk feel deeply enough that there should be a Men's Club in the Society, there will be a Men's Club in due time. It is not the Leader's place to organize a Men's Club. Towards the groups already well organized, the Leader enjoys a relationship of friendly interest. When his interest seems to move out of bounds it is interpreted as "interference." He keeps at a respectful distance from the "inner sanctum" of each group. Who would dare to try to run the Women's Auxiliaries, for instance?! This is as it should be: and it is our hope that the group life of the Society will continue to have a spontaneous and healthy and fruitful growth.

As a matter of fact, the Leader has quite enough on his hands in the maintenance of the Sunday morning services -- and the many less conspicuous "pastoral duties" that are his to perform. Hints are heard betimes that Sunday, and Sunday morning services, and Sunday morning sermons, like history, are "a thing of the past"; but it seems to remain as a central feature of the St. Louis Ethical

²⁰ In a postscript to this letter, Hynd noted that prominent among Anne's belongings was a 1950 certificate proclaiming her a lifelong member of the Women's Auxiliary. "She prized the card very much indeed," he wrote. "Auxiliary members may wish to know this."

Society that the Sunday morning service hold a place of importance in the lives of our members and in the life of the community at large. The average standard of the Sunday morning service is very high -- in music, in readings, and in the addresses offered by a variety of speakers....

Returning this week from the East by train I read Sullivan's "Beethoven: His Spiritual Development." I read the following as having reference to a certain period in Beethoven's career: "Beethoven at this time greatly desired fame; His genius was to be exploited for his personal glory. He had not yet reached the position of seeing himself rather as a priest than as a king." The Leader of an Ethical Society must reach the position of "seeing himself rather as a priest than as a king," even as a musician must. The musician is a priest inasmuch as he mediates certain great experiences of the spirit -- the human spirit -- to mankind; he is the mediator; the priest, who stands between the great musical and spiritual experiences of the race and individual men and women and children. The priest in religion professes to be the mediator between the gods and men -- bringing the blessing or the curse of the gods to men and women and children. The Leader of an Ethical Society is not a king -- lording it over men, seeking his own glory, imposing his will upon others -- he is more akin to the priest, since he stands before the people as their mediator -- the mediator between the great spiritual traditions of the human race, past and present, and the individuals who seek his services in the Sunday morning meetings, in other meetings, in the ceremonies of an ethical religion (as in the Marriage Service, the Naming Service, the Funeral and Memorial service, and so on), and in private consultation. The Leader speaks and serves in the name of something far greater than himself, more eternal than himself, -- the great tradition of ethics and religion; and if, as a kind of priest, he achieves greatness, he achieves it because it is written, "He who would be greatest among you let him be among you as one who serves." (Report to Annual Meeting, May 22, 1946)

Hynd neatly fulfilled Adler's model of the Ethical leader as scholar-in-residence. His study on the second floor of Sheldon Memorial was Spartan; in winter, he kept the heat down low, and visitors found him wrapped in a woolen shawl as he perused his books. Like Sheldon and Chubb, he used his summers as academic sabbaticals; he passed the off-season in cooler climes -- often British Columbia -- catching up on his reading and preparing lectures for the coming season. Hynd limited his scholarly undertakings to public speaking; he edited some of his platform addresses for publication in pamphlet form, but he wrote only a few articles for direct publication in Ethical Culture journals. His interest in community affairs also was limited; he served for a time on the board of the Urban League, but he exhibited no fervor for social action.

Beyond his platform duties, he frequently spoke to outside organizations. His book reviews at public libraries were well-attended, and he often was called upon to lecture to educators and deliver commencement addresses at high schools and colleges. In addition to traveling the Ethical platform circuit, he spoke at Unitarian and free churches. For several years in the forties, he presented a ten-week series of lectures on world religions at the University College of Washington University; in the 1946-47 season, Society trustees personally underwrote tuition fees to permit Sunday School teachers to participate in the course. He also gave 15-minute radio talks on stations that provided free airtime to religious organizations.

Hynd resigned in 1950 to return to his homeland. In addition to nostalgia, he was lured home by British social security benefits -- benefits he could not draw in the United States. After submitting his resignation, he acknowledged that he also had been dissatisfied with his compensation in St. Louis; he was paid less than \$5,000 a year, plus a tax-exempt parsonage allowance and a skimpy retirement fund. The executive committee offered to negotiate a better package, but Hynd declined, saying he had resolved to live out his years in the British Isles. He was given a cordial send-off -- the community honored him at a dinner and made a gift of the few thousand dollars that had accrued in his endowment policy -- but few eyes were damp. In his 17 years as leader in St. Louis, Hynd had garnered much respect but little affection.

12: Confluence - From Lecture Club to Community

Community Life

Under Sheldon, the Ethical Society was more of a lecture club than a wholehearted religious community; its hallmarks were stimulating addresses, both public and private; study groups divided according to age, gender, and topic; and collective sponsorship of community service. Social gatherings were rare and somewhat forced. Chubb,

with his extravagant festivals and his glorification of unity, deepened members' sense of belonging. But while the Society's social life blossomed after the move to Sheldon Memorial, it was as fragmentary as the intellectual pursuits of the earlier era. It was during Hynd's tenure that Society members began to forge a community worthy of the name. Committees and lay leaders complemented Hynd's scholarly preoccupation by attending more thoughtfully to the needs of members. Furthermore, the community, like a family that had been splintering into self-absorbed individuals, recognized the need to gather together -- even if the effort seemed at first artificial and self-conscious -- to facilitate indiscriminating bonding. The time had come to realize the unity Chubb had prophesied.

Handshakes and Head Counts

Membership in the Society took a dive in the 1930s. When J. Hutton Hynd took the leadership post in 1933, the Society had 411 members; by the end of the decade, that figure had dropped to 342. Ten to twenty people joined the Society each year, but new arrivals consistently were outnumbered by deaths, resignations, and drops. Of course, the Depression forced many Americans to cut back on charitable contributions and resign from organizations requiring dues, but the Society also suffered from its leader's lukewarm commitment to expansion. Hynd did little to attract new membership. Though he treated visitors cordially, those who requested an on-the-spot synopsis of the Society's philosophy were apt to be instructed to make an appointment through his secretary; he did not readily approach strangers, nor did he call on prospective members. Furthermore, Hynd lacked Chubb's knack of inspiring loyalty to the community. And despite the pattern set by his predecessors, many Society members were dissatisfied with Hynd's long sabbaticals (one of which he unexpectedly stretched to six months), during which he was unavailable for weddings, funerals, and consultation. Lay members of the Society took it upon themselves to arrest the slide in membership by conscientiously reaching out to visitors and confreres alike. Ushers became deputies of the Membership Committee, answering queries and passing out Ethical Culture pamphlets and cards indicating interest in literature and membership information. In an effort to make young people feel more at home, the committee in the late thirties began asking members of the post-graduate groups and other young Society members to serve as ushers. It asked board members to be especially hospitable, but it sent letters to all members urging them to act as "publicity agents" for the Society. Mindful of the financial straits that prevailed during the Depression, the Membership Committee in 1933 instituted a kind of deferred-billing plan: Visitors who expressed an interest in the Society but were not in a position to make a pledge were granted membership privileges gratis "for a reasonable length of time" -- in practice, one or two years. To heighten the community's sense of welcome, dinners honoring new members were made biannual beginning in the 1937-38 season. The Membership Committee also enhanced solidarity by calling on seldom-seen members, keeping tabs on the special needs of members, and announcing births, weddings, and deaths.

The membership slide stopped about 1940, and by the middle of the decade, the head count had risen back to 400. The Membership Committee then undertook a series of aggressive promotional efforts aimed at adding one hundred members to the tally. The committee's first big push was a membership drive conducted in the 1940-41 season. Members were asked to bring prospective members to a kickoff dinner in January 1941; guests attending the event later were invited to attend intimate get-acquainted gatherings at members' homes. During the drive, representatives of the Membership Committee maintained an informational post in the vestibule of Sheldon Memorial.

In the ensuing years, the Membership Committee built up a list of prospects whose names had been turned in by members. In the 1941-42 season, the Publicity Committee began sending notices of platform meetings and other Society events to people on the list, then followed up by asking members who had submitted names whether the prospects actually had attended meetings. Mailings were stepped up in 1943, when hundreds of people on the list were asked to consider applying for membership; leader-in-training William Hammond conferred with those who expressed interest.

In 1947, the Membership Committee led a campaign to induce hangers-on to become members. Sunday School graduates and non-member parents of the school's students were tapped first. Invitations to membership again were sent to about 300 non-members on the mailing list, and a statement of the benefits of active membership was sent to all non-members who participated in Society subgroups. Neighborhood captains made phone calls and personal visits to those who did not reply to the mailings. The Platform Committee assisted in the drive by including a brief talk on membership in each platform service; the committee believed such conspicuous appeals were more effective than perfunctory invitations included among mundane platform announcements. The committee's efforts paid off: At the annual meeting in May 1948, it was announced membership had reached 488 -- roughly a 40 percent increase since the start of the decade.

Soliciting Ink and Airwaves

The Society was inconsistent in its publicity efforts, with the result that its low, misshapen profile remained chronic. Percival Chubb—aided by volunteer press agent Elwood Street—had garnered press by dint of his provocative declarations and his civic boosterism. By contrast, Hynd, who was both more cerebral and more parochial, attracted little attention. In the thirties, Hynd made a habit of placing notices of Society meetings on the church bulletin boards of downtown hotels. In addition, the board took out advertisements in a church directory distributed to hotels, but, deciding that an appeal to transients was a poor use of publicity funds, it discontinued the practice after a few years. The Society also advertised in newspapers, distributed copies of the AEU journal *The Standard* in public reading rooms, and occasionally arranged media interviews with Ethical leaders; but an ongoing public relations program was not begun until the mid-forties. A Publicity Committee formed at that time sought to secure news coverage and interviews with outstanding visiting speakers by maintaining closer contact with the press; it also attempted to publicize platform addresses by inviting reporters and mailing synopses to daily newspapers.

The Society modestly increased its exposure through the medium of radio. From 1939 to the mid-forties, Hynd occasionally spoke on the “Church of the Air” show broadcast Sunday mornings on station KMOX; the station provided the free airtime to various religious communities in rotation. The Society’s half-hour show, a simplified version of the platform service, included readings, quartet or organ music, and an address. Beginning in October 1948, station KWK each month provided the Society with fifteen minutes of free Sunday morning airtime. During the Society’s season, Hynd used the slot to present an unadorned inspirational talk—usually an abbreviated version of a platform address he previously had presented at the Society. Lay members of the Society spoke on the show during Hynd’s summer sabbaticals. These speakers drew on their professional and avocational expertise to outline an ethical vision: For example, attorney Harold Hanke examined the evolution of the church-state separation doctrine; novelist Fannie Cook spoke on “Art and Ethics;” and Cook’s husband, Jerome, a physician, spoke on medical ethics. Walter Haase, the trustee who obtained the airtime, urged lay speakers to promote a positive image of the Society by emphasizing ethical values without offending listeners’ religious sensibilities. The radio show spurred frequent inquiries and requests for transcripts, but it had no appreciable affect on platform attendance or Society membership. Judging by the station’s mail, the show’s most loyal listeners were Society members, indicating that it did little more than “preach to the saved.” The show’s limited effectiveness was by no means peculiar: The “religious ghetto” of Sunday morning radio never has been known for winning converts.

An Incisive Observer

In addition to raising the head count, the Society leadership sought to become more responsive to the needs and interests of Society members. In the 1935-36 season, an ad hoc Survey Committee distributed questionnaires seeking suggestions for improving the Society. A moderate number of questionnaires were returned, but with few suggestions. In the hope that a person-to-person appeal would be more fruitful, the Society in 1938 engaged Grace Gosselin, an auxiliary staffer of the New York Society, to canvass the membership and scrutinize the Society’s administrative structure. Besides providing insight into members’ hopes and disappointments, the survey was expected to help the board clarify the functions of the Society’s committees, administrators, and paid employees. Society members donated the funds for the survey. Gosselin spent weeks in St. Louis studying reports; attending Society meetings; and interviewing members, trustees, committee chairmen, leaders of subgroups, and Sunday School administrators, as well as Hynd and Percival Chubb.

Gosselin, acting as a detached efficiency expert, presented the board with a challenging overview of the Society in February 1939. All her recommendations spurred thought and discussion, some spurred decisive changes. She made a number of suggestions for increasing membership, some of which were adopted in the drives outlined above. In addition, she recommended that detailed membership files be maintained, and that committees and subgroups make extensive use of this information to draw members into more active participation in the Society’s administration and social life. As for managerial structure, Gosselin delineated the duties of the leader, the executive secretary, the Sunday School director, and even the janitor. Committees, she said, should be streamlined to minimize conflicts and duplication of effort; she recommended the unification of the Finance Committee with the Ways and Means Committee, and the merger of the Building, House, and Grounds committees. In addition, she counseled the board to give committees more pointed instructions; for instance, she suggested that the Publicity Committee be asked to compile a directory outlining the Society’s purposes, structure, and activities. She strongly urged the creation of a central committee that would serve as a think tank for improving the Society’s program and facilitating group interaction; such a committee, she said, might be a refinement of the dormant Organization Committee provided for in the Society’s by-laws. She also advised the board to more effectively tap the potential of the subgroups for the overall welfare of the community. Noting that members of the Young People’s Association had expressed

willingness to organize a subsidiary group for teen-agers, she urged the board to encourage the plan. She also recommended that Y.P.A. members, who represented the core of the Society's future lay leaders, be consistently invited to serve on the board and Society committees.

In April 1939, the board held a dinner meeting at the Congress Hotel to take action on the report. The meeting resulted in a flurry of initiatives, including upgrading the maintenance of membership files and producing a Society directory. The board referred numerous recommendations to the appropriate committees and subgroups with its blessings, and it ordered each committee to contribute to a manual outlining the duties of committee chairs and members.

The most signal undertaking resulting from the survey was the inauguration of an all-Society steering committee called the Advisory and Planning Council. The council, which included the chairmen of the Society's subgroups and standing committees and up to four members of the Society at large, was charged with recommending changes in Society policies and activities. At least once a year, the council would present to the board a plan for coordinating groups and events to maximize their contribution to the Society. In the coming years, this idea factory was to spawn some of the Society's most beneficial programs; among the initiatives undertaken at the council's suggestion were the establishment of a Membership Participation Committee, which gathered information on members' interests and talents and distributed the information to committees and subgroups; the development of all-Society and small-group dinner programs; and the launching of a weekly reception for members and visitors.

Breaking Bread

In the thirties and forties, the Society experimented with a variety of social activities and succeeded in establishing customs that would foster fellow-feeling for years to come. In an effort to "revitalize" the Society, an ad hoc committee in the 1934-35 season developed a plan for weekly or bi-weekly Society dinners featuring talks, entertainment, and group discussions. Such meetings, the committee said in its proposal, would be "conducive to fellowship and the constructive pursuit of what we stand for as an Ethical Culture Society." After the membership approved the plan at the 1935 annual meeting, the board established a Program Committee to organize the meetings. These dinners, which sometimes included large-scale discussions of public affairs topics proposed by the AEU, were held irregularly in the thirties.

Under the sponsorship of the Women's Auxiliary and Junior Auxiliary, all-Society dinners were held monthly beginning in 1941. They grew into elegant affairs, each requiring days of work. Volunteers hauled food and utensils up the four flights of Sheldon Memorial to the Assembly Room, then hauled the refuse back down. Tables were covered with lace tablecloths, and food was served on fine china. Initially, the gatherings were called "Hostess Dinners": Auxiliary members divvied up the membership list and extended personal invitations, then served the diners at the tables to which they were assigned. After lapsing in the mid-forties, the dinners were revived under the more egalitarian -- but only modestly accurate -- title of "Host and Hostess Dinners." Eventually, they came to be known simply as "Fellowship Dinners."

A Fellowship Dinner Program Committee formed in the 1947-48 season made talks and group discussions a regular feature of the gatherings. As an illustration of the variety of topics covered in the dinner programs, the first dinner in the 1948-49 season featured three talks on United World Federalists, a movement formed in the wake of World War II aimed at establishing a global justice system; the event included discussion of pending AEU resolutions on the United Nations. The February 1949 dinner included a panel discussion on river conservation; participants included a naturalist, a proponent of a Missouri River Valley Authority, and a public utility representative. The March dinner included a talk by a mental health expert and discussion of a proposal that the Society institute a counseling service for its members. And the April dinner featured talks by Hynd and David S. Muzzey on the history and philosophy of the Ethical movement. In addition to talks on social issues, the dinners sometimes included music, slide shows, and film documentaries. These gatherings served as occasions to welcome leaders-in-training and leaders returning from sabbaticals; to honor servicemen who had fought overseas; to express gratitude to board members and committee chairs; to reunite Sunday School graduates; and to introduce new members. Most were arranged by the women's clubs, but the Men's Club -- in its brief incarnations -- clumsily conducted a few dinners. Fellowship dinners continued to be held monthly -- except in months that featured more elaborate all-Society events, such as the bazaar and the Good Cheer celebration -- into the fifties and sixties.

As an experiment, the Society in 1947 also conducted neighborhood dinner parties in members' homes. Irene Chubb, first wife of R. Walston Chubb, initiated the program in the hope of facilitating more intimate interaction among members. Mrs. Chubb helped form the Fellowship Committee, members of which arranged social gatherings

in their respective geographic districts. Chance compatibility made some of the dinners convivial affairs, but other groups found they had little more in common than a zip code. The program soon petered out but was to be revived in later decades in more agreeable formations. In the meantime, affluent couples such as the Putzels, the Fischels, and the Lennertsons could be counted on to throw dinner parties in honor of visiting Ethical leaders; invitations to these exclusive affairs were prized.

In the 1930s, the Society's bazaar was complemented by a spring carnival called the County Fair, an event that recreated the milieu of its old-fashioned rural namesake. Society subgroups, under the direction of the Organization Committee, ran concessions and provided entertainment. The first County Fair was held in 1934. The event brought in only about \$150, but its inestimable social value inspired the Society to organize similar events biennially until 1940. The later fairs, which were held on two or three consecutive days, raised several times as much money as the first. The fall bazaar, meanwhile, was expanded in 1941 as a means of increasing the Society's income: Sunday School alcoves served as booths for the sale of crafts, preserves, baked goods, and white elephants; on the Assembly Room stage, young people sold works of art; and the women's groups hosted sit-down meals.

The Sunday School's annual outing evolved into an all-Society affair in the thirties. From 1930-35, the outing consisted of a day on a Mississippi River excursion boat such as The City of St. Louis and the steamer St. Paul. In later years, the excursions were replaced with picnics held at public parks. Typical of church and school picnics, these gatherings consisted of basket lunches, sack races, softball games, and the like. For years, the picnics were sponsored by the PTA, members of which had garnered organizational experience through their assistance to the Sunday School. However, as more and more members without schoolchildren began to attend, the PTA asked that its responsibilities be shared more equitably. Consequently, an independent Picnic Committee was formed in 1949 to arrange the outings.

The Society also conducted square dances, card parties, and receptions to introduce exhibitions of members' photographs and artwork. The community sometimes sponsored outings to stage productions at the Opera Guild, the Little Theatre, and the Town Square Theatre; as the Society received a percentage of the theaters' gate for selling blocks of tickets, these events brought in modest funds. In more deliberate attempts to raise funds, the Society experimented with public entertainments. An Entertainment Committee formed in 1934 on a recommendation of the Ways and Means Committee organized public performances by musicians, puppeteers, and storytellers. The events were sparse and, though sometimes well-attended, rarely netted proceeds commensurate with the work and overhead expenses invested in them.

Amid all the brainstorming and hand-wringing over the promotion of community, perhaps the most effective contribution to the cause was the establishment of a simple "coffee hour" after the platform service. While some members had been in the habit of remaining in the lobby to chat in small clusters, they rarely stayed long, and visitors were apt to be ignored in the rush toward the parking lot. The Advisory and Planning Council suggested in 1949 that serving coffee in the library would encourage members to mix and interact at some depth and would give members and visitors alike a regular opportunity to make new acquaintances. The women's clubs, with the board's financial backing, hired a maid to prepare and serve coffee on the first few Sundays of the 1949-50 season. Members of the clubs and the Membership Committee made a point of greeting visitors and making introductions. With attendance ranging from fifty to seventy, the trial was deemed successful and the custom was crystallized. In no time, the simple reception became integral to the Ethical experience. It became a time to digest and debate the platform address in thoughtful company, a time for the young to mingle with the old, a time for visitors to catch the spirit of the community. Society members would even attend platform addresses they fully expected to be humdrum so as not to miss this opportunity to visit with their friends.

The Annual Meeting was the community's most focused occasion for taking stock of itself and airing disputes. Beginning in the 1933-34 season, the Society held its annual meeting in May; it was in that season that the Society began starting its fiscal year in May instead of October. The meeting traditionally was preceded by a supper in honor of new members. Especially active members religiously attended the meeting, but others were put off by the prospect of listening to tedious reports in an uncooled hall. To make the gathering more appealing, the board sometimes included motion picture showings and Sunday School plays in the program. Attendance in the Hynd era ranged from 91 to 185. The agenda included reports on the budget for the ending year and budget projections for the coming season; a report on membership growth or decline; reports on group activities; and talks by the board president and the leaders. Also, the membership elected trustees and voted on proposed by-law amendments and ethical resolutions. The meeting served as a time to take stock of progress toward stated goals and to introduce new long-range goals. Virtually each year, the board instructed group representatives to keep their reports brief. It was not above using gimmicks to make the reports palatable. At the 1945 meeting, group representatives held placards

listing their accomplishments for the year; when all the reports were completed, the cards were reversed, revealing letters that spelled out "Ethical Society." In 1946 and 1948, group and committee reports were presented in abbreviated verse form; the full reports were simply filed for those who wished to peruse them. Beginning in the late forties, the marvel of mimeograph reproduction permitted the board to distribute copies of written reports, sparing everyone from having to listen to them in toto.

Hybrid Vigor

Paradoxically, the Society's many subgroups provided "hybrid vigor" that contributed mightily to the goal of unifying the community. As these social and study groups formed, expanded, split, and merged, Society members encountered each other in new and stimulating configurations. Accordingly, the board, in a 1940 policy statement, agreed that, while acknowledging the platform service as the Society's central activity, it would give all possible encouragement to the activities of the subgroups. For candor's sake, the statement should have included the caveat "within budgetary constraints."

The Organization Committee, which had galvanized group activities and coordinated meeting schedules, fell dormant in the late thirties; some of its duties were assumed by the Advisory and Planning Council -- an all-Society oversight committee -- and the Membership Participation Committee. Even still, group and committee leaders felt the need for an all-purpose organizer to whom they could turn for consultation and administrative assistance. Because Hynd had little time -- or talent -- to take on that role, the Advisory and Planning Council in 1945 recommended the Society hire a part-time director of group activities. The board president appointed a committee to investigate the proposal, but no director was hired. In 1948, the council again recommended that funds be budgeted for an organizational assistant; this time, it urged the hiring of a full-time aide to coordinate social and educational activities, develop a youth program, and provide various membership services. The board tabled action on the recommendation, but the council renewed the proposal in 1950; at that time, the suggestion was one of a number of proposals for use of the 75th Anniversary Fund to be raised in 1951. Again, the board declined to act. In this administrative vacuum, the position of program director unofficially was filled by the Society's executive secretary, Meredith McCargo; though a notoriously poor typist, this dedicated -- and pitifully paid -- worker was cherished by generations of Society members for coordinating the social calendar and cheerfully attending to a myriad of administrative details.

In limited ways, the board kept its' promise to promote group life. It mailed a statement of the groups' purposes and activities to all new members of the Society with a note of encouragement to take part. The annual meeting often was dominated by group reports; at several of these meetings, charts clarifying the activities and interrelation of the Society's groups were presented to the membership. The board also offered the groups funds, space, and direction on a case-by-case basis. But because it never provided a central program director, the viability or collapse of the Society's groups depended almost entirely on the initiative of group members. The Women's Auxiliary underwent a schism in the early thirties. While the original group continued to meet regularly in one of the back rooms of Sheldon Memorial, Irene Kundermann and Edith Enzinger fused a bevy of younger women into a parallel group that met in the Assembly Room. The Junior Auxiliary, beyond chatting about matters more pertinent to its generation, provided distinct services to the Society; notably, it sponsored the spring card party, a popular and modestly profitable annual event. The sororities periodically came together for luncheons, poetry readings, and music recitals. While both groups made baked, sewn and handcrafted goods for fund-raising sales and distribution to the poor, the Junior Auxiliary specialized in group quilting. Both clubs donated funds and supplies to the Society, and they always joined forces to put on bazaars and community dinners. Over time, both groups shrank: Members of the parent group grew feeble and began dying off, and members of the offshoot slipped away as they took on more familial and career obligations. Consequently, the groups remerged -- again under the name Women's Auxiliary -- in 1949. Yet another sorority formed in 1943: The Business Women's Group, which was composed primarily of secretaries and teachers, held evening get-togethers at members' homes well into the fifties.

The Men's Club organized in the late twenties held together into the mid-thirties. Its monthly dinner meetings featured talks by club members, Society leaders Hynd and Percival Chubb, and guest speakers. Through the depths of the Depression, these lecture-discussions focused on politics and social problems. At a 1935 meeting, for instance, J.A. Wolf, executive director of the Neighborhood Association, gave an address "concerning the lives, habits, poverty & misfortunes, of the many poor people living in the so-called Slum Districts of our City.... Mr. Wolf went to some length in describing the destitution & misery of a large number of these people -- emphasizing the fact that many negroes are in an unbelievably sad, sad state of want, half-starvation & misery." (Minutes of Men's Club meeting held Nov. 14, 1935) Unlike the women's groups, this club never performed social services. Several members tried to mobilize support for civic development, but despite the persistent encouragement of

Percival Chubb, all such efforts came to naught. At a meeting in 1934, for example, Hermann Schwarz pleaded with the men to help him lobby the Board of Aldermen for the erection of a planetarium and museum of natural history. Initially, the club elected to form a lobbying committee to take up the cause. However, R. Walston Chubb, who had a formidable talent for swaying opinion, reversed the vote by arguing that "in these days of broad social interests, most worthwhile people had some special interest in cultural or social development work, and that the club as a whole should not be bound to any one special project." (Minutes of Men's Club meeting, April 10, 1934) The chairmanship of the club changed hands almost yearly, and none of the leaders attempted to formalize the organization -- which was just fine with the members.

Several years after this manifestation of the Men's Club went the way of its predecessors, a group of Society men began gathering for occasional luncheons. Beginning in the forties, this group of about thirty men assembled five or six times a year at the call of its long-standing chairman, R. Walston Chubb. Because the largest plurality of its members worked downtown, the fraternity met at restaurants in downtown hotels. When visiting Ethical leaders and other affable out-of-town platform speakers accepted the group's invitation, it met on the Monday after the address to accommodate the guest's itinerary. The men gathered simply to socialize; they followed no fixed agenda and broached no service or fund-raising projects. The "Downtown Club," as it came to be known, perdured into the mid-sixties, by which time the dispersion of business sites throughout the metropolitan area made weekday luncheons unfeasible.

The Young People's Association underwent growing pains in the thirties. The Society's most active social group, the Y.P.A. conducted countless dances, wilderness excursions, and sporting events. Occasionally, it presented plays at Society functions and public fund-raisers. The group also sponsored study groups on philosophy, comparative religion, and current issues; Society members opened their homes to the association for dinners and wide-ranging discussions with visiting Ethical leaders. The group's warmth and vivacity ensnared many young people who visited the Society experimentally. "I just felt at home there right away," recalled Robin Jones, who went on to become a member -- and later president -- of the Society. (Interview with Robin Jones, Sept. 24, 1986) Ruth Anderson described the group as a dynamic amalgam of personalities:

We had a terrific Y.P.A. -- really active and strong and creative. That's where I met [my husband,] Ted. We went out almost every Sunday after [platform services] and played soccer. We had a Halloween party to end all Halloween parties, and a winter dance with cotton "snow" hanging from the ceiling, and a "Gay Nineties" party. We weren't always too popular with the Ethical. The old custodian, I think, hated us; he thought we were ruining the building, which we probably were.

It's hard to look at us now and think we were a wild bunch. We were iconoclasts; we were individualists; we were people who had broken away from something; we all had minds of our own. We were very creative. So you put that bunch together, and you've got fireworks. (Interview with Ted and Ruth Anderson, Sept. 15, 1986)

Ironically, the association's strong appeal became its undoing. Although originally composed of Society members in their teens and twenties, the congenial group had no fixed ceiling. Longtime members were disinclined to step aside. "People just kind of hung on," recalled Harold Hanke. "It got to be unwieldy." (Interview with Harold and Jane Hanke, Sept. 22, 1986) Furthermore, the Y.P.A. was the only group in the Society that consistently sponsored outings, and older Society members could not resist taking part. By the late thirties, "Young People's Association" had become a misnomer; Ted Anderson half-facetiously estimated members ranged in age "from 8 to 80 -- something like that." (Interview with Ted and Ruth Anderson, Sept. 15, 1986) As the club's age span stretched into early dotage, differences in interests -- and efforts to accommodate all of them -- diluted the association's vitality. In 1940, Hanke, the Y.P.A. liaison, informed the board that the association had disbanded. At the board's request, Hanke revived the group, but it failed to regain its former health. After it dissolved yet again in 1942, the board, on the advice of the Advisory and Planning Council, offered to pay a recreational aide a per diem wage to develop appealing activities. The group reorganized under the direction of Hanke and Ted Anderson, but it declined the board's offer.

In the mid-forties, the Y.P.A. acted on the lessons of its past. To avoid intergenerational conflicts, it split into two groups. The Junior Division, which included teen-agers and single Society members in their twenties, reinstituted strenuous activities and youth-oriented outings. It acquired sole use of a room at Sheldon Memorial -- a privilege hitherto reserved for the Toy Shop -- which it furnished and decorated to provide a homey atmosphere for get-togethers. Taking on the character of a typical youth group, it conducted carnivals and other fund-raisers to finance excursions and participation in young people's conferences. The Junior Y.P.A., under various names, was to

repeatedly lapse -- usually because of weak leadership and its members' departures for college -- only to be revived with fresh batches of youngsters. Meanwhile, the open-ended Senior Division, whose members described themselves as "the older young," organized more sedate gatherings than its counterpart. As more and more of the group's members married and began raising families, the "Senior Y.P.A.," as such, dissolved, but its members maintained close bonds. Beginning in 1948, married Society members and friends began banding together in "couples clubs" which met at members' homes for dinners, games, and lecture-discussions.

After the dissolution of the Child Study Group in the late twenties, L.D. "Mac" McIntyre started the Parents' Child-Guidance Group. By meeting in the library on Sunday mornings -- after the start of the Sunday School and before the platform service -- this group, unlike its predecessor, drew an equal number of men and women. Over time, the group broadened its scope of topics; while child-rearing remained a staple in its agenda, the group now tackled everything from utility rates to political scandals and women's rights. Reflecting this change, Ted Anderson renamed the club the Adult Discussion Group when he assumed leadership in the forties. As in the International Relations Group, debates were fueled by visiting speakers. During the Society's summer recess, the group conducted Sunday meetings in public parks. Because its sessions were consistently rousing, the group drew -- and held -- a number of new Society members. More ephemeral discussion groups, with different meeting times and more narrowly defined agendas, sprung up from time to time; one such group met bi-weekly in the thirties to hear and discuss classical music.

The Society's reading circles suffered sad fates. The Contemporary Literature Circle, which had thrived in the teens and twenties, waned in the thirties. In its later incarnations, the group lacked an erudite, determined leader who could guide both reading and discussions. Hynd frequently reviewed books from the platform, but he did not assume Chubb's role in assisting the reading group. As visits from provocative Ethical leaders grew less frequent, the group gathered only sporadically; it finally dissolved in the early forties. Beginning in the 1947-48 season, the Society made several attempts to sustain a Great Books discussion group. These groups, and philosophy groups conducted on the same pattern, similarly dissipated for lack of direction and discipline. Too often, participants failed to keep up with assigned readings, and discussions tended to deteriorate into irrelevant polemics.

The International Relations Group was revived by a few astute changes. In the thirties, the group continued to meet periodically to hear timely talks and take part in discussions under the direction of founder Paula Wilhelmi Moody. Members stayed abreast of political and economic developments through news reports, and Ethical leaders, foreign-born professionals, and political observers presented their perspectives on the pressing issues of the day. As the members -- many of whom had joined via the Y.P.A. of the twenties -- aged, they elected to move their meeting time from Sunday evenings to weekday mornings. The time change had the unfortunate effect of limiting male participation to retirees, but it dovetailed with the schedules of the Society's women members: At the urging of Elsie Langsdorf, the group met monthly simultaneously with gatherings of the Women's Auxiliary and the Junior Auxiliary, effectively inducting all the members of those groups into its ranks. Langsdorf eventually took over the group, and in the aftermath of World War II she focused its attention on the United Nations -- "the chief force that is holding the world together." (minutes of U.N. Discussion Group, October 1948)

The U.N. Discussion Group, now a subsidiary of the Women's Auxiliary, studied the composition, deliberations, and interventions of the United Nations. U.N. proposals and declarations spurred spirited debates on the ethics of war, revolution, trade barriers, population growth, and nuclear armament. In addition, members presented reviews of books on world affairs. Support for the establishment of a world government ran high in the group, but the women were optimistic about the circumscribed efficacy of the United Nations. The auxiliary was part of the National Women's Conference of the AEU, an accredited advisory agency of the United Nations Organization. Because the AEU association sent representatives to special meetings of the U.N. Assembly, the St. Louis group maintained two-way communication with the United Nations: UNO publications were augmented by insider reports, and the women often drafted resolutions on United Nations issues for presentation to the membership and AEU assemblies. Group membership ranged from 30 to 60.

The Toy Shop met with a most ignominious demise. As volunteers grew scarce, the Misses Wangelin -- Josie, Hattie, and Emma -- dutifully carried on their work almost solely by themselves. With so few hands at work, production had declined from roughly a thousand toys a year in the teens to a few box loads in the forties. Because the Society's unhallowed groups had to endure cramped conditions and scheduling conflicts, sentiment arose that the Toy Shop room ought no longer be consecrated to the quaint hobby of a few kindly old women. In particular, the Sunday School was in dire need of space for a nursery, and its administrators pressed for that room. The problem was, the sisters had exclusively occupied the room for as long as anyone could remember, and no one was eager to ask these pious volunteers to gather up their glue pots and make way for the diaper brigade -- a directive comparable

to telling nuns that their chapel henceforth would be used as a water closet. To the knowledge of posterity, no one claimed credit -- or blame -- for the exploit, but the deed was indeed done: The room would principally house the Toy Shop until 1960, but on Sundays it was the province of the babies.

Boy Scout Troop 21, led by scoutmasters Herbert Morisse Sr. and Joe J. Grant, held strong into the mid-thirties. In 1930, in addition to hiking and camping, the troop of about 30 boys manned a float ("International Scout Brotherhood") in the city's Armistice Day parade and presented an exhibit at the AEU assembly. The boys, many of whom attended the Junior Sunday Assembly, enjoyed showing off their outdoor skills in Sunday School assemblies. Attendance at meetings and outings fell off after the middle of the decade, and the troop disbanded about 1938.

The troop's distaff counterpart was launched about the time the boys hit their skid; in fact, the funds remaining in the Boy Scout troop's account were turned over to the nascent Girl Scout troop. Society members Hilda Dreifke and Lola Niederhoff started the girls' troop in 1934. Unlike the Camp Fire Girls troop of the twenties, the Girl Scout troop was composed primarily of neighborhood residents; only a handful of the roughly twenty-five girls in the group were children of Society members. Many of these girls were too poor to afford uniforms; with Dreifke's intercession, Society members helped cover those costs. Members helped in other ways, as well: Anne Hynd taught the girls home economics, and Hermann Schwarz shared with them his knowledge of nature. And, because the girls could not afford to attend the official scout camp, Society members who owned wilderness retreats allowed the troop to use them for weekend trips. "That was a big help for those youngsters -- to get away," Dreifke said. "Some of them had never seen a live chicken or cow before." (Interview with Hilda Dreifke, Oct. 28, 1986) The original troop met at Sheldon Memorial on weekday afternoons. In the 1938-39 season, Society member Virginia Schrader added a Brownie Troop, which met on Sunday mornings during platform meetings. Because most of the girls walked home from the meetings, Dreifke decided to disband the troop in the early forties, by which time the immediate neighborhood had turned menacing.

Baptized In The Good Life: The Sunday School under Hynd

Hynd's tireless advocacy of pure religious values carried over from the platform to the Junior Sunday Assembly. Next to oratory, Hynd gave the greatest share of his attention to the JSA: Bearing the title of school president, he took part in curriculum planning, student evaluations, the hiring of directors, the selection of teachers, and the fixing of salaries and honoraria. By tradition, his primary role was to set the intellectual and spiritual tone of the school; he persistently infused his exaltation of "the Good Life" into the pedagogy:

In religious education of the more liberal sort, the child is introduced to the more universal tradition of religion. We may tell what was believed, what is believed, by this and that religion: but the main objective lies in the effort to expose the child to the spirit of religion common to all religions -- the spirit of questing for the Good, the spirit of reverence for the Good, the spirit of devotion to the Good.

...

And it may be that our children, as they are baptized in the spirit of man's search for the Good Life, will be inspired to unite with all men and women of good will in the right use of science and of art, and of all knowledge, to the greater glory of mankind. This should be the great objective in religious education. (J. Hutton Hynd, "Objectives in Religious Education: A Panel Discussion," *Religious Education*, March-April, 1945; Volume XL, Number 2; p. 99)

The JSA, Hynd said, taught "the three R's in religious education, Reason, Reverence, and Responsibility." ("The Ethical Society of St. Louis," undated radio address broadcast over station WIL.) Among the Society's adults, however, Responsibility for the Sunday School was a hot potato. Throughout much of Hynd's tenure, continuity in administration of the JSA was provided by longtime board member Jennie Wahlert. Cecelia Boette, who directed the school in the teens and twenties, had stepped down before Hynd's arrival. During the succession of directors in the following decades, Wahlert maintained the school's harmony and educational caliber.

Wahlert, a progressive teacher and school administrator, earned a national reputation for her work in early childhood education. A descendant of five generations of educators, she began her career teaching at the elementary level in the St. Louis Public Schools. In 1934, she began serving as principal of Jackson Elementary School on the city's North Side, and in 1948 became professor of education at Harris Teachers' College. After her "retirement" in 1953,

she directed Washington University's nursery school and taught early childhood education at the institution's University College. She was an enthusiastic delegate -- by gubernatorial appointment -- to the 1951 Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth, a weeklong colloquium of educators and youth leaders held in Washington, D.C., on Truman's initiative. A stalwart in the racial integration of the public school system, Wahlert was honored in 1965 by the St. Louis Association of Colored Women's Clubs for "excellent work in the field of human relations." She founded the Missouri chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma, an educational sorority, and was the founding president of the Association for Childhood Education International. "You were amazed at how many things she could have her fingers in and still do a good job," Emsy Rubin said of Wahlert. "Anything she undertook, she did well -- woman of all seasons, woman of all times." (Interview with Emsy Rubin, Sept. 30, 1986) Wahlert was warmly regarded for her patience and kindness in assisting troubled children (acquaintances frequently recalled the solicitous interest she expressed in a young would-be purse snatcher she once warded off). An earthy, vivacious woman, she counterbalanced Hynd's rather stilted style. She humored his fussiness in organizing festivals and pushing for formal teacher training; her forte was attending directly to the changing needs of directors, teachers, and students. Ordinarily, Wahlert worked behind the scenes, chairing numerous incarnations of the JSA Committee, advising and encouraging directors, building up a stable management structure, and representing the board's concerns at staff meetings; except when she briefly filled in as director, she was not involved in the Sunday morning nitty-gritty.

Boette's immediate successor in the directorship was Hermann Schwarz, a stern Prussian man who had taught in the school for years.²¹ In contrast to the deferential Miss Boette, Schwarz was a stickler for order and proper deportment; exactly at starting time, he shut the door to the Assembly Room requiring latecomers to enter in shame. He eschewed the revered Sheldon textbooks, but he revived the Victorian righteousness that characterized them. Using the press he employed in his printing firm, he churned out cards carrying philosophical quotes and edifying moral dictums to be memorized by the pupils -- for example, "Know the Right, Love the Right, Do the Right." Schwarz resigned as director in 1934. Reflecting the board's predilection for professional educators, the position was assumed, in quick succession, by Richard Jente, an instructor at Washington University; Julian C. Aldrich, an administrator in the University City schools; and Alfred Daniel "Buck" Buchmueller, a graduate of Eden Seminary employed in social work and educational research. During breaks in the directorship, Hynd with coaching from Wahlert -- took on the role.

Ideas in Search of Doers

Ideas for improving the school abounded, but the frequent turnover of directors impeded the board's efforts to implement them. In an effort to secure a long-term director, an ad hoc committee formed in 1938 urged the board to establish an honorarium. The board had balked at the recommendation since Boette's retirement, mainly because of budgetary constraints,²² but partly because it was feared that a director attracted by payment would be less dedicated than a volunteer. However, given that the few hundred dollars suggested by the committee was even less than the Society had paid Boette, the board agreed to set aside the funds.

In her 1939 report on a survey of the Society's needs, New York adviser Grace Gosselin also suggested a handful of administrative and programmatic changes in the school. She recommended that Hynd relinquish the presidency of the school and turn over principal authority to the school director. The director, she wrote, should have "complete liberty to plan the work," hiring and supervising both paid and volunteer staff members. As the PTA provided support but not direction, Gosselin recommended the establishment of a standing JSA Committee that would guide teachers and administrators in program development. "It would be logical," she wrote, to choose the president of the JSA from such a committee rather than placing the Society leader in that role. Gosselin believed that the school

²¹ Schwarz, who immigrated in the 1870s, was a pillar of the Society's German contingent. His marriage to Louise Rheinlander on April 16, 1899, was reputed to be the first marriage solemnized in the St. Louis Society. Walter L. Sheldon performed the service, which was then legitimized by a judge. An avid naturalist who had long been active in the Boy Scouts of America, Schwarz died in 1940 as he had once said he wished to die -- in a Scout uniform and at a Scout meeting. The Scouts to whom he had awarded merit badges minutes before his death formed an honor guard at his memorial service at Sheldon Memorial.

²² The JSA had always operated without tuition, but that policy came under fire about 1950, when trustees noted that a sizeable number of non-Society members sent their children to the school. Thereafter, JSA officials tactfully asked non-member parents whose children had been in the Sunday School for more than a year to either join the Society or contribute to the school; some agreed, some did not. The board debated the policy for years, finally agreeing to keep the school free so as to maintain its accessibility to the children of poor families. Until recently, the only fees charged were to cover the costs of materials used in special-interest groups.

director should rely primarily on a JSA Committee, deferring to the Society leader only in matters of general philosophy; such a system, she said, would make the school more responsive to the parents of pupils. The board acknowledged the wisdom of her suggestion but continued to rely on Hynd because he was eminently reliable, while few trustees and Society members were eager to maintain a committee that would take on his duties. Gosselin also recommended developing more engaging extracurricular activities; improving the quality of the school's song collection and music program; building up the school library; and giving the children more responsibility for planning activities and decorating meeting areas. (Survey report delivered to board Feb. 10, 1939, by Grace H. Gosselin) These suggestions were passed along to the school staff, which gradually executed them. Julian C. Aldrich, during his brief tenure, spawned still more plans for school improvements. He wanted to add to the staff a teachers' assistant; a music director who could bring originality and verve to the school's increasingly drab assemblies; and an activities director who could organize outings, recreation, and crafts instruction during the second half of the morning program, thus giving purpose to a period that amounted to little more than baby sitting. At Wahlert's urging, the board agreed to support these staff enhancements. The school secretary was immediately dubbed teachers' aide (a semantic promotion, at best), but the additional personnel were slow in coming.

In 1940, the Advisory and Planning Council recommended the formation of a "Senior Sunday Assembly" -- a division that would add three years to the Sunday School program. Under the proposal, students still would graduate from the Junior Sunday Assembly, but they then would advance to the senior group. Graduation from the junior group would be subdued and held in the Assembly Room; graduation from the senior group would be a more elaborate affair in the auditorium. The council recommended that the two divisions be led by the same director but be conducted in separate parts of the building. The board favored the plan and asked Hynd to oversee development of an expanded staff and curriculum. In April 1940, the board held a special meeting at the Congress Hotel to discuss the expansion plans. Walston Chubb insisted that advanced classes could be conducted only if the school could acquire college-educated teachers with special training in ethics. Accordingly, the board appointed Hynd, Henry Putzel, and preschool director Mildred Smith to institute an exacting training program for teachers and group leaders. At the same time, Hynd, Smith, and Buchmueller set about drafting the advanced curriculum. In September 1940, Hynd reported that he had outlined a course for the Senior Sunday Assembly, and had consulted Willis H. Reals, dean of Washington University's continuing education program, on the formation of a training course for teachers. In the ensuing seasons, Hynd did organize advanced classes for JSA graduates, but the dream of a "Senior Sunday Assembly" never was fully realized; the volunteers who conducted the extension simply failed to hold the attention of jaded older teen-agers.

In the tradition of the Eso-Pogradi, JSA graduates did continue to form post-graduate study and discussion groups. These groups endured for varying lengths of time, lasting only until the adolescent desire to break free overrode the desire to continue associating with classmates; their success depended largely on the charisma of volunteer leaders. In the thirties, some of these groups progressed so steadily that their philosophical investigations took them beyond the ken of fresh graduates; at Hynd's urging, a Society volunteer in 1935 organized a club for the younger graduates which met monthly on Sunday evenings. Another post-graduate group, complete with president and secretary, was organized in the 1939-40 season by Carl Morisse. In the early forties, two "junior discussion groups" -- divided by age -- met weekly under the overall direction of Arthur Schwarz, a leader of the Young People's Association; Society members representing a variety of professions, avocations, and social causes spoke to the groups and led informal discussions on Sunday mornings. Though often stimulating, none of these formations attained the continuity of the post-graduate group run entirely by Walston Chubb in the twenties and early thirties. The Y.P.A., with its consistent blend of social events and intellectual undertakings, commanded far more loyalty, but its youngest members generally were several years out of high school.

In an effort to encourage participation in post-graduate groups, Hynd moved Recognition Day to midseason starting in the 1935-36 season. He reasoned that graduates would be more inclined to maintain an affiliation with the program if there were no summer break between JSA graduation and entrance into a post-graduate group. The change in graduation timing required other classes to advance in January, forcing new students to enter courses in midstream. Consequently, Recognition Day was moved back to the end of the season in the 1942-43 season.

Seeking "the Good" in the Arts

The tradition of holding thematic assemblies continued into the Hynd era, with a distinct leaning toward the arts. In addition to building on such themes as Scouts Sunday, Peace Sunday, and "Kindness to Animals" Sunday, the JSA held assemblies honoring outstanding poets, composers, and painters. All-school assemblies often were marked by special music, sprightly folk dances, and lighthearted plays. The breadth of the children's dramatic undertakings varied with the talents and ambitiousness of volunteers. In the thirties, Society members Emsy Rubin and Emily

Marner staged and choreographed elaborate operettas based on such tales as "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "The Pied Piper of Hamelin."²³ In the forties, plays and oral presentations of all sorts became an integral part of the school program.

The JSA piped up in the 1940-41 season with the enlistment of music director Carl Werner, who was hired as platform organist midway through the season. Society organists had customarily performed at student assemblies, but Werner was especially committed to the school, and he inspired a burst of musical enthusiasm. In addition to performing on piano and organ, Werner, using song books published by the AEU and Unitarian liturgical committees, led the children in what Smith termed "lusty singing." In addition, he arranged for fine recitals at school assemblies. Keeping within a tight budget, he often brought in students from the Community Music School, a forerunner of the St. Louis Conservatory and Schools for the Arts (CASA). When talent allowed, he also directed a small instrumental group composed of JSA students. Teaching that "music begins where speech leaves off," Werner broadened the students' aesthetic exposure and considerably raised the tenor of school assemblies.

In the mid-forties, Werner brought the school another boon -- his bride, Lorna, who served as drama director. Carl, a director of high school orchestras, and Lorna, a speech pathologist, met while working for the Webster Groves school district. When the couple were dating, Lorna regularly accompanied Carl on his Saturday evening rehearsals with Hynd at Sheldon Memorial; only after Hynd was satisfied with the preparations could the couple go dancing or take in a movie. Upon joining the Sunday School staff, Lorna Werner set about organizing taut assemblies which would "encourage promptness, add dignity and discipline to the assembling each Sunday morning, and provide inspiration for the class period which follows." ("A Challenge for Religious Education," address broadcast Sept. 9, 1951, over radio station KWK) A dynamic, animated woman, she boldly conscripted parents and teachers to assist in producing cyclic pageants -- such as the Thanksgiving, Winter, and Spring festivals. She also directed a variety of plays and oral presentations, coaching the children in voice projection, diction, acting, and theatrical production. During her term of service, it became customary for classes to regularly present artistic interpretations of their studies. Like Percival Chubb, Werner believed that dramatics deepened the impact of classroom studies:

[T]he festival is seen as an opportunity to highlight a portion of the year's work by reviewing and placing in a form for oral presentation a play, a story to be read or told aloud, a choral speaking arrangement, etc. By this means a lively summation of the work will be accomplished, other classes will have an opportunity to share what has been gained by one group or groups, the children's creative abilities will be stimulated, and important personal growth will have taken place. Evidences of this personal growth will be observed as the child begins to overcome his inhibiting audience fears, he gains a more natural stage presence, [and] he improves in voice and diction as a result of efforts to communicate before a larger audience than his usual conversational group or class. Also, such important ethical by-products as the cooperation necessary for working together toward a common goal, development of leadership and self-discipline will be observed during the process of preparation for the festival. Strangely enough, as our own Percival Chubb said in his book, "Festivals and Plays," written long before progressive education came into practice, "the ultimate finished presentation constitutes the smallest part of the value derived from festival work." (Ibid.)

Though endeared for what she gave the school, Werner received in kind. "My growth as an aesthetic person was immense through my work with the Sunday School," she recalled. "I've done some writing since, but that was my first taste of creative writing, in working with the festivals at the Sunday School." (Remarks from platform, May 25, 1980) The Werners served the JSA until 1955, when they moved to Florida to take jobs in the Sarasota school system.

"Living Together": A Unified Curriculum

Florence Grant Armstrong, who succeeded Buchmueller as director in 1941, carried out some of the other plans that had been wafting about. Armstrong was a strong-minded woman who acquired her leadership acumen while directing the women's athletic department at Washington University. Her son William recalled that she "went about her chores with the spirit of the song we sang in Sunday School, 'If you have a task to do, do it, do it with a will.'" (Letter from William Grant Armstrong to James F. Hornback, dated Jan. 12, 1978) The founder and longtime

²³ Rubin recalled that after the opening performance of "Jack and the Beanstalk" (the students gave a second performance at Neighborhood House), Percival Chubb told her that she had "reached the pinnacle" of the dramatic arts, adding, "Now do you think you can stay there?" (Interview with Emsy Rubin, Sept. 30, 1986)

president of Poetry Center, a writers' circle that presented interpretive "poetry concerts" to the public, she shared the Werners' zeal for creative expression. Armstrong's first stint as director was brief, in 1943, she took a hiatus to travel. She was replaced by leader-in-training William Hammond for two seasons, and Wahlert and teacher Dewey Schill each filled in for a season. At the start of the 1947-48 season, Armstrong agreed to take on a four-year term as director, provided she be given a "free hand."

Armstrong delegated administration of the pre-school group -- formally called the Primary Department -- entirely to Mildred Smith, a vital, nurturing woman who engaged the children with stories, songs, art projects, and play activities. The group occupied rooms at the rear of Sheldon Memorial, spilling into the garden in the warmer months; the children had access to equipment for indoor and outdoor play. Smith called the group a "social laboratory" in which toys were used for experimentation and self-discovery. It taught fundamental ethical values such as courtesy and group decision-making. The older children in the department -- 4- and 5-year-olds -- were taught stories about everyday childhood experiences, such as making new friends or feeling afraid of the dark. The children's own accounts of personal conflicts furnished material for the teachers' explication of ethical concepts.

For the older children, Armstrong helped develop a curriculum that would remain in use for more than a decade. The curriculum she inherited -- a piecemeal refinement of that designed by Boette and Percival Chubb -- had been developed for an undivided ten-year program for 6- to 16-year-olds. The first grade studied fundamental moral attitudes as depicted in fables and legends; the second grade undertook contemporary children's literature termed "Here and Now Stories"; the third and fourth grades delved into Old Testament and New Testament stories, respectively; the fifth grade examined the lives of exemplary men and women; the sixth grade studied civics, with an emphasis on the local community; the seventh grade learned to appreciate the natural world and humanity's obligation to protect it; the eighth grade explored foreign cultures; the ninth grade discussed "Ethics in Everyday Life"; and the graduating class examined world religions in a course that culminated with a study of the Ethical movement. In her second stint as director, Armstrong, working closely with Smith, updated the curriculum under the unifying theme of "Living Together." The 6-year-olds now focused on living together in the home. They studied family responsibilities, ways of making the home a pleasant environment, the meaning of family ties, and other values arising in the home. Included in this course was an introduction to the art of conversation:

[E]ach Sunday they serve "tea" (actually chocolate drink) and make small talk. That is, the child must learn to converse. No one child may dominate the conversation, but must listen in turn to his neighbor -- [a lesson] which many grown-ups have never learned. You recognize the beginning of the psycho-social growth, this trying to reach out into the larger world, gradually leaving behind the ego-centered baby, in the new-found enjoyment of the fine game of mind meeting mind. ("The Challenge of Religious Education Today," address by Florence Armstrong broadcast Sept. 10, 1950, over radio station KWK)

The class for 7-year-olds broadened out to living together in the community. These students studied public protection and health; the provision of food, shelter, and clothing; and each citizen's role in serving the community. Moving on to the concept of living together in the world, 8-year-olds studied cultural variety, examining the ways in which the customs of foreign cultures evolve to meet the same needs addressed by Western customs. The 9-year-old class studied the lives of influential historical figures in a course titled "Patterns for Living Together." Under Armstrong, these first four grades beyond the Primary level were loosely segregated as the Intermediate Department. On the first Sunday of each month, this department gathered for an exclusive assembly in which the children were told an "Ever-Ever Story" -- a story that illustrated a perennially applicable ethical principle; among the staples were "The Blind Men and the Elephant" and "The Man, the Boy, and The Donkey." Group discussions were held on the contemporary significance of the stories. At the department's next exclusive assembly, one of the classes in the division would present a creative dramatization of the story.

The Senior Department, which included children 10 through 14, undertook the "History of Living Together." The 10-year-olds studied social customs of peoples ranging from primitive nomadic tribes through the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations. As a prelude to Bible studies, 11-year-olds examined the Palestinians and Semites of the Biblical era from a practical perspective, focusing on agriculture, slavery, wars, and laws governing safety and labor. The 12-year-olds approached the Bible as an ancient library, studying how and when the books were written and evaluating the ethical content of each. The 13-year-olds took up the study of the Bible as literature; they learned to appreciate its beauty and cadence, with an emphasis on the role of song and verse in uniting a people. Numerous auxiliary books were used in these courses; the Bible was made central because its ethical precepts are integral to the value system of the contemporary Western world. The final group in the Senior Department studied world religious thought from primitive superstitions on up to contemporary religious beliefs and practices. This course included

visits from sectarian religious leaders and field trips to churches and synagogues. Gene Speckert, who studied this course under Hynd just before graduating in 1938, recalled with gratitude how it helped her grasp the universal principles of religion. "I was more knowledgeable in comparative religions than my contemporaries at that time," she said. "I can remember going to college with ministers' children, and I ... found what I had learned in Sunday School was a help to me. In some ways, I'd learned things that these folks didn't learn." (Interview with Gene Speckert, Sept. 29, 1986) At the Senior Department's monthly assembly, teachers presented a signal Bible story; classes later presented these stories in the form of playlets.

Another of Armstrong's lasting contributions was the methodical development of extracurricular activities. The Sunday School proper -- including assemblies and classes -- was conducted from 9:30 to 10:50 a.m. For years, a play group for children who did not attend platform services had been held from 10:50 to 12:30, but bored, restive older children had become a bane to school directors, not to mention platform attendants disturbed by the noise that bled through the Assembly Room floor. Armstrong solved the problem by soliciting additional volunteers -- and, when necessary, hiring outside help -- to lead the children in artistic pastimes such as dramatics, painting, crafts, puppetry, and photography; such groups as the Punch 'n Judy Puppet Club and the Printing Shop Club met regularly during this time slot. The Society, the JSA, and the Parents Discussion Group split the costs of paid helpers, thus rounding out the staff enhancements envisaged for years. Student fees for the diversions were minimal.

High Standards, Low Budget

Though neatly unified on paper, the JSA's course of studies began to lose its cohesiveness in the forties. A professional journalist, Armstrong -- by her own admission -- lacked the educational expertise to fully implement her ideas. She gave her teachers general thematic direction but left it to them to design lesson plans. The teachers, all of whom were strictly volunteer, varied widely in competence. Some, such as Gina Hasse, a former stage actress with a flair for dramatic storytelling, and self-taught naturalists Philip Rau²⁴ and Waldemar Palm, intrigued students year after year; others had more good will than talent. Such limitations would have been offset by the retention of a trained educator at the helm, but the board was unwilling to provide even a part-time salary for the directorship. When, in 1949, the board formed a committee to assess the staffing of the JSA, the committee essentially said the Society was getting what it paid for. The committee -- which was chaired by Alexander S. Langsdorf and included Hynd, Armstrong, Smith, Wahlert, Buchmueller, and longtime JSA secretary Mabel Wheeler²⁵ -- urged the board to increase the school's budgetary allotment. "It is very evident that the JSA has been left to limp along as best it may, with reliance upon the voluntary efforts of those members who have some free time they are willing to devote to the arduous work," the committee reported, adding that "the word 'voluntary' is used advisedly, for the few honorariums provided for in the budget are so small as even to stretch the meaning of honorarium to its ultimate limit." (Report to board dated April 11, 1949) The committee determined that no untrained volunteer could be expected to thoroughly design and implement a curriculum "that will be consistent with the aims of the Society." (ibid.) It recommended the board find the means to finance a professional teacher-director; as an alternative, it requested more time to examine the school's administrative structure and to collectively refine instructions for teachers. Not surprisingly, the board chose the latter option. In the ensuing year, the committee ploddingly filled out the curriculum, drawing inspiration from a Unitarian model and assistance from AEU religious education director Florence Klaber. In 1950, the committee passed its work along to a newly formed JSA Committee which included representatives of teachers and parents; this formation was crystallized when the committee's duties were spelled out in a by-law amendment adopted the same year.

The high academic standards held by Hynd, and a handful of trustees, created a persistent element of tension between the board and the JSA staff. In particular, Walston Chubb, a Harvard-educated attorney, and Alexander S. Langsdorf, with his background in university administration, continually pushed for extensive teacher training and a rigorous, systematic pedagogy. In a portion of the 1949 committee report in which he spoke solely for himself, Langsdorf had some harsh words for the JSA program:

A genuinely constructive Sunday School remains a problem to be worked out on experimental lines. The usual church Sunday school is a device for equipping children with permanent blinders to make them see and think through life only what their elders want them to see and think. In our own curriculum, I see almost nothing that will make our children understand, and be tolerant of, the religious beliefs of people with whom they will have to live their lives. I see nothing that will

²⁴ Rau, who earned his living in real estate, wrote a book titled, "Jungle Bees and Wasps." Rau, Palm, Hermann Schwarz and other nature teachers augmented their classroom work by leading students on hikes.

²⁵ Wheeler's later married name was Jones.

acquaint them with what science has to say about the nature of the physical world in which they live, and how they may learn reverence for the wonders all about them, as for instance, by some study of the stars. (Report to board dated April 11, 1949)

Wahlert, Armstrong, and Smith, with their more down-to-earth expectations of teachers, made no attempt to institute the sort of formal training program that Hynd and his backers envisioned; the Society lacked the funds for such an undertaking, and the teachers lacked the time. Instead, the women conducted periodic seminars on classroom techniques, brought in authorities to speak on religious studies, and discussed educational philosophy at teachers meetings. The monthly meetings, which included dinners served by grateful members of the Women's Auxiliary and the PTA, were well-attended and often fruitful. In addition, teachers were encouraged to attend outside seminars on religious education. In the mid-forties, board members personally underwrote the fees of teachers who chose to attend Hynd's comparative religion courses at University College. The AEU also provided valued assistance: Religious Education Director Florence Klaber regularly consulted on the trainers of teachers, and, with financial support from trustee Henry Putzel, as many as five or six JSA administrators and teachers attended the annual AEU religious education conferences at Hudson Guild.

If the JSA was not always up to Langsdorfs stringent standards, parents and students were less captious. Year after year, enrollment topped one hundred, and parental participation was high. Lifelong Society member Jane Arrigo, who graduated from the school in this era, recalled the program as a crucial element of her upbringing:

We were always learning something; we always had fun. And the teachers were great It was so fascinating, and so much went on, that you didn't want to miss It was the most interesting Sunday School anybody could go to. You wouldn't want to miss, because you might miss something. When they were studying nature, we went out into nature -- many, many times; in a year, we might go out once every two months.

We learned the Bible in a good story form [so] that we could relate to other people about the Bible. We found out that we remembered the Bible, because we did it in an understanding way.

As you got older in Sunday School, you learned that people were all different, and you don't ridicule people for their thoughts, because they lived in a different culture. What was right in the United States was not always right. It was the same with religion. ...

I was about the only one I knew, maybe in my whole [public school] class, that was Ethically oriented. I was quite secure. When they all would smoke, I would feel very free to not smoke, because I didn't have to be one of the crowd -- I wasn't one of the crowd. I was different. I didn't want to be like everybody else -- and I knew I wasn't, as far as religion was concerned. I was very content, and very secure. Nobody could ever shatter my thoughts. The kids today, they don't know what to say if people say, "What do you believe?" I was very secure ... I was not going to be anything different than Ethically oriented in my life. (Interview with Jane Arrigo, Sept. 30, 1986)

Expanding Minds - Maturation of the Platform Program

During Hynd's term of leadership, platform offerings reached a new high of intellectual stimulation. The scope of visiting speakers was substantially expanded -- partly because the movement's founding crusaders were retiring and dying off, and partly because a Society member's generosity enabled the community to contract more eminent speakers from various fields of inquiry. Addressing the needs of the membership from new perspectives, Hynd and his advisers also experimented with changes in the structure, tenor, and promotion of the platform service.

Hynd addressed the Society much more frequently than had Chubb during his active leadership, sometimes occupying the platform on more than half the Sundays in the season. To sustain audience interest, he often presented platform series -- each comprising two to five addresses -- on such themes as "Crises in Contemporary Culture" (1934-35 season), "Educating Our Emotions" (1939-40), and "Dynamic Obligations of the Common Man" (1942-43). A 1938-39 series titled "Three Studies in Christian Sources" included talks on "The Mythology of Christianity ... The Moral Standards of Christianity," and "The Symbolism of Personality." In his spring 1942 series "Questions We Ask Ourselves," he addressed anxieties over suffering, uncertainty, and the worthiness of human life. He sometimes asked guest speakers to cooperate in platform series. For instance, a spring 1948 series titled "Cultural Origins and Contributions" encompassed talks by Hynd on "Evolution of the Idea of God" and

"Origins of Christian Supernaturalism"; the series also included an address on "Our Judeo-Christian Heritage" by Unitarian minister Thaddeus B. Clark and a talk titled "Morality is Enough" by Chicago Ethical leader A. Eustace Haydon. As indicated by these themes, most of Hynd's addresses were philosophical and hortatory; regular attendants especially appreciated his expositions of newly released books. With the onset of turbulence in Europe, however, Hynd often turned his attention to social, political, and economic affairs. At war's end, he returned to the inner life with a series of four addresses on "Spiritual Reconstruction."

Hynd had a few platform associates near at hand. Throughout Hynd's term of service, leader emeritus Percival Chubb presented two or three platform addresses per season. William Hammond, during his two-year stint as leader-in-training, spoke only three times, but he frequently presided at platform meetings in Hynd's absence. Beginning in the mid-forties, Alexander S. Langsdorf spoke to the Society about once a year -- usually on ethical aspects of science and technology. After he was named honorary associate leader in 1948, Langsdorf often presided at platform and community meetings, but his addresses remained infrequent. In addition to calling upon these associates within the institution, Hynd occasionally exchanged pulpits with Clark of First Unitarian Church; R. Lester Mondale, pastor of All Saints Unitarian Church in Kansas City; and Rabbi Julius Gordon of Temple Shaare Emeth.

In the thirties, Ethical leaders continued to preponderate among out-of-town speakers. In addition to veterans Algernon Black, Horace Bridges, John Lovejoy Elliott, David Seville Muzzey, Henry Neumann, and Nathaniel Schmidt, St. Louis now welcomed W. Edwin Collier, a Stanton Coit protege who succeeded S. Burns Weston as leader of the Philadelphia Society; Haydon, an author²⁶ and professor of comparative religion who succeeded Bridges in Chicago; Vivian T. Thayer, director of education at New York's Ethical Culture Schools; George Beauchamp, leader of the nascent Washington, D.C. Society; and Arthur E. Briggs, founding leader of the Los Angeles Society. Leaders of the dominant societies exchanged platforms about once a year. In an era when transportation was slower and the pace of life more leisurely, these visits sometimes lasted up to a week; besides addressing a society on one or two Sundays, the visitor might meet with the society's subgroups, conduct seminars for Sunday School teachers, and join in community activities. In addition, established scholars such as Muzzey often spoke to civic and religious groups and gave radio and newspaper interviews.

The Society's tight budget militated against bringing in large numbers of Ethical leaders each season, but Percival Chubb urged that the practice continue. Such exchanges, he said, kept the societies in closer touch with each other and contributed toward the training of the younger leaders. Another advantage of relying on speakers within the movement was that the St. Louis and Chicago societies could share the costs of bringing Eastern leaders to the Midwest²⁷; similarly, coalitions of American societies hosted speaking tours by British leaders Coit and Lord Henry Snell. Furthermore, full-time Ethical leaders could afford to waive lecture fees by simply exchanging platforms. Communities supported these exchanges by putting up leaders in their homes; in St. Louis, members of the Hospitality Committee -- under the supervision of Executive Secretary Meredith McCargo -- minimized costs by providing visitors with lodging, meals, and entertainment. Consequently, whenever financial constraints forced the Society to pare the number of out-of-town speakers it invited, Ethical leaders were the last to be cut from the list.

Money Talks

The quality of the Society's other visiting speakers, already high, received a tremendous boost in 1939 with the establishment of the John M. Prather Fund for Education in Ethics. Prather, a longtime member of the Society, had taught science in the St. Louis Public School District for 33 years. He died in 1938 while touring Egypt -- one of many adventurous sojourns he had undertaken since retiring in 1935. A single man who lived frugally and invested astutely, Prather left a \$25,000 bequest to each of the three educational institutions from which he had earned degrees -- Harvard the University of Chicago, and Antioch College of Ohio. He also bequeathed \$25,000 to the Ethical Society; income from the fund was to be used "for lectures or a series of lectures by eminent publicists, men or women, with a powerful ethical message and with a magnetism and manner of delivery that will attract large numbers of thinking people." The community was surprised and deeply gratified by the bequest. According to a resolution the board passed in Prather's honor, the gift "was bestowed in the quiet and modest way that was

²⁶ Haydon, who had traveled the Ethical circuit for years before retiring from his post at the University of Chicago, wrote "The Quest of the Ages" and "The Biography of the Gods."

²⁷ Beginning in 1950, the Society occasionally cooperated with Temple Shaare Emeth in bringing to town speakers from outside the Ethical movement. Visitors would speak to the temple congregation on a Friday night and stay in town to address the Society the following Sunday, with the communities splitting speakers' fees and travel and lodging costs.

characteristic of Dr. Prather's demeanor in our midst. Despite his love of outdoors and his habit of wandering afield to study Nature, his was a familiar and welcome presence among us; but he was of a retiring disposition and offered no noticeable demonstration of the steadiness and depth of his devotion and faithfulness. This manifestation of his high regard for the part played by our fellowship in his life ... serves to strengthen our common faith in its value and effectiveness." (minutes, March 13, 1939) A Prather Fund Committee composed of shrewd investors administered the bequest; under the committee's care, the market value of the fund topped \$28,000 by 1945.

Varying interpretations of Prather's stated intentions for the fund sparked occasional disputes. R. Walston Chubb contended that the money should be used only for speakers who would not otherwise occupy the platform; specifically, he insisted that it not be used to pay the fees of visiting Ethical leaders. If the board dipped into the fund for ordinary platform expenses, Chubb said, its purpose would be defeated. The board occasionally overrode those objections, but it generally approved expenditures only for out-of-town speakers from outside the movement. In addition to paying speakers' fees, the fund covered such ancillary costs as advertising and hospitality.

Hynd, acknowledging the limits of his erudition, used the fund to host complementary speakers. Because Hynd drew heavily on literature and the arts in virtually all of his platform addresses, the Society rarely hosted guest speakers who specialized in those fields; instead, it rounded out the platform program by inviting scientists, social analysts, and mental health experts. Hynd underlined the value of the fund when he noted that the Society's list of speakers was "the like to which is not known on any other Sunday morning program in the city (blessings, here, on the head of the late John Prather -- a member who saw the significance of the Sunday morning service and who made provision for the extension of its influence). Truly, the members and friends who attend the Sunday morning services should be outstanding persons, since they hear so many outstanding speakers!" (Leader's report given at annual meeting, May 1946) But while he cherished the variety of speakers the fund enabled him to contract, Hynd feared that platform attendants might interpret a radical speaker's stand as the Society's "party line." In the forties, he ran this disclaimer in Sunday program flyers: "The speaker is granted full freedom of speech. Utterances from the platform commit the speaker, and not the Society as a whole."

A Potpourri of Piquancy

Philosophy and religion were among the most common topics of visiting speakers. Harvard professor Ralph Barton Perry, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author who was highly regarded for his development of value theory, opened the 1941-42 season with a talk on "The Values We Defend." Semanticist Samuel I. Hayakawa, an English professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology and author of "Language in Action," addressed the Society in 1946. Humanist philosopher L. M. Birkhead, director of Friends of Democracy and religious consultant to novelist Sinclair Lewis, also spoke in 1946. E. Burdette Backus, pastor of All Souls Unitarian Church in Indianapolis and president of the American Humanist Association, outlined his vision of "A Global Religion." Corliss Lamont, professor of philosophy at Columbia University and author of "Man Answers Death" and "Humanism as a Philosophy," made the first of his many visits to the Society in 1949.

Foreign affairs, with an emphasis on the struggle for world peace, was another mainstay of platform offerings. Throughout the season, and particularly on its annual Peace Sunday, the Society hosted representatives of peacemaking organizations such as the Carnegie Peace Foundation, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the National Council for the Prevention of War, the Institute of International Education, the Foreign Policy Association, and subsections and support groups of the League of Nations and the United Nations. In seeking to comprehend the ethical dilemmas of international relations, the Society drew upon the expertise of a variety of political observers and world citizens. Roger Baldwin, director of the American Civil Liberties Union, often spoke to the Society on the prospects for democracy in reforming nations such as postwar Germany and Japan. Suhindra L. Joshi, a professor of comparative religion in both the United States and India, and Kumar Goshal, and Indian author, actor, and radio commentator, spoke repeatedly on Oriental culture and politics; their addresses customarily were complemented by readings from Eastern scriptures and contemporary authors. After the division of Pakistan and India, the Society invited Pakistani professor Mohamad Hafeez Toosy, a Moslem, to balance the perspective of the Hindu sympathizers. Sir Herbert Ames, a former member of the Canadian House of Commons and the financial director of the League of Nations Secretariat, spoke in 1937 on "Hungary -- Two Conceptions of the Right to Rule." Enrique de Lozada, a diplomatic consultant and professor of political science at Williams College, shed light on American cooperation. Naturally, American-Soviet relations dominated the Society's concern with international affairs. Author Frederick L. Schuman, professor of government at Williams College and principal political analyst for the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service, spoke frequently on the changes required for an enduring peace -- if not partnership -- between the nations. Other speakers on the issue included Admiral William H. Standley, a former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union; Emil Lengyel, Eastern European correspondent for the New York Times; and

No-Yong Park, a professor of Oriental culture who addressed American and Soviet interventionism from the Chinese perspective.

Consistent interest in psychology and family life was reflected in the platform program. The most renowned mental health authority to address the Society was Viennese psychiatrist Alfred Adler, who spoke in March 1936 on "The Prevention of Neurosis and Crime." In the 1939-40 season, author and counseling consultant Roy E. Dickerson presented an address titled "Marriage, Family Life, and the Fine Art of Living." A frequent visitor in the forties was Harry Allen Overstreet, professor of philosophy and psychology at City College of New York and author of "The Mature Mind," a 1949 best-seller. Overstreet spoke on such themes as "Personal Balance in a Neurotic World" and "What We Owe to Ourselves as Human Beings." Other psychological authorities who spoke in the forties included Paul Popenoe, director of Los Angeles' Institute of Family Relations; Rudolph Dreikurs, director of the Chicago Community Psychiatric Center and author of "The Challenge of Marriage" and "The Challenge of Parenthood"; and Evelyn Millis Duvall, author, marriage counselor, and executive secretary of the National Council on Family Relations.

An array of social critics and civic theorists addressed the Society. The most frequent visitor in this field was Eduard Christian Lindeman, associate editor of *The New Republic* and advisory editor of *Rural America*. Lindeman, who taught at the New York School of Social Work and the New School of Social Research, conducted a number of studies on adult education and authored books on social problems. Among the addresses he gave in the thirties and forties were "The Modern Question of Values" and "The Quality of Democratic Culture." Other academics invited to address domestic social and political issues included criminologist Harry Elmer Barnes; Washington University law professor Ralph Fuchs; and Curtis W. Reese, Dean of the Abraham Lincoln Centre of Chicago and one-time president of the American Humanist Association. From the University of Chicago came T.V. Smith, professor of philosophy and editor of the *International Journal of Ethics*; Louis Wirth, professor of sociology; and Herman Finer, professor of political science and author of "The Theory and Practice of Modern Government." Mordecai Ezekiel, economic adviser to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and author of "Jobs for All," spoke twice during the 1943-44 season. Louis Adamic, founding editor of *Common Ground* magazine and author of "The Native's Return," "My America," and "From Many Lands," gave a 1942 Thanksgiving address titled "Immigrant Gifts to America." Social reformer Saul Alinsky, executive director of the Industrial Areas Foundation of Chicago and author of "Reveille for Radicals," first spoke to the Society in December 1946.

Though the Society, like white America generally, was reluctant to confront racial issues, civil rights became a hot topic in the forties. In 1936, the board dissuaded Hynd from presenting an address on the social significance of negro spirituals; he finally gave such an address -- accompanied by a presentation of spirituals by the Sumner High School chorus -- in 1943. Society member Fannie Cook, a novelist²⁸ and ardent proponent of racial equality, presented three platform addresses on the topic: "Democracy and the Negro," 1943; "An American Dilemma -- The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy," 1945; and "The Tyranny of Prejudice," 1948. Civil rights advocate Carey McWilliams, a contributing editor of *The Nation* and author of "Factories in the Fields," "Brothers Under the Skin," and "A Mask for Privilege," proposed solutions to racial inequality in 1944 and 1948 addresses. Bringing to the issue an element of scientific inquiry, social anthropologist Allison Davis, a professor of education at the University of Chicago, examined the presumption of a "racial personality" in a 1946 address. On Race Relations Sunday, an unofficial nationwide observance in February 1944, University of Chicago history professor Walter Johnson commemorated President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation; in February 1950, Walter White, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), provided a more provocative observation by assessing "Lincoln's Unfinished Business."

The Society's attention to civil rights was not limited to black equality. In 1939, Hynd spoke on "Semitism and Anti-Semitism: A Challenge to the Reign of Reason"; and in 1945, Jerome Nathanson, one of several Jewish Ethical leaders, presented an address titled "Must We Have Anti-Semitism?" With the division of Palestine and the establishment of Israel, Jewish identity and Zionism became frequent platform topics in the forties and into the fifties. The changing status of women in America also found expression from the platform. In February 1943, Fannie Cook and fellow Society member Delia Mares, also an author²⁹ and then director of the National League of Women Voters, commemorated feminist leader Anna Howard Shaw in a platform presentation titled "Free to Fashion the Future." Notes in that Sunday's platform program declared that "we honor [Shaw] and the many women who were coworkers with her in the securing of political and other rights for women." A quote from C. Delisle

²⁸ Cook, a social worker, wrote "Mrs. Palmers Honey," "Bootheel Doctor" "The Hill Grows Steeper," and "Storm Against the Wall."

²⁹ Mares, a high school history teacher, wrote a book titled "Know Your Enemy."

Burns headed up that flyer: "Any community which attempts to live upon the abilities of one sex only, loses half its vitality; and any community which makes one sex subordinate to the other, is headed towards barbarism."

A Question of Questions

The tone of the platform service -- at once intellectual and religious -- was at times difficult to maintain. Speakers were expected to provide the thoughtful stimulation of the college classroom, but they were to do so in the atmosphere of a church. Hynd and his advisers -- the ephemeral Committee on Speakers and the board of trustees at large -- sought to strike a balance in platform offerings between inspirational philosophy and specific social issues. Trustees often asked Hynd and visiting speakers to alter the topics of their addresses, but they had difficulty arriving at a consensus. Their social conscience ignited by wars and the Depression, many Society members felt platform talks should focus on action programs in such areas as housing, criminal justice, and community organizing. Most trustees agreed, believing that "while the Society was not organized for group action in fields of reform, it has a unique contribution to make in emphasizing practical applications of ethical principles [in] social and economic relationships." (minutes, November 1945) On the other hand, "several members of the board were inclined to demur on the ground that purely technical discussions by experts ... would tend to change the more general religious character of the Sunday morning service." (Ibid.) In practice, the tension resulted in a healthy balance.

The Society's ambivalence over intellectualism was especially evident in its experiments with a question-and-answer period a custom deemed sacred by universities and sacrilegious by churches. Society members who came to platform meetings seeking information strongly favored the practice, while those who sought inspiration found it distasteful. When the discussions first were tried in 1943, they were held in the library after the platform meeting. That arrangement had the advantage of preserving the religious integrity of the service, but spatial limitations kept many members from taking part. In the 1947-48 season, on a recommendation of the Advisory and Planning Council, the board president was authorized to conduct question-and-answer sessions in the auditorium "when the address is on a vital issue." (minutes, October 1947)

One of the first experiments with the auditorium format resulted in a vitriolic exchange between audience members and a controversial speaker. Kurt Singer, a political lecturer, radio commentator, and author who had published an underground anti-Nazi newspaper in war-torn Europe, spoke at the Society January 11, 1948, on the ethical aspects of his book "Spies and Traitors." In his address, Singer railed against both fascist and communist opponents of American government. In particular, he castigated Gerald L. K. Smith, the demagogic head of the right-wing America First movement, calling him one of the "gravediggers of democracy." Smith recently had moved his headquarters from Detroit to St. Louis, and his chief lieutenant, Don Lohbeck, led a contingent of party members to the Ethical platform service. Lohbeck and one of his associates repeatedly interrupted the question-and-answer period by making vituperative remarks and launching imperious speeches. The tough-minded, barrel-chested R. Walston Chubb, who presided over the service, curtly silenced the men. Chubb, a vocal member of the Civil Rights Committee of the St. Louis Bar Association, asserted that he was a champion of free speech; when outraged St. Louisans attempted to block the party's move to St. Louis, he noted, he had vigorously supported Smith's constitutional rights to speak and organize without government interference. But he indignantly noted that the Constitution guarantees no one the right to disrupt a private religious service. He proposed a motion that the men no longer be recognized. The motion carried. (Information from Ethical Society program flyer, January 11, 1948; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 12, 1948; and interview with Ted and Ruth Anderson, September 15, 1986)

In the wake of the incident, board president Alexander S. Langsdorf, insisting that the tone of the platform service be kept "on a spiritual plane," persuaded the board to discontinue the question period. (Minutes, February 1948) The practice occasionally was revived, but it was held after the formal adjournment of the platform service. Attempts by Langsdorf and his sympathizers to maintain civility by having questions submitted in writing or by limiting questioners to a few pre-selected Society members were shot down as undemocratic. Society members who participated in the question period were quite willing to accept the acrimony that sometimes arose.

Paying the Piper, Breaking the Pipes

Music remained a fundamental of the platform service. In the thirties, string trios and quartets were engaged occasionally; in the forties, the Spring Festival usually included recitals by cellist Pasquale DeConto and harpist Graziella Pampari of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. Otherwise, the music that accompanied meditations and collections emanated from the Society's glorious Kilgen organ. Florence Jewett, a skilled organist who had introduced the Society to a vast range- -of music, retired in 1939. A barely competent replacement served while an ad hoc Organist Committee conducted auditions. The committee contracted Society member Carl Werner in the

middle of the 1940-41 season. Werner, a music teacher and director of high school orchestras, had belonged to a coterie of Society members that had gathered around Jewett after platform services to discuss her selections and other things musical. Werner had studied under Jewett in his youth, and he recalled gratefully that taking lessons at Sheldon Memorial had permitted him to practice on "the most magnificent organ in town." (Letter from Carl Werner to the author, dated August 19, 1986) The setting of the instrument, however, took its toll on organ and organists:

After the Sunday meetings the heat would be shut off for the auditorium. ... So when Mrs. Jewett practiced on the organ, in order to keep warm she ... rigged up a canvas cover for the console and in this contraption she placed a small electric heater. This proved to be quite comfortable for practicing. (I wish I could have taken a picture of the setting.) I inherited this when I took over in 1941. ...

These drastic changes in temperature naturally would affect the organ pipes and mechanism and eventually did. The wooden pipes, in particular, were affected. ... [Cracks were] caused by the changes in humidity. The rapid changes in temperature as the heat was turned on would cause this ... To counteract the drying out of the air in the organ chambers, I would place several buckets of water in the organ chambers and hang up large wet towels near the pipe to raise the humidity. [Ibid.]

Despite Werner's affectionate pampering, the instrument that had been the pride of the Society in 1913 was on its last pipes in 1950. Peter Kintzele, chairman of the Building Committee, told the board it would cost up to \$4,500 to refurbish the instrument. A comparable replacement would cost \$35,000 -- ten times the instrument's salvage value. Kintzele noted that the venerable pipe organ could be traded evenly for an electric organ -- "but hastened to add that we would be trading our birthright for a mess of pottage." (Organ Report, January 1950) Minor repairs kept the organ functional for a few years, but when it again broke down in 1954, repair estimates ranged as high as \$9,000. Against the Building Committee's recommendation, the board finally replaced the Kilgen instrument with a Hammond electric organ donated by Lucille and Douglas Dodds in memory of her father, Henry Ratz. The use of congregational singing continued to be spotty. Emerson had prophesied that ethical religion would "fast enough gather ... music ... and poetry"³⁰; in practice, it did not gather them fast enough to satisfy jaded freethinkers. In the forties, ethical societies pooled their favorite songs and compiled a pathetic collection that no one deemed worthy of publication. St. Louis bought several hundred copies of "We Sing of Life," a Unitarian-Universalist song book partially financed by the AEU, but the community never used it with regularity. To expand the limited repertoire of "hymns" appropriate for the Society, Hynd, like Chubb, wrote a few creditable inspirational songs. His "Promise of Spring" is representative:

"Onward moves the hast'ning year!
Heralds of the Spring appear!
Signs of waking life arise,
Light more fully fills the skies:
Promise of a brighter day
Gladdens now our common way
Promise of the earth so fair,
All its fruits and beauties rare.
Let the gifts of Earth abound
Where the race of man is found!
Let the strife of nations cease,
Usher in the age of peace!
Let the rule of man be sure,
May his righteousness endure -
Sharing life with great and small,
Bringing health and joy to all.

(Sunday program, March 23, 1947)

³⁰ Excerpt from essay "On Music," by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Red-Letter Days and Red Tape

Cyclic festivals were demoted in the thirties. For all his fastidiousness in directing the ceremonies, Hynd generally considered them a children's affair. Only the Winter Festival -- which, curiously, the anticlerical Mr. Hynd renamed the Christmas Midwinter Festival³¹ -- was conducted as a platform service. Typically, the Midwinter Festival comprised carols, dramatic presentations by Sunday School students, a candle-lighting ceremony, a story told by Hynd or Chubb, special music, and a visit from a "Santa Claus" bearing candy for the children. As before, a social gathering was substituted for the platform service on one Sunday during the holiday season. The Thanksgiving and spring festivals were conducted by Sunday School personnel -- usually under Hynd's direction -- during the regular school hour; these festivals, which adults were encouraged to attend, were followed by straightforward platform services. The services on those days included festive touches -- congregational singing, Chubb-era responsive sentences, and instrumental recitals -- but a topical address remained the dominant element. Hynd also relegated the Ceremony of Recognition to the Sunday School hour, sparing the platform address that he believed adult members cherished. Chubb continued to conduct the New Year's Eve Quiet Hour, which consisted of music, carol singing, a few words of inspiration, and time for quiet reflection. The service, which drew twenty to thirty stalwarts, was a poor match for good ol' American-revelry, and the tradition was permitted to die quietly in the early fifties.

Other special observations were conducted within the basic format of the platform service. Outstanding humanist philosophers -- such as Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and Mark Twain -- were commemorated on signal anniversaries of births and deaths. The annual Shakespeare Sunday was celebrated on the Sunday nearest April 23, the birthday of the dramatist; Hynd, Chubb, or a visiting English professor spoke on the ethical import of Shakespearean drama, and program readings were excerpted from the bard's poems and plays. Peace Sunday, held annually in November, featured addresses, readings, and songs exalting world peace. On Y.P. A. Sunday, members of the Young People's Association selected the readings and the speaker and presided at the service. The speaker was asked to address the needs and concerns of youth. For example, Harold D. Meyer, chairman of the Department of Sociology at the University of North Carolina and director of the North Carolina Recreation Commission, spoke in the 1945-46 season on "Youth -- A Dynamic Force in Modern Society: How Shall We Direct It?" And in the 1948-49 season, Virgil L. Border, associate Regional Director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, spoke on "What is Youth Doing Today?"

Apart from platform services, the Society's only distinctly religious ceremonies were namings, weddings, and memorials. The right of an Ethical leader to solemnize marriages again was called into question after Hynd's arrival. Percival Chubb, a naturalized U.S. citizen, satisfied the Missouri marriage statute's citizenship requirement and the prevailing bureaucratic interpretation of the statutory term "minister of the gospel." But Hynd, always a resident alien, failed to persuade the recorder of deeds to honor his authority as a minister. When he performed a wedding, therefore, a civil authority was invited to legally sanction the ceremony. In 1941, the board considered proposing legislation that would allow Ethical Leaders, regardless of citizenship, to perform weddings, but no one undertook serious lobbying efforts. In response to a request from the board's legal counsel, Harold Hanke, the state's assistant attorney general in 1950 rendered the informal opinion that a licensed or ordained preacher need not be a citizen to solemnize marriages. Hanke, calling the opinion "vague and non-committal," asked the recorder of deeds to request a formal opinion from the state's attorney general. The matter was dropped when Hynd announced his resignation in February 1950.

No legal restrictions apply to memorial services, but the Ethical service traditionally is conducted only by people authorized by the acting leader. Before departing for cooler climes, Hynd each summer commissioned several Society members to perform memorials in his absence. Percival Chubb sometimes was available to perform this service. When both leaders were absent, the duty fell to lay members including R. Walston Chubb, Alexander Langsdorf, Hermann Schwarz, Henry Putzel, Dewey Schill, and Harold Hanke. Leaders from the Chicago Society also were called in on occasion. There is no definite format for an Ethical funeral, but it customarily includes a eulogy, music, reading, and silent reflection.

Setting Clocks, Marking Calendars

The Society tried several arrangements of its Sunday morning essentials -- the Sunday School, Adult Discussion Group, Post-Graduate Discussion Group, platform service, and Play Group. For years, the Sunday School began at 9:30 and ended just before the platform service, at which time children who did not attend the service joined the

³¹ Trustees, though sensitive to the objections of non-Christians, generally held that Christmas had lost its denotative meaning and become synonymous with "the holiday season." (minutes, January 1949)

Play Group. The discussion groups, meanwhile, began at 9:45, ending in time for participants to attend the platform service at 11 o'clock. But the platform service often ran well past noon, making for a long morning for families with children. To lighten the schedule, the Platform Committee in 1948 asked the leader to end the service no later than 12:05 or 12:10, giving members time to visit together before hunger pangs drove them home. And in 1950, newly hired Sunday School director Mildred Smith moved the starting time of the Sunday School up to 10 a.m. Discussion groups were started at the same time, so that programs for adults and children now were conducted concurrently.

The Society's season continued to parallel the academic September-to-May calendar, but many members wanted it to be lengthened by a few weeks at each end. On a recommendation of the Advisory and Planning Council, the board in 1940 distributed a questionnaire on the matter. Of the 198 members who responded, 110 indicated they wanted the season to start earlier in September, end later in May, or both. Nonetheless, the board dropped the proposal when Hynd, who had pushed for an even earlier closing date, objected. Hynd claimed to oppose the extension because discomforting heat and waning interest precipitated a drop-off in attendance toward the end of the season; however, his habit of leaving town on a long sabbatical promptly after the last platform Sunday indicates his reasons may have been more personal. Not until the 1947-48 season did the board vote to extend the season until the end of May. The season then was topped off with the annual picnic on the first Sunday of June.

A Sluggish Movement

The AEU continued to serve as a loose federation of independent societies. Its principal function was to facilitate intercourse among the societies by coordinating speaking tours, publishing a nationwide journal, and conducting national assemblies and leadership colloquiums. Generally, Ethical leaders and Sunday School administrators benefited from the association. But other Society members, despite their appreciation of visiting Ethical leaders, felt little identification with the movement at large and often questioned whether the Union merited the annual dues St. Louis paid. Nationally, the movement was holding its own, at best: After more than half a century, it had added only the Brooklyn and Boston societies to the original American societies in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis; it had no definite plans to expand to other cities, and until 1942, it had no formal program for leadership training. In their contacts with representatives of other societies at annual assemblies, St. Louisans learned that the heartfelt congregationalism they cultivated was atypical of the movement -- an observation that diminished their already scant sense of belonging to a national community.

In terms of productivity and inspiration, the AEU's annual assemblies have been uneven. Those hosted by East Coast societies naturally have drawn the largest number and greatest variety of delegates; assemblies held in Chicago, St. Louis, and Cleveland have drawn disproportionate Midwestern representation. In efforts to offset such imbalance, the AEU and the New York Society have helped underwrite transportation costs for Midwestern delegates to assemblies held in the East. Also, each society's contingent is permitted to vote according to its allotment of delegates rather than being limited to one vote per delegate in attendance. As a rule, each society is allotted one at-large delegate plus one delegate for each fifty members; the St. Louis contingent, with nine to eleven votes, consistently has been among the most influential. To maximize its impact, the Society in 1948 adopted a policy of casting its votes as a block; in most cases, the St. Louis contingent votes privately on all issues coming before the full assembly, then casts its delegate votes unanimously according to the majority vote of the caucus. Matters put to a vote at assemblies include reorganization and policy proposals; dues increases and the establishment of special funds and projects; the election of national officers and the expansion of the Union's paid staff; and ethical resolutions on such issues as peace, race relations, and the government's domestic programs and foreign policy. Assemblies also feature subordinate colloquiums for religious educators, youth groups, women's groups, and so on. Each society's delegates divvy up participation in these workshops, then report back to their communities and subgroups.

From time to time, the Union has asked the societies to form standing AEU committees to promote the movement's publications; endorse and publicize the Union's national programs; inform the AEU secretary of local activities that would be of interest to other societies; cooperate with the secretary in planning assemblies; and keep society members informed of AEU programs and activities. St. Louis formed such committees a few times in the thirties and forties, and even established the makeup of a standing committee in a 1949 by-law amendment, but primary responsibility for maintaining relations with the Union usually fell to the leader and a single lay representative. Between assemblies, decisions are made, and assembly proposals drafted by the AEU's board of directors and executive committee. Percival Chubb served a stint as AEU president -- a non-administrative advisory post -- in the thirties. In the thirties and forties, active Society members such as Edna Gellhorn, Alexander S. Langsdorf, Frederic Arnstein, and Harold Hanke represented St. Louis on the board and kept the community informed of its proceedings.

Through correspondence and meetings of the Fraternity of Leaders (later renamed the Leaders Council), Ethical leaders helped each other hone their thought and organizational skills. After the death of Adler, who personally had selected leaders from the movement's inception, the Fraternity also developed informal standards for leadership qualifications and screened applicants for training and service. Fraternity members and AEU administrators sometimes proposed methods of equalizing employment conditions through the establishment of a national pension fund and a minimum pay scale, but the larger and more affluent societies blackballed such notions. In 1941, for example, the president of the Chicago Society proposed that Union members jointly provide compensation for leader Horace Bridges, who had served the movement for some 29 years. Bridges' failing health had forced him to curtail his platform appearances, but he continued to write; because his writings benefited all societies, Chicago contended, it was reasonable to ask them to help pay his pension. St. Louis trustees replied that the individual societies were responsible for maintaining their own pension plans; the St. Louis Society recently had designed an annuity policy to provide for Hynd's retirement benefits, and the board's attitude was that of the wise virgins.

The pension proposal was but one indication of the societies' wavering loyalty to each other and the movement at large. In 1943, when the Chicago Society asked St. Louis to share Hynd's services while it sought a replacement for Bridges, the board's response was again parochial: It authorized Hynd to speak in Chicago at his discretion, but it made clear that the number of midweek addresses the Chicago Society wanted Hynd to present would pose an unacceptable burden. Hynd visited Chicago from time to time but made no commitment to the Society; the community limped along without a fulltime leader until 1945, when it hired A. Eustace Haydon. However, later in the decade, Hynd -- like his colleagues on the coast -- substantially assisted in the formation of the Cleveland Ethical Society. Furthermore, St. Louis aided the community's development by inviting a representative of the group to visit St. Louis for observation and advice.³²

Uncertain loyalty also made the International Ethical Union (IEU) a shaky alliance. The association, which at one time comprised Ethical unions from the United States, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Italy, Britain, Japan, and occasionally other nations, was formed in 1896. The IEU held conferences on and off until World War I, during which European ethical societies floundered. At the initiative of Percival Chubb and his cohorts overseas, the Union conducted occasional moral education conferences between the wars, but the second war naturally precluded even those. The association was revived in 1952 as the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). It has held conferences every four years since 1957.

In the thirties, the IEU asked the societies to help support the Vienna community, which was served by outstanding leaders but lacked sufficient funding. Citing budgetary constraints, the St. Louis board declined to contribute to the fund, but Society members independently scraped together the community's quota. In 1938, Vienna leaders Wilhelm Boerner and Walter Eckstein were imprisoned for anti-Fascist activities, and the IEU again asked the societies to offer support. John Lovejoy Elliott secured the leaders' release in a visit to Berlin, and members of the New York Society underwrote the costs of bringing the men to the United States; at the urging of the AEU, the St. Louis Society started a Boerner-Eckstein Fund to help maintain the refugees. In 1943, however, the board denied the AEU's request to solicit further contributions to the cause from Society members; the men had forfeited St. Louis's good will by declining to speak at the Society.

Though slow to expand, the AEU did attain a measure of institutional stability. In the forties, the Union obtained sorely needed legitimacy when it was incorporated as a non-profit religious and educational institution. The articles of the New York State incorporation extended tax-exempt status to all member societies; a concomitant IRS ruling acknowledged the deductibility of donations and bequests to ethical societies. Furthermore, AEU dues -- which for decades had comprised a flat 3 percent of each society's annual income -- were augmented by a per capita fee in the late forties. Since the institution of that "head tax," societies have more consistently kept their rolls clean of inactive members.

Tightfisted Support

In honor of the movement's 70th anniversary, the AEU in 1946 sought an additional \$20,000 from the societies to provide for the expansion of the movement -- which would include hiring a full-time field secretary -- and the establishment of an educational camp for youth. The expansion work was to be initiated over five years. The board of the St. Louis Society balked at the vagueness of the proposals, but the Society ultimately supported the expansion fund, increasing its annual pledge by \$500 to \$2,500 from 1946-50. Locally, the campaign was included in St.

³² Despite subsidies from the AEU and gratis speaking trips by Ethical leaders, the Cleveland Society never attained stability.

Louis's 60th Anniversary Fund drive. Society members contributed \$21,000 toward the local goal of \$30,000; the lion's share of the proceeds was used to retire the mortgage on Sheldon Memorial. The remainder included only enough cash to cover St. Louis's obligation for the first two years of the Five-Year Plan; the rest of St. Louis's annual pledges were drawn from the operating fund. Several times during the implementation of the AEU's Five-Year Plan, St. Louis temporarily withheld a portion of its pledge to protest the AEU's procrastination in hiring a field secretary and its use of the expansion fund to cover operating deficits. However, the edifying success of the youth camp, the Encampment for Citizenship, impelled the Society to make good its pledge.

At the start of the expansion program, the AEU adopted a clearly defined procedure for the admission of associate groups to the Union. No permanent field secretary was hired, but the Union occasionally subsidized "leaders-at-large" to assist in the formation of new societies. In addition, the Union in 1948 instituted at-large membership for residents of cities that had no ethical societies. A handful of embryonic societies was spawned during the five-year program; at St. Louis's Annual meeting in May 1949, the board president reported that delegates to the AEU assembly had had "a feeling of belonging to a forward-moving organization."

In 1949, the AEU formed a committee to devise ways of observing the movement's 75th anniversary in 1951. The committee recommended that the AEU and member societies jointly conduct a fund-raising campaign in the 1950-51 season aimed at increasing societies' pledges by 30 percent. The committee suggested that local projects be included in the drive, but that priority be given to the minimum requirements of proposed AEU projects, including a subvention fund for fledgling societies and any society in need; a graduate institute or summer school of ethics for leadership training; financial support of the Encampment for Citizenship; publication of books and organizational manuals; a fund for the work of the Religious Education Committee; and traveling lectureships.

The St. Louis board favored the proposals for a subvention fund; a fund for the Religious Education Committee; and a fund for the publication of manuals on organizing societies, Sunday Schools, and social groups. It disapproved proposals regarding publication of a book on the history of the movement; a graduate school; traveling lectureships; and support of the Encampment. In evaluating the proposal, R. Walston Chubb reviewed the AEU's track record in fulfilling the objectives of the Five-Year Plan. He noted the Union had established the at-large membership program; facilitated the attempt to form a Cleveland society; helped develop Sunday School programs through the work of the Moral Education Committee; and provided field assistance to some of the newer Societies. Trustees were not convinced of the efficacy of a centralized development program. They believed that the growth of the movement would best be served by the building up of model societies that would demonstrate the principles of liberal religious communities in their respective communities. With this in mind, the board recommended that the Union restrain its field work. The consensus of the board was that the AEU, drawing upon its experience with the Five-Year Plan, could meet its objectives by carefully administering its present revenues. The board asked the Advisory and Planning Council to evaluate the AEU proposal.

After discussing the proposal with AEU Executive Secretary Cornelius R.P. Cochrane, the Advisory and Planning Council issued its report in March 1950. The council contended that the proposed fund drive was, at least in part, an attempt to garner support for routine functions of the Union, and it questioned whether some of those functions merited increased expenditures. It called for an agreement among member societies on the priority of budget proposals; if the Union failed to reach its monetary goal, it said, friction could be avoided only if funds were diverted from one project to another according to a prior agreement. The council's evaluation of the proposals virtually paralleled the board's. The council supported the proposal to raise a fund for subventions, but it urged that such a fund be used only to provide leadership. Leadership, it said, was the crucial factor in organizing and strengthening societies; where leadership was lacking, financial assistance was wasted.

The council was cool to most of the plan. It opposed the proposal to support the Encampment with Union funds, stating that the program's directors should solicit support directly from society members and the public. It also opposed the establishment of traveling lectureships, preferring that the proposal be incorporated into the plan to provide permanent leaders who would have a more substantial impact on the movement. Likewise, it opposed the notion of establishing an academic graduate institute; in light of the limited funds available for leadership training, the council felt that the Union's emphasis should be on providing communities for on-the-job training. The council also disputed the efficacy of proposed "commissions of inquiry," noting that the plan was virtually identical to the low-cost Public Affairs program conducted in the thirties. Another proposal that failed to win over the council was the establishment of satellite groups on college campuses; the council felt that, while such a program might aid the movement's long-term prospects, the Union could ill afford to spawn youth groups at a time when nascent adult communities were struggling for survival.

With these reservations, the council recommended that the Society pledge limited support to the campaign. It proposed that the Society set its fund-raising goal at \$32,500 -- \$12,500 for the AEU projects and \$20,000 for local projects, including finding a replacement for Hynd and buying or building a community center in St. Louis County that would be served by a full-time director of activities. Should the Society fall short of its goal, trustees agreed that St. Louis would stand by that ratio, devoting 40 percent of its proceeds to the AEU. Noting that the proposed St. Louis allotment represented nearly 20 percent of the Society's budget, the council recommended that other societies similarly base their proposed contributions on membership and income levels. The board approved the council's report and sent it to the AEU as representing the Society's position on the campaign.

The St. Louis pledge, which represented no increase over the dues the Society paid during the Five-Year Plan, angered the AEU. The board eventually agreed to raise the local campaign goal to \$40,000, but it affirmed that the Society would support only those projects approved in the Advisory and Planning Council's report. By April 1951, the Society had collected pledges amounting to only \$24,550. Initially sticking with its original plan to allocate only 40 percent of its take to the AEU, the board actually reduced the Society's pledge to \$10,000 -- \$2,000 a year instead of the \$2,500 a year the Society had contributed for the previous five years. By fall, however, the board was persuaded to raise its pledge to \$3,250 to promote new societies and provide for increased travel by the executive secretary.

Without substantially increased financial support from the societies, the AEU could do little more than maintain the status quo. As per St. Louis's recommendation, it used its subvention fund primarily for leadership training. It proceeded with the production of organizational manuals, but no comprehensive history of the movement would be written for two decades. The proposed graduate school, campus satellite program, and commissions of inquiry did not materialize.

The Encampment: Initiation in Democracy

In the wake of World War II, Ethical Culture undertook to strengthen world peace by initiating youths in the ways of democracy. The Encampment for Citizenship, begun in 1946 by New York Ethical leader Algernon Black and an associate, Alice K. Pollitzer, was an intensive six-week program of lectures, discussion groups, field trips, and recreational activities. Virginia Harris, a graduate of the St. Louis Society's Sunday School and later a forceful member of the board of trustees, spoke of the Encampment as "the high point of my growing up. It was the most meaningful thing I ever did." (Interview with Virginia Harris, July 31, 1986) Through lectures on such topics as international relations, urban affairs, civil rights, war and peace, and economics, the Encampment sought "to inculcate a certain sensitivity to what being a citizen of the United States should entail." (Ibid) Speakers included economists, journalists, public servants, scientists, artists, psychologists, and sociologists. Workshops taught the youths leadership skills such as public speaking, news analysis, and organizational techniques; often, those skills were sharpened and tested by role-playing legislators, lobbyists, and labor negotiators. Field trips included visits to neighborhood settlements, human services agencies, labor union headquarters, large corporations, governmental and private agencies, migrant farm labor camps, and industrial plants. Reflecting its devotion to the principles of representative democracy, the program was theologically neutral, non-partisan, and promoted no fixed economic doctrine. Fittingly, the Encampment's admission policy was exemplarily democratic. The program included -- but was not dominated by -- Ethical Society members and their children. Participants were youths in their late teens and early twenties who came from a variety of ethnic, religious, social, and economic backgrounds. The program brought together blacks, whites, Asians, Native Americans, and Latinos; Southerners, Midwesterners, Easterners, and foreigners; and urban, rural, and small-town youths. Harris, who attended the Encampment in 1961, recalled that the interweaving of disparate social elements was a priceless element of the experience:

That was the beginning of student activism regarding race relations and voting rights. To a person, the people who went there were open to this kind of experience. We never had any racial problems. People were really high on the idea that we were in the vanguard of what was going to happen to our whole country. (Ibid.)

The Encampment's approach was more participatory than academic. By living together, playing together, and developing decision-making mechanisms, the campers explored the essential democratic virtues of tolerance and compromise. The political facts of cohabitation made real the science of politics: The students' elected government established and enforced work schedules and rules of conduct; general sessions of the campers were held to vote on issues of broad significance, such as adoption of a constitution and establishment of a curfew. Harris recalled:

The thing that was most meaningful to me was the way they organized the student governance of the Encampment. The second or third night we were there, they told us we were all supposed to go to this meeting that had to do with student government. All hundred of us packed into this auditorium, and the director got up and said, "You guys have to set up a student government," and walked off the stage. And so we all this *mob* -- created a student government, with no guidelines. We were sort of angry at first, because they had left us in a void, a vacuum. You could see certain natural leaders emerging and getting the group to accept this idea or that idea. That made a real emotional impact on me, because I thought, "If you were in the midst of a revolution, where anarchy prevails, what happens? Where does government come from?" The thought did stay with me that the way government is formed is crucial. (Ibid.)

Harris's perception of social idealism among campers was validated in a 1959 statistical study conducted by the Bureau of Applied Social Research of Columbia University:

The campers became more appreciative of our traditional civil liberties; became more tolerant of freedom for non-conformists; became stronger in defense of civil rights for minorities; became more optimistic about solving pressing social problems; felt less sense of social isolation; showed a small increase in tendency toward political action through accepted social channels; [and] implemented the philosophy of the dignity of man in the friendships they formed during the summer, irrespective of race.

(Saal D. Lesser and Charles Winick, "Direction, Salience, and Intensity of the Effects of an Intergroup Educational Experience: Attitude and Behavior Changes Attributable to the Encampment for Citizenship," reprint from a 1959 edition of *Journal of Intergroup Relations*.)

The Encampment usually was conducted at Fieldston School, a high school affiliated with the New York Society. For several years, Encampments also were conducted at the University of California at Berkeley and the Caribbean National Forest in Puerto Rico; one of the last of the Encampments was held on Navajo territory in Arizona. In addition to funding from the AEU, the project was supported by educational grants and private donations. The Encampment provided a limited number of scholarships, and various civic organizations underwrote the costs of hometown participants. Eleanor Roosevelt helped publicize the Encampment by chairing its board of sponsors from 1946 until her death in 1962; she also participated in the program by visiting with campers each summer. President Kennedy commended and encouraged the Encampment. Members of the St. Louis Society supported the Encampment by donating funds, providing local publicity, and referring potential participants to the program's administrators. More than thirty St. Louis youths took part in Encampments. The Advisory and Planning Council in 1948 recommended that St. Louis organize a Midwestern version of the Encampment, but the board pooh-poohed the proposal as overly ambitious.

Undaunted, the Y.P.A. that year raised its share of funding for a weekend conference which brought together about fifty youths from liberal religious and political groups. The gathering, dubbed "Intergroup Youth Encampment: A Preparation for Action on St. Louis Minority Problems," was held at Camp Taconic near Eureka, Missouri. Participating groups, in addition to the Y.P.A., were the Channing Club of First Unitarian Church, the Council on Intercultural Relations, the Interracial Committee of Washington University, Hillel House, and the American Veterans Committee. The stated purpose of the encampment was "to study the problems of prejudice in St. Louis, and to discuss actions and techniques by which St. Louis youth can most effectively combat those problems." (Encampment publicity flyer) Jennie Wahlert, a Society member who worked diligently toward the racial integration of the St. Louis public school system, was among the principal adult organizers.

Substandard Standard?

The quality, cost, and distribution of the AEU journal *The Standard* was a constant source of debate among the societies. Begun in 1914, *The Standard* comprised thought-provoking essays and editorials as well as book reviews and bits of news from the AEU and the separate societies; it was published monthly from October to May. The journal's name was suggested by historian and Ethical leader David Seville Muzzey for reasons he expounded in its inaugural edition:

In the "critical period" of our early history, those distressing years in which we were laboring to maintain our union at home and our honor abroad under the impotent authority of the Articles of Confederation, George Washington advocated the adoption of a strong national Constitution in the

ringing sentence: "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the honest may repair! " That sentence has inspired the name of this periodical.

There is not lurking in the name any slightest suspicion of that arrogance of finality which would claim that the views presented in these columns are the "standard" of ethics as the meter bar kept in the Observatory of Paris is the "standard" of linear measure. Our title is a rallying cry, and not a catechism.

In the Middle Ages the armies of the Italian communes went out to battle with the standard of their city streaming from the top of a mast fixed on a huge car, the carroccio, which moved in the center of the host. So in the battle of to-day, amid the clash of creeds and the confusion of moral judgments, we raise our standard. May it be an inspiration to courage, to clarity, and to candor!

(Quoted from first edition in fortieth anniversary edition, May-June 1954, Volume YCL, No. 3; p. 75)

The Ethical movement was blessed with such brilliant leaders as Muzzey, Jerome Nathanson, Henry Neumann, Horace Bridges, and W. Edwin Collier -- not to mention kingpins Adler and Elliott -- and its members were fortunate to have access to the provocative reflections of these men through *The Standard*. However, the journal's subscription level was consistently low, indicating that American ethical society members did not have much of a taste for its unabashedly scholarly content. The St. Louis board repeatedly told managing editor George O'Dell that he could hope for few new subscriptions unless he "livened up" the content and layout of the journal. When the matter arose at AEU assemblies, delegates of other societies often agreed that the publication should be recast in a more popular magazine-type format. It also was suggested that the journal might be made self-supporting if it broadened its market by soliciting more entries from outside the Leadership Fraternity. Such changes, however, would have entailed increased its fee scale and production costs, forcing the subscription price higher and threatening to further depress readership. From time to time, it was suggested that the subscription cost simply be deducted from the societies' AEU dues, thus placing every ethical society member on the mailing list, but delegates would not support the dues increase that such an extension inevitably would have forced. In 1949, the St. Louis delegation proposed that *The Standard* reduce its drain on the AEU budget by halving the frequency of publication; the assembly, however, voted not only to retain the journal's eight annual editions but also to expand its size.

The societies also cooperated in the production of books and publicity pamphlets. St. Louis supported the publication of Adler's 1933 magnum opus *An Ethical Philosophy of Life* by pledging to order substantial quantities of the book. However, when Bridges in 1937 proposed to author a history of the Ethical movement, the Society hedged its support, refusing to place an order until the book was published and its price ascertained. The Society did help underwrite the production of the AEU-Unitarian song book "*We Sing of Life*" by promising to buy a few hundred copies. It also bought reams of philosophical pamphlets written by Ethical leaders, and Hynd contributed modestly to the program by rewriting a few of his outstanding addresses for publication. Beyond those efforts, the societies tended to handle their publicity needs independently. St. Louis opted to take part in a nationwide public relations campaign the AEU proposed in 1938, but the program foundered when Chicago and Philadelphia -- which already had funded local publicity campaigns -- declined to take part. The New York Society proceeded with its program, which included an analysis of membership needs and fund-raising methods as well as the development of propaganda; St. Louis piggybacked on the New York program.

The Greater Community

The Ethical Society is fundamentally a spiritual greenhouse, an institution for the growth and sustenance of truth seekers. For Adler and Sheldon, this greenhouse was trivial if it did not cultivate compassion. They believed that the quest for human fulfillment necessarily entails works of charity and active intervention in the social and political structures of the larger community. After giving the Self-Culture Halls Association a life of its own, however, the St. Louis Society was disinclined to undertake social service communally; its strong-willed members preferred to venture beyond the greenhouse as solitary citizens. The community took great pride in the achievements of its activist members, among them Edna Gellhorn, a founder and guiding spirit of the League of Women Voters; Jennie Wahlert, a solicitous educator devoted to the racial integration of St. Louis's public schools; and Harold Hanke and R. Walston Chubb, attorneys who fought diligently for civil rights and the integrity of church-state separation. The desire to band together in assessing and addressing the needs of the city, the nation, and the world has arisen only

sporadically. When it has taken hold, the Society has commonly evaluated ethical issues and opened the door to the intellectual and aesthetic nurturance of its greenhouse.

Taking a Stand on Taking Stands

Throughout the first half of its history, the Ethical Society, as a body, refrained from taking sides on ethical issues. Leaders and members alike were free to voice strong opinions, but no position was sanctioned as a "party line." When the American Neutrality League asked the Board of Trustees to endorse its anti-war stand in 1915, the board passed a resolution declaring that it would not commit the Society to any public stands, nor would it even bring such requests as the ANL's before the membership. The prevailing fear was that sanctioned stands, like the moral mandates of a traditional church, would tend to make dissenters feel disloyal. The community would brook no compromise of that most cherished of values, free thought.

After World War I, however, the Society began to rethink its anti-position position. In the face of international tensions and economic disaster, neutrality smacked of timidity and equivocation. With the specter of ecclesiastical hovering over the deliberations, the community tentatively decided that certain positions command the assent of all ethical people. Accordingly, the membership in 1934 ratified an innocuous disarmament resolution proposed by the Women's Club of Philadelphia. The resolution expressed opposition to war and support of all movements and legislation for the advancement of peace among the peoples of the world. A telegram expressing the kernel of the resolution was sent to President Roosevelt.

Other ethical societies also were questioning the movement's traditional neutrality. At the 1934 assembly, the AEU proposed to establish a Public Affairs Committee that would be authorized to make pronouncements on ethical issues. According to the proposal, the committee would include all recognized Ethical leaders and at least one lay representative of each society. Societies would be free to abstain from the program, and pronouncements would state exactly which societies had given their endorsement. In the St. Louis Society, R. Walston Chubb headed up a 10-member committee to study the proposal. At the committee's recommendation, the membership rejected the AEU proposal as stated and instead supported the committee's more democratic formula.

The revised proposal placed principal emphasis on the educational potential of a public affairs program -- not on the intrinsic usefulness of conclusions. It was modeled on the policy-making program of the National League of Women Voters, under which no position is actively supported until the membership has given it thorough consideration. In its report, the local committee noted that communal, in-depth study of such issues as foreign policy, industrial law, and government aid would further the Society's traditional aim of fostering enlightened decision-making. It recognized the program's hazards -- the erection of dogmas, erosion of the societies' autonomy, and the alienation of dissenters -- but expressed confidence they could be avoided with institutional safeguards. According to the proposal, the Public Affairs Committee would set the national agenda for discussion, then tabulate and publicize the resulting conclusions. It would be bound to publicize minority opinions along with its pronouncements. No Society member -- and no member Society -- would be bound to uphold the program's conclusions. Positions would be statements of support for governmental or social action -- not theoretical convictions. Only issues of paramount ethical importance would be studied. To guard against clericalism, the role of the Fraternity of Leaders would be limited to deciding whether issues proposed for study met that criterion; otherwise, leaders would carry no more weight than other Society members.

With the support of the membership, the committee drafted a by-law for presentation at the 1935 annual assembly. In addition to formalizing the policies outlined above, the proposed by-law set the terms of committee service and voting rights. The national committee would be composed of one representative of each participating society. These delegates would be charged with overseeing local study programs, and no delegate could enter a vote until the society he or she represented had studied the issue for at least a year and had taken a poll. In cases in which the committee's vote was not unanimous, any delegate could demand that the vote be weighted according to membership totals; the votes of a particular society could be cast as a block or divided according to the results of a local poll. Each society would have the right to abstain from voting on an issue, and only propositions on which a majority of the societies voted could be announced as representative of the AEU. Positions would be decided by a simple majority. The Public Affairs Committee would meet once a year at the annual AEU convention. At a special meeting in October 1935, the membership of the St. Louis Society ratified the proposed by-law and asked that it be presented at the convention.

The national Public Affairs Committee, with R. Walston Chubb as chairman, was established at the convention. The other societies accepted St. Louis's proposal that the program be treated as an educational exercise, with the national

committee setting an agenda for study, but policies regarding representation and voting were left indefinite. Some societies were willing to authorize their boards of trustees or executive committees to take stands on behalf of the membership, but the St. Louis Society, at a membership meeting in January 1936, voted that only a poll open to the entire membership could determine its stand. However, the membership did authorize the board to appoint the Society's delegates to the national committee.

The board appointed a nine-member local Public Affairs Committee charged with initiating discussion groups to study national proposals. According to the procedure adopted by the membership, the conclusions of the study groups would be reported to the local committee, which would then put the proposals to a vote of the membership. The St. Louis delegate would be bound to vote the membership's conclusions in votes of the national committee.

In 1936, the AEU Public Affairs Committee instructed the societies to study New Deal unemployment and relief programs, American foreign policy, and a proposal to establish a register of conscientious objectors in the Ethical movement. In St. Louis, two groups formed to evaluate the efficacy of the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal agency that put millions of Americans to work building schools, roads, sewer systems, and other public facilities; one group focused on W.P.A. projects employing men, the other on projects employing women. Members of the study groups investigated W.P.A. projects in St. Louis and St. Louis County, interviewing workers and supervisors, visiting work sites, and studying building reports. At a membership meeting in October 1936, the study groups delivered a glowing report on the program. The investigators said the workers' "attitude toward life and toward their government is greatly improved by the feeling that they can perform work useful to the community," and declared that the material and moral benefits of the program fully justified the budget deficits it helped create. (minutes, October 1936) The membership unanimously ratified the approbation and instructed its delegate to the national committee to vote accordingly. A group formed to study American foreign policy reported that its investigation of trade barriers, adherence to the World Court, and membership in the League of Nations resulted in no position "which would clearly warrant the support of ethically minded people"; it faulted the national committee for failing to restrict the scope of the issue. Also at that meeting, the membership considered the proposed register for conscientious objectors, which would have incorporated the following declaration:

I, the undersigned member of the _____ Society for Ethical Culture, hereby record my opposition to any and all kinds of war. Out of the convictions developed by membership in the Society, and with due respect to the convictions of those fellow members who give a different interpretation to the Society's principles, I affirm my sense that the slaying of human beings in war, even in war of defense, is morally wrong, and I further affirm that for my own part I will in no way whatever assist knowingly the waging of any war that may come. I am aware that in time of war those who stand by a declaration like this will suffer the consequences; but I am making this considered statement now because conscience impels me.

The membership unanimously voted down the proposal. As a compromise, those present unanimously declared their sympathy with efforts to secure official recognition of conscientious objectors regardless of religious affiliation. Initially, few societies shared St. Louis's enthusiasm for the Public Affairs project. At the 1936 assembly, only St. Louis and Philadelphia provided comprehensive reports on their in-house studies. Brooklyn's public affairs committee had undertaken an agenda of its own, and Chicago, New York, and Westchester deferred their reports. On the national level, the program sputtered. Algernon Black of the New York Society attempted to win unified support for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War; the national Public Affairs Committee distributed a proposed resolution on the issue early in 1937, but no consensus was reached. The local Public Affairs Committee remained active for three or four years, but involvement in what had now become an unofficial debate program waxed and waned. Society subgroups such as the United Nations Discussion Group, the Men's Club, and the Young People's Association regularly discussed public issues, but few attempts were made to reach or publicize firm conclusions.

In 1947, Black asked the societies to ratify a "Declaration of Human Rights and Responsibilities" he had drafted. The declaration was an idealistic statement of universal goals at the personal, community, national, and international levels. For the most part, it was radical only to the extent that the principles enunciated in the U.S. Bill of Rights represented a condemnation of the authoritarianism prevailing throughout the globe. However, it included distinctively liberal components: In addition to rights traditionally recognized in America, such as freedom of speech and religion and equal protection under the law, it advocated progressive principles such as the right to a guaranteed living wage and "a social minimum" of housing, medical care, and education; the right to plan parenthood and obtain divorce; and the right of labor unions to strike. At the global level, it would recognize the right of all nations to participate in a federation for the settlement of disputes and protection from aggression, as well as the right of access to raw materials, credits, and markets without religious, ideological, or cultural prejudice. The

document enumerated the responsibilities that necessarily correlate with each stated right; for example, the right to a living wage and social security carries the responsibility "for contributing at least as much productivity. as a worker as one demands as a consumer," and the right of nations to self-government implies the responsibility of political subgroups to vigorously employ the tools of democracy. Reflecting the terror of the dawning Nuclear Age, the document declared that "whether men achieve ... unity or are divided into destructive conflict against one another, whether they enjoy the fruits of nature and of human effort or destroy one another, is the basic ethical problem of our time." (Draft of "Declaration of Human Rights and Responsibilities," by Algernon D. Black, May 1947.) St. Louisans were less than enthusiastic about the declaration. Copies of the draft were distributed to trustees and other "representative members" of the Society at the beginning of the summer. After discussing the declaration at length at its first meeting in the 1947-48 season, the board voted to "tactfully reject" the proposal. In its response, the board suggested that the AEU henceforth submit study questions -- rather than prepared statements -- to the member societies.

The AEU revived the Public Affairs Committee in 1948. At the request of the national committee, the St. Louis membership approved a by-law re-establishing a local committee to oversee the study of public issues and to report its conclusions and recommendations to the board. As before, the board would submit proposed resolutions to the membership before instructing its delegate to the national committee. (minutes, May 1949) In its first year, the reconstituted AEU committee asked the societies to evaluate three resolutions supporting the United Nations and federal aid to public education. This time, no groups were formed explicitly to examine the proposals, but the U.N. resolutions -- which called for international adherence to the United Nations as a step toward world federalism -- were studied in depth by the Society's U.N. Discussion Group and were made the topic of discussion at a community dinner. The membership ultimately approved locally drafted versions of the resolutions, which were later adopted in substance at the AEU assembly. This process of confirming resolutions would be invoked frequently in the decades to come, but members of the St. Louis Society generally minimize the practice: The tiny AEU wields little clout in the public arena, and its freethinking members are hardly inclined to adopt moral convictions simply because a majority of their confreres has sanctioned them.

Amid the efforts to establish a national mechanism for making ethical pronouncements, the board grew ambivalent over its own policy of neutrality. When the Social Hygiene Association in December 1937 requested the board's endorsement of an ordinance that would reorganize St. Louis's venereal disease treatment program, the board's reply reaffirmed that it did not have "the authority to ... take any definite action which would commit the society as a whole on any public question." However, the board hedged on that policy when New York's John Lovejoy Elliott in 1938 asked the societies to support a congressional bill raising the intake limit on German refugees. Again, the board refused to commit the Society to a firm stand, but it did agree to inform the membership of Elliott's letter-writing campaign.

Church-state separation, the one controversial principle championed by virtually all Society members, is the only issue on which the board readily suspended its neutrality. In 1948, the board applauded the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that children could not be released from compulsory secular education to attend classes in religious instruction. The board sent a telegram to New York leader V.T. Thayer congratulating him on his lobbying efforts in the legal battle. On the local scene, board president Harold Hanke, an attorney, was authorized to write the St. Louis Board of Education commending a committee recommendation that the district discontinue its released-time program in light of the ruling. The letter stated the Society "is deeply concerned ... in the problems of moral instruction of children but shares the view of many other religious organizations that these problems cannot be met by the released time plan, or any other use of the public school system to further sectarian instruction." (letter from Harold Hanke to Mervyn E. Wiethaupt, secretary of the Board of Education of St. Louis, dated April 12, 1948) At the Board of Education meeting held to air the issue, Hanke forcefully conveyed the Society's opposition to the released-time program. (On the advice of its legal counsel, the school board discontinued the program.) Likewise, when New York's Jerome Nathanson in 1950 requested support for a congressional bill barring private schools from receiving federal financial assistance, the board swiftly complied with letters to congressional representatives and the House Committee on Labor and Education.

Racial Integration: A Call to Integrity

The community may have had difficulty reaching a consensus on issues facing Congress and the United Nations, but the weightiest ethical issue it tackled was in its own home: The question of admitting blacks to unqualified membership, a controversy that had been shunted for decades, finally was answered in the forties. The Society's by-laws never explicitly excluded blacks, but the community was less than hospitable to early black applicants. Ironically, one of the Society's founders had struck a powerful blow for civil rights: In 1916, Charles Nagel, the

former White House cabinet member in whose offices the nascent community held organizational meetings, was one of four attorneys who fought for -- and secured -- a temporary federal restraining order preventing enforcement of St. Louis's recently adopted residential segregation ordinance.³³ That ardor for equality was not in evidence in 1921, when the board decided not to invite a newly accepted black member to the annual dinner for inductees. (minutes, May 17, 1921) At that meeting, the board voted that "this question of the status of negro members be thoroughly gone into at some future meeting of the [Executive] Committee."

The notation "colored" beneath one of the names in a list of new members indicates at least one more black joined the Society in that decade, but there is no evidence that the question was "thoroughly gone into" in those years. So, while blacks were welcome at the Society's lectures and concerts, their admissibility as members remained dubious. The Society's welcome was untested in the thirties and early forties: Several blacks regularly attended platform services, but apparently none applied for membership. The practical question confronting the community was whether to make it known that blacks would be welcome to join the Society and its Sunday School.

Amid the collective postwar sigh of relief, the denial of civil rights to millions of black Americans finally pricked the nation's conscience. Blacks who had fought in the war (in segregated platoons) were less accepting of second-class status in the nation for which they had risked their lives; the assertiveness of these veterans gradually spread through their communities. In the Ethical Society, the "Negro problem" had become a frequent topic of lectures and discussions. In 1939, a Sunday School assembly in honor of Abraham Lincoln was combined with an observation of the Urban League's twentieth anniversary; the league's secretary spoke at the assembly, the theme of which was "Helping Our Negro Neighbors." In the fall of 1944, the Adult Discussion Group took up the question of "What the Negro Wants." Novelist Fannie Cook, author-journalist Carey McWilliams, and University of Chicago professor Allison Davis advocated black equality in platform addresses. Hynd, going against the tenor of the times, invited NAACP director Walter White and other blacks to speak at Ethical services; on one such occasion, the board asked that the speaker not be "billed as a negro and so imply that we were trading on the racial issue." (minutes, November 1944)

The Society was not all talk: In the manner of Walter L. Sheldon -- who instituted the Colored People's Self-Improvement Federation as a corollary to the Self-Culture Clubs -- the Society exhibited a certain noblesse oblige toward the black community. Though ordinarily stingy about rental fees, the board several times granted free use of Sheldon Memorial for black forums conducted by the YMCA and the Works Progress Administration. And, in authorizing the president in 1943 to hire a new janitor, the board asked him to bear in mind "the possibility of colored help or perhaps a Japanese American." (minutes, September 1943) Hynd and several Society members served on the board of the Urban League; and a 1941 article in the community's monthly bulletin noted that Hynd was "cooperating with Bishop Scarlett in seeking to reduce the discriminations against the Negro population in the National Defense program. Do you know that the Negro population is likely to be excluded almost entirely from the benefits accruing from the building and industrial programs for National Defense in Saint Louis and vicinity? The situation may become very serious." (News Notes, February 1941, Vol. 111, No. 6)

As progressive St. Louis churches slowly began to encourage integration, the Society's board cautiously tested the members' openness to the forthright admission of blacks. In February 1945, on a recommendation of the Advisory and Planning Council, the board authorized the Adult Discussion Group to hold a dinner meeting to which blacks would be invited and at which a black would speak; the council hoped the event would elicit white members' attitudes toward mingling with blacks. In May, the council formally recommended that blacks be invited to membership in the Society with full rights and privileges, and that the Membership Committee be informed the policy was to take effect immediately. Most trustees favored the proposed policy but were reluctant to antagonize the few sharp dissenters. The recommendation was tabled until the June meeting, when the board held its first on-the-record debate on the matter. One trustee asked the board to bear in mind "the attitude of the older members" -- i.e., hostility to integration -- but others noted that prospective membership applicants "might decide adversely, feeling that discrimination indicated a discrepancy between the professed and the actual practice." (minutes, June 1945) The question was not resolved, but the trustees agreed to resume the discussion in the fall. They did not.

The issue was brought to a head in December, when a black woman named Mabel Curtis asked to send her twin 10-year-old sons, Robert B. and Thomas A. Curtis, to the Sunday School. A "lengthy and spirited discussion" of the

³³ The injunction was made permanent in 1918 after the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a similar ordinance in Louisville. Source: James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1981), p. 439

request was held at the December board meeting. Board president Henry Putzel, who felt passionately that the Society was ethically obliged to welcome the boys, vacated the chair to symbolically release himself from the duty of impartial mediation. It was noted -- for the first time -- that a proposal to admit blacks to the school previously had been dropped after meeting with resistance from teachers. Some board members contended that sentiments had changed substantially since blacks last expressed interest in the school; others, however, held that the retention of state segregation laws³⁴ indicated Missourians were not prepared to accept integration. They warned that the admission of blacks likely would spur resignations from membership and withdrawals from the Sunday School. While the issue no doubt challenged the trustees' personal readiness to associate more closely with blacks, opponents of admission simply voiced concern that the membership was not prepared for such a change. On the other side of the issue, several trustees saw the refusal to admit blacks as an unjustifiable violation of basic ethical principles; unless the policy was changed, they warned, the Society would be rightly branded as hypocritical. Hynd timidly sat out the controversy, assuring the board that he would abide by its decision. Finally, agreeing that setting a policy unilaterally could incite more ill will than the policy itself, the board asked its Sunday School liaison to investigate the attitudes of parents and teachers.

The PTA likewise dragged its feet. Jennie Wahlert, the Sunday School liaison, reported in May that "the question had been discussed informally with the teachers but should have further consideration." (minutes, May 1946) The PTA did not place discussion of the issue on its agenda until February 1947 -- 14 months after the board requested its input. The board, meanwhile, held another "lengthy discussion" on the issue in December 1946, agreeing that "the question should be carefully studied and that a program of education should be worked out whereby outstanding negroes are invited to address various groups and meetings of the society." (minutes, December 1946) In February 1947, the PTA reported to the board the results of its poll: 24 parents favored the admission of black pupils, while six were opposed; among teachers, seven were favorable and two opposed. Having debated the issue for two full years and having satisfied its obligation to consult parents and teachers, the board finally voted that "that it be the policy of the Board to admit to membership in the Ethical Society and to the Sunday School persons regardless of race, creed, color or national origin." (minutes, February 1947)

A few Society members resigned over the policy, but otherwise it had no dramatic effect. The community made no special effort to solicit black membership applicants. In the forties and fifties, only a handful of blacks joined the Society, but those who sought active roles found their contributions -- as trustees, Sunday School teachers, and, in one case, as AEU representative -- were welcomed.

Despite its open-door policy, the Society, as a body, was slow to support racial equality in the larger community. In 1947, the board sent a representative to the Race Relations Institute. (minutes, January 1947) But when asked in 1948 to support pending equal-rights legislation, the board invoked its traditional neutrality. (minutes, June 1948) Likewise, in 1950 the board declined to reply to a questionnaire from the Missouri Association for Social Welfare soliciting the Society's attitude toward the admission of blacks to state-supported colleges. (minutes, June 1950 [second meeting of month]) In the following decades, however, Hynd's successor and numerous Society members were to take decisive action in the civil rights movement.

(In a soul-searching commemoration of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., the Society in 1986 resurrected its squabble over the admission of blacks. An excerpt from King's letter from Birmingham Jail, in which he inveighed against "moderate" whites who would govern the pace of change, was juxtaposed with a dramatization of the board's deliberations. Modern dances by a black member and her daughter, poignantly conveying both rejection and acceptance, were included in the service. Underscoring the challenge to welcome contemporary pariahs, the observation concluded with the submission of membership applications by actors portraying an ex-convict, a homosexual, a drug addict, and a person with AIDS. The commemoration was re-enacted at the AEU assembly held later that year in St. Louis. Thomas Curtis, whose family's application to the Sunday School had

³⁴ In 1938, the U.S. Supreme Court, in chipping away at the precedential "separate but equal" principle of segregated schooling, ordered a black admitted to the University of Missouri law school because no black law school existed in the state. Not until the 1954 case of *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* did the court unqualifiedly declare educational segregation unconstitutional.

forced the issue, attended the second event at the Society's invitation. Harold Hanke, who presided over the board in its concluding deliberations in 1947, also was honored.)³⁵

Throwing Open the Doors

In addition to conducting in-house discussions -- in the Adult Discussion Group, at community dinners, at question-and-answer periods in platform services, and at evening forums in the auditorium - the Society continued to experiment with public service programs.

The Society marked its fiftieth anniversary by hosting an AEU convention and sponsoring a single large-scale public forum on the social changes indicated by the Great Depression. The meeting, held November 27, 1936, was titled "What Changes Are Required for Social Reconstruction?" The keynote speaker was Paul Kellog, editor of *Survey Graphic*. Alexander S. Langsdorf, dean of the schools of engineering and architecture at Washington University and president of the Society's board of trustees, presided over a panel discussion that included J. Lionberger Davis, president of Security National Bank, who represented the business community; Mary Ryder, vice president of Central Trade and Labor Union, representing labor; Robert D. Kohn, past president of both the American Institute of Architects and the Construction League of the United States, representing technical professions; Isidor Loeb, dean of the Washington University School of Law, representing government; Mark McCloskey, director of the National Youth Administration of New York City, representing education; and Horace J. Bridges, leader of the Chicago Ethical Society, representing religion.

In 1935, Percival Chubb had proposed a series of discussions be arranged as the first step toward founding a "People's School of Politics and Civics" in preparation for the 1936 presidential election. The proposal died in the water. When the community forum idea again arose in 1937, Hynd agreed to chair a committee to investigate the

³⁵ An edifying footnote attends this story. Robert Byrd Curtis, one of the first two blacks to graduate from the Society's Sunday School, grew to become one of St. Louis's most vocal and controversial civil rights activists. In 1959, while a law student at Washington University, Curtis and two black companions were arrested and convicted of trespassing when they attempted to eat at Santords, a restaurant near the university. Their convictions in University City court were overturned on appeal, but the experience apparently strengthened the resolve Curtis's mother had instilled in him. A few years later, while serving in the Army at Fort Hood, Texas, he was involved in sit-ins that led to a ruling that military police could not be used to enforce local segregation policies. After beginning his law practice in 1962, Curtis became chairman of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality). In 1963, CORE launched a campaign to urge banks to hire more black employees. After a sit-in at the Jefferson Bank and Trust Co., Curtis and eight others were found guilty of violating a circuit court restraining order. The heaviest sentences -- nine months in jail and a \$ 1,000 fine each -- went to Curtis and William L. Clay, who later became a U.S. Congressman. Curtis served as an assistant attorney general while his appeal was pending but was forced to resign the post to serve four months of his sentence. The Jefferson Bank case stirred tremendous controversy in St. Louis and is considered a signal confrontation in the local fight for economic equality. At a memorial service for Curtis, the Reverend Buck Jones noted that blacks who work "in banking in St. Louis, at Southwestern Bell, in the department stores, and elsewhere, should not forget the contribution of Robert Byrd Curtis." (St. Louis American, April 24-30, 1986)

In 1968, Curtis ran for the Democratic nomination for governor to protest the actions of incumbent Governor Warren E. Hearnes, who had quickly sent National Guard troops into Kansas City to quell the riots that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Curtis charged that the Guard had acted in a brutal, repressive manner. He also criticized Hearnes for failing to sponsor a state open-housing law and failing to appoint blacks to high government positions. In addition, he accused Hearnes of attempting to gerrymander the First Congressional District in North St. Louis to undercut the black vote. Curtis ran a distant second in a field of three.

In 1969 and 1970, Curtis served as a staff attorney for the Legal Aid Society of St. Louis and St. Louis County. His tenure there was a rocky one. His penchant for defending militant civil rights activists such as Percy Green, and his volunteer position as legal adviser to ACTION (Action Committee to Increase Opportunities for Negroes), a splinter group of CORE, cost Legal Aid \$76,000 in funding from St. Louis County and the United Fund. Curtis resigned from the agency after a year and a half, and for two years directed the Newark Legal Services Corporation of New Jersey. He then returned to Missouri, where he served as a regional attorney for the St. Louis and Kansas City offices of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission until his death in 1986.

possible use of Sheldon Memorial for a series of public meetings. While interviewing the directors of social welfare agencies about participating in the series, Hynd learned that the Adult Education Council had mapped out a series of lunchtime forums to be held in East St. Louis from January through March of 1938. Borrowing on the Council's organizational efforts, Hynd proposed that the Society sponsor a series of corresponding evening meetings at which the same speakers would address the public on this side of the river. The board agreed to finance the program from its speakers' fund, and Society subgroups provided publicity and hospitality services. No admission fees were charged, but collections were taken to offset costs. At the first forum on January 14, 1938, Elizabeth P. MacCallurn discussed, "Partition of Palestine: Betrayal or Solution?" On February 11, Maxwell S. Stewart, associate editor of *The Nation*, spoke on, "Security or the Dole?" At the final meeting in the series on March 11, Walter Laves, secretary of the Chicago chapter of the League of Nations Association, spoke on "Can America Remain Neutral in Another World War?" The meetings drew as many as 150 people per evening, but the board was dissatisfied. When a board member proposed that the Society independently conduct a similar series in the 1938-39 season, the consensus was that public interest did not warrant the effort.

In addition to the series based on the Adult Education Council's program, the Society in 1938 co-sponsored a daylong conference on the merit system in civil service with the St. Louis chapter of the League of Women Voters. Held on February 25, the conference included morning, afternoon and evening sessions. At the evening session, David L. Robinson, associate director of the Public Administration Service in Chicago, spoke on "What the Merit System Can Do for Missouri." The following year, the groups collaborated in presenting a similar daylong conference, this time on housing. Hynd and league president Jeanne Blythe presided over the February 13 conference, which presented a variety of perspectives on the problem of St. Louis's decaying slums and the use of federal subsidies. The program included an open discussion of labor problems and construction costs. Speakers represented the St. Louis Health Department, the City Planning Commission, the St. Louis Housing Association, the St. Louis Real Estate Exchange, and the St. Louis Foundation for Neighborhood Improvement. Attendance at the three sessions ranged from one hundred to two hundred.

The Adult Discussion Group, under the leadership of Leslie D. "Mac" McIntyre, attempted in 1944 to launch a "Freedom Forum" in which social issues would be publically explored. Using a \$100 allotment from the Prather Fund, the group hired a name speaker for an October 1 forum on the Missouri Valley Authority. The lecture-discussion drew more than a hundred people, but, despite publicity efforts, few non-Society members attended. McIntyre envisaged a series of highly publicized forums which would feature unpaid speakers and be open to the public free of charge, but the dream -- like its predecessors -- never materialized. Instead, the discussion group presented, in addition to its Sunday morning sessions, periodic in-house dinner discussions.

Similarly, the Young People's Association, with financial backing from the board, conducted a conference titled "Youth Faces the Post-War World" in April 1945. The lauded conference, modeled after one the New York Society had sponsored, included forums on "The World Youth is Facing," "Finding a Job in Tomorrow's Economy," and "Overcoming Prejudice." The featured speakers were Edgar C. Taylor, headmaster of the Taylor School for Boys; Arno J. Haack, executive secretary of the Washington University branch of the YMCA-YWCA; and Francis P. Chisholm, professor of English at Stephens College. Leader-in-training William Hammond trained Y.P.A. members to serve as leaders of small-group discussions. The symposiums, held on three consecutive Sunday afternoons, were open to college students and high school juniors and seniors.

Hynd suggested that the Society observe its 60th anniversary in 1946 with a Midwestern version of a recent New York conference on "the Scientific Spirit and Democratic Faith." As an alternative, he proposed a daylong institute of religions to which ministers, rabbis, and priests would be invited. The proposals did not get off the ground. The Society belatedly observed the anniversary by hosting the AEU assembly in 1947. The conference included two public lectures: On May 16, Emily Taft Douglas, a former Illinois representative to the U.S. Congress, spoke on "Women in National and International Affairs"; the next day, V.T. Thayer of New York's Ethical Culture Schools presented an address on "Religious Freedom and Public Education."

A Civic Institution

The Chamber Music Concerts the Society began presenting in the 1930-31 season quickly became a St. Louis institution. A string quartet under the direction of Max Steindel, solo cellist and personnel manager of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, provided most of the performances in the thirties and early forties. Steindel's ensemble was augmented by local instrumental and vocal soloists, including Ethical Society organist Florence Jewett and soprano Helen Traubel Carpenter, a church choir singer who later embarked on a distinguished operatic career. A series subscription -- two tickets to each of three concerts -- cost \$5. The three-concert series were designed to provide an

education in music history: The 1933-34, series, for instance, contrasted Classicism, Romanticism, and Impressionism; concerts in the 1934-35 series gave listeners a taste of Russian, English, and Spanish composition styles; and the 1936-37 season provided an overview of Beethoven's maturation as a chamber music composer. To help concertgoers cultivate a discerning ear, program notes provided background on musical trends and the distinctive contributions of noted composers. Countless newspaper reviews praised the Steindel Ensemble,³⁶ which coalesced via these performances, and congratulated the Society on filling a void in the city's cultural life. Praises also abounded for Sheldon Memorial, which musicians and concertgoers alike hailed as one of the nation's most acoustically excellent music halls. (Unfortunately, the hall also was renowned for its matchlessly hard seats.) The stellar performances and glowing reviews belied an ongoing struggle to keep the series alive. After the Society absorbed deficits on the 1932-33 and 1934-35 series, the board questioned whether the program could feasibly be continued. The Music Committee secured enough guarantors --mostly civic boosters from outside the Society -- to win the board's go-ahead for the 1935-36 series, but it was put on notice that the series would be the last if it did not pay for itself. Fortunately, the series brought in enough proceeds to allow the Music Committee to reimburse the Society for the debts it had carried. Percival Chubb, a steadfast supporter of the series, braced organizers' hopes that the program would find sure footing as the public acquired a taste for the music:

Chamber Music has been the Cinderella of the musical family. She was once in high favor among the courtly aristocrats in Europe, who set the great composers to catering for them in their small music halls. But she has not attracted the populace ...

Happily, the younger generation is being educated by [the increasing vogue of symphony concerts] -- witness our Students' Philharmonic Concerts. But there is a difference. They present a spectacle, including the engaging figures of great soloists. Orchestras add a dramatic interest. How different these quiet, undemonstrative little ensembles! Besides, the music is different. It is pure music, whereas much of the symphony music is descriptive program music; the pieces often have literary titles which give their themes a structure -- for instance, "Romeo and Juliet" and "Midsummer Night's Dream." But education is making headway! Young people are being educated in our Music Settlements. We have our Community Music Schools³⁷ here in St. Louis; and our Concert Committee has been liberal in supplying their best pupils with tickets to our concerts ... (Undated handwritten notes, apparently in preparation for a promotional talk prior to the 1939-40 series)

The Music Committee in the thirties was headed up by Rudolph Schmitz, founder of the program. Schmitz, a longtime Society member who had served on the board from 1903-19, so adored chamber music that he briefly resigned from the Society in protest when organ music replaced string quartets as the staple of the platform service. Schmitz's passion for fine music often conflicted with the board's pragmatism. Anguished by the number of seats that sat vacant during outstanding performances, he gave complimentary tickets to public schools for distribution to exceptional music students. He wanted to give still more tickets to private schools and symphony musicians, but the board, concerned that extensive giveaways would hamper ticket sales, checked his generosity. The board also curbed Schmitz's penchant for booking costly soloists. But Schmitz was less than conciliatory. For the sake of music lovers and musicians alike, he regularly proposed expanding the number of concerts offered per season. Much to his chagrin, the board regularly turned him down. The conflict came to a head when Schmitz proposed to arrange a six-concert series for the 1939-40 season. The board referred the proposal to the full Music Committee -- which Schmitz himself was disinclined to consult -- for a recommendation. The Music Committee voted down the proposal as financially unfeasible. Schmitz, true to form, resigned the chairmanship in protest. He soon attempted to retract his resignation, but the board, wearied of his recalcitrance, insisted on accepting it. Schmitz served out the season as chairman. In May 1939, the board named him "honorary chairman" of the program but took pains to ensure that authority to sign contracts be held solely by Schmitz's successor, Jules Bebie. Despite the strained feelings, the Music Committee was anxious to assure Schmitz that the Society deeply appreciated his initiation and -- for ten years -- direction of the program. In an ironic tribute to him, the committee added a fourth concert to the 1939-40 series at no extra cost to season-ticket holders.³⁸ Bebie headed up the Music Committee for three seasons, Jennie

³⁶ In the course of personnel changes, the ensemble went by the names Guidi-Steindel Quartet, Farbman-Steindel Quartet, the St. Louis String Quartet, and finally the St. Louis Ensemble.

³⁷ A forerunner of the St. Louis Conservatory and Schools for the Arts (CASA).

³⁸ Using a portion of the proceeds from that series, the committee gave Schmitz a set of classical recordings as a token of gratitude. The tribute came none too soon: Schmitz died in 1941 at the age of 89. The first concert of the 1941-42 season was dedicated to his memory, as was the last concert of the 1949-50 season -- the series' twentieth.

Wahlert for one. From 1943 into the fifties, the program was directed by J.G.W. Schoenthaler, an accomplished musician and chamber music aficionado who readily cooperated with the board.

Appointing the chairman was not the only authority the board exercised over the Music Committee. In its efforts to make the concert series a going concern, the board in 1937 placed the sale and distribution of tickets into the hands of the Entertainment Committee, which oversaw the Society's social and fund-raising events. It also persuaded the Music Committee to contribute the slim proceeds from the concerts directly to the Society instead of unilaterally determining their use for special platform music; naturally, the committee retained seed money for the ensuing season. Perturbed by the committee's assumption that the concerts were the inevitable highlight of the Society's calendar, the board insisted that the committee clear proposed dates with the Organization Committee to avoid precluding other Society events. And, prompted by occasional notes of criticism in concert reviews, the board also demanded that the committee more closely supervise the preparation of participating local musicians. At the same time, however, the board consistently supported the program. Once the reputation of the Chamber Music Concerts was established, trustees adopted a wholehearted commitment to maintaining the program's viability. The board continued to insist that the concerts pay for themselves which they usually did -- but it regarded the program principally as a community service, not a fundraising device. The board encouraged Society members to volunteer for the enormous amount of work the concerts required. It also drew the community into the administration of the program; beginning in 1949, it permitted non-Society members to serve on the Music Committee, demanding only that Society members predominate.

Under the supervision of the Entertainment Committee, ticket sales hit a record high in the 1939-40 season. Buoyed by the success of the series, the Music Committee continued the four-concert format for several years. In the 1942-43 season, however, the board had to save the committee from a deficit by reducing the Society's rental fee and appealing for support from the membership. Consequently, the 1943-44 series was reduced to three concerts; that series turned a tidy profit, and the three-concert format was retained for the next fifteen seasons.³⁹

A twist of fate pushed the music series to new heights of quality in the 1944-45 season. The St. Louis Ensemble, which had been booked for all three concerts, backed out of two of them because of scheduling conflicts. The Music Committee, forced to reach beyond the city limits to fill out the season, booked the Philharmonic String Quartet of Chicago for the open dates. The cost of the Chicago quartet drove the series into the red, but public response to the guests was more than encouraging. With its limited funds, the committee scaled back the 1945-46 season to two concerts but booked out-of-town artists - the Chicago quartet and Toronto's Hart House Quartet -- for both. These touring ensembles proved such a strong draw that local musicians were entirely eased out of the program by 1948. In 1947, the Society introduced to St. Louis the famed Paganini Quartet,⁴⁰ which returned frequently to Sheldon Memorial. In the ensuing years, the Society brought in the Budapest, Italian, Pascal, and Julliard string quartets, among many others. The Chamber Music Concerts brought the Society high regard in the St. Louis community. Among music lovers, the name Ethical Society was forever associated with memorable aesthetic experiences. Conscious that many members -- and potential members -- first encountered the Society via the concerts, the community subtly noted that its message could be heard in the strains of Schumann and Strauss. Many of the series' program booklets carried this foreword:

Across the stage of the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan appears in large letters the legend:

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF WORLD FRIENDSHIP
THROUGH THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF THE ARTS

In this spirit, these concerts are sponsored by the Ethical Society of St. Louis, which believes that religious dedication may be tested by what men do for one another on this earth.

³⁹ Using a portion of the proceeds from that series, the committee gave Schmitz a set of classical recordings as a token of gratitude. The tribute came none too soon: Schmitz died in 1941 at the age of 89. The first concert of the 1941-42 season was dedicated to his memory, as was the last concert of the 1949-50 season -- the series' twentieth.

⁴⁰ The Paganini Quartet of San Francisco was billed as the "all-Stradivarius Quartet." All of its instruments were created by the renowned craftsman and had been owned by Paganini.

An Ethical Powerhouse

Apart from sponsoring chamber concerts, the Society, as a body, remained disinclined to undertake community service. The prevailing attitude, often enunciated by the influential trustee R. Walston Chubb, was that the Society is an "ethical powerhouse" which inspires members to take on charitable causes privately. As before, the Society's chief contribution to the community was in granting use of Sheldon Memorial to charitable and civic groups. In 1934, the Society donated use of the auditorium for a concert by blind musicians -- the opening event of Educational Week for the Blind. In 1935, the board provided the building for a public forum on the Wagner-Lewis bill, which was to become the National Labor Relations Act. And in 1939, a college alumnae association was permitted to hold a Christmas party for needy children in the Assembly Hall. But the board turned down more requests for free building use than it granted. Organizations with a direct tie to the Society were most apt to win the board's approval. In the mid-thirties, the board permitted the St. Louis Consumers Cooperative Club -- which include several Ethical Society members -- to use the library once a month. Society member Edna Gellhorn, a national and local leader of the League of Women Voters, often obtained use of the building for league meetings at reduced rates. The American Civil Liberties Union, an agency initiated by members of the Ethical movement, also was given preferential rates. Likewise, the Neighborhood Association -- into which the Self-Culture Halls Association had merged -- was given free use of the building for its 50th anniversary celebration in 1938. During the war, the Society provided use of the building for several relief programs. In January 1943, relatives of war prisoners used the building to draft strategies for establishing communication with the men. Later that year, the U.S. Navy was given free use of the auditorium for a graduation service.

Beyond these occasional offers of assistance, the board was chary of committing the Society to outside agencies. In 1915, the board had formally banned the posting or voicing of announcements regarding organizations other than the Society. That policy still was in effect in 1925, when the board prohibited the distribution of leaflets urging passage of child labor laws. However, in 1931, the board did appoint a delegate to the embryonic Vigilance Committee of Washington Boulevard, an organization intended to "combat the vice evils on this boulevard." Similarly, when the American League Against War and Fascism in 1935 asked the board to appoint a representative to its executive committee, the board appointed Elsie Langsdorf to attend committee meetings and report to the Society on the league's activities. Even still, the action was taken with the understanding that Langsdorf's status was unofficial; the minutes noted that "the board has no authority to appoint a delegate to participate in the activities of an outside organization." Bracing its traditional policy, when the Society in 1940 was invited to join the Public Education Association, the board advised the association that the Society does not commit itself to outside federations. Successive boards often asked Society members who served in community organizations to act as observers for the Society, but never authorized them to bind the Society to ethical stands or political strategies.⁴¹

Although skittish about formal commitments, the Society did cooperate with other religious communities. It promoted and participated in interdenominational civic meetings held at Sheldon Memorial and elsewhere. In 1935, Hynd delivered the first of a series of four talks on religion held at Washington University; his address -- later complemented by Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish speakers -- was titled "Meaning and Concepts of the Ethical Movement." Hynd, like his predecessors, participated in pulpit exchanges with Unitarian and other liberal ministers. Likewise, Society Sunday School teachers observed the operation of sectarian Sunday schools and took part in interdenominational training programs.

The Society did form a rather ineffectual alliance with two like-minded St. Louis communities. In 1950, it formally struck a liaison with the Rationalists Society and the Freie Gemeinde, a dwindling German freethinkers' group from which many of the Ethical Society's earliest members were drawn. At a meeting at Sheldon Memorial, group representatives agreed the three societies would band together in defense of religious liberty. Each group appointed a liaison to the other groups; board president Alexander S. Langsdorf was the Society's first representative. Proposals for common action adopted by the central committee were to be referred to the respective societies for membership action. As a sign of its firm intentions, the coalition in 1951 marked the Freie Gemeinde's 100th anniversary with a public address on church-state separation at Sheldon Memorial. In the years to come, Society members who held joint membership in the other groups sustained the loose alliance, but it produced no substantive actions.⁴²

⁴¹ At the annual meeting in 1949, the membership approved a by-law requiring that all delegates of the Society to outside organizations be Society members.

⁴² The Freie Gemeinde, upon its dissolution, was to donate its assets to the Society. See page Freie Gemeinde property to the Ethical Society 192.

As a matter of policy, the Society did not donate funds to charitable causes. The board made an exception in 1946, when it appropriated funds to send food parcels to famished members of a Freie Gemeinde community in Hamburg, Germany. In 1950, the National Women's Conference of the AEU asked the Society -- via the United Nations Discussion Group -- to contribute a Sunday collection to a campaign to benefit UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund). The board, sympathetic but wary of setting a precedent, turned down the request, and instead simply publicized the fund in the Society bulletin.

One of the Society's rare ventures into community service was a small-scale vacation school conducted in the summer of 1944 for neighborhood children and the children of Society members. Weekly art classes, which Josie Wangelin had conducted every summer for years, were augmented by a weekly day camp directed by leader-in-training William Hammond. About eighteen children, ranging in age from 6 to 12, took part in this recreational "Friday Club." Hammond departed the following year, and nothing similar was attempted until the Society initiated its nursery school. The Advisory and Planning Council in 1948 revived the 1927 proposal to buy or build a community center, preferably in St. Louis County, but the scheme was sentenced to death by committee.

A Prudential Path

Tackling Challenges with Sparse Tackle

A small, young religious community, like a small, young business, is harshly taxed by social and economic crises. To sustain itself until more propitious times, it must marshal its limited resources wisely. The tiny Ethical Society of St. Louis was buffeted by the Great Depression and World War II: Its finances were decimated; its young men were called to the front. Having no stockpile of money or abundance of people power, it plodded its way through those storms with caution, forethought, creative leadership, and a modicum of luck.

Of the Members, by the Members

Board President Alexander S. Langsdorf, whose administrative duties at Washington University left him with little spare time, demanded efficiency. He constructed a standing order of business, and he rarely allowed meetings to run longer than two hours. Only reports that had been submitted in writing could be presented. On his order, written instructions for the heads of all standing committees were drawn up in 1935. Langsdorf recognized that, contrary to custom, board members were not always ideal candidates for the chairmanships of standing committees; he sought the freedom to invite especially talented Society members to take on leadership roles. In 1936, the board proposed -- and the membership approved -- by-law amendments allowing the president to appoint non-trustees to head up committees.

Langsdorf served as president from 1930 to 1937, at which time he asked to step down because of increasing professional demands. Henry "Max" Putzel, who had served as vice president from 1934 to 1937, assumed the presidency from 1937-46. Harold Hanke was president from 1946-49. R. Walston Chubb was elected president in 1949, but soon declared that he would be unable to take office immediately. Frederic Arnstein reluctantly consented to serve as president that year, with the understanding that Chubb would take over at the end of the season. Meanwhile, Chubb took Arnstein's old job of co-vice president. The "understanding" did not work out as Arnstein had hoped: He was president until 1952, when Chubb finally began a two-year stint. Chubb had served as secretary throughout the thirties and forties. Other steady officers during this era were Wendell P. Kundermann, who served as treasurer throughout the thirties; and Jennie Wahlert, who served as co-vice president in the thirties and throughout the forties.

The remarkably long terms served by some trustees and officers spawned concern that the board was stagnating and growing less responsive to the membership. In 1948, trustee Frederic Arnstein, stating that he wanted to ensure more Society members would serve on the board, proposed a cap on trustees' terms of office. The president appointed a committee to consider drafting a by-law limiting the number of consecutive terms a trustee may serve. At Arnstein's suggestion, the committee also examined the possibility of limiting the number of consecutive terms board officers could serve. The committee concluded that the proposed by-laws would hinder the board's effectiveness. Fixed limitations on service, it said, "would undoubtedly deprive the Society of the advice and counsel of some of the most interested and worthy members." The committee acknowledged, however, that it would be in the Society's interests to have as many members as possible learn about the community's problems and contribute to its growth by serving on the board.

To increase the level of rotation, the committee suggested that the Nominating Committee be made a standing committee instead of being formed just before the annual meeting, thus allowing Society members to recommend candidates for the board throughout the season. The committee further suggested that, as a matter of policy, the Nominating Committee include in its slate of candidates at least one person who had not previously served on the board. By soliciting more input from the membership, the committee reasoned, the Nominating Committee and board president -- who annually appointed nonelected members to one-year terms -- would consider a wider range of members for board service. The Nominating Committee immediately adopted the policy: The membership was asked to submit recommendations to the committee four months before the 1949 annual meeting, and the slate of candidates presented at the meeting included two Society members who had never served on the board.

In 1950, the board's authority to add to its number was widened. The president long had held the authority to annually appoint three non-elected trustees; at the annual meeting in 1950, the membership approved a by-law amendment allowing the board to appoint up to six Society members to one-year board terms. The additional posts raised the maximum number of board members to eighteen -- twelve elected and six appointed.

A Block off the Ol' Chip

R. Walston Chubb's delayed -- and brief -- presidency belies the power he wielded on the board, both in deliberations and behind the scenes. According to Charles "Bud" Blake, Chubb "always sat near the head of the table [at board meetings] and always had more to say than anyone else, whether he was president or not." (Interview with Charles and Garnet Blake, July 1986) Chubb served on the board for nearly three decades -- probably a record term. After he stepped down, trustees continued to consult him on pending board actions. Like his father, Percival, R.W. "Wally" Chubb was one of the most colorful characters in the Society's history, but his colors were of a different stripe. Percival was a slight man, and, though capable of biting sarcasm when referring to moral opponents, he was canny and gracious in personal intercourse. Walston, by contrast, was "a big bear of a man" (Interview with Ted and Ruth Anderson, Sept. 15, 1986) who had a bawdy sense of humor and the tact of a Missouri mule. "He had a very nasty habit of telling awful, very, very dirty jokes -- I mean real dirty jokes," recalled Walter Hoops (himself no prude), who tapped Chubb's legal expertise in the transfer of Freie Gemeinde property to the Ethical Society. "Our German fellows did not go for that at all. They could take a joke, but he had some real humdingers." (Interview with Walter and Eleanor Hoops, Sept. 18, 1986) Chubb's widow, Louise "Lee" Langenohl Chubb, admitted that her own vocabulary turned a few shades bluer after their marriage. Not surprisingly, some trustees and Society members found Chubb vulgar and bombastic, but most were endeared by his directness, ingenuity, and stubborn loyalty to the Society.

Robert Walston Chubb was born in Brooklyn on May 15, 1894. His mother, whose maiden name of Walston became the boy's moniker, died about 1905. The generosity of his stepmother, Anna Hartshorne Sheldon Chubb, enabled him to attend Harvard, from which he graduated in 1915. He went on to study law at Harvard, Washington University, and Columbia University, taking his law degree from the last institution in 1920. From 1917 to 1919, he took a break from his studies to fight in World War I, serving as a captain in the 342nd Field Artillery of the 89th Division; he later wrote a history of the regiment's experiences in battle. He met his first wife, Irene Sylvester, at Columbia University, where she was working toward a master's degree in economics. The couple had three children -- Louise, Walston Jr., and Elliott, who was named after the revered New York Ethical leader John Lovejoy Elliott. The couple also took in a niece, Rosemary Chubb, when she fled the ravages of World War II in England.

Spurning repeated suggestions that the Ethical Society promulgate political stands and communally undertake social action, Chubb believed that the Society should function as an "ethical powerhouse," informing and enlightening members and motivating them to serve the greater community. His position was no empty justification of detached, laissez-faire philosophizing; he exemplified the concept in a lifetime of vigorous community service.

Chubb guided his professional career according to his ethical ideals. After his admission to the New York Bar in 1920 (he had been admitted to the Missouri Bar in 1917), he worked for the New York firm of Cravath and Henderson. Although the firm had "a very high standard of case and thoroughness," (letter from R. Walston Chubb to Percival Chubb, dated Oct. 7, 1921; courtesy of Louise "Lee" Chubb) he left it after a year because he had "had enough of it and did not see how further work in that line would lead very far." From 1921-24, he served as assistant counsel to the War Finance Corporation, a federal government agency which financed agricultural banks and co-operative associations. Upon the termination of that position, his search for work led him to reassess the value of his vocation. He turned down a lucrative offer of a "nice, respectable, permanent job" as corporate finance counsel to New York's National City Bank because, as he told his father, "I figured I could do better than to spend my life

serving Wall Street." (undated letter to Percival Chubb; courtesy of Louise "Lee" Chubb) In response to his father's suggestion that he consider leaving the profession, he expressed his ambivalence:

As for leaving the law, I do not intend to tho I do not think it is easy to use the law as a means to service. Modern lawyers serve corporations -- which are simply property. People separate their property from themselves. By means of the corporate fiction and all, [all] the corporation represents is the acquisitive side and not the human. On its public side the law deals also with property -- its protection and the organization of economic units.

I am not an economic determinist and I like people. Hence my occasional discouragement about the purposive aspects of law -- especially in N.Y.

Unless some rare opportunity shows up between now and summer I think I will hit for the West -- the materialistic West. I can at least try to live in a community and share its problems and perhaps deal with human clients a little more than corporate entities. (Ibid.)

In 1924, he did indeed head West -- to the same community his father had come to call home. He joined the law firm of Lewis, Rice, Tucker, and Allen, becoming a partner in 1926 -- hence the firm's longtime name of Lewis, Rice, Tucker, Allen, and Chubb. He quickly built a reputation as a brilliant and tenacious lawyer. In addition to representing such imposing entities as the St. Louis Stock Exchange, he took on countless low-yield and pro bono cases. He regularly counseled citizens' groups and all levels of government on the drafting of legislation. In 1932, the governor of the Federal Reserve Board appointed Chubb special counsel for the formation of the \$2 billion Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which made loans on the assets of state banks that folded during the Depression; while serving in that capacity, he personally advised President Hoover. Also in the thirties, Chubb served on the St. Louis Bar Association committees that drafted the Missouri Plan for the selection and retention of judges; a variation of the association's final proposal was approved by voters. In 1938, he was appointed to the St. Louis Bar Committee, the Missouri Supreme Court's disciplinary body for lawyers in St. Louis. In the forties, he chaired the Bar committees for the Eighth Judicial Circuit and the Bill of Rights. Reflecting his passion for protecting civil rights, Chubb in 1956 headed a special committee of the St. Louis Bar Association which provided counsel to citizens subpoenaed by the Un-American Activities Committee of the House of Representatives -- a committee formed by Sen. Joseph McCarthy to investigate Communist activities in the United States. In an editorial, the Post-Dispatch commended Chubb for his vigilance in protecting the Sixth Amendment in this "unpopular cause." (Post-Dispatch, May 28, 1956) In addition to freely dispensing his expertise in law and finance, Chubb energetically fought for liberal causes. As an officer of the St. Louis Social Planning Council, he lobbied the state legislature to adopt the merit system and other progressive government programs. In 1939, he drew the ire of the Senate Appropriations Committee by agitating for state social security allotments for children and the disabled proportionate to the allotments for senior citizens. When one senator questioned the constitutionality of appropriating relief for children -- which, unlike relief for the elderly, had not been specifically approved by voters -- Chubb indelicately declared the senator was "concealing the real reason for his opposition" with a legal technicality. Senator Phil Donnelly of Lebanon, a member of the committee, sternly warned Chubb he would "get along with the committee much better if you make no more statements of that kind." (Post-Dispatch, May 11, 1939) In addressing the St. Louis delegation, Donnelly added: "What we don't like is for people like Mr. Chubb to come here and impugn the motives of this committee. If all of your delegation were like him, in my opinion, you would not get a cent out of the General Assembly." (Globe-Democrat, May 11, 1939) The Post-Dispatch castigated the legislature for sidestepping the issue:

The hearing before the Senate Appropriations Committee yesterday on the State social security bill was a farce. Instead of giving earnest attention to those who went to Jefferson City to plead the cause of the unemployables and dependent children, the committee chose to fall back on its dignity and go into a huff because of a wholly justified stricture delivered by the spokesman for the St. Louis Social Planning Council.

When R. Walston Chubb made the remark implying that fear of the power of the old-age pensioners at the polls is the true explanation of why the Legislature is willing to treat this class of indigents so much more liberally than other classes, he was speaking the mind of every thinking citizen in the State. There is no shadow of reason or of social equity in making an appropriation which allows 16 times as much to an old-age pensioner as to a person who is physically or mentally incapacitated. (Post-Dispatch??, date??)

Chubb worked heartily in Democratic Party politics. Although he was considered a strong potential candidate for a U.S. congressional seat, he preferred to remain behind the scenes, serving as a party campaigner and an officer of Americans for Democratic Action. In the 1964 presidential election, he served on the National Lawyers Committee for Johnson and Humphrey. Chubb came to regret his support of Johnson as the president escalated the Vietnam War. By 1967, he was "firmly convinced that if the Johnson administration doesn't change its policies, it will bring the Democratic Party down to disaster." (Post-Dispatch, Dec. 9, 1967) Accordingly, Chubb supported pacifist Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy in his challenge of party centrist Sen. Hubert Humphrey, chairing the McCarthy for President State Committee in the 1968 primary. At a Kansas City, Missouri, campaign rally, Chubb echoed his father's ardent pacifism:

"I have heard about the generation gap," Chubb told the young people in the audience, "but I am as young as you are. I was about where you are in 1914. I read then and reviewed Norman Angell's book *The Great Illusion*. War is still a great illusion.

"I think the cannon fodder ... has gotten better educated. I want to congratulate you for being here. Now we have found a candidate. I think there is a kind of mystical bond between this man, Gene McCarthy, and all of us who ask the question, 'How can we tolerate this kind of madness?'

"Now there has been a rebirth of confidence in the potential of mankind, and there is a kind of miracle of loyalty to a man who embodies this conviction." (Kansas City Times, April 3, 1968)⁴³

Chubb's professional and political hero was U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, whom he was proud to call a friend. It is unclear how the men met, but their association was long and deep. Chubb had consulted Brandeis before turning down the National City Bank job, and the two visited and kept up correspondence until Brandeis's death in 1941. Brandeis put Chubb in touch with professional and social acquaintances in St. Louis, where he had begun his law practice in 1878 with George and James Taussig (the latter of whom became the principal organizer -- and first de facto president -- of the St. Louis Ethical Society). Chubb spoke on the jurist's career at a number of public events. In 1936, on the twentieth anniversary of the date on which Brandeis took his place on the bench, Chubb gave the keynote address at the dedication of a plaque marking the site of Brandeis's first law office on Chestnut Street.⁴⁴ The plaque read: "From this spot spread the influence of a great lawyer, a social philosopher and a wise and just judge." (The plaque, initially installed in the sidewalk, was removed in the course of reconstruction, and in 1964 was mounted on the wall of a restaurant which now stood at the site. At the rededication, Chubb again spoke on behalf of the Bar Association.) In his address, Chubb lauded Brandeis for "his development of a new spirit and a new method in the solution of our great social and economic problems" and referred to the jurist as "the great educator of the court and of our democracy." (Typewritten text of address delivered June 5, 1936; courtesy of Louise "Lee" Chubb) Chubb considered Brandeis the model attorney, a servant of people rather than corporate entities. He was fond of quoting Brandeis as saying, "I would rather have clients than be somebody's lawyer."

Chubb, true to his desire to share in the problems of a community, performed countless civic services. He was an officer of the city and county YMCA for years, and served as the first chairman of the Webster Groves branch of the Y. He was a founder and longtime executive committee member of the St. Louis Council on World Affairs. He was a board member and one-time president of the International Institute of St. Louis, which helps aliens settle and obtain citizenship. He also served on the boards of the World Peace Through Law Center, the Social Planning Council, and the Missouri School for the Blind. He was for several years president of the board of trustees-of-the John -Burroughs School, which both his sons attended. He served on the first mayoral race relations committee in 1949, and in 1953 the St. Louis County supervisor appointed him to a citizens commission to study law enforcement and recommend improvements in police protection. An unabashed civic booster, he led several fund raising campaigns for United Charities in the thirties. He is best remembered for his presidency of the St. Louis Regional Open Space Foundation in the late sixties and early seventies. Under Chubb's leadership, the foundation raised three-quarters of a million dollars to match a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant used to buy 1, 100 acres along the Meramec River for use as state park. He also headed up the foundation's campaign to raise the \$197,000 with which St. Louis County matched a federal grant to establish Bee Tree Park, a 190-acre tract of woodlands and river bluffs along the Mississippi River in South St. Louis County. The park, which opened in 1974, features a hiking trail named after Chubb.

⁴³ When McCarthy lost the primary, Chubb half-heartedly encouraged McCarthy backers to vote for the Humphrey-Muskie ticket as a lesser evil than the Nixon-Agnew ticket.

⁴⁴ Originally designated 505 Chestnut Street, the site is about a third of a block west of Broadway.

Like his father, Chubb was a highly regarded public speaker. Corporations, civic organizations, and academic institutions often called on him to give addresses, participate in debates, and emcee ceremonial banquets. He was forever eager to air his views on politics, economics, religion, and all things controversial. Despite -- or perhaps because of -- his characteristic bluntness, he also became a skilled mediator. After Chubb moderated a 1949 Town Hall talk by Harold E. Stassen, who was then embarking on his notoriously eccentric political career, a St. Louis businessman praised Chubb on his finesse in handling the crowd of 3,500 people, adding that Chubb's voice was "at least as good as that of the late Franklin D." (Letter from Garret F. Meyer, vice president of the Warner-Jenkinson Manufacturing Co., to R.W. Chubb, dated April 5, 1946)⁴⁵

Through his remarkable record of public service, Chubb vindicated his faith in the Society as an "ethical powerhouse." Among the tributes he cherished was a letter from a conservative Christian associate who could not help but humbly acknowledge Chubb's benevolence:

I ... want you to know how very much I have and do appreciate your friendship of over forty years. It has sometimes been a source of wonder of some of my associates as to how I could be so closely affiliated in my business life with not only a Democrat, but a liberal Democrat, and a person who is not a Christian to-boot. I don't think these questioning friends of mine are as familiar as they should be, perhaps, with the Book of James that says something to the affect [sic] that "faith without works is dead," and somewhere in the Book of John where Our Lord said to some of his antagonists "If you do not believe what I speak, judge my faith by my works" or something to this affect. [sic] If these friends knew all the great things that Walston Chubb has done in his life on a person to person basis, I think they would be a little bit slower to criticize my judgment in the selection of attorneys and personal friends. (Letter from John W. Brunner, president of Vi-Jon Laboratories, Inc., to R.W. Chubb, dated June 13, 1973; letter courtesy of Louise "Lee" Chubb.)

Slogging through the Depression

The Society suffered a severe drop in income during the Great Depression: Members were forced to cut back on their pledges, securities dropped below face value, fund-raisers were less lucrative, and building rentals plunged. Expenditures were slashed, but the Society nonetheless faced a deficit virtually every year in the thirties. Board President Alexander S. Langsdorf complained that "some of our members ... do not seem to take this situation seriously.... [T]here are even some who believe that the deficit is not really a deficit." (President's report, 1933) The board's pattern of coping with the crisis was less than promising: Each spring, it borrowed on the Society's securities enough cash to meet operating expenses, then paid off the loans with dues collected in the fall -- thus inviting yet another deficit. The principal bequest of Anna Sheldon Chubb, which had been intended for the retirement of mortgage bonds, was used to cover interest costs and operating deficits. The Society was living off its capital, and the \$35,000 mortgage taken out in 1928 remained intact into the early thirties.

The Society's annual operating deficits ranged from \$1,000-\$3,000 during the thirties; the exception was the 1937-38 season, when a bequest briefly put the Society in the black. Besides disposing of securities, the board met these deficits by holding periodic canvasses. The drives, which usually were conducted in an air of panic, began with solicitations of a select group of high-level contributors; R. Walston Chubb was known for putting the squeeze on his friends among the Society's more affluent members. All-member meetings then were called to outline the Society's financial needs and to solicit canvassers. Prospect cards listing each member's history of giving were drawn up for use by campaign members; when needs were most acute, canvassers approached members with requests for specific increases. Some years, canvassing efforts were limited: A mailing was sent to the membership, and only those who did not respond were solicited personally.

As the nation's economy improved in the forties, midyear deficits grew smaller and rarer, and annual fund drives ultimately kept the fellowship in the black. The budget, which had hovered around \$13,000 for years, jumped to more than \$20,000 by the end of the decade; the biggest increases in expenditures were for AEU subsidies and office, maintenance, and Sunday School personnel. The yearly custom of billing members for the amount they had contributed the previous season would not accommodate such a sharp rise in expenditures. Beginning in 1948, members were asked to make a new pledge each year. The first year of the system proved singularly successful: Overall, pledges were increased by more than 50 percent over those of the 1947-48 season.

⁴⁵ The Town Hall, on whose steering committee Chubb served, was a public forum conducted by the YMCA.

Low membership contributions were the principal cause of deficits during the thirties. According to a 1933 report by the Ways and Means Committee, the average pledge was \$15 -- half the Society's per capita cost of \$31. Later in the decade, as the membership fell off and deficits mounted, the per capita cost rose to about \$50. The board began to see the folly of maintaining a dues minimum: Many members mistakenly regarded the minimum figure as a fixed expectation, comparable to the dues of a union or civic organization. Those who pledged only the minimum dues -- \$10 a year for members over 25, and \$5 for junior members -- were specifically asked to raise their contributions, as were members who declined to contribute to special funds. Not surprisingly, dues delinquency became acute in the Depression. When nagging and threatening brought no response from those in arrears, the board turned to more honeyed approaches. In June 1936, for instance, the president of the board sent out notices offering amnesty on back dues to anyone willing to resume making pledge payments. Of the 29 letters sent out, only one brought a response -- and that was a formal resignation.

Hynd was ambivalent about pledge policies. Believing the Society should be run on the same basis as a church, he disliked references to "dues" and objected to the cancellation of memberships. On the other hand, he noted that Society members gave proportionately less than many churchgoers, and he admittedly envied pastors who were able to assist needy parishioners out of their congregations' largesse. Nonetheless, he consistently pleaded for delicacy in solicitation and collection procedures; he and most trustees were reluctant to press members too hard for fear of losing them altogether. In 1939, he told the board that delinquent members should be interviewed personally before any action was taken to drop them; he even agreed to interview the latest batch of delinquents himself. The success of his approach -- at least in numbers -- was not encouraging: Only one of the members he spoke to agreed to resume paying dues. He did succeed in persuading the Finance Committee -- which assumed the Membership Committee's collection duties in 1941 -- to help delinquents maintain membership by switching to associate status.

In the thirties and forties, member pledges accounted for a little more than half the Society's income. The next highest sources of revenue usually were Sunday collections and non-member contributions, but bequests -- which amounted to more than \$15,000 in the forties -- sometimes topped the list of ancillary income. Rental fees and donations from Society subgroups substantially augmented the budget. Beginning in 1941, the Women's Auxiliary and the Junior Auxiliary sponsored monthly "Hostess Dinners," which, in addition to the fall bazaar and occasional rummage sales, permitted them to contribute several hundred dollars a year to the Society. Other subgroups -- such as the Y.P.A. and the Adult Discussion Group -- contributed smaller sums out of their dues collections. In addition, an Entertainment Committee formed in 1934 organized such one-time fund-raisers as motion picture presentations and benefit performances at community theaters.

During the Depression, some of the Society's investments turned sour. A Florida church that sold the Society several \$1,000 building bonds repeatedly defaulted on its payments; the Society did not recover its investment until the mid-40s, and it never realized a return. Other hard-pressed debtors were granted frequent extensions on bond payments, and what solid investments the Society held were apt to be liquidated. In the mid-30s, the Finance Committee informally adopted a conservative policy of limiting investments to government bonds and other securities held legal for trust funds in Missouri. The board in the forties paid closer attention to its investments. In 1943, a by-law amendment provided for a five-member Investment Committee with authority to buy and sell securities for the Prather Fund and other Society trusts.

In 1936, the Walter L. Sheldon Memorial Library Fund finally was abolished. Martha Fischel, who chaired an ad hoc committee formed to study the fund, determined it could no longer serve the purpose for which Anna Sheldon Chubb had intended it: There was no need to reprint Sheldon's books; his dated ruminations and Sunday School curricula were no longer in demand -- and the core of books in Sheldon's collection did not merit the preservation efforts the donor had anticipated. The cash and securities in the fund were transferred to the Walter L. Sheldon Memorial Building Fund. In place of the restricted fund, a new Library Maintenance Fund was created for the upkeep of the facility and the purchase of new books needed by the leader, Sunday School teachers, and Society subgroups.

Also in 1936, the board established a Tribute Fund for donations in honor of loved ones. A three-member committee was established to publicize and administer the fund. In subsequent years, the fund and the committee became a source of prolonged bickering on the board. The fund had not been dedicated to any specific purpose at its inception, and the committee appointed to oversee the fund objected to the board's dipping into it for ordinary operating expenses. At the committee's insistence, the money contributed to the fund in its first few years was held in abeyance until the committee settled on a stated purpose. Some committee members believed that devoting the fund to a neglected cause -- such as leadership training or an insurance plan for leaders -- would attract more

contributions. Others could imagine no purpose more pressing than the retirement of the mortgage. The latter contingent won out in 1940, when the fund was devoted solely to debt retirement.

The Society made slow progress in paying off the mortgage during the thirties. On the recommendation of the Ways and Means Committee, the board in 1934 established a Sinking Fund, contributions to which were used solely for mortgage payments. Throughout the decade, the Society offset the debt in minimal increments of \$500-\$1,000. Elaborate plans to pay off the mortgage by selling low-interest bonds of indebtedness to members were frequently presented to the board, but none was adopted. Because campaigns for operating funds so taxed the membership, only one fund drive specifically devoted to the mortgage was held in the decade. In the spring of 1936, Society members who anticipated leaving bequests were asked to donate those allotments pronto. A small committee of canvassers obtained \$3,500 from a select group of Society members; no general solicitation was held. Those contributions brought the mortgage down to \$25,000 -- the level at which it was renewed.

In the early forties, as operating deficits became less burdensome, the Society reduced the mortgage by a few thousand dollars a year, drawing primarily on the Tribute Fund. By 1946, the debt had been brought down to \$15,000. The 1946-47 season marked the Society's sixtieth anniversary, and the fellowship decided the time was ripe to settle an old debt. But paying off the mortgage was not the Society's only aim: It had agreed to contribute to the AEU's ambitious five-year extension program, and Sheldon Memorial was sadly in need of renovation. The goal of the 60th Anniversary Fund was set at \$30,000 -- \$15,000 for mortgage retirement, \$10,000 for the AEU project, and \$5,000 for building repairs. More than 30 canvassers took part in the drive, which was led by Frederic Arnstein, R. Walston Chubb, and Arthur Schwarz. The Society's wealthier stalwarts, the first members tapped by the committee, contributed more than \$16,000 in amounts ranging from \$200 to \$1,000. The general solicitation that followed brought the total up to \$21,000, indicating that members found a fund drive directed toward specific purposes more compelling than a drive intended simply to cover operating expenses. The mortgage -- the top priority of the drive -- finally was paid off on February 23, 1947. At the annual meeting in May, Jane Hanke -- wife of board President Harold Hanke -- had the honor of celebrating the landmark occasion by burning the cancelled papers on the final \$15,000 mortgage. Because the fund fell short of the goal, it was decided to allot from it St. Louis's obligation for only the first two years of the AEU program; allocations for subsequent years were drawn from the Current Fund. The remainder of the anniversary fund was insufficient to cover the cost of a new roof, but a special solicitation in the fall of 1947 made up the difference.

Tight budgets continued to restrain the Society's ambitions. In 1948, the Advisory and Planning Council recommended that funds be budgeted for a full-time organizational assistant to the leader. The proposed aide would coordinate social and educational activities, develop a youth program, and provide various membership services. Other plans concocted by the council in the late forties included the establishment of a community center in the county; the purchase of prime airtime for radio advertising and Ethical messages; construction of an annex behind Sheldon Memorial; and employment of an associate leader. The board generally was receptive to such ideas but was chary of pushing for the necessary funds; rather than "cutting the cloth to fit the pattern," it tended to snip its pattern from the meager cloth at hand.

Cultivating Ethical Leadership

With atypical foresight, the Society had begun taking an active interest in leadership training during Hynd's tenure. Because the Ethical movement has never had a formal academy for training leaders, and because employment opportunities in the movement are sparse, the AEU has had difficulty keeping leadership prospects in the wings. In the forties, the Union sought to fortify the movement's future by instituting an ongoing training program. A two-year program was adopted in 1942: Inductees would spend the first-year training under New York leaders, and the second as assistant leaders in other societies. The program was engineered largely by the New York Society, which agreed to bear the cost of the first-year practicums and to help arrange financing for the second-year apprenticeships. The first trainees accepted into the program were William Hammond, Henry B. Herman, and James F. Hornback -- known among Ethical leaders as the "Three Hs."

St. Louis became the program's first beneficiary outside New York when it hired Hammond as leader-in-training at the start of the 1943-44 season. Half of Hammond's salary was paid out of the Sutro Fund, which was inaugurated by a member family of the New York Society to provide for leadership training; the remaining costs were borne by the St. Louis Society and the Fischel Fund, a fund set up by the Fischel family of St. Louis and administered by the AEU. Hammond served as director of the Sunday School, but his other roles were poorly defined. Lay leaders of the Society had hoped Hammond would complement Hynd by visiting congregants, organizing educational programs, and vigorously promoting membership. Hynd, however, saw himself as Hammond's academic mentor, and urged the

young man to concentrate on his studies. Hammond rarely spoke from the platform, and he took on few pastoral duties, leaving many Society members feeling dissatisfied with the undertaking. The Society retained Hammond through the 1944-45 season, with the second-year costs borne equally by St. Louis and the Sutro Fund, but the board decided by the end of that season to sever the relationship. In a letter to the AEU, board president Henry Putzel said Hammond gave "evidence of having an enlightened and sincere devotion to the principles and aims of the movement, and of having the character and the potential ability by which his enthusiasm and devotion can be made effective in leadership. He shows ability as a speaker, and an aptitude for administration work and group activity." Putzel added, however, that Hammond's direction of the Sunday School had not been "especially creative; and his application to his studies has not been as intensive and consistent as it might have been in view of the generous margin of time and opportunity afforded him." (Letter from Henry Putzel to David Seville Muzzey, then chairman of the AEU Leadership Committee, dated April 10, 1945) In sum, Putzel recommended that Hammond continue his training, but that he do so elsewhere. Hammond took that advice and embarked on a lifelong career in the Unitarian ministry.

Though less than enthusiastic about Hammond, the St. Louis Society remained committed to the training experiment. In 1944, the board urged the AEU to proceed with the program, promising the Society's assistance in training candidates and installing fledgling leaders in expansion communities. Unfortunately, no leaders-in-training were available to replace Hammond. Herman became a full-time leader in the New York Society, and Hornback temporarily dropped out of the program to serve in the armed forces. Some St. Louis trustees felt the movement should stabilize the training program -- and hedge its bets -- by soliciting probationary assistant leaders who maintained outside vocations in education and social work. Still, no promising new candidates were forthcoming.

So it happened that the AEU had no replacements to offer when Hynd resigned. Hornback had completed his apprenticeship after the war, but he was committed to the Westchester (New York) Society. Hammond was considered for the post, as was George Beauchamp, part-time leader of the fledgling Washington, D.C., Society; Edward "Ted" Haydon, son of Chicago leader A. Eustace Haydon; Lester Mondale, a Unitarian minister then serving in Kansas City, Missouri⁴⁶; and Huston Smith, a professor of world religions. In the short run, however, St. Louis faced another limbo in leadership.

Alexander S. Langsdorf, former board president and retired dean of Washington University's School of Engineering, came forth to hold down the fort. Langsdorf was a natural for the interim position. Long active in the Society as an organizer and speaker, he had been elected "honorary associate leader" at the 1948 annual meeting and had been inducted into the AEU Fraternity of Leaders the following year. The Society paid him a monthly wage for his part-time service in the 1950-51 season. Langsdorf, a firm and gracious administrator, provided an air of calm in which the Society could choose a permanent successor to Hynd.

Langsdorf had an illustrious professional career and a long history of civic service. He began teaching at Washington University in 1901. An expert in electrical engineering, he served on the Jury of Awards at the 1904 World's Fair. In 1915, he published a textbook on direct-current machinery which quickly became a standard in the field; he published a follow-up book on alternating-current machinery in 1937. He served as dean of the School of Engineering -- and sometimes simultaneously as dean of the School of Architecture -- for a total of thirty years. Raymond E. Tucker, a longtime mayor of St. Louis who later served on the university faculty, said Langsdorf "brought honor to the University by his technical competence and professional conduct. He gave to his students a healthy attitude toward life and demonstrated that attitude in his own actions." (Washington University Magazine, Winter 1969)⁴⁷ Langsdorf's community service -- in addition to his seven years as president of the Ethical Society -- included a twenty-year stint on the City Planning Commission and the inaugural presidency of the Committee for Nuclear Information, an organization formed in 1958 to monitor radioactive fallout.⁴⁸

During his year of interim leadership, Langsdorf regularly presided at platform services but gave only two addresses; although a seasoned lecturer whose platform talks were well-received, he wisely recognized the limited value of his scientific perspective on ethics. When he did address the Society, he brought a wealth of empirical knowledge to the naturalistic themes Hynd had popularized. As might be expected, Langsdorf considered scientific

⁴⁶ Mondale is a half-brother to Walter Mondale, who served as vice president under Jimmy Carter and ran for the presidency on the Democratic ticket in 1984.

⁴⁷ In the 1960s, the university bestowed a series of engineering fellowships in Langsdorf's name, and the Alexander S. Langsdorf Seminar Room in Cupples Hall II was dedicated in 1967.

⁴⁸ After broadening its focus to include air and water pollution, the organization was renamed the Committee for Environmental Information.]

research of equal value to philosophical inquiry, and he ventured that the two paths converge in rational religion. Disputing the classical supposition of a matter-spirit dichotomy that necessitates superhuman grace, he asserted that virtue evolves from animal instinct in the same manner that human life evolved from lower organisms -- in other words, the origin of ethics is as humble as that of the species itself. But while scientific discoveries had shown the race's comforting myths about its environment, Langsdorf urged that such demythologization be seen as a step toward a higher level of ethical evolution:

Nowhere in all the vast reaches of outer space, or on our own little planet, can science detect the slightest sign of a purpose imposed from within or without, that works for the welfare and security of mankind. So it is an austere picture, severe and forbidding to those who have been nurtured to believe that there is an overriding providence that takes account of the sparrow in its fall. We are obliged to think of ourselves and the other living creatures that share this earth with us as minute organisms riding on a tiny speck of matter that is microscopic in the cosmic scale. The heaven and the hell that were very real places to the ancients just do not fit into the picture because there is no room for them. Both concepts are thought fossils, and like fossils in general, they are as dead as the dodo.

...

Whether we like it or not, science tells us that the universe is indifferent to man's existence, and that so far as can be detected it would continue its own cycle of the birth, life, and death of stars if animate life on this earth were to be snuffed out. Primitive man, finding himself in what seemed to him, and certainly was, a hostile environment, sought security by inventing a multitude of gods -- beneficent gods charged with responsibility for his well-being, malevolent gods that bore the onus for his misfortunes. These gods, refined in character, to this day dominate religious thought. They represent a flight from the world of the natural to the world of the supernatural; they serve as convenient crutches upon which to lean when strength is lacking to stand alone; they serve to impart a sense of security in an unfriendly environment that cannot be shaped to minister fully to man's needs. But if the scientific approach means anything, it means that above everything else man must not regard himself as an alien spirit in a hostile world, serving a period of probation before being translated to another one; he must instead see himself as a child of nature obligated to feel at home under the conditions into which he is born, and to mold those conditions, by his own efforts, as nearly as may be to the form he desires. Looking out upon an uncaring universe he must discover in himself the strength and the ability to stand on his own feet; and to understand that it is in his own nature, and there only, that there resides the divinely unifying purpose which makes life meaningful. ("Ethics, and Man's Search for Security," platform address given Jan. 8, 1950)

Opting for Youth

The search for a new leader began in earnest in the fall of 1950. Alfred Daniel "Buck" Buchmueller chaired the Search Committee, which included Putzel, Langsdorf, and R. Walston Chubb. To help Society members and trustees make an informed choice, Langsdorf frequently scheduled potential leadership candidates to speak from the platform. Mondale addressed the Society three times during the 1950-51 season, Hornback twice. Smith and Beauchamp each spoke once, as did John Gill, a Unitarian minister from Alton, Illinois, who emerged as a dark horse in the running. Buchmueller solicited trustees' assessments of each man. The board instructed the Search Committee to draft a clearly defined set of qualifications for the leadership post, but the committee balked, reporting it did not wish to be "too rigid" in its expectations.

In the spring of 1951, a Leadership Committee was formed to advise the board in its final selection proceedings. Chaired by Peter Kintzele, the committee included Putzel, Langsdorf, R. Walston Chubb, Harold Hanke, and Walter Haase.⁴⁹ By April, the committee had narrowed the field to Hornback and Mondale. Mondale, then approaching 50, commended himself by virtue of maturity and experience. The son of a Minnesota Methodist minister and a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, Mondale radiated warm, rustic manliness and exhibited remarkable intellectual acumen. He had been the youngest signer of the Humanist Manifesto of 1933 and had established himself as a leader of the humanist wing of Unitarianism during an earlier stint at a parish in Evanston, Illinois. Trustees agreed that Mondale promised to stabilize and expand the community after Hynd's lackluster final years. Long interested in

⁴⁹ Haase was a scion of the Haase family whose food company bore its name. The company, which was sold to outside interests after Waltees death, is now known almost exclusively for its imported olives.

Ethical leadership, Mondale wanted the post badly. Hornback, at 31, projected youthful enthusiasm; trustees felt he would help draw younger generations to the slowly aging Society. Also, the son of a Methodist minister, Hornback had graduated from Central Methodist College in Fayette, Missouri, and pursued post-graduate studies in philosophy at the University of Chicago and Columbia University. As a product of the AEU's experimental training program who had served the Westchester Society since 1947, his commitment to the Ethical movement was established. In contrast to Mondale, Hornback explicitly disavowed his candidacy for the St. Louis post in remarks voiced from the platform; in fact, he recommended that the Society take the opportunity to broaden the movement's leadership by hiring Mondale or someone of Mondale's experience and caliber. In debating the choice, the board gave considerable weight to the financial needs of the two men: Mondale, a husband and father -- as well as a veteran of the ministry accustomed to a moderate income -- would require a higher salary than Hornback, who was married but had not begun a family. In the board's first informal poll, most of the trustees who expressed a firm preference favored Hornback. However, at the urging of those who wanted a surer grasp of Mondale's philosophy, the board invited the minister to an all-Society community dinner and a luncheon with the trustees.

At a special meeting of the board on April 30, 1951, the board chose Hornback as the sole leadership candidate to be presented to the membership. To avoid creating divisiveness in the community, the trustees -- acting on Hanke's recommendation -- agreed before the vote to unanimously support the victor. Hornback, despite his declaration of non-candidacy, won by a tally of ten to five, with one abstention.⁵⁰ In a phone call that Hornback later described as surprising and embarrassing, board president Frederic Arnstein persuaded him to consider applying for the position; after consulting with the Westchester board, which made no special effort to retain him, Hornback agreed to accept the post if approved by the membership. According to the Society's by-laws, a two-thirds majority of those present at the community's annual meeting was required to elect a leader; Society members' only options would be to elect Hornback or instruct the board to continue its search. Members were told that a vote would be taken at the meeting, but the candidate's identity was not revealed in advance. At the May 24 meeting, Kintzele presented the board's recommendation; Langsdorf seconded the nomination and outlined Hornback's background and qualifications; and Hanke moved that Hornback be elected. He was -- unanimously.

Hornback's starting salary was even lower than that which had so displeased Hynd. Hornback reluctantly accepted the offer, although it represented no increase from the compensation he received in Westchester. Years later, after learning that Arnstein had reduced the board's proposed offer, Hornback repeatedly expressed resentment over the transaction. However, members who served on the board at the time of Hornback's hire said the offer was commensurate with Hornback's experience and allowed for raises as he grew in the position. They also pointed out that most of the savings were placed in a speaker's fund, which enabled Hornback to rely heavily on guest lecturers while adjusting to the post. Furthermore, Langsdorf remained on salary throughout the first half of the season to help ease Hornback into his duties.

⁵⁰ Mondale, whose Kansas City church was destroyed by fire a few months before the leadership vote, served for a time as leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society and later worked in various capacities as an advocate of humanism. He and his wife retired to a remote cabin in the Missouri Ozarks, where they continued to live at the time of this writing.

The Fourth Era: 1950-1986

13: JAMES F. HORNBACK - EVANGELICAL HUMANIST

James Franklin Hornback is a man of firm convictions. One of the first avowed humanists to enter Ethical leadership, he tirelessly—and pointedly—declared reason the viceroy of human capacities. He was an ardent proponent of scientific naturalism, which he defined, in part, as the rational deduction of objective ethical principles through the weighing of competing values. In his addresses, writings, and community service, he strove to facilitate social harmony—a harmony which he envisioned as cultural homogenization and universal devotion to the “new faith” of ethical religion.

Hornback commonly defined his stances in contradistinction to what he perceived as opposing movements. As a rationalist and philosophical purist, he railed against both religious fundamentalism and theological modernism. A “critical realist” who believed unswervingly in the objectivity of ethics, he disparaged existentialism, mysticism, romanticism, and any other “ism” that legitimized a subjective approach to ethical decision-making. And as a crusader for cultural assimilation—his most passionately held ideal—he despised all forms of ethnic separatism.

Hornback formed his convictions early in life. He proudly asserted having dispensed with the notion of God in boyhood:

I don't recall ever having [theistic faith]. I remember as a little kid—it would have to be at the age of 4 or 5 — looking up at the sky and sort of daring the universe to prove me wrong: “If there's anybody out there, flash me a sign.” I've been told many times that was naive and a childish thing to do, but I've also been told by many doubters that they also went through that process, many of them much later. And I said my bedtime prayers with my fingers crossed, purely naturalistic, wishing every blessing and growth to all sentient beings—in kiddy language, whatever it was. I obviously didn't know the language of scientific naturalism or ethical humanism at that time, but those were my... sentiments. (Interview, September 23, 1986)

There was no question of a loss of faith, or a shift from the consolations of religion to consolations of philosophy or ethics. I simply never held the “faith of our fathers,” continuous though that faith seems to have been back through my great-great grandfather in northeast Missouri, to his father and others in Kentucky and Virginia “converted” by the Wesleyan missionary from England, Bishop Francis Asbury. (Ethical weekly, February 1, 1976)

An “unregenerate son of a Methodist minister,” Hornback placated his parents by attending Christian services and listening to readings from the Bible. He went so far as to join the church, traditionally a testimony to the acceptance of divine salvation. “I made my parents so proud and myself so dishonest and creepy-feeling by saying, ‘I might as well get this over with,’” he recalled. “And my parents carried my ‘church letter,’ as it's called, around with them for maybe ten years after I left home until they were finally convinced that I was not really with it. That's one of those pragmatic acts that I always felt very guilty about.” (Ibid.) Remembering that “creepy feeling,” Hornback resolved to never again compromise his intellectual integrity to sustain some ersatz kinship. “I could never accept the pragmatic theory that the ‘truth’ is what ‘works’—at least in social and political relations, where lip service to the prevailing myth or folkway usually works better than a scrupulous attempt to correlate statements with the ‘facts’ they claim to designate.” (James F. Hornback, “A Discovery, Not a Conversion,” in Cable Neuhaus, ed., *A Lively Connection: Intimate Encounters with the Ethical Movement in America*, New York, Ethica Press, 1978; p. 56.)

To the exacting young “Jeff” Hornback (the lifelong moniker, an embellishment of the initials J. and F., was devised by his cousins), the world of his minister-father was polluted with hypocrisy. He felt indignant at the sight of the Methodist bishop lighting up a cigar after admonishing candidates for ordination never to smoke. That episode became for Hornback a symbol of the “duplicity” of neo-orthodoxy, which sought to reconcile such scientific discoveries as biological evolution with theological doctrines by liberally reinterpreting biblical “truths.” Like Hynd, Hornback insisted that “the fundamentalists are right”—that is, that Christianity and Judaism are defined by their ancient doctrines, and that minimizing or redefining those doctrines is a fraudulent way of “keeping the faith.”

During his adolescence in Clarksville, Missouri, sixty miles north of St. Louis, this rationalist rebel “sought out the village atheists and found them good company.” (Ibid., p. 59) A favorite companion was the editor of the weekly newspaper, for whom Hornback worked as a reporter and typesetter, and with whom he shared ideas and books. One of the chief literary influences he encountered was Herbert Asbury’s “Up From Methodism,” which helped Hornback extract “the essentially natural and humanistic ethics of liberal Protestantism” (Ibid., p. 59) from its theological matrix. Right and wrong, he decided, require no validation by historical mythology or institutional authority. In his collegiate and postgraduate studies, Hornback expanded and refined this belief in a self-affirming and rationally discernible system of ethics.

Hornback’s idealization of racial and religious assimilation also had its roots in childhood experience. He was a great-grandson of the “Old Jim Hornback” whom Mark Twain depicted in “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” as the model of a benevolent slaveholder. J.F. Hornback would always remember how his grandfather—a son of “Old Jim’s”—praised Lincoln for heroically freeing the slaves yet grieved over the liberation of his motherly personal slave, Sarah, when the boy was 7. Knowing that his own ancestors may have owned those of some of his African American playmates, Jeff felt a personal shame over the ostracism and economic oppression of blacks by whites. As he grew more aware of Clarksville’s social stratification, he was equally distressed by the racist traits of the town’s WASP majority and the clannishness of its Catholics and Jews:

Catholic families, though welcome in all neighborhoods and schools, usually went off to parochial schools in a way that seemed cultish and unfriendly to me. And the Jewish young people, to the sorrow of everybody else, seemed to be pulled out for private schools and large cities just as they were being fully accepted and loved in the mixed public-school community. I shared the regret for my black friends and playmates too ... and rebuked my parents and their generation for allowing the law for segregated black schools to stay on the books in Missouri. They responded to all these problems with a benign acceptance of cultural differences and gradualism, which I denounced then as “racism,” but which is now known and revered by some of the “minority” groups themselves as the “new ethnicity.” (Ibid., p. 58)

Hornback, a graduate of Central Methodist College in Fayette, Missouri, first encountered Ethical Culture while studying at the University of Chicago. Faculty members suggested that Hornback, an outstanding philosophy student, translate his humanistic principles into liberal theology and prepare for a career as a Christian minister—a suggestion similar to that posed to Felix Adler by sympathetic members of Temple Emanu-El. Like Adler, Hornback rejected the proposition as disingenuous. Instead, convinced that only institutes of learning were truly hospitable to straightforward rationalism, he proceeded to train for an academic career. Meanwhile, he attended services at the university’s Rockefeller Chapel, an ecumenical forum in which he could hear Christians, Jews, Hindus, and humanists. However, perceiving a shift in the chapel congregation toward explicit Christian theology, Hornback grew restive and began seeking an alternative community. A. Eustace Haydon, a highly esteemed author and professor of religious history at the university, told Hornback of the Ethical movement but discouraged him from joining; the Chicago Society, Haydon contended, had taken a wrong turn under the leadership of conservative Horace Bridges. Undaunted, Hornback began visiting the community, and was enchanted by such Ethical leaders as David Saville Muzzey, Algernon Black, Jerome Nathanson, and Henry Neumann. After years of challenging—and humoring—neo-orthodox teachers who declined to “come clean” by proclaiming an unequivocally secular philosophy, he now encountered brilliant, articulate men who crystallized and exalted the very sort of rational ethics he had always believed should direct human behavior. “For me, ethical humanism came as a discovery, not a conversion,” he recalled, “though I share the conviction of... Felix Adler that we must always be converting ourselves. Joining an Ethical Society is not a sign of having arrived, but of committing ourselves to a continuous quest.” (Ethical weekly, February 1, 1976) As his loyalty to the movement grew, Hornback taught in the Sunday School, took on the leadership of the youth group, and ultimately embarked on leadership training in New York.

After the United States entered World War II, Hornback waived his draft exemption as a ministerial student and interrupted his training to serve a stint in the Army. While working at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, he met Angela Leyton, a striking and talented young artist who was working as an occupational therapist. The exotic beauty of this woman of Mexican, Indian, and English extraction captivated Hornback, who was primed to break the bounds of WASP propriety. The couple married, and Angela accompanied her groom back to New York City, where he finished his training before assuming leadership posts in Westchester and St. Louis.

A Preacher of Ethical Science

The hallmark of Hornback's philosophy was ethical objectivism, the belief that ethical imperatives arise naturally from human interaction with objective reality. He stopped short of positing moral absolutes (he often mocked Adler's "Ought in all its Awful Majesty"), but he nonetheless insisted that moral principles are "imbedded in... the facts of... life," that they somehow "exist" independently of human constructs. The challenge of the ethical truth seeker, he taught, is to discern those imperative scientifically. Dispensing with transcendent sanction—the usual underpinning of such a stern moral stance—Hornback struggled to justify his faith philosophically. The extent to which he succeeded is debatable; his devotion to the proposition is not. His addresses on this topic—his most common theme—had more the character of homiletics than of teaching. Drawing on his extensive academic training, he introduced generations of Society members to the concepts and vocabulary of systematic philosophy. However, Hornback was no detached professor: He was bent on persuading his audience, and his every presentation was heavily weighted with his conviction. This Doctor of Philosophy and "unregenerate" minister's son became, in effect, a preacher—a preacher, paradoxically, of ethical science.

Hornback grounded his ethical faith in the assertion that material reality causes human perception, and that, because reality is uniform, all clear-thinking people will deduce from their perceptions the same principles of moral behavior; of necessity, ethical disputes evince faulty perception or errors of logic. Underlying this assertion is the premise that immutable moral relations are an integral aspect of reality—and of "truth," the perfect symbolization of reality and the goal of human reasoning. This argument validates the universality of ethics without calling upon revelation or maintaining the existence of a procreative ideal realm. "[P]ut off by Adler's disdain for science and his quaint neo-Kantian absolutism in ethics," (Ethical weekly, February 3, 1980) Hornback sought to shift the underpinnings of Ethical Culture from transcendentalism to a forthright humanism:

Our Ethical Culture Founding Fathers, Felix Adler in particular as *the* founding Leader from 1876 to 1933, considered ethics to be the most certain of all knowledge. Physics, chemistry, and the material sciences were of course "relative," approximate, and subject to change, but questions of The Right (he spelled and pronounced it that way, with religious awe) were eternal and absolute. He agreed, as I would from a more naturalistic point of view, that "values" are fleeting, subjective, created by whim, caprice, and luck as well as by prudent planning. But he did not derive or justify The Right from the values it created, as any naturalist or scientific humanist would. "The better is available to the fortunate few," he said, "but the best is available to everyone."

Such ethical philosophies, which find the rules or principles of the right, the just, or the ethical directly *out* there, or *in* there, wherever "ultimate" reality may be—are called "de-ontology" (from ontology, the science of being). Those of us who believe we must derive our rules or principles or judgments from actual situations of value—appreciations, prizings, pleasures, interests, ideals—we are practicing "axiology" (the science of values) or "teleology" (the study of goal-oriented behavior or processes). Creation, achievement, or at least appreciation of values would be our final test of the rightness or wrongness of our ethical theories and acts.

(Promotional synopsis of address, "Doing 'Right' and Doing 'Wrong'"; Ethical weekly, October 29, 1978)

Philosophically, Hornback identified himself as a "critical realist." While he did not believe that ideas precede or precipitate reality, they do "have consequences; ideas have a special status; they're a kind of permanent grid of ideal possibility, logical possibility." (Interview, September 23, 1986) He differed with both Neo-Platonists, who hold that primordial ideas are manifest in apprehensible modes of being (both material and moral), and existentialists, who contend that existents have only that "meaning" which human observers attach to them (in Sartre's words, "existence precedes essence"). He saw little benefit in phenomenology, the philosophical study of perception without any attempt to verify or explain objects perceived. Instead, Hornback asserted that "essences" such as hardness or triangularity "come as generalizations from objects. I am an objectivist, in the sense that I think our abstractions grow out of experience and have no supernatural status except as projections." (Ibid.) Rightly formed, however, those "abstractions" and "projections" are consistent, he contends; while they lack divine sanction, they boast a kind of self-authenticating inevitability.

In Hornback's deduction of "objective ethics," subjectivity is an intellectual handicap to be overcome via the tools of a rational science:

[W]hat is truth? My question is not meant to be cynical, completely relativistic, or nihilistic, as it so often is these days.... It is easy enough to render all beliefs and opinions equally valid (or invalid), and all values and moral judgments of values equally good (or bad), by insisting that there is no standard for testing them beyond the subjective preference of the person in whose head they are lodged.

Of course, our concept or opinion as to what is true about everything, including ourselves, is highly colored by our selves. But centuries of training in the scientific method [Francis] Bacon and others fought to protect, against the hoary sophistries, should have taught us ways of checking our subjective opinions, in contrast or in concert with the other subjective opinions, and in focus on the alleged object of the opinions. Thus the accidents of individual taste or temperament, the bias of culture or ethnicity, and even the limitations of human sense organs and intelligence may be corrected in part by comparison with other tastes and temperaments, other cultures and ethnicities, and instruments and operations far beyond the powers of the human mind, or any other minds we know of. Even then, and always, the truth remains somewhat beyond....

To that extent, the truth is a symbol, meaning somewhat more than what it literally stands for as a sign or pointer or dictionary definition. Literally, in the commonsense language everyone lapses into in more sensible moments, the truth is “what is,” “what is so,” or “the nature of the case,” and our more or less truthful ideas must be checked against that greater reality to determine and correct our errors. What works for me, or gets me by, or makes me happy or certain—that may or may not be true. Subjectivity, while all-important in the long run of course, is no sure test of truth, or of the ethical behavior which makes healthy subjectivity possible.

Promotional synopsis of address, “The Power of a Symbol: ‘The Truth’ “; Ethical weekly, February 18, 1979)

According to Hornback, “The objectivity of ethics has always been a central tenet of the Ethical movement. By this we mean that ethical behavior is something more than subjective whim or of individual taste, and more than the customs and mores of the tribe we happen to be born in.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “The ‘Objectivism’ of Ayn Rand”; Ethical weekly, November 14, 1965) Ethical Culture, said Hornback, asserts that “ethics has some basis in fact, the interrelations of personalities, the nature and structure of things—that it is not just a matter of... complete relativity.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Objective Altruism”; Ethical weekly, March 29, 1970) He acknowledged that “*values* are subjective, almost by definition. They include all pleasures, choices, prizes, ecstasies, kicks, fulfillments—however conflicting, strange, or foolish they may seem.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Sophisticated Substitute for Ethics”; Ethical weekly, October 4, 1964) The business of ethics, he said, is to “weigh, organize, heighten, harmonize, and set priorities among subjective values, as objectively as possible, and to aim at the greatest possible value according to available knowledge of man and the universe.” (Ibid.) He elsewhere refined this definition in utilitarian language, declaring that the goal of ethics is to achieve “the greatest possible satisfaction of interests”—that is, the best compromise amid internally and socially conflicting values. (Promotional synopsis of address, “The ‘Objectivism’ of Ayn Rand”; Ethical weekly, November 14, 1965) “The imperative,” said Hornback, “grows out of the weighing, the predicting, the testing of the consequences—in other words, that process of choosing, hopefully, for whatever creates life and growth, the more abundant life.” (Interview, September 23, 1986)

Hornback emphasized that ethical precepts derived through reason are indeed imperative: They are commands, not guidelines. Noting that the U.S. Constitution declared people have “certain unalienable rights,” Hornback underscored “the equally natural, unalienable, or contractual responsibilities, duties, or imperatives upon which all rights depend.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Responsibilities attend Rights”; Ethical weekly, December 15, 1974) Altruism, which Hornback defined as “genuine interest in others, in community and causes greater than one’s self,” delivers a mandate that may run counter to one’s tastes and inclinations. (Address, “Objective Altruism”) He was dubious of what the influential pediatrician Benjamin Spock deemed “the essential goodness” of human desire, charging that, judging by consequences, it “bears little resemblance to the old inner voice of ‘conscience,’ which was so dependable and so universal that whole generations considered it innate or divinely inspired.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “The Crisis of Authority”; Ethical weekly, April 14, 1968) By Hornback’s reckoning, even that “*old inner voice*”—the voice of “Duty” that Walter Sheldon exalted as the sure guide to ethical behavior—tends to mimic cultural mores and justify selfish motives. Because spontaneous inclinations are so various and precarious, Hornback believed that they must be reined by the viceroy of reason. “The right thing to do may at times be unpleasant,” he said. “It may be difficult as hell, but it may be what you *ought* to do, because it serves the greater

value.” (Interview, September 23, 1986) On the other hand, he observed, “Altruism need not mean self-effacement or martyrdom, though in some tragic and heroic cases it has led to that. Indeed, from the start, our movement has rejected the idea that ethics must always involve self-effacement or sacrifice.” (Address, “Objective Altruism”) Restating that observation as a beatitude, he wrote, “Happy indeed, and blessed and ethical, is the man whose wishes and obligations coincide—who wants to do (subjectively) what on the most thorough and sober responsible reflection he discovers or concludes he should do (objectively).” (Ibid.) But when “shoulds” and “wants” conflict, he insisted, the former must take precedence:

[I]f there is no all-knowing and all-powerful God out there in the universe, some people say, why should we be good? Or as Feodor Dostoevsky put it for one of his characters, and clearly for himself, “If God is dead, then all things are permitted.” If there is nobody watching, and nobody powerful enough to enforce ethical principles, then why be ethical? Dostoevsky wasn’t, even though he claimed to believe in God.

The same challenge is frequently put to those of us who believe in the validity of ethics—of objective, discoverable principles of better or worse, right or wrong, in human affairs, with or without a concept of God. Why be ethical? Why prefer one form of behavior over another? Some even go so far as to ask, why prefer life over non-life?

The Ethical Movement was founded to meet the twin challenges of the ethical authoritarians on the one hand, and the ethical skeptics and nihilists on the other—those who drew their imperatives straight from God or the infallible tradition, and those who recognize no imperatives at all.

The decline of the imperative mood, not just in grammar but in most of modern life, has continued steadily, since the days of the Ethical Societies’ founding fathers a century ago. It would be hard to imagine an Ethical Leader or Sunday School teacher these days, or forty years ago, seriously repeating the aim of Dr. Adler’s *Moral Instruction of Children* in 1892: to fill them with “a sense of the Ought in all its Awful Majesty.”

No ifs, ands, or buts about that! A stark and thunderous imperative, standing on its own. But I find it just as hard to understand or accept the view that there is no basis for the use of the imperative—no justification ever for the words “ought,” or “should,” or

“must.” (Except that we ought, or should, or must never say such words!) According to this latter view, we may at most (if we care to) suggest that others might like the things we like, or despise the things we despise.

But why? If I prefer the profits (or just the smell) of pollution, or the glory of war and bloodshed, or the special privileges of a racist or elitist government, who is to tell me I shouldn’t? A majority of those harmed, who might otherwise be helped? Life sustaining life, rather than mutual destruction? Isn’t that really better? Then say it! Do it! Want to do what you ought to do. That’s ethics.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “Ethics Without Thunder: The Decline of the Imperative Mood”; Ethical weekly, January 29, 1978.)

For Hornback, the accessibility of “objective ethics” is inherent in a holistic view of reality. The scientist who refuses to apply his methodology to ethics, and the theist who places the source of ethics outside the natural world, err in bifurcating reality, he contended. “A world or cosmos usually united in primitive religion and speech has been seen as divided into mind and matter, spirit and flesh, value and stuff, religion and science, ‘subject’ and ‘object’ by most ‘modern’ philosophers since Descartes, Kant, and Hume. Some philosophers and religionists—in particular the humanists who are strongly ethical—are trying to heal this damaging split.” (Report by James F. Hornback on address, “‘Object’ in Humanist Ethics,” delivered May 6, 1984; Ethical weekly, May 20, 1984) Against this dualism, Hornback advocated naturalism, “the philosophy which unites the worlds of science and the humanities, of facts and values, insisting that they are really one world and must learn to live together.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “The Best of ‘The Two Cultures’: The Values of a Scientist”; Ethical weekly, March 24, 1968). Ethics, rather than being imposed from a supersensible realm, develops organically in human ecology: “Man and his values, his cultures and his religions, are viewed as evolving along with his physical characteristics, in nature.” (Ibid.) With

a fervor rivaling that of the Vatican, Hornback warned his listeners against the adversaries of naturalism—the “supernaturalists” and the “sub-naturalists”:

“[N]aturalism” is much more than a love of nature. It is also more than an appreciation of the universal response to the message of sunlight, warmth, color, freedom, and renewal in the springtime. Naturalism is the acceptance of life as meaningful in its own terms, and of ethics—the guiding principles—as imbedded in and derived from the facts of such life. It may be either optimistic or pessimistic about the possibilities of human nature, or “realistic” in between.

In these terms, naturalism has most often been seen in opposition to the prevailing religious philosophies of Western culture, which held that life received its meanings and its guiding principles from forces above and beyond nature—in short, from the supernatural. How could beings as weak, transient, and prone to evil and suffering as men, possibly build and order their lives without superhuman aid? How could they even exist?

But in modern times, with the decline of the supernatural in the face of science, the “faith” of naturalism has been increasingly attacked from another side which, for want of a better term, I shall call sub-naturalism. Sub-naturalism shares with naturalism the belief that there is no supernatural or eternal source of truth and goodness, reward and punishment, and guiding rules for behavior, but it lacks the confidence of naturalism that there are natural and human sources of these qualities.

“Fact is fact, and value is value, and never the twain shall meet,” say these new sub-naturalists, from the hardboiled scientists of logical positivism to the new mystics and romantics of existentialism. “Value is non-sense,” says the early positivist, A.J. Ayer. Or, a bit later and mellower, “Value is non-cognitive.” And his fellow-travelers of existentialism, all for value, chime in, “Life and the universe are absurd. We create our values by an act of will.”

This leaves all value judgments in the area of impulse and emaciated mysticism, while the technical means of achieving them are assigned to the area of fact, science, and the rational planning. So the gap widens between fact and value, science and society, means and ends, technology and decision-making.

Promotional synopsis of address, “The Natural, Super-Naturalism, and Sub-Natural: A Talk for Easter,” Ethical weekly, April 6, 1969)

Hornback’s moral certainty is softened by a quiet omission—an omission which, by scholarly standards, undercuts his central thesis. Although he firmly asserted the discoverability of “objective ethics,” he never laid out a clearly defined ethical code. To do so, of course, would be deemed arrogant and unacceptable in the liberal Ethical Society. Accordingly, he humbly owned that “there are differing and often conflicting views of ‘the greatest good,’ and the ways of knowing, serving, or achieving it.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “How Can We Tell What’s Ethical”; Ethical weekly, January 9, 1983) While yet maintaining the objectivity of ethics, he placed responsibility for its discovery on the individual, and he acknowledged that ethical knowledge—like scientific knowledge—is subject to revision:

Even though we have no cosmic creed, we believe that there must be a cosmic outreach, some sense of man’s place in the great natural universe in which he has evolved, some sense of the possible purpose of man. Never mind whether this was a purpose placed long in advance, in the heart of the universe. Much of our interfaith and religious dialogue these days is devoted to this desperate search for sanctions, with an overly optimistic assumption that the sanctions are the same. Where was the sanction given, and by whom? How was it derived? We do not, in Ethical Humanism, try to evade this need for a search for sanction. But because we believe it is so important, and because we have accepted the teachings of modern science, *we consider this a search that every man must carry on for himself*, even though it be in close cooperation with others. *The conclusions must be open and tentative, subject to constant re-examination and the handling of new facts.*

(Transcript of address, “Ethical Culture and the ‘Larger’ Humanism,” delivered January 27, 1963, at the New York Society for Ethical Culture and broadcast over radio Station WQXR; p. 9 [italics are the author’s])

In a 1983 address titled “How Can We Tell What’s Ethical?” he enjoined his listeners to investigate the principal historical methods of seeking ethical guidance—divine revelation, mysticism, reason, empiricism, and adherence to authoritative figures or institutions—and to employ a sensible blend of the methods they found most compelling. “The way is different for each,” he said. “Our joint obligation is to seek mutually sustaining and enhancing universal values.” (Report by Susan Weidenheimer on address, “How Can We Tell What’s Ethical?”; Ethical weekly, January 23, 1983) As always, he expressed his lifelong reliance on reason to discern moral imperatives, but he concluded the talk with a remarkably tolerant embellishment of a quote from Nietzsche: “‘This is *my* way... What is *thy* way?’ *The* way? There is none.” (Ibid.) In avoiding a declaration of *the* way to ascertain right and wrong, Hornback honored Ethical Culture’s traditional openness: “Though Felix Adler considered... naturalism or humanism mistaken, and below the ‘supersensible’ level of religion, he left the door open for membership in his creedless movement. Like him, I would affirm my own philosophic faith, and encourage others to develop and justify their own life philosophies.” (Address, “Doing ‘Right’ and Doing ‘Wrong’”)

While refraining from pontification, Hornback did outline areas of ethical refinement, urging Society members to follow the path of reason up “the pyramid of responsibilities... from the broad base of common honesty and kindness, up through the more specialized and narrowing area of psychological adjustment and sensitivity training, to ordinary service and charity to others, to service and causes that involve pioneering and controversy, to the peak of the Ethical pyramid which would include a life orientation, an integrating philosophy.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “I and Thou: The Subject and Objects of Ethics”; Ethical weekly, February 6, 1966)

Hornback also lightened his rhetoric by occasionally qualifying the efficacy of the intellect. In his less defensive moments, he stipulated that “the principles and practices leading to the best possible relations among human beings... are open, discoverable, and subject to *reasonable* confirmation in experience”—a subtle admission that ethical “knowledge” is somewhat shy of certainty. (Promotional synopsis of address, “The New ‘Polydoxy’: Jewish? Christian? Humanist? Ethical?”; Ethical weekly, April 9, 1978 [italics are the author’s]) And for all his “objective” scientism, he conceded that “life cannot be all reason and cool planning, whether selfish or altruistic.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Self and Society: Ethical Humanism”; Ethical weekly, November 28, 1965) Because “an ethical vocabulary, or even a well-reasoned ethical theory, does not necessarily produce an ethical life,” a kind of ethical “grace” is needed to live “the good life.” (Address, “Doing ‘Right’ and Doing ‘Wrong’”) It was in his efforts to reconcile science and art, to interweave the potentially complementary faculties of reason and intuition, that Hornback produced his most thought-provoking religious instruction:

Moral skeptics and supernaturalists like to say that ethics is an “art” rather than a “science,” that some of us just “have it” while others don’t, and that ethics simply cannot be taught. Most of them hasten to add, however, that while ethics cannot be taught, it can be “caught.”

But how do we know when we have “caught” some ethics? And how do we know who “has it”? Do we just know, without reasons, evidence, or learning—by quoting authority or revelation, or by a flash of intuition or conscience?

Of course, being ethical and helping others to be ethical is an art, but it is an art based on centuries of human experience. Some people seem to do “the right thing” instinctively, without study or reflection, while others bumble along “doing wrong” in spite of good intentions and hard work. This is true in every discipline, from the fine arts to sports or telling a story, from “pure” science to the applied sciences of building bridges or doing business. It’s a quality called grace. Some of us have it, and some of us don’t. It is sometimes inherited, innate, unsought, and unmerited—like the grace of God in Calvinist theology. But more often it is the result of years, even generations, of sensitive striving for human betterment.

So in ethics there is the pure science, or theory, and the applied science, or art. Some of us develop one without the other. Those who master the “art” without the science seem to do so by choosing and following good examples, or listening to good authorities, or playing good hunches. But who knows which examples, authorities, and hunches are good, and why?

...

Our founding leader, Felix Adler (1851-1933), liked to say that while cultivation in the conventional arts and sciences is the privilege of the fortunate few, the way to ethical or moral goodness is open to everybody. Calling ethics “religious,” as he did, he disagreed with the saying he attributed to Schiller, that “he who has art and science has religion; he who has not these, let him have religion!” (I rather like the implications of this saying.) But this was Adler’s way of stressing that the “culture” in his favorite name, Society for Ethical Culture, meant moral striving which is open to everybody, and not just the cultivation of good taste. As he so often noted, many people of exquisite taste are among the world’s least ethical, and many of crude or average taste are supremely ethical.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “Ethics as Art and Science”; March 31, 1968)

A Distinctly Ethical Humanism

Hornback’s vision of humanism came into focus with his discovery and service of Ethical Culture. Mindful that “humanism” is variously used to denote simple atheism, attentiveness to human needs, and a love of classical art and literature, Hornback was careful to modify the humanism he propagated as emphatically *ethical*. His was no value-free humanism: It was realizing the finest of human potentialities—not “doing what comes naturally”—that he advocated. “Theological conservatives,” he wrote, “are understandably scornful of the sort of indiscriminate humanism which glorifies ‘all things human’—as if one possibly could be for all known human values, cultures, aspirations, and ideals, not to mention the conflicts, confrontations, envies, and hatreds, without hopeless inconsistency. Obviously, any ‘humanism’ must be an ideal conception of what human beings and society could be, rather than a simple observation or statistical projection of what they are.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “What Does it Mean to be Human?”; October 8, 1978) He viewed human character as malleable, equally capable of heroism and heinousness: “Unless one is a fanatic Calvinist, believing all humans to be born in sin and completely dependent on God for salvation, or an equally fanatic romantic, believing all humans to be born good until corrupted by learning and civilization, it must be equally obvious that human nature is a variable mixture and potential for good or evil.” (Ibid.)

In one key respect, Hornback confirmed a prevalent definition of humanism: It is atheistic. The human person, he asserted, need not call upon divine guidance or power to achieve ethical greatness. Indeed, Hornback vigorously denied that there is a divinity mortals might call upon. “I am agnostic about a lot of things,” he once said, indicating a simple uncertainty about the nature of reality, “but not about that.” While he rarely engaged in arguments over the existence of a divinity, his atheism clearly served his enduring premise that ethical principles are evident in the natural world. Because theism purports to take ethical direction from a supernatural source, Hornback claimed that it obfuscates humanity’s route to harmony with the earth and its other sentient inhabitants. When biologist David Ehrenfeld claimed in “The Arrogance of Humanism,” a book released in 1978, that an excessive reliance on reason engenders human alienation from the universal ecosystem—resulting in pollution, the endangerment of wildlife, and the depletion of natural resources—Hornback countered that “the most arrogant of all traditions in this regard is the Hebrew-Christian theology of man created in a supernatural God’s image, with ‘dominion’ over mere Nature and the lower animals.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “The ‘Arrogance’ of Anti-Humanism,” delivered January 21, 1979; Ethical weekly, January 7, 1979) Reason, said Hornback, mandates that humanity act as a responsible steward in nature. He further contended that theocentric philosophies tend, paradoxically, to falsely aggrandize humanity: “My own impression has always been that the traditional faiths are more presumptuously humanistic in the narrow sense, in making man the center of the cosmic process, and in claiming historically revealed truths about man which no science can contradict. Ethical humanists doubt that the cosmic drama happened in certain mythical and so-called historical ways just for the benefit of man, or as a moral test for him.” (Transcript of address, “Ethical Culture and the ‘Larger’ Humanism,” delivered January 27, 1963, at the New York Society for Ethical Culture and broadcast over radio Station WQXR; p. 10)

As with his overall metaphysics, Hornback refrained from depicting his atheism as a cornerstone of Ethical Culture, but he had little patience with wishy-washy agnostics: “[M]ost self-styled agnostics are really Fifth Amendment atheists,” he contended. “That is to say, when asked what sort of God may or may not exist, or may or may not be known, they tend to attach little or no importance to the question, or to have a definition so broad (love, or life, or nature, or first principles) that few atheists could disagree. So the choice between being an agnostic (‘I don’t know’) or an atheist (‘I don’t believe in God’) often turns out to be one of taste or public relations.” (Promotional introduction to “The Proper Agnostic,” an address by Robert Hoagland; Ethical weekly, October 15, 1978)

His atheism notwithstanding, Hornback cautiously described Ethical Culture as religious. It is religious, he said, insofar as its adherents share a common spirit of commitment:

I see no point in engaging in a sort of ‘tis-‘taint argument about who is or is not “religious.” Anyone who would use that term outside the folds of the obvious and historically established religions, or modern offshoots, must be prepared to explain the sense in which the word “religion” is used.

The Ethical movement is not “polydox” (holding “many doctrines”). Nor is it “orthodox” or “heterodox” (holding the “right doctrine” or “other doctrines”). The Ethical movement affirms the centrality and the supremacy of the ethical factor in every aspect of life. We believe that the principles and practices leading to the best possible relations among human beings—and other life, wherever it may exist—are open, discoverable, and subject to reasonable confirmation in experience. It is in our faith in such a method, and our commitment to it, that we call ourselves religious.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “The New ‘Polydoxy’: Jewish? Christian? Humanist? Ethical?”; Ethical weekly, April 9, 1978)

That perspicuous consecration of ethics, said Hornback, is what makes Ethical Culture distinctive: “We are not... a sort of nondenominational ‘religious’ society interested in ethics, but one in which ethics itself is the object of supreme commitment. Though we find kindred spirits and sobering examples of ethical living in other organizations, I know of none which makes the ethical emphasis explicit, as we do.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “The Special Role of the Ethical Leader”; Ethical weekly, May 11, 1980)

For Hornback, the “ethical” appendage to “humanism” indicates more than mere decency. He flouted “minimalist” ethics—the ethics of “enlightened self-interest,” the benign contention that one may do whatever one pleases so long as the action does not harm others. “Our ethic,” he said repeatedly, “moves beyond a mere ‘not wanting to hurt’ to a ‘wanting to help.’” (Report by Casey Croy on Hornback address, “World Humanist Trends,” delivered October 17, 1982; Ethical weekly, October 31, 1982)

For all his attention to the rational discernment of right and wrong, Hornback recognized that ethical *knowledge* can only be translated into ethical *behavior* through the inward cultivation of character. Repulsed by Madalyn Murray O’Hair and other atheists who defined themselves primarily by their antagonism to all things religious, Hornback struggled to develop a naturalistic vocabulary for the journey toward goodness. He was aided in his struggle by Adler and George Santayana—whom Hornback grew to admire during his postgraduate studies—but he never attained the deftness and confidence with which his heroes addressed the inner life. Instead, he essentially laundered the nomenclature of Judeo-Christian mystical theology, as when he spoke of “ethical grace” or suggested that “there is... an Ethical or Humanist equivalent of the wholeness, personal greatness, at-homeness in the universe, even ‘saintliness,’ which is properly defined as spirituality.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “The ‘New’ Spirituality: Is There an Ethical Equivalent?” delivered October 17, 1978; Ethical weekly, May 28, 1978) As soon as he suggested such a thing, however, he was compelled to qualify it, underlining the grave hazards of quietism and superstition:

I... have always favored “spirituality,” fully convinced that the highest of human sensitivity, creativity, and serenity is possible for those who see it as a fortunate outgrowth of cosmic evolution—just as much as it is possible for those who see it as a mirroring, mingling, or infusion of a great external Spirit. The “inner light,” as the Quakers see it, seems just as bright in the saintly secular spirit as in the more traditionally religious. Indeed, some of the least “spiritual” people I have ever known have been those who insisted that they were in direct communication with the Great Spirit, or at least in indirect communication through the Church (Temple, Mosque, etc.) or Scriptures which the Great Spirit revealed to the fortunate few.

The Central faith of the Ethical movement has always been in spirituality itself, rather than in a dogmatic explanation of its source. Some traditions favor a complete other-worldliness, or more accurately an out-of-this-world-liness. Not activity, they say, or having or doing, but just being. But being without concern for the material or physical needs for continuing to be, that is obviously self-defeating. Other traditions—especially the ethical-humanist—can recommend a sort of detached attachment, a prudent recognition of the ways best suited for reaching ideal ends.

“Spiritualism” is another question. “Spiritualism” seems to cover the whole range of spirituality, from the sublime or saintly to the malign or diabolical. It tends to be a rather materialistic or mechanical theory of intercommunication and control between and among spirits. If “spiritualism” is true, then the humanizing and ethicizing of spirits remains urgent, even perhaps the resort to “exorcism” or “casting out” of evil spirits. It is undoubtedly a valid criticism of most humanists, that they fail to allow enough room for the abnormal, the paranormal. True “spirituality” does not thrive on a shallow or unrealistic optimism, any more than it does on dour morality or spiritual rules.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “The ‘New’ Spirituality: Is There an Ethical Equivalent?; Ethical weekly, October 17, 1978)

Above all, Hornback doggedly asserted that “spirituality,” however defined, must be viewed as no more than a *means* to an ethical ideal; the ideal itself—the “greatest good”—can only be reliably determined through the systematic weighing of competing values. To fix objectives by attending to an “inner voice,” he warned, is to subject oneself to mysterious and potentially fiendish motives. “The irrational ends or goals of ethnicity, emotionalism, and ego determine the uses of science and reason,” he claimed, resulting in the “tragic excesses of our age—in war, pollution, poverty, and racism.... Surely this is the fatal split, between reason in means and unreason in ends.” (Address, “The ‘Arrogance’ of Anti-Humanism”) Similarly, when Theodore Roszak, author of “The Making of a Counterculture,” spoke at the Ethical Society in 1979 under the auspices of a local college, Hornback responded to the writer’s “sub-naturalism” with a biting platform address that reaffirmed the preeminence of reason:

Among America’s many “alternative” lifestyles, the one which receives the least attention from proponents of a healing counter-culture is... “the Ethical Alternative,” or Ethical Humanism. At best, “The Ethical Alternative” of rational, principled behavior in the service of the greatest possible value is treated as if it were the Establishment, responsible for all the ills as well as the “goods” in the material sense of modern society....

It seems just as intemperate, unjust, and ridiculous to me for Dr. Roszak to blame the plundering, wars, pollution, and poverty of the modern world on the tradition of rationalism and “objective” science, as it must seem to him for me to blame all the Hitlers, Charles Mansons, and hell-holes of Calcutta on impulse and a mystic sense of unity. Of course, there is no such thing as a value-free science, but neither should there be—to my heart and mind—a value system or community or person exempt from scientific or rational judgment. Is it Ethical Humanism that has failed us, or has it never yet been tried? And which philosophy really creates the dualism between flesh and spirit, matter and mind, science and feeling?

(Promotional synopsis of address, “The Ethical Alternative”; Ethical weekly, April 22, 1979)

Hornback believed that Ethical Culture, in addition to encouraging character development, shares with traditional religions the obligation to provide communal support that transcends the bounds of family, career, and social class. In the course of his vocation, he grew in his appreciation of this “sense of internal fellowship, the sharing of a common faith and outlook,” noting that “many of our members find their greatest inspiration in the informal, social, or fellowship events—in face-to-face ‘loving and caring.’” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Commitment, Community, and Civic Action: Ethical Priorities for 1978-79”; Ethical weekly, March 12, 1978) While community feeling is characteristic of all religious movements, Hornback deemed it a rarity among “independent liberals and free spirits,” who tend to avoid “institution-building.” In the Ethical Society, he said, “We see the need for more warmth, caring, and aesthetic wholeness in our total program.” (Ethical weekly, September 26, 1982) Hornback’s appreciation of community extended to the American Ethical Union and the International Humanist and Ethical Union; upon returning from an IHEU conference in Hanover, Germany, in 1982, he reported experiencing a “sense of spiritual kinship with a worldwide movement to which modern thought has come closer, despite the resurgence of religious orthodoxies.” (Report by Casey Croy on address, “World Humanist Trends,” delivered October 17, 1982; Ethical weekly, October 31, 1982)

But as with his advocacy of a qualified “spirituality,” Hornback was quick to caution Society members that community feeling must remain subordinate to the service of ethical ideals, “for ours is a ‘movement’ of dedication and commitment, rather than a ‘facility’ for the satisfaction of miscellaneous interests.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Ethics as Art and Science”; March 31, 1968) Although he valued community for its own sake—and not simply as a fortunate by-product of organizing for social service and reform—he expressed discouragement in the

1970s that “our current emphasis and activity are in the direction of the personal, social, and psychological, rather than the public affairs outreach.” (Address, “Commitment, Community, and Civic Action: Ethical Priorities for 1978-79”)

According to Hornback, the gravest hazard of exalting the satisfactions of community is that a narrow allegiance to any religious institution—including Ethical Culture—is antithetical to the “larger humanism” that commands the loyalty of all ethical people. “Humanism in general and ethical humanism in particular means the use of the greatest possible good of humanity, present and future, as a guide and sanction and imperative for action,” he wrote. “So those who appeal to the individual ego or will, the family or tribe, the ethnic group or nation, or an international racial or religious group as the ultimate in goodness are to that extent not humanists.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “The ‘Arrogance’ of Anti-Humanism”; Ethical weekly, January 21, 1979) Extrapolating from this overarching concern for human equality and interdependence, Hornback contended that openness and creedlessness are necessary virtues in an organization that strives to foster ethical behavior. “[T]he Ethical Society—both locally and nationally, and internationally—has always been an open and a ‘gathered’ group, as the sociologists call it, rather than an ethnic or ‘birthright’ group,” he wrote. “‘Whosoever will,’ may come and join us in a shared quest for the highest possible good, rather than in a preconceived or inherited notion of that good.” (Hornback’s promotional announcement of address, “Individualism, Community, and the Problem of Ethics,” delivered by Gerald D. Izenberg, associate professor of history at Washington University; Ethical weekly, February 4, 1980)

That “quest for the highest possible good”—a quest that is at once spiritual, communal, and scientific—was Hornback’s definition of ethical humanism. No “leap of faith,” it is an investment in the human capacity for knowing, modified by a healthy wariness of the human capacity for self-deceit:

We exist, as individuals, yes; we exist in communities; we exist too, in this great natural universe in which we live and move and have our being. Our ideals, our sanctions, our possibilities, and our aspirations all come from this great natural universe. Ethical humanists are distrustful of those who put their trust in the existentialist or mystical inner voice. The inner voice so often echoes the prejudices of one’s own background and culture. We are distrustful of those who are a little more sociological about it and attribute their sanction exclusively to their heritage, their tradition, and the training of children. *There must be an outreach aimed at full understanding of man’s place in the natural universe, as well as an inward look at his spiritual being, which is also a part of that natural universe. The creative process found in these three dimensions is the supreme value of an ethical humanist.*

(Transcript of address, “Ethical Culture and the ‘Larger’ Humanism,” delivered January 27, 1963, at the New York Society for Ethical Culture and broadcast over radio Station WQXR; p. 10 [italics are the author’s])

A Bulwark of the Old Left

Hornback was a stern and combative social critic. He spoke out on war and peace, church-state conflicts, racial discord, urban blight, and a host of other burning issues. He made no secret of—and no apologies for—his biases. He was a classic liberal, favoring strong government intervention to redress the wrongs of racism, sexism, economic and educational inequities, and industrial pollution. A staunch supporter of the United Nations, he fought for nuclear disarmament and an international system of justice.

But Hornback was as conservative in his methods as he was liberal in his stands. A self-proclaimed bulwark of the “Old Left,” he endorsed orderly democracy and board-room activism; he loathed militancy, flower-child romanticism, and any other social or political movement fueled by emotion. Not that he was content with the effectiveness of rational, systematic politics: He was frustrated with the slowness—and precariousness—of the democratic system, but he cherished it as the only reliable guard against humanity’s apparently savage instincts. Like the American founding fathers he lionized, Hornback doubted the intelligence and decency of “the majority,” but he accepted the *system* as the most benign alternative to latent tyranny or anarchy. Accordingly, he deemed the instruction and recruitment of ethical citizens a primary aspect of his vocation. He beseeched his listeners to translate their ethical convictions into political action, pushing and prodding humanity to more nearly realize its potential for goodness:

[E]thics and religion must be projected, and for the most part defined, in an area that is “beyond politics.” But that is not to say, as some people are prone to do, that ethics and religion are to be excluded, or worst of all to be considered wholly separate, from the realm of politics....

[E]thics is to be identified with an “ideal” plan or projection beyond the way things are.... [W]e are of course obliged to apply our best possible ethical thinking to all the issues of politics. We must also console ourselves in the long run with the realistic dictum that “politics is the art of the possible.” What can and will get done is discouragingly small and often “wrong,” through majority votes and representative governments, and compromises and trades in the clash of selfish and separate and vital interests.

Is there no better way? Even democracy, though it may be the best safeguard against massive and totalitarian evils, is dependent on the enlightenment and the ethics of its ultimate governing body—the electorate. There is our basic problem, in a world and a nation in which people seem increasingly to be acting and speaking in terms of their single-minded pressure groups and self interests, rather than the common weal.

In short, there is a real need for people who willingly project the possible good of the nation, and of human-kind, beyond the politics of self-interest and the present moment. (Unless, of course, you have a simple faith—as the fascists do on the collective side and the rugged individualists and Social Darwinists do on the individual side—that in the “clash” of vital interests the “best” man, the “best” nation, the “best” race or religion is bound to win. War, for this type, becomes “the extension of politics by other means.”)

Ethics, then, becomes our best hope for “the extension of politics” by means that are humane, rational, and aimed at shared and enhanced values. Laws and precedents, and administrative and court decisions, may embody the highest common factor (or the lowest common denominator) of ethics in our culture. But they seldom go beyond the mediocre, the commonly accepted, even in the recognition of minority rights. So ethics must be on the growing edge....

(Promotional synopsis of address, “Beyond Politics”; Ethical weekly, November 4, 1979)

Through the diligent practice of ethics, Hornback believed, humanists can markedly advance cultural evolution. His frequent potshots at social Darwinists do not indicate disagreement with their depiction of human development; on the contrary, true to his “scientific naturalism,” he maintained that “human society, religions, arts, and philosophies are parts of the natural, evolutionary process, just as our bodies and physical characteristics are.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Nature and Nurture: The ‘Roots’ of Ethics”; Ethical weekly, March 27, 1977) His disagreement was with the assumption that the wealthy and the “reigning powers” of politics and commerce are, by necessity, society’s “natural” leaders: “Who says that survivors of the evolutionary process are biologically the fittest or ethically the best?” he demanded, noting with sorrow—and sometimes anger—that ethical people often are thwarted by driven and unscrupulous adversaries. (Ibid.) To avoid that acknowledgement, he said, would exonerate racism, sexism, and other forms of elitism that so often triumph in the clash of partisan interests. Hornback viewed the successes of unscrupulous seekers of money and power as an interim stage in the evolutionary process, a process he believed would ultimately reward equality and altruism. “There are those who see man’s evolution as now determined by reason and culture, more than by the physical heritage—even if that heritage tends to combativeness more than cooperation,” he wrote. “And many evolutionists stress the qualities of love and cooperation for survival above those of conflict.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Radical or Reactionary: The Spirit of our Age”; Ethical weekly, May 25, 1969) Again, he preached the necessity of “keeping the faith”—of living by objective ethical standards, even when those standards precipitate practical failures in this passing stage of evolution. In the context of this ethical faith, the quality of one’s life—and the measure of one’s character—must be judged by reference to ideals rather than immediate prosperity:

The old debate between justification by “faith” and justification by “works” has been superseded lately by the suggestion that we don’t need to justify ourselves at all. All we have to do is to be.

On the other hand, pending some better solution to the problems of race and poverty, war and crime, pollution and overpopulation, the “being” of some of us is bound to be less satisfactory than that of others—unless, of course, we manage to equalize ourselves in utter destruction or chaos. How do we justify the differences? In terms of power alone? (This solution seems

increasingly popular, as in fascist times and place, as the only way to social justice. Whatever is, is right.)

In romantic, utopian terms, everybody ought to be able to “be” himself, fully, without interference from others, from laws, from disease, from tragedy. But despite our sneers at the ethics of the old “economy of scarcity”—which is supposed to account for saving and sacrifice, servility, and drudgery—we have as yet found no ethics for the “economy of abundance.” Despite industrialization and automation, the world of plenty for all remains a far-off dream.

So in the meantime, how do we justify our existence, as individuals and as institutions? Some would still make the justification primarily economic or military. Those who can get what it takes, or beat down or frighten away the opposition, are the deserving. At least they have the power, and the only way that the “have-nots” can get their share is to get comparable or even incomparable power.

Justice, if it is considered at all, becomes nothing but a jockeying for power. Ours not to reason why, ours is but to do—or die. Surely the modern world can do better than that.

One of the chief problems, I submit, is the number of people who have decided that they no longer have to justify their existence—neither economically, nor intellectually nor morally. By a curious psychological quirk that is downright metaphysical in its implications, they are thus justifying themselves, by “faith.” They think they are justified, just by being what they are (however unproductive or anti-social) or believing as they do (so long as it comforts them). The confidence so engendered keeps them going, while more skeptical or self-critical people sink in despair....

[T]here is a standard of social usefulness and cooperativeness—in an atmosphere of toleration for difference of talent and need—which must be retained if we are ever to achieve social justice.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “On Justifying Our Existence”; *Ethical weekly*, May 5, 1968)

Hornback’s appreciation of cultural evolution profoundly affected his approach to ethics. As an “objectivist”—rather than an “absolutist” or “relativist,” according to his definition of the terms—he sought to examine social controversies in the context of evolving justice. If behavior is to be judged by its consequences, as he believed, then the historical and anticipated results of human actions weigh heavily in ethical decision-making. “In that fleeting moment known as the ‘present,’ very little that is important or even meaningful can happen,” he wrote. “It is in the continuing life process that ethics is possible.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “To Ourselves and Our Posterity”: What Rights for Which Unborn?; *Ethical weekly*, December 10, 1978) Because of his unswerving secularism, he disregarded all suggestions that actions have consequences in an afterlife. Humanists, he said, concern themselves solely with the “here and now,” but added that the scope of those two dimensions is illimitable: “[T]he ‘here and now’ of an ethical humanist,” he wrote, “includes all possible interests on this earth and its surrounding galactic space, and all the lasting and interdependent interests of foreseeable future generations.” (Ibid.)

Viewing justice as a process rather than a pre-ordained principle, Hornback phrased ethical issues in temporal, utilitarian terms. For instance, he justified his pro-choice stand by granting more merit to the implications of abortion than to a purportedly inherent wrongness: “What . . . , in a true humanism, are the ‘rights’ of the unborn? Are they simply, as in present anti-abortion theory, the right to be born alive, once biologically conceived, regardless of all other conditions? Or is there a ‘right’ to be born under

certain favorable conditions—favorable both to the individual in question, and to the needs and interests of the human race? Conversely, is there a responsibility—which some people have assumed for economic, biological, or sociological reasons—of neither conceiving nor bearing children?” (Ibid.) Elucidating this overriding concern for “here and now” consequences, he wrote, “Other-worldly religions are more squeamish about the beginnings of life—with taboos on birth control and abortion—and less concerned about the length and quality of life, or the loss of it in war, capital punishment, and natural catastrophes.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Taking Liberties with Life”; *Ethical weekly*, April 10, 1966)

Economic security was among the chief “quality of life” issues Hornback regularly addressed. The “Old Leftist” grieved at the unequal distribution of property and opportunity, and, like Walter Sheldon, he refused to accept the “value-free” diagnoses proffered by social scientists. “Our economic facts and problems in a naturally favored land

such as the United States are clearly a reflection of our basic choices and theories of value,” he wrote. (Promotional synopsis of address, “Inflated Costs and Deflated Values”; April 20, 1980) For instance, in assessing the calamitous recessionary cycle of the 1970s, he owned that inflation is “often the result of great and mysterious economic forces, and sometimes the result of natural catastrophes or the blameless accidents of birth and geography.” But more often, he added, it is “the direct result of human cussedness and greed, of people trying to get more and more for themselves, while producing less and less for others.” (Ibid.) Only by designating “the good life” in terms of fairness and responsibility—rather than comfort and status—can individuals help “break the hold which economics seems to have on ethics.” (Ibid.) A soldier in the “War on Poverty,” Hornback fought for public housing, government-sponsored job training and placement, and adequate funding of welfare and health-care programs; in his addresses—and through his participation in various civil rights agencies—he pressed for equal employment opportunity and compensation for women and minorities.

The two ethical issues Hornback addressed most often—and most fervently—were church-state separation and racism. It may be said that the top priorities on his social agenda were shoring up a “wall” and breaking down barriers.

A Voice In The Wilderness

In his devotion to propagating ethical humanism, Hornback felt painfully lonely. When he retired from active leadership in 1984, he delivered an address titled, “An Ethical Promised Land?: After Forty Years in the Wilderness.” In it, he expressed his bitter disappointment that the world community had passed up opportunities to break down historic divisions. “Instead of transcending the old religions and nationalisms after the defeat of Hitlerism,” he said, “we acquiesced in their revival and multiplication.” (Report by Hornback on, “An Ethical Promised Land?: After Forty Years in the Wilderness,” an address he delivered September 16, 1984; *Ethical weekly*, September 30, 1984) As the title of the address implies, Hornback saw himself as a voice in the wilderness, a John the Baptist heralding a new and unifying faith grounded in ethics. Surrounding him was a wilderness of unreason, a congenial habitat for aggressive predators, insidious scavengers, and cowardly escapists.

The most brazen predators in the wilderness were religious fundamentalists. In the 1940s and ‘50s, when sociologists and other intellectuals predicted the dissipation of dogmatic religion, Hornback warned that fundamentalism would revive; because science had undermined cultural mythologies that long had provided emotional sustenance, he asserted, the weak of heart would renounce the way of the mind and take refuge in the ersatz certainties of “old-time religion.” Time proved him right: In the ensuing decades, America’s fastest-growing religious movements were emotionally charged and theologically conservative. “Born-again” Christians became a powerful cultural, political, and economic force. And as the power of the Christian bloc swelled, Hornback grew increasingly combative.

Throughout his career, Hornback took on his Christian adversaries in the schools, the courts, and the polls. As he interpreted the constitutional separation of church and state, the government not only is barred from supporting any particular religion, but it must not support religion in general over “‘irreligion’ or ‘non-religion’ or even ‘anti-religion.’” (Address, “In What Sense are We Religious?”; *Ethical weekly*, March 14, 1976) He was an unswerving ally of the “free, mixed, nonsectarian public schools” which—as he delighted in pointing out—were for many years denigrated by Canon Law as a potentially perverting influence on Roman Catholic youngsters. In the wake of Madalyn Murray O’Hair’s successful campaign against prayer in public schools, he vociferously fought the dogged efforts of evangelical Christians to reinstate the practice via litigation, legislation, or a constitutional amendment. Likewise, he lobbied against any legislative or bureaucratic attempt to aid private schools with federal or state tax revenue—including tax rebates and tax deductions for private-school tuition; such measures, he warned, would destroy the public schools, or at very least “ensure their status as schools for blacks and paupers.” (*Ethical weekly*, March 19, 1978) In the early 1970s, he was a plaintiff in a drawn-out challenge to a Missouri statute under which free textbooks would be provided to private-school students. While he and his co-plaintiff were successful in their challenge, Hornback remained vigilant. In the mid-70s, he lobbied against a drive to amend the Missouri Constitution to allow limited state aid for private schools—and he urged Society members to do the same. He served on the boards of the Missouri chapters of PEARL (Public Education and Religious Liberty) and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and he supported the ACLU in its determined efforts to prevent state support of religion.

If hardline dogmatists were the most belligerent foes in the forest, theological modernists were the most insidious. For all his differences with Christian fundamentalists, Hornback had “a certain grudging respect” for their integrity.

“I think [the fundamentalist] is wrong, but I wouldn’t call him dishonest,” he said. “I don’t think there are very many dishonest fundamentalists.” (Interview, September 23, 1986) Liberal, avant-garde theologians, on the other hand, generally struck Hornback as cowardly and two-faced. “The pragmatic theists,” he said, “are the people I objected to most—the ones who said, ‘Well, we really don’t believe anymore the content of the ancient revealed religions, but we find their symbols and festivals and so forth so powerful that we’re going to use them and try to change their meaning, so to bring people to catch up with us. That was my argument with the church—more against the pragmatic theists [than the devout believers].” (Ibid.)

The tendency among progressive Protestant and Catholic theologians to recast the God-image in conceptual terms—for example, defining God as the “value-creating process of the universe”—was, to Hornback, deceitful. “In the Hebrew-Christian Western theological tradition, ‘God’ is a *person*—maybe not a grandfatherly human body in the sky, but God is a cosmic consciousness of will, a power—a conscious power,” he said, adding that turning God “into a principle or an integrating symbol... is a popular afterthought.” (Ibid.) He recognized that “the use of the word ‘God’ opens doors,” but he refused to package his secular philosophy in more culturally palatable currency. “I just find it a matter of integrity, of honest use of religious language,” he said. “I feel we have an ethical obligation not to snow people or take advantage of them by using words in an esoteric sense just because you know they will respond emotionally to the words.” (Ibid.)

In his fervor to spread the “new faith” of ethical humanism, Hornback was impatient with “crypto-humanists” who refused to forthrightly promote secular philosophy. “I see the modernists and the process theologians and so forth as kind of mediators, but I also see them as delaying agents,” he said. “They have retained the symbols and the institutions (of traditional religion), which plays right into the hands of the fundamentalists. In other words, if they had been frank in their humanism, I think it would have strengthened humanism to the point of perhaps a victory over the ‘forces of darkness.’” (Ibid.)

If Christian modernists struck Hornback as weak-willed dissemblers, truth seekers of the mystical variety struck him as crazy escapists. Although the self-realization movement launched in the 1960s matured in the seventies and eighties, winning over scholars and scientists who adopted fresh paradigms of reality, Hornback did not soften his scorn for non-rational modes of apprehension. Freakish cults that won the allegiance of innocent youths were easy targets, but Hornback’s criticism was wholesale: Meditation, yogic or Zen discipline, and the study of Eastern philosophy was so much dangerous nonsense. By his reckoning, accepting subjective religious experience as a guide to “the good life” was like asking the brainless Scarecrow for directions to Oz. He considered linear thought—the logical analysis of objectified reality—the essence of right knowledge. To draw sustenance from non-rational insight, he believed, was to be irrational, or “sub-natural”:

The human race has been defined in part, or at least distinguished from the lower animals, by its time-binding ability. The ability to use symbols, memories, myths, hopes, and plans to bind our past through our present to our future—this has been almost the definition of *homo sapiens*, the “rational” animal.

This definition has in recent years been challenged by emphasis on two ancient philosophies of life. One is the absolute or egoistic hedonism of immediate gratification of impulses, feelings, and wishes, as distinguished from prudential or universal hedonism. And the other philosophy, sometimes but not always related to egoistic hedonism, is the belief that past and future are merely human and even illusory projections of “the eternal now.” To live fully, perhaps ecstatically, in the here and now, without reference to the past or concern for the future, becomes the aim or the philosophy of life.

Granted, the “rational” animal has not done too well to date, in planning or achieving a good society. But is that due to too much reliance on reason, science, and prudence, or too little? The gap on this question is not really between the generations, but between people of differing views.

* * *

The “Now” generation, as it has been called in an extensive literature and folklore, is sometimes just impatient—wanting the good life here and now, as most of us ethical humanists do. Sometimes it may be showing frustration—distrust of the past and of the alleged wisdom and experience of age, and fear or skepticism for the future. But in its more metaphysical supporters (Alan Watts, Carlos Casteneda, Ted Roszak, to name a few) it asserts the “eternal now”—beyond time and space, beyond good and evil, just heightened consciousness.

A member’s gift of “The Tao of Physics,” a book by physicist Fritjof Capra (1975) shows the parallels between relativity theory and ancient Asian mysticism. The book prompted me to finish a bit of verse started several years ago, after reading Emily Dickinson’s “They say that ‘time assuages’” at a funeral service. Our son Jim, now a business student at UMSL, wisecracked a title too good to resist:

PHYSICISTS THROW IN THE TAO

They say that “time elapses,”—
Time never did elapse;
Our minds and our synapses
Give us sequences and gaps.
We look far out in spaces,
And see far back in times,
And a mystic glimpse erases
All need for reasoned rhymes.

(Promotional synopses of address, “Aging and the ‘Now’ Generation: Space, Time, and Ethics”; Ethical weekly, February 27 and March 6, 1977)

In addition to spotting enemy camps throughout the wilderness, Hornback grumbled about adversaries in the humanist camp. Ethical leaders who adopted the vocabulary of Protestant modernism, and particularly those who used that language to describe vital mystical experience, were especially irksome. And because Hornback did not define his philosophy primarily in terms of unbelief, he did not automatically count defiant atheists among his allies. For instance, he made no attempt to disguise his contempt for Madalyn Murray O’Hair, the renowned champion of organized atheism: “The self-appointed leader in the battle for ‘atheism’ and ‘religious freedom’ complains she has had to do it all alone, and even without financial help,” he noted in a 1976 edition of the Ethical weekly. “The sad fact is, for all her energy and belligerence, she has been either unwilling or constitutionally unable to work with anyone. Those of us who knew her, years back, as Ms. Murray of Baltimore with two young sons opposing prayers and Bible readings in the public schools, watched in horror as she upstaged, put down, and grabbed credit from everyone else. (My file is full of her attempts to be ‘unholier than thou.’)” (Ethical weekly, April 4, 1976)

Hornback’s chief complaint with believers of all stripes is their tendency to define themselves as “insiders,” leaving all unbelievers—or believers, in the case of clannish atheists—on the outside. Citing its polarizing effects in personal, ethnic, and international life, Hornback called religion “an important if not overriding cause in most of the world’s current and probably future wars.” (Hornback address titled “Messianic Missiles: The New Holy Wars,” delivered February 19, 1984; reported by Susan Weidenheimer in Ethical weekly, March 4, 1984) As he read history, one clan’s devotion to religious or ethnic self-preservation prompts an equal and opposite reaction, setting up a cycle of reciprocal hostility:

One “true believer” seems to call for another—often in sharp contrast and conflict with the first. And so it is with the “true believer” whose current notoriety had made him an obvious illustration for a talk, even before the outbreak of equal and opposite “true believing” created by the taking and holding of American hostages in the [U.S.] embassy at Teheran.

The Ayatollah Khomeini is the obvious illustration, a dark and brooding spokesman for the Moslem revival as we start the fifteenth century of the Moslem calendar. Mohammed made his fateful flight, or hegira, from Mecca to Medina to establish his new version of the ancient semitic religion of Abraham in our year 632 A.D. Mohammed wanted to be a new prophet in the tradition of Jesus and the prophets of Israel, and in more ways than most westerners are now prepared to admit, he was.

There is much to be said for the view that the “true believer” Hitler, looking for a scapegoat and an enemy for the mystic revival of the “Aryan” race, chose the ancient and scattered but still identifiable “Jewish people,” God’s chosen people with a promised land. In so doing and almost succeeding, through the war and the Holocaust, he did succeed in reviving that ancient “true belief” in Zionism and its embodiment in the partitioning of Palestine for the new state of Israel. But the Arabs and Moslems (including non-semites as in Iran) have thus been prodded by Jewish and western “colonialism” into a massive revival of their own.

And now the Ayatollah, in plotting or supporting the taking of American hostages to force the return of the Shah, has brought out the “true believers” in avenging the honor of our country against the madmen and infidels.

(Address, “The Return of the True Believers”; Ethical weekly, November 25, 1979)

Release from the cycle of hostility, Hornback taught, lay in the exercise of religious tolerance. He felt it imperative that religions be permitted to thrive without governmental or sectarian interference, because only by dropping their defenses can religious and ethnic organizations enter into a greater community: “The American ideal by which many of us have lived, for all the opposition to it or blindness in its practice, has been one of inclusion of many religious and ethnic backgrounds in one nation, one community, one culture. Some of us have no other ‘identity’ and no other place of refuge, having rejected the separatists of our own background as ‘racists,’ or at least as religious bigots.” (Ethical weekly, December 4, 1977) He admitted that it often was a strain to defend the freedom of religious groups he found noxious, such as the Society for Krishna Consciousness (the Hare Krishna sect), the Unification Church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, and the Church of Scientology. “Defending religious freedom these days requires the patience of a Job,” he wrote. “Yet there are those of us in the Ethical movement, and in many more conservative religious movements, who believe in defending it, against all provocations.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Blasphemy, Brain-Washing, Genocide: The Seamy Side of Religious Freedom”; Ethical weekly, September 25, 1977)

Hornback recognized that facilitating community requires more than superficial deference: It requires dialogue. For all his combativeness, he made significant efforts to communicate with ethical humanism’s “outsiders.” Following in the footsteps of his predecessors all the way back to Sheldon, he took part in the Sandwich Club, a venerable ecumenical community of clergy and educators. He often invited priests, ministers, and rabbis to speak at the Society; in the eighties, he organized two consecutive summer platform series in which representatives of various religious groups—ranging from traditional denominations to peculiar contemporary movements—explained their beliefs and practices to interested Society members.

Perhaps Hornback’s most constructive interaction with supposed adversaries was with Jesuits, members of the Roman Catholic order known as the Society of Jesus. During the reformational Second Vatican Council, the church set up a Secretariat for Non-Believers to establish communication with communists and other non-theistic movements whose influence had become—from the church’s point of view—frighteningly strong. Members of the secretariat met with representatives of the International Humanist and Ethical Union at a two-day conference in Amersfoort, The Netherlands, in April, 1966. Later that month, Jesuit seminarians at St. Mary’s College in St. Marys, Kansas, invited leaders of the American Ethical Union to take part in a parallel conference titled CONTACT—Conference On Non-Theism And Contemporary Theology. Hornback was one of four humanists—two of the others also were Ethical Culture leaders—to participate in the conference, the first of its kind in the United States. By all accounts (the event received extensive press coverage), the Jesuits and humanists engaged in open, respectful, and surprisingly productive discussions regarding metaphysics, ethics, education, and pastoral care. The student hosts, who were concluding up to 15 years of training for the priesthood, expressed fascination with the sincerity and ethical devotion of men they had expected to be antagonistic; several of the scholastics admitted with embarrassment that their familiarity with humanistic philosophy was paltry in comparison with the humanists’ grasp of Christian thought and history. According to an article in the National Catholic Reporter, Hornback was similarly surprised by the congeniality of the gathering, which produced friendships he would maintain for decades: “Hornback told the Jesuits, ‘You’re not nearly so square as I expected. But I think five years ago you would have been considerably more square, and this conference, under your auspices, would not have taken place.’ Both sides laughed when he added, in a reference to a controversial Vatican II speech by Father Pedro Arrupe, the Jesuit general, ‘I think you see now we aren’t a monolithic mass movement ready to take over the mass media.’” (National Catholic Reporter, May 4, 1966)

Hornback's constructive engagement with the "forces of darkness" carried over into his long-term battle to prevent government support of private schools. For all the firmness of his conviction, he openly acknowledged the validity of his opponents' concerns—in particular, the quality of education in St. Louis's city schools. His conclusion—drawn largely from his experience as a father of public-school children—was that citizens must persistently bolster the floundering educational system that had exasperated so many conscientious parents:

Ethics in the schools of America—not just the demand for equal access and equal opportunity in education, but the demand for teaching and practice of ethics and morality in the classroom and school community—may turn out to be the big issue in education after all.

In this issue alone, my sympathies as a parent, Ethical leader, and community volunteer are running with those parents—white or black, city or suburban, prosperous or poor—who seek out private or parochial schools, or privileged public school districts, where teachers and administrators can expect regular attendance and punctuality, good grooming and classroom tone, cooperation between school, and home, and some standards of excellence in skills and subject matter. The public school establishment—as its parochial and separatist enemies call it—is far from blameless in its choice of methods which have led to aimless, unstructured, drugged, and even violent behavior in the decades since World War II.

But as a friend and partisan of the "free, mixed, nonsectarian public school" denounced by Canon Law, I hope the public schools will reassert their birthright, and their basic principles. They can and must act in loco parentis—in the place of parents, during school hours—whether the parents are acting as parents or not during their time. And teachers and administrators must be backed in this right to elementary discipline, contrary to many recent trends in educational philosophy, children's lib, and student's "rights."

Many factors, of course, contribute to the widely publicized decline in student and teacher morale, test scores, and general willingness to be taxed for public schools. The broadening base of the student body, including the black "underclass," has extended through high school and into college and graduate school. The wars, the instant news, and the tensions of an ethnically and religiously mixed industrial society—all these contribute to the problem.

But given the problem, how is it to be solved? If we do not help the public schools of America to meet the challenge, tax support will soon be shifted by "democratic" choice of Congress and the citizens to private and parochial schools. Some of the latter, particularly the parochial schools holding on after their ethnic congregations have left the central city, are doing a better job of desegregation, drug control, classroom discipline and teaching the basic skills than the public schools are doing. Yet I cannot shake the fear that increasing support for such schools will only balkanize America further, and assure the failure of the democratic experiment which elitists and separatists have been predicting since colonial days.

(promotional synopsis of address, "Ethics in the Schools: City and Suburbs, Public and Private"; Ethical weekly, May 21, 1978)

In addition to acknowledging the need for substantial improvement in public education, Hornback recognized as legitimate the worry that public schools undermined students' religious sensibilities. On the platform and in other public forums, he asserted that humanism is not "a monolithic mass movement" bent on destroying the faith of children; he pooh-poohed the contention of a regional class-action lawsuit that secular humanism was the "religion" of the public schools, and that, according to the principle of non-partiality, government-supported schools were obliged to give equal time to the teaching of Christianity and Judaism. In less guarded moments, however, he cautioned that Ethical Culture courted such charges by defining itself as religious, and by obtaining legal judgments upholding that definition. His battle for educational integrity forced a dilemma: He dearly wanted public schools to teach ethics—secular, humanistic ethics—but he recognized the danger of asking the state to support a "religious" movement. Though firm in denying the veracity of theism, he was savvy enough to take seriously the passions of those who espouse it. His proposed solution of the dilemma—a solution backed by the National Council on Religion and Public Education—was to press for instruction *about* religion while maintaining opposition to religious *indoctrination*:

Far from suggesting the kind of ostrich-in-the-sand avoidance of religions as a fact of history, literature, and life which characterizes some school administrators and sectarian vigilantes, I have a positive proposal to make. Not religious observances or devotionals, which are clearly unconstitutional, and likely to isolate and intimidate minority groups and religious dissenters. Not “optional” acceptance of bibles distributed by such well-meaning missionary groups as the Gideons. But deliberate, disciplined, and educationally certified teaching about the history and literature of religions in an academic

way which has been accepted increasingly by public and private colleges and universities in recent years, and by some state and local public schools.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “Orange Juice, Prayers, Carols, and Sex: Whose Religion in the Public Schools?”; Ethical weekly, November 27, 1977)

Of course, dialogue includes more than mutual respect and the quest for understanding: It includes persuasion. Amid the resurgence of conservative theism, Hornback perceived widespread disbelief, a growing disenchantment with religious authoritarianism in thought and ethics. He saw the trend toward agnosticism, as well as flirtations with mysticism, as a ripe opportunity to win converts to the “new faith.” Popular literature on the “death of God,” he surmised, “indicate a new interest in secular ethics.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Conflicting Reports on the Death of God”; Ethical weekly, January 16, 1966) While taking quiet satisfaction in the observation that so many were coming around to his perspective, Hornback also saw the changing religious temperament as a challenge to recruit dissenters before they wandered off in aimless alienation:

Reports on the death of God are probably like those Mark Twain heard about himself, “highly exaggerated.” Indeed, a favorite joke among those who reject the reports is to say “God is dead” (signed, F. Nietzsche), and then add the obvious fact that “Nietzsche is dead” (signed, God).

But the gods who can live and die as nothing but ideas in the minds of men are hardly the “living” gods of convinced believers. We expect a noted humanist like A. Eustace Haydon, professor emeritus of the history of religions at the University of Chicago and leader emeritus of the Chicago Ethical Society, to speak of “the Gods who died” as he does in his “Biography of the Gods” (sixth printing, Macmillan, 1948). We had hardly expected Protestant theologians to add their God to the list, or to see them joined by an occasional Rabbi and even a few Catholics.

Something different is going on here—something personal, human, and purely secular in its ethical implications—rather than a discussion of traditional theology.

“God is dead,” indeed. For some people this seems to mean the end of hope, of moral imperatives, or at least of egotistical illusions. Dostoevsky warned, “If God is dead, than all things are permitted.” But the record shows that Dostoevsky found the lowest of morals and ethics permissible, even though he believed in God.

Such subjective treatment of the God question has always struck me as trivial and decadent—as contrasted with the realistic questions of the existence or non-existence of such a being. Strangely enough, the subjective approach is often called existentialism.

In taking the required religion course late in my four years in a denominational college, I was moved to write this summary of the message of the Protestant “modernist” who taught the course:

Oh God, who art a definition,
Thy will be done, by repetition.

He and his proteges have tried hard to keep the definition going. Now they seem to be giving up.

This is the point at which the Ethical movement came in, ninety years ago, insisting that human dignity and creativity go on—and should go on—whether there is a god or not. We hope that most of the disillusioned will now come our way, rather than concluding with Dostoevsky and his kind that “all things are permitted.”

(Promotional synopsis of address, “Conflicting Reports on the Death of God”; Ethical weekly, January 23, 1966)

On Sunday mornings, Hornback habitually approached first-time visitors to the Ethical Society, politely but firmly inviting them into the community of ethical humanism. “The supremacy of ethics in every aspect of life”—that was the principle he extended as the salvation of jaded minds and hearts. He truly hoped that the “new faith” would spread, igniting a fresh fervor in the “post-Christian” era of Western culture. His tolerance was cordial, at best; he most certainly did not favor religious pluralism. On the contrary, he deemed “excessive individualism” the “fatal fault” in the plan of the American Founding Fathers: “This is the besetting sin of the Protestant ethic—the view that a man’s religion is a private affair, and one religion is just as good as another, so long as it does not disturb the peace.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “America’s Founding Fathers—and Ours”; Ethical weekly, February 4, 1968) The faith he preached was substantial and unique—a religious movement whose long-prophesied time, he asserted, had finally come. He bore through the wilderness the standard of Felix Adler, who “believed, as the American Founding Fathers did at their best, that we should all be working toward a new faith in which family and vocation, religion and politics, art and culture, would all be bound together.” (Ibid.)

Stirring Up The Melting Pot

Hornback was unequivocally devoted to the principle of equality. He embraced this cause more ardently than any other, and he spoke his mind at the risk—and sometimes the cost—of alienating Society members and other fellow humanists. He was indiscriminate in his hatred of discrimination: All forms of ethnic separatism were, to him, forms of racism. A self-described “old assimilationist,” he promoted cultural homogeneity and decried the maintenance of subcultures defined by race, religious origins, and national heritage. By his interpretation, this stance is a hallmark of both American democracy and the Ethical movement:

Whatever the reality, the American dream for many of her native sons and immigrants has been a dream of a land in which the accidents of birth and background are overlooked, if not forgotten, and the only aristocracy or special privilege is based upon merit. But increasingly in recent years, the evidence has seemed to be that the “melting pot” has never really melted—at least not for those who remained close to old-world countrymen in the ports where they disembarked, by choice or by necessity.

The recent change of our national motto by Congress, from *E Pluribus Unum* (unity from diversity) to “In God We Trust,” may be a simple recognition of the truth, as contrasted with the old ideal. Emma Lazarus’ “huddled masses yearning to breathe free” have done all right financially, for the most part, with the notable exception of the Negro. Ideologically, the sociologists now tell us, they did not accept the assimilation and Americanization so ardently offered them by Anglo-Saxon liberals.

Not all the newcomers were welcomed, and each wave of new immigrants—whether German or Irish or Jewish or Italian or Puerto Rican—has had to fight its way to acceptance. The “new man” of M.G.J. de Crevecoeur, who published his *Letters of an American Farmer* as J. Hector St. John in 1782, has been slow in coming. Even his friend Jefferson made it clear that he did not expect “the canaille” (the dogs, rabble) of Europe’s cities to contribute much to American democracy.

The founders of the Ethical movement, from 1876 in New York to 1886 in St. Louis and London, shared much of Jefferson’s skepticism about the realities of human nature. They also shared his faith in its possibilities—in the ability of men of good will to bring together the best insights of their differing backgrounds and temperaments, to build a good society on new principles. For them, freedom depended to a great extent on self-discipline, and not on a romantic eruption of individual or tribal feeling.

Founder Felix Adler in particular mistrusted the individualism of the “Protestant ethic,” with its naive faith that the greatest good comes from each individual’s enlightened pursuit of his own self-interest. “It is not the nature of self-interest to be enlightened,” he warned. He sought instead the organic blending and the rational testing of the various national, racial, and religious types, so that the outcome for each man might be the most individualized act on the highest ethical level.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “The American Dream and World Reality”; Ethical weekly, October 29, 1967)

* * *

Like the United States, in whose Centennial year, 1876, our Ethical movement was founded, we have deliberately remained open to many peoples and cultures. This has gone against the trend of recent years, which is back toward the units of biological, linguistic, religious, and cultural heritage called the “new ethnicity” (to distinguish it from the old “racism”).

A genuinely pluralistic community is not without its troubles in decision-making and action, but we remain committed to it, as the ideal form of human community.

(Ethical weekly, March 14, 1976)

Naturally, Hornback’s heroes—the people he encouraged Society members to emulate—were ethically superior individuals who tended to perceive humanity as a unified whole rather than an amalgam of disparate cultures. In the 1964-65 season, he presented a series of addresses under the collective title of “Almost Universal Men.” The series included talks on “men who, to a significant degree, rose above national origins, religious backgrounds, and other accidents of birth in the service of mankind.” (Ethical weekly, January 3, 1965) (The “almost” qualifier in the title of the series acknowledged that no one can reasonably claim to entirely transcend such “accidents of birth” as race and religious upbringing; Hornback moderated his praise of his subjects in accordance with their cultural “liberation.”) Among the subjects of the talks were Jawaharlal Nehru, the recently deceased Indian prime minister whom Hornback described as “an ideal blend of East and West, white and black, reason and emotion”; Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the eminent philosopher, physician, organist, and musicologist; and Pope Pius XII. If Americans would follow the example of people such as these, Hornback asserted, racial and ethnic conflicts would dissolve along with racial and ethnic distinctions.

Black and White

In the United States, of course, African Americans have suffered the most heinous forms of bigotry. From the start of his Ethical leadership in the 1940s, Hornback championed the civil rights movement. Always the “Old Leftist,” he allied himself with the NAACP, the Urban League, and other mainstream human rights organizations; he shunned and derided extremists who fomented riots and encouraged dubiously justified civil disobedience in the name of “black power.” Clannish reaction to discrimination, he believed, served only to sharpen racial battle lines. “Sympathy and understanding need not lead us into the endorsement of the separatist and racist policies of the Negro extremists,” he wrote in a promotion of a 1967 address. “As one who has always fought ‘White Power’ and white exclusiveness, gentile power and gentile exclusiveness, I find it hard to support exclusive policies in the Negro and Jewish communities.” He expressed the hope that clannishness among African Americans and Jews was a “symptom of pain and injustice which will fade away.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Black Power and White Integrationists”; Ethical weekly, October 1, 1967) Ibid.)

Because neither social injustice nor concomitant ethnic clannishness perceptibly faded during Hornback’s tenure of Ethical leadership, his exhortations on the matter grew increasingly vehement. He staunchly supported court-ordered desegregation of St. Louis’s public schools, but he considered that course a regrettable alternative to voluntary integration of both neighborhoods and schools. In the wake of a 1980 court order mandating more extensive school desegregation measures in St. Louis, he reaffirmed his preference for non-governmental integration. “If we ‘do the right thing’ voluntarily, in sufficient numbers, and in good time, then we may be spared the pain and chaos of trying to clean up social and economic messes under pressure, compulsion, and penalty of law,” he said. Comparing the court order with the controversial military draft evoked in the Vietnam War, he asked, “Must we all be drafted, just to achieve a mediocre level of justice?” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Volunteers and Conscripts, in Peace and War”; Ethical weekly, March 30, 1980)

Residents of the Central West End, a racially mixed sector of the city, Hornback and his wife bucked the “white flight” of the 1950s and sixties by sending their children to predominantly black public schools rather than enrolling them in nearby private schools or relocating to one of the more affluent and exclusive areas of St. Louis County. Though sensitive to their motives, Hornback implicitly criticized white Society members who had joined the “flight” and then declined to help reverse the trend. When the Interfaith Coalition for Peaceful Integration and Quality

Education—in which Hornback had been active—called for a day of prayer in support of the 1980 court order, he bemoaned the legal irrelevance of the ruling to geographically insulated Society members:

Having spoken periodically on this subject, and having watched sadly since 1954 (*Brown v. Topeka*) as white families and middle-class blacks increasingly sought “quality” education for their children in private or suburban schools, I feel constrained to speak at least one more time. Only one of our families, I believe, is still involved in the City schools in the pupil and parent category. They are white. Another two or three, both white and black, are still teachers, and one or two in administration. So even the call for peaceful compliance—which is still meaningful to some Protestant clergymen and congregations, a few Catholics, and no Jews—is addressed to few Ethical Society ears.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “Can Quality Elude Equality in Education?” *Ethical weekly*, May 4, 1980)

The steadfast “old assimilationist” gave little credence to the argument that the “melting pot” ideal, insofar as it sanctioned America’s white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture as the sociological norm, was itself a form of racism. Ethnic groups that resisted enculturation, he contended, fanned bigotry by asserting exclusive legal and territorial rights. Having long prophesied a cycle of antagonism, he could not resist voicing a veiled “I told you so” when evidence of reactionary mobilization reached a critical mass:

Much has been made of the “ethnic backlash” against too much enforced integration in America, especially with blacks and through such methods as busing in the schools. And much of the “ethnic backlash” has been directed against the older and presumably established European immigrants to America, who spoke English or learned it easily through similar appearance and institutions. Integration has been denounced as their plot, to trap and to neutralize people of other backgrounds and temperaments.

The right to abstain from the predominantly Anglo-Saxon or northern European patterns of the early immigration, and to maintain the language and customs of southern and eastern Europe, has been forcefully asserted in recent years. And “pluralism” or “mosaic” has become the conventional wisdom, instead of the earlier ideal of “one people” or a “melting pot.” In all this turmoil among the white ethnics, the black American has been pushed around the most, with his African skin tone and background and his Anglo-Saxon culture imposed during slavery.

The villain in all this, and the only American ethnic group that has been attacked and vilified with impunity, is the white Anglo-Saxon of Protestant background (regardless of belief or attitude) — the WASP. Now there has come a little organized “backlash,” or “frontlash” as it is sometimes called, from the alleged “majority” group.

If “minorities” are entitled to separate neighborhoods—so the argument runs and is apparently supported by both [1976] presidential candidates—then the “majority” should be able to claim its separate and exclusive community, too. But, no, that would be segregation, cultural imperialism, bigotry! Or would it?

An underground movement is stirring, playing on the sense of injustice in the old “majority” American, the white of generally mixed northern European origins. This is “The Dispossessed Majority,” as portrayed in a mail-order book by Wilmot Robertson and in his monthly journal, “Instauration.” He convincingly catalogs the books of “minority racism” which have been published and praised in recent years, while his book for “majority racism” has been suppressed by every tactic known to the trade. A WASP in background, he is not a Christian, but a social Darwinist who sees “the ascent of man” as a struggle for survival among ethnic groups as well as individuals.

Those of us who have urged and practiced the way of integration and assimilation can share Robertson’s concern for the “new ethnicity” and its open “minority racism,” and agree that it leads to his logic of racial conflict. But how do we reverse the trend—in Rhodesia, South Africa, and the Middle East, as well as in America?

(Promotional synopsis of address, “Backlash or Frontlash?: ‘The Dispossessed Majority’”; Ethical weekly, October 10, 1976)

Despite its limitations, Hornback’s answer to that rhetorical question never really changed: Members of America’s dominant culture must fully embrace minorities, while in lifestyle, education, and career choices, minority groups must relinquish distinctive customs and “melt” into an increasingly homogeneous culture. Even the 1977 Supreme Court case of Bakke vs. University of California, in which a white man claimed that the medical school’s acceptance of lesser-qualified minorities over him constituted a civil rights violation, failed to inspire a more creative response. Minimizing the immediate ethical question regarding the plaintiff’s rights, Hornback took the opportunity to reaffirm the long-term need for equality in education and employment. (Promotional synopsis of address, “‘My Son the Doctor’—the Bakke Case”; Ethical weekly, January 1, 1978)

Because he believed that racial equality depended heavily on the maintenance of “free, mixed, non-sectarian public schools,” he continually fought for civil rights in that theater of the war. He branded as “subsidized separatism” proposals to give tuition tax credits to parents of parochial school children, (Ethical weekly, February 4, 1979) and he dismissed the justification of such proposals on the grounds of religious freedom as “a cover for racism.” (Report by Susan Weidenheimer on Hornback address, “America’s Rejected Motto—E Pluribus Unum”; October 25, 1981)

Zionism as Racism

Hornback’s proclamations on voluntary integration stirred a modicum of resentment among Society members who believed that they had rightly served the welfare of their families by locating in St. Louis County—which was, after all, the democratically chosen site of the new Ethical meeting house. And there were some “national, racial, and religious types” who did not cotton to the notion of being “rationally tested and blended” into someone’s cultural ideal; they cherished their identity—as Jews or “hyphenated Americans”—and did not take kindly to a leader passing judgment on their ethnic loyalty. Nonetheless, in the main, Hornback’s oft-repeated call for racial equality was so plainly and indisputably ethical as to be innocuous: He was “preaching to the saved.”

On one particularly touchy ethnic issue, however, Hornback’s obstreperous talks and writings gravely offended a substantial portion of the membership: He opposed Zionism, and he uniformly branded its supporters racists. In an address he delivered on the heels of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, he succinctly stated his long-standing objection to Zionism:

The little state of Israel amazed its friends and foes alike on June 6, when it took the initiative away from hostile and encircling Arab states, and quickly won the war they had planned for its extinction. A world which remembered Hitler, and saw in Israel a refuge for oppressed Jews everywhere, was quick to applaud the victory of the underdog. The underdeveloped peacekeeping forces of the United Nations were not needed to protect Israel, which had rejected them anyway, as Egypt finally did.

The threat of World War III in the Middle East subsided when the United States and other western powers decided not to express their predominant support of Israel with force, and Russia decided not to risk rushing to the defense of... the Arabs. Temporarily, with minor exceptions, peace has returned to the Middle East. But the long-range threat remains, as the Arabs swear to remember for more than twenty years their claims to the land of Palestine which exiled and scattered Jews have remembered for two thousand years. Eventually, the Arabs say, their 200,000,000 kinsmen will reassert their claim over the land where 2,000,000 Jews now hold sovereignty given them by the western powers, the United Nations, and three Arab-Israeli wars.

As one who has consistently opposed anti-Semitism (or anti-Jewishness, to be more exact; Arab Semites are seldom a live issue in the West), I began my crusade against Hitler in schoolboy days. I worked for free admission of Jewish refugees to America and all other countries, often against the combined forces of anti-Semites and Zionists. I waived both conscientious objection and Ethical clergy exemption to serve in the army in World War II. And then I opposed creation of the state of Israel.

Israel seemed to me an inevitable source of tension and a probable cause of World War III. It was not only wrong in principle, but unnecessary in practice. Other places of refuge (Uganda, for instance) had been offered and spurned. After all, had God not promised Jerusalem forever?

So the issue of Israel is far from the simple one of tolerant, democratic people defending their lives and homes against an anti-Semitic rabble. How many Americans, Jewish or gentile, know the ethnic and religious laws of the State of Israel? How would we like to see them written into the law and practice of the United States, for the benefit of any ethnic or religious group? And why should “the Jewish people” everywhere be counted as “citizens” for “ingathering” and pressured for support of unregistered Israeli government agencies, regardless of their own beliefs, culture, and nationality?

(Promotional synopsis of address, “Israel and the Liberation of the Jew”; Ethical weekly, September 17, 1967)

Hornback’s impassioned opposition to Zionism precipitated muted speculation—and a few indignant accusations—that he harbored anti-Semitic sentiments. He denied these allegations, however crudely: “To the charge occasionally made that this [anti-Zionism] is anti-Semitism, *it is not*. I don’t mind people being Jewish in background, even by choice. But I do object to the blanket identification of every person born into such a family as Jewish forever. They should be free to leave it or join it. This is something that the Jewish community is very reluctant to accept.” (Interview, September 23, 1986) While it may not be possible—insofar as Jewishness is, in part, a racial trait—for one to become an ex-Jew, Hornback contended that maintaining Jewish identity regardless of religious belief is bald and deleterious ethnic separatism. And separatism, he believed, is antithetical to humanism: “Is keeping Jewish holidays and doting on the ethnocentricity of the people—is that *Judaism*? Or is it valid for a humanist? I don’t think it is.... I wouldn’t urge any Jewish person to be ashamed of or to conceal his heritage, but I just don’t agree with the ardent, ethnocentric reaffirmation of it.... I think most people, in the long run, resent that much of a tribalism in the modern world.” (Ibid.)

Certainly, Hornback did. In July 1984, he stormed out of the International Humanist and Ethical Union Congress in New York in protest of a vote to accept the Israeli Association for Secular Humanistic Judaism into membership in the worldwide network. Declaring “Humanistic Judaism” a contradiction in terms, he sided with the Israeli Association for Secular Humanism, which condemned Arab-Jewish separatism and Zionism as forms of “apartheid” and, accordingly, opposed admission of the second Israeli group to the IHEU. Infuriated by the American Ethical Union representatives who cast the deciding votes in the controversy, he joined the Israeli Association for Secular Humanism and the German and Belgian delegations in walking out of the meeting hall. “The implication to me of admitting such an ethnically defined group,” he wrote in explanation of his action, “is that we then open the door to any number of separatistically identified groups: WASP or Afrikaner or Coloreds or Black. To me, this would reverse the principled membership policy of an Ethical Society or a Humanist Chapter. It raises serious doubts about the direction of our national and international movements, and the limits of our ‘pluralism.’” (Ethical weekly, September 23, 1984)

In clarifying his defense against charges of anti-Semitism, Hornback argued that antagonism toward Israel among Middle East nations derived more from a geographic dispute than from persistent racism. He further contended that compassion for the historically persecuted Jewish people had blinded the West to what he deemed Israel’s political and military belligerence:

“[R]acism” is an attitude of extreme exclusion (or inclusion) towards out-group and in-group members. You can’t have the one without the other.

So it is with anti-Semitism, as directed against Jews and their ethnic cousins the Arabs. It narrowly defines an ethnic group—through language, custom, religion, culture nationality, and biological heritage, particularly in the case of endogamous or in-group marriage—and proceeds to endow that entire group with vices (or virtues) that are at best statistical tendencies or cultural norms, and at worst myths and slander.

Anti-Semitism has been one of the worst of such racisms, in religious and historical terms, particularly the anti-Jewish variety since the West has not yet been much exposed to the self-contained Arab cultures. ...

Ironies, paradoxes, and reciprocal tragedies abound [in Jewish history]. But despite the Nazi terror, and the Holocaust in which millions of Jews and other “lesser breeds” were driven out or

exterminated—the exact numbers seem almost irrelevant now, except for self-justification by extremists—I do not believe that anti-Semitism is “endemic” and inevitable (any more than anti-gentilism or anti-blackism or anti-WASPism is), or that the assimilation of Jews and gentiles in Germany was a mistake, or that a “return” of Jews as the favored ethnic in-group in a reconstituted State of Israel is any solution to the problem of racism. Quite the contrary.

Compassion for those who sought such a solution, in the panic of flight from extermination or in the in-bred psychology of the ghetto, is still in order. Even Theodore Herzl, the father of modern secular Zionism, was a disillusioned assimilationist, many Jews insist. They simply cannot trust us goyim—at least not all of us.

So it was that the Jews recreated Israel, the Biblical land of promise and divine election, aided by mixed feelings of guilt and compassion among liberals and the frank relief at mutual separatism among conservatives. Harry Truman’s favor to a friend, and the United Nations’ zig-zag attempt to solve the Arab-Jewish-British colonial problem in Palestine, finally by partition—these actions brought us where we are today.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “Religious and Secular Source of Anti-Semitism”; Ethical weekly, February 2, 1978)

Acknowledging his limited perspective on the turmoil of the Middle East, Hornback booked several platform speakers who represented contrary opinions; among them were both non-partisan scholars and avid Zionists. Most notably, Hornback in 1976 arranged an address by Alon Ben-Meir, a prominent author and one-time Israeli citizen who then served as executive director of the Jewish National Fund for the Central States. With Hornback’s encouragement, the Society also sponsored an exploratory two-day conference on “Israel and Palestine” in 1978. All the same, Hornback never softened his “Zionism is a racism” stance. On the contrary, he grew more aggressive and outspoken on the issue in his later years of leadership service.

The controversy that had simmered more or less quietly for decades boiled over in 1980 when Hornback wrote a provocative anti-Zionist letter to the editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. The newspaper recently had published a circumspect editorial criticizing Israel’s parliamentary Knesset for formally declaring Jerusalem the nation’s capital—a which action the writer claimed had jeopardized delicate peace negotiations then under way with Egypt. (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 25, 1980) In reply, Hornback commended the paper on its stance, then broadly expanded on his longstanding assessment of the Middle East conflict:

Thank you for your courageous July 25 editorial, “Reckless Over Jerusalem,” and the accompanying Engelhardt cartoon of Mr. Begin waving a shovel for “groundbreaking” in the ancient but recently reclaimed “Israeli capital.” Few Jewish readers, I suspect, and even fewer gentiles will have the courage to support you openly for fear of reprisal or charges of anti-Semitism.

But it is far more anti-Semitic, and indeed, anti-human, to continue the conspiracy of silence, fear and guilt while Jews themselves repeatedly use the state of Israel to jeopardize their own safety and security and the peace of the world. As a gentile, I have fought against Hitlerism and all forms of racial and religious discrimination since high school and college days before World War II, waived conscientious objection to serve in that “just” war, and worked ever since to assure Jews everywhere of safety, political and economic equality, and full social acceptance in the United States and all nations of the “free world.” I have just as consistently opposed Zionism and the resultant state of Israel, as unsafe and unnecessary for refugees, inflammatory to Arabs and Moslems in the oil-rich Middle East, backward in ethnic and racial policy, and the probable cause of the ultimate Holocaust for Jew and gentile alike in World War III.

The *Post-Dispatch* would do us all a great service if it printed the names and text of the “statement signed by 56 U.S. Jewish leaders” (your story of July 24) who broke openly at long last with the extremist policies of the Begin government. The same criticisms have been made openly in Israel, by Jews as well as by Moslems and some Christians. Why not grant the same right to Americans?

Our taxes bear the massively disproportionate “foreign aid” of the Israeli military and civilian establishment. And bond sales and voluntary contributions (tax exempt as religious) raise the cost

of Israel to all Americans to inflationary heights. We blame OPEC and its Arab oil nations freely, with a gross anti-Semitism in which most American Jews and mass media join freely, but the most measured and principled criticism of Israel is roundly denounced and suppressed as anti-Semitic.

(*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 6, 1980)

Hornback's letter, written just as he was beginning a yearlong sabbatical to complete his doctoral dissertation, sparked a storm of protest in the Society and the St. Louis Jewish community. In Hornback's words, "All hell busted loose." (Interview, September 23, 1986) Both Hornback and the newspaper received a torrent of replies, ranging from hearty agreement to bitter opposition. The *St. Louis Jewish Light* reprinted Hornback's letter along with a lengthy response which detailed the plight of Jewish refugees and extolled Israel's peacemaking efforts. The *Light* charged that Hornback's "wrongheaded views"—which it likened to those of Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat and the infamous American anti-Semitic agitator Gerald L.K. Smith—were "so anti-Israel as to be anti-Semitic in tone," and remarked that the letter was "even more disturbing because it is signed by... the highly respected Leader of the Ethical Society of St. Louis, part of a movement founded by the late Felix Adler, the son of a Reform rabbi who gave up his rabbinical studies to establish a secular humanist movement which continues to attract many ethnic Jews as well as Gentiles. While Mr. Hornback did not sign the letter in the name of the Ethical Society, his well-known identity as its local Leader gives added weight to his opinion—and added responsibility for accuracy." (*St. Louis Jewish Light*, August 13, 1980)

In addition to the newspaper's editorial, Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman of Congregation Shaare Emeth wrote Hornback a stinging response which he later allowed the *Jewish Light* to publish in full. In it, Stiffman branded Hornback's statements "patently naive and virulently unethical." (*St. Louis Jewish Light*, September 24, 1980) Echoing the *Light's* retort that "the Leader doth protest too much," (*St. Louis Jewish Light*, August 13, 1980) Stiffman dismissed Hornback's support of Jewish refugees as hollow and hypocritical: "You wish to be the protector and defender of Jewish rights—everywhere but in the State of Israel! ... You, Dr. Hornback, like the Jews as they were during W.W. II. You want us to be weak, defenseless, homeless, hopeless—so that you can defend us.... Don't say that you love and defend Jews, and then take away the essence of my history and faith. I'd rather not have you courageously 'waive conscientious objection' to protect Jews. I conscientiously object to your denial of Jewish legitimacy, Jewish rights, Jewish existence." (*St. Louis Jewish Light*, September 24, 1980)

In reply to his published critics as well as those who wrote him directly, Hornback published additional letters in both the *Post-Dispatch* and the *Light*. Because the *Light*—and several irate Society members—had underlined Hornback's role as Ethical leader, he took pains to state that he had written as a private citizen, "and not as Leader of the Ethical Society of St. Louis, or on behalf of any consensus or majority vote taken by the Society." (*Post-Dispatch*, September 10, 1980) And because the *Light* had implied that Hornback had dishonored the heritage of the Ethical movement, he spelled out Adler's attitude toward Jewish ethnicity and defended himself as a loyal standard bearer:

On the classic "Jewish Question," the Ethical movement was clearly non- or even anti-Zionist in its first half-century under Felix Adler (1851-1933). Dr. Adler left the Reform Judaism of his Rabbi father to found Ethical Culture, along with four gentile colleagues in the Free Religious Association, all intent on setting up Emerson's "new church based on moral science." Never denying his Jewish heritage, he patiently elaborated his reasons for rejecting it: (1) its subordination of universal ethics to traditional theology, and (2) its "racial requirements." Until his death in the early Hitler years, Adler remained firm in his opposition to all who sought to perpetuate the Jewish-gentile distinction, citing the reciprocal insults and injuries in both Old and New Testaments.

Finally, most critics have put me down gently as "naive," "confused," "unrealistic," "decent" and "respected" but "obsolete," and following a "double standard." If "realism" means abiding by ancient standards of ethnic and religious nationalism, and calling it 'self'-determination, then let me be "naive." My single standard favors all governments, federations and voluntary association which bring people together, and opposes those which do not. And the whole human race will be "obsolete" if we fight the battle of Armageddon over Jerusalem just to fulfill ancient prophecy and prayers.

(*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 10, 1980)

As the controversy raged on—and on—the Ethical Society’s hapless board of trustees was forced to contend with the ire of members and the community’s bruised public image. In letters to the board, the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith and several Society members expressed outrage at Hornback’s words. One Society member, determined that Hornback’s actions not go unnoticed, mailed copies of the letters and editorial responses to fellow members. Another, Jeffrey Wides—a trustee who had been “bothered... for a long time” by Hornback’s conversational statements regarding Jewish “racialism”—wrote to fellow board members decrying the leader’s “argument of bigotry.” (Letter to the board of trustees from Jeffrey Wides, dated October 28, 1980) In a separate letter, Wides charged that Hornback had “shown himself to be intolerant, insensitive, prejudiced, confused, and detrimental to the Society,” and indirectly suggested that he be fired. (Letter to trustee Casey Croy, with a copy to James F. Hornback, from Jeffrey Wides, dated October 12, 1980) The board sought a means to dissociate the Society from Hornback’s statements without offending his honor. At its meeting of September 8, 1980, the board passed the following resolution, copies of which were mailed to—and published in—the *Post-Dispatch* and the *Jewish Light*:

The Board of Trustees of the Ethical Society of St. Louis recognize that the leader of the Ethical Society has a right to express his own views on any subject including the views set forth in a letter published by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on Aug. 6, 1980 over the signature of James F. Hornback. The Board of Trustees therefore resolves in keeping with its constitution and by-laws that it hereby disclaims that the letter above mentioned represents any stated views and positions of the Society.

The resolution was passed by a vote of 10-1, with one abstention. Further, in an executive session held November 3, the board passed a motion forbidding all officers, employees and members of Society to use Ethical Society stationery except in conducting Society business. It also passed a motion stating: “In light of the policy announced relating to the use of Ethical Society stationery, the board declares that the views of James F. Hornback relating to Israel and Zionism are his personal views and not the views of the Society.” This time, many trustees felt the board was going to far in dissociating itself from Hornback; five of them voted against the resolution.

The board’s actions, far from ameliorating Hornback’s critics and supporters, left both parties dissatisfied and angry. Wides held that “to say the Leader is free as an individual to take whatever position he likes on any issue is a noble ideal. But it lacks the practical understanding of the effects such positions... have on the Ethical Movement and the Ethical Ideal.... In the particular incidents being discussed it expresses no awareness of or sensitivity to the effects Mr. Hornback’s statements have on: (1) the Ethical Society members who are of Jewish background, (2) the non-Ethical Society Jewish community. It makes the former feel unwanted, unappreciated, and alienated. It makes the latter resent and distrust an ‘anti-Jewish Society’ in their midst and reduces their chances of joining to zero.” (Letter to board members from Jeffrey Wides, dated September 15, 1980) On the other side of the dispute, one correspondent, contending that “Hornback’s position on Israel and the Arabs is shared by many—the majority, probably—of social scientists who know the history and political economics of Western Asia,” alleged that the disclaimer “simply shows how much pressure can be brought to bear even by non-traditional Jews.” (Letter to L. Dean Smith, president of the board of trustees, from Nicholas J. Demerath, dated October 15, 1980) Former board president Ludwig “Fred” Hammer wrote that he believed the board’s action was “somewhat short of the best ethical action in this instance.... [L]et’s avoid any public response that in any way separates our support for freedom of expression.... An affirmation of the ability of Society members to judge a position on the merits of arguments presented whether by our leader or by his critics is what an Ethical Society is all about.” (Letter to L. Dean Smith, president of the board of trustees, from Ludwig Hammer, dated September 24, 1980) For his part, Hornback was gratified to receive letters of support from Society members and other sympathizers, but he noted that the disclaimer “did not disturb me too much, in view of the heat of the issue.” (Letter to Jeffrey Wides, trustee, from James F. Hornback, dated October 10, 1980)

In the crossfire of protests and condemnations, Hornback substantiated what many Society members long had suspected—namely, that his fury over Zionism and Jewish ethnicity stemmed in part from the frustration and sense of alienation he had experienced while serving ethical societies in New York City and Westchester, New York, early in his career. In a rambling, combative, six-page letter (with a five-page postscript) to Rabbi Stiffman, he vented the resentment he carried from those years:

You ask what I was doing in 1947-48, or in 1945-48, when the Jews allegedly had no place else to go but Palestine. I was just back in 1946, newly wed to a Mexican American of emancipated (free-thinking) Catholic background, working part-time with suburban Ethical societies in New Jersey and going part-time again to graduate school in philosophy at Columbia U. A year later I became

the first resident Leader of the Westchester Ethical Society in an old mansion in New Rochelle (now a Yeshiva!), where my wife and I were the resident staff with a resident caretaker couple helping us on nights and weekends. I continued dealing with the refugees I had worked with in my initial years as a graduate-student leader-trainee at the New York and Brooklyn societies in 1942-44, and I continued to warn the ardent Zionists around me (even in Westchester, though few if any Zionists among the fabulously prosperous old-timer and newcomer, refugee members of predominantly Jewish background) that the State of Israel would be a tragic mistake tactically, and an even more tragic mistake to those who professed to value the church-state separatism and ethnic-state separatism of America. Fine old-timers like Frederick Breitenfeld, an urbane and strikingly Semitic type, were still stating firmly an equation which still strikes me as true in principle, though *not quite* in degree of cruelty of violence (even counting Begin and his fascist cohorts): “Zionism is just Hitlerism in reverse.” He meant of course Jewish racialism, religio-ethnic nationalism. Or another, Ted Lanice of Long Island, reported squelching bigoted Rabbis and Zionists whom he encountered socially, by calling them “racists” when they asked “Who are you to break the continuity of three- (or four-, or five-, or almost six-) thousand years?” Despite these insightful views, these comfortable though openly Jewish suburban Jews were not without their own hang-ups and overly defensive stigmata, so that I had a hard time bringing in sincere and convinced members of non-Jewish background. They would ask, in all amiable naivete, “How did *you* happen to get interested in Ethical Culture?” (My esteemed senior colleague Algernon Black in New York asked that of young Harold Saunders of the State Department, adding the preface, “With a name like Saunders, how...?” He wondered why Mr. Saunders never came back. How did he know that our current Middle Eastern specialist was not Jewish? [Or is he?])

Further, I found a Sunday School curriculum of six or seven years of Old Testament (“We want our children to get that narrative!”), a half-year each of New Testament and Comparative Religions, and a year of Ethical Culture. When I undertook to change some of these things, on the grounds that they were not compatible with the stated ideal of Ethical Culture or with their own expressed hope that Angela and I might bring some “Christians” into the Society, a few bristled and suggested I was anti-Semitic, and just didn’t like Jews despite my protestations. Sounds familiar to you, doesn’t it, Jeff? (Oh, yes, I see I neglected to mention my other illustrative “things”: a Youth Group which was alternating meeting nights with Rabbi Shankman’s Reform Temple Israel [unbeknownst to me, until I innocently tried to change for purely practical reasons of building schedule after the first year, and got charged with authoritarianism]; I then proposed that we try alternating or cooperating for a while with the friendly Youth Group of nearby North Avenue Presbyterian Church, which had had me as a guest speaker and from which we soon drew a couple of gentile members. Cries of ‘anti-Semitism,’ and “Who will our children marry?” A real clincher came, when Dr. Alfred Graf, a rustic looking Germanic “squarehead,” a minor novelist and critic of great and sensitive style who suffered great hardships in getting away from Hitler and around the world to his wife’s family in Westchester, and whom I was helping with his halting English, told me that some of our members had asked him how it happened that he, a gentile [or maybe they said “Christian,” which he was not, though a Lutheran minister’s son], had had to get out of Germany.)

(Letter to Rabbi Jeffrey B. Stiffman of Congregation Shaare Emeth from James F. Hornback, dated October 7, 1980)

As Hornback and his critics despaired of altering each other’s views, the rancorous volleying petered out. Although the flap “loomed rather large in some people’s minds,” Hornback later contended that “the average member of the Ethical Society was relatively untouched by it.” (Interview, September 23, 1986) Indeed, apart from the resignation of two Society members in protest of Hornback’s retention, the controversy had little lasting effect. Hornback’s successor came on board in the midst of the uproar, and it gradually became clear that Hornback never would reclaim the status of principal leader of the Society; his remarks often were batted about—primarily in debates of the leader’s right to speak freely—but their import quickly waned.

A Homeland for Humanists

While some Society members grew deaf to Hornback’s negative expression of his social philosophy, as in his opposition to Zionism and “white flight,” the community happily recalls his positive expression of that philosophy—a philosophy of human bondedness that transcends cultural, racial, and religious differences. “Our

Ethical movement,” he wrote, “was meant to be a fellowship in which the American ideal found social, political, and even religious expression in the growing ‘oneness’ of people—with due regard for distinctive backgrounds and contributions.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “America’s Rejected Motto—E Pluribus Unum; Ethical weekly, October 18, 1981) The supreme loyalty of an ethical humanist, he believed, must be the greatest possible welfare of humanity as a whole:

I will not go so far as our founder, Felix Adler, in saying that “ethics is nothing if not universal.” Of course, the more national, tribal, or even personally selfish forms of ethics are “something.” But as a humanist and cosmic naturalist in ethics, I share some of Dr. Adler’s more transcendental or supernatural feeling that supreme commitment to self, tribe, or parish is often worse than nothing.

The good is all too often the worst enemy of the truly ethical.

Promotional synopsis of address, “Three Levels of Ethics: The Personal, the Parochial, and the Universal”; Ethical weekly, May 1, 1977)

Hornback’s sharpest criticism of the Ethical movement arose from his urge to “spread the good news.” When the American Ethical Union, at its 1977 convention, voted to end its co-sponsorship of *The Humanist* magazine, he argued that the action bespoke the triumph of religious parochialism: “Through it all ran the undercurrent of what I still consider the basic issue—localism and ‘service to members,’ as against a sense of mission and movement.

Paradoxically, or so it must seem to some, it is the religious movements which give most to missions and outreach which are growing, and those which concentrate on members’ needs and wishes which are dying. So let us live a little!” (Promotional synopsis of address, “The ‘Humanist’ Magazine: A Sponsor’s Farewell”; Ethical weekly, May 15, 1977) The Ethical movement, he warned, must not deteriorate into a defensive preoccupation with self-preservation. Instead, organized humanism must vigorously infuse its ideals into “the larger humanity.” Using Zionism as a foil, he prophesied a worldwide cultural maturation culminating in a “homeland for humanists,” a utopian society that would enshrine and exemplify rational ethics:

The search for roots and a feeling of at-homeness, even the rising demand for a political and cultural homeland for every ethnic and religious group, must raise a haunting question for Ethical Humanists. Should there be, could there be, “A Homeland for Humanists,” too—a place where our beliefs and ideals, for the first time ever, would dominate in the schools and politics, in cultural life, and in the “sovereign” national decisions of war and peace and international exchange?

Ridiculous, some will say, especially those most eager to have a homeland for themselves on racial, religious, or traditional nationalistic grounds. Humanists do not come from any particular place, nor (by definition and ideal) are they a distinguishable race or a separatist religion. Nor have they been in the majority in any political jurisdiction we know of.

Humanists themselves—at least the ethical variety, as distinguished from literary or culture-bound humanists—are the first to stress their own openness and willingness to live and work with people of other backgrounds and beliefs. A humanist homeland would tend to be a homeland for everybody, excluding nobody, a pluralistic rather than a homogenized culture.

So what do we make of the claims of others to an inherent right of “self-determination”? What is the unit of self-determination? Positive choice, or negative discrimination? Race? If so, how designated or determined? Religion? If so, how broad the sect or denomination? National origin? If so, how long ago and by whose drawing of boundaries or military conquest?

To ask these questions is to prove the impossibility of letting everybody go back where he came from, even if he wanted to, or of setting up islands of sovereignty. Whose homeland is the United States? The Indians, whether autochthonous (originating here) or immigrants from Asia? The old Anglo-Saxon or Northern European settlers, some of whom still think that the American experiment was ruined by too much immigration of different national backgrounds and religions? Some of the later ethnic groups seem to be echoing or outdoing the alleged WASP bigotry, in their own demands for ethnic solidarity and purity. The American Negro is among the oldest settlers

now, more Anglo-Saxon in culture than most, and not likely to “go home again” to an Africa he never knew.

Contrary to sectarian and ethnic slurs, America’s nonsectarian public schools and constitutional freedoms do not establish humanism as a religion. But they do protect the possibility of its growth. Our homeland must be built wherever we are, and made as humanistic as possible.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “A Homeland for Humanists?”; Ethical weekly, May 23, 1971)

Countering the Counterculture

Hornback stood his rationalist ground against the counterculture that emerged in the 1960s, taking little encouragement in the groundswell of social consciousness. Although the leftist protestors and activists generally shared his agenda for social change, he viewed them as essentially nihilistic, self-absorbed, and mad with the yearning to wrest power from the "Establishment." Because their intentions and efforts were grossly misguided, they merited no credit: "Simple 'involvement' or 'activism' is not ethics," he wrote. "Much of it is quite the opposite." (Promotional synopsis of address, "Ethics, Politics, and Power"; Ethical weekly, September 15, 1968) The "New Left," by Hornback's reckoning, was nothing but fascism dressed up in bell bottoms and love beads. "These revolutionary movements of our day are a sick, sad, decadent lot, whose chief value lies in their serving as symptoms of underlying sickness in our world," he charged. "But instead of offering solutions — instead of joining in crash programs toward world government, racial harmony, united cities, job training, and building in the slums, they offer pure reaction. They would have been labeled Fascist before World War II." (Promotional synopsis of address, "The Reactionary Revolutions of Our Day"; Ethical weekly, January 7, 1968)

Hornback's chief objection to the "hippies" and "revolutionaries" of the era was in what he deemed an abandonment of reason and order in favor of mysticism and confrontation. Impatient with the slow progress of the Old Left he championed, members of the "Now Generation" appeared to seek quick solutions to personal anxiety and social injustice. On one front, Hornback condemned "the culture of non-striving," the rejection of "straight" education and career development in favor of earthy romanticism and drug-induced "mind-expanding experiences." On another front, he vilified antagonistic rebels who fought "Establishment" reactionaries "with their own weapons — racism, militarism, minority rule, violence, and so forth." (Ibid.) To Hornback, the sixties were a reign of anarchy, a time when "the reasonable hopes and orderly proposals for human progress in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries [were] scrapped." And to his chagrin, "the brave minority of liberals and radicals who expressed the hopes and made the largely unheeded proposals has been blamed for the crises of our day." (Ibid.)

The steadfast rationalist continually expressed disgust with the nascent self-realization movement, an outgrowth of humanistic psychology which drew on Eastern mystical traditions. To his ears, the popular exhortation to "get in touch with one's feelings" was tantamount to "truth is subjective" — the heresy of heresies. To his eyes, the spectacle of long-haired youngsters experimenting with hallucinogens, kneeling before gurus, and dancing to hard rock presaged a slide into another Dark Age. "True believers in the counterculture take pride in being mystical, tribal, anarchistic, and even shamanistic," he wrote, going on to cynically list the "fringe benefits of the counterculture" as "curses and incantations, hand-to-mouth subsistence, medieval plagues, drug-induced visions, guerrilla warfare, assassination, and ritual murder." (Promotional synopsis of address, "Ethical Culture and 'The Counter Culture'"; Ethical weekly, January 4, 1970) By suspending their critical judgment, he warned, these "true believers" left themselves vulnerable to seduction by all manner of unworthy leaders, "missionary psychopaths like the hip writer Norman Mailer, proponents of brawls and knifing, drugs and perversions, and violent instant gratification of every wild impulse." (Promotional synopsis of address, "Alienation and the Search for New Identity"; Ethical weekly, January 5, 1969) He saw evidence of that dangerous vulnerability in a variety of religious and quasi-religious movements, including a revival of evangelical Christianity:

The wish for a savior persists, even in this alleged age of science and technology. And lo and behold, he has arrived for some — in the unlikely person of Charles Manson (admittedly both Jesus and the Devil); or in [L.] Ron Hubbard, founder first of Dianetics and then of Scientology; or in Timothy Leary and his League of Spiritual Discovery (LSD); or in a new Holy Spirit of anonymous and unearthly mien — just Transcendental Consciousness, Alone with the Alone.

Some are still waiting, but momentarily, for the literal second coming of Jesus Christ. These Adventists, whether Seventh-Day or otherwise, know that God has promised to send a comforter

in the final days. And anyone who is willing to look and listen can easily tell that these are indeed the final days, days of "wars and rumors of wars," days of the Beast whose mystic number is 666.

I am most reminded of my amazement and horror as a skeptical small boy, along with my less skeptical but utterly non-mystical Methodist parents, at seeing the revivalist ministers in their tents and store-front churches, using mass enthusiasm and hysteria, aided by physical manipulation and fatigue, to get the faithful to "pray through," "speak in tongues," keel over, or otherwise "get the spirit." In those days it didn't take drugs, and indeed it doesn't in these days either if we can believe the Jesus Freaks and other new mystics.

(Promotional synopsis of address, "The Second Coming of Primitive Cults," Ethical weekly, April 11, 1971)

Hornback saw mysticism as a cultural ally of both apathy and violent incivility. With their emphasis on enlightenment, as exemplified by Ram Dass' admonition to "Be Here Now," mystical movements encouraged adherents to "drop out" of the harried world to find the solace of the "eternal now." By Hornback's reckoning, such inwardness necessarily dissipated practical initiative. "[A]mong the 'now' generation, there is an emphasis on a kind of 'interim ethic' for immediate rescue and enjoyment, as if there were no tomorrow," he wrote. "It bears more than a superficial resemblance to primitive Christianity, in which the faithful lived in hippie communes of maximum love and minimum striving, awaiting the second coming of Jesus. But if the world does not end, or need not end, this is the ultimate copout." (Promotional synopsis of address, "The Ethical Ideal — and Those Who Perish in the Meantime"; Ethical weekly, February 7, 1971)

Equally disheartening — and even more frightening — was the "Now" generation's impatience with orderly, incremental social change. "It has been my... impression, and my contention, that preoccupation with changing the whole culture — 'the whole bag' — has become one of the chief deterrents to progress on the important issues," Hornback said. (Promotional synopsis of address, "Ethics in the Choice of Life Styles"; Ethical weekly, November 8, 1970) In the rage of war protesters and "Black Power" demonstrators, he detected an arrogant disregard for democracy. "I see most of the radicalism of our age as reactionary, fascistic, with its emphasis on power and passion, pressure and confrontation, rather than the traditional and despised humanistic values of reason and persuasion, planning and harmony," he wrote, adding rhetorically, "Who can really claim that these latter values have ever been overdone?" (Promotional synopsis of address, "Radical or Reactionary: The Spirit of our Age"; Ethical weekly, May 25, 1969) Noting that the mystical and psychological tenor of the era heightened the cultural validity of feelings, he portrayed the rebellious fury of the sixties as the culmination of "a blood bath of romantic reaction against the Enlightenment values of reason, harmony, and equality before the law.... We are back, like Latin America and the Balkans, to 'the politics of passion,' and with Hitler, to 'thinking with the blood.'" (Promotional synopsis of address, "Ethical Culture and 'The Counter Culture'"; Ethical weekly, January 4, 1970) This disregard for civility, he warned, would exact a violent cost: "Romantic reactionaries of the sort who think with their blood and their guts, if they think at all before acting, are waiting fully armed to do battle with those romantic liberals who are willing to drop the protection of law and order and of reason." (Ethical weekly, January 28, 1968)

So it was that Hornback viewed mysticism and rebellion as symbiotic: Whether they tossed bombs or just dropped out, these guerrillas and peaceniks were united in their disdain for the status quo. He saw the alliance as an assault on his dearest values — reason, self-restraint, assimilation, and cooperation. It was an unholy union which eroded the progress and dimmed the dreams of civilization:

The old political left had no kind words for mysticism, and liked to characterize the consolations of religion as "pie in the sky by and by." In the words of Joe Hill, immortalized in song and legend:

You will eat by and by
In that glorious land above the sky;
Work and pray, live on hay
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

Strangely enough, the "New" Left is mystically inclined — so much so that the fugitive Weathermen of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] boast that they engineered the escape of psychedelic drug man Timothy Leary from prison to Algeria, where he can mingle with Black Panthers and other strangely assorted heroes of the revolution.

The earlier revolutions and heroes in the western world, including Russia, were those of reason and universal rights against the old emotional and separatist ties of class, race, economic advantage, and religious orthodoxy. In the name of reason and equality, great crimes and terror were unleashed, not only in France and Russia, but even in America. "Lynching" got its name from the Virginia planter and magistrate, Charles Lynch, who wasted no judicial time on Tories. But in all fairness, it must be said that his actions were not justified or glorified by the ideologists of the American Revolution.

The "New" Mysticism and the "New" Left are different from the old. They freely denounce reason and egalitarian laws and structures, as inadequate instruments in the cause of truth and justice. They want immediate truth and immediate justice. The mystics and the political activists do not always work together, and there are those who say the alliance cannot stay together long. They share only a common antipathy, and perhaps a common lifestyle, against the expressed ideals and the lifestyle of the previous revolution, which is now called, somewhat prematurely, "the Establishment."

What might have been a Golden Age of peace, plenty, and brotherhood in the years since World War II has turned instead into an age of "minor" wars threatening to become major, of economic waste and arrogance in the face of poverty, and of ethnic separateness and conflict of increasing viciousness. The promise of the United Nations, of unprecedented affluence and education, of laws and court decisions extending these benefits to groups previously denied them in America and the world —what has become of it? The trend in the late 60's at least, and in 1970 so far, is still sharply downward.

Ironically, we learn from "Hair" and the astrologers that in March, 1948, our solar system entered "The Age of Aquarius" - a 2,000-year period of peace and plenty. Not the millennium, but two of them! Interesting, if true. But what do we do, if anything, to usher mankind into that Golden Age? (Promotional synopsis of address, "The New Mysticism: Pie in the Sky Here and Now"; Ethical weekly, November 1, 1970)

His answer, naturally enough, was to redirect the anger and energy of the era into a "humanistic revolution," a renaissance of reasoned and ethically disciplined social reconstruction. "[I]n this period of demolition of institutions, of elegant and inelegant variations in manners and morals, and of rushing backward into the irrational and the occult, there is a fighting chance and a challenge for those of us who still believe in ethical humanism," he wrote. (Promotional synopsis of address, "The Humanist Revolution": Fact or Fancy?; Ethical weekly, September 29, 1974) "The real challenge of an Ethical movement and to each Ethical Society in these times is to demonstrate to a discouraged and often skeptical world that social order can be combined with dignity and equality for all." (Ethical weekly, January 28, 1968)

In his last years of active leadership, Hornback saw little evidence of such a renaissance. Instead, he said, the turbulent sixties gave way to a decade marked by "a turn to looking inward, self-help, and lifestyle questions, often denounced as the 'New Narcissism' or the 'Me Decade.'" Whatever the cause, the decade was marked by passive evasion of the 'big' social and ethical issues of racial equality in education and housing, arms control and conflict resolution, and control of pollution, crime, and violence." (Leader's Word, Ethical weekly, October 18, 1981) Hence, the dismal condition of the world continued to challenge ethical humanists "to harmonize our philosophic and personal needs with the political and planetary, in a 'humanism' which is genuinely ethical and ecological." (Ibid.)

Ethical Lieutenants

More assistant leaders served the Ethical Society during Hornback's tenure than in any other era. Trustee Ludwig "Fred" Hammer, who served as board president for six years in the 1950s and sixties, consistently urged the Society to help train promising young people for Ethical leadership. Critical of the AEU's desultory training program, he sought to cultivate missionary spirit in the movement by offering the St. Louis community as a hothouse for prospective leaders. Hornback supported that vision; he hoped to bring on board a leader-in-training who could direct youth groups, coordinate membership activities, instruct prospective members in the principles of Ethical Culture, and assist him in representing the Society at community meetings.

Accordingly, the board included in the Society's 1955-56 budget \$1,200 to supplement an expected AEU subvention for a leader-in-training. In addition, board president Carroll E. Nelson appointed an advisory committee to confer with Hornback on the training and duties of a trainee. This committee, which was composed of Alexander S. Langsdorf, R. Walson Chubb, and Peter Kintzele, recommended that the board raise the budgeted allotment for a leader-in-training. The board complied, agreeing to pay from \$2,500-3,000 of an assistant's salary, provided the

AEU pay the remainder. That year, two young men who belonged to the St. Louis Society applied to the AEU training program; however, both withdrew their applications when the AEU made it clear that it would help fund their training only if the men agreed to relocate at the Union's direction at the end of a year. A third applicant, a Unitarian minister from Illinois, likewise declined to make a commitment. As plans for an experimental satellite community in St. Louis County began to coalesce in 1956, Hornback eagerly sought an assistant who could share the expanded leadership duties. On his recommendation, the board offered the position to a student at a local Lutheran seminary; after considerable vacillation, the seminarian opted to continue his training in the Unitarian church.

George von Hilsheimer

Finally, in November 1956, a few months after the county experiment began, a fiery young man named George von Hilsheimer presented himself as a fully committed candidate. However, because Hornback and the Leadership Advisory Committee questioned whether von Hilsheimer, at 22, could reasonably be entrusted with the full range of leadership duties, von Hilsheimer was presented to the membership as a candidate for "director of youth work."

Von Hilsheimer began his ministerial career at the age of 13 as a precocious evangelist in Southern Baptist churches in Florida. He attended the University of Miami, where he majored in history and competed on the debate team. In the course of his studies, his theological predilections took a decidedly progressive turn; he organized a religious liberals group which grew to become the second-largest religious organization on campus. While at the university, he served as a lay minister at the Unitarian Church of Miami. He later studied at Meadville Theological Seminary, an affiliate of the University of Chicago. At the time he applied to the leadership training program, he was married but had no children.

After the candidate made two visits to the Society, the Leadership Advisory Committee pronounced von Hilsheimer a man "of unusual talent, with an engaging personality, whose religious philosophy is such as is necessary to engage in directing a liberal religious fellowship." The committee recommended that von Hilsheimer be hired as director of religious education and assistant to Hornback; he would coordinate all young people's activities, research the history and philosophy of the Ethical movement, and continue his education at Washington University. Von Hilsheimer was hired under those terms in December 1956; his employment started on January 1, 1957. His salary package—a total of \$350 a month—included housing and tuition allowances.

Von Hilsheimer was made responsible for both the city and county Sunday Schools. He was to oversee the two subdirectors who ran the programs, and was instructed to share responsibility with the JSA Committee and the school staff for recruiting, training, and placing teachers. He also was to coordinate the city and county young people's programs through assigned group leaders. In addition, he was asked to form a liberal religious group at Washington University or lead a Young Adults group for college-age members of the Society.

In his managerial style, Von Hilsheimer proved to be brash, if not downright obnoxious. To the distress of longtime JSA leaders and AEU Religious Education Director Florence Klaber, he unilaterally directed Sunday School teachers to dispense with their formal lesson plans and instead engage in improvisational discussions with students. Feathers flew, and the board of trustees scrambled to reassert control of the school by adopting by-law amendments delimiting von Hilsheimer's authority. In a letter to Klaber, Hornback wrote, "we are alert to George's over-enthusiastic promotion of his own extreme views on religious education. We are going to have to get a bit legalistic with him, to hold him down the normal channels of committees, colleagues, and AEU tradition and experience. We value his initiative and enthusiasm a great deal and trust that we may help him to channel his energies." (Letter from James F. Hornback to Florence Klaber, dated March 12, 1957) Certainly, Hornback did not wish to squelch his young assistant. Unlike his predecessors, Hornback had little input in the direction of the Sunday School; however, he believed that the education of youth required the wholehearted attention of an Ethical leader, and that duty logically would fall to his assistant. Nonetheless, von Hilsheimer had taken off like an unbroken bronco, and Hornback was ill-prepared to break him. In a letter to Charles "Bud" Blake, a trustee and Sunday School parent, Hornback said that von Hilsheimer must be persuaded to consult with the JSA Committee, the school staff, and the principal leader of the Society before instituting any more changes. He added: "We value George's enthusiasm and initiative a great deal, but find that his anti-authoritarian philosophy does not quite square with his essentially authoritarian methods of putting it over." (Letter from James F. Hornback to Charles Blake, dated March 12, 1957)

The outcome of the squabble was messy. Not only did both subdirectors resign, but von Hilsheimer himself elected to end his work with the Sunday School, focusing instead on his studies and other leadership duties, including platform addresses, pastoral visitation, and promotion of CORE (the Congress of Racial Equality). In a letter to R.

Walston Chubb, with whom he maintained a strained friendship, von Hilsheimer urged that the board restructure the Sunday School and increase the school's budgetary allotment to provide for a full-time superintendent. He claimed that the JSA Committee had mistakenly assumed he was to serve as overall leader of the school, and protested that "the limitations imposed by the leadership responsibilities of my position will not permit me to provide active organization and administration of the JSA." Von Hilsheimer's impolitic decision to take his proposal to the board without first consulting Hornback, the JSA Committee, or the Leadership Advisory Committee spawned indignation among some trustees and loyal Society members. Who, they demanded, is in charge here?

Von Hilsheimer quickly acquired a reputation as an enfant terrible; he did not object. He was spirited and hard-working; he also was impulsive, opinionated, willful, and impatient with authority. His admirers found him refreshing and vital; his detractors called him a hothead with a penchant for demagoguery. "No question he had talent," recalled one member, adding that "he had the tendency of putting things in a way that he was bound to get rabid support or rabid opposition. He'd bring out the best and the worst in people." Another member gave a blunter assessment: "He was a wild man. He wasn't diplomatic. He made an impression on people—I don't know what kind, but an impression." One interviewee described him as "an emotional, way-out sort of person—brilliant, but unstable." Still another gave this mixed review:

He was a real go-getter. You never saw such an eager beaver. He would work on things day and night. He would have meetings with people, and he was visiting (Society members)... But even though he was very vigorous, and a lot of people liked what he was doing, he also was making a few people unhappy. He wasn't making himself as well-liked with the powers that perhaps he could have if he had chosen to. He went ahead and did a lot of things on his own without asking permission or getting anybody else's opinion about it—he just did things. He would commit himself and the Society to things, and he made decisions on his own without the help of the board. I guess he realized that if he had to wait for a committee or the board to do it, why, it would never get done. He was just a "doer." He wasn't a mean or bad person.

All agreed that young Mr. von Hilsheimer enlivened the Ethical Society, if only briefly. His platform talks at the county satellite were well-attended, and his participation in meetings—including open houses he held at his apartment—ensured a healthy measure of controversy. However, after only five months at the Society, he was drafted into the Army. Hornback and Horace Friess, AEU director of leadership training, appealed to the Selective Service Board to grant von Hilsheimer a clerical deferral, but the application was rejected. Hornback announced at the annual meeting that von Hilsheimer would enter the Army on June 1. In a reference letter, Hornback noted that his wayward assistant had acquired friends and enemies in record time:

[T]he very initiative and irrepressibility that commend him to some of us seem to put others on their guard. So George is now persona non grata to several of my Ethical colleagues, both lay and professional.... George is not a person about whom it is easy to be neutral. He seems to kill or cure, enchant or repel. He always keeps things churning, and should build up a great deal of meaningful activity, most of it controversial.

(Letter from James F. Hornback to Harry Nance, New York chapter of the American Humanist Association, dated June 21, 1960)

Hornback's prediction was astute. Von Hilsheimer's extremism was manifest in his later career as a Unitarian minister. His sardonic tirades against racists, religious conservatives, and the government were frequently printed in *The Realist*, a digest of free thought and social criticism. In the mid-sixties, he served as chairman of the American Society of Humanistic Education, president of the Fund for the Migrant Children, and regional chairman of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders. (Philadelphia Society bulletin, November 23, 1966) His educational experiments continued to create controversy. In 1963, a youth camp under his direction—the Summerlane Camp near Rosman, North Carolina—made local headlines when a mob of nearby residents ran von Hilsheimer and the campers off the land. The residents, who were less than pleased with the camp's racial integration to start with, grew enraged when the camp's promise to "communicate... the values of love, openness, work, and joy" was twisted into published rumors of nudity and "free love." (From Summerlane Camp brochure, quoted by *The Realist*, September 1963) In 1974, von Hilsheimer made national headlines when a U.S. Senate subcommittee ordered him to explain an apparent pattern of overcharging the government for the care of students at Green Valley School, a Florida school for emotionally disturbed adolescents he had founded and directed. In the course of the Senate hearings, von Hilsheimer defended the school's use of such unorthodox discipline measures as forcing students to sleep in shallow graves and applying an electrical stimulator he termed "the lollapalooza."

(Associated Press story in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 26, 1974; WP story, possibly in *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, datelined July 25)

David Norton

No sooner had von Hilsheimer vacated the assistantship than it was filled by David Norton, a bright, handsome artist and civil engineer who had belonged to the St. Louis Society for years. Norton, who at 27 had grown restless in his engineering career, took a substantial cut in pay to serve the Ethical movement he had come to love. More level-headed and amiable than his predecessor, Norton served the Society from 1957-62. From the outset, he fulfilled the full range of leadership duties—platform speaking (in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia, as well as St. Louis), presenting workshops, counseling, visiting the sick, and performing weddings and memorial services. He also maintained a consultative role in the Society's religious education program: He spoke to classes, helped refine the curriculum, and organized joint Ethical-Unitarian religious education conferences. To round out his training, Norton took one course per semester at Washington University, earning a master's degree in philosophy in 1962. Under the tutelage of Hornback, whom he described as "a first-rate Leader and mentor," (Letter from David Norton to the author, dated February 3, 1987) he also studied the philosophy and history of the Ethical movement.

Norton, like his mentor, worried that the Society tended to be parochial, focusing overmuch on its own welfare. "Believing that the community held many potential members, and that increased name recognition would swell the membership," (Ibid.) he sought to extend the community's reach. Drawing on his highly developed aesthetic sensibilities (his father was an architect, his mother the proprietor of an art gallery), he made several distinctive contributions to the St. Louis community: He gave talks on art and architecture, regularly published cultural essays and book reviews in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and served for two years as co-host of "Bookmark," a weekly public television program sponsored by the St. Louis Public Library. Recalled Ludwig "Fred" Hammer, "He was very, very good at making book reviews. He was an excellent speaker, and he had a great sensitivity for conveying what was in a book." (Interview with Ludwig "Fred" and Corinne Hammer, Aug. 18, 1986)

Norton shared Hammer's missionary spirit. He urged the AEU to retain a full-time leader for the recruitment of Ethical leaders, and he proposed the inception of a national publication that would be distributed to the public as well as members of ethical societies. In his impatience and zeal, he published essays on ethics in independent national publications. "The philosophy of humanism and applied ethics should be kept before people throughout the country at all times," he said. "Ethical religion can replace tradition religion, if we but watch for the time to move forward again, taking a long stride ahead to prevent being overwhelmed." (Minutes of board of trustees meeting, August 1958)

Despite the breadth of his responsibilities, Norton was not at ease with all aspects of leadership. He was a fine speaker, and his grasp of ethical principles grew during his term of service, but he—and others—felt he was beyond his depth in organizational and counseling duties. Said one Society member, "Norton had no love for the details of the job—no question about it. He was a dreamer, and really loved the academic side of things." Member Walter Hoops concurred: "I don't think he liked all those details that go with being a minister. If it had only been lectures, and maybe even writing a book, he would have liked that. But this business of listening to all those complaints, that didn't appeal to him." (Interview with Walter and Eleanor Hoops, Sept. 18, 1986) Hornback was fond of Norton, though he felt his assistant neglected housekeeping affairs. "David was very engaging," he said. "I would say he was almost as good as von Hilsheimer as an engaging person—maybe even better, because von Hilsheimer had a little bit more of the showman appeal—he was strictly all charisma. Where Dave was more of a solid person, and yet David just wanted to do book reviews and outside guest appearances and so forth. To me, that just wasn't quite appropriate for the trainee-trainer relation." (Interview, September 23, 1986)

At a time when training for Ethical leadership was haphazard, Norton's career was about as sound as it could have been. The St. Louis Society paid his salary but received a yearly subvention of a few thousand dollars from the AEU. Although technically hired as a leader-in-training, Norton was informally known as assistant to the leader in his first year of service. In 1959, he attended the AEU's first Leader Training Institute, which was held on the campus of Columbia University. That same year, he received AEU certification, and his status in St. Louis was thereupon officially advanced to that of associate leader. Having established his dynamism and philosophical acumen on the Ethical lecture circuit, he received numerous requests from Eastern societies to serve as full-time leader. In deference to his graduate studies and his wife's career (Joan Carter Norton was a longtime host of "Romper Room," an enormously popular children's television show), he held off until the summer of 1962, at which time he became leader of the Boston Ethical Society. Because he was uncertain as to whether he would retain the post, he requested—and was granted—a leave of absence from his position in St. Louis. The leave was extended

several times, and Norton was formally invited to rejoin the St. Louis staff a few years after his departure, but he never returned from the coast.

Norton served as full-time leader of the Boston Society for three years. In his fourth year, having decided to turn toward an academic career, he reduced his commitment to half-time service and pursued a doctorate at Boston University. In 1966, he was hired as assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Delaware. He later was promoted to full professor, a position he held at the time of this writing. Ever loyal to the ideals of the movement, he attributed his departure from leadership to a reassessment of his strengths and inclinations, and to a lack of properly directed training:

I have great respect for the Ethical Movement, the Leaders I knew, and the membership. In theory, I continue to believe that the movement makes great sense—an organization of persons dedicated to moral ends on secular principles. I think weekly association is important, for learning, growth, and regular renewal of commitment. Unfortunately, most secularists seem to view weekly meetings as the “church” they have left behind, hence the small AEU total membership. Or such is my conclusion.

After nine years of service, I left the Leadership essentially for two reasons. The first is that I felt that the shaky foundations of my knowledge were insufficient to the demand for weekly lectures—I frequently was not confident that I knew what I was talking about, and I decided that the foundations of my own knowledge and understanding needed hard work that I could not self-supply by self-directed study....

The second reason is that, increasingly over the years, I had become uncomfortable with the inevitable (though often denied) “shepherd of the flock” aspect of Ethical Leadership. For example, I do not feel competent to give advice on personal problems, and am particularly uncomfortable if (having been coerced by circumstances into giving advice) my advice is followed. In general, I did not like being looked to as a “leader” in any sense. Thus it dawned on me that I was at odds with the job description in a fundamental way.

Norman Fleishman

A month after Norton’s departure, the Society hired Norman Fleishman, whom Hornback described as a “winsome, boyish, enthusiastic... street boy from Los Angeles” who “had never owned a suit or tie until he applied for AEU Leadership Training.” (Undated notes from Hornback to the author) Fleishman, who was educated as a teacher, had served as leader-in-training with the New York Society before coming to St. Louis in the summer of 1962. Again, the Society and the AEU jointly provided Fleishman’s salary, and the Society further funded his continuing education at Washington University. Since Norton’s absence and Fleishman’s service in St. Louis both were expected to be temporary, Fleishman and his wife set up housekeeping in the Norton family’s home. When Norton declined to return to St. Louis to serve in the 1963-64 season, the board asked Fleishman to stay on another year.

While other assistant leaders served the Sunday School part-time, grudgingly, or not at all, Fleishman took a keen interest in the program. Like von Hilsheimer, he favored an open, free-form style of instruction; also, like von Hilsheimer, he sometimes locked horns with the more conservative lay leaders of the school. But unlike the “wild man,” Fleishman committed himself to the JSA, serving as full-time director in his second year at the Society. He is best remembered for his service in that arena.

All the same, Hornback felt Fleishman was insufficiently devoted to his work. Citing a complaint Fleishman had voiced regarding vacation time, Hornback said, “He was just that way, a pure baby emotivist—again, with a good deal of charm, but not a dedicated organization man.” (Interview, September 23, 1986)

Fleishman left the Society after two years to take a position with the American Humanist Association. After a year with the AHA, he and his wife worked at a Unitarian School in Switzerland. Fleishman later worked for Planned Parenthood of America in its New York and Los Angeles offices.

It is worth noting that Hammer, then president of the St. Louis board, had reservations about continuing the pattern of hiring permanent assistants. He contended that St. Louis could best help the movement—and itself—by developing leadership through short-term assignments. During a previous stint as president, Hammer in 1959 had

informed the AEU that St. Louis would pay and train leadership prospects for periods of three or four months, provided the Union would then install these candidates in long-term positions at other societies. He made the proposal because “the AEU did not have original plans for using potential candidates” who had attended the three-week-long Leadership Training Institute the AEU had conducted at Columbia University that year. (Letter from Ludwig “Fred” Hammer to Horace Friess, chairman of the AEU Leadership Committee, recorded in minutes of November 1959 board meeting) Similarly, in 1963, after Fleishman’s first year at the Society, Hammer suggested that the AEU place Fleishman in a leaderless society and send St. Louis a fresh trainee. Neither the AEU nor the St. Louis board supported Hammer’s proposals; the catch-as-catch-can mode of leadership placement continued.

John Moore

Since the Society seemed determined to retain long-term assistant leaders, Hammer did all he could to encourage candidates of the highest caliber. After Fleishman’s departure, the Society welcomed John Moore, a 25-year-old graduate of the University of Arkansas who Hammer had introduced to Ethical Culture. Moore, originally an industrial engineer, had met Hammer in 1961 when he went to work for Proctor and Gamble, a firm Hammer served throughout his engineering career. Engaging discussions of religious philosophy prompted Moore to accompany Hammer to Society meetings, where the young freethinker “was amazed to see people saying in public what I thought in private.” (Letter from John Moore to the author, dated January 30, 1987) During a subsequent two-year stint in the Army, Moore nurtured a growing interest in anthropology and hungrily studied humanist writings. In his last six months in the service, Moore took advantage of his assignment to a nearby Army base to regularly attend Ethical meetings. He took a leave from the Army to attend the 1964 Leadership Training Institute in New York, and soon thereafter accepted the St. Louis Society’s offer of a leader-in-training position.

The board defined Moore’s position as leadership trainee “on a basis somewhat akin to a fellowship”; the AEU paid roughly half his salary. Under the terms of his hiring, Moore was expected to spend about half his time studying sociology and anthropology at Washington University and the other half serving the Society. His principal responsibility in the Society was organizing and directing the Youth Group and the Young Adults Group. He also presented platform addresses, speaking most often on political and social ethics.

Moore’s style was direct and often pugnacious. For example, in a 1965 address titled “A White Southerner Looks at the South,” he conveyed his amazement at the “attitudes and ignorance” of fellow participants in a recent civil rights march on Montgomery, Alabama. “It’s easy to be a Northern white liberal,” he said. “Talk is cheap.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “A White Southerner Looks at the South”; Ethical weekly, April 25, 1965) As indicated by a 1966 address titled, “America Viewed as a Primitive Culture,” Moore sought to provoke insight by presenting ethical issues in a sociological context:

When we describe another culture as being “primitive,” there is the strong implication that we ourselves are not. Yet how clear is the distinction between the characteristics of an “advanced” culture and the practices of “primitives”? Are primitive mores and ethics any less honorable than our own, or any less beneficial? Is there actually any difference between the ethics of “civilization” and the ethics of “savagery”?

For example, is human sacrifice much different from capital punishment? Is nuclear warfare in the defense of “freedom” any less barbaric than death from a flint-tipped arrow? I would suggest that our culture blinds us to universal human similarity and perhaps weakens our desire to empathize and cooperate with other peoples.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “America Viewed as a Primitive Culture”; Ethical Weekly, January 16, 1966)

Like his mentor and predecessors, Moore was a man of conviction. Passionately leftist and fiercely opposed to the Vietnam War, he voiced his convictions in strong words. His participation in campus protests and press reports of his polemics on war and racism unsettled those Society members who were, in demeanor if not politics, considerably more conservative. In the fall of 1965, the Executive Committee voiced its concern that Moore’s pronouncements might be interpreted as representative of the Society. Though the officers fended off suggestions that Moore be clearly restricted in his activism and relations with the press, they agreed to counsel him against speaking in the name of the Society. The board sought the advice of New York Ethical leader Jerome Nathanson, then AEU director of leadership training. In a discussion with Moore and board members, Nathanson reaffirmed the right of Ethical leaders and trainees to speak their minds. A leader, he said, “should be free to say what he thinks,

uncensored, but he should remember that he does not represent all the views in the Society.” (Minutes of board meeting, November 1965) Nathanson “expressed praise of Moore, with whom he had been impressed at the Training Institute because of his forthrightness, honesty and toughness, but cautioned him that he has to be prepared to accept opposition.” (Ibid.) Hammer, himself no shrinking violet, felt his colleagues were unnecessarily squeamish. “John Moore was a very honest guy,” he recalled. “He was a crusty guy—very bright, very sharp, but very, very blunt. He was not what you would call a sophisticated politician when it came to getting ideas across. I liked him.” (Interview with Ludwig “Fred” and Corinne Hammer, Aug. 18, 1986) Hornback described Moore as “a very amiable, delightful” assistant, adding that “von Hilsheimer and Moore were the ones with whom I had the most direct bond. We just had some hilarious times together, wisecracking and working together.” (Interview, September 23, 1986) On the other hand, he expressed dismay that Moore “really went all-out for the revolution, and that was all that mattered.” (Ibid.)

While the board took no formal measures to stifle the young leader, he certainly felt the mounting pressure to “get with the act.” As Moore recounted in a 1987 letter to the author, the squeeze confused him:

While at Washington University I became a Marxist, which I did not think at all incompatible with being an Ethical Humanist, especially since Percival Chubb, long-time Leader of the St. Louis Society, had himself been a Fabian Socialist. When Students for a Democratic Society got organized at Washington University, I was the first President, and a member of the National Council. I was then dumbfounded when certain members of the Society were outraged and, among other things, wanted to fire me, take away tuition money for my part-time study at Wash. U., not let me speak on the Sunday platform, etc. What I had done was follow my conscience, which I understood was one of the primary responsibilities of Ethical Culturists. But it was clear to me that my activities had created a turmoil and created some problems for Jeff Hornback, so I served my term as President then dropped out of SDS. I felt I needed some time to think about what I had witnessed and do some reading.

Although Moore reluctantly modified his efforts to effect social change, his experience in St. Louis engendered doubts about whether he had indeed found a welcoming and supportive spiritual home. Nonetheless, he continued to pursue a career in the movement. In 1967, he began a year’s service as leader-in-training with the New York Society. Subsequently, he served as full-time leader of the Essex County (New Jersey) Ethical Society for four years. During this time, his sociological reflections deepened his skepticism of Ethical Culture. His doubts about the movement’s future, and his dissatisfaction with the demands of Ethical leadership, are food for thought:

When I first came to the Ethical Movement I was both naive and idealistic, the usual combination. I truly believed that Ethical Humanism was the religion of the future, and I had a missionary zeal in bringing people to the Society.

* * *

What ultimately undercut my confidence in the future of the Ethical Movement was not Marx but Karl Mannheim, particularly his book “Ideology and Utopia.” From reading him, it was clear to me that the ideology of a group, what they all said together, was only loosely related to the perhaps more important implicit purposes of the group.... So I began to wonder why it was that the philosophy of Ethical Humanism had such a narrow appeal, largely to middle and upper class professional people.... [I]t seemed apparent to me that Ethical Culture was never going to appeal outside this narrow range of social and intellectual strata, and that it was not the religion of the future. So the personal question for me was whether I could continue in the Movement in the role of minister/priest/rabbi, with the realization that the Movement was never going to missionize the world. At the time I took the position at Essex County, I still believed that I could function in the Movement, and still wanted to.

I think that what finally drove me out of the movement was the personal cost of being a Leader. In St. Louis, I once noted from my calendar that I had twenty-seven consecutive evening meetings. That’s nearly a month. As my family grew, I discovered that I had very few evenings or weekends to spend with them.

After completing his doctorate in anthropology at New York University, Moore, like Norton, left Ethical leadership for academia. At the time of this writing, he was chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Oklahoma-Norman.

Robert Hoagland

In the 1966-67 season, Hornback took a sabbatical to complete work on his doctorate in philosophy—work he had begun in 1951. The board granted the sabbatical on the condition that Hornback agree to serve the Society for at least three years after his return. Although Moore was then on staff, he could not adequately substitute for Hornback because he had yet to receive leadership certification—a prerequisite for performing weddings and funerals. Among the men who considered filling in for Hornback during the sabbatical year were J. Hutton Hynd, the former St. Louis leader who had returned to his native Scotland, and Lester Mondale, a one-time candidate for the permanent leadership position who since had served as leader of the Philadelphia Society and as substitute pastor of Unitarian churches. Ultimately, however, the job went to Robert Hoagland, the acting minister of a Unitarian Church in Oneonta, New York, and leader of a Unitarian community in Madison, Wisconsin.

Hoagland, who had made interim leadership something of a vocation, deftly assumed the speaking, counseling, and administrative functions of the principal leader. Hornback described him as “a rather ironically pompous and snippy character—colorful, piquant, full of literary and historical knowledge, a good man at turning a phrase; not conventional, even in our [comparatively liberal] ways. He was... very bright, very competent, very opinionated—and he’d let you know it. A man with a touch for words.” (Interview, September 23, 1986)

A thoroughgoing humanist, Hoagland had little trouble adjusting to the tenor of the Ethical Society. In fact, although a newcomer to Ethical Culture, Hoagland exhibited extraordinary concern for the health of the movement. He made frequent suggestions regarding the Society’s organization, communication, and potential expansion. While his temporary status mitigated the impact of his proposals, it also freed him to offer a fresh perspective without worrying about the toes he might step on. He saw the movement as lagging far behind its potential; he urged the Society to “spread the word,” to heighten its public profile and make its programs and services more accessible. He suggested that the Society open the doors of the meeting house for use by other religiously and politically liberal organizations, and he urged members to rekindle the pioneer spirit of the movement’s founders through social action projects. In directing the platform program, he was more experimental than Hornback: He made creative use of music and drama; he invited guest speakers to extemporaneously address current issues, in addition to presenting prepared lectures; and he encouraged Society members to take a stronger role in planning services. He also suggested that the Society adopt some of the structural devices of traditional churches, such as a board of “elders” who would attend to the community’s philosophical and spiritual concerns, leaving the board of trustees to handle strictly administrative matters.

Hoagland was popular with the membership—so much so that a group of members mounted a petition and letter-writing campaign to persuade the board to retain him as assistant leader after Hornback’s return and Moore’s departure. The board agreed that Hoagland’s services were much appreciated, but the budget could hardly accommodate both Hornback and Hoagland, who were paid comparable salaries. Upon Hornback’s return, Hoagland resumed his itinerant ministry. He served for a time as editor of a journal published by the Fellowship of Religious Humanists.

Leaders, Not Followers

One more assistant leader, Tom Ferrick, served the Society during Hornback’s tenure. Because Ferrick’s principal duty was management of the Sheldon experiment, an amalgam of social action programs conducted at Sheldon Memorial after the community’s relocation to the county, he is profiled in the chapter on the experiment. For the purposes of this chapter, a notable aspect of Ferrick’s tenure — 1969-72 — is the conflict that evolved between him and Hornback. Ferrick was a champion of political and economic underdogs and a sympathizer of the radical left. He, like Moore, represented the revolutionary spirit of the sixties that Hornback derided as irrational and irresponsible. While Hornback valued the spunk and determination these men exhibited, he rankled at what he deemed their impolitic ways. His inability to form effective partnerships with his assistants contributed to the refusal of the Society’s lay leaders to hire any more associates during Hornback’s tenure.

Norton’s praise notwithstanding, most assistants and Society members considered Hornback a poor mentor for leaders-in-training. Despite his grasp of philosophy and Ethical Culture, he was essentially close-minded; his stubborn allegiance to such propositions as the discoverability of “objective ethics” and the immorality of ethnic

loyalty dissuaded the intellectual give-and-take of mentor and novice. Furthermore, because his own skills as a speaker, counselor and organizer were wanting, most of his assistants did not view him as a role model or seek his advice. Conversely, Hornback begrudged his assistants respect. Lacking confidence in his stature, he was chary of sharing leadership functions; he jealously guarded his hold on the platform, the newsletter, educational seminars, and service on community boards. Norton, for one, was widely regarded as a superior lecturer, but Hornback severely limited his hours in the spotlight. And when associates did speak—whether from the platform or at seminars—Hornback, as presider, reserved the last word; he commonly clarified or contradicted the primary speaker's assertions on the spot. "He could not let the men have a free hand with their own ideas," recalled one member. "Almost everybody had to have their talks [criticized]... some comments about it, where Jeff didn't agree, as though he was afraid his audience was being contaminated by a fresh idea."

Hornback's lack of deference inevitably spawned frustration and ill will, preventing genuine collegiality. In consequence, the assistants responded to Hornback's directives with something less than alacrity, and he was not one to insist. "I probably erred on the side of non-directiveness," Hornback said. "I probably put these guys too much on their own mettle. Although that would have been hard to tell them, because their attitude toward authority—and it was the characteristic attitude of the sixties—the books were all saying this—you know, you don't trust anyone over 30, and so forth..." (Interview, September 23, 1986) Trustees, especially board presidents, sometimes intervened to persuade assistants to carry out their assigned tasks.

To a man, the assistants who served the Society during Hornback's tenure were strong-willed and idealistic. They wanted to accomplish great things, and they were drawn to the Ethical movement because it promised an opportunity to advance ethical enlightenment and social change without the constraints of ecclesiastical doctrine and authoritarianism. They did not anticipate the constraints Hornback would impose, and they were not satisfied to perform auxiliary functions. Recalled member Charles "Bud" Blake, "Most of them wanted to save the world. They were young and ambitious. They wanted to make speeches, and they wanted to devote their time to things they thought were of greater importance to them than ministering to the Sunday School." (Interview with Charles "Bud" and Garnet Blake, July 1986) The very high-spiritedness that led these men to the Society set the stage for personality conflicts. "You've got to have an appreciation of the position these people are in," said Fred Hammer. "A guy that chooses to be an Ethical leader, he has to have an ego which has to stand up to his job, and that's sometimes contrary to being a cooperative individual. Jeff is not a strong person in the sense of instructing or guiding, and here you run into a bunch of people who have their own egos—pretty strong ones, at that, otherwise they wouldn't want to get into this particular area. And they just don't mesh." (Interview with Ludwig "Fred" and Corinne Hammer, Aug. 18, 1986)

The principal reason Hornback and his assistants did not "mesh" was that he, the board, and the membership at large had varying—and sometimes conflicting—expectations of the men. Trustees often batted about the notion of maintaining two leadership roles—one leader to "mind the store" and another to make public appearances and beat the bushes for new members. Because Hornback was perceived as stodgy, it was naturally assumed that he would serve as the "inside man," tending to the administrative details that so engrossed him. In hiring assistant leaders, then, trustees consistently sought more charismatic people to fill the "outside" role. Ironically, Hornback supported the dual-role proposition, but he saw himself as the incontestable "outside" man:

I wanted some relief. I wanted to go around and be active more in the community, and not be so tied to desk and Society detail, and none of them (assistants) would really keep shop. I'd envisioned that they would be a little bit more duty-bound—a little bit more helpers and apprentices, and they were not about to be apprentices to anybody.... The New York Society, with its multiple leadership, actually could afford a few leader specialists—and let's face it, Algernon D. Black and Jerome Nathanson were leader specialists, each trying to be a great "outside man." Some of these guys [leaders-in-training] were trying to follow that pattern, but if you're going to be a leader of a one-man society, you've got to be a generalist. (Interview, September 23, 1986)

In effect, assistants were simultaneously expected to be dazzling and subservient; it was not possible for them to please both their employers and their mentor. The resultant dissatisfaction led to an informal ban on the hiring of leaders-in-training. According to longtime trustee Harold Hanke, the attempts at team leadership were "an absolute bust. More money has been wasted on that leadership training program than you can shake a stick at." (Interview with Harold and Jane Hanke, Sept. 22, 1986) In the terse words of Frank Nutt, who served on a succession of leadership committees, "every one was a disaster." (Interview with Frank Nutt, Sept. 16, 1986)

The Passing of the Baton

James F. Hornback was dedicated to Ethical Culture. He devoted his entire professional life to the maturing but ever-tiny movement; he is among the few people to retire from Ethical leadership without ever having had an outside career. He was an interim president of the AEU in 1982, and he presided over the AEU National Leaders Council for six years, the maximum allowable term, ending in 1976. He served as an AEU delegate to all congresses of the International Humanist and Ethical Union from its postwar formation in 1952 until 1986, and he served on the board of the IHEU from 1962-66. He was, in short, a company man.

On the home front, he served the St. Louis Society for a record 33 years. Further, he maintained the status of leader emeritus from the time of his retirement in 1984 until 1988. He delivered hundreds of platform addresses, attended countless committee meetings, and married and memorialized generations of Society members.

He also gave a generous share of his attention to community organizations. He served on the boards of the American Humanist Association, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Memorial and Planned Funeral Society, World Federalists, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Eastern Missouri. For years, he served as the secretary of the Sandwich Club, a venerable luncheon club of liberal religious leaders to which every leader of the St. Louis Society, beginning with Walter Sheldon, has belonged. An ardent supporter of the United Nations, he presided over the St. Louis Chapter of the United Nations Association from 1975-77 and served on the national board of the UNA from 1977-82; he also acted as AEU representative to the United Nations Tenth Anniversary congress in 1955. The charitable projects he helped organize, and the groups he assisted as speaker and adviser, are too numerous to list.

For decades, Hornback was the Society's point man, the central message-carrier in the community's network of personal contacts. "His strengths," wrote former assistant leader John Moore, "were in the time he devoted to the job, his willingness to talk to any member any time, his attention to administrative matters, and his day-to-day control of events in the Society." (Letter from John Moore to the author, dated Jan. 30, 1987) Member Walter Hoops confirmed that image of the efficient shopkeeper, saying that Hornback "was a natural for that kind of thing. He could go from one thing to another." (Interview with Walter and Eleanor Hoops, Sept. 18, 1986) Nevertheless, Hornback considered himself a mediocre manager, at best:

If you're going to be a leader of a one-man society, you've got to be a generalist, even though—as in my case—I don't regard myself primarily as an organization man. I will do the organizational chores, not because I feel my most creative at them—I don't. Or that I feel they're my chief talents. To me, the chore of calling and coordinating a committee is a trial; I'm timid about it. I hate having to call people and put the bead on them, I really do, even though I know in many cases they're glad to be asked, and I've been assured that many times. Still, I'm timid about drafting and directing people. I can't. So in that sense, I tend to flinch, and do it myself. Though I think, considering that temperamental tendency, that I did pretty well, but I have no illusions and no false pride about it—I don't think that was my calling, particularly. But I did it because I realized that, sure, you've got to do that for the cause.

(Interview, September 23, 1986)

Hornback rankled at his own tendency to "do it himself." He often complained to the Society's lay leaders that the demands of his position left him insufficient time for study, reflection, writing, home life and recreation. In a letter to the board, he wrote that he was "easily distracted and tied down by administrative and pastoral detail, to the detriment of the philosophic and educational work which I still regard as the distinctive function of an ethical society." (Letter from James F. Hornback to the board of trustees, dated January 7, 1980)

Although Hornback conscientiously made himself available, few members confided in him; he had neither the training nor the inclination to offer counsel. "I always felt he was a little cold," said a longtime member. "I never felt comfortable with him. I like him, really, I just think he's kind of cold and unapproachable." Hornback attempted to compensate for his lack of magnetism by keeping abreast of the details of members' lives. He had a mania for clipping newspaper articles on members and filing away notes on marriages, divorces, deaths, and career advancements. By recalling these bits of personal information in Sunday morning visits, he established a passable pastoral rapport; he gave members and visitors, especially those seeking relief from longtime alienation, a sense of

being acknowledged and appreciated. He also drew upon this skill in delivering remarkably detailed and refreshingly anecdotal eulogies.

Hornback's greatest weakness was in his most prominent role—that of platform lecturer. The philosophical content of his talks was often unwieldy and unduly technical, and his delivery was disjointed and phlegmatic. Because he considered written lectures to be stilted, he chose to improvise his talks. As one member recalled with dismay: “Typically, he came to the platform without a clear idea of what he was going to say. He was absolutely persuaded that he could not read an address. So he didn’t organize them. He would come with a pile of books, put them on the edge of the lectern, and then you never knew what was going to happen—he’d get lost, he’d run over, he’d get on tangents and never get back to his subjects.” While the talks of other Ethical leaders, including St. Louis leaders, were commonly transcribed for the edification of members, few of Hornback’s talks were sufficiently cogent to be committed to paper. “I think it’s a sad commentary that, of all the years Jeff was here, there is not a reproducible talk available to our membership,” said one lay leader. “That, I think, is incredible—I think it’s a severe indictment. His problem, at the end, was redundancy and extemporaneous remarks. It really got to be a problem for the Society and for some of the membership.”⁵¹ One member, a homemaker who had cherished the finely wrought addresses delivered by J. Hutton Hynd, said she “found Hornback’s lectures very difficult to follow. I used to come home and think, ‘Gee, I’d have been better off if I’d stayed home and done my washing.’ He’d go off on a tangent, and I’d think, ‘When’s he going to get back?’ and he never did. I used to leave in a fog, thinking, ‘What did I hear this morning? I can’t pull it together.’” He fared no better in seminars and workshops sponsored by the Society. “Jeff’s idea of a successful orientation meeting,” recalled a former associate, “was to discuss at length Hegel’s absolute morality from the standpoint of neo-Kantianism. And then you woke up the orientation participants and sent them home.” Almost from the start of Hornback’s tenure in St. Louis, lay leaders pleaded with him to discipline his speaking style. Hornback, while acknowledging that his custom was unpopular, was unable or unwilling to alter it:

For better or for worse, and I guess for worse.... I tried in my early days of speaking to stick close to a script, and I got hopelessly balled up, and I never learned to read well—I don’t feel at home tied to a script. I tend to take off and wing it, usually from fairly strict outline notes with many fortifications of readings and background and so forth, tending, in the sense of not having it completely sorted out, to be vastly overprepared, so that I’ve got ten times as much material in the background than I really need. Now I realize that, homiletically, is probably not the wise way to go, even at the fairly literate and fairly sophisticated audience [that attends Ethical Society services], that one needs to simplify and focus and so forth. A long philosophic ramble is not the sort of thing that everybody might follow, though, I must say, my favorite teachers did it that way.

(Interview, September 23, 1986)

Because of the centrality of the platform address in the Ethical service, Hornback’s shortcomings as a speaker were impossible to overlook. “There are other reasons for being here, but that platform meeting ought to be the key to the whole week,” said one member. “For me,” echoed another, “the lecture is the main part of our service, of our whole system, of our whole Ethical Society. I like to have a good talk, a well thought out lecture that gives me something to think about. If somebody doesn’t do that, that takes all the enjoyment out of being a member of the Ethical Society.” Dissatisfaction with Hornback was widespread; Society stalwarts regularly attended platform meetings to visit with friends and glean what they could from Hornback’s talks, but some less dutiful members attended only when the service featured guest speakers. An informal club, composed mainly of disenchanted husbands of loyalists, met in the Assembly Room during Hornback’s lectures; to the best of one member’s recollection, it was called the Association of Those Who Have Heard Enough Hornback. The leader “had been here altogether too long to have anything fresh to say,” said one member, adding that the Society was “reduced to the people who would come no matter what was being said.”

Inevitably, talk of dismissing the leader arose continually. Members and their trustees wanted a more stirring and energetic leader, a leader who could unify and expand the community. “We didn’t think that any growth was possible... with Jeff remaining,” said a lay leader. But the community had never dismissed a leader, and the prospect of doing so was unseemly. Reflecting a common sentiment, one member said Hornback “emulates what Ethical Culture should be teaching people to be.” Others remarked that Hornback, though ineloquent, was “the only

⁵¹ The interviewee’s statement is not quite accurate. At least two of Hornback’s addresses — “Ethical Culture and the ‘Larger’ Humanism” (1963) and “World Humanist Trends: the Challenge of the Hanover Congress” (1982) — were transcribed by the New York Society.

act in town” for forthright religious humanists. Furthermore, Hornback was seen as a reliable caretaker of the institution.

Unlike some of his more dynamic colleagues, he was politic and conciliatory. “For all his limitations,” said one member, Hornback “never polarized the Society. You’d get sick and tired of his straddling issues, but he never fractured the Society.” Like Gerald Ford’s presidency, Hornback’s term of leadership was distinguished by its relative stability. One lay leader, noting that Hornback would have “had no place to go” had the Society dismissed him, characterized his retention as an act of decency: “I would guess that most of our Society members would have a heck of a time dealing with a hardline attitude toward someone who’s devoted to the movement, to the ideal, and simply becoming obsolete before your eyes. You wouldn’t fire him. I don’t think anybody would have had the guts to say, ‘You’ve got to find something else.’” Of course, Hornback knew he was largely disliked and unappreciated; over the years, he acquired the resentment of a “kept man” toward his grudging patrons. In his creeping bitterness, he transformed his compendium of personal trivia into an arsenal of poisonous gossip. As one member said, he was “contaminated by years of rejection.” He slowly but visibly burned out, becoming a plodding and uninspired servant. As Dylan Thomas wrote of “wise men at their end,” Hornback came to the sorrowful realization that his “words had forked no lightning.”

Hornback’s request for a second sabbatical was the beginning of the end of his career. He had not completed his doctoral dissertation in his 1966-67 leave, and that unfinished challenge had become an albatross. He planned to have the dissertation, “The Philosophic Sources and Sanctions of the Founders of Ethical Culture,” published in book form, and he told the board of trustees that he felt completion of the project would be of considerable value to the Ethical movement. James S. McDonnell, former chairman of the board of the McDonnell Douglas Corporation and a personal friend of Hornback’s, encouraged the leader to proceed with the project. McDonnell, who chaired the philanthropic McDonnell Foundation, arranged for a \$33,000 grant to the Society to accommodate the leave in the 1980-81 season. In his written request for the sabbatical, Hornback urged the Society to “take advantage of the special financing of this leave, to retain the services of a highly qualified leadership prospect for the Ethical Movement in general or the St. Louis Society in particular.” (Letter from James F. Hornback to the board of trustees, dated Jan. 7, 1980) Hornback made it clear that he intended to resume his leadership role after the sabbatical, but he also let it be known that he planned to retire a few years after his return. Therefore, in searching for an interim leader, the board sought a permanent successor to Hornback.

After approving Hornback’s sabbatical, the board adopted a modified version of a transition plan proposed by an ad hoc committee. The plan affirmed that the Society was searching for a permanent leader who would begin serving at the start of the 1980-81 season; pledged to maintain Hornback’s full salary and benefit package until his expected retirement in 1984 and reaffirmed his pension plan; and established the functions and deadlines of a Leader Search Committee to be appointed by the board president. The plan also included the appointment of Hornback to the auxiliary position of “Senior Leader” effective at the start of the new season. The board defined that role in its report to the membership: “In the Ethical movement, it is clearly understood that the Leader carries the responsibility of Leadership in a Society while the Senior Leader participates in a cooperative way which assures continuity and a strengthening of the Society during the transition period and beyond. This is not to be construed as having two Leaders, an arrangement which the Board felt would almost certainly be confusing and divisive.” (Ethical weekly, February 17, 1980) The board’s report noted that “Mr. Hornback had commented on the program proposal prior to the executive session and he supports the decisions reached.” (Ibid.)

In February 1980, board president L. Dean Smith appointed a Leader Search Committee. Chaired by Frank Nutt, the committee was made up of Corinne Hammer, Sandra Purdy, Margaret Ranford, Bill Stuckenberg, Fred Tuttle, Dan Vornberg, and Mike Wertman. Smith said the committee represented his “sincere attempts to set up a committee as representative of the entire St. Louis Ethical Society as possible, while still maintaining a moderate committee size. Special attention was given to seeking a balance in terms of age and duration of membership; of trustees and lay members; of men and women; as well as in terms of representing as wide a range of subgroups as possible.” (minutes of the board of trustees, March 1980) The committee was to solicit and screen candidates and make a recommendation to the board; the board, in turn, would make a final selection of a candidate to be presented for membership approval. In preparation for the search, the committee drafted a job description and a profile of the ideal leader. In developing that profile, the committee sought to determine what Society members most wanted in a leader. A questionnaire circulated in March 1980, asked members to rank the relative importance of ten personal and professional qualifications. The qualifications, listed in descending order of importance as indicated by the survey results, were:

- 1.) Warm, friendly personality

- 2.) Strong platform speaker, competent in several areas, an authority in at least one area
- 3.) Able to attract and bring in new members of all ages; skillful with diverse groups and diverse persons and interested in working with them (These qualifications were tied in the ranking.)
- 4.) A convinced ethical humanist
- 5.) Able to inspire Society members to participate in Society programs
- 6.) Able to reach out into the community so the Society can make an impact in community programs
- 7.) Has a deep concern for pastoral duties, calling, ceremonies, etc.
- 8.) Highly competent in philosophical studies and teaching
- 9.) Has a stable, ongoing family situation

As his contribution to the ongoing discussions about what the community needed in a leader, Hornback delivered an address outlining the historical development of the role. In the talk, given May 11, 1980, he inverted the priorities revealed in the survey, stressing philosophical acumen over interpersonal skills:

Times have changed considerably since Felix Adler traveled and spoke on “The New Profession” as he recruited and tested, and frequently rejected, candidates for Ethical leadership in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth. On philosophic grounds alone, most of our present leaders would have been rejected. (He chose transcendentalists and rejected naturalists or humanists for all leadership roles, lay or professional.)

The prophetic role of religion—the pioneering and the truly educational—was stressed, above the priestly and the pastoral. The leader, Adler said, should be the “chief learner” of the Society; and all education should be ethical education.

Ethical leadership must be a true vocation, a “calling,” and not just a job one does for a clientele to make a living. It is working for a “cause,” not just for a congregation—though presumably the members are chosen for their understanding of the cause and their commitment to it. The cause is ethics itself, ethical insight and ethical living so strong as to be religious.

(Promotional synopsis of address, “The Special Role of the Ethical Leader; Ethical weekly, May 11, 1980)

The Search Committee was determined to find the best available person for the job. Because the St. Louis Society is so large and diverse, committee members felt that only a well-rounded minister and public speaker would be suitable. “We were looking for a middle-aged person with substantial experience in a comparable church or society,” said Nutt. “It’s too strong a society for an inexperienced person. The committee wanted someone who was thoroughly trained and ready to take on pastoral duties.”

The committee’s earliest inquiries revealed that, because few societies could afford to retain associate leaders and leaders-in-training, qualified candidates for leadership posts were not to be found within the movement. The committee followed up leads provided by Hornback and other Ethical leaders, Unitarian Universalist leaders, and academics long associated with the Ethical movement. In addition, notice of the St. Louis opening was advertised in the Humanist magazine, The Churchman (an independent journal of religious humanism), the journal of the American Philosophical Association, and the Unitarian Universalist World.

An early applicant, Paul Beattie, minister of All Souls Unitarian Church in Indianapolis, received the hearty endorsement of both the committee and the board; before going before the membership, however, Beattie withdrew his candidacy, and the committee resumed its search. In June 1980, Nutt reported that the committee had received fewer than twenty responses to its ads. The committee eliminated about half the applicants as unqualified and invited a select few to come to St. Louis for interviews. As the summer wore on, it began to seem likely the Society

would begin the 1980-81 season without a leader at the helm. Hornback offered to postpone the start of his sabbatical until January, but the offer was declined. Instead, a Contingency Committee was formed to provide platform and pastoral services during the anticipated leaderless period. The plans developed by this committee, which was chaired by Ludwig “Fred” Hammer, are a commendable example of enthusiastic lay leadership. However, the plans were obviated by the serendipitous hiring of John Hoad.

At the time he applied for the position, Hoad was working as a counselor at a New Jersey mental health service and completing his doctorate in counseling at Princeton University. A career minister, Hoad had taken a humanistic turn after decades of service to the Methodist church. However, he had come to the United States from his native West Indies only a few years before, and he had never heard of Ethical Culture before his Unitarian wife, Karen, brought to his attention the ad in the UU World. Because the opening called for someone who excelled in both counseling and public speaking, Hoad saw it as a natural progression of his career; after visiting ethical societies in New Jersey and New York to investigate the movement, he interviewed for the post in August 1980. The timing of his interview was an extraordinary coincidence. When Frank Nutt phoned to extend the invitation, Hoad asked what date would be most propitious for his visit; as Nutt flipped through his appointment book, Karen Hoad inspected the couple’s itinerary for a summer excursion to determine when they would be nearest St. Louis. Almost simultaneously, Nutt and Karen Hoad suggested the same date.

Hoad wowed the committee with his erudition, eloquence, and warm, gentle manner. Meeting in special session, the board unanimously recommended him to the membership, and the membership approved his hiring with near unanimity; the member who cast the sole dissenting vote later confessed that he had done so only to symbolically maintain the Society’s tradition of contentiousness. In September, the AEU accorded Hoad provisional leadership certification. After tying up his affairs in New Jersey, Hoad came on board in mid-November.

Hoad quickly won the hearts and minds of Society members. His insightful and exquisitely crafted platform talks were a banquet for a hungry crowd. Though his even temperament and dry wit disappointed those who had hoped for a more fiery personality, virtually everyone felt confident that the wheel had passed into strong hands. Members turned to Hoad for pastoral counseling, and pastor and wife began forming lasting friendships. A master of the art of encouragement, Hoad helped lay leaders hatch educational and social programs. A new era had begun.

Ah, but the old era had not ended. Hornback was to return from his sabbatical at the start of the 1981-82 season, and the role to which he would return was less than clear. In accordance with his wishes, and with undeniable eagerness, the board had selected an interim leader who was expected to serve the Society for years to come. Hoad, a lifelong minister who was less than ten years Hornback’s junior, could hardly be viewed as novice to be “brought along” under the aegis of the retiring leader; accordingly, the “senior” was dropped from Hornback’s title. Wary of the conflicts that might result from the sharing of one ambiguous title, the board scrambled to divvy up leadership responsibilities in the most favorable manner that would be acceptable to both men. On the recommendation of a leadership committee made up of Mike Wertman, Frank Nutt, and Fred Hammer, the board assigned to Hoad primary responsibility for platform, pastoral, and membership duties, and directed Hornback to tend to community relations, publicity, and research.

Hornback’s “community relations” portfolio was a compromise devised by the board to replace a controversial proposal for an “outreach” program. Under the outreach plan put forth by the leadership committee, Hornback would have assisted in the formation of ethical societies in other Midwestern cities—a dream that had floated about for decades. Hammer envisioned Hornback’s role as a corollary to his research and publicity portfolios: He wanted the leader to write and gather literature that would introduce embryonic communities to Ethical Culture and the ways of institution-building. However, some trustees construed the proposal as requiring a more direct involvement in nascent societies and considered the task inappropriate for Hornback—or vice versa. The proposal also hinted at providing subsidies for Ethical “missions”—an untenable budget item at a time when dual leadership placed an unprecedented strain on the Society. The narrower responsibility for “community relations” was an innocuous alternative.

Essentially, the board’s directive merely sanctioned Hornback’s avocations as official assignments. Tending to “community relations” simply meant maintaining longstanding contacts and continuing his involvement with religious, philanthropic, and activist organizations. “Research” included continuing work on his dissertation and organizing the Society’s voluminous archival papers. And “Publicity” was a rather vague portfolio that entailed little more than generating press releases regarding platform and educational programs. Unquestionably, the position to which Hornback returned after his sabbatical was a subordinate role with little substance. Hornback agreed to the

terms of the plan, but its implementation caused him enormous distress. As one lay leader said, “I can’t think of anything more defeating for a person than to be left hanging without anything to do.”

The three years of dual leadership that followed Hornback’s return were rocky for both men. Hoad, with the strong encouragement of the board and membership, sharply limited Hornback’s platform appearances—a blow to the pride of the thirty-year man. Hoad’s ideological differences aggravated Hornback’s frustration: After years of preaching about “objective ethics” and the evils of ethnic loyalty and modern psychology, Hornback looked on helplessly as the new principal leader promoted introspection, delved into the relation of feelings to ethics, and fostered empathy for varied cultural and religious perspectives. On several uneasy occasions, Hornback made use of platform appearances to minimize or openly controvert Hoad’s views. Toward the end of the first inharmonious year of dual leadership, Hornback expressed to the board his anger at being “squeezed out” of his role:

I had assumed—and am still convinced—that Platform, Membership, and Pastoral responsibilities, and Community Relations, Publicity, and Research, are integrally related aspects of Ethical leadership which need to be talked through by cooperating Leaders, initially and almost day by day, even though the greatest share is assumed by one Leader in any given area. So on or about July 1, 1981, as we approached the time for staggered vacations, I asked John if it was not time for us to be checking signals on platform planning. (I had every expectation of a reduced role, and a secondary or supportive role, subject perhaps to analysis of thirty years of my primary experience locally, for better or for worse.) Imagine my surprise, and the surprise of the few knowledgeable people with whom I have shared this experience, to hear that John had already planned platform policy and proportions for 1981-82, on a six-to-one ratio for himself and me.... On this, John cited the support of a good and representative ad hoc committee he had called at his house, including some new members. But I consider this a poor way to start a leadership collaboration, and a shabby example of professional ethics. Nevertheless, I have confined my protests to inner circles, and to the few concerned members and colleagues who knew or suspected that the drastic shift in emphasis was not made with my knowledge and consent.

* * *

I can no longer laugh off or put down the volunteer informants who kept telling me they heard, locally and from coast to coast, that I was being squeezed or frozen out in the new leadership arrangement. Until the above events came to light, I kept insisting that things were all being done with my knowledge and consent, if not my initiative. Now I have had to admit to some, though not yet to all by any means, that they were right and perhaps knew more than I did.... I have resented being goaded by John to stay away from his portfolios—Platform, Membership, and Pastoral—and cleave only to mine—

Community Relations, Publicity, and Research. Community Relations was conceived to include AEU and IHEU, among other things, and I am still the St. Louis Leader representative to the AEU Board. But when John had the chance to take one of three AEU Executive Committee appointments from the National Leaders Council, I urged him to do it. He makes the subsidized monthly trips, in between quarterly trips for the whole Board and Leaders Council. I have not reproached him for “encroaching” on my portfolio, or taking my longtime job on the AEU Executive Committee, which makes him a Board member ex officio.

I suggest that John simply believes less in the possibility of dual leadership than I do. Had there been a more confident and open promotion of the idea, not as a need but as a challenge at least during these two or three years of planned succession, the whole thing might have gone down better up to now.

(Letter from James F. Hornback to the board of trustees, dated March 31, 1982)

Hornback’s conclusion had merit. The board had not conceived the dual leadership arrangement with openness and confidence; given Hornback’s track record with associate leaders, no one expected him to be a helpful teammate. His auxiliary role was designed as a dignified way for him to ease out of leadership. Despite the board’s wise caution that the arrangement “was not to be construed as having two leaders,” Hornback never fully accepted the limitations of his post-sabbatical status. In hindsight, the transfer of authority would have been far more graceful and humane had Hornback been forthrightly asked to retire with a pension and emeritus status. The unsubtle “freeze-

out” was a humiliation to Hornback and a source of ongoing anguish for the unsuspecting man who sought to launch a new chapter of his ministry in a new congregation. Ted Curtis, who presided over the board from 1981-83, attempted to keep the pot from boiling over by calling together a mediating Leaders Advisory Committee comprising members appointed jointly by himself and the two leaders. The action was futile: Hornback now objected to the board’s delineation of leadership duties, and the committee was expressly forbidden to alter the arrangement. Hornback forced the issue, demanding that the board shore up his secondary authority in Hoad’s areas of primary responsibility. In response, the board stood behind Hoad. One former trustee encapsulated the board’s consensus in the phrase, “John’s our future; Jeff’s the past.”

Though the board’s actions represented the dominant sentiments of the community, some Society members grieved at the sidelining of their longtime leader. In a show of support for Hornback’s continued service, one member anonymously contributed \$30,000 in the 1982-83 fund drive to cover his salary. The gesture was an emblem of the loyalty Hornback had earned through sheer devotion, but it was a thin ointment for the bruising he had taken. As one former president recalled the ordeal, Hornback had “opened up the door” for a permanent replacement when he requested his second sabbatical, and the board “jumped” at the chance to make a long-desired change. “Jeff wanted the board to get a temporary replacement, and he mentioned his long-term plans to retire,” recalled the lay leader, “but he didn’t think for a moment that the board would really push him out. He never adjusted to that.”

Dejected, Hornback exerted little initiative in his final years of service. He completed his dissertation, put together summer platform series, and tidied the Society’s historical papers before delivering them to the archival library of the University of Missouri-St. Louis. His retirement was commemorated at a banquet held November 9, 1984. More than two hundred Society members and colleagues turned out to honor him. Tributes were delivered by representative members and Ethical leaders Sheldon Ackley and Matthew Ies Spetter. The membership presented him with bound letters of appreciation and a Farewell Fund of \$7,863; Hornback planned to use the gift to travel for recreation and volunteer work. He announced that he and his wife intended to make a “clean break” from the Society to establish the fact of his retirement but added that he intended to take up volunteer activities after a suitable period away from the spotlight. As leader emeritus, Hornback made occasional appearances on the platform and other Society functions, periodically attended AEU and IHEU meetings, and performed weddings and memorials at the request of members. He never resumed an active role in the Society’s educational programs.

Hornback left a legacy in the James F. Hornback Humanist of the Year Award, given yearly to a person or institution in honor of distinguished humanitarian service. The award is accompanied by an honorarium from an endowment contributed by James S. McDonnell. Hornback was the first recipient of the award, which was inaugurated at a 1976 banquet marking his twenty-fifth anniversary of service to the St. Louis Society. Subsequent recipients have included a state senator, a psychoanalyst, and the philanthropic International Institute of St. Louis.

Hornback’s fierce opposition to Zionism precipitated his conclusive departure from the Ethical movement. When Israel forcefully put down Palestinian protests in the occupied West Bank and Gaza strip in 1987 and 1988, Hornback demanded that the Society and the AEU condemn the nation for abusing human rights. When the bodies declined to pass such resolutions, Hornback angrily resigned his membership and renounced his leadership status.

14: JOHN HOAD; A DILIGENT SEEKER

John Hoad’s story is one of unending growth. His critical appreciation of the cultures and religious traditions he has embraced has permitted him to cultivate a richly variegated world view. A lifelong student of philosophy, theology, psychology, and science, he pursues every mode of inquiry that promises insight into the human experience. To borrow one of his favorite phrases, he “keeps a growing edge,” forever learning and experimenting. He leads an examined life, a life of thoughtful service and courageous reflection. Always searching, never satisfied that his vision is complete, he is a paradigm of the freethinker.

Hoad was born November 1, 1927, in Barbados, a West Indian British colony that later became an independent republic.⁵² Although baptized and confirmed in the Church of England, the dominant Barbadian denomination, Hoad received no formal religious training apart from that customarily included in the British public-school curriculum. While in the fifth form, which corresponds to the senior year of U.S. high school, he began reading the works of 19th century British freethinkers Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant. After considering their arguments, Hoad decided to formally break from the Church. Administrators of Harrison College, upon receiving a note from his father,

⁵² Barbados became an independent republic in 1966.

excused Hoad from the school's religion classes; he thereafter spent those class times in a study hall with two other dissenters, a Jew and a Catholic.

In the sixth form, the equivalent of the junior college level in U.S. education, Hoad "turned to science to find meaning in life." (Interview, August 1, 1986) Because his father, the manager of a sugar factory, could ill afford to send him to an institute of pure science, he accepted a scholarship to the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad. (FOOTNOTE: The Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture subsequently became the agriculture department of the University of the West Indies.) After earning his diploma, Hoad taught geology in the college's soil sciences division while continuing to work toward an associate's degree. He planned on a career in teaching.

While at Imperial College, Hoad began attending services at Methodist churches. He was strongly influenced by the writings of Leslie Weatherhead, a British Methodist who applied the findings of the natural and social sciences to scriptural theology. Weatherhead analyzed the person of Jesus and accounts of supernatural events in the light of science and scholarship. Essentially, Weatherhead envisaged Jesus as an ethical archetype, a man worthy of heed on human terms without regard to metaphysical dogma. (FOOTNOTE: Weatherhead's books include "Jesus and Ourselves" and "It Happened in Palestine.") As his religious thought matured, Hoad decided to funnel his interest in teaching into ministerial service. In 1950 and 1951, he studied at Cliff College, a Methodist Bible college near Sheffield, England. Although he did well academically, his acceptance into the ministry was delayed by bouts of pneumonia. During a one-year hiatus from his studies, he worked as a lay evangelist at a city mission in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he preached, conducted evangelical meetings, and visited the sick. In 1952, after presenting a clean bill of health, he was accepted into the ministry. He attended the theological college at Cambridge University, receiving his Master of Arts in divinity in 1955.

Recognized by his superiors as a man of exceptional intellect, he was permitted to pursue advanced studies before taking on a pastoral assignment. He studied at West Germany's Göttingen University, where he was exposed to Christology scholar Joachim Jeremias, and Switzerland's Basel University, where he attended lectures by theologians Oscar Cullman and Karl Barth. Upon his return to England in 1956, he was formally ordained a minister of the Methodist Church.

His first clerical assignment was as missionary to British Guiana. (FOOTNOTE: Upon obtaining independence, British Guiana was renamed Guyana). In his five years in South America, he served two Methodist circuits comprising 14 churches and affiliated elementary schools. During that time, he started a newsletter for lay preachers, an innovation that again brought his scholarly aptitude to the attention of church leaders. In 1961, he was called back to England for a year of "missionary deputation"—that is, traveling about as a visiting preacher to stir up enthusiasm for the missions. In 1962, he was sent to Kingston, Jamaica, where he served simultaneously as pastor of Providence Church, chaplain of St. Andrew's Girls School, and a member of the interdenominational chaplaincy staff of the University of the West Indies. During this time, Hoad honed his counseling skills and began to dream of studying pastoral counseling at a first-rate university. In the mid-sixties, he served on the board of trustees that formed the interdenominational United Theological College of the West Indies. In 1968, he was named president of the college, a post which included teaching homiletics, pastoral counseling, and New Testament Greek. He resigned the post before the end of his elected term, in part to facilitate social progress in the region:

While my presidential term would have been five years normally, I resigned at four years. Part of it was the desire to further my own education. Part of it was due to a feeling that, although I was a West Indian, I was a white West Indian, and here I was the white president of a seminary which was 90 percent black students. We still had a faculty that was tilted in favor of white expatriates by 60 percent to 40 percent West Indian. I felt the time had come for a change, and I knew that if I left, there was a Baptist faculty member, a black Jamaican, who would in all likelihood get the presidency—which he did. It was partly for that reason, not feeling so much pushed out, as that I wanted to make room for the image of a black head of this seminary. (Interview, August 1, 1986)

Upon leaving Jamaica in 1972, Hoad began work on his doctorate in pastoral counseling at Princeton Theological Seminary. While writing his dissertation, he worked as a psychotherapist at a counseling agency and two psychiatric hospitals. From 1976 to 1980, he served as clinical superintendent of Corner House, a counseling agency serving the township and borough of Princeton, New Jersey. Throughout these years, he reassessed and refined his religious perspective.

Like Adler's evolution from Reform Judaism to transcendentalism, Hoad's transition from liberal Protestantism to humanism was smooth and gradual. Never a dogmatist, he simply grew to appreciate Christian values in a

conceptual matrix that depended less and less on theological underpinnings. At Princeton, he was deeply influenced by the writings of American psychologist George Kelly, author of “The Psychology of Personal Constructs.”⁵³ As he examined, with Kelly’s help, the *function* of religious images, the relevance of their *substance* waned. To Hoad, Christianity “became true... in a different sense”:

It was through Kelly that I began to see that a lot of what we do in life is simply form constructs by which we live—constructs that give us conceptual leverage on reality. I was, after a period of more orthodox Christianity, going back to the Weatherheadian psychological approach to the gospel. My dissertation was a study of faith as it’s presented in the synoptic gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. What was happening was, I was beginning to see the doctrines of the Christian faith in a more metaphorical or symbolic sense. So that if you call Jesus son of God, you’re using that construct to say, “Here is a representative human being”; if you see Ultimate Reality as being like a parent, then this life is the counterpart to that parenthood—this is the son to that type of father. And so Jesus becomes a paradigm, in what he says and what he does, to give us conceptual leverage on that reality.

I was moving along the line of using science in general—and psychology in particular—to understand what religion was all about, and therefore was more ripe both for what I learned from the Unitarians and for what I was coming into in Ethical Culture.

It’s always been gradual. William James speaks of the “hot spot” in the center of the mind, and then cooler spots in the periphery, and that something that’s been in the hot spot can move out to the periphery, and something that’s been in the periphery can come into the hot spot in the center and become the integrating, motivating factor in your life. I think that’s what happened. It was a gradual play. Once metaphysics was not of much consequence; then I went into a kind of mainstream orthodox metaphysics; and then I moved out of that into a more metaphorical, symbolical way of viewing the faith. (Ibid.)

While the change was gradual, it was nonetheless radical. Fellow churchmen may have envisaged God in various ways, “but they all agreed that there was some frame of reference that you could call revelatory, that there was another world that impinges on this world.” (Ibid.) The shift to humanism entailed dispensing with belief in the reality of that “other world.” Hoad’s completion of the shift was aided by the writings of Felix Adler, which, cleansed of their dated transcendentalism, complemented Kelly’s conceptual investigation. From Adler, Hoad learned to elevate the ethical import of religious imagery—the ideal of justice that underlies the image of a God who rewards good and punishes evil, the ideal of loving relationships that underlies the image of a God who nurtures his mortal children. “Forget the imagery,” Hoad concluded. “It’s not helpful. The important things are the ethical ideals that are imbedded in those ideas of divine reality—or Ultimate Reality—being a judge or a king or a parent.” (Ibid.) In other words, he moved his means of “getting conceptual leverage on reality” down to earth. “Humanism,” he says, “is a way of saying that our conceptual levers have their fulcrum within human experience. It’s saying that humans can only know humanly.” (Ibid.)

As a novice among humanists, Hoad found the movement in need of “some positive features of its own.” (Ibid.) Having no antipathy toward theism, he could hardly define his emerging world view in terms of beliefs it omitted. And to do so, he contends, is a kind of spiritual disorder that stunts one’s religious growth:

I’m not particularly enamored of the humanists who simply define themselves by opposition to supernatural religion. They’re sort of God-obsessed. They’re going through what I call “anti-courtship,” or “negative courtship.” I got this from watching people in counseling who got a divorce but would go through all the motions of still getting in touch with one another, though now to fight rather than to love; there’s still a courtship, but a negativecourtship. There are a lot of humanists who seem to spend their time defining themselves by opposition to supernatural religion. As one psychologist said, “What you resist, you’re stuck with”: The adolescent who disobeys the parent is as much defined by the parent as the adolescent who obeys the parent, because they’re still taking off from where Dad and Mom are; the definition is still coming from what they’re rejecting. (Ibid.)

⁵³ Kelly, George (1955). *The psychology of personal constructs*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

In searching for “the positive features” of humanism, Hoad was unsatisfied by the “scientific naturalism” that Hornback and other prominent humanists championed—the practice, in Hornback’s words, of viewing “man and his values, his cultures and his religions, [as] evolving along with his physical characteristics, in nature.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “The Best of ‘The Two Cultures’: The Values of a Scientist”; Ethical weekly, March 24, 1968) Hoad, who had studied the natural sciences since his youth, shared in this enthusiasm for scientific exploration. “Science is one of the main channels of knowledge today,” he says, “and the scientific revolution is not only under way but is going to transform us more and more in exponential growth within the next hundred years.” (Interview, August 1, 1986) Scientific discoveries, he found, are an invaluable aid in making ethical judgments, as when biological information is considered in analyzing such dilemmas as abortion and euthanasia. However, facts alone do resolve dilemmas. On the contrary, Hoad found that “modern science is presenting us with a series of decisions for which there are no clear guidelines” in our ethical legacy—decisions such as allocating donor organs or taking a comatose patient off a respirator. (Ibid.)

Furthermore, his studies showed him that science, far from producing rock-solid facts, has itself “taken us beyond the view that science offers us objectivity as against the subjectivity of religion.” (Ibid.) Science, after debunking religion, has proceeded to debunk its own earlier tenets. The “reality” investigated by atomic physicists, for example, “is disappearing into appearances and probable judgments. It’s all becoming energy. On the level of particle physics, we’re in a place that’s as mysterious as any belief in a God has ever been.” (Ibid.) And even when nature, the object of scientific study, is clearly perceptible, it makes for a poor ethical mentor. “Nature is based on very selfish interests of species and groups within species,” Hoad notes. “It’s based on violence as well as on altruism. When it comes to moral conviction, naturalism by itself will not give you the full guidance you need as a human being; you need something more.” (Ibid.)

The quest for that “something more” has led Hoad to varied repositories of human knowledge. Fond of quoting the Roman writer Terence’s assertion that “nothing human is alien to me,” he has scoured the beliefs and practices of cultures throughout history for pieces of the human puzzle:

Religion, science, ethical tradition—all of these things we inherit are part of what I use to say what a human being is and what a human being should be. But then we are still left with human rationality, human culture and feeling and art and music to help us put together the complex piece that is a human being and say, conceptually, this is how I see humanity and this is how I see human beings behaving. (Ibid.)

In addition to examining society at large, Hoad has long turned inward to discern the manner in which memorable events shape his perception. “Reflection on experience,” he wrote, “is the basis of our personal philosophy.” (Promotional synopsis of address, “Autobiography as Philosophy”; Ethical weekly, February 22, 1987) Taking to heart the advice of a childhood friend, Hoad learned early in life to “process and register life experiences as they happen—else they slip away, leaving little mark behind.” (Report of address, “Autobiography as Philosophy”; Ethical weekly, February 29, 1987) In a 1987 address titled “Autobiography as Philosophy,” he shared some of those reflections: A “brief but very real” love affair at age 18 precipitated a “breakthrough to a new sense of self-appreciation”; standing on principle throughout his formal education engendered in him the conviction that “we are diminished morally” if there is nothing for which we would put our security on the line; and separation from parents and the deaths of loved ones helped him integrate “a sense of the limits of life.” (Ibid.)

Another lesson Hoad shared in that address was an appreciation of serendipity, the manner in which random events often give rise to good fortune. Karen Hoad’s discovery of the Ethical Society’s “help wanted” ad, and the coinciding dates of the couple’s road trip with the convening of the search committee, are examples he especially enjoys recounting. But his serendipitous relation to Ethical Culture goes further than that. Hoad’s decision to suspend his ministerial practice while attending Princeton afforded him an opportunity to rethink his philosophy before resuming his pastoral career in a new direction. And, as it happens, a skilled pastor was just what the Society needed at that juncture. Hoad offered both new ideas and a new approach: He came not as a preacher, but as an intellectual midwife bearing “conceptual tools” that would “give people a fuller awareness and put them in fuller touch with what is involved in making a decision.” (Interview, August 1, 1986) He brought a fresh view of humanism, an exhaustive knowledge of ethical principles, and a dedication to building community.

A Growing Edge

The ubiquitous boats and sailors of Hoad's island childhood fixed in his mind two images that would become lifelong analogies of the human experience: sails and anchors. Sailing taught him the art of tacking, of moving with or against the wind by cooperation, ingenuity, and, sometimes, hard struggle. Anchors taught him to value continuity and the periodic need for stillness. His philosophy of life, of navigating one's response to the mystery of existence, is imbued with anchors and sails, rootedness and change, tradition and innovation.

Such parabolic terms are well-suited to the later years of Hoad's ministry. If he is a consummate "first learner," he is also a sympathetic shipmate, a sojourner eager to share the lessons of "seamanship." In his addresses, counseling, and socializing, he pursues the give-and-take that is so dear to the devoted truth seeker. He is less interested in attaining answers than in living—and inviting others to live—a worthy life.

Hoad often exhorts his listeners to "keep a growing edge on life," to explore the never-ending newness of knowledge, action, and experience. "Life," he says, "reaches out, adapts, invests in every nook and cranny: it's there in the forest, the stream, under the rock, in the desert, in the air.... It gives vitality to our personal life, to our relations, to our careers, to our religious quest." (Address, "Keeping a Growing Edge on Life"; Ethical weekly, May 8, 1983) By tapping new resources and exploring new regions, he teaches, one finds that "there is enough for us to be grateful, to meet life with a resounding 'It's good to be here.'" (Address, "Resources for the Ethical Lifestyle"; Ethical weekly, November 8, 1981; reported by Casey Croy) Among those resources is "the religious heritage of humanity—a quarry of insight, thought and example." (Ibid.) Religious movements, both ancient and contemporary, serve as a guide to interpreting experience. Another prime resource is "a circle of mentors"—philosophers, prophets, reformers, and poets, as well as family, friends, lovers, and teachers "who have inspired us, made life lift with new significance." (Ibid.) In 1982, Hoad presented a series of platform talks on "Paradigmatic Individuals," historical figures "whose lives and teachings become human archetypes for vast cultures over a period of many centuries." (Leader's Word, Ethical weekly, February 28, 1982) Included in the series were talks on Socrates, Jesus and Shakespeare. In subsequent seasons, Hoad has given addresses on Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and other ethical heroes whose courage and tenacity incarnate humanist ideals.

Hoad's pastoral bent is evident in the three other resources he deems crucial to the ethical lifestyle. First, he emphasizes "the inner journey," the exploration of "the true self within" that is too easily obscured by day-to-day cares. "Don't let the little things in life crowd in and keep you from things that will excite and expand you," he writes. "Meditation, learning to be absorbed and open, can bring each of us to the 'still point of the turning world.'" (Address, "Resources for the Ethical Lifestyle") Secondly, he sees personal growth emerging through the dynamics of community. "No mere warm chumminess, this form of fellowship entail[s] a life of love and helping others come nearer the goals of religion," he writes. (Ibid.) Finally, he urges social involvement through activism and volunteerism. "A sense of making a worthwhile contribution," he says, is essential to a healthy life. (Ibid.)

In promoting "the good life," Hoad is more gadfly than preacher. "The Pulpit," he says, "works from a frame of reference in which there are 'givens' — revealed answers; the Platform is committed to 'intelligent probing.' The Pulpit starts with Answers and seeks to explain them; the Platform begins with Questions and seeks to explore them." (Address, "The Important Things in Life"; Ethical Weekly, October 14, 1984) Accordingly, he is fond of leading "meditative addresses," talks in which he suggests categories of thought and invites listeners to fill in the blanks, whether mentally or orally. In one such address, "The Important Things in Life," he sketched levels of reflection on values—from the experience of good things to the recognition of preferences to the need to evaluate and order competing preferences. Audience members volunteered their highest values, and the address closed with "a challenge to move back from these 'abstractions' to concrete acts that express what we hold to be the most important things in life." (Ibid.)

The do-it-yourself address illustrates Hoad's appreciation of varied perspectives. Because ethics derive from values and values differ widely, even among people of good will, ethical precepts often are not universally applicable. Hoad urges his listeners to "recognize the limitations of our individual perspective. We all channel our energies through constructs or viewpoints of the world as we see it. Our ethics teach respect for the rights and differences of others. Therefore, 'ethical dogmatism' is a contradiction in terms." (Address, "Our Ideology Emerges from Our Methodology"; Ethical weekly, January 18, 1981; reported by Susan Weidenheimer) A corollary to the recognition of one's limited perspective is an appreciation of honest dialogue, which Hoad calls "one of the main planks" of the Ethical Society. "Love your enemies," he says, "for they tell you your faults." (Ibid.) To learn and grow through community, humanists "must respect and accept the 'otherness' of those with whom we disagree," he argues. (Ibid.)

In an essay in a 1981 edition of the Ethical weekly, he explores Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro's assertion that "the acting self knows reality at the point where it meets opposition," the "otherness" of one's environment and other people. (Leader's Word; Ethical weekly, March 15, 1981) "I find this exciting and scary!" Hoad reflects. "It means that I can only really discover myself when I engage the difference of others and their resistance to me. If I try to ignore or eliminate the otherness of the other, I diminish myself. If I can interact with it, I become more real." (Ibid.)

Throughout his tenure at the Ethical Society, Hoad has demonstrated the reaping of insight by "engaging the difference of others." In the 1983-84 season, for example, he delivered a series of addresses on three classic ways of "managing the data of reality." (Promotional synopsis of series on "The Skeptic," "The Rationalist," and "The Believer"; Ethical weekly, November 6, 1983) In depicting "the skeptic, the rationalist, and the believer," he sought to explore the functions, virtues, and limitations of these modes of thought without proposing the wholesale adoption or rejection of any. The skeptic, he says, keeps us on our toes, spurring us to question assumptions and traditions. He calls "the Rational Mind... one of the great tools of human evolution, giving us theory, objectivity, pragmatic leverage, creativity, and a sense of past and future." (Address, "The Rationalist"; Ethical weekly, November 27, 1983) And Faith, a sullied word among humanists, "is a way of imagining reality," a necessary antecedent to creativity in politics, relationships, and science. (Address, "The Believer"; Ethical weekly, December 11, 1983) Because each thoughtway has its pitfalls as well as its strengths, Hoad urges the use of all three as intellectual checks and balances. In other talks and writings, he has characterized this attitude as agnosticism, which he defines not as "a sit-on-the-fence refuge for the uncommitted" but as an imaginative, open-minded and open-ended search disciplined by logic and the scientific method. (Leader's Word; Ethical weekly, November 15, 1981)

The litmus test of a life philosophy is its power to offer guidance, if not comfort, in the face of misfortune. "Religious heritage and our evolving ethical religion," Hoad asserts, "are resources for dealing with natural and human disasters, social evil and the all-encompassing boundary of death." (Address, "Resources for the Ethical Lifestyle") Eschewing the theistic consolations of grace, divine intervention, and compensation in an afterlife, humanism must develop a naturalistic interpretation of—and response to—human misfortune. In a 1983 address titled, "Why Do Bad Things Happen?" Hoad examined the kinds of experience human beings interpret as evil—natural disasters; biological breakdown, as in cancer or birth defects; biological conflict, as in bacterial disease; human conflict, including honest errors as well as aggressive selfishness; and pain, which is aggravated in the human animal by long-term memory and heightened consciousness. He further expounded traditional means of explaining such misfortune, such as asserting that humanity is suffering the fall-out of an extraterrestrial conflict (e.g., Zeus vs. Prometheus, Jehovah vs. Lucifer), that humanity's utopia was derailed by its ancestors (e.g., Pandora, Eve), or that punishment attends individual or collective wrongdoing (e.g., karma, Hebrew exile). Hoad notes that nature's moral indifference precludes blame-finding and argues that "man's inhumanity to man" is best understood through evolutionary anthropology. In addressing the former, he advocates the ethical use of science "to increase our understanding and control of the random." (Synopsis of address, "Why Do Bad Things Happen?"; Ethical weekly, February 20, 1983) As for the latter, "in the face of the bad," he says, "we must make the good. And seek transcendence in the creation of value." (Ibid.)

Hoad offered his clearest and most satisfying instructions for confronting hardship in a 1985 exposition of existentialism titled "The Four Horsemen of Existence." Existentialism, Hoad wrote in promoting the address, "focuses on the heavy burden that each individual faces in making the decisions that constitute our life. To be fully aware of what it means to be in existence creates a fundamental 'anxiety'—'existential anxiety.' To achieve an 'authentic' life, we need courage—the courage to be." (Promotional synopsis of address, "The Four Horsemen of Existence"; Ethical weekly, May 5, 1985) The title of this signal address is derived from the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," the riders of the Book of Revelation who symbolized pestilence, war, famine and death. Hoad depicts their corollaries, the Four Horsemen of Existence, as the fundamental contingencies of the human condition—finiteness, potential to act, choice, and separate-but-relatedness:

As a book on "How Cooking Works" may help us to understand better what many cooks learn by apprenticeship and oral tradition, so the Existentialists seek to help us to understand how "existence" works, to be aware of the components of living that are fundamental for all. These "givens" are the contingencies that we all face, a contingency being something that bears on our life but has an uncertain quality to it. These contingencies create an "existential anxiety" that is basic to life and must be met with courage. If we try to avoid it, we fall into neurotic anxiety.

What are the "givens"?

Finiteness “We do not know enough to ensure our security.” This basic insecurity is not just a matter of recognizing that the sun will die, that mass species extinctions have taken place and ours may be next, and that 20 civilizations have risen and fallen. For one may answer these threats by saying: Yes, but our planet and life on it are millions of years old, and most of us have a life expectancy at birth of over 50 years.... The Existentialist focuses on the consciousness of the Individual and notes that chance and death come to all. “Being” is threatened by “non-being” and we need to exercise “the courage to be.”

Potential to act It is to this “given” that the Existentialist attaches a sense of guilt, not to the “given” of Choice. For this philosophy, it is non-action, no trying, “ending not with a bang, but a whimper” that creates basic guilt. It is the unfulfillment of potential that makes us feel condemned by a built-in monitor. And this is another “basic” that we must come to grips with. The potential to act is offset by “accumulations of non-living” (in the phrase of a young woman that John met at Trenton Psychiatric Hospital) and we need to accept responsibility for our lives, to “answer back” to our being “thrown” into existence.

Choice Though hemmed in by our genetics and our circumstances, each of us has a sense of autonomy, of being able to make a difference to our situation. Psychology can help us to be better at “decision-making” but ethics is required to guide our choices. It is those choices for Good that set at bay the threats of emptiness and meaninglessness.

Relatedness We live in the polarity between Self and Other. We need the courage to be ourselves (and not “merge”) and also the courage to take the risk of being in relationship.

Existentialism is a “tough coach,” challenging the tranquilizing, alienating, and dissipating forces, inviting us to courage, asking that we face our insecurity, bestir ourselves, choose the best as we can see it, and seek that best in ourselves and in others.

(Synopsis of address, “The Four Horsemen of Existence”; Ethical weekly, May 19, 1985)

Hoad’s “tough coach” philosophy points the way to a life of richness. Beyond merely slogging through, he encourages his listeners to take hold of life, to “set sail” with purpose and determination. Much of his work is devoted to the premise that the successful life and the ethical life are one and the same. In a 1987 address titled “The Psychology and Ethics of Success,” for instance, he applied ethical precepts to motivational writings to “define success in terms consonant with our human ideals.” (Synopsis of Address, “The Psychology and Ethics of Success”; Ethical weekly, January 11, 1987) He contends that the only true success is “linked with a larger perspective on life”; an achievement, to be genuinely gratifying, must also be a contribution. (Ibid.) And in “Inventing Ourselves: The Quest for Lifelong Education,” a 1986 talk that kicked off a series of soul-searching seminars, he sketched some of the essentials of personal and communal growth. At the top of his list was a reminder of the perennial “sails and anchors” metaphor:

We need a philosophy to deal positively with change. Life needs a balance between stability and innovation, continuity and change. Often in the West, philosophy has dealt with static realities, while in the East philosophy has focused on the impermanence of the human condition. Through history we have the consciousness of change aroused in us and may thus come to recognize that we must constantly deal with change: investing in a future as much as in a past.

We need a philosophy that encourages the acquisition of enrichment of the self right up to the last breath of our lives. Personal consciousness is the central question of religion, and its loss is a troubling challenge: “When I consider that I may cease to be/ Before my pen has glean’ed my teeming brain.” (Keats) Some assure us of another life; others would have us leave our good to posterity; others see a good life as worth pursuing in and of itself.

We need an educational model that promotes Adult education. Education once took the form of apprenticeship. Then came schooling for the young. Now we are facing an explosion of education into later years (as people change career, or pursue further training in their field) and even into retirement (with such programs as “elderhostelling”). Faculties have had to rethink their teaching styles; new funding, day care help, special leaves, sex roles have all had to be thought through afresh.

We need a personal attitude of adventure in living, rich in curiosity and interest and openness of mind. Not letting the past hold the present to ransom. We need the mind-set of so many seniors at this Ethical Society, who go on claiming more of life's experience into their 70's, 80's, 90's. And we need that as a societal as well as personal attitude. Our Society has to grow, to expand out of its past. And being a community offers each of us the enrichment that comes through and with others.

(Synopsis of address, "Inventing Ourselves: The Quest for Lifelong Education"; Ethical weekly, January 19, 1986)

Higher Innocence

As a man who has cherished the consolations of traditional religion, Hoad has committed himself to making humanism a vigorous alternative. His American citizenship parallels his adoption of the humanist vision: In both politics and religion, his fresh loyalty is sharpened by the critical judgment of a convert.

Hoad always has been careful to note that "Ethical Culture is not a Humanism." (Report of address, "Holistic Humanism"; Ethical weekly, May 27, 1984) Just as Adler considered transcendentalism the most viable supporting philosophy for Ethical Culture, but wisely refrained from making it an institutionalized orthodoxy, so today Hoad and his colleagues promote humanism as the movement's supporting philosophy. It is a living, growing philosophy, in need of disciplined care.

Hoad's predecessors did the spadework. He recognizes that earlier freethinkers, by venting antagonism toward "authoritarian clerics," served a "useful cleansing function." (Report of address, "What is Humanism?"; Ethical weekly, October 17, 1982) He pays tribute to the courageous men and women who have "bucked the current tide." (Report of address, "The Free Mind through the Ages"; Ethical weekly, November 10, 1985) However, as noted earlier, he is wary of humanism becoming "defined by the thing that it opposes," (Address, "What is Humanism?") for a humanism so defined offers little more than anger and cynicism. "It is easier to rebel against confinement," he wrote. "It is harder to build community." (Address, "The Free Mind through the Ages") As poet William Blake saw the evolution of personal faith as a transition from "Innocence" to "Experience" to "Higher Innocence," so Hoad has seen his mission as carrying humanism to a higher level of creative thought and practice.

Hoad accepts the common conception of humanism he inherited from his mentors—that of a way of life founded on reason, Western democratic principles, and scientific knowledge, a way "guided by a cooperative concern for the good of humanity," rather than by creeds and revealed moral codes. (Address, "What is Humanism?") But he both softens and expands that conception. As for knowledge, he postulates that humanists "look at reality through our own eyes, through human experience, not through a lens borrowed or provided from elsewhere." (Report of address, "Humanism and Religion"; October 5, 1986) In other words, he advocates "an approach to reality in which all perception is seen as an exercise of human construing: a paradigm of conceptual leverage alternative to all paradigms that would place the fulcrum outside of human experience." (Address, "What is Humanism?") With that caveat, he admits the impossibility of certainty and the validity of competing views, but he goes on to assert that the tentative, slow-growing knowledge born of honest skepticism is the only reliable foundation of a mature world view. And his appreciation of "cooperative concern" goes beyond the protection of civil rights: Given that humanism "is a life lived out of human resources, with no expectation of help or guidance from any reality outside of what is accessible to human observation," then humanists are morally obliged to enrich humanity, to provide the help and guidance whose only known origin is human. (Ibid.)

Hoad, the most scientifically erudite of the Society's leaders, has sought to strengthen the role of science in humanist thought. "Humanism," he wrote, "needs to tap into modern Physics, Biology, Psychology, and Anthropology for clues and guidelines as to our 'reality' and the place and role of humanity on the map of universal evolution." (Report of address, "A Humanism Big Enough for Humanity"; Ethical weekly, December 16, 1984) He urges Society members to "think scientifically—by careful observation, reflection, ... and problem-solving" and to keep abreast of scientific research and technological breakthroughs. (Report of address, "Awareness of the Growing Edge of Modern Science"; Ethical weekly, March 31, 1985) He helps his listeners evaluate the social impact of scientific advances, from the discovery of blood types to the development of antibiotics and contraceptives. At the same time, however, he is careful to point up the inherent limits of the scientific enterprise. Because it is a human function, he notes, it "partakes of human perspectives, biases, even dishonesty. We must keep a critical edge to our reception of it." (Ibid.) Furthermore, he warns that science "can be put in the service of evil, of commercial greed, of

polluting advances.” Consequently, humanists need to take part in the political and economic decisions that govern its use. “Science must be constantly related to human values,” he wrote, “so that it serves the best in our becoming.” (Ibid.) Most importantly, Hoad stresses that the clinical clarity of scientific research does not obviate the sometimes-awesome need for ethical judgment. When it comes to such life-and-death questions as abortion and euthanasia, he says, science “will shed the light, but you still have to make the human decision.... We’re scared of those human decisions because we think we’ll all run away into selfishness or permissiveness.” (Interview, August 1, 1986) In a 1986 address titled “Humanism and Science,” he laid out his basic principles of a qualified faith in science:

Because Humanism stays within human experience to interpret reality, it has an affinity with Science.

Scientists may have revelatory insights, but these are seen as part of the working of the human mind, not revelations from beyond human experience. This affinity of Humanism with Science has often led Humanists to identify with them. But many God-believers also accept modern Science as a tracking of the footprints of God’s creation. Let’s rather say that Humanism finds in Science a major contributor to the understanding of reality, and keep the one as a philosophy and the other as a discipline with overlapping but not identical terms of reference.

Humanists should become more involved in Science, while at the same time being critically aware of its conceptual limitations and its nature as a human enterprise.

Science has presented us with a revolution in thought and life that we take for granted. We have only just begun to ride herd philosophically on the scientific revolution. We hardly know how to build “entropy” or “randomness” or “probability” into our view of life or the reversal of entropy in the “big bang” and in life. It’s scary to know that we have so much power to shape life (through DNA) or destiny (in nuclear power).

We need to understand the limitations of Science as well. Many humanists who describe themselves as “scientific naturalists” don’t seem aware of what science says about nature or how little nature offers to solve our human problems! Science has to abstract from data and categorize, to control the variables and repeat the experiments—and life often does not prove amenable to being processed in that way. Increasingly too, we are recognizing that Science extrapolates or projects beyond the observable along a continuum of comprehensibility and that the “observer” doing this needs be studied as well as the observations. Science is *our* metaphor. What clue does human consciousness offer to our understanding of the reality of the universe? In Godel’s theorem that no system based on mathematics is provable within its own terms, we may have an outer limit to what Science can achieve.

Finally, Science is a human enterprise, subject to the passions, prejudices, and politics of humanity; and it is only a part of that human enterprise, which also encompasses the aesthetic and the historical. Annie Dillard, in *Living by Fiction*, says that “we are missing a whole class of investigators: those who interpret the raw data of the universe in terms of meaning.” She would have us turn to the writer, to imagination, to ourselves as creators.

(Report of address, “Humanism and Science”; Ethical weekly, October 12, 1986)

While intent on furthering rationalism and scientific thought, Hoad also has sought to develop of a “suitable ecumenicity” with non-humanists. Facetiously paraphrasing President Reagan’s unfortunate depiction of the Soviet Union, Hoad insisted that religionists are not “an ‘evil empire’ against which we must prepare our philosophical missiles.” (Report of address, “A Humanism Big Enough for Humanity”; Ethical weekly, December 16, 1984) Just as “negative courtship” is a philosophical dead-end, so antagonistic relations with theists are a social sin, a violation of the humanist vision. Hoad proposes a humanism that is confident yet humble. While he advocates the philosophy as a satisfying, morally bracing way of life, he readily acknowledges that many people — with good reason—view it as a threat. Like any philosophy, humanism must be offered, not foisted. And because it represents a break from the theism that still holds sway in Western culture, its champions must respect its valid opposition.

Since the public school system has been the most visible arena of the humanist/theist conflict, Hoad has often used school-related court cases to analyze the elements of the dispute. In the 1950s and sixties, Hornback and other Ethical leaders had grappled with the question of whether to assert the religious quality of humanism; while

humanism clearly fulfills the classic functions of religion, forthrightly calling it religious sets the stage for thorny constitutional quandaries. For example, if humanists object, on constitutional grounds, to the teaching of religion in public schools, then they must object to the teaching of religious humanism as well as Judeo-Christian theology. Some humanists, motivated as much by pragmatic and political concerns as by principle, have opted to minimize the religious character of humanism so that certain of its precepts—such as scientific rationalism and self-reliance—could legitimately be given prominence in American pedagogy.

Hoad has approached the quandary more directly and sincerely. Whether humanism is defined as a philosophy or a religion, he embraces it as a distinctive world view and way of life, and he firmly agrees with Christians and other protesters that secular government must not promote this or any other religious philosophy. However, he is careful to delineate exclusively humanistic beliefs and principles from customs and ideas that have solid social currency without reference to a particular religion. For example, while humanism espouses democracy, the scientific method, and values-clarification, it cannot be defined by those precepts, because non-humanists also espouse them. Similarly, evolution, a longtime bugbear of fundamentalist Christians, cannot be labeled a tenet of humanist religion because it “is not the exclusive property of humanists—mainline Christian groups accept it too.” (Report by Susan Weidenheimer on address, “Questions (Reflections on Questions that Trouble Humanists)”; *Ethical weekly*, December 19, 1982) Moreover, Hoad states, “Evolution is accepted by thinking people as fact, though its mechanisms are still debated. Creationism does not qualify as science, for science tests and revises as it goes; creationism does not.” (Ibid.) On the other hand, Hoad acknowledges that the principle of self-reliance—to the exclusion of prayerful reliance on a divine being—is definitively humanistic and therefore unacceptable in a public-school curriculum. He refuses to dodge the issue, as some humanists have attempted, by claiming that humanism is actually neutral on the question of God. “The ‘neutral’ there is not the same as the Constitution’s ‘neutrality’ vis-a-vis religion,” he writes. “The Constitution is only neutral on the issue of ‘establishing’ (or ‘promoting’) religion in State-controlled places; it says nothing about the content of religious beliefs. But Secular Humanism’s ‘God-neutral’ stance is related to content: It is saying we don’t have to bring God into the picture to make sense of life, and that’s a philosophy on a collision course with theism.” (Synopsis of address, “Judge Hand and Secular Humanism”; *Ethical weekly*, April 19, 1987)

Court battles over such issues as school prayer and the admissibility of textbooks afford Hoad opportunities to clear up the “muddleheadedness” of theists and humanists alike regarding what constitutes a religion, what constitutes humanism, and what constitutes the establishment of a religion. An essay in a 1986 weekly is perhaps his most succinct statement on the issue:

The national debate over Secular Humanism needs some clarification if we are to make any progress with it. The right wing has attempted to make Humanism the fall guy for all the ills of the nation, in particular stressing that Humanists are undermining values in the schools by teaching evolution and values-clarification. Evolution is seen as anti a Creator; and values-clarification is seen as relativizing morality by suggesting that moral decisions are merely subjective. To maintain separation of Church and State—this from the right! — these things should not be taught in school, they say. Secular Humanism is a religion—keep it out of our kids’ public school education!

There is confusion even among Humanists on this issue. Some see Humanism as a Religion—and then need to face the issue raised by the Right. Others see Humanism as merely synonymous with an identification with modern thought as expressed in science.

I see Humanism as a Religion because I define a religion as a way of life that gives coherence to our quest for meaning and ethical living. In consequence, I think that there are some things about Humanism that should not be taught in schools. Humanism defined as looking to human resources to meet human problems and needs, without expectation of divine intervention, is not something that I would want taught in schools, for it takes a position in a religious debate. As I don’t want the Fundamentalist teaching “God” in schools, so I think that “No God” should not be taught in schools either.

But then, you may ask, how about evolution and values-clarification and the like? Should they be banned too? And my answer would be No, because they are not what defines Humanism. When I was a Christian I believed in and taught evolution and sex education in high schools and values clarification. There is, in fact, no monolithic Christianity all believing the same thing opposed to a monolithic Humanism all believing the same thing. Even among Christians there is strong

divergence of opinion on war, apartheid, civil rights, divorce, abortion, and science. Even God is variously defined: As John Wesley is reported to have said, “Calvin’s ‘God’ is my ‘Devil.’” Humanists too don’t all think alike. We don’t have to accept everything that carries a Humanist label.

But we need to distinguish the Humanist premise from all those contemporary views that we share with non-humanist contemporaries.

(Leader’s Word, Ethical weekly, April 20, 1986)

For all his concern over religious equity, Hoad attends more closely to those “shared views” than to the disputes that point up exclusive aspects of humanism. Sympathetic to cultural diversity, he promotes what he calls “a humanism big enough for humanity,” a humanism that accepts and even celebrates variation, but which strives toward ideals that transcend mere enculturation. For example, in a 1984 address titled “Social Identity and Humanist Vision,” he explored the manner in which “we synthesize our identity out of elements of country, class, and culture,” then rose to “the plea that ‘being human’ outweigh them all.” (Synopsis of address, “Social Identity and Humanist Vision”; Ethical weekly, January 29, 1984)

He sees humanism, at its finest, as the art and science of “being human.” Its gravest danger, he believes, is of becoming “an intellectual ghetto” by “defining itself in too constricted a fashion to encompass the needs of humanity.” (Synopsis of address, “A Humanism Big Enough for Humanity”; Ethical weekly, December 16, 1984) To reach its potential as a life-giving philosophy, it must address the needs of the whole person. In an address titled “Holistic Humanism,” he sketched his conception of humanism as a movement of “head, heart, and hands,” a movement that explores meaning-of-life questions through science and intellectualism, but which also attends to the value of feelings and the need for social action. If he seems to some to overstress matters of “heart,” it is probably because the movement has so consistently neglected them. “Humanists,” he said in another address, “are very emotional people, while projecting an image of being intellectualistic. The total impact of the Freudian revolution hasn’t hit some Humanists yet—certainly not the Rationalists, who will use Freud to show that religion is a projective illusion but avoid his critique of much reasoning as mere ‘rationalizing.’ We need a Humanism big enough to encompass our emotional needs.” (Address, “A Humanism Big Enough for Humanity”)

In his opening address of the centennial 1986-87 season, “Humanism and Religion,” he laid out the three primary components of a “liberal religious fellowship”:

OUR HIGHEST VALUES — In George Kelly’s *Psychology of Personal Constructs* we learn how the constructs by which we perceive the world are built up in hierarchies, some more subordinate, some more superordinate. Our most superordinate constructs are what define our religion. John Stuart Mill, writing about the Religion of Humanity, defined it this way: “The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of our emotions and desires toward an ideal object, recognized as of the highest excellence and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire.”

RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS — Adler distinguished between belief in a divine being (which he rejected) and belief in divine life (which he accepted). “My ideal of the divine life (he wrote) is that of a spiritual society infinite and composed of infinite members, infinitely diverse, each necessary to each.” To the last days of his life he was trying to grasp more fully what the concept meant. We believe in a religion that is based on a community seen in that light and inspired by that ideal.

CULTIVATION OF A WAY OF LIFE — Values and attention to relationships would not by themselves qualify as a “religion.” But when we pursue these things as a “way of life,” then we are talking religion. Many activities go into that “cultivation” and the Ethical Society exists to enhance that cultivation of ethics as a way of life.

But this description still needs something more. Religion is a pointer to a reality that goes beyond our intellectual formulas. Karen Hoad once said: “*Religion is my sense of belonging to the universe.*” There is an integration, an inspiration, a celebration.

(Address, “Humanism and Religion”; Ethical weekly, October 5, 1986)

Green Leaves

Ethical Culture is the most democratic of religions. More than any other, it is a religion “of the people and by the people.” Its members, therefore, seek intellectual and spiritual guides, not pedantic autocrats. Hoad fills that need well, encouraging Society members to carry on the unending creation of a religion. While continually reviving and recasting the movement’s traditions, he nurtures its growth.

Like Adler, he sees the movement more as an undertaking than as a belief system. “Ethical Culture,” he says, “is basically the cultivation of ethics as a way of life: awareness in every situation of the opportunity to create value, what is worthwhile, what enriches the human scene.” (Synopsis of address, “Holistic Humanism”; Ethical weekly, May 27, 1984) He stresses the need for tolerance and cooperation. “Let us live and let live where speculation about Ultimate Reality is concerned,” he teaches, “but let us get together and work together in a shared quest for the expression of ethical values in human life.” (Synopsis of address, “What We Are”; Ethical weekly, September 25, 1982)

Hoad describes Ethical Culture as a “mature religion.” Like any religion, he notes, it starts with philosophy and values. Drawing on the work of psychologist George Kelly, he adds that religion is defined “by our highest superordinate construct,” that reality which is held dearest. In Ethical Culture, that reality is ethics. “We don’t just study ethics and live ethically,” he says. “We make ethics a way of life. We embrace the ideal; we identify with the ideal as the fulfillment of what life is about.” (Synopsis of address, “Mature Religion”; reported by Casey Croy in Ethical weekly, September 27, 1981) He calls the movement “mature” because it forthrightly acknowledges that religion “is a function of human enterprise.” (Ibid.) In contrast to “immature religions,” which “emphasize dependence on father figures or kings who create and control,” it is defined by experience, responsibility, self-dependence, freedom, cooperation of equals, “and a realistic but creative vision of the world in which we live.” (Ibid.) This “mature religion,” he says, “brings all to the test of modern thinking, to the bar of human reason.” (Ibid.)

Despite his relatively brief career in the movement, Hoad has drawn more heavily than his predecessors—with the exception of Sheldon—on the works of Adler. He has delivered several addresses on Adler’s signal books, and he devoted an entire adult education course to examining “An Ethical Philosophy of Life.” While leaders in the mid-20th century tended to scoff at Adler’s antiquated metaphysics, Hoad and his colleagues have sought renewed guidance in the founder’s ideals. In a 1985 address titled “Felix Adler: Are there Green Leaves yet on this Tree?” he sketched the major influences of Adler’s philosophy—Hebrew religion, Emerson, Jesus, Kant, socialism, labor relations, and reflection on personal experience—and posited those aspects of his legacy that should continue to mark Ethical Culture:

- [A] The focus on ethics, the values-dimension in human life—countering both supernaturalism and naturalistic reductionism.
- [B] The ethical attribution of inherent worth to every person, no matter what their perceived social value may be.
- [C] The establishment of this worth in an all-embracing theory of humanity’s place in a wider spiritual context.
- [D] The promotion of ethical worth in communities of interacting persons seeking to raise themselves to the level of their innate worth.
- [E] Membership in such societies to be based only on the pursuit of such ethical values, not on any accompanying dogma.
- [F] Cultivation of ethics in the major human concerns of family, vocation, national life, international justice.

(Synopsis of address, “Felix Adler: Are there Green Leaves yet on this Tree?”; Ethical weekly, February 17, 1985)

Hoad embraces Adler’s philosophy of “the ethical as an expression of human interrelatedness.” (Ibid.) He finds in Adler’s regard for the inviolability of the human person an echo of Nishida Kitaro’s appreciation of “otherness”—

the individual distinctiveness which not only deserves honor but offers boundless discovery. “Adler,” he notes, “sought a morality of groups in the twin concepts of plurality and unity. In place of God, he posited an infinite society organically encompassing the inviolable unlikeness of each individual.... His ethic aims at enriching individuals by treating each as of total worth, but the enrichment is always relative to relationship within community.” (Synopsis of address, “The Spiritual Ideal as Foundation of Community”; Ethical weekly, March 23, 1986) The Ethical Society, then, must be more than a lecture hall:

“It is a place for seeking the good life, a place for moral experiencing, for just dealings, and caring relationships.” More than a shared vision, Ethical Culture is the interaction of moral beings.

To underscore the universality of Adler’s ethic, Hoad often points to corollaries in classic religious traditions. For example, just as Adler taught that individuals must be treated “as of total worth,” Hoad notes that Jesus urged a pure attentiveness to the recipients of charity when he said, “When you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing.” (Matthew 6:3; Jerusalem Bible) Hoad also finds an ethical parallel to Adler in Zen Buddhism, particularly in the direct engagement with reality that its koans and meditative practices are intended to facilitate. He finds that the Zen master’s “When you walk, walk” resonates with Adler’s “deed before creed.” In an address titled, “Zen and the Art of Ethical Culture,” he describes both ways of life as “an engagement of the total self.” (Address, “Zen and the Art of Ethical Culture”; delivered March 15, 1981; published in pamphlet form) He likens the attentive absorption of a Zen swordsman to an Ethical Culturist’s awareness of “otherness”:

[C]omprehensive awareness is what Zen is after—an engagement of the total self. Zen does not despise the mind. It has its philosophers, but it would say to reason: “The truth is not wholly in you,” and to emotion:

“Reality is not wholly in you,” and to action: “The world is not wholly in you.”

One of the classics of Zen Buddhism is Takuan’s letter on Zen and the art of swordsmanship, written in the early 17th century. Takuan begins by describing the “abiding state of ignorance”—the stage where the mind is still “stopping” with an event rather than flowing on. The mind observes the opponent’s sword about to strike and it “stops” there... a paralysis, however momentary, sets in. Takuan wants the swordsman to reach the point where he “cherishes no calculating thoughts whatever.” His mind is not located just in the eye or in the arm but in the whole organismic body of the person. When he responds, it is as a moving and whole self, flowing with the situation....

Zen finds that the major problems of life are rooted here, for it is this “stopping” of the self in one place that we call the “ego,”—the ego that gets in the way of right action. The ego is the accumulated debris of our past to which we cling for identity. A blow is struck and we stop there, still smarting from last week’s family quarrel or last month’s committee meeting or reacting with a previous marriage’s stock responses or with habits born of a childhood rejection. We stop flowing and growing.

So Jesus, like a Zen master, says, “Don’t worry about tomorrow—tomorrow will have worries enough of its own,” and “When you do a good deed, don’t cling to it in consciousness”—move on, lots more opportunities await you to do good deeds. If you stop and make a medal out of this one, you’ll be tempted to look at the medal rather than the next opportunity for good awaiting you. So—live what you’re living when you’re living it, and move on. As Yün-men put it:

“When walking, walk; when sitting, sit—but, above all, don’t wobble.”

It is in this emphasis on experience that I see a connection with the spirit of Ethical Culture. When Adler placed “deed before creed,” he made a constantly revised experiencing primary and the theoretical crystallizations of experience secondary and always temporary. I do not believe we appreciate the genius of that position if we simply replace theological creeds with social philosophies. We are still being creedal if we give up, “I believe in a Creator” for “I believe in civil rights or the right to abortion, or whatever.”

Don’t misunderstand me. I believe in those civil and other rights. But I am contending that there is something more basic than our social philosophies. It is the experience, the essentially moral experience, of meeting another human being in an open, attentive, respecting way, without “mind-

stopping” at their sex or class or role or education or nationality. “It is to act,” as Adler put it, “so as to elicit the best in the other and so in oneself.”

(Address, “Zen and the Art of Ethical Culture”; delivered March 15, 1981; published in pamphlet form)

A Humanist Theologian

In his life and ministry, Hoad has explored the “God problem” with extraordinary curiosity, tenacity, and creativity. Not since Walter Sheldon has a St. Louis Ethical leader tackled theological questions with such humble respect. Like Sheldon, he is more interested in the nature and function of God-concepts than in pure metaphysics. But having access to 20th century studies in anthropology, physics, and neurology, and having a healthier detachment from ecclesiastical loyalties, Hoad has raised the investigation to a higher plane. He is a student, not of an all-powerful God, but of a vastly powerful belief. Just as Sheldon sought to show that God-concepts evolve in tandem with moral principles, Hoad suggests that divine imagery is as much a product of moral values as it is a motivation for right living.

Hoad considers the question of whether God exists to be unproductive, since it presumes some sort of definition. “The word ‘God’ is so overlaid with meanings and associations that it is counter-productive to use it to get an entree into ultimate reality,” he says. “‘What is the nature of reality?’ is a more productive and open-ended question. It allows us to ask the old and the newer questions without importing the presumption of an answer into the quest.” (Synopsis of address, “The Quest for Ultimate Reality”; Ethical weekly, May 12, 1985)

According to Hoad, the structure of one’s quest determines the nature of one’s discoveries. In a 1985 address titled “The Quest for Ultimate Reality,” Hoad compared the search for universal meaning to oceanic investigations. He told a parable of people seeking to understand the ocean using different tools and modes of perception: a small-mesh throw net, a large-mesh seine, a bucket, a canvas and paints, the touch of the skin, a chemical kit with test tubes, and lovers’ dreams. Each observer would take in a different kind of evidence. And while each kind of evidence would illuminate a specific facet of oceanic reality, none would exhaust the mysteries of the ocean or provide a fixed definition of the reality under study. So, it is with an investigation on the grandest scale, an investigation of *ultimate* reality: Many tools and modes of perception are helpful, and diligence yields a wealth of understanding, but no amount of study can produce a firm definition. In fact, defining ultimate reality is a contradiction in terms, for to define is to exclude, and nothing can be excluded from that which is all.

The scientific mode of inquiry, which clearly has attained dominance in the 19th and 20th centuries, presents an awesome world-picture. It is a picture in which all matter can be explained in terms of 100 elements, all movement in terms of four major forces, and all organisms in terms of millions of years of genetic evolution. But faced with that portrait, Hoad says, “a bifurcation takes place in the human mind between ‘explanation,’ on the one hand, and ‘interpretation,’ on the other. We must continue to pursue the task of explanation (in terms of quarks, DNA, curved space, learned responses, etc.). But the nagging need for interpretation persists—the need to give ‘human significance’ to the unfolding panorama.” (Ibid.) Scanning religious history from its most primitive beginnings, Hoad notes that human interpreters tend to personify reality, to view it as a product of consciousness. However, he warns, “the old theistic metaphors are exhausted, and the interpretive quest needs new and more plausible metaphors.” (Ibid.)

Of course, the dominant interpretive metaphors of Ethical Culture have shifted dramatically in the movement’s history. While Adler and Sheldon rejected the forms of traditional theism, they yet maintained a devout belief in a higher power, a “Supreme Righteousness.” They and their contemporaries in the movement believed that “there is a purpose working itself out in the world.” By the mid-20th century, however, secular humanism had become the movement’s dominant worldview. Steeped in scientific inquiry and empirical philosophy, the third generation of Ethical leaders deemed all supernatural metaphors untenable. Rather than taking a stand on the rightness or wrongness of these positions, Hoad has sought to synthesize the enduring contributions of each. In an address titled, “The Function of ‘God’ in Human Evolution,” he suggested that the findings of neurological research offer a new way to assess that philosophical divergence: The tendency to a “rationalist” or “religionist” philosophy, he said, may be due to left- or right-brain hemisphere dominance, or to reliance on the processing of reality by different evolutionary layers of the brain. Characteristically, he proposed the liberal use of all these “doors of perception” in the quest for the meaning of human existence:

The *transcendentalist* would see the God-concept as the repository of the ethical idealism of the human race, a star to steer our course by, and might add (in Shakespeare's words):

There is a divinity that shapes our ends Rough hew them how we will.

The *secular humanist* would see the God-concept as an illusory projection of human insecurity, a kind of whistling in the dark of our existence, an idea that, in the hands of the priests of the ages, has become "tyrannically exploitative," to use a phrase of Paul Kurtz.

As for myself, I share both heritages. I find great resources and wisdom in our religious heritages, West and East. But I am also deeply committed to the scientific enterprise of the Western world as a path to the truth of Reality. Religion has given much that is positive; it has also engendered war, superstition, false security, and tyranny over the minds and lives of humans. Scientific humanism has given us much that is positive; but it is based on a morally neutral science that has made possible the development and deployment of nuclear destructive forces that appall the mind and could destroy humanity as we know it. Scientific humanism has done a needed job of cleaning out the stables of religion, but it has often (to coin a phrase) pitchforked out the horse with the manure. Further, scientific humanism has often staked so much faith on reason that it has itself become absolutist, dogmatic, and tyrannical about other spheres of human life. Pascal would have us remember that "the heart has reasons that reason cannot grasp." Or, to quote Shakespeare again:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. Can we move beyond these positions? I think so.

* * *

[T]he God-concept has functioned as a unifying *principle of understanding* — the result of an evolution of thought from animistic response to the individual spirits of tree, animal, stream to a universal consciousness—much as Newton's gravitational theory linked in a larger whole astronomical and terrestrial forces previously viewed apart. The God-concept has functioned *as a universal principle of relationship*, leading towards the acceptance of every human as part of one global family—a true ideal, even though the major religions have themselves become warring supertribes. The God-concept has been *the repository of human values*, gathering to itself the supposition—or hypothesis—that the expanding, evolving process of the universe that produced the stars and ourselves has somewhat in it corresponding to our minds at their best, an urge to create truth, beauty, and goodness with the materials of our geosphere and the companions of our biosphere.

We need a "paradigm-shift" (like those spoken of in T.S. Kuhn's "The Nature of Scientific Revolutions"), a new working model. The old God-concept is in its twilight and we do not need to revive it in that form. We need exploratory hypotheses (that the neo-cortex can respect), not declarative dogmas. But the time has come to renew the Quest, to go on exploring in the light of what the God-concept suggested to us, with the new light of our newest thought.

Thus a synthesis may be possible of left and right hemispheres, of older and more recent brain layers, of ancient religion and modern science—that our processing of Reality may enable us to make better sense and more effective demonstration of the "attempt to live in right relations" with ourselves, our fellow humans, and our place in the universe.

(Address, "The Function of 'God' in Human Evolution"; delivered April 5, 1981; published in pamphlet form; italics are Hoad's)

Suspending judgments of the veracity of God-concepts, Hoad has carefully observed the manner in which they arise and the purposes they serve. Ancient peoples, he notes, clearly developed divine imagery that suitably explained their environment — hence the difference between the predictable divinities of Egypt and the complex, stormy deities of Mesopotamia. Because these cultures have passed, the imagery they spawned can be analyzed with ready detachment; those gods are nothing more than anthropological fossils. The challenge of the modern thinker is to examine the origin and function of contemporary God-concepts with similar detachment. In a 1986 address titled, "Humanist Perspectives on the Question of God," Hoad suggested viewing the God of the Western world as "the

lead character in the longest-running novel of the human race.... As fiction, God is seen as a human artifact, freeing us from its magic.” (Synopsis of address, “Humanist Perspectives on the Question of God”; Ethical weekly, March 2, 1986) Regardless of the extent to which this image corresponds to ultimate reality, it certainly serves as a key to understanding its human creators. Just as a literary work of fiction illustrates the novelist’s approach to finding significance in the human experience, so the “fiction” of God reveals much about the fears and strivings of generations of believers. This shifting of attention from content to form, he suggests, is useful to all thinking people: “The traditional theist is urged to see the God-idea in evolution, and the secular humanist is urged to examine again the values of our religious heritage.” (Ibid.)

Approaching the God-image as “fiction” has helped Hoad to unearth the wisdom of religious literature. Like Sheldon, he is an ardent student of the Bible, and he often exhorts his listeners to delve into it. In a 1985 address titled, “Claiming the Biblical Heritage for Humanism,” he asserts that humanists are free to tap into the Judeo-Christian Scriptures with the same approach they take to ancient Greco-Roman writings, drawing insight from proverbs and allegories while “screening out” patent superstition. Noting that humanists, depending on their backgrounds and personal quests, approach the Bible variously with indifference, nostalgia, and antagonism, he offered hints for cleansing one’s perspective. First, he suggests the use of historical criticism which shows the Bible to be a compendium of cultural treasures, analogous to a literary anthology American scholars might compile to illustrate their nation’s history and character. “Seen in this light,” he says elsewhere, “the Bible would take its place among other cultural resources in the quest for meaning and moral guidance.” (Synopsis of address, “The Bible in Humanist Perspective”; Ethical weekly, January 30, 1983) Secondly, he proposes unlocking that compendium with a formula for translating the term “God.” Since humanists tend to trip on that word, Hoad suggests substituting the term VIP—an acronym for Values, Insight, and Purpose. “In other words,” he says, “we read ‘God’ as a repository for the values, insights, and purpose that our human ancestors read into reality. Using the formula doesn’t mean that we will agree with what is said of the ancient VIP, but we can gain the appropriate philosophical ‘distance’ to make sense as Humanists of the classics of the Hebrews.” (Synopsis of address, “Claiming the Biblical Heritage for Humanism.” (Ethical weekly, October 20, 1985) In other talks, Hoad has applied these techniques to specific Biblical tales and inspirational writings, focusing always on such universal elements as morality, humor, and the longing for tranquility.

But in his emphasis on form over content, Hoad does not deny that the authors—and most of the subjects—of the Bible genuinely believed in God. In particular, Jesus of Nazareth was nothing if not a believer. Hoad, a lifelong admirer and student of the historical Jesus, refuses to diminish Jesus’ theism. While he does not recognize Jesus as supernatural or morally perfect, he argues that attempting to obscure his faith—as Sheldon did in his “Life of Jesus for the Young”—emasculates his worldview. To see Jesus simply as a great teacher whose parables and pithy sayings concentrate significant ethical principles “is to have half a Jesus and to leave the ground of his ethic unexplained,” says Hoad. “For Jesus, the ethical was grounded in the existential. He believed Ultimate Reality was all-loving and that’s why we should be too. We should behave like family because we have one Parent. We don’t need to be anxious because that Parent cares for us.” (Address, Paradigmatic Individuals—Jesus and the Abba-Hypothesis; delivered March 21, 1982; printed in pamphlet form)

Jesus’ faith, of course, is a stumbling block for many humanists who would like to understand and appreciate this extraordinary man more deeply. Hoad has sought to remove that block by respectfully according Jesus the same freedom he accords all great minds—that is, the freedom to hypothesize. In an address titled “Jesus and the Abba-Hypothesis,” Hoad correlates Jesus’ faith to the intellectual pathways taken by selected writers and philosophers. For instance, poet William Wordsworth observed that “eye and ear... half create” the world they perceive, and philosopher William James argued that, by asserting “the will to believe,” human beings construct the realities by which they live. Even Adler spoke of “the reality-producing functions of the mind.” In declaring faith in an intimate father-God, then, Jesus is no more reckless than a Freud positing an Unconscious or an Einstein positing a space/time continuum. He is simply setting forth his vision, a vision of a universe that embodies the finest qualities of human parenting. By placing theistic faith on the same plane as more naturalistic forms of faith, Hoad seeks to soften the intimidation and scorn Jesus arouses in humanists. And by presenting Jesus as a visionary rather than a god or a madman, Hoad provides access to an unquestionably great mind. Instead of rejecting or avoiding the historical Jesus, Hoad invites humanists to explore and test his vision as they would that of any influential figure. “Jesus’ construct of a Friendly, Caring Universe inherited from his Jewish background and made more intimate by him needs to be examined for its value as a hypothetical symbol,” Hoad suggests. “Even some scientists are beginning to track the spores of meaning in our universe and to ask about the interaction of the human mind and the universe that spawned it—and what they may all spell for us.” (Ibid.)

In this depiction of faith as hypothesis, Hoad finds a key to clarifying many of the conflicts that rend humanists and theists. In particular, the Judeo-Christian hypothesis that the world was created by an intelligent, caring being seems to collide with the scientific hypothesis that the universe has evolved from chaos via physical and biological forces. However, Hoad notes that the collision can occur only if the hypotheses are inappropriately placed on the same intellectual plane. At the heart of the issue, which is kept alive by the debate over the teaching of creationism in public schools, is whether the universe is governed by chance or intelligent purpose. In “Creation and Evolution: What’s the Bottom Line?” Hoad notes that the answers put forth by scientists and fundamentalist Christians address different aspects of reality. Genesis, he says, “was mythology impregnated with the Prophets’ message of a God of Righteousness, a nation’s good God who was active before there was a nation. Genesis is not focused on questions that modern science would ask, nor can it answer those questions.” (Synopsis of address, “Creation and Evolution: What’s the Bottom Line?”; Ethical weekly, January 17, 1982) The two approaches to reality are so different, he says, that they defy comparison as hypothetical equivalents. While one relies on faith in purportedly revealed documentation, the other is a process of examination, argument, and testing. “To tell scientists that Genesis is pure fact because the Bible says so,” he argues, “is to demand that they cease to function as scientists and become believers.” (Ibid.) But while scientific humanists may discount the conceptual validity of the Christian hypothesis, Hoad urges a sympathetic appreciation of the passions that fuel the dispute. In the minds of believers, he says, “those who oppose Genesis’ creation as fact appear to be attacking not a different concept of biology or geology, but the basis for morality.” (Ibid.) By shifting from the material to the moral plane, he suggests, humanists discover that they share the same challenge that Jews and Christians confront in the Bible. “Here we are, where the author of Genesis was nearly 3,000 years ago, contemplating the tree of life and the tree of the conscious knowledge of good and evil,” he says. “We are more scientifically advanced, but the ethical question remains. Do we have the good sense and moral force to do right by our world and by one another?” (Ibid.)

In addition to facilitating better relations with theists, Hoad has sought to help humanists make peace with their own religious past. While some Society members are lifelong Ethical Culturists, most come from Jewish, Protestant, or Catholic backgrounds. Building on a favorite Wordsworthian phrase, Hoad notes that these people have come to Ethical Culture “‘trailing clouds’ of guilt or oppression or dependency or with a highly colored view of reality from a religion.” (Synopsis of address, “Debriefing from a Past Religion”; Ethical weekly, April 5, 1987) Other Ethical leaders, held back by pride or embarrassment, have neglected to explore the painful aftereffects of faith crises. Hoad, however, seeks to help members go beyond nostalgia and resentment to integrate the powerful influence of religion into their emerging worldviews. In an address titled “Debriefing from a Past Religion,” he notes that children of all cultures are customarily reared on myth before being introduced to more rational thoughtways. To cling to resentment over the weaning, he says, is to disrupt one’s progress in higher ways of thought: “We have to grow up within and then grow beyond the psychic ‘pouch’ of our culture,” he says. (Ibid.) By reappraising their religious heritage through sociological, psychological, and scientific understanding, he suggests, humanists can let go of their “trailing clouds” and win the freedom to apply the essential forms of religion—such as ritual, organization, and leadership—to the religious philosophy of their adulthood.

For Hoad, the “God problem” is more a source of understanding than a cause for dispute. He acknowledges that the basis of membership in the Ethical Society—commitment to study and promote ethics— “does not rule out debate about the meaning of life. We are very interested in philosophy and realize that perspectives inform our ethics.” (Synopsis of address, “What We Are”; Ethical weekly, September 25, 1982) On the flip side, however, he notes that ethics inform perspectives: He finds in moral proclivities evidence of unspoken beliefs about the world as it is and should be. He often reminds his listeners that philosophical and theological assertions sometimes rationalize obscure drives. And while self-indulgent inclinations may be disparaged as base, the drive for the “highest,” however ill-defined that destiny may be, fuels the heroism of religionists and humanists alike. In other words, one who strives to “bring out the best in one’s self and in others” shares the essential motivation of one who strives to “serve God humbly.” For Hoad, images of God crystallize ethical ideals. As Sheldon used religious beliefs “to trace the steps of growth of the moral sense,” Hoad examines beliefs for clues to further progress. A true son of Adler, he consistently interprets the quest for meaning as a desire to create value through right living:

On one thing all serious questers, theist and non-theist, agree: The “ultimate” for humans can only be approached by pursuing the best in human values: creativity, justice, caring. Only by being creative, just, and caring can we be “intimate with the ultimate.”

(Synopsis of address, “The Quest for Ultimate Reality”; Ethical weekly, May 12, 1985)

Ethical Midwifery

Hoad sees facilitating ethical thought as one of an Ethical leader's primary functions. Rather than telling his listeners what to think, he teaches them how to think. One of the few criticisms commonly made of his leadership style is that he does not take forceful stands on ethical issues. Though passionate in his convictions, he does not believe that persuading people to adopt his views is a proper or creative use of his position. Instead, he is committed to stimulating thought, educating the decision-making process, and offering "conceptual tools" with which thinking people can approach dilemmas. As he recalled in an essay in the Ethical weekly, he acquired this approach while serving in the Christian ministry:

Many years ago, I came across an interesting description of preaching styles in terms of Freudian psychology. Some preachers were seen as "superego" preachers: They scold, they verbally punish, they harangue, they threaten. In other words, they act like overbearing parents to their audience. Other preachers were seen as "ego" preachers: These reason as adult to adults, they persuade, they throw out suggestions, they share experiences, in the expectation that their hearers will respond with the good sense of adults.

The "ego" address style is the right one for Ethical Culture. As Felix Adler put it: "Nor shall the leader impose his philosophy of life or his belief authoritatively, but propose it suggestively."

(Leader's Word; Ethical weekly, February 22, 1981)

Hoad considers "ego" preaching more productive as well as more respectful than "superego" preaching. His approach is akin to that of Japanese philosophy, which, as he once noted, "speaks suggestively, pointing to where one may experience truth, rather than telling us exactly what truth is." (Leader's Word; Ethical weekly, March 15, 1981) He sets the stage for insight, gathering together information and principles that can be combined in any number of ways, then invites his listeners to explore the topic independently; at times, he even asks audience members to share their insights aloud. Fittingly, Socrates was among the thinkers and teachers Hoad profiled in a 1982 series of addresses on "Paradigmatic Individuals." In praising the itinerant philosopher's methodology, Hoad noted that he challenged the assumptions of his fellow conversationalists "in the confidence that they could, with help, learn to reason, learn to deliver themselves of the unwritten law within, and so come to possess greater truth." (Address, "Paradigmatic Individuals: Socrates and the Maieutic Method"; delivered March 14, 1982; printed in pamphlet form) Hoad exhibits that very sort of confidence. "What I'm doing," he said in an interview, "is trying to open up a situation in such a way that you will be given a conceptual tool, and if you buy the tool, then you make the decision—I don't make it for you. [I'm] helping people to enlarge the ways in which they approach it—sometimes to see the pros and cons, so that I can leave it in such a position that somebody can decide to come down on this side of it and somebody on that side of it." (Interview, August 1, 1986)

Just as Socrates described himself as a "gadfly" whose sting would awaken a sleeping horse," Hoad sees himself as a prod to broader consciousness. (Address, "Paradigmatic Individuals: Socrates and the Maieutic Method") He even echoed the self-description of his ancient mentor in the title of a 1985 talk, "Awareness—Awakening from our Sleep Walk." In that address, he notes, with some relief, that "being aware of what is happening is not necessary to many complex processes of learning, thinking, and even reasoning—our computer-like minds can process our behavior without much conscious help from us." (Synopsis of address, "Awareness—Awakening from Our Sleep Walk"; Ethical weekly, March 17, 1985) However, he warns that excessive dependence on such robot-like abilities robs a person of the reflective awareness without which, as Socrates said, life is not worth living. And while chance events—such as illnesses, accidents, crises, and falling in love—can temporarily jolt one out of this insouciant dream state, he contends that a crucial element of the "good life" is "the development of a discipline by which we learn to be constantly more aware." (Ibid.) The discipline he proposes includes such simple measures as slowing the pace of one's life, removing distractions, and trying out unfamiliar ventures—changes that are apt to alter one's perspective.

Hoad has made an intricate study of thinking. In an adult education course simply titled "Thinking" and in several platform addresses, he has delineated stages of problem-solving and laid out time-honored principles of creative thought. Using such eminent examples as Copernicus and Einstein, he examines the varied ways in which a creative thinker identifies a problem, gathers information, makes new connections between components of a problem, and

sets the stage for illumination. He urges thinking people to suspend good-bad judgments while exploring the logic and potential of proposed solutions. By courageously freeing up the mind in this way, he teaches, one becomes open to discovery—and to more effective courses of action. “Our challenge,” he says, “is to be pioneers of thought, to challenge old assumptions where they support injustice and discrimination, and to move to renewed, creative application of our ethical principles in our lives.” (Synopsis of address, “Creativity and Optional Thinking”; Ethical weekly, May 17, 1981; reported by Susan Weidenheimer)

To foster the creative thought of Ethical Society members, Hoad has at times adopted a professorial lecture style, defining the terminology and procedures of general ethics, then presenting hypothetical—or actual—ethical dilemmas calling for the application of these principles in such areas as medicine, engineering, business, and family life. He calls such presentations “exercises in stretching one’s ethical muscles.” (Synopsis of address, “Ethics is about Conflict”; September 22, 1985) Noting that the guidelines one uses in making ethical choices are “a legacy from the past” and often amount to mere “gut reactions,” Hoad says the Ethical Society “exists to give us opportunity to take a more reflective look at these guidelines.... [I]t is at the Ethical Society that we should be learning the conceptual tools by which to make better judgments.” Promotional synopsis of address, “Ethical Dilemmas”; delivered by John Hoad and Walter Vesper; Ethical weekly, November 30, 1986) And, because developing ethical positions is partly a communal process, he also has suggested guidelines for “ethical ways of arguing,” emphasizing the need for mutual respect and openness to new ideas and perspectives. (Synopsis of address, “Ethical Ways of Arguing”; Ethical weekly, January 24, 1982; reported by Susan Weidenheimer)

Tools of Reflection

The tools with which Hoad empowers his listeners to “make better judgments” are not limited to the left-brain functions of logic and scientific analysis. Like his predecessors, particularly Percival Chubb, he describes the ethical life not only in terms of right and wrong but in terms of character, wholeness, and health. To be ethical, he believes, is to be earnestly engaged in the human enterprise—aware, responsive, and creative. In cultivating the ethical lifestyle, then, he calls upon various arts and sciences—especially literature, psychology, and humor—to illustrate human dilemmas and enlighten thought.

One valuable tool he often invokes is semantics, the critical study of words and their meanings. Valuing the proper use of words as a crucial humanist concern, he has devoted several essays to scholarly exploration of semantics and grammar. In fact, some of his unsolicited critical comments have even led to refinements in dictionaries. “The dictionary is one of the most important resources of an educated life,” he has said. “Words are the distinctive tools of human evolution.” (Leader’s word; Ethical weekly, March 21, 1982)

Hoad finds a wellspring of insight in the finest use of words, literature. He is enamored of Shakespeare, largely for the bard’s remarkable ability to sympathize with sharply divergent world views. Like Hoad, Shakespeare sought ever-deepening understanding of the human condition, not fixed and final answers to the puzzle of existence. Hoad also praises Shakespeare for his investigation of the existential consequences of ethical—and unethical—behavior. Shakespeare, he said, focuses tragic moments, helping us to foresee the destinies of our fantasies: “Just as Macbeth frightfully observes that, regardless of ‘the life to come... We still have judgment here,’ so thoughtful humanists inevitably discover that their actions dramatically affect both their inner lives and their outward circumstances.” (Address, “Shakespeare and the Human Condition”; delivered March 28, 1982; printed in pamphlet form) Hoad has used a variety of plays, both ancient and contemporary, to flesh out the human traits that underlie ethical problems. Euripides’ “Medea,” for instance, spotlights the rage that motivates an otherwise incomprehensible crime of passion, and Arthur Miller’s “The Price” illustrates that ethical decisions are made with partial knowledge and weighted with guilt, fear, and frustration. Hoad finds in such works of art a way to plumb the complex interplay of thought and feeling involved in every ethical act.

Hoad also uses popular songs, the dominant poetic form of the age, to underscore the human drama of ethics: “Delta Dawn” shows how attachment to past hurts or glories can stultify a life; Billy Joel’s “The Stranger” suggests that “we may be as afraid of a higher self as we are of a lower self”; and Mel Tillis’ “Ruby, Don’t Take Your Love to Town” illustrates the poignant sorrows of war. (Synopsis of address, “The Masks We Wear: The Stereotype Trap”; Ethical weekly, December 12, 1982; reported by Mildred Frederiksen) During his tenure in St. Louis, he has even penned a handful of songs (sung to traditional tunes or set to music by Society music directors) for use in platform meetings. One such song, “The Educated Heart,” was introduced at the 1986 Thanksgiving Festival as an expression of gratitude to loved ones and cultural forbears:

Ten thousand lives upon their course
Have added to my thought,
Their thinking minds and caring hearts
Have blessed my life unsought.
I walk where other feet have trod
Draw insight from their art

Draw sweet content from songs they sung To educate my heart.

The scroll of mentor and of muse
Who share of life's elan

Will run through many varied names:

A Bach, a Messiaen;
Da Vinci's there and Rockwell too,
Einstein and Nightingale,
and Jesus takes his place by King,
And Shakespeare tells a tale.

But with the names of famous folks, I bless the folks I know:

A mother, father, lover, friend,
A child who helps me grow.
I count my blessings one by one
In all their magnitude
And ah! the diapason swells
In bursts of gratitude.

One of the ethical tools Hoad wields most expertly is the science of psychology, a field in which he has acquired much formal training. By bringing his theoretical knowledge and clinical experience to bear on ethics, he enriches understanding of character development and interpersonal relationships. In urging attentiveness to the inner life, he notes that psychology teaches, albeit indirectly, that a lack of self-esteem is at the core of many ethical conflicts. "Since Humanism and Ethical Culture believe in the high worth of the individual," he suggests, "why not apply this concept to our dealings with ourselves? ... Self-esteem is the beginning of wisdom and of health." (Promotional synopsis of address, "Ethics and Eating"; Ethical weekly, October 26, 1986) His explorations into motivation—"the veritable quagmire of forces and counter-forces in any behavioral change"—take Walter Sheldon's rudimentary "Lessons in the Study of Habits" to a more enlightened plane. (Synopsis of address, "Project Motivation"; Ethical weekly, January 16, 1983; reported by Casey Croy) His studies of relationships, likewise, go well beyond a proffer of appropriate behavior. He probes the functions—and malfunctions—of grief, guilt, fear, and other emotions which, consciously or not, fuel human behavior. In a talk titled "Anger and Forgiveness," for instance, he postulates that "anger is the emotion of justice.... Where injustice is perceived, there is anger: a warning that unfair treatment is taking place." (Synopsis of address, "Anger and Forgiveness"; Ethical weekly, February 8, 1987) He urges his listeners not to scorn or squelch anger, but to educate and use it as "a mobilization to secure justice." (Ibid.) But while he relies heavily on the insights of modern psychology, Hoad insists that the science must not be permitted to supplant the more holistic science of ethics. "Self-realization," he warns, "becomes a narcissistic exercise unless it is linked to that larger universe of fellow humans and of higher goals of which Felix Adler spoke." (Leader's word; Ethical weekly, January 4, 1987)

Humor is yet another tool with which Hoad illuminates ethics. As he examines the phenomena in his more pensive moments, he observes that humor brightens the significance of everyday experiences through exaggeration or unexpected juxtaposition; like science fiction, it alters one's perception of human behavior by placing it in a fresh context. "Apart from being entertaining and relaxing," he observes, "humor is also a probe of our perspectives on life." (Leader's word; Ethical weekly, April 12, 1981) In his more playful moments, Hoad uses the art of humor to clarify the elements of ethical quandaries and to soften prejudices by establishing perceptual distance. An essay on "Bill-of-Rights thinking," a favorite theme, is an excellent example:

IF I WERE A DICTATOR ...

Omar Khayyam longed for the power to “grasp this sorry scheme of things entire and remold it nearer to the heart’s desire.” What would I do if I had that power? Here are some fanciful and not so fanciful decrees from my Office for Putting Things Right:

All who breed or grow roses without scent would have to clean sewers for six months. Anyone found cooking succotash would be assigned to making gas masks for the scentless-rose breeders working in the sewers. (I would show some pity, you see!)

Anyone who favors Art Deco or Nouveau Art would be required to do finger-painting for a psychiatrist for a year. Any drawings that didn’t resemble something recognizable would be used as a dart board in pubs, where Picasso paintings (apart from his Blue Period) would be hung. More exercise of pity, you see: The drawings would assure those in the pub that they were seeing straight!

Anyone eating animal food would have to work in a slaughter house for a week. Those who eat chicken would have to demonstrate that they can kill one. While vegetarians would have to argue before a jury of deer why their rights were not abridged when killed by a lion but were abridged when killed by a human. Those who oppose animal experimentation would have to sign an affidavit that they would not want to be treated by any medication or form of surgery developed through animal experimentation. And any persons who argue that it is okay to neuter animals would be forbidden sex for six months. (It would be okay to neuter animals with due demonstration of grief and regret!)

By now, I guess, I will have had applause from some and I will also have stepped on many toes! I would even lose my wife for a while! — on several counts. Which only goes to show that it’s a very tricky game to play dictator: Humanity is a many-splendored thing in its tastes and variety, and humanity’s problems are not easily solved by fiat of one point of view. Which is why we need to learn what I call “Bill-of-Rights thinking”: learning to live by a form of government that respects others’ rights to think differently from ourselves and to move towards our heart’s desire by democratic commitment and reasoned persuasion.

What would I have been sentenced for if you had been the dictator? (Leader’s word; Ethical weekly, May 4, 1986)

Translating Morals into Manners

Hoad has a driving fascination with “everyday ethics,” the elements of fairness and touches of kindness that elevate human relations. While he often addresses weighty issues of social justice, he asserts that “we need also to become more aware of the everyday human interactions that make up the greater part of our days and nights.” (Leader’s word; Ethical weekly, March 1, 1981) The axiom that “charity begins at home” applies to ethics generally: For Hoad, as for Adler, positive social change arises from heightened ethical behavior at the personal level.

In addition to expounding ethical theses of great philosophers, Hoad often draws on the writers of “wisdom literature,” the “minor mentors of morality” who help fill in the gaps of systematic philosophers. The Book of Proverbs, Aesop’s fables, the Roman Stoics, and other ancient sources offer pithy advice on ethical aspects of human behavior, touching on such matters as generosity and selfishness, industriousness and laziness, forgiveness and revenge. Hoad also taps authorities on etiquette such as Amy Vanderbilt, Lord Chesterfield, and Dale Carnegie. These advisers, when not overly concerned with traditional niceties or the advantages of making a good impression, help “turn morals into manners,” Hoad says. And that, he believes, is an essential of the humanist way: “Among the other things that it means, Ethical Culture means to me growth in human sensitivity, the ability to listen to another and to respect differences, the ability to share and to care. Morals need to be translated into manners; ethical thinking into human thoughtfulness.” (Leader’s word; Ethical weekly, March 1, 1981) For Hoad, courtesy is the embodiment of ethical ideals, the outward sign of inward respect. Behaving politely, he suggests, strengthens one’s “base... of belonging to the human race, every member of which has worth.” (Synopsis of address, “Everyday Ethics”; Ethical weekly, March 8, 1981; reported by Susan Weidenheimer)

Hoad has sought to counter what he sees as neglect of personal ethics in the humanist movement. “As a former member and minister of the Church,” he recalls, “I know of the encouragement given to Christians to pursue a life of

personal rectitude.... There was also the discipline of ‘spiritual formation’ in which we were encouraged to raise our sights and strengthen our characters in all goodness, by regular meditation. Now a lot of that was done in an oppressive way, with enormous guilt generated.... But to have a personal ethic still makes sense to me.” (Leader’s Word; Ethical weekly, Summer Bulletin No. 1, June 1985) In developing a personal ethic comparable to that of the Judeo-Christian tradition, he has asked members to share the models of “humanist character” they idealize, the touchstones by which they test their motives, and the guidelines they hold for guarding words and actions, healing relationships, and expressing a sense of justice, tolerance, and freedom. In short, he has asked, “How do we bring out the best in ourselves and in others?” (Ibid.)

In November 1985, after ingesting members’ responses to his solicitation, Hoad delivered a three-part series of addresses on “Personal Ethics.” The first talk in the series, “The Meaning that Motivates Our Morality,” focused on the social values that inspire moral behavior among members of a community. He explored the major moral systems at work in the United States—systems which, by turns, exalt spiritual communion, civic virtue, personal enterprise, and individual uniqueness. Characteristically, Hoad called for a happy union of these ethical perspectives, a combining of “I-thinking” and “You-thinking” with “We-thinking.” (Synopsis of address, “The Meaning that Motivates Our Morality”; Ethical weekly, November 17, 1985)

The second talk, “Can There be a Liberal Code of Ethics?” examined the tension between individualism and public welfare. Enumerating some of the classic principles of liberalism as economic equality, internationalism, freedom of speech, racial equality, separation of church and state, and procedural protection for accused criminals, he asked if it is possible to construct a code of ethics that serves those goals without unacceptably restricting individual freedom. “The liberal,” he concludes, “believing in justice as equality, gives high value to tolerance for the dichotomies that exist among us, striking a note of persuasiveness and education rather than coercion and looking to principles rather than precepts. The emergent code would affirm justice, compassion, and personal integrity.” (Synopsis of address, “Personal Ethics II: Can There be a Liberal Code of Ethics?”; Ethical weekly, November 24, 1985) As an example of a substantive code that respects the fundamentals of liberalism, he distributed copies of the ten-point code of ethics for government workers passed by Congress in 1980; while it does proscribe certain acts, such as bribe-taking, the code primarily calls upon workers to exercise their judgment and initiative.

In the concluding talk in the series, “Special Problems of Personal Relationships,” Hoad applied the general principles of the preceding talks to specific areas of personal ethics—family, community, friendship, love, and sex. He offered for consideration a code he believes will “bring out the best” in its practitioners and the people with whom they interact:

[I] DO THE COURTEOUS THING. Good manners is an expression of love at work in everyday events. The “magic words”—

Please, Thank you, You did a great job, Excuse me—give recognition to the fact that we never “buy” another, not even when we pay for their service or may expect it as part of a family.

[II] DO THE APPROPRIATE THING. That is, have an eye to social convention as a way of bespeaking our happiness at being part of a community. “Variety is the spice of life” — but one can’t live on spice! However, what is socially acceptable varies widely with differences in taste: So the limits of appropriateness should be widely set.

[III] DO THE RESPONSIBLE THING. In Latin re-spondere signifies “answering to,” “making a promise in return.” Life is a “given”; relationships are a “given”—what’s our response to that? In answer, what is required is more than a list, such as: Be honest, be kind, don’t steal, don’t kill. We need an overriding concern in all behavior to actively seek, to the best of our knowledge, to do what is right and good. The great codes have a creative touch: Their negatives are only “guardrails,” warning that we are getting off track; their essence is what is and what is not “humanizing.”

[IV] BE SENSITIVE. To be ethical, we’ve got to be aware. Sleepwalking through life, we miss so much we may have got from others and we do unnecessary damage. Sensitivity waxes and wanes with our anxiety, busyness, and self-preoccupation. It is a skill to be learnt: an awareness of where one’s center is, of one’s energy, of what hurts, what heals, what helps—in ourselves and others.

[V] BE FAIR. This is justice in personal rather than community terms. It means rising above prejudice, checking before we criticize. It requires treating different people differently, according to their need.

[VI] KEEP A GROWING EDGE. Creativity is an important part of personality and so of personal ethics. There are always new ways to solve problems, to demonstrate caring. The Zen masters kept on that growing edge.

[VII] BRING OUT THE BEST/SEEK THE HIGHEST. There is a discipline required to live in the ethical dimension, to ride herd on our thoughts and feelings and words. But using mistakes and criticism to learn, we can treat the discipline as an adventure that leads to mastery and to joy.

(Synopsis of address, "Personal Ethics III: Problems of Personal Relationships"; Ethical weekly, December 1, 1985)

The aspect of personal ethics Hoad has addressed most frequently is the sexual bond. In numerous talks on love, marriage, and sexual conduct, he has approached that bond with a careful admixture of reverence and practicality. In a 1981 address titled, "Romance and Responsibility," for instance, he paid homage to the mystical wonder of the love relationship but added that emotions alone do not "explain what to do when the daily dishes come along and the need to spend more time at the office, and the dirty diapers, and the little faces spotted with chicken pox, and the bills come a-knocking." (Address, "Romance and Responsibility"; delivered May 3, 1981; printed in pamphlet form) After exploring the often tense interplay of romanticism and classicism throughout Western history, he suggested that classicist discipline actually helps sustain romantic love by restraining the naive and egocentric attitudes that threaten it. "Romantic love is the exploration of the personal significance of another human being, both as a very real person, and as a point of contact with the mystery and meaning of human personal reality," he said. "If we work at it, respect each other, give time to its cultivation, the Romantic engagement of self with self and with the Ideal will return and return all life long: A Vision of Love that is itself an Ethical Ideal." (Ibid.)

In more technical psychological talks, such as "Making Marriage Work," Hoad has detailed common dysfunctions in the marital relationship and suggested ways to make the bond more productive, supportive, and stimulating. His advice is not merely that of the psychologist, however: He repeatedly reminds his listeners that a successful partnership requires commitment to an overarching ethical philosophy. The sanction of a marriage, he says, "comes from within. Not for better or worse *by God*, but through rough times and smooth because my ethical sense of caring outlasts the ups and downs of today's feelings." (Synopsis of address, "Making Marriage Work"; Ethical weekly, November 22, 1981; reported by Susan Weidenheimer) At the same time, he refrains from exalting marital permanence as an ethical absolute. The first St. Louis leader to have been divorced and remarried, he offers compassionate understanding of marital breakdown. "In my counseling," he notes, "without being committed to 'save' a marriage, no matter what, I do seek to get the couple to see what is left of their investment in one another and to revive it, if possible. I do not encourage divorce. But divorce can be a creative thing: the recognition of a psychological death and the courage to move on." (Leader's Word; Ethical weekly, May 24, 1981)

As is his custom in all matters of social ethics, Hoad often assesses contemporary sexual mores in light of their evolutionary history. In "Ethical Aspects of Modern Marriage and Other Cohabitation," he traced the development of marital ethics through social models that variously stressed reproduction, property inheritance, and romantic companionship. He concluded that the pre-medieval European custom of non-marital cohabitation, revived in recent decades with the aid of contraception, elevates personal liberty but also challenges its practitioners to redefine their responsibilities. "The modern companionship model," he says, "will have to continue to deal with issues of reproduction and financial resources, and it will need an educational support that promotes a view of sex as good (not degenerate, as in the earlier church and in some historically recent medical models), while promoting a sexual integrity that recognizes the heavy physiological and psychological investment of the human species in sexuality as an expression of relational values. If we are going to be more than reproductive and real estate partners, we also need to learn how to enhance the quality of living together." (Synopsis of address, "Ethical Aspects of Modern Marriage and Other Cohabitation"; Ethical weekly, April 20, 1986)

Beyond addressing marriage, cohabitation, and divorce, Hoad has approached the overall question of sexual ethics much more thoroughly—and with far greater frankness—than his predecessors. Recognizing that society's model of sexual ethics has grown fuzzy since the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and beyond, he has taken pains to delineate the essentials of "a sexuality based on responsibility, caring and the celebration of the creative things in life." (Synopsis of address, "Sexual Ethics"; Ethical weekly, April 5, 1981; reported by Susan Weidenheimer) In response

to frequent requests for guidance, particularly from single Society members, he has sought to bridge the murky gulf between stern, prohibitive Judeo-Christian sexual ethics and a more liberal, enlightened, humanistic approach. “The ethical issue,” he says, “is the maintenance of responsibility, not loyalty to past customs or mores. Law and custom should support a responsibly taken course, not take over. Life is in constant change and all life is ever-renewed achievement—so it should be too with our sexuality, seen as a happy adventure in exploring togetherness.” (Synopsis of address, “Sexual Ethics”; Ethical weekly, May 13, 1984)

To fully appreciate the role of sexuality, Hoad teaches, humanists should view it as symbolic of a larger perspective on human behavior. “How we use our sexuality tells us what we think of ourselves and what we think of others,” he contends. In addition to being “a healthy part of our nature” which “exists for our pleasure and mutual enrichment,” sexuality is “part of our communication system, expressive of the total relationship between persons.” (Synopsis of address, “Sexual Ethics”; Ethical weekly, April 5, 1981; reported by Susan Weidenheimer) As such, he says, it bespeaks the ethical quality of a couple’s bond. Reflecting the Kantian injunction against using a person as a means to gratification, he insists that sexuality must remain subordinate to the “personhood” of which it is a function. “Awareness and respect of individual personhood need not negate sexual awareness, but should lead us to transcendence of human principles over merely biological,” he observes. (Ibid.) One way to chart a responsible course, he suggests, is to cautiously integrate emotional and physical interaction. In “A Modern Sex Ethic,” he proposed “a hierarchy of gesture and touch in which the sensuous and the social move in tandem to where the deepest level of physical intimacy expresses the deepest level of personal intimacy.” (Synopsis of address, “A Modern Sex Ethic”; Ethical weekly, March 1, 1987)

A man of exceptional grace and sensitivity, Hoad is particularly believable on the topic of personal ethics. When a Society member noted that he seems never to miss a chance to say thanks, he replied that “I’ve made thanks a way of life because I am so deeply impressed with how much we owe to others, how much almost every life that touches mine adds something to it.” (Ethical weekly, May 31, 1981) When he mentioned elsewhere his gratitude to members who saved for him a container of chicken hearts—a delicacy that he had found difficult to obtain—he added that such “fringe benefits” of his position “make their contribution to what Wordsworth described as...

‘feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man’s life, His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love.’ “

One cannot ‘engineer’ these fringe benefits,” he continued. “One would not want to. They are spontaneous and serendipitous. But they add immeasurably to the niceness of life. “With a little thoughtfulness we can all join in...” (Essay titled “Fringe Benefits”; Ethical weekly, January 13, 1985; Wordsworth excerpt is from “Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,” l. 31-35)

Crafting Justice

Nowhere is Hoad’s skill as an “ethical midwife” more evident than in his talks on social justice. Whereas other Ethical leaders, like preachers and professors generally, approach social issues by arguing for chosen positions, Hoad prefers to teach his listeners how to develop positions of their own. Always the “ego preacher,” he offers ways to evaluate conflicts and assess the efficacy of optional responses.

In a 1982 address titled, “The Ethical Dimension,” Hoad set out a five-point approach to analyzing ethical dilemmas: 1) uphold and study the general principles of ethics; 2) isolate and weigh factors impinging on a given situation; 3) test each factor in light of the values you uphold; 4) listen to the other side; and 5) put it together and make a decision, keeping in mind that “no decision is also a decision.”

Hoad often uses tense domestic and international conflicts as arenas in which to instruct his listeners in the use of these “conceptual tools.” He takes apart ethical dilemmas, looking carefully and sympathetically at each side’s arguments as well as the unspoken passions at play. In 1981, for instance, a strike by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization prompted him to examine the role of law as an expression of society’s sense of justice. The conflict climaxed when President Reagan, invoking a law prohibiting strikes by federal workers, fired the striking controllers. Because Reagan’s action did not address the controllers’ genuine grievances, Hoad reflected that the politically expedient solution was ethically deficient. Noting that laws sometimes are inadequate or unjust, as with

segregation laws once upheld in the United States, he asserted that law needs to grow to express a society's heightening awareness of justice. Accordingly, he suggested that the law governing public strikes "should be re-examined to make it serve the needs of government without oppressing federal employees." (Synopsis of address, "The PATCO Strike"; October 11, 1981; reported by Susan Weidenheimer)

The 1982 war between Argentina and Britain over claims to the Falkland Islands served as another lesson in using the tools of ethics:

Here are some reflections on the Falklands crisis as I seek to isolate the factors and weigh them ethically.

If our ethic requires that we do *right by all*, then we have to listen to the claims of the Argentines, the British, and the Islanders. If our ethic requires that we raise the issues to the *highest human level*, then we need to go beyond the rhetoric.

We will note that Argentina probably precipitated an external crisis to *divert* national attention away from an internal one. We will note that the islands as a future source of *oil* may be a consideration—most nations set ethics aside for oil. But these are not determinative ethical factors.

History may offer some pointers, but it too is not a decisive factor. Dr. Daniel J. Santa Cruz in a letter to the *Post-Dispatch* (April 3) recounted the history and concluded that it supported the Argentine claim. But can Papal Bulls of the 14th and 15th centuries really settle such an issue? If they could, we would have to rearrange allegiances all through the Americas. We would also have to ask who gave Spain or the Pope or any European the right, in the first place, to annex the Americas from their original inhabitants. Ethnic loyalties come into play very strongly in such issues, and we tend to prefer our tribe—North European, or Latin—unthinkingly. We might call it the "ethnic gut reflex."

We move on to a higher level of ethical reflection in applying the principles of self-determination, non-aggression, and international justice and arbitration.

The Islanders voted to stay with Britain, exercising a principle of self-determination that is important to our way of life. But how important? In the interest of the nation, Israel recently ousted Jewish settlers in the Sinai, as the United States has done to American Indians. Numbers and strength play a part here. We can push around a few but not a large number like, say, the British settlers in Northern Ireland—though that did happen in the creation of Pakistan. *Do numbers count ethically?* We show strange inconsistencies on this: That 52 Americans were held in Iran stirred the nation; that 52,000 Americans die on our roads annually does not.

The decisive ethical factor (as I see it) is in *how* we handle international claims. The Argentine government has a bad track record on human rights, and on the Falklands issue "jumped the gun" into *aggression*, when no urgency was involved. That aggression needs to be reversed.

But how? The oldest remedy is *war*; or, in the myth, Cain kills Abel. The moral exercise humanity faces today is how to bring international pressure to bear on such a situation, *to remove the troops and institute arbitration*.

As we feel the shock of young Argentine and British lives lost to our sophisticated instruments of brutality, can we really contemplate a nuclear war that would kill *millions upon millions*?

(Essay, "The Falklands Dispute"; Ethical weekly, May 16, 1982)

While intellectual detachment can help in framing a conflict, it poses the hazard of diminishing the conflict's import. A recurring theme in Hoad's work is that personal ethics are causally related to social and political ethics. Pursuing that thesis, Hoad in 1984 delivered a two-part series on "Health and Toxicity." The first talk, "The Healthy and the Toxic Personality," observed that a patient's mental attitude is a powerful factor in the healing or progression of disease—as illustrated in Norman Cousins's "Anatomy of an Illness." Hoad further noted that the attitudes of individuals contribute to the health or toxicity of an organization such as the Ethical Society. Carrying the

observation a step further, he asserted in the companion address, “Health and Toxicity—at the National and International Level,” that unconscious belief systems set the tenor of a people’s political life. Regarding the Cold War, for instance, he suggested that the collective insecurity of Americans fuels the build-up of nuclear arms, which, in turn, heightens insecurity. To help his listeners appreciate such connections, Hoad pulls fiction, exaggeration, and humor out of his ethical toolbox. As if turning a telescope around to deliberately alter the viewer’s perspective, he sometimes describes global conflict in terms of personal conduct. And, as this caricature of military planning illustrates, national policies do indeed mimic personal conduct:

Some years ago I was at a party with a young professor from a college in New York and he was telling of a piece of street wisdom that he used when walking late in certain dangerous areas of the city. Approaching a group of possible delinquents, he would put one hand in a pocket (as if he had a weapon there), he would walk with a peculiar limp, and he would start to mutter to himself. The message was: I may be mad, stay clear of me!

I think of his story when I hear debates on the use of nuclear deterrents. It sounds as if the two sides are saying: Man, we have these crazy bombs and we will do crazy things with them, if you try anything crazy yourself.

We thought [cult leader Jim] Jones and his followers were crazy when 900 of them accepted suicide. We thought Hitler was supremely mad when he brought about the death of six million Jews.

What now do we say of this talk that proposes limited nuclear strikes, any one of which near a populated area (Boston was given as an example in a recent TV report) could kill a million people in a few minutes?

Where do we go from here? It is not within my competence or the space of this column to argue the pros and cons of the “balance of terror.” My point is that their leaders and ours are beginning to talk this crazy talk, and somebody needs to proclaim the sanity of seeing all peoples as one human family.

(Leader’s Word; Ethical weekly, May 10, 1981)

Hoad believes the path to a just harmony lies in the use of what he calls “Bill of Rights thinking”—thinking guided by the document he praises as “a crown jewel of human community.” The hard-won rights protected in the bill “secure a way of community premised on the worth of the individual and the free expression of ideas,” he says. (Synopsis of address, “The Bill of Rights, Part I: Crown Jewel of Human Community”; Ethical weekly, March 23, 1986) He notes that the principles and observations incorporated in the document apply in everyday life and in foreign affairs, as well as in American legal disputes. “Not only is there ‘law’ and ‘philosophy’ in the Bill of Rights,” he says, “there is also ‘psychology,’ for those who proclaimed these rights recognized that humans tend to control other humans, to suppress contrary opinion, and to make others conform to their thinking.” (Synopsis of address, “The Bill of Rights, Part II: Endangered Species”; Ethical weekly, May 6, 1986) “Bill of Rights” thinking, he says, counters this tendency by appreciating and encouraging free thought, even when such thought threatens the ascendancy of one’s own ideas.

Because human equality is fundamental to “Bill of Rights thinking,” prejudice, one of the most destructive tendencies in human nature, has been the subject of many of Hoad’s most probing addresses. But instead of simply condemning prejudice, Hoad has sought to understand its origin and function. In fact, he points out the chauvinism implicit in unconditional assimilation, “which posits that minority groups adopt the characteristics of the dominant group, implying a superior/inferior distinction, and requiring the giving up of equally old, valid, and valuable cultural heritages on the part of the minority.” (Synopsis of address, “Ethnic Identity and Ethical Culture”; Ethical weekly, February 10, 1985) Far from branding prejudice an unmitigated moral wrong, he perceives it as a natural survival mechanism with equal potential to enhance or violate human welfare.

In “Universal Ethics vs. Xenophobia,” for example, he noted that a measure of xenophobia, or fear of strangers, “can be healthy and occurs throughout nature, from our bodies’ immune systems to animal herds.” (Synopsis of address, “Universal Ethics vs. Xenophobia”; Ethical weekly, December 7, 1980; reported by Casey Croy) Just as the body uses “recognition signals” in determining whether to integrate or attack proteins, he said, the human person learns to distinguish friend from foe. The tendency to trust, protect, and advance one’s own kind—that is, those of the same

race, religion, or nationality—is an extension of primitive survival instincts, instincts that run counter to Terence’s idealistic declaration that “nothing human is alien.” In its brutal forms, of course, prejudice has spawned wars, degradation, slavery, and genocide, and such evil effects have prompted sophomoric social critics to deem discrimination innately evil. Hoad, however, draws the line more precisely:

“It is one thing to recognize and even, where appropriate, to cultivate national, ethnic, or sexual human differences,” he says, “but it is unethical to let those features override our common shared humanity so as to neglect, deprive, or misuse others.” (Synopsis of address, “Getting Through to One Another”; *Ethical weekly*, May 31, 1981)

In a 1985 talk titled “Ethnic Identity and Ethical Culture,” Hoad set out guidelines for assessing the ethics of ethnic distinctions. While promoting ethnicity through customs, associations, festivals and the like enhances cultural richness, he said, attitudes of superiority are clearly destructive. “Our ethnicity,” he said, “should be a springboard from which to join with others in exploring theirs and contributing to a sharing of cultural heritages.” (Synopsis of address, “Ethnic Identity and Ethical Culture”: *Ethical weekly*, February 10, 1985) As for justice, he affirmed that society must assiduously prevent ethnic preferential treatment in providing access to the opportunities and resources of the community. His overriding ethical rule is that “‘human values’ should have priority over ‘ethnic’ values in any conflict of loyalties.” (Ibid.)

Hoad’s talks and writings on sexual equality have been more forceful. As in his approach to prejudice generally, he dispassionately explores the historical development of cultural expectations of men and women. His conclusions, however, are more stern: The unequal treatment of women, under law and by custom, is a crime that degrades all of society. He contends that unchallenged assumptions about sexual differences perpetuate inequities—inequities made all the more oppressive by their subtlety. For instance, in a 1984 address titled, “Femininity, as Cultural Artifact,” he described in detail the inordinate emphasis society places on the physical attractiveness of women. (On another occasion, he underscored the point by arranging a platform address by Christine Craft, a broadcast journalist who gained national renown when she contended in a lawsuit that a Kansas City television station demoted her for being “too old, too ugly, and not sufficiently deferential to men.”) Associated with the expectation of beauty, Hoad argued, is an image of women as servants and helpmates rather than movers and shakers. For the sake of men and women alike, he called for greater sensitivity to the needs, potential, and problems of women. And in “ERA: Men, This is for Us, Too,” he suggested the need for a shift in consciousness analogous to the historical shift in physicists’ perception of motion: Whereas Aristotle’s peers saw a stone swinging at the end of a cord as a restrained falling object, Galileo and his successors saw it as a pendulum with its own impetus and orbit. “The proposed ERA is part of a paradigm shift in our perception of the nature of equality,” he said. “Women are being seen not as restrained falling objects, but as having orbit and momentum of their own, which claim equal validity with men’s, under law.” (Synopsis of address, “ERA: Men, This is for Us, too”; *Ethical weekly*, December 13, 1981; reported by Casey Croy)

At times, Hoad’s commitment to sexual equality has overpowered his custom of attributing validity to both sides of an ethical argument. In the early 1980s, as the drive to pass the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution neared its end, his reasoned arguments gave way to some of his most impassioned pleas. “There are some things so luminously clear to oneself that it becomes mind-boggling to find others adamantly opposed,” he wrote in the *Ethical weekly*. “It has been so for me with the Equal Rights Amendment issue. I cannot comprehend how a Nation that so vigorously proclaims its origination in the concept that all are created equal and its continuing dedication to that ideal can withhold the constitutional guarantee of that equality from women. I feel diminished to live in a society that does not consider my wife and my daughters entitled to equality with me under the law.” (Leader’s Word; *Ethical weekly*, February 21, 1982) Hoad urgently supported the amendment drive, promoting participation in rallies and letter-writing campaigns directed at the Missouri Legislature. For him, the failure of the drive remains an incomprehensible shame.

Drunk driving is another social issue on which Hoad has pulled no punches. Hoping to inspire indignation and watchfulness, he frequently has written essays comparing figures on alcohol-related road deaths to figures on war fatalities. In a 1982 issue of the *Ethical weekly*, for instance, he noted that drunk drivers had claimed the lives of 250,000 Americans—more than four times the number killed in the Vietnam War—over the previous decade. “If they had been shot by terrorists, this nation would be in an uproar,” he observed. “The White House, the Congress, the FBI, the Pentagon, and more would all be involved by now. But the dead are just as dead as if a bullet had hit them.” (Leader’s Word; *Ethical weekly*, February 7, 1982) Throughout the 1980s, he joined in the call for tougher drunk-driving legislation and law enforcement. Further, he called upon citizens to avoid drinking and driving; he even has published tips to help prevent party guests from drinking to excess.

Such overt campaigning is exceptional for Hoad; he reserves it for issues he deems “luminously clear” to any ethically minded person. In addressing more controversial issues, even those that claim a strong consensus among Society members, he scrupulously balances his convictions by presenting—and often soliciting—opposing views. Such is the case with the most ardently disputed moral dilemma of the age: abortion.

Hoad is forthrightly pro-choice. He had been a pioneer speaker and writer for abortion rights legislation in the West Indies, and he has encouraged the Ethical Society’s communal support for the abortion rights movement. Nevertheless, he continually warns his listeners against facetiously dismissing anti-abortion arguments. “However much we may promote pro-choice laws and counseling, we must be open to the values of the other point of view if we, as an Ethical Society, are to fulfill our obligation to be a mental forum for resolving the controversy,” he says. (Synopsis of address, “Towards Dialogue on Abortion”; Ethical weekly, February 1, 1981; reported by Casey Croy) As part of his ongoing effort to fulfill that obligation, Hoad in 1983 invited a priest who served as professor of moral theology at St. Louis University to share a platform program with him and a Society member who worked at an abortion clinic; he promoted the program as an exercise in “listening across the barrier.” (Promotion of platform program, “Defining Human Life”; January 23, 1983)

Hoad’s basic argument for abortion rights is that a fetus, although it is a “unique genetic package,” is not fully human and therefore not strictly deserving of the right to life. He expressed his view thoroughly in a 1987 commentary published in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch:

As we mark the 14th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, one question stands above all others: Is the induced expulsion of a fetus from the womb before it is viable tantamount to the killing of a human being? Is abortion murder?

I think that this question takes precedence even over the question of a woman’s reproductive rights. A woman should have the right to the control of her body but she does not have the right to kill another person—if the fetus is a fully accredited human being.

My contention is that the fetus is not the equivalent of a human being. I agree that the fertilized egg is a unique genetic package that may become a human being, but potentiality is not actuality.

It is a fallacy to think that because two things both appear on one continuum of development they are the same thing. A squirrel eating an acorn is clearly a different reality from a lumberjack felling an oak, even though acorn and oak are on a continuum of growth.

A developmental view of the fetus recognizes that stages of growth and the context in which the growth is taking place contribute to the total picture. The woman, in my view, has her reproductive right secured because the fetus is not and cannot become a human being until it has developed a neural network capable of sustaining the consciousness characteristic of a human being. She must decide if she wants it to go on to that stage of growth.

A number of social indicators support this view of the fetus. First, historically, even the Christian Church has been ambiguous on this issue. In many church traditions abortion was treated as a serious sin but not as murder. And distinguished theologians can be quoted as arguing that the fetus went through vegetable and animal stages before becoming human, or that the soul was infused into the embryo several weeks into the pregnancy (in males earlier than in females, some argued).

Second, we do not treat fetuses that miscarry the same way that we do babies who die at birth. There are no death notices, no obituaries, no memorial services for the miscarried fetus. The fetus is not a person.

Third, legally, even before the Supreme Court decision, many states had liberalized their abortion laws. In 1958, half the states allowed therapeutic abortions to save the mother’s life. The Modern Penal Code (1962) drafted by the American Law Institute and proposed for the states would have vastly broadened the grounds for therapeutic abortions.

Even the 1969 Missouri Statutes treated abortion as manslaughter, with punishments far less severe than for murder and stated, “An indictment which fails to allege that the abortion was not

necessary to preserve the life of the woman is not sufficient to support a conviction.” All this came before *Roe vs. Wade*. If the 1973 Supreme Court decision were overturned, we would still not be back at a position of treating abortion as murder.

Fourth, biomedical studies indicate that nature is an abortionist on a grand scale. Malcolm Potts (“Abortion” 1977) estimates that, “One fertilized ovum in two is aborted spontaneously,” either before or after pregnancy is diagnosed.

Millions of human beings are being lost every year, at nature’s hit-and-miss discretion. And yet there is no lamentation in our society for these lost souls, no concerts to raise funds to save them, no picketing or protests. Clearly, we do not react to a lost embryo with the same sense as we do to a lost baby.

In the developmental view, we would find abortion increasingly problematical as the fetus neared birth, but in the early stages even those whose theoretical positions equate the fertilized egg with a human life do not socially act as if it were one.

In Roman Catholic moral theology, under strict criteria, an “ectopic” pregnancy may be terminated. Ectopic means literally “out of place” and refers to pregnancies developing, for example, in a Fallopian tube.

My question to my friends across the fence would be:

Why do you define ectopicity simply in anatomical terms? Women, like men, are not simply biological robots. They are complex contexts of physical and mental health, of economic and psychological condition, and pregnancies are begotten under circumstances of varying choice and responsibility. Surely we need to take all these factors into consideration when we try to decide whether a fetus is out of place and legitimately removable or not.

(“Why Society Treats Fetuses Different From Babies”; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 24, 1987)

The attribution of the commentary identified Hoad as leader of the Ethical Society. That Society members commended him on the essay—and that no member voiced objection to it—bespeaks the breadth of the community’s agreement on the issue. All the same, Hoad has continued to challenge liberals who treat abortion too lightly. In a 1986 talk titled, “Philosophical Implications of the Abortion Controversy,” he cautioned that a fetus, while perhaps less than human, is certainly a being deserving of respect. “On any evolutionary scale of values,” he said, “a fetus must have a far higher claim than any animal—yet many who promote animal rights seem to neglect fetus rights.” (Synopsis of address, “Philosophical Implications of the Abortion Controversy”; February 16, 1986) Abortion, he suggested, “should be seen in the same light as divorce, surgery, bankruptcy—a necessary way out of a bad situation but not a desirable norm.” (Ibid.)

To some Society members, this even-handedness of Hoad’s is dissatisfying. While none wants “fire and brimstone,” some do wish for a bit more fire. Hoad, humbly aware that he cannot please everyone equally, is content in being true to himself and his mission. He offers information, tools, and perspectives, not answers; he is, after all, a “midwife,” not an adoption agent.

Cultivating Community

Hoad has brought exceptional leadership skills to his service of the Ethical movement. Through—and beyond—his addresses and writings, he has sought to bolster the Society’s organizational strength. While previous leaders had recognized the importance of the community’s political and economic structures, none had the training or drive to direct them. Hoad, drawing on years of study and experience in social psychology, has avidly nurtured leadership, communication, and cooperation within the Society.

Noting that the Ethical Society “occupies a unique spot on the map of religion,” Hoad often endeavors to clarify its identity through novel comparisons. In a 1982 essay, for example, he wrote that the Society “is like a driver’s education simulator that helps us to mentally model how to

make the most of situations as expressions of justice and love.” (Essay, “Modeling Behavior”; Ethical weekly, October 3, 1982) And in a 1985 essay, he compared the Society to a supermarket: As a market provides access to products, he wrote, the Ethical Society provides opportunities—opportunities for interaction with people of like values, for education in ethics, for community and personal support, for a safe environment in which to grow and experiment, and for cooperation with others in doing good. (Essay, “Our Product”; Ethical weekly, September 22, 1985)

Although R. Walston Chubb’s depiction of the Society as an “ethical powerhouse” has held sway through the years, Hoad also has firmly supported the community’s service aspect. He is eminently pragmatic in his idealism. “‘We have a dream’ must become ‘We have a plan of action,’” he says. (Ethical weekly, September 23, 1984) In promoting what he terms “transformational humanism,” Hoad describes the Society’s collective motivation for social action: “We seek change in our world because we see ourselves as fellow-humans with the rest of humanity and recognize that all our attitudes and actions influence the web of social life. We are inherently political animals—an attitude that will need to be channeled into social service and social change but which underlies all our thinking. It’s a basic, integral, and integrating attitude.” (Leader’s word; Ethical weekly, January 26, 1984) As indicated in this 1981 essay, Hoad believes the Society’s “home life” and service are complementary, not contrary:

(Society member) Bill Stuckenberg introduced me recently to two terms that have been used to indicate a dichotomy that has existed in the Ethical Society. The issue is this: Do we consider the Society a “home” or a “cause”? A home is concerned with social relationships, with refreshment and renewal, with fellowship, and with intimate reflections. But a cause is a public thing: It is a thing of the newspaper page, the boardroom, the factory floor, the street, the corridors of power. Some of those among us would like to see the Society as more of a spiritual and social home, and some would like to see it as more of a cause, while many keep seeking ways to make it both home and cause.

The issue is complex. What, for comparison, is a university? It’s a sort of in-between organization, apart from and yet preparatory for the public world. Karl Marx sitting and writing in the British Museum was in a home of study but was generating economic and political reflections of a powerfully revolutionary cause.

So a home may be a place of escape or it may be a place of renewal. And a cause may be pursued by a “think-tank” as well as by a protest march. And a cause may be pursued by a leader or a special interest group without the whole Society giving its name to it. Hopefully, we have here an atmosphere that serves both interests.

(Leader’ word; Ethical weekly, April 26, 1981)

Again and again, Hoad has reminded members that diligent management is the key to turning dreams into action. “Things we want to happen won’t just happen of themselves unless we recruit, train, motivate, and supervise persons to do them, and plan, monitor, and evaluate the programs we want done,” he advises. (Ethical weekly, September 23, 1984) In more businesslike terms, he has noted that the Society’s primary level of activity—providing opportunities for community, service, and personal growth—requires steady attention to a secondary level of activity—the work of the Board of Trustees, committees, and paid staff. Calling upon his training in communications, he has offered methodical instruction in the principles of organizational interaction.

In 1984, for instance, he presented a series of academic essays on group dynamics in the Ethical weekly. The series covered such topics as leadership structures, information-gathering systems, task development, conflict resolution, and listening skills. He encouraged a balance between a group’s inner-directed focus—that is, its efforts to maintain and strengthen itself — and its outer-directed focus, its tasks and goals. He offered tips on integrating various personality types—such as the “Tough Battler,” the “Friendly Helper,” and the “Objective Thinker”—into the work of a group, and he stressed the need to prevent “nuisance” types—such as the “Belittler” and the “Fence-Sitter”—from diminishing the spirit and effectiveness of the group.

Hoad has made an art of encouraging members to initiate and manage service projects, to take on new responsibilities and stand up to their fear of failure. As he said in a 1984 address titled, “The Courage of Our Convictions,” “Ethical reflection fails at the point of action unless there is courage.” (Synopsis of address, “The

Courage of Our Convictions”; Ethical weekly, February 26, 1984) While some people seem to have a natural aptitude for organizing, Hoad insists it is an acquired ability. “Organizing is a skill and discipline that needs to be learnt,” he says. “Ideas must be given legs—and hands and a mouth, and ears for feedback. So, if you want to see something happen: Believe in it. Share it personally. Organize for it to happen. Trial balloons float away if there is no string attached!” (Ethical weekly, February 19, 1984) To members whose general calls for involvement have prompted little response, he recommends personally recruiting volunteers. “Go shake the apple tree, my friend,” he urges. “Gently, lest they bruise. Or, better still, go handpick them, one by one. And remember to polish them by the month!” (Ethical weekly, November 30, 1986) To avoid—or cure—burn-out, he urges organizers to pay heed to participants’ strengths, interests, and periodic need for respite, being careful not to overwork some members while overlooking others. And, mindful that not all organizational efforts are raging successes, he braces organizers for the disappointments of their travails. “Learn to live with human nature, which can be messy, lazy, forgetful, and imperceptive,” he advises. “Factor in the shortfall. Aim for the best, but remember that we are not yet perfect—so work around that!” (Ethical weekly, February 19, 1984)

Hoad is ever cognizant of negative undercurrents in the community. “There is warmth and friendliness among us, and hurt, but also anger and suspicion,” he observes. (Synopsis of address, “A Humanism Big Enough for Humanity”; Ethical weekly, December 16, 1984) Tensions are inevitable, he says, because every organization includes several sources of guidance, each having a legitimate but different point of view. The Ethical Society vests various responsibilities in the leader, the Board of Trustees, committees, and the membership at large, and two or more of these parties are apt to disagree over policies and interpretations. The existence of such tensions, Hoad says, need not be destructive. “Creative organizing sees opportunity, not catastrophe, in tension,” he says. (Essay, “Tensions”; Ethical weekly, March 17, 1985) He recommends facing tensions openly in a respectful exchange of ideas. To that end, he has presented guidelines for fair and productive arguing in various talks and essays. Democracy can work, he contends, if all sides are committed to the good of the organization.

Hoad has acknowledged that the Ethical Society is an especially contentious community. “Leadership is often a problem in humanist ranks,” he says, “because we attract many people with individualistic leadership characteristics, proportionately more ‘Chiefs’ than ‘Indians,’ and not a few ‘prima donnas.’” (Synopsis of address, “A Humanism Big Enough for Humanity”; Ethical weekly, December 16, 1984) In a 1984 talk titled, “Beyond Individualism: Organizing Our Cause,” he challenged Society members, many of whom have long considered themselves mavericks or renegades, to subordinate self-interest to the good of the group. “Individualism as ‘doing one’s thing’ is not ours,” he said. “We seek to do the ethical thing. Individualism as hating to join anything is not ours; we are a Society.” (Synopsis of address, “Beyond Individualism: Organizing Our Cause”; October 7, 1984)

Recruitment is another aspect of organizational life that comes hard for Society members, who to a person disdain importunate proselytizing. On the other hand, members naturally want to share the home they have found, and Hoad encourages them to do so—directly, yet gently. Of course, the Society’s motivation for recruitment is necessarily different from that of a gospel community: It is out to invite minds, not save souls. One reason for bringing in new members, Hoad suggests, is to “improve the ‘mind environment’ in which we live.” (Synopsis of address, “Gathering Inward—Reaching Outward”; Ethical weekly, April 1, 1984) Another, more religious reason is drawn from Adler’s belief in the “divine manifold.” The Society reaches out, Hoad says, “because we belong... to the universe that gave birth to us and to one another through whom we become persons.” (Ibid.) Because inviting members of that manifold to cross the threshold of the meeting house requires skills that are apt to be dormant in the Society, Hoad has balanced the art of “reaching outward” with efforts to “reach inward.” In addition to encouraging such public relations projects as print advertising and the issuance of timely press releases, he has held workshops aimed at helping Society members explain the community’s make-up and *raison d’être*. Further, he has expressed confidence that the Society, by developing effective programs and conscientiously serving the community, will continue to attract “homeless” soul mates.

Beyond practicing and teaching humane management skills, Hoad regularly renews his call for attention to personal ethics. “Good manners and courtesy are expressions of kindness, they are ways of showing love in small things,” he wrote in a 1986 essay. “They are the lubrications of the bigger machinery of life. And that lubrication is important in the collective life of a group.” (Leader’s word; Ethical weekly, October 19, 1986) The use of “the magic words,” he wrote, “reminds us that those who serve us are our fellow-humans, whose ‘souls’ cannot be bought even when we pay for their ‘service’ and whose ‘volunteerism’ is not ‘cheap labor.’” (Ibid.) If the Ethical Society is to succeed in *promoting* ethics, Hoad teaches, it must always *embody* ethics.

15: A CRITICAL TRANSPLANT - THE MOVE TO SUBURBIA

Even before the mortgage was paid off, Society members began debating whether to move out of Sheldon Memorial. In the mid-forties, some board members believed the Society could cut its operating costs by relocating to a smaller building in the county. A committee formed in 1946 investigated possible building sites and examined the Society's mailing list to determine what district would be most accessible to members. The study revealed that the largest plurality of members lived in the western portions of the city and county. Accordingly, the committee located a prime piece of real estate in Clayton, but the cost of the property discouraged serious consideration. Nonetheless, as Sheldon Memorial aged and required higher maintenance costs, the board balked at making capital improvements; in the early 1950s, its working supposition was that the building would remain usable only for another decade.

With the flight to the suburbs, many Society members wearied of journeying to the decaying urban neighborhood, and they worried that the trek discouraged visitors. Attendance at night meetings grew sparse. Membership held steady, but Sunday School attendance was dropping, and a consensus evolved that the Society could flourish only by establishing a presence in the county. "We just simply couldn't attract people to come down to the Grand Avenue area, that's all," said Charles Blake. "And we didn't have any children's programs. At one time, we used to have evening programs, but it became very, very difficult to have evening meetings." (Interview with Charles "Bud" and Garnet Blake, July 1986) In 1955, an Expansion Committee—composed of past presidents and headed up by Alexander Langsdorf—recommended such expansion alternatives as building a new meeting house in the county; renting a storefront or hall for public meetings; building or buying a community center at which recreational and educational programs could be conducted; and promoting neighborhood discussion groups that ultimately could evolve into satellite ethical societies. The board steered a middle path, testing the popularity of a move to the county by conducting a second Sunday program in rented quarters. Board Vice President Harold Hanke, a vocal proponent of county relocation, headed up a Growth and Development subcommittee charged with administering the pilot program. Hanke also chaired a Site Subcommittee appointed to investigate potential relocation sites. A third Growth and Development subcommittee screened candidates for assistant leadership positions.

Testing the Waters

The county experiment was begun in September 1956. The program—which included a platform lecture, an adult discussion group, and a Sunday School directed by member Herman Woebcke—was conducted in the YWCA building on North Brentwood Boulevard in Clayton. Funding for the program was provided from the Growth and Development Fund, which held the lion's share of the Society's accessible bequests. Throughout the two years the program was conducted, Hornback and the Society's leaders-in-training shuttled between Sheldon and the Y, delivering the same address at both locations. Guests who spoke at Sheldon Memorial sometimes visited the county branch as well, but directors of the county branch also secured speakers on their own. Piano and organ music was provided at the platform services. Mindful of their mission to extend the Society's reach, program directors took out advertising, printed a publicity brochure, and appointed ambassadors to provide information about the Society.

The program got off to a strong start. On the first few Sundays of the experiment, attendance at the county's Sunday School was double that of the city. In the first months of the program, total attendance at the city and county adult services increased about 10 percent over the corresponding period of the previous season. At the end of the program's first year, the president of the board appointed a committee to evaluate its success. It was decided to continue the program for a second year in the hope that the Society could arrive at a consensus on relocation by the end of the season. During the program's second season, the county Sunday platform service and social hour were held at the Masonic Temple in Clayton; the Sunday School remained at the YWCA. Despite the makeshift facilities, more Society members attended the county program than the Sheldon program. Nevertheless, maintaining the programs simultaneously was a weak proposition. "It was a fiasco," said Ruth Anderson. "The leader had to run from one building to another. And it was kind of divisive. Some of your best friends would go to one place and you'd go to another. You wouldn't see each other for years." (Interview with Ted and Ruth Anderson, Sept. 15, 1986)

While the county program was under way, Hanke continued his search for a temporary meeting house in the county. His committee's early search focused on existing buildings—mostly residences that could be adapted to the Society's needs. On Hanke's recommendation, the board in 1957 authorized the payment of earnest money toward

the purchase of a roomy residence on a five-acre estate in West County.⁵⁴ The chairman of the Site Committee was authorized to offer as much as \$75,000 for the property. The owner, however, chose to hold out for \$90,000, and the board reconsidered its action. According to the Growth and Development Committee's analysis of the proposal, the annual operating budget of a county branch headquartered at that site would be about \$10,000. Even if the parent society underwrote half the budget, the committee noted, the branch would have to secure about 100 new members—paying an average of \$50 apiece in annual dues—to provide that much additional income.

The board decided that the success of the county experiment did not warrant that much optimism. Most of the program's participants previously attended services at Sheldon Memorial; overall Society membership had not significantly increased. The experiment clearly indicated that a county location would foster growth, but the board concluded that the Society did not have—and was not likely to garner—enough members to maintain two buildings. Its consensus was to temporarily retain Sheldon Memorial and revoke the decision to purchase the West County site.⁵⁵ In its next report, the Growth and Development Committee agreed that coexistent city and county communities were unfeasible, but it recommended that the programs be consolidated at Sheldon Memorial only until the Society was prepared to fully relocate to the county. The board unanimously approved the recommendation, pending approval by the membership. The county program was discontinued in April 1958.

A Democratic Design

Because Society members had been considering a move for years, the decision to buy property in the county was made quickly. In the spring of 1958, membership meetings were held to discuss the proposed relocation in light of the overall aims and needs of the Society. The meetings, which included both small-group discussions and all-Society assemblies, produced a consensus favoring relocation to the county. Meanwhile, the Site Subcommittee of the Growth and Development Committee was expanded to include four pairs of investigators, each of which was assigned to a particular area of the county. Its search now focused on undeveloped property on which a new building could be constructed. By June, after inspecting nearly sixty sites, the committee agreed on a sloping five-acre tract of land at 8955 Clayton Road in Ladue, an affluent municipality located a few miles west of St. Louis proper. The property, owned by Fred and Eleanor Endres and operated as a tree nursery, was available for \$35,000 — a bargain even in that day. The grade of the land had given the Site Committee pause—with ample cause, given that damaging slides recently had occurred on at least seven nearby plots—but a committee comprising seven engineers reported that the tract could be made usable with relatively inexpensive modifications. The board put down earnest money on the property and recommended the purchase to the membership. In addition to receiving copies of the Site Committee's report, Society members were invited to inspect the property and question members of the Growth and Development Committee before voting on the proposal by mail-in ballot. The vote was overwhelming: Of the 471 ballots mailed out, 238 were returned; 186 favored the purchase, 48 opposed it, and four ballots were returned unmarked. After obtaining the favorable opinion of yet another engineer, the board finalized the sale in July.⁵⁶ Despite the purchase, the feasibility of building on the Ladue property remained in question for some time. The Site Committee was reactivated in 1959 to search for alternative sites and reconsider sites that had been rejected in the early going.

Board President Ludwig “Fred” Hammer quickly instituted the structure by which a plethora of design and financial decisions would be made. The Growth and Development Committee, having completed its initial tasks, was overhauled to suit the needs of transition. Again, it comprised three subcommittees. The Finance Subcommittee directed fund-raising efforts and administered building funds. The Functional Requirements Subcommittee directed the Society's suborganizations in projecting the social, cultural, and civic activities they planned to sponsor after the move. These plans were submitted to the Design and Construction Subcommittee, which was charged with selecting and instructing an architect for the new building.

The entire membership of the Society was invited to take part in the design process. “We got everybody and his uncle to work on the building,” recalled Hammer. “We created functional design groups, we created art groups, we created site, management, accounting [groups]. The Women's Auxiliary told us what kitchen facilities we needed,

⁵⁴ The Krey estate was located on Ladue Road just west of Lindbergh.

⁵⁵ Sentiments ran high on both sides of the issue. Originally, the board secretary noted that the trustees “did not have the courage to run the risk of purchasing the Krey property.” The minutes were ordered altered at the next meeting.

⁵⁶ In 1961, the Society bought an adjacent plot from Henry and Eva Endres for \$7,750, bringing the tract to just over five acres. The address of the combined properties then was set at 9001 Clayton Road.

the Sunday School described their classroom needs, and so on. It really paid off. That was the best way to get everybody's commitment. We got added support for the move by drawing so many people into the planning process." (Interview with Fred Hammer, October 1986) This gathering of preferences was an exercise in cantankerous democracy. "It was traumatic," said Jane Hanke. "As you can imagine, everyone had their own idea of what should go into the building." (Interview with Harold and Jane Hanke, Sept. 22, 1986) Hanke, for instance, considered her finest contribution to the design process to be her insistence on a center aisle in the auditorium, set perpendicular to the platform, as opposed to the four-aisle design used in Sheldon Memorial. The center aisle, she said, enhances the natural drama of religious ritual. "Happily, I won, and every time we have a wedding there, I am glad," she said. (Ibid.) Other suggestions encountered more resistance. Some members, Hanke recalled, ridiculed the color scheme she developed, comparing the building to a Howard Johnson's motel. Likewise, a few members wanted the stained-glass windows moved from Sheldon Memorial to the new building, but most felt that the Old-World piety of those heirlooms would destroy the sleek elegance of the international style of architecture then in vogue. R. Walston Chubb, for his part, inveighed against the modern style promulgated by Frank Lloyd Wright, and Alexander Langsdorf—an authority on engineering and architecture—worried that any building constructed on the Ladue site inevitably would slide down the slope. Notwithstanding the bickering and qualms, the Functional Requirements Subcommittee worked up charts of space and facilities required for the Society's current activities, then turned its attention to projected new activities. In March 1959, it forwarded its proposed floor plan to the Design and Construction Subcommittee. That committee, under the direction of Bert Reager, spent months drafting preliminary plans, drawing on the advice of experts in architecture and aesthetics.

In selecting an architect for the job, the design committee sought a creative individual who could embody the Society's ideals in a practical facility; it also required a proven record of responsiveness and budgetary restraint. The design subcommittee included a handful of architects belonging to the Society, but the parent Growth and Development Committee, wary of fueling discord over professional competitiveness, decided that no Society member would be awarded the contract; the trustees, though peeved that the committee had so notified the architects without consulting the board, agreed with the policy. (At least one architect resigned from the Society in anger over the prohibition.) After interviewing a string of candidates, the design committee in 1960 recommended St. Louisan Harris Armstrong. Although most of his projects were residences, Armstrong had designed such institutional structures as the laboratories building at Washington University, the former Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney department store in Clayton, and the McDonnell Douglas Corporation's \$7 million engineering building at Lambert Field. A fellow of the American Institute of Architects since 1955, Armstrong had won numerous honors for his achievements, including a silver medal from the French government and fourth prize in the design competition for the Jefferson Expansion Memorial (Eero Saarinen won the competition with his renowned Gateway Arch design). According to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Armstrong's work "was characterized by a fondness for sweeping, graceful lines that harmonize structural design with natural surroundings." (St. Louis Globe-Democrat, December 17, 1973)⁵⁷ The parent committee and the board of trustees approved the recommendation, and Armstrong set about evaluating the site and sketching plans.

Reconnaissance Missions

As relocation planning snaked along, some Society members grew restless to extend the community's reach. In 1960, the Leadership Advisory Committee—the scope of which was exceptionally elastic—presented three proposals for community outreach. One was to hold neighborhood meetings in six districts of the metro area over the summer. The meetings would be similar to the Sunday platform services, with Hornback and assistant leader David Norton speaking on the philosophy of the Ethical movement. Newcomers attending the meetings would then be invited to the homes of Society members for group discussions. The hope was that personal introductions to the Society would dispose visitors to attend Sheldon Memorial services in the fall. The second proposal was to organize satellite groups in outlying areas; suggested sites included Columbia, Missouri, and the Southern Illinois communities of Belleville, Alton, and Granite City. According to the proposal, these groups would meet regularly under the direction of volunteer leaders trained at Sheldon Memorial. The third proposal was to concentrate publicity efforts on one particularly promising area. The board decided to combine the proposals by holding neighborhood meetings in two fertile districts; the groups that attended these meetings would have the option of joining the parent Society or forming satellite societies in their respective communities.

⁵⁷ A photographic retrospective of Armstrong's career was displayed as part of the Ethical Society's memorial service in June 1974. Also at the memorial, James S. McDonnell gave the Society a grand piano in Armstrong's honor.

The first regional meeting was held in the fall of 1960 in the Ferguson-Florissant area of North St. Louis County. Advertisements and announcements were run in the neighborhood press, and Society members living in that part of the county were asked to bring friends and neighbors. The meeting, which was held at the Community Meeting House in Ferguson, included an address, a panel discussion, and a question-and-answer period. Society members hosted a reception after the meeting. The meeting drew about 50 people, a third of them non-members. In January 1961, a second regional meeting was held at a Belleville restaurant for Metro East residents. That meeting drew 23 people, ten of whom were non-members and four of whom had had no previous contact with the Society. Neither meeting augured well for the establishment of satellite groups. "There was no way, at this time, we had sufficient strength for regional meetings," said Hammer. "The tendency over the years was to hope for neighborhood consciousness, but it was impractical. We are too small. We're not like the Catholics, where churches anchor neighborhoods." (Interview with Fred Hammer, October 1986). Hammer added that the establishment of satellite societies within the metropolitan area would diminish the society's strength by dividing attendance. Nonetheless, the modest participation in the regional meetings indicated that interest in the Society was widespread.

Nailing Down the Dream

Few Society members believe in providence, but apprehension about the costly relocation was assuaged by an uncannily fortuitous gift. In 1959, member George Sommers bequeathed to the Society 3,300 shares of Texas Company stock worth about \$275,000. (Like John M. Prather, whose 1939 bequest boosted the quality of the Society's platform offerings, Sommers was a thrifty, semi-reclusive bachelor whose modest lifestyle belied his means.) If the bequest were treated as a challenge grant, Society leaders noted, the community could afford to build a beautiful, spacious meeting house in the county. The bequest added momentum to the expansion campaign, and a Project Committee formed to implement the relocation plans finally ratified use of the Ladue site in the fall of 1960. The committee—noting that few sites were available east of Lindbergh Boulevard, and that those west of Lindbergh generally were larger and more expensive—recommended spending the money needed to make the Ladue site usable. Meanwhile, members of the Building Design and Construction Committee reached agreement on design specifications and directed Armstrong to draft preliminary drawings. Armstrong at first envisioned a classical building—not unlike Sheldon Memorial—that would be set close to the road. The design committee, however, encouraged him to experiment with the modern style for which he had become known. "I wanted something more imaginative, something that would have lasting beauty," said Hammer. (Interview with Fred Hammer, October 1986) Armstrong thereupon developed the avant-garde design that would place the Ethical Society meeting house on the architects' tour list. The Project Committee generally favored the plans, but it asked Armstrong to reduce the floor space to hold building costs below \$500,000.

With the board's backing, Reager and Armstrong presented the revised plans to the membership at the 1961 annual meeting. The plans called for a 400-seat auditorium that could be expanded to 500 seats with the addition of a balcony. The auditorium would be flanked by an executive wing on the west and two east wings that would enclose a courtyard and recreation area. The east wings were to comprise Sunday School classrooms and a 125-seat auditorium that would serve as a Sunday School Assembly Room and auxiliary lecture and meeting hall. The lower level of the main building would include a library, a kitchen, and a meeting hall/dining room. Excluding the balcony, building cost was estimated at \$460,000; a balcony, which could be added later, would cost an additional \$90,000. Furnishings, landscaping, and architectural and engineering fees would add another \$90,000 to the price tag. The board presented to the membership a resolution approving the expenditure of \$550,000 to \$640,000 to implement the plans.⁵⁸ The resolution, along with voting ballots, was sent to the membership; the mailing included an explanation of building plans, a picture of the architect's model, a questionnaire on design preferences, and a projection of financial obligations. Again, the vote was overwhelming. Of the 468 ballots mailed out, 295 — about

⁵⁸ Relocation was not the only plan presented at the meeting. Member John Kessler, a humanitarian dedicated to the viability of the central city, proposed that the Society renovate Sheldon Memorial and build a \$30,000 annex behind it. He won little support for the idea at the 1959 annual meeting, and he won even less in 1961. Kessler was among the members who steadfastly urged the retention of Sheldon Memorial regardless of whether the Society made its home elsewhere.

63 percent—were returned. Of the votes cast, 239 — 81 percent—favored the building project; 50 opposed it; and six abstained.⁵⁹

Upon receiving the ratification, the board designed a fund-raising campaign aimed at matching the \$275,000 Sommers bequest. As no one in the Society had the time or experience to direct such a large-scale campaign, the board decided to hire a professional fund-raiser. After interviewing the representatives of seven fund-raising firms, the Finance Committee contracted with Lon Amick of Burrill Inc., a Kansas City-based organization. Amick, working with a group of Society members, set up a campaign Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was assisted by an Advisory Group, which offered consultation on general financial matters; a Technical Advisory Group, which was composed of attorneys and accountants who helped contributors design practicable trusts and wills; and a Memorial Group, which acknowledged substantial donations by designating certain items in the new building as memorials. Adding to the challenge sum the costs of the campaign and the interest on money borrowed against pledges, the board set the goal of the campaign at \$300,000. Throughout October 1961, about fifty volunteers trained in the delicate art of solicitation knocked on the doors of Society members. In addition, a Pledge Cultivation Committee buttonholed members who did not return pledge cards and systematically approached new members. Contributors exceeded the campaign goal, making 269 pledges amounting to more than \$318,000. This sum, added to the bequests invested in short-term bonds, ensured that the Society would have more than \$600,000 for its building. As Hammer recalled, the success of the campaign verified the strength of the urge to relocate:

We were all scared to death that we'd never raise the amount of money that we did. As a matter of fact, the professionals estimated we'd raise about half. The professionals came in, and the first thing they wanted to know was, "What's your history of raising money?" When they saw how we had done in the past, they said, "What you're asking for is so much out of the history of your past, you're going to be lucky if you get \$150,000." Well, we got pledges for \$318,000.

(Interview with Ludwid "Fred" Hammer, Aug. 18, 1986)

The eclectic tastes Armstrong incorporated in his final design spurred misgivings. Some trustees felt the pagoda-type roof was "too Oriental" or "too churchy"; others charged that the columns of the facade and the cracker-box style of the wings presented a conflict of periods. But proponents of the design, backed by the fact that the membership already had approved it, triumphed. Most holdouts were won over by the finished product. "I think the building has worn very well," Hammer reflected. "It doesn't look like it's dated. Almost everybody admires it. It's still considered a very modern-looking building." (Interview with Fred Hammer, October 1986) The controversial spire turned out to be a trademark of the Society. Constructed of *terme* (steel covered with an alloy of lead and tin) as a cheaper alternative to copper, the roof's patina is as distinctive as its shape. Furthermore, the conical space it forms helps create the simple grandeur and acoustical excellence of the auditorium.

The board was content to fill that space with the tones of an electric organ. Reager estimated that a pipe organ would cost \$15,000 to \$20,000 more than an electric one, and respondents to a questionnaire had opposed the additional expense by a vote of 172-53 (in fact, two respondents indicated that they wanted no organ at all in the new meeting house). But a band of music lovers, spoiled by decades of listening to the superb Kilgen organ at Sheldon Memorial, pressed for another pipe organ. Led by Society organist Fern Kelly, the group set its sights on a neo-baroque instrument crafted by Werner Bosch of Kassel, Germany. The cost of the organ—about \$17,000, including shipping and installation—was covered by a gift from Joseph and Genevieve Hail in memory of Hail's deceased first wife, Valburga.

In September 1962, building specifications were sent to six construction bidders; the contractors were asked to bid on the minimal plan, adding a separate estimate for a balcony. All the bids—which began at about \$700,000 — were

⁵⁹ On the questionnaire that accompanied the ballot, 140 respondents voted in favor of incorporating a balcony in the building; 98 opposed building a balcony; and 57 did not respond to the question. On the proposal to spend an additional \$20,000 to buy a pipe organ instead of an electric organ, 53 respondents voted in favor, 172 voted in opposition, two voted to have no organ at all, and 68 expressed no opinion. On the question of omitting the cooling system, 59 voted in favor, 189 voted in opposition, and 47 gave no answer. Regarding the disposition of Sheldon Memorial, suggestions included selling the building as soon as possible, holding the question in abeyance pending development of the midtown area, and retaining the building for concerts, meetings, or use by a satellite ethical society. Those who favored the move to the county noted on the questionnaire that they felt relocation would facilitate the growth of the Society, strengthen the Sunday School, attract more young people, and bring the meeting hall closer to the present membership.

beyond the Society's range, and their narrow span indicated that the problem lay with the design. The ground-breaking ceremony, originally set for October 7, was indefinitely postponed, and Armstrong set to work on cost-cutting modifications. In addition to opting for less costly roofing material, Armstrong drew in the roofline, shortened the depth of the foyer, and eliminated one of the east wings; classrooms originally intended for the second wing were replaced by alcoves in the meeting hall, and the auxiliary auditorium was forfeited. The board approved the revised plans, and, on the recommendation of the Building Design and Construction Subcommittee, contracted the Gamble Construction Company. The firm's winning bid, excluding non-essentials, was \$536,000. The long-delayed ground-breaking ceremony was held June 27, 1963.

The first service in the new building was held on December 6, 1964, but dedicatory services were delayed until the building was fully furnished. On January 24, 1965, an address by social reformer Saul Alinsky kicked off a week of civic dedication. Political, religious, and civic leaders were invited to a public meeting and reception January 27. St. Louis County Supervisor Lawrence K. Roos and a representative of St. Louis Mayor Raymond R. Tucker spoke at the event, as did Thaddeus Clark, pastor of First Unitarian Church; Rabbi Jerome W. Grollman, past president of the St. Louis Rabbinical Association; and O. Walter Wagner, an ecumenical minister representing the Metropolitan Church Federation. AEU Vice President Robert A. Lennertson presented the Union's congratulations, and the Society's past presidents were honored. On January 29, New York leader Henry Neumann spoke at a Recognition Reception, an in-house celebration of the building's completion and a tribute to those who gave "time, talent, money, and moral support" to the building program. Neumann's platform address on January 31 crowned the dedication.

The Bosch organ was installed in January and was dedicated April 1 and 2 with concerts by organ virtuoso E. Power Biggs. The first recital was a private affair for Society members and non-member contributors to the Building Fund; the second was a public concert conducted under the auspices of the American Guild of Organists. As Hornback recalled in memoirs, Biggs "rolled his audiences in the aisles with elegant and good-humored commentary, including: 'This is the way God wanted organs to be built.' "

Costs and Benefits

To no one's surprise, costs associated with the relocation exhausted the Building Fund and strapped the Current Fund. The Society ran deficits of about \$7,000 in the 1962-63 season; \$10,000 in '63-64; \$16,000 in '64-65; and \$12,000 in '65-66. In November 1964, just before the move, the board authorized the treasurer to take out a five-year mortgage loan of up to \$150,000 to cover building and furnishing expenses. Only \$80,000 actually was borrowed, but mounting interest on the loan presented yet another burden. Since most contributors to the Building Fund still were paying on their pledges, the board decided against holding an all-member drive to replenish that fund. However, the board in 1965 solicited Building Fund contributions from members who had joined the Society since 1961, the year of the building campaign. The goal of this limited drive was set at \$10,000. Only about half the 66 new members contacted made pledges, and the Society received barely a third of the goal. Meanwhile, the board conducted an all-member canvass seeking increases in annual pledges. Finance Committee members informed the membership of the Society's financial straits through platform talks and announcements in the bulletin; members were asked to pledge about 2 percent of their gross annual income. The increases received were not sufficient to lighten the weight of the mortgage. Once again, an angel came to the rescue. In 1966, member Lina Baier bequeathed to the Society securities worth about \$90,000. In January 1967, the board voted to liquidate most of the gift, bringing the mortgage down to \$44,000 and substantially easing interest payments.

The move to Ladue brought the meeting house closer to most Society members, but it did not have a marked effect on membership. The Sunday School, on the other hand, did receive the boost that relocation advocates had predicted: After the move, enrollment shot to nearly two hundred, and weekly attendance consistently exceeded one hundred. Despite the cost-cutting modifications, the Ladue meeting house has served well the Society's needs. Classrooms double as conference rooms, forcing children to contend with coffee cups and grown-ups with crayon fragments, and alternate use of the meeting hall for Sunday School assemblies and adult socials causes minor inconveniences, but the cramped conditions that strained nerves at Sheldon Memorial were indeed eliminated. The only substantial alterations of the building have been lighting improvements, the addition of acoustical partitions, and modifications intended to make entrances, restrooms, and water fountains accessible to the handicapped. As membership rose and Society activities increased in the late eighties, the community considered building an annex similar to the east wing envisioned in the initial building plans. Twice—in 1968 and 1976—the board entertained motions to buy the house and lot adjoining the Society's tract on the east. Proposed uses for the property included an Institute for Ethical Studies, which would offer graduate degrees, and an Ethical Culture School similar to that

affiliated with the New York Society. An ad hoc committee formed in 1976 concluded that the neighboring residence was not suitable for the proposed institutions, nor could the Society afford such undertakings; the board agreed.

Likewise, the notion of sponsoring a satellite branch has reemerged from time to time. In 1982, Leader John Hoad reported that a group he had met in Carbondale, Illinois, might serve as the nucleus of an affiliate society; at the Society's centennial banquet in 1986, he floated a dream of establishing new societies in Kansas City, outstate Missouri, and other Midwestern metropolises. In 1983, AEU President Fred Arden challenged the community to follow the lead of the Washington Society, which had sponsored the Northern Virginia Society. Limited financial and leadership resources have kept these dreams from becoming goals.

The Society's policies regarding rental of the building have changed just a bit less frequently than the make-up of the board. In 1959, the board adopted a policy drafted by Fred Hammer. That policy divided rental applicants into three categories: parties devoted to private aims; parties devoted to an individual good (such as a piano recital) but whose overarching aim is the furtherance of the arts, ethical education, or cultural welfare; and parties devoted to the public good. Under the policy, all purely self-serving applicants were denied use of the building, and parties falling into the second category were required to pay rental fees commensurate with those charged by private facilities. Organizations devoted to public welfare were asked to contribute as much as they were able. The Society, acting as co-sponsor of the event, made up the difference in its out-of-pocket costs from rental proceeds; when the fund ran dry, all requests for co-sponsorship were denied until it was replenished. The policy was followed during the last years at Sheldon Memorial, but exceptions became more frequent after the move to Ladue. Outstanding civic organizations such as the United Nations Association and the American Civil Liberties Union were sometimes permitted to use the building free or at cost, but trustees wrangled over granting such privileges to other groups. In the sixties, the policy again became a contest of wills and votes. In 1973, the Institutional Management Subcommittee of the Growth and Development Committee drafted new guidelines based on the rental procedures of nearby conference facilities. According to that policy, there would be no rental charge when the Society chose to co-sponsor an event, and no deviation from the fee scale when it chose not to. The board adopted a softened variant of the proposal: Charges for jointly sponsored events would be reduced by the amount the Society chose to contribute to the outside organization, and the board would retain its discretion to alter the fee scale in other cases. In effect, the board opted to continue without a firm policy.

16: STEADY AS SHE GOES

In the final third of its first century, the Ethical Society acquired a kind of easygoing nobility. That the community had outlived all of its founding members proved that it was indeed an institution. Gone were the anxious warnings of the community's impending dissolution, the panicky fund drives, the hand-wringing overhead counts. Like a three- or four-generation St. Louis family, the community had roots; it was here to stay. The dispute over the relocation to the county loomed large at the time, but in the context of the Society's long-term stability it was no more disruptive than a hard-fought presidential election. Concerns over money and membership continued but took on a more tranquil air. Problems seemed more manageable; challenges more welcome. The ship may rock, but it wouldn't sink.

Neither fervor nor neglect has had a pronounced effect on membership levels. Since 1950, the Society has had roughly 450 to 500 adult members, plus a few dozen junior and associate members. The high-water mark of 599 in 1955 was deceptive in that it included many lapsed members whose names had yet to be stricken from the rolls. Subsequent variations are too small to be correlated with membership drives or changes in site, programming, and leadership. As a result, an assumption has arisen that recruitment efforts serve to maintain the status quo—a humble but not inconsequential purpose.

Concerted membership drives have been conducted periodically for decades. In recruitment campaigns in the fifties and sixties, membership prospects—whose names were submitted to the Membership Committee by longstanding members—were sent literature and invitations to apply for membership. Since the mid-sixties, "Prospects Days" or "Bring-A-Friend" Sundays have featured introductory addresses on Ethical Culture; ushers and Membership Committee members make a special effort to greet strangers, solicit questions, and distribute informational pamphlets. In preparation for one such Sunday in 1984, Leader John Hoad, at the urging of the Membership Committee, conducted a workshop on "How to Explain Who We Are" to help members introduce friends and visitors to the Society's philosophy. Since the establishment of First Sunday Luncheons in the 1980s, Bring-A-Friend Sundays have been scheduled to coincide with luncheons to facilitate interaction with visitors.

In general, though, the highly charged membership drives of years past have given way to ongoing recruitment and integration procedures. Statements of the Society's purpose are included in newsletters and other literature, and platform presidents offer visitors words of welcome and brief introductions to the movement. Persistent prompting by leaders, presidents, and Membership Committee chairs has made members aware of the need to welcome visitors, counteracting the undeserved public image of the Society as an elitist intellectual clique. Open seminars, eminent platform speakers, and public events such as concerts, rallies, and award ceremonies often give members of the community their first exposure to the Society.

Probably the most consistent and effective method of recruiting members has been the Newcomers Open House, a meeting held in a private office after the platform service in which two or more Society members respond to the inquiries of visitors. Begun in the early seventies by members who had participated in similar programs in Eastern societies, the meetings have proved more potent than flashy recruitment campaigns; the personal contact and genteel tone of the Open House have helped countless visitors overcome misgivings about this oddly defined community. With the rising consciousness about fiscal responsibility in the late seventies and into the eighties, directors of Open House meetings have learned to speak directly of pledging as an integral aspect of membership, helping to forestall cavalier attitudes among new members. Visitors who want more information on the Society and Ethical Culture commonly attend orientation meetings conducted by leaders. Those who choose to apply for membership then arrange to meet privately with a leader to discuss their commitment at greater depth. Throughout the induction process, members and leaders are scrupulously respectful of visitors' hesitation; far from being pressured to join, visitors are urged to participate in the life of the Society until they feel at home before making a formal commitment.

The termination of memberships has become every bit as respectful as recruitment. While financial support is a requirement of every member who is able to pay, the obligation is readily waived for members who remain committed to the Society but lack the means to contribute. Members who both cease to fulfill pledges and stop attending Society functions for six months or a year are contacted by members of the Membership Committee. Members who wish to retain an affiliation with the Society but do not actively participate in its life are invited to become associate members, a status that does not require the Society to cover costly AEU membership dues; only those members who cannot be found or who fail to respond to queries are involuntarily dropped from membership.

The Society has become more adept at integrating new members. Beyond receiving packets of detailed information on the Society, new members are assigned mentors—members of the Membership Committee—to answer questions, provide introductions, and encourage participation in Society groups and activities. To remind longstanding members to attend to new arrivals, bright ribbons are attached to members' name tags during their first six months in the Society. In addition, new members are treated as guests of honor at the potluck dinners held on Good Cheer evening and the evening of the annual meeting; mentors introduce the members to the community with brief biographies.

Maintaining lines of communication among members has become routine. The Ethical Weekly, under a succession of editors, serves as a community bulletin board; a typical edition includes introductions to speakers, synopses of addresses, messages from the Society's lay and professional leaders, tidbits on members' vicissitudes, and a calendar of events. Since 1983, an Information Table staffed during coffee hours provides details on Society activities and opportunities to sign up for volunteer services and participation in study groups and other programs. The need for information regarding members' interests and volunteering proclivities has spawned several efforts to build up thorough and accessible membership files. First begun by the Advisory and Planning Council in the early fifties, card files grew to include information on members' families, occupations, hobbies, and organizational skills. The computerization of the 1980s prompted development of comprehensive files, including pledging histories, which are available to Society leaders.

Because the Society's professional leaders inevitably are unable to meet all the pastoral needs of hundreds of members, lay committees have arisen from time to time to provide assistance to sick, elderly, and handicapped members. Women's groups in their various manifestations have taken the lead in this area. The most focused effort was begun in 1972 by Renate Vambéry, a trustee and active member of the Tuesday Women's Association. Members of that group, known as the Committee of Concern, made visits and telephone calls to shut-ins and engineered transportation for elderly members who were otherwise unable to attend platform meetings and social gatherings. A representative of the committee served on the board of the Healing Community, a local interdenominational organization devoted to raising the responsiveness of religious communities to the needs of the elderly and handicapped. The committee's activities diminished in the mid-eighties when many of its core members grew frail themselves, but it was rejuvenated as a coalition of all the Society's subordinate groups; representatives of

the Ethical Singles, the Doubles, and the Tuesday Women's Association coordinate the efforts of group members to respond to needs in the community at large.

Looking Inward

The Ethical Society, composed as it is of reflective individuals, has strenuously examined itself over the years. Dissatisfaction with the Society's sense of identity and provision of services spurs cycle after cycle of efforts to refocus the community's purpose. Though the 1960s are popularly deemed the dawning of the soul-searching discussion group, the Society conducted wide-ranging, freewheeling deliberations on its identity even in the fifties. The Growth and Development Committee of that decade concentrated the restlessness and ambition of the community, precipitating the relocation to the county meeting house. In the sixties, discussion groups were held on long-range planning, analysis of Society programs and sub-organizations, social action and social service, and the community's relations with other societies and the AEU. Beginning in 1970, a Growth and Development Committee led by past president Ludwig "Fred" Hammer examined the Society's goals and effectiveness; guided by problem-solving techniques distilled by the humanistic psychology movement, the committee's task forces developed plans for upgrading the Society's educational programs, nurturance of community spirit and the inner life, institutional health, and participation in the community and global affairs.

The granddaddy of soul-searching programs was Project Emerge, conducted in the 1985-86 season. The project, a nationwide effort of the AEU, sought to gather up whatever hopes and dreams might "emerge" from its member societies as a prelude to reorganization of the national body. The St. Louis program, by far the most intensive in the movement, included a series of facilitated discussions on values, beliefs, frustrations, and goals. Facilitators underwent extensive training in group dynamics, and scores of Society members, representing all ages and a wide span of opinion, took part in the Sunday afternoon discussions. Latter discussions generated concrete proposals for improvements at the local and national levels. Locally, broad support emerged for a strengthening of the Society's educational programs for all ages; the consensus soon led to the hiring of a program director to develop and oversee seminars on philosophy, ethics, and psychology. Other top goals voiced by program participants included the heightening of community ties, promotion of Ethical Culture through public education, encouragement of social action, and development of systems to provide support for members suffering emotional distress. As for the national movement, St. Louisans designed the proposal for regionalizing AEU administration that was adopted by delegates to the 1986 assembly.

A Rhythmic Stride

The maturation of the Ethical Society is evident in its waning reliance on strong personalities. The long-term presidencies of earlier eras—Robert Moore served for 30 years, and Martha Fischel and Alexander S. Langsdorf each served for seven—gave way to a rhythmic turnover analogous to that of government officeholders in the United States. By the 1980s, a three-year term had become the norm. Frederic Arnstein served as board president from 1949-52, the period during which J. Hutton Hynd retired from leadership and James F. Hornback came on board. R. Walston Chubb, who had served on the board continuously since 1929, was elected president in 1952 and re-elected in 1953. When Chubb declined renomination in 1954, he was succeeded by Carroll E. Nelson, who was re-elected in 1955 and 1956. Ludwig "Fred" Hammer served as president from 1957-60 and from 1961-64; Nelson served in the interim year of 1960-61. Thor Anderson was president from 1964-1967; Charles "Bud" Blake, 1967-69; David B. Carpenter, 1969-71; Robin Jones, the Society's first woman president since Martha Fischel, 1971-74; James Comfort, 1974 until his death in December 1975; Michael Wertman, 1975-1977; L. Dean Smith, 1977-80; Ted Curtis, 1981-83; Dennis Owsley, 1983-86; and Richard Booton, 1986-89. Booton was succeeded by Nick Pacino.

A series of policy changes in recent history has made the Board of Trustees more responsive to the membership. As in years past, the Nominating Committee essentially appointed trustees throughout the 1950s and sixties: The committee customarily nominated exactly as many candidates as there were openings, ensuring that all nominees would be elected by the membership. The custom was perpetuated out of deference to sensitivities; nominees agree to take on weighty responsibilities and time-consuming volunteer commitments, and committee members long believed that anyone willing to accept such a job should get it. However, the practice unquestionably deprived the membership of real choice. The problem was rectified by a 1973 by-law amendment stipulating that additional nominations may be made by written petitions signed by five active members of the Society and filed at least three weeks before the annual meeting. Members have used the petition process, and member-nominated candidates have at times been elected over committee-nominated candidates. In addition, a policy adopted in 1976 requires that the

Nominating Committee include representatives of each of the Society's standing committees and social organizations in addition to incumbent trustees. As a further democratic safeguard, the board in 1977 passed a resolution forbidding members of the Nominating Committee to nominate immediate relatives; any committee member whose relative is nominated is required to resign from the committee. Yet another by-law amendment made the one-year board terms—which had been filled by presidential appointment since 1950 — elective positions. At each annual meeting, the membership now elects four trustees to three-year terms and six to one-year terms.

This outbreak of democracy spawned some skittishness on the board. Several times in the 1970s, trustees who objected to the election of relative newcomers proposed prerequisites for board service, such as a minimum length of membership in the Society and a history of fulfilling pledges. One such proposal—a by-law amendment that would have required three years of membership and the fulfillment of a pledge over the previous 12 months—was spurned by the membership at the 1971 annual meeting. The reigning consensus was that knowledge of Ethical Culture and commitment to service should be the only firm requirements for board service. Similarly, proposals to make all board terms two years and to limit the number of successive terms a trustee may serve have surfaced repeatedly but have not been adopted.

Because the board tends to be consumed by problem-solving and financial decisions, trustees often have voiced the need for a corollary body to discuss philosophical concerns and generate planning proposals. Although the Society's by-laws require the maintenance of an Advisory and Planning Council to fulfill this role, the body has arisen and vanished according to vagaries of enthusiasm and workloads. As originally conceived, the council comprised the chairs of all standing committees; however, because those leaders usually are trustees, a council so configured lacked perspectives not already represented on the board. A by-law amendment adopted in 1954 broadened the makeup of the council to include representatives appointed by each of the Society's subgroups. When active, the Advisory and Planning Council examines the activities of the Society and proposes changes and innovations; it advises the president, informs trustees of unmet needs, facilitates communication among Society groups, and assists in the scheduling of events. Under some presidents, the executive committee has subsumed the role of the council. At other times, the role has been filled by such temporary bodies as the Growth and Development Committee of the 1950s and the Long-Range Planning Committee of the 1980s.

Various administrations have used other means of keeping tabs on Society activities. Officers and other trustees often are made responsible for assisting and reporting on committees that fall under such general categories as finance, social action, education, administration, and outreach. Under some presidents, these coordinators have formed steering committees that plan monthly agendas for the board. In addition, ad hoc committees have been charged with examining the board's responsibilities in light of the Society's constitution, by-laws, and charter. Seminars on law, parliamentary procedure, problem-solving, financial management, and management of volunteers also have been used to keep trustees abreast of their duties.

The One and the Many

Two complementary drives, the need to belong to a unified family and the desire for companions who share one's state in life, have spawned the warp and weft of the Society's social life. In addition to platform services, all-Society social events foster a sense of connection to a spiritual family. At the same time, many Society members form intimate bonds in groups for women, young people, singles, and couples, and the security fostered by those associations strengthens each member's identification with the community as a whole.

All-Society social events have changed with the times, becoming less formal and more egalitarian. The elaborate, labor-intensive Fellowship Dinners begun in 1941 put an excessive strain on the Women's Auxiliary. After the Auxiliary told the board in 1957 that it could no longer carry on the tradition without assistance, the board announced that the monthly affairs would stop unless the Society's men shared in the workload. When the men responded with something less than zest, the Auxiliary lightened its own burden by reducing the frequency of the dinners; it also declared some of the events potlucks, a plebeian tradition so new to the Society that on one occasion when members were asked to bring a covered dish, one member brought just that—an empty covered dish. As more women entered the workplace and lives became generally more hectic, even potluck dinners were limited to the annual membership meeting and Good Cheer holiday party. Pancake breakfasts and post-platform luncheons, hosted by Society subgroups, emerged in the late sixties as a more workable alternative to the Fellowship Dinners. As in other organizations, catering became the norm for award banquets and the kick-off dinner of the annual fund drive.

The women of the Society also had to fight to make the annual bazaar a more equitable undertaking. In 1953, after decades of bearing sole responsibility for the event, members of the Women's Auxiliary complained to the board, delicately stating that they "seriously questioned whether their time and effort was not being misused." (Minutes of meeting of December 7, 1953) The Auxiliary suggested that the Society increase its fund-raising through direct appeals, allowing it to scale down the bazaar and treat it primarily as a social event. On the recommendation of the Advisory and Planning Council, the board instead appointed a bazaar chairman to divide responsibility for the event among various Society groups, relieving the Auxiliary of an unfair burden. The new division of labor gave all Society members an opportunity to participate. While the Auxiliary (and its successor, the Tuesday Women's Association) remained the principal organizer of the event, assistance from singles and couples clubs and the elimination of other demands—particularly the formal all-Society monthly dinners—has made the bazaar more manageable. Throughout the year, and especially in the fall months preceding the event, women's club members prepare handcrafts, greeting cards, recipe books, baked goods, and jellies and preserves for sale at the event. Volunteers gather additional merchandise—books, magazines, sheet music, records, pottery, bric-a-brac, tools, linens, housewares, games and toys, and plants and seedlings—and decorate the hall, serve meals, and construct and staff booths with such mall-ish names as Noel Notes, Nostalgia Inc., Junktiques, Mulch Ado About Plants, and Jar 'n' Crock. The Society's principal fund-raising event, the bazaar netted about a thousand dollars a year in the fifties; since the move to the Ladue meeting house, increased bargain-hunting traffic has raised that figure as high as \$5,000. Since 1974, the TWA has donated three-fourths of the proceeds to the Society and placed the remainder in a Social Causes Fund for distribution to charities.

A variation on the bazaar was launched in 1970 with the Human-Interest Fair, which showcased the avocations of Society members. In addition to offering handiworks for sale, participants exhibited personal treasures and gave lessons in such pastimes as magic, folk dancing, model construction, and the making of fishing lures. Similar fairs, titled "Expressions" and "Tapestry of Talents," were held in 1972 and 1979, respectively. Members also have had the opportunity to share their talents via the art exhibits held throughout the season in the foyer and upper halls of the Ladue meeting house; while the first exhibits in the late sixties and early seventies were limited to members, non-member artists have since been permitted to exhibit their work at the building upon the recommendation of Society artists.

Small-scale dinners in the homes of members have provided opportunities for intimate interaction among members. In the late fifties, groups drawn together by such special interests as photography and hi-fi music held private dinners at the homes of participants. The Ethicurean program, begun by Garnet Blake in 1963, consists of small supper parties—about eight guests per gathering—at the homes of members. By custom, the host provides beverages and guests bring salads, main dishes, and desserts. By shuffling the guest list throughout the season, the program gives each participant a chance to converse with a range of fellow members—young and old, singles and couples. The program has become an ideal way to introduce newcomers and new members to the community.

Since the early fifties, Fellowship Committees have formed to organize a variety of other all-Society events, including Good Cheer, the annual picnic, square dances, concerts, work auctions, card parties, house and garden shows, "mini-bazaars," talent shows, family weekends at an Ozark resort, and excursions to museums and performing arts events. Other customs have arisen through the initiative of a few individuals. Friendship Nights, featuring card and board games, music, films, and refreshments, were held monthly in the 1979-80 season; the following year, similar events were held in conjunction with Sunday luncheons. Reflective gatherings called Sunrise Sharing and Together at Twilight were organized in the eighties. And beginning in 1985, the Ethical Singles have sponsored a lavish, all-Society Thanksgiving dinner that has drawn up to 70 members and friends, including whole families.

Since 1984, the biggest and most cherished all-Society event has been the annual fall gathering. Originally called a retreat—a name that offended the non-religious sensibilities of some members—the gathering is held in September to solidify fellow-feeling at the start of the season. Held most often at Camp Wyman, a Kiwanis property near Eureka, the gathering includes workshops and children's classes as well as swimming, hayrides, campfires, square dancing, and other recreational activities. By sharing meals and living quarters, participants make new friends and get to know longtime acquaintances even better. Workshops are led by Society members and Ethical leaders on such wide-ranging topics as journal-keeping, assertiveness, foreign affairs, discovering nature, and confronting ethical dilemmas. The weekend is capped with a closing ceremony featuring poetry, drama, song, and talks by the leaders. More than 150 members commonly attend at least one day of the gathering.

Social Tapestry

The split and reunification of the Society's women's club in the thirties and forties was repeated in the sixties and seventies. While members of the Women's Auxiliary continued to meet for two decades after the group's 1949 reunification, younger women began to meet separately in the fifties and sixties. The new group, which gathered on Tuesday afternoons for lunch and educational programs, called itself the Tuesday Women's Association. The Women's Auxiliary, composed of the youngsters of yesteryear, dissolved in 1970; its remaining members joined the TWA. The enlarged group since has gathered faithfully on Tuesdays for lunch and talks on current affairs, the arts, and science; in the 1983-84 season, for example, the club heard a talk by Ray Hartmann, editor of *The Riverfront Times*, on honesty and fairness in the media; took part in a discussion of the right to die without extraordinary medical intervention, led by Leader John Hoad and member Margaret Ranford; and hosted a talk on "The Inalienable Rights of Children" by a panel comprising two social workers and a teacher of early-childhood education. Afterward, members stay to chat, play cards, and work on craft projects. The club also conducts outings such as riverboat excursions and trips to museums. Since the mid-eighties, a contingent of men has gathered at the same time. In addition to sponsoring fund-raisers such as bazaars and card parties, the TWA has taken up social and political action, circulating petitions and writing letters in support of legislation, surveying members on their ethical convictions, and supporting charities and activist organizations with a portion of the proceeds from fund-raisers. Causes the group has championed include abortion rights, elimination of the Missouri tax on food and medicine, and legislative efforts to prevent the use of state funds for private education. Like the Women's Auxiliary of the Sheldon Memorial days, the TWA also helps to maintain the beauty of the building and surrounding landscape.

The International Relations Group, essentially a subgroup of the women's club since the mid-forties, formalized its lecture series in later years. The TWA and the American Association of University Women have jointly sponsored an International Relations Lecture Series each year from January to April. Guest speakers—mostly university professors—give overviews on political and economic change around the world and invite questions and discussion. The chair of each four-lecture series (the responsibility alternates between the two sponsoring organizations) selects experts on current controversies or nations that are undergoing rapid change. The 1980 series, for example, featured Barry Ames, assistant professor of political science at Washington University, who spoke on "Contemporary Politics of Latin America and the Implications for the U.S."; Doris Crozier, associate professor of Anthropology at Lindenwood College, on "Families Facing Change"; Robert Clayton Mudd, a career diplomat who later served as diplomat-in-residence at Washington University, on "Iran in Crisis"; and Anna F. Petersen, executive director of International Institute of Metropolitan St. Louis, on "A Human Tragedy: The Agony of Four Million Homeless Refugees Throughout the World."

The Society's couples clubs have formed anew with each generation. The Couples Club that formed in the forties was the principal social arm of the Society; in addition to meeting about once a month for dinners at the homes of its members, the club hosted gatherings to entertain visiting leaders and launch special projects. In 1953 the Advisory and Planning Council, observing that the club was composed almost entirely of over-40 members, encouraged the creation of a similar club for younger members. The Couples Club thereupon changed its name to the Sheldon Fellowship, and a Young Couples Club was formed for couples in the 20-to-40 range. The Sheldon Fellowship, having lost its large and democratic following, and having acquired a name that confused it with the old meeting house, essentially dissolved a year or two after the Society moved to Ladue, though the circle of friends at its core continued to meet for private dinners. Members of the "young" group, meanwhile, resisted departure as they entered their 40s and 50s, electing instead to drop the modifier from the group's name. Rather than contracting with age, this group expanded; under the name Couples and Singles, it continued to host educational and social gatherings throughout the eighties. In the late sixties, the next generation formed a group called Couples Too; at the outset, it too limited membership to people in their 20s and 30s. Like previous clubs, Couples Too held dinner meetings which featured talks by visiting speakers, films, and wide-ranging discussions, but it also arranged such events as pool parties and folk-dancing lessons. And like its immediate predecessor, the group opened its membership to unmarried Society members; accordingly, the group in 1980 changed its name to People Too. The next twenty- to thirtysomething group, formed at the start of the 1986-87 season, adopted the name Doubles; reflecting its inclusion of unmarried contemporaries and its sponsorship of family activities, it quickly added the alias of Doubles Plus or Minus. Yet another social group, Middlence, was formed in 1980 for Society members ranging in age from 40 to 65; it has met about once a month for dances, lectures, and potluck dinners.

In the 1980s, the singles group emerged as the Society's largest and most active social organization. Formed under the name Singletons in the 1950s, the group initially consisted of a handful of Society members, mostly young people who had never been married. The Singletons held parties at members' homes and made occasional outings to concerts, plays, and movies. Beginning in the early seventies the group, now known simply as the Ethical Singles,

teamed up with a Unitarian singles group, the Singletarians, to hold monthly dances at the Ladue meeting house and Unitarian church halls. The cooperative arrangement dissolved around the late seventies, by which time the Ethical Society contingent had begun to swell with divorced members. Increasingly, the group included family activities—such as float trips and cookouts—on its calendar to accommodate the children of single parents. In the 1983-84 season, under the chairmanship of Ted Curtis, the Ethical Singles went into high gear; by the end of that season, the group commonly held gatherings every Friday and Saturday night, and often on Sunday afternoons as well. That extensive planning remained the norm throughout the decade. The group has conscientiously interspersed events for singles only—parties, ethnic dinners, concerts, discussion groups—with family activities such as hiking, camping, sledding, and bicycling. The group also sponsors several all-Society social events such as square dances, apple-picking excursions, and the annual Thanksgiving dinner. The Ethical Singles have taken on a vital role in the community. Though not a therapy group, it has provided support and companionship for divorced and never-married people, many of whom had found it difficult to forge friendships in a “couples’ world.” Like the Young People’s Association of a previous era, it has attracted many newcomers to the Society, and success in organizing singles activities often has inspired members of the group to take on more responsibility within the larger Society.

In the 1950s, the Adult Discussion Group continued to meet in the library of Sheldon Memorial before platform services to hear informal talks and discuss current issues. The group publicized its meeting topics, along with announcements of platform addresses, in newspaper calendar listings and flyers posted at libraries. The group’s continuity was disrupted by scheduling changes put into effect during the County Experiment of 1956-58. Since leaders and guest speakers appeared at both the county and city locations, the county group met at 9:30 a.m. to give speakers time to drive to Sheldon Memorial by 11 o’clock. The earlier meeting time made a pre-platform meeting in the county unfeasible, and too few members attended the city venue to make a discussion group there viable. In the 1957-58 season, the second of the County Experiment, a discussion group called the Ethical Issues Committee began meeting at the homes of members once a week on a weeknight; because of space limitations, the meetings were limited to about 15 participants. The Sunday discussion group was revived in the 1958-59 season, after the County Experiment had ended. Its new leader, Beatrice Kornblum, renamed the group the Ethical Forum in 1959, signifying a shift toward political controversies. Kornblum, a world traveler and voracious reader, was a skillful discussion facilitator. The Forum included discussions of such social issues as population growth, genetic engineering, racism, sexual inequities, and capital punishment, and such family matters as raising adolescents and coping with divorce; for variety, some meetings were devoted to religion, popular culture, and the arts.

The Ethical Issues Committee and Ethical Forum functioned concurrently until their merger in 1964 as the Public Affairs Committee. The Sunday discussion group, still called the Ethical Forum, continued to meet under the auspices of the Public Affairs Committee, which also served as the umbrella organization for the Society’s social action projects. As an experiment by the board to increase participation, the Ethical Forum in 1975 began meeting after the platform meeting until about 1:30 p.m. Kornblum, displeased with the board’s decision, resigned as moderator after 17 years. Under Kornblum’s successors, the group turned from ethical and philosophical issues to topics of general interest—a shift which, along with the scheduling change, diminished participation. In 1976, a Parents Association formed, meeting during the time slot vacated by the Forum. This group, like the Adult Discussion Group of the forties and early fifties, gave parents of Sunday School children an opportunity to socialize and discuss child-rearing issues before the platform meeting; it also supported Sunday School activities by providing volunteer assistance and raising funds for special projects and purchases. The increasing popularity of the Parents Association further siphoned participation in the Ethical Forum, and the latter disbanded midway into the 1976-77 season. The Parents Association, meanwhile, gradually expanded its meeting topics to include political and health matters; as the group came to include Society members who did not have children in the Sunday School, it was renamed the Adult Association.

Waves of Camaraderie

Ethical Society youth groups have had a desultory history, gaining strength and momentum under consistent leadership only to wane as members head off for college and leaders move on to other interests. Until the 1980s, the Sunday School curriculums extended only through the eighth or ninth grade, after which graduates would join informal post-graduate study and discussion groups. In the 1950s, high school students in grades ten through twelve formed youth groups under the auspices of the Ethical Education Committee. Led by adult Society members such as Ludwig “Fred” Hammer, Kenneth Maag, and William Wright, these groups met on Sunday mornings for discussions, talks by guest speakers, and recreational activities. Leaders-in-Training David Norton, Norman Fleishman, and John Moore assumed leadership of the group during their tenures at the Society in the late fifties and early- to mid-sixties.

In the mid-sixties, the Youth Group began meeting on alternate Friday nights for social gatherings, in addition to the Sunday morning discussion meetings. In seasons when the group was especially cohesive, it moved beyond its meeting rooms to go on outings and perform service projects: In 1960 its members cleared brush from the newly acquired site of the Ladue meeting house, and in 1965 they cleared a nature trail in the woods behind the building; the group also conducted fund-raisers such as Sunday luncheons, bake sales, car washes, square dances, and plays and variety shows. In 1960 and 1964, representatives of the group attended meetings of the AEU's National Youth Conference at the New York Society and Hudson Guild. So appealing were the group's activities that a corollary Junior High Youth Group was formed in 1965 for eighth- and ninth-grade Sunday School students.

The Youth Group lagged in the late sixties and early seventies. Lacking in structure and educational value, the program was a weak draw. In 1975 the board, acting on a proposal by trustee David Jones, agreed to fund professional leadership to get the program on track. Jones and Leader James F. Hornback sought advice from the First Congregational Church of Webster Groves, which had a thriving youth group led by a youth minister and several seminarians. The board established a committee to organize and supervise a Youth Outreach Program and allocated \$3,600 per year for three years to fund the experiment.

Beginning in the summer of 1975, the Youth Group was led by John Merrill, an Eden Theological Seminary student, as part of his required field experience. Merrill, a veteran of the Webster Groves program, quickly won the hearts of the 15 or so young people in the nucleus of the group, leading remarkably intimate discussions of adolescent concerns and making himself available as an adult confidant. The group met on Sunday mornings and again on Sunday evenings in the Youth Room, a Sunday School classroom dedicated to the group's use and outfitted by the group with homey furnishings. It was on Merrill's initiative that the group began its long-running custom of holding weekend youth retreats — at Camp Wyman or the Ozark cabins of Society members—several times each season. In April 1976, using funds they had raised by sponsoring a coffee house at the Society's meeting house, eight of the group's members spent their spring break painting houses and doing carpentry work in Homestown, an impoverished community in the Missouri Bootheel. The project was supported by the Delmo Housing Corp., a New Madrid-based organization dedicated to improving the condition of low-cost housing in the region.

Merrill was succeeded in the 1976-77 season by Jon Knight, also an Eden seminarian. Under Knight's leadership, average attendance at Youth Group meetings rose to 21. During the season, the group held three retreats and several fund-raising events, and in the spring went on another work trip to the Bootheel, this time to North Wardell. Under Knight's direction, members of the Youth Group bolstered the Junior High Youth Group by conducting workshops in self-awareness and community building and assisting in putting on a "mini-retreat" at the meeting house.

Meanwhile, a College Youth Group, made up largely of "graduates" of the High School Group, began meeting in the spring of 1977. The group's activities were coordinated by Janet Reiders with advice from William F. Symes Jr., another Eden student and former youth leader at First Congregational; LaFaun Hoggard served as board liaison. In the 1977-78 season, the group met on Sunday afternoons to hear talks by guest professionals and engage in encounter sessions. Members also organized camping trips and cultural outings. That same season, Reiders and Hoggard organized a Junior High Youth Group. The college group failed to reorganize at the start of the 1978-79 season.

Knight, the leader of the high school group, was replaced by Symes at the start of the 1977-78 season. Midway through the season, Symes stepped down because of schedule conflicts and was succeeded by John "Skip" Perrey Jr., a young businessman who also had been involved in the First Congregational youth program. As in the first two years of the experiment, the season included three retreats and a volunteer work week.

After building up the program with paid outside leadership for three years, trustees decided to cultivate leadership within the Society. Responsibility for the group was assumed in the 1978-79 season by Society member David F. Behrens, an American University graduate and baker's apprentice who had assisted Perrey as a volunteer the previous year. Responding to the wishes of the young people, Behrens led the group in probing discussions of self-image, family relationships, sexuality, career goals, and adolescent conflicts. The increasingly cohesive group provided solid peer support and encouraged the honest expression of feelings. While some trustees voiced concern that the group had grown excessively serious and psychologically oriented, Behrens' leadership was vindicated by parents who observed that their children had grown more open and thoughtful. On the lighthearted side, the group engaged in such activities as taffy pulls and ice-skating parties.

Behrens was the last paid leader of the group. In the 1979-80 season, three adult members of the Society—Jeff Wides, Renate Vambery, and Bob Camp — volunteered as group sponsors. The group gathered on Sundays, holding

discussion meetings concurrently with the Sunday School or gathering later in the day for outdoor excursions and concerts. While attempting to continue the intimate encounters of the group's previous incarnation, the adult advisers also encouraged the young people to interact with other Society members by volunteering in the Sunday School and meeting jointly with elderly members. Group identity slipped, and by midway through the season some meetings drew only one or two young people. The advisers, using a modest allocation from the board, revived the group by launching a series of appealing activities, including roller skating, canoeing, and group training on a ropes course. Group members were provided with paint and supplies to redecorate their meeting room, an undertaking that strengthened both their identity as a group and their sense of belonging in the Society.

At the start of the next season, the advisers turned the group over to Hoggard and Reiders, veterans of the program. The group got off to a good start with a pizza party and a "Rockin' Chairathon," a 24-hour fund-raiser, in the fall of 1980. The group, which had a nucleus of about 12 members, met weekly on Sunday evening. The social consciousness of the group increased, as evidenced by its assistance to the Society's refugee resettlement program and its tour of the state penitentiary in Jefferson City. The group disbanded at the end of the season when most of its key members graduated from high school.

While that group was waning, however, a younger group was rising. A Junior High Group initiated in the 1980-81 season by members Mark Kaufman and Sue Borstein had coalesced by the time its older counterpart broke up. Gatherings of this group included pool parties, roller-skating parties, canoe trips, board-game competitions, hayrides, and outings to movies. The group also conducted fund-raising projects and met in the Youth Group room for Sunday-afternoon discussions. So, while the Society had no High School Group in the 1981-82 season, graduates of the Junior High Group launched one the following season simply by continuing the tradition they had begun. Though operating with limited funding, Borstein and Kaufman maintained the group for several years, organizing recreational activities and an annual social action project.

After the Ethical Education Committee completed its Sunday School curriculum in the mid-eighties, it turned its attention to a discussion-based curriculum for high school students. That curriculum, L.I.F.T. (Life Issues for Teenagers), has since provided a starting point for discussions on listening and communication skills, values, emotional conflict, family and role issues, relationships, coping skills, making choices, and handling transitions. Within these broad areas, group participants focus on specific issues of concern, including such topics as dating and intimacy, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, handling stress, teen suicide, and career paths. When, in 1984, the Society launched its tradition of holding a weekend gathering at the start of each season, the Youth Group began holding a parallel retreat, an encounter designed to spark the sense of group identity that will deepen throughout the year.

In the fall 1986, a Youth Conference was held at Hudson Guild Farm concurrent with an AEU Religious Education Conference. With support from the Bullock Fund, the AEU, parents, and private donations, 17 members of the Society's Youth Group attended the Youth Conference. The weekend was planned and conducted by a national committee which included Richard McConnell of St. Louis. Youths attending the conference revived the long-dormant national organization and renamed it Y.E.S.—Youth of the Ethical Society. Some of the participants shared their impressions in the Ethical weekly:

My weekend at Hudson Guild was one of the best of my life. It was great to get together with people who share similar beliefs. Everyone was comfortable with each other and let their guard down. As a result we made good friends very quickly.... The weekend made me feel better about myself. I feel very close to the people who were there and I am looking forward to meeting them again.

Charis Simms

On Saturday we had a trust walk which showed how well we had gotten to know people in such a short time. At the rap session, everyone opened up and shared their real thoughts and feelings.

Anne Jamieson

...

My experiences enriched me by expanding my horizons.

I enjoyed the camaraderie, fun and learning experiences. I made friends from all over the eastern U.S. that I hope to keep forever.

Andy Bartell

(Ethical weekly, November 9, 1986)

Under the direction of Kaufman and McConnell, as well as Society members Kyle Dennis, Ann Eggebrecht, and Norm Eisenberg, the Youth Group in the 1980s attained a level of inquiry and interaction reminiscent of R. Walston Chubb's legendary groups. "Our class is coming together well," McConnell reported in 1984. "We are discovering that we like ourselves and each other, that despite different backgrounds, interests, and schools, we have common, fundamental values. Our goals... involve better understanding of ourselves and our religion and preparation for an ethical adulthood." (Ethical weekly, November 4, 1984) The group became such a strong draw for younger students that the EEC, by popular demand, decided in 1985 to hold the Recognition ceremony—the Ethical rite of passage—for students completing the eighth grade, allowing ninth graders to join the youth group and become junior members of the Ethical Society.

17. ROLLING AND COASTING - SUNDAY SCHOOL FROM 1950 TO 1986

The Ethical Sunday School, perhaps because its fate is so closely tied to the attitudes of its many volunteers, has seemed to mirror the times more pointedly than other branches of the Society's life. When, in the Eisenhower era, American life was relatively steady and calm, so was the Sunday School. When dissension wracked the nation in the 1960s and early '70s, the school quaked. And when successive phases of social change led Society members on a journey from introspection to a profound appreciation of global responsibility, they took the children along.

As the leadership of the Society passed from Hynd to Langsdorf to Hornback, Mildred Smith maintained the continuity of the Sunday School's leadership. Smith, after teaching in the school for 11 years, became director in 1951. A full-time public-school teacher, she declined to make the half-time commitment the board had requested. Instead, she concentrated her preparatory work in the summers and delegated lesson planning and other tasks to teachers and departmental heads. She accepted only half the \$1,000 yearly honorarium the board had offered, asking that the remainder be divided among the director of dramatics and the superintendents of the school's nursery, primary, intermediate, and senior departments. Her emphasis on teamwork included bi-monthly staff meetings and regular training seminars. In addition, she and most of the departmental heads attended the annual AEU Religious Education conference at Hudson Guild, New Jersey.

Smith retained the "Living Together" curriculum she had developed with predecessor Florence Armstrong, but annually directed teachers to draw up fresh lesson plans. She also insisted that the children take part in developing the program; at assemblies, the students introduced guest speakers and provided music and readings. Under her guidance, the children also revived the tradition of producing a school newspaper. Smith, who had long directed the school's nursery program and play groups, expanded the children's play facilities; at her urging, and with the support of the JSA Committee and PTA, the board approved the installation of playground equipment at the rear of Sheldon Memorial—the site of the now-dormant garden once cultivated by the Women's Auxiliary.

Smith and her colleagues were on the front line of progressive trends in education. As Smith enunciated in a publicity pamphlet, the program was intended to nurture thoughtful reflection and self-direction:

Sometimes parents and educators, trying to be conscientious, prepare a mold which the child must someday grow to fit. They believe that if the child does as well as an adult as they, his training will have been successful. They teach him by rote and as he grows they force his thinking into a definite preconceived form, crushing originality and condemning deviation. The end result is a carbon copy of the trainer's ideas.

Other more venturesome parents and educators believe that growth implies freedom for the child. Not the freedom of caprice; not the freedom from responsibility; but the kind of freedom that permits sincere questions and honest answers. That is the kind of freedom we attempt to provide for our children at the Ethical Society in the children's assembly each Sunday morning.

We, of the Ethical Society, believe that man has potentialities for good and that with proper training this “good” can be developed to predominate in the character of an individual. We believe people are free to make their own choices. We believe that the values an individual holds high will color all of his behavior and his character. When these values are ethical and socially acceptable the individual has achieved freedom. He behaves in an acceptable manner because he chooses to do so. No amount of policing or use of external authority can make the individual conform who does not wish to act for the common good. Self-direction then is the major goal of the Ethical Society’s children’s program.

To reach this goal it is necessary to help the child “find himself.” Just as a child should discover his abilities and interests as he matures, so he should discover himself ethically, religiously, and socially. Believing this discovery process can only take place in an environment free from prejudice, free from fear, the children’s assembly is set up without dogma, open to everyone of all races and from all cultural backgrounds.

In this setting the child is stimulated to think for himself. He is confronted with social needs and impressed with the importance of the individual in effecting improvement. The emphasis is on behavior here and now. The rewards held out are the present satisfactions to be realized from a positive constructive contribution to society. The immortality of good behavior is the living on of the good behavior in the lives of those that have been touched by it.

This singular purpose of self direction based upon freedom of choice is the goal of ethical teaching for both the home and the Sunday school.

(1949 radio address, “Training the Child for Ethical Living”)

Smith sought to step down from the post at the end of the 1953-54 season but was persuaded to stay on an additional year to help train her successor, Society member William Wright. Wright, a gentle, eager man, held the fort at Sheldon while the experimental county branch of the school was started up in Clayton. After the departure of the music and drama directors, Carl and Lorna Werner, Wright invited talented Society members to help conduct school assemblies and lead the children in singing humanist hymns from “We Sing of Life,” a song book published jointly by the AEU and the Unitarian-Universalist Association. Pursuing an emphasis on aesthetic refinement, he also started a tradition of displaying prints of fine paintings in the Assembly Room. (Interview with Bill Wright Oct. 25, 1986)

At the start of the 1956-57 season, with enrollment decimated by the increasingly popular county program, Wright engineered a shift in the school’s schedule to minimize inconvenience and encourage attendance. The Children’s Activity Program (CAP), previously conducted concurrently with the Society’s 11 a.m. platform meeting, now convened at 9:30, pushing the academic JSA classes into the later time slot; the children’s assembly still was held from 10:30 to 10:50. In implementing the change, Wright noted that families interested in attending only the platform meeting and JSA could shorten their time commitment by about an hour, while families which also wanted to take part in the Adult Discussion Group and CAP would be unaffected. Wright also believed the new schedule would help staff members prevent disruptive noise during the platform meeting, and that the virtual irrelevance of noise prior to that meeting would allow for a more lighthearted activity hour.

Trial Balloons and Brass Tacks

The dual-school program also prompted the JSA Committee to explore ways to unify and expand the community’s sprawling educational activities. In the 1956-57 season, the committee submitted to the board an exhaustive proposal for an ambitious Religious Education Program comprising the Sunday Schools, high school and young adult groups, and adult education. The proposal called for the establishment of a Religious Education Committee that would coordinate educational activities for all ages; its responsibilities would include selecting and supervising staff members, initiating and evaluating study projects, and administering finances. The proposal further called for the addition of both paid and volunteer staff members, including a director of teacher training, librarians, youth group advisers, a festival coordinator, and separate superintendents for the city and county schools. A full-time director of religious education, chosen by the proposed committee, would bear overall responsibility for curriculum planning and teacher supervision. The proposed budget for the program, \$6,000, was double the Sunday School’s current allotment. The Board of Trustees was impressed with the scope of the plan but deemed it impractical in light of “the

realities of finance... and needs of the Society.” The Society had recently hired George von Hilsheimer as a leader-in-training, and the board opted to place him and his successor, David Norton, in charge of the Sunday School program. The JSA Committee did expand the schools’ volunteer staff, but the hiring of an adult education director would not come about for decades.

As noted elsewhere, von Hilsheimer’s tenure with the Society—and service to the Sunday School—was brief and stormy. Norton, who succeeded him at the start of the 1957-58 season, brought a steadying touch to the Sunday School. He did valuable work on the curriculum, recruited and advised youth group leaders, and helped organize religious education conferences, sometimes held jointly with Unitarian instructors. He strengthened the school’s social service customs, organizing toy drives and initiating a program in which students corresponded with—and sent gifts to—children in foreign countries. He also upgraded teacher training, conducting seminars at Sheldon and in teachers’ homes. However, Norton was largely occupied with other leadership duties, and much of the day-to-day work of the program fell to the directors of the city and county schools. Smith, now chairwoman of the JSA Committee, helped guide the directors, each of whom received a \$500 honorarium.

The JSA Committee, which lapsed in the late fifties, was reconstituted in 1963 as the Religious Education Committee. It was charged with overseeing policy making, curriculum development, and communication between the Board of Trustees and the school staff. One of its first actions was to institute the kindergarten, nursery and crib room as a separate organization from the JSA. (The committee, which included such subcommittees as the Curriculum Committee, the Library Committee, the Personnel Evaluation Committee, and the Art Committee, changed its name to Ethical Education Committee in 1968.)

Society member Lee M. Carter succeeded Norton in the 1962-63 season, serving until leader-in-training Norman Fleishman energetically assumed the post the following year. Unlike previous assistant leaders, Fleishman gave the best of his attention to the Sunday School. Virtually dispensing with the remnants of the “Living Together” curriculum, Fleishman encouraged teachers to lead their classes in wide-ranging discussions. Upon Fleishman’s departure at the end of the 1963-64 season, the Religious Education Committee renewed its recommendation that the directorship be developed into a full-time professional position. In accordance with that goal, the honorarium for Fleishman’s successor, Joyce Best, was increased from \$500 to \$750.

What is Man?

Best and Mary Ellen Finch, who took over the directorship in 1967, oversaw the creation of a new curriculum titled, “What is Man?” Unlike previous curricula which presented different themes at each grade level, “What is Man?” comprised six thematic modules which were presented in grades one through seven. The modules, each of which lasted five or six weeks, were taught with increasing sophistication at higher grade levels.

The first unit of study—also titled “What is Man?”—was intended “to help students develop self-awareness and a sense of identity within the species we call man.” (Publicity pamphlet titled, “What is Man?: Sunday School and Youth Program”; published in 1965) Children in lower grades concentrated on mythology and anthropological studies, and older students were introduced to philosophical and religious theses on the human person. The second unit of study, “His Search for Values,” explored “the universal quest of man, whether it be in the search for truth, for beauty, for fame, for technical knowledge, for status, or for love.” (Ibid.) The module encouraged children to consider the needs that drive human behavior and to ethically evaluate the means by which they are fulfilled. The third unit, “His Rights and Responsibilities,” examined issues of freedom, choice, and duty at all levels of human community. “His Service to Others” focused on modes of social service and spotlighted exemplary historical and contemporary public servants. The penultimate module, “His Beliefs,” included instruction in comparative religion; older students were introduced to modern religious critics and trailblazers, including outstanding humanists such as Albert Einstein and Julian Huxley. The final unit, “His Home in Nature,” fostered appreciation of the biological world and challenged students to develop a sense of stewardship. Students in the eighth grade, meanwhile, undertook a more systematic study of western religions, and ninth graders studied the history of humanism from ancient Greece to Ethical Culture.

As always, the program included assemblies that featured singing, talks, demonstrations, films, and dramatic performances growing out of the curriculum material. In addition, children raised funds for UNICEF, the Neighborhood Association, and other local charities. Attendance, which had doubled from 50 to 100 the year the Society relocated in Ladue, remained consistently above 110 in the mid- to late 1960s.

The “What is Man?” curriculum was used until 1971. Because it provided only sketchy guidance, its effectiveness depended largely on the ingenuity and commitment of individual teachers. Those who devised clear lesson plans and obtained supplementary readings and audiovisual resources often provided engaging instruction; those who had less time—and perhaps less imagination — did what they could to nurture restless youngsters.

Freedom and Disarray

Restlessness grew particularly acute among older students, many of whom wearied of the “What is Man?” modules as they progressed through the program. At home and at school, these young people confronted the fiery issues of the time—civil rights, poverty, the Vietnam War, the emerging counterculture—and they frequently expressed a need for more help in approaching the ethics of adulthood. At the annual meeting in May 1970, Religious Education Committee Chairman Herbert Morisse told Society members that “Young people today are much more sophisticated and aware of what is going on in the world than they were just a few years ago, and it has been necessary to keep the Sunday School curriculum flexible—and in some cases, experimental—in an effort to provide a program that will be accepted as ‘relevant,’ ‘challenging,’ and ‘interesting’—to use words accepted as appropriate by the younger generation. This is particularly true in the eighth and ninth grades, and the problem of retaining the interest of these older boys and girls is one we expect to continue, and with which we shall continue to search for a solution.” (Minutes of Annual Meeting, May 1970)

That search led to the most sweeping changes in the Sunday School’s history. In the 1969-70 and 1970-71 seasons, students in grades seven through nine were grouped according to special interests rather than age. These groups, which were formed for about six weeks at a time, discussed current issues, undertook such projects as making films and producing works of art for exhibit in the Assembly Room, and took part in the cleaning and retooling of the Sheldon Memorial for use in social programs. Reflecting an interest in contemporary social issues, the students’ undertakings included a slide show on war, a project to explain the dangers of drug abuse to younger children, a letter-writing campaign against the slaughter of baby seals, a campaign to help prevent lead poisoning in children, and an educational program on overpopulation. Broadly speaking, the school’s educational philosophy had begun to shift from content to process: Rather than instructing the students, teachers facilitated interaction and creativity, trusting that sincere young people would train their own minds and consciences.

At the start of the 1971-72 season, the Sunday School became a full-blown “free school.” Society member Caryl Sundland, a charismatic teacher who had long been a favorite of students, had accepted the directorship on condition that she be given free rein to complete the shift in educational direction. Sundland believed that the children would benefit most from programs they conceived and implemented. Interest groups were formed at all age levels; some met without adult supervision. According to a report to the Board of Trustees from the Ethical Education Committee, the approach had produced “lots of enthusiasm and no boredom.” (Minutes of board meeting, October 1971) The honeymoon was short-lived. Some children, blessed with inventiveness and natural leadership abilities, thrived in the libertarian environment. For most, however, the novelty soon gave way to tedium and dissatisfaction. Furthermore, parents and other previously involved Society members were alienated by the shift, and Sundland had difficulty soliciting sympathetic volunteers. By December 1971, Sundland and the Ethical Education Committee reinstituted graded classes and began devising a more structured course of instruction. The quick reversal, however, upset the children who had savored their freedom and failed to win back distrusting children and parents; by February 1972, attendance had dropped to 35, including about a dozen junior high students who had formed a modestly consistent youth group.

Sarah Schramm, a friend and colleague of Sundland’s in the free school experiment, sought to retain some of the positive elements of the concept when she became director in the 1972-73 season. She told the board of trustees she took “an experiential approach to learning, emphasizing that a student can only learn a lesson well through direct experience. This approach requires the student to take on a lot of responsibility.” (Minutes of meeting, board of trustees, January 1973) Acknowledging that her philosophy put off “people who were accustomed to black-and-white teaching methods,” she moderated the free school approach by reintroducing a somewhat systematic study of comparative religions and ethical humanism. The healing begun, attendance rebounded to a total of about 80.⁶⁰

While the changes in the school had been implemented with relatively little resistance, dissatisfaction among trustees and Society members rose to an uneasy simmer. One-time Sunday School loyalists worried that the school’s

⁶⁰ Sarah Slavin Schramm later wrote a book titled *Plow Women Rather than Reapers: An Intellectual History of Feminism in the United States*. 1979, Scarecrow Press. ISBN-13: 9780810811836d

circuitous path of experimentation had left children feeling detached and cynical. Consequently, the 1972-73 season saw a series of soul-searching meetings by trustees and school authorities. Society leader James F. “Jeff” Hornback decried the progressive methods of Sundland and Schramm and urged the development of a disciplined “parish school” that would forthrightly introduce children to the principles of Ethical Culture. Members of the Ethical Education Committee, which had tended to occupy itself with the details of field trips and special projects, lamented that the committee had given insufficient attention to the overall direction of the program. And the Society’s trustees belatedly chastised themselves for failing to cautiously monitor and guide those entrusted with the school. Joyce Best, who had chaired the Ethical Education Committee for more than a decade, was a calming influence, observing that the program’s shortcomings were an acceptable risk of healthy experimentation; noting that the diversity of the community posed a tough challenge to educators, she assured trustees that the committee would encourage continued innovations.

The disorderly drift of the school led to a renewed call for increased professionalism. The Ethical Education Committee produced an administrative plan that envisioned a half-time Sunday School director and a part-time education director who would oversee both adult and childhood education programs. In preparation for the 1973-74 season, the board agreed to allocate \$2,500 for a Sunday School director who would work at least 20 hours a week; trustees generally approved of the hiring of an overall education director but were not yet prepared to fund the position. Responding to concerns that directors had been given too much authority in recent years, Sunday School liaison Elizabeth Van Patten assured the board that the new director would be held in check while the school was being “put back on its feet.” (Minutes of meeting, board of trustees, March 1973) The Ethical Education Committee was instructed to produce a detailed job description for the half-time position.

An Upward Spiral

The first person to hold the newly expanded post was Elaine McCammon, a Society member educated in psychology. In the two years she served as director, McCammon was credited with re-establishing formal instruction methods, firming up discipline, and rebuilding the Society’s trust in the school. Finding no competent successor who was willing to work half-time, the board in 1975 agreed to have Kent Forrest, a member and past chairman of the Ethical Education Committee, serve as interim director on a voluntary basis in the 1975-76 season; EEC members took on most of the tasks that had been performed by a paid director. The money saved by suspending the half-time position was used to improve the school’s facilities and equipment. Forrest, a high school history and economics teacher, augmented the emerging curriculum with a systematic program of value-clarification exercises designed to spur discussion among children and adults. As he noted in his introduction to a platform address he gave in 1974, he deemed such exercises crucial to the evolution of the ethical personality:

There is little disagreement over Alvin Toffler’s thesis that the rapid acceleration of a technological society has taken its toll in human casualties both physiologically and psychologically. Before the Industrial Revolution, mankind had a cultural and institutional stability which gave his life a minimum of personal value conflict. But now our contemporary society is a Baskin-Robbins store of overchoice. We have a constant struggle among individuals of all ages searching the ruins of our fragmenting social institutions (church, home, and state) in an attempt to understand their own individual relationships to society.

The value conflict dilemma as a cause of deviant or antisocial behavior has just gained awareness among contemporary educators. Presently most major school systems have implemented in their curriculum from grades K through 12 a series of books, pamphlets, simulation games, and media aimed at reducing the cultural value shock and providing a method for those persons with unclear values to find meaning in their lives (value clarification)

(Ethical weekly, Dec. 1, 1974)

In the mid-seventies, the reinvigoration of the Sunday School became an upward spiral: The school’s improved stability helped it win greater parental loyalty, and appreciative parents became increasingly committed to serving the program. In 1976, a Sunday School Parents Association was formed under the leadership of Society member and trustee Dick Booton; the group, which met each Sunday before the platform meeting, discussed ethical education in the home and assisted the school through a variety of volunteer efforts. Monthly “information exchanges”—conferences of parents, teachers, and EEC members—were initiated. With the support of the Parents Association, the Ethical Education Committee and newly appointed Sunday School director Corinne Hammer strengthened

special-interest activities, forming nine-week workshops in such fields as photography, drama, crafts, cooking, science, and sex education. To accommodate these activities, the Sunday School, which for years had met from 10:30 to noon, was expanded to a two-hour format that began at 10 o'clock. During the first hour, students attended formal Sunday School classes and parents who were not teachers gathered for coffee and group discussion; the Ethical Forum, an informal group that had met to hear guest speakers before the platform meeting, was rescheduled to meet after the platform meeting—a change that led to its dissolution, or more accurately, its merger into the Parents Association. During the platform meeting, parent volunteers helped conduct special interest activities.

Gradually, vitality spread throughout the school. The preschool, formerly little more than a play group, adopted a curriculum suitable for children from ages 2 to 5. Students at that level were introduced to a dolphin puppet named DUSO (an acronym for Developing Understanding of Self and Others) with which teachers led seminal discussions that launched storytelling, role-playing, and art projects. Joy McConnell, teacher of the seventh and eighth grade class, and her husband, Richard, organized annual youth retreats to “establish more positive feelings within a group and... provide an opportunity for communication and for activities requiring more than the one hour a week the group would normally have.” (Ethical weekly, Nov. 7, 1976; written by Corinne Hammer) At all levels, students engaged in such service projects as toy drives, friendship visits to care institutions, and contributions to animal welfare organizations. And a children’s choir, under the direction of Society music director Stephen Curtis and his wife, Rhian, regularly practiced and performed in the latter half of the decade. Attendance peaked in 1976-77 with a total enrollment of 162.

As the Society’s expectations sharpened, administrative responsibilities outgrew the capacities of volunteers. Corinne Hammer, who assumed the director’s position in the 1976-77 season, and her successor, Mary Comollo, found that the directorship had become a full-time position with half-time pay — a position that neither they nor any other qualified person wanted to hold for very long. In the 1978-79 season, the Ethical Education Committee developed a broader administrative base that distributed responsibilities more equitably. The EEC, which was directly accountable to the board, oversaw the Parents Association (later renamed the Adult Association), the Curriculum Committee, and an overall administrator of the Sunday School. The administrator, in turn, coordinated activities and the school calendar, assigned work areas, wrote notices for the Ethical weekly, handled finances, disciplined students, and oversaw supervisors. Other responsibilities, such as recruiting, training, and assigning teachers, now were vested in a subordinate Sunday School director, a special interests director, and a pre-school director, all of whom were paid the same salary. Two volunteer positions—festival coordinator and curriculum director—also were more clearly delineated.

At the end of the 1978-79 season, the EEC adjusted this arrangement, dropping the post of administrator and creating co-directors in the pre-school program. In addition, the voluntary position of education director was formalized; this director, who reported to the EEC rather than the Sunday School director, was in charge of curriculum planning and library development.

A Definitive Course of Studies

The position of education director, initially held jointly by Hammer and Sandra Purdy, was created to address the single greatest need of the school—planning. The school had never had a thorough curriculum, complete with lesson plans and supplementary teaching materials. Directors customarily provided suggestions and raw resources, but teachers had to fill in gaping blanks. Because they were volunteers who had limited time to devote to class preparation, lessons often were wanting. Further, the lack of planning resulted in duplication and a haphazard progression from one grade to another, engendering boredom and confusion, and many potential teachers declined to take on the task of weekly lesson planning. The American Ethical Union’s religious education directors provided stimulation and guidance, but the AEU notoriously neglected to produce useable written materials. The EEC had begun to fill this need in the late 70s, and the appointment of the education co-directors brought the effort into sharper focus. The committee established three goals for the curriculum: The unifying theme of the program would be one’s relation to oneself, the community, and the world; comparative religion would be taught at each grade level; and each class period would include a well-defined lesson in ethics.

The curriculum committee marshaled a vast amount of material, calling on present and former teachers to contribute lesson plans and drawing on their evaluations of resources. Further, Society members not otherwise involved in the school were invited to volunteer expertise of all sorts by examining the curriculum and offering supplementary information. Contributions ranged from insights into family dynamics and mysticism to information on environmental science. The full course of study, one of the finest achievements in the Ethical Society’s history, rises

from elementary discussions of childhood conflicts to probing reflections on death, God, self-realization, and moral dilemmas. Hammer, a longtime chair of the EEC, helped set the tone of the product and the school it serves:

Ethics cannot be taught by dogma or by indoctrination. They develop rather as a result of home and Society (big S and little) working together toward a growth which is as slow and sure as the life process itself. Here we seek to provide an environment where we can bring all our resources of imagination, humility, affection, reverence, and humor to the task of helping our children develop a warm acceptance of themselves, of other people and of the ideas we hold in common.

(Ethical weekly, Feb. 6, 1977)

After more than three years of concentrated work, the curriculum was substantially completed in 1980. The course outline for each grade provides detailed lesson plans for each Sunday, including readings, discussion topics, and instructions for using audiovisual materials. While not bound by the curriculum, teachers were gratefully relieved of the burden of planning. Besides being an instant success in the St. Louis Society, the curriculum has been bought—at cost—by Sunday schools in other societies. The curriculum, regularly revised and updated, has remained in use.

A Certain Place

Along with implementing the long-awaited curriculum, the Society came closer to adopting the high degree of professionalism that parents and teachers had urged for so many years. Donna Kniest, who directed the Sunday School from 1978-80, and Joy McConnell, who held the top position from 1980-87, both were career educators who held master's degrees. The position still was not full-time, but the half-time salary was brought up to a professional level in 1985.

Both Kniest and McConnell brought tremendous enthusiasm to their service of the school. Kniest, an expert in communications, strengthened teamwork among teachers through workshops and discussion groups. Cultivating a flair for music, she also was noted for enlivening student assemblies with a batch of humanist songs set to traditional tunes.

McConnell, who later became an Ethical leader, was a master at adapting philosophical principles to the needs of children and young adults. Shortly after becoming director, she stopped teaching so she could concentrate her efforts on teacher supervision and overall guidance of the program. Calling upon her skills as a writer and speaker, she heightened the Society's awareness of the school as an integral part of the community. "The wholeness of our community," she once wrote, "reaches from the tiniest child in the crib room to our most elderly member bound to her home." (Ethical weekly, October 12, 1986)

Her frequent platform announcements and articles in the Ethical weekly kept members abreast of the school's curriculum, staff changes, and need for volunteers. Sunday School students, she maintained, "are *our* children. *All* of ours. They are our future—our responsibility. In a world where they are surrounded by friends who are certain that their beliefs are the only right ones, we need to help our children feel that this is a certain place, a warm, loving, solid community that stands for something, something good and growing. Then when their friends challenge them, they are able to stand their ground, secure and solid in the rightness of their own ongoing spiritual search and self-esteem." (Ibid.)

Besides encouraging the Society to take collective responsibility for its children, McConnell demanded that the students themselves take greater responsibility for their school. Declaring that "the practice of democracy is an act of worship for ethical humanists," she conducted "town meetings" at which the children chose the recipients of their weekly collections, developed slates of special interest activities, and voiced grievances and suggestions.

McConnell, who for years served simultaneously as Sunday School director and the Society's festival coordinator, made seasonal celebrations a lightning rod for intergenerational cooperation. "We are a community for all ages," she observed in a report on one such festival. "Many adults have rediscovered the charm, creativity, and intelligence of our children. Our children have rediscovered that they belong to a group where they are cared for and respected. Most of all, we have had very good times together. We have all made new friends and realized once more the richness of experience and talent among us. We have heard from so many people about the success of these events that we should surely try to do more activities with all ages working together." (Ethical weekly, Dec. 6, 1981)

McConnell, a principal contributor to the curriculum completed in 1980, envisioned the Ethical Sunday School as a vital complement to public education, in which she saw “an ever-increasing pressure... to teach only the basics, the facts, and to avoid all topics which challenge the realm of ethics, values, or decision making.” (Ethical weekly, October 20, 1985) At the Ethical Society, she said, “We wish to nourish not only the intellect but the emotions, the human spirit, creativity, self-esteem, and understanding and compassion for others.” (Ibid.)

In addition to implementing the curriculum spawned in St. Louis, McConnell championed the “Centerquest” curriculum developed in the mid-eighties in concert with other ethical societies. Centerquest, a program adaptable to all age levels, examined models of human experience presented in contemporary, Biblical, and international folk literature. Through the course, she said, “both teachers and students explore the meanings and significance of their own life experiences by reading about and discussing the plots of others’ lives. The recurring pattern of entry, anxiety, hope, despair and transformation becomes a path for the discovery of personal meaning.” (Ethical weekly, February 23, 1986)

In an era marked by parallel strains of religious skepticism and dogmatism, McConnell sought to instill in students a lasting confidence in ethical humanism. She expressed her philosophy in a report on the AEU’s 1984 Religious Education Conference:

For me, apart from the refueling and inspiration I always gain from the conference, its main importance was the focus on increasing our children’s understanding of and identification with Ethical Humanism. Our lack of creed and dogma may lead our children to believe that there is nothing really definite here for them to believe in. What do they answer to the question, “What are you?” when the issue of religion arises among their friends?

Today some children’s answers to these questions are so certain and absolute that other, more dogmatic, faiths may seem very attractive. There are such clear beliefs, definite answers, and strong concepts of right and wrong.

But we as parents and teachers need to give to our children the knowledge that what they are learning here is even stronger. Instead of giving them answers we are helping them to ask questions and then to seek their own answers. Instead of declaring absolute right and wrong, we learn ethics derived from human tradition, and we both model and encourage in our children moral responsibility, social awareness, and human concern. We are open-minded; one is allowed to disagree and explore one’s own truth. Instead of imposing our view on the world, we invite the world into our classroom to see what it can give us.

Ethical Humanism is a religion of process. We are all becoming, growing, learning, sharing. We know that the world is not certain but often ambiguous. We learn to tolerate and even thrive in the presence of these ambiguities. That is true strength and it will not fade in the face of personal disillusionment as faith in absolutes often does. We present models of lives rich in values as catalysts for our children’s self-discovery.

(Ethical weekly, November 11, 1984)

The momentum the school built up in the mid-seventies reached fruition in the eighties when a core of young people raised in the Society formed a tight-knit youth group. This group, which initially comprised youths in grades 10 through 12, attained a level of inquiry and interaction reminiscent of R. Walston Chubb’s legendary groups. Under the direction of such Society members as Kyle Dennis, Ann Eggebrecht, Norm Eisenberg, Mark Kaufman, and Rich McConnell, the group discussed social ethics, sexuality, drug use, careers, and other matters of compelling interest to adolescents. The youths painted and furnished a room set aside for their use. From its headquarters, the emerging club planned service projects, fund-raising activities, and field trips. With Rich McConnell’s encouragement and assistance, the group eventually took to meeting outside the Sunday-morning setting for recreational activities and trips to AEU youth conferences. When the Society in 1984 launched its tradition of gathering for a retreat at the start of each season, the youth group began holding annual retreats of its own. “Our class is coming together well,” McConnell reported in 1984. “We are discovering that we like ourselves and each other, that despite different backgrounds, interests, and schools, we have common, fundamental values. Our goals... involve better understanding of ourselves and our religion and preparation for an ethical adulthood.” (Ethical weekly, November 4, 1984) The group became such a strong draw for younger students that the EEC, by popular demand, decided in 1985

to hold the Recognition ceremony—the Ethical rite of passage—for students completing the eighth grade, allowing ninth graders to join the youth group and become junior members of the Ethical Society.

The reinvigoration of the Sunday School in the 1970s and '80s was a study in commitment. Like children caught in a divorce, students in previous years had been buffeted by changes they could not control or understand. A core group of dedicated teachers and administrators brought order out of chaos, making the school an institution worthy of investment. Commitment bred commitment. Society member Joan Goodman, upon assuming the assistant directorship at the start of the 1985-86 season, reflected on the attitude she perceived among her colleagues:

After experiencing even a few Sundays of the hectic Sunday School pace, I entertain the prospect of working as assistant director with pleasure. The role seems filled with just the right amount of challenge and satisfaction to qualify as one of those jobs about which you can say, “I like what I do!”

I am pleased with the importance the Ethical Society places on its Sunday School and on its younger participants in general. The adults evince a respect and affection when the children visit the platform meeting, such as at the Spring Festival or the balloon launch on opening Sunday. A child's poem is important enough to be recited in the closing ceremony at the retreat or published in the *Ethical Weekly*.

The teachers are as professional in their seriousness toward their volunteer commitment as I've seen in career teachers in my eighteen years in the profession. They arrive early to pore over their lesson plans and stay late to prepare for next week's activities. They attend workshops on Saturday mornings or as late as ten o'clock on a weeknight.

I am sure that the parents appreciate the Sunday School, but they would value it even more if they were to observe behind the scenes as I have been able to do in these few weeks. I have seen that the Sunday School is not an offshoot of the Ethical Society; it is an integral part. Its goals and attitudes mirror those of the Ethical Society, making it rewarding for the students, their parents, and for me as a member of the staff.

(Ethical weekly, November 16, 1985)

Hitting the Books

Society members' thirst for knowledge has never been slaked by platform presentations alone. Professional leaders have conducted evening and Saturday courses on philosophy and Ethical Culture, and study groups—formed with or without the assistance of Ethical leaders—have helped members cultivate personal philosophies of life. In recent years, lay members have taken more and more initiative in presenting educational programs, a drive that has culminated in the establishment of an ongoing program of lectures, workshops, and seminars.

Throughout his tenure, Leader James F. Hornback conducted an annual series of orientation classes—usually spanning four to six weeks—in which he introduced new and prospective members to the history and principles of Ethical Culture. In the 1950s and sixties, these courses were the basic educational offering of the Society. As such, they attracted longstanding members as well as newcomers, and so often included discussions of concern to the entire fellowship, such as leadership training and membership growth. In the 1969-70 season, Hornback led a study-discussion group on philosophy; the group, which met monthly on a weeknight, discussed Abraham Edel's “Ethical Judgment” and Bertrand Russell's “History of Western Philosophy.” In 1971 he moderated a panel discussion of B.F. Skinner's “Beyond Freedom and Dignity”; the program, which featured professors of philosophy and psychology from Fontbonne College, St. Louis University, and the University of Missouri-St. Louis, was co-sponsored by the Character Research Association, a St. Louis-based organization directed by Society member Theodore Lentz. After completing his doctoral dissertation on the founding leaders of Ethical Culture, “The Philosophic Sources and Sanctions of the Founders of Ethical Culture,” Hornback shared the fruits of his research in a five-session series of classes in the spring of 1983.

Leader John Hoad, after his arrival in 1980, shared responsibility for conducting orientation sessions. In addition to tracing the evolution of Ethical Culture from its origins in liberal Judaism and Christianity through the “classical” Adlerian period and the shift to humanism, he has organized seminars on the psychology of ethics and humanism in

the broader context of Western thought. In 1981, he offered a series of seminars designed to help participants appreciate the influence of emotions on ethical behavior; the four weekly seminars were on “Feelings as Signals,” “Anxiety and Depression,” “Anger and Guilt,” and “Communicating Feelings.” In the fall of 1981, Hoad, assisted by Patricia Cashman of the Stress Center at Compton Hill Medical Center, conducted a series of four workshops on stress management; held on weekday evenings, the sessions were on “Identifying Stress Sources,” “Job Burn-Out,” “Negative and Positive Coping,” and “Mental Attitude as Stress Filter.” The following season, he held a one-day seminar on the same topic. In 1982, Hoad and Hornback jointly led a series of four seminars on the philosophies of Sigmund Freud, Joseph Campbell, Sophocles, Plato, and Daniel Yankelovich; the seminars, which included a presentation by William Levy, professor emeritus of the Washington University School of Philosophy, drew an average of 38 participants. In the fall of 1982, Hoad conducted a series of seminars on public issues. Also in 1982, he sponsored a series of evening meetings on “Thinking”; the series, designed to help participants attend more closely to their own thought processes, included seminars on “Styles of Thinking,” “Relational Constructs,” “Imaging,” and “Problem Solving.” In the 1983-84 season, Hoad led two one-night book discussions; the first was on “Macbeth,” the second on George Orwell’s “1984” and “Animal Farm.” Also in 1984, responding to pleas from the Membership and Publicity committees to encourage Society members to invite friends and associates to the Society, he conducted a workshop on “How to Explain Who We Are.” In the spring of 1984, he conducted a three-session series of seminars on humanism: The first, “The Bible in Humanist Perspective,” explained how the use of modern historical literary methods and scholarly detachment can allow humanists to quarry the classics of the Hebrews as they do the classics of the Greeks; the second evaluated “Jesus in Ethical Perspective”; and the third looked at “Humanity in Religious Perspective.” In January 1985 Hoad led a series of three seminars: In the first, “A Gestalt Theory of Ethics,” he put forth the thesis that broad world views have more influence on ethical decision-making than logic; in the second, “A Philosophy of Suffering,” he traced human interpretations of misfortune since Job; and in the third, “Playing with Words is Playing with Life,” he examined humor and other components of language that define “the borders of our thought.”

In the 1983-84 season, Hoad, with the encouragement and assistance of member William Stuckenberg, initiated a series of workshops exploring motivation. A task force of Society members with a professional interest in motivation—including educators, psychotherapists, salespeople, advertisers, and personnel recruiters—formed a study group, dubbed Project Motivation. The project was launched with a March 1983 platform address by Richard DeCharms, a professor of psychology and education at Washington University. In his address, “The Paradox of Personal Causation,” DeCharms argued that those who seek to be “origins,” internally motivated originators of behavior, must encourage their followers to likewise function as origins rather than as “pawns,” powerless, externally motivated servants. In the following season, the task force held a series of workshops with scholars in the field, followed by groups discussions of concepts and techniques that various professionals found useful in stimulating initiative. One workshop was devoted to a study of “In Search of Excellence,” the best-selling book on corporate management by T.J. Peters and R.H. Waterman Jr.

Lay members, on their own initiative, have formed countless discussion and study groups. A Philosophy Group begun in 1952 informally studied Western philosophy. Led by member William Stuckenberg with academic advice from Leader James F. Hornback, group members discussed books chosen by consensus. Hornback and associate leaders, as well as visiting Ethical leaders, sometimes spoke to the group and led discussions. Attendance at monthly meetings averaged about 25. After Stuckenberg resigned the chairmanship in 1968, the group lapsed for lack of leadership. In the 1950s, a discussion group on world politics met on Sunday or weekday evenings, either in the Sheldon Memorial library or at the homes of members. In 1957, members Barry Commoner and Lothar Pinkus conducted a series of Sunday-evening meetings on science and ethics. In the late fifties and early sixties, the Ethical Issues Committee organized open forums and educational meetings on social ethics. Beginning in the 1971-72 season, members Kenneth Knipmeyer and Ruth Norton facilitated a weekly philosophy study group whose reading list was heavy on Kant; for more than a decade, Knipmeyer repeatedly petitioned the board to arrange a systematic course on ethical philosophies, but Hornback was unwilling to commit to such a project, and it never fully materialized. The Ethical Issues Discussion Group, formed in 1973 and lasting for about two years, read and discussed contemporary books on ethics; group meetings, held at the homes of members, often included talks by local writers and philosophers. A successor to that group, the Continuing Education Fellowship, met monthly in a rented ballroom—to facilitate socializing as well as formal discussion—through the 1975-76 season. Also in the 1975-76 season, lay members, led by Charles “Bud” and Garnet Blake, began forming groups of the Great Decisions program of the Foreign Policy Association. The groups, which continued to meet into the mid-1980s at the homes of members, discussed domestic and global political issues in accordance with an agenda disseminated by the association; by way of example, topics in one eight-session series focused on the U.S. Constitution and Foreign Policy, Defense and the Federal Budget, Egypt and the United States, the Pacific Basin, South Africa, Foreign Investment in the United States, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and Dealing with Revolution.

In the 1976-77 season, an Adult Education Committee chaired by Clayton Chism was formed to develop a six-session educational series modeled after the orientation series but led by lay members. It was intended not as an orientation for new members but as a way to help long-standing members deepen their understanding of Ethical Culture. Topics discussed at the meetings included the history and purpose of Ethical Culture; activities of the Society; Ethical ceremonies; ideals expressed by Ethical leaders; and outstanding humanist writers. The series was well-received and awakened the fellowship's interest in more formalized educational programs. The following season, the committee conducted a seven-session series on "Ethics in the Workplace." Coordinated by Dan Vornberg and moderated by lay members, the discussion classes explored ethics in science and engineering, sales and business, building and building trades, medicine and psychiatry, and teaching. The program made use of a humanist film series titled "Ethics in America."

In the spring of the 1977-78 season, the committee launched another series on "Urban Vitality," a study of community development programs in the older suburban communities of metropolitan St. Louis. The series was kicked off with a platform talk, "Toward a New Federal Urban Policy," by Ernest Calloway, a lecturer in African American studies at St. Louis University and associate director of research for the Central Council of Teamsters. The Monday-evening series began with a demographic review of the St. Louis area by Frank Avesing of the St. Louis University Center for Urban Programs. Other presenters included Martin Braeske, assistant director of human resources for the Community Development Office of St. Louis County, speaking on housing problems; Society member Jim Pona, of the St. Louis City Community Development Agency, on the history and current trends of federal assistance programs in the urban area; Oliver Dulle, city clerk of Richmond Heights, who discussed the municipalities' point of view on inner-county problems and opportunities; and Society member Mary Fahey, director of business development programs for University City, on commercial revitalization. The last session was a Saturday workshop at which members discussed the possibility of the Society undertaking a community action project; participants recommended that interested members take part in the local chapter of ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now).

In the fall of 1978, the Adult Education Committee conducted a three-session series on the problem of mortgage and insurance redlining in St. Louis and elsewhere in Missouri. At the first session, Rep. Edward Sweeney of the Missouri House of Representatives discussed potential legislative remedies to the problem. At the second session, held two weeks later, Richard E. Ratcliff of the Washington University Department of Sociology discussed local research into redlining and outlined some strategies for corrective action. At the final session, participants discussed ways in which they could battle the practice through political and consumer action.

In 1983, member Dennis Owsley, a chemist, organized "Science for the Layperson," a four-session series on science and ethics. The seminars were: "Behind the Scenes," an examination of the scientific method in practice; "The Desire to be Clean," an exploration of the effects of soaps and detergents on the environment; "Thermodynamics and Everyday Problems," a study of the interrelation of energy production, the environment, and population growth; and "What's Behind Bio-Technology," a sketch of the ethical implications of research into DNA and RNA. Also in 1983, 72 Society members gathered at seven homes to view "The Day After," a television movie about the aftermath of a fictional nuclear war and discuss the ethical implications of living in the Nuclear Age. After the coffee hour the following Sunday, members gathered for a more extensive discussion of the same theme.

Yet another philosophy discussion group was formed in the 1986-87 season on the initiative of members Stephen Best and Roberta "Bobby" Toole; group members agreed to read common texts on the history of philosophy as well as contemporary works on ethics. Other short-term groups have formed to discuss single works of compelling value. In the mid-1980s, member Joy McConnell, who was to become an Ethical leader, inaugurated a more systematic study of literature as a tool to development of the inner life; titled "Centerquest," the program has consisted of an annual six-evening series of discussions limited to 12 participants.

While Society members appreciated the seminars and workshops periodically presented on the initiative of Hoad or lay members, they pushed for a concerted, ongoing educational program that would regularly provide a wide span of offerings. In the spring of 1985, the Ethical Education Committee recommended establishment of a Whole Life Education Program. The idea was developed in detail by a committee headed by trustee Margaret Ranford and consisting of Sue Bader, Dick Booton, Corinne Hammer, John Hoad, Joy McConnell, Dennis Owsley, Ruth Schwartz, Bill Stuckenberg, and Terry Yakota. In November 1985 the board of trustees approved the proposal in principle and appointed a steering committee to flesh it out and solicit comments from Society members.

With the backing of the Whole Life Education Committee, the Society in the 1985-86 season launched its most comprehensive adult educational series to date. The series, under the overarching theme of human behavior, was

overseen by psychiatrist Jeffrey Sugerman. It was funded out of the Stuckenberg Growth and Development Fund with the proviso that each seminar include an exploration of the ethical dimension of human motivation. The first seminar was to have featured political activist and diet counselor Dick Gregory on "Social Values and Hunger," but a flight delay forced its cancellation. The second featured Alvin Poussaint, associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and consultant to "The Cosby Show," on "Violence in Society/Violence in the Family." In the third, staff members of the St. Louis-based Masters and Johnson Institute, led by Dr. J. Robert Meyners, presented "Human Communication, Intimacy, and Relationship Building." The fourth workshop, "Behavior and Health," was a presentation by St. Louis University Medical School faculty on sleep disorders, stress-related illnesses, and chronic pain. "Changing Sex Roles in a Changing World" was presented by Gertrude J. Ruben Williams, an author, psychotherapist in private practice, and teacher of the Psychology of Women at Webster University. "Impacts of Divorce on Children—A Developmental Approach" was presented by James Mikolajczak, a psychoanalyst and assistant professor at St. Louis University. "Human Development in Older Adulthood" was presented by Dory Hollander, president of New Options Inc., a St. Louis-based consulting firm, and a former teacher of adult development and aging at Webster. And Neil Katz, director of the Program in Nonviolent Conflict and Change at Syracuse University, presented a "Communication and Conflict Management Workshop," designed to foster skills in listening, problem-solving, assertiveness, and conflict management.

Heartened by the success of the human behavior series, the Whole Life Education Committee worked through the winter and spring of the 1985-86 season to plan for the next season's offerings. For its part the board, acting on a mandate expressed in the Project Emerge discussions of the 1985-86 season, hired a program director who would, among other tasks, manage and publicize the educational program. The program director, Diane Schuch, came on board at the start of the 1986-87 season and immediately began implementing the committee's plans by lining up speakers, making building arrangements, and producing a brochure of course offerings for dissemination to Society members and friends. Each season's program since has included workshops, symposiums, and study groups meeting on Saturdays, Sunday mornings, and weeknights. Offerings have included personal growth topics such as family dynamics and nurturing relationships for singles, organizational seminars on such topics as managing volunteers and directing meetings, and scholarly workshops on philosophy and ethics. An example of the latter was a one-day symposium in the 1986-87 season on "Essentials of Ethical Theory"; it included lectures on Aristotle, Kant, Mill, and Emmanuel Levinas, presented by Hoad and St. Louis University philosophy professors Robert Gibbs and James Bohman. "Ethics in Practice," another seminar presented that season, explored ethical problems encountered in everyday life; participants included Linda Weiner, research and clinical associate at the Masters and Johnson Institute, who spoke on sexual ethics; Sonja Nelson, trust officer in the Estate Planning Department of Centerre Trust Co., on financial ethics; member Richard McConnell, a labor lawyer who had served previously as an assistant prosecuting attorney for St. Louis County, on legal ethics; John Vavra, chairman of the Human Studies Committee of the Washington University School of Medicine and a professor of medical ethics for 15 years, on medical ethics; and social worker Jane Goodman, director of Family Life Education for Jewish Family and Children's Services, on family ethics. Other speakers in the Whole Life Education offerings have included visiting Ethical leaders, member professionals, and outside educators, social scientists, and mental health practitioners. A standing Education Steering Committee plans the offerings with guidance from the Program Planning Committee, which outlines three- and five-year curriculum plans.

18. THE MAIN ATTRACTION - CONTINUITY AND EXPERIMENTATION IN THE PLATFORM PROGRAM

For all the progress made in other areas of the Society's life, the platform service, the principal font of information and challenge and the setting of most memorable group experiences, has remained the central attraction. Ethical leaders and the lay committees that advise them have striven to balance the topics of platform services, spotlighting philosophy, social issues, and personal growth. Hornback spoke about two Sundays per month, as has Hoad; in arranging for speakers for the remaining Sundays, Hornback had a marked predilection for geopolitical topics, and Hoad has adjusted the schedule to give personal issues a nearly equal share in the mix.

The cost of "name" lecturers rose sharply in the 1960s and beyond. Hornback, long accustomed to booking academics and social reformers who were happy to accept a modest honoraria, was put off by fees that ran into the thousands of dollars—in addition to travel and lodging expenses and the commissions of booking agents. He used the Prather Fund for visiting speakers conservatively, engaging only two or three out-of-town speakers per season, in addition to one or two humanist colleagues. By the time Hoad assumed responsibility for planning the platform program in 1980, the fund had swollen through accumulated interest, and he has used it boldly, bringing in stimulating speakers who often attract considerable attention from the media and the public.

The Ethical Society has taken pains to uphold its reputation as the community's primary forum for talks on humanistic philosophy and religious liberty. Religious philosopher Huston Smith spoke in 1951. The prince of humanist philosophers, Sir Julian Huxley, spoke at the Society in 1954 on "A Humanistic Religion for the Human Race." The eminent humanist philosopher and author Corliss Lamont, who had taught philosophy at Columbia, Cornell, and Harvard universities and the New School for Social Research, was a frequent speaker in the sixties and into the seventies. Another regular guest was Paul Kurtz, professor of philosophy at the State University of New York and editor of *The Humanist*. Countless other moral philosophers, liberal theologians, and social scientists have shared their views on humanism from the Ethical platform. One of the more renowned was Lawrence Kohlberg, Harvard professor and author of books on moral development, who spoke in 1973 on "The Stages of Moral Development as a Basis for Ethical Education"; Kohlberg was noted for his theory that there are in all cultures invariant and logically distinguishable stages of moral growth in which rational principles of judgment and decision appear—or fail to appear—in any individual. Ed Doerr, director of education for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, also spoke in 1973. Sugata Dasgupta, director of the Gandhian Institute of Studies, spoke in 1974 on "Peacelessness, Poverty and Non-Violence in the Third World." Biologist Bette Chambers, president of the American Humanist Association, spoke in 1977; her talk—"Holy Scopes! Is Evolution Still an Issue?"—was a refutation of the fundamentalist Christian charge that evolution is a "religious" doctrine that should be balanced in public school education by instruction in creationism. Humanist "renegades" welcomed by the Society have included Indian atheist Goparaju Ramanchandra Rao, who spoke in 1970 on the reform alliance he had struck with Mohandas K. Gandhi despite Rao's insistence that religion and mysticism are tools of repression; and Mihailo Markovic, a controversial humanist professor of philosophy at the University of Belgrade, Yugoslavia, who spoke in 1979 on "Humanism: The Universal Basis for Ethics."

Visits by the membership's favorite speakers in the Ethical movement—especially Algernon Black and Jerome Nathanson of the New York Society and Henry Neumann of the Brooklyn Society—grew less frequent after about 1950. Time constraints kept many Eastern leaders from traveling extensively, and the weakening Chicago Society generally was unable to help St. Louis cover travel expenses, as it had in years past. Still, the economy of platform exchanges has allowed for periodic visits by successive generations of Ethical leaders, including Matthew Ies Spetter of the Riverdale-Yonkers Society; Howard Radest, Bergen County, N.J.; Lester Mondale, Kenneth J. Smith, and Judith Espenschied, Philadelphia; Walter Lawton, Chicago; Harold Quigley, Los Angeles and Chicago; George Beauchamp, Washington, D.C.; Michael S. Franch, Baltimore; Susan Bagot, Northern Virginia; Howard Box, Brooklyn; M. Michael Grupp, Queens; Sheldon Ackley and Arthur Dobrin, Long Island; and Edward Ericson and Don Robert Johnson, New York. Other leaders in the movement, including AEU presidents Rose Elbert and Fred Arden, executive director Jean Somerville Kotkin, Encampment for Citizenship executive director Robert Lubetsky, and religious education directors Muriel Davies and Emily Thorn, also have been featured guests. And Unitarian ministers Robert Hoagland and Khoren Arisian, both of whom served as Ethical leaders during their careers, have spoken frequently in St. Louis.

While nothing as dramatic as the philosophical shift from transcendentalism to humanism has occurred in the recent history of Ethical Culture, longtime members have observed a change in the tone of Ethical leadership. Erudition has remained an essential quality of the vocation, but ethical societies have insistently chosen leaders whose warmth, optimism, and sensitivity to human needs will guide them in an age of deepening cynicism. Throughout the movement, including St. Louis, Ethical Culturists have sought of their leaders pastoral care as well as philosophical acumen. A report of a 1983 address by Matthew Ies Spetter reflects the prevailing tone:

Dr. Ies Spetter, Leader of the Riverdale-Yonkers Society, used thoughts from a variety of writers, together with personal experience in counseling, to illustrate the process of healing and the strengthening of the impulse within each of us toward life and renewal.

Healing has to do with the total inner environment and with values. Each of us is not only an individual, but also a communal creature, dependent on the encouragement and comfort of those around us. The poetess May Sarton in her book "Recovering" tells how her connections with her friends led her to regain her physical and emotional health. When the soul needs healing it is giving and sharing that liberates us.

Dr. Spetter sees the key to healing in our ethical humanist assumption of the worth of each person. When confronted with emotional or physical troubles (which are ways of dealing with what we feel as defeat or failure), we need to find our way back to a sense of self-worth. We can choose to acknowledge and use suffering to help us become more alive.

There is strength and courage in the human heart to deal with all the unfairnesses each of us must face. To help one another within a caring community, we have to avoid acting like observers, to make a real, concentrated, honest entering into another's suffering.

There is much healing to be done. We in the ethical movement base our faith upon the development of values for living; our religion provides the power to aim for the spiritual natures in one another, and to clarify that nature for ourselves. "It bids us to turn to one another, by stressing the humility and awe before the miraculous composite of another person. This is what we can do for ourselves and others when the soul needs healing."

(Ethical weekly, May 1, 1983, reported by Susan Weidenheimer)

The Society has continued to offer the community scholarly analyses of social problems and international relations, with an emphasis on liberal reform efforts. Roger Baldwin, founder and longtime president of the American Civil Liberties Union, spoke at the Society every few years in the fifties, sixties, and seventies, voicing his views on international relations and the ethics of reform, as well as civil liberties. Carey McWilliams, longtime editor of *The Nation* and author of books on labor, agriculture, ethnic groups, and the law, spoke at the Society at least a half-dozen times from the forties through the seventies. Anthropologist Margaret Mead spoke several times in the fifties and sixties, as did social reformer Saul Alinsky and anthropologist Ashley Montague. Former U.S. Sen. Joseph S. Clark, president of the World Federalists, spoke in 1970; Neal Potter, a member of the organization's National Executive Committee, spoke in 1980; and executive director Walter Hoffman spoke in 1986 on "Next Steps to Peace." Lord Caradon, previously known as Sir Hugh Foot, one-time British minister of state for foreign affairs and United Kingdom representative to the United Nations, spoke in 1973 and again in 1974 on his experiences as a mediator in Mideast conflicts. Economist Kenneth Boulding, co-director of the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan, spoke in 1973 on "The Ethics of Peace." Physicist Norman Alcock, founder of the Canadian Peace Research Institute, spoke in 1974 on "Equality and Freedom Among the Nations."

Anthropologist Lois Beck, president of the Society for Iranian Studies, helped Society members understand that nation's revolution and antagonism toward the West in his 1980 address, "Iran and the Islamic Resurgence." Joseph Fletcher, visiting scholar in Medical Ethics at the University of Virginia, and author Robert Treat Paine, professor emeritus at Episcopal Theological School, discussed the ethical, legal, religious, and social issues posed by new modes of human reproduction in their 1980 platform presentation, "Babymaking and Medical Technology—An Ethical Challenge"; Fletcher's controversial theory was that society should eschew random genetic selection, using technological advances to reproduce the healthiest children possible. In 1981, John Hoyt, President of the Humane Society of the United States, spoke on "The Humane Ethic." Marek Thee, Polish scholar and diplomat, spoke in 1982 on "Halting the Nuclear Armaments Momentum." In 1983, Irish peace activist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Betty Williams delivered an address titled, "When Love Begins to Knock at Doors." Independent politician John Anderson, who had run for president in 1976, gave an address on political ethics in 1983. Author Bruce Jennings, staff member of the Hastings Center and one-time ethics consultant to U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics, detailed a theory of legislative ethics in a 1984 talk. In 1985, Carol Perkins, widow of zoologist-conservationist Marlon Perkins, spoke to the Society on conservation efforts. John Healey, executive director of Amnesty International USA, spoke in 1986 on "Human Rights in the Eighties." And Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh spoke in 1987 on "The Price of Power." In addition to bringing in speakers from out of town, the Society has hosted addresses on urban affairs, world peace, and human rights by university professors, educators, journalists, labor leaders, and public officials of the St. Louis metropolitan area.

Despite waffling over the admission of blacks in the forties, the Society later became a staunch defender of civil rights. Hornback, in addition to speaking often on equal rights and school desegregation, invited eminent thinkers on these issues. James Farmer, the national director of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) who later served as assistant secretary of Health, Education and Welfare before devoting himself to speaking and writing on social and racial issues, spoke in 1971 on "Integration and Separatism: A Look from the Black Think-Tank." In 1973 Alton T. Lemon, executive director of the Germantown Settlement near Philadelphia and former deputy director of Housing and Urban Development for the Philadelphia area, addressed "The Black Stake in Public Schools." John B. Ervin, vice president of the Danforth Foundation, spoke in 1979 on "A Tale of Two Cities: Desegregation of the St. Louis Public Schools." Claude Brown, director of research and education of Teamsters Local 688, gave an update on the progress of African Americans in a 1981 address titled "Here We Go Again: Or, The New Reconstruction." In 1984, Donald Woods, a journalist who had escaped from South Africa after his newspaper was shut down, spoke on apartheid, urging a relentless continuation of economic sanctions against his native country.

The Society also has invited speakers to expand awareness of other minorities and ethnic groups, as well as people pushed to the “margins” of society by disease or handicaps. Virginia Harrison, a professor who had a debilitating neuromuscular disease, spoke in 1985 on “Awareness of Margins”; Harrison urged that interacting with “marginal” people as friends, peers, and colleagues would make “normal” people more aware of their needs and better able to appreciate whether their lives are worth living. Actress Phyllis Frelich, winner of the 1980 Tony Award for her role as the defiant deaf student in the Broadway production of “Children of a Lesser God,” presented a 1987 address titled “Hear the Silence”; her husband translated the talk from sign to spoken word.

Hornback, though a diehard opponent of Jewish ethnic separatism, invited several prominent Jewish thinkers to share their thoughts on the subject, including Robert A. Cohn, editor of the St. Louis Jewish Light, who spoke in 1979 on “Threats to Cultural Pluralism,” and Gerald Eisenberg, a Washington University history teacher who favored ethnic separatism, in 1980. At the same time, Hornback never passed up an opportunity to refute the stands of such guests, in print and from the platform. His 1966 introduction to a talk by Rabbi Sherwin Wine, the leader of a Michigan congregation of Jewish humanists, was typical:

In leaving the temple of his fathers, and founding the first Society for Ethical Culture in New York in 1876, Felix Adler made it clear that he no longer accepted the idea of the special mission of the Jewish people, however broadly that mission might be conceived.

“If the teaching mission is to be maintained,” he said, “it must be exercised by all who have the gift. If there is to be an elect body (a dangerous conception, the meaning of which is to be carefully defined), it must consist of gentiles and Jews, of men of every race and condition.... “

Rabbi Wine, on the other hand, holds onto the concept of Jewish peoplehood. “Judaism,” he writes in his Birmingham Temple newsletter, “is the total ethnic culture of the Jewish people.... Since we are Jewish in an ethnic and cultural sense, we will use Jewish literature and customs as vehicles for the study and expression of certain universal concepts.”

But what if we are not Jewish?

As a gentile, an Anglo-Saxon of Protestant background, for instance, should I call myself a Christian “in an ethnic and cultural sense”? Should I stay with my “people” in socially segregated churches and clubs, picking and choosing Christian “literature and customs as vehicles for... certain universal concepts”?

No, thank you, Rabbi Wine! Come on over to the Ethical-Humanist side.

The Society also has invited outstanding speakers on sexual equality and reproductive rights. Attorney Ann Q. Niederlander, a past president of the Missouri League of Women Voters, gave her thoughts on the legal, social, and ethical status of women in an optimistically titled address, “After the Equal Rights Amendment,” in 1972; Dorothy Roudebush, president of the Abortion Rights Alliance and a member of the board of Planned Parenthood of Missouri, also campaigned for the ERA in a 1975 address. Gloria Steinem, editor of Ms. magazine, and her colleague, Margaret Sloan, a black leader in the women’s movement, presented a platform dialogue on “Sexism and Racism” in 1973; their weeklong visit included an invitational symposium and an exhibit of feminist art at the Society’s meeting house. Author Elisabeth Mann Borgese, senior member of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, California, spoke in 1975 on “The Ascent of Woman”; her 1962 book of the same name stressed the need for a new synthesis of feminine and masculine qualities to achieve global peace. Psychologist Carolyn J. Hirsch, former research director of the Violence Research Unit of Denver General Hospital and author of the authoritative 1977 book “The Trouble with Rape,” spoke on “Tomorrow’s Woman” in 1977. Judith Widdicombe, a pioneer nurse in the reproductive rights movement who ran the Reproductive Health Center, a St. Louis counseling and clinical center targeted by anti-abortion protestors and the Missouri attorney general, delivered an address titled “Is Abortion Really the Issue?” in 1978. In 1984, the Society presented a talk on “Television News and Show Business” by Christine Craft, a television journalist who had won a sex-discrimination lawsuit after being demoted from her Kansas City, Missouri, anchor position for being “too old, too ugly and not sufficiently deferential to men”; in the talk, Craft said that she—unlike her male colleague—was required to undergo cosmetic and wardrobe makeovers, and was coached by media consultants to present an “illusion of credibility” by delivering news in a happy, angry, or sincere mode, leading her to conclude that appearance had become a higher priority than substance in television news. Rebecca Klatch, an assistant professor of sociology at Washington University and author of “Women of the New Right” (Temple University Press, Philadelphia), spoke twice in 1986

— on “World Views of Right-Wing Women in America” and “The Future of Gender Politics”; Klatch contended that archconservative women, who saw the feminist movement as attacking the family structure and promoting self-centeredness, had actually become role models of activism for their daughters.

From time to time, the Society has invited scientists to share—in laymen’s terms, their perspective on ethical issues. Local scientists, including university professors, research physicians, and corporate technologists, have addressed controversies in medicine, resource management, and technological development. Society member Barry Commoner, a Washington University scientist who made ecology a central issue in his 1980 bid for the U.S. presidency, spoke several times in the fifties and sixties. R. Buckminster “Bucky” Fuller, the philosopher and engineer best known for designing the geodesic dome, spoke in 1960 on “The Uses of Invisible Structure.” John Logue, director of the World Order Research Institute at Villanova University, spoke in 1973 “The Fate of the Oceans.” Distinguished Indian physicist Yash Pal, in town to address a United Nations Association conference on the potential uses of space, spoke in 1982 on “Education for the Space Age.” Carl Bender, professor of physics at Washington University, accepted the Society’s invitation to explain the futility of the Reagan administration’s Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”) in 1985; the Society sought unsuccessfully to find a physicist or Reagan administration representative to speak in defense of the project.

Literary figures from near and far have been among the Society’s strongest draws. Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review*, spoke in 1954. Writer Louis Untermeyer visited the Society in 1959. Humanist poet John Ciardi, a teacher at Rutgers University and poetry editor of the *Saturday Review*, spoke in 1960, and poet Howard Nemerov, a graduate of the Ethical Culture School and longtime Washington University professor, addressed the community in 1969. Author Alex Haley spoke in 1973, shortly after completing seven years of travel and research in quest of his African ancestry, on “Black Heritage: One Man’s Search for ‘Roots.’” And Han Suyin, author of “A Many Splendored Thing,” spoke on prospects for China and “The Population Explosion” in her 1965 and 1973 visits. In 1985, poet Julie Heifetz, author of “Oral History and the Holocaust,” delivered several powerful poems she had written from the perspectives of Holocaust survivors she had interviewed.

As the nation’s concern with mental health rose in the seventies and beyond, psychologists and related professionals became frequent guests at the Society; Leader John Hoad, a trained psychotherapist, has each season booked a couple of mental health authorities to speak on character development and shed light on the relation of mental health to ethical behavior. Lester Lirkendall, professor of family life education at Oregon State University and a specialist in sexual ethics, spoke in 1970 on “The New Morality.” W.L. Pew, president of the American Society of Adlerian Psychology, gave an address titled “Alternatives to Violence” in 1971. The president of New York State Council on Drug Addiction, Donald B. Louria, described by Leader James F. Hornback as one of the “most calm and compassionate and well-informed” voices in the field of drug-abuse treatment, spoke in 1972 on “Will Our Society Survive?” In 1975, psychologist-philosopher Lawrence LeShan and his wife, Eda, an educator and expert in child psychology, presented a platform dialogue on their educational philosophy and conducted seminars for Sunday School teachers; the platform presentation, which included an affirmation of extrasensory perception, discomfited members who felt the Society should avoid the appearance of validating such beliefs. Psychiatrist Leopold Hofstatter, professor of psychiatry at the University of Missouri and one-time superintendent of the State Hospital, addressed the needs and rights of the mentally ill in 1976. Society member Sadashiv “Sam” Parwatar, regional director for the St. Louis State Hospital, spoke in 1979 on “Ethical Issues in Psychiatry.” Moisy Shopper, professor of child psychiatry at St. Louis University and faculty member of St. Louis Psychiatric Institute, questioned the benefits of the much-publicized International Year of the Child in a 1979 talk. Jane Loevinger, of the Social Science Institute at Washington University, discussed the ethical implications of ego development in a 1980 address. In 1981, psychiatric social worker Anita Pepper examined changes in the American family—including the movement of women into the labor force, the increase in single-parent families, delayed marriage and child-bearing, and lowered birth rates—and sketched the need for a national policy to support family life in changing times. Lois Daniels, administrator of the St. Louis Foundation for Alcoholism and Related Dependencies and director of De Novo, an intermediate care residential program for women, spoke in 1981 on “Taking Responsibility—What is our Part in the Process?” Douglas Heath, researcher in human development and professor of psychology at Haverford College, outlined qualities needed for success and happiness in his 1985 address, “Is the American Character Ready for the Emerging Future?” Psychologist and seminar director Cameron Meredith spoke in 1986 on “The Art of Encouragement: Becoming a Fully Functioning Person,” and psychologist Kathryn D. Cramer, a pioneer in the application of psychological principles in corporate settings, spoke later that year on “Personal Vitality in a Stress-Filled World.”

Some of the Society’s greatest platform resources have been its own members. Walter Hoops, a self-educated freethinker and purveyor of rationalist books, has spoken several times on philosophers of the Enlightenment and his

experiences as a citizen of pre-war Germany and a member of the St. Louis Freie Gemeinde. David Carpenter, a Washington University professor and one-time president of the Society, spoke in 1971 on "National Policy Implications of the 1970 Census." Theodore F. Lentz, a teacher and counselor at Washington University's School of Education, author of books on the "science of peace," and founder of the Peace Research Laboratory and the Character Research Association, spoke in 1972 on the social and scientific advances needed to establish global peace. Member S.D. Parwatikar, superintendent of the St. Louis State Hospital, gave addresses in the seventies on ethical issues in psychiatry and his personal departure from Hinduism. James Hoggard, a former Baptist minister, shared his latter-day view of Jesus of Nazareth in a 1979 talk. George Ulett, a psychiatrist who headed up the psychiatry department at Deaconess Hospital after serving as director of the Missouri Department of Mental Health, spoke in 1979 on role of mental attitude in the healing and prevention of disease. In 1980 member Murray Underwood shared the insights he had gained into the Moslem perspective while living in Algeria. Chemist Dennis Owsley and political scientist Jeffrey Wides shared a 1981 platform presentation exploring the "myths" of scientific objectivity and pure rationalism. That same year, Alexander Calandra, professor emeritus of physics at Washington University, spoke on "The Nature of Ethics." Business executive Kathie Layton joined with Leader John Hoad and Marian Allbee, women's studies coordinator for the St. Louis Community College District, for a 1983 platform presentation titled "Update on the Women's Movement." But members' participation in platform programs has not been limited to professional expertise: Members are frequently called upon to speak of their religious and ethical development and life experiences relating to such matters as drug addiction, single parenthood, and grief.

The Lay Voice

In the early seventies, after 20 years of planning platform programs almost single-handedly, Hornback sought more direct participation in platform planning by lay members. In response, the Growth and Development Committee in 1973 conducted a survey which indicated that members wanted more variety in the platform program, including varied formats, an increased use of the arts, and inclusion of more lay members as speakers, readers, and presiding officers. A Program Committee was formed to develop ways to implement those suggestions, with the hope of countering a drop in platform attendance that was commonly laid to tedium. One early experiment in format changes was a 1974 platform on "Future Shock." The meeting, organized by members Ludwig "Fred" and Corinne Hammer, included a showing of the film based on Alvin Toffler's best-selling book, which explored the social effects of accelerating changes in knowledge and technology, and a question-and-answer period featuring a seven-member panel of professionals—mostly Society members—in science, medicine, education, psychology, and law. In the 1975-76 season, the platform committee, led by William Emerson, conducted a four-Sunday series on family issues titled "All in the Ethical Family—Then and Now." The series, which featured social scientists from St. Louis University, Webster College, and the University of Missouri-St. Louis, addressed intergenerational communication and examined historical trends in family life. Also in 1975, members Dora and Leon Phillips, as part of the Society's observance of International Women's Year, presented dramatic episodes from classic plays depicting "Female Villainy." A second four-Sunday family series in the 1976-77 season focused on aging; organized by Society member Carol Dye, a psychologist specializing in gerontology, it included talks by three mental health professionals and a dramatic production by the City Players, "A Choice to Make." A 1978-79 series on family values included a talk by member Martha Roper, a high school teacher of human sexuality, on the teaching of sexuality and non-violence, and a talk by psychologist Robert H. Moore titled, "How Practically Not to be Disturbed about Anything."

A latter-day incarnation of the Program Committee, the Lay Program Committee, chaired by Dan Vornberg, planned the platform service for the fourth Sunday of each month in the 1979-80 season. The first, held in September, was a talk on single parenthood. The second was a debate on the efficacy of development tax incentives; Bradley Susman of the Team Four development consulting firm spoke in favor of incentives, Washington University economist James Little took the con position, and Chuck Kindelberger of the Community Development Agency of St. Louis acted as moderator. In November, Mary Ellen Finch, head of the Department of Education at Maryville College and former director of the Ethical Sunday School, arranged a panel discussion on early-childhood education. Member Alan Ranford organized the January 1980 lay platform, a panel discussion on death and dying that featured Charles Corr, philosopher and teacher of a "death and dying" class at Southern Illinois University; Jack Pennington, a psychologist who worked for Lutheran Medical Center and taught at Forest Park Community College; and social worker Ruth Reko, who administered the hospice at Lutheran Medical Center. In February's "Fourth Sunday" platform, members Ken Knipmeyer and Walter Hoops gave a brief history of Western philosophy. The lay platform in March, arranged by member Robert Roades, was a talk by William Eckhart, director of the Peace Research Laboratory, on "Alternatives to War." In April, member Renate Vambéry brought in Alexander Calandra, a scientist who expressed an appreciative but skeptical assessment of the holistic health movement. In the fall of 1980, the Platform Committee, now chaired by Ludwig "Fred" Hammer, organized platform services until the arrival in November of new leader John Hoad.

The summer platform series, instituted in the early seventies to help fill the gap of the Society's "off-season," has been coordinated primarily by lay members. The meetings, held on six to eight Sundays, consist of informal talks — by unpaid speakers—and group discussions. Attendance is much lower than during the regular season, usually 30 to 50 people. Most speakers have been members; it has been seen as an excellent opportunity for members to gain public-speaking experience before a supportive group and to exchange ideas to an extent not possible in brief visits during the regular season. In the 1976 summer season, for example, members presented talks on philosophers and philosophical movements that had strongly influenced their thinking: Clayton Chism spoke on Thomas Paine; Leon Philips, Henry David Thoreau; Walter Hoops, the Epigones (followers of Paine); Robert Roades, Ralph Waldo Emerson; Walter Hayes, "The Revolution of the '50s and 60s"; and Mark Nugent, John Dewey. The summer season also has served as an opportunity for visitors to get acquainted with members in an informal setting; talks by individuals and panels on "What is the Ethical Society?" and "What Ethicals Believe" have been typical. In a reverse of that custom, Leader James F. Hornback invited leaders of other religious movements to speak in the 1983 and 1984 summer series; speakers included representatives of Islam and the Baha'i faith as well as Catholic, Protestant, Mormon, and Jewish clergy.

Hoad has continued to encourage participation by lay members, frequently inviting members to share the platform with him in discussions of ethical dilemmas that touch on their areas of expertise. Since 1981, he has included talks by two or three members in each year's Recognition Day platform. In a 1982 Social Action Day platform assembled with his support, Society members outlined the activist and service projects in which they took part: Marion Andres explained the workings of the food distribution project, then coordinated by the Ethical Singles; Renate Vamberg represented both the Healing Community, an ecumenical coalition dedicated to eliminating the architectural and attitudinal barriers that keep physically and mentally disabled people out of mainstream life, and Amnesty International, which works for the release of people imprisoned for religious or political beliefs; Fred Valeriot represented Physicians for Social Responsibility, which works "to counter the bleak and unacceptable future" of nuclear war by educating people about the horrors it would bring; Janet Becker spoke for Operation Weather Survival, an organization that works to keep people alive through severe heat or cold; Joy Guze spoke for the United Nations Association; Murray Underwood represented the American Civil Liberties Union, which defends the principles of the Bill of Rights in courts, legislatures and public forums; James Hoggard represented the Peace Research Laboratory, founded by late Society member Theodore Lentz to study conflict resolution and the conduct of peace; and Mary Curtis spoke for the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR).

In the 1985-86 season, Hoad gave the floor to a Society member who was shocked by the strong opposition among members to drug testing in the workplace. The opposition sentiment emerged when Hoad, in an address on the Bill of Rights, used audience participation to highlight dilemmas raised by conflicting constitutional rights. Richard Foristel, manager of internal communications at McDonnell Aircraft Co., a division of the McDonnell Douglas Corp., petitioned Hoad for an opportunity to explain the need of corporations to use drug tests. In his talk, he outlined the devastating effects of drug abuse on productivity, safety, worker morale, and corporate competitiveness. When he called for a show of hands to indicate sentiment toward well-defined drug-testing policies, substantial support for pre-employment and post-accident screening indicated that he had swayed many of his fellow Society members on the issue.

New Wineskins

From the start, Hoad has sought out and encouraged novel platform programs, making extensive use of drama, dance, poetry, and music. He has arranged platform appearances by New York performance artist Linda Mussmann, the St. Louis-based Holy Roman Repertory radio company, and actor-orator Frank Fowle III, who performed a portion of Homer's "Iliad." In the 1986-87 season, member Kathleen Foy directed an 11-member, all-Society cast in a production of Jane Martin's "Talking With ..."

Hoad has repeatedly organized platforms that bring together people of conflicting or complementary perspectives. One such platform was a 1983 discussion of abortion that brought together the Rev. Benedict Ashley, a Roman Catholic moral theologian at St. Louis University; Society member Allison Hile, director of public information and education at the Hope Clinic for Women; and Hoad. Acknowledging that most people who held an opinion on the legality of abortion were not open to changing their minds, Hoad planned the program as an exercise in "listening across the barrier": Ashley gave his reasons for opposing abortion and sought common ground in respect for human life and rights; Hile gave examples of the medical, psychological, and age problems which prompt women to choose abortion, and appealed for sympathy to their needs; and Hoad detailed his ethical argument validating the right to obtain safe, legal abortions. The speakers elaborated on their positions in an extended question-and-answer period.

A St. Louis Post-Dispatch story on the program—"3 Speakers At Forum Call For End To Bitterness On Abortion Issue" (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 24, 1983) — prompted a letter to the editor "commending the Ethical Society for pointing the way for the rest of us" by bringing together "three people who were willing to present their differing views in an atmosphere of explicit mutual respect." (Letter by Margaret Katranides of University City, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 9, 1983).

The following season, Hoad arranged a pro-and-con forum on animal experimentation. Donald Barnes, director of the Washington Office of the National Anti-Vivisection Society, presented "The Case against Animal Experimentation and the Alternatives"; Roy Peterson, professor of anatomy at Washington University School of Medicine and chair of the Committee on Humane Care of Laboratory Animals, presented "The Need for Animal Experimentation and the Humane Safeguards"; and Hoad explored the necessary implications of viewing animals as objects of moral concern.

Chord Changes

In the 1950s the Music Committee primarily oversaw the Society's Chamber Music series, giving scant attention to the needs of the platform service. A Musical Activities Committee was formed in 1953 to seek out and employ musicians within the Society and arrange for platform performances by guest artists about once a month. Successors to that committee offered direction to organists, solicited outside professional advice on the planning of performances, polled members on their musical preferences, and obtained leadership—usually volunteer—for the Ethical Chorus that was first formed in the seventies. The Chamber Music Committee and the Rarely Performed Music Committee recommended outstanding local musicians for platform presentations.

Organist Carl Werner left the Society at the end of the 1954-55 season, after 14 years of service, to take a job in Florida. He was replaced by Richard Olsen, a teacher of languages as well as organ and piano. Upon his departure in 1959, Olsen told the Society he had never enjoyed more an association as organist. Olsen was succeeded by Fern Kelly, who would serve the Society for 17 years. In addition to expanding the Society's musical repertoire, Kelly was remembered as the driving force behind the decision to purchase the first neo-baroque pipe organ in the St. Louis area after the move to the Ladue meeting house. In recognition of her long years of service, Kelly was named "organist emeritus" by the board upon her retirement at the end of the 1975-76 season. Her replacement, Edmund W. LeRoy, was the first organist to hold the title of music director; in addition to performing on the organ, he was charged with obtaining other soloists and ensembles to perform at platform services and festivals. LeRoy, who held advanced degrees in organ and voice from Julliard School, came to St. Louis to teach voice at Washington University; a two-time winner of Julliard's Enrico Caruso Memorial Prize, LeRoy performed at recitals and in opera productions around the country. He elected not to direct the Ethical Chorus, leaving that task to Society member Stephen Curtis, who also directed the professional Musica Nova chorus. As LeRoy conceived his role at the Society to be that of educator as well as performer, he began the standing tradition of teaching music appreciation, dispensing information about composers and musical styles through published essays and oral introductions to performances. He also began another tradition that would be carried on by his successors: attempting to convince Society members that chatting during preludes and interludes is rude.

When LeRoy left the position at the end of the 1982-83 season to teach at Rollins College in Florida, the musical directorship underwent a memorable shift in quality. LeRoy was replaced by Carl Smith, who previously had served as minister of music at Delmar Baptist Church. Smith, who held a master's degree in music and served on the adjunct faculties of Washington University and Eden Theological Seminary, was a harpsichordist as well as organist. He tackled his role with uncommon enthusiasm, arranging an engaging variety of musical presentations for both platform services and music appreciation seminars. In 1984, Smith oversaw the revoicing of the organ by the Martin Ott Pipe Organ Co. of St. Louis—a project which revived the qualities that have made the meeting house a favorite venue of St. Louis organists. Beyond making appeals to members and visitors to maintain a respectful silence, Smith persuaded the board of trustees and Leader John Hoad to revise the platform schedule so as limit seating, departure, and collection-taking during his performances; that heightened regard for the integrity of music was to endure beyond his tenure. At the end of his first season with the Society, Smith entertained an offer for a much more lucrative position; the board, recognizing that the community valued him tremendously, authorized a special solicitation to more than double his part-time salary. He remained for another season, during which he added folk and jazz to the Society's range of musical offerings. His ultimate departure toward the end of the 1984-85 season caused Society members months of grief—until they discovered that his successor, Martha Stiehl, would carry on the work he had begun in the same high caliber of professionalism. Stiehl held a master's degree from the University of Illinois and had studied under Anton Heiller and Marie Claire Alain. With her dazzling performances

of avant-garde compositions—in particular, the challenging works of 20th century innovator Olivier Messiaen—she even won over many of those Society members who had still regarded organ music as a form of Christian penance. Through her direction of the Ethical Chorus and her energetic participation in cyclic festivals, Stiehl set a high standard for the Society's later music directors.

Pagan Pageants

In contrast to the festivals held during J. Hutton Hynd's tenure, which were put on by Sunday School children before platform meetings, contemporary festivals have become intergenerational productions. Children and adults meet an hour or two before the platform service to have breakfast and prepare musical and dramatic presentations, dividing into such groups as singers, actors, writers, dancers, and artists. For decades festivals were produced by the staff of the Sunday School; to ease the burden on those volunteers and increase the appeal of festivals to adult members, planning responsibilities were shifted to committees comprising representatives of the Sunday School, the Ethical Education Committee, the professional leadership, and the Adult Association. Some festivals require weeks of preparation by volunteer and professional performing artists; others are impromptu affairs put together in the morning according to rough guidelines. All festivals serve as the day's platform service and usually take the place of Sunday School activities and Adult Association meetings. Music directors, guest artists, and members perform classical, jazz, or folk music. Songs are performed by the Ethical Chorus, which practices weekly during the season, the "Instant Chorus," composed on the spot of volunteers and draftees, and choirs of Sunday School students; congregational singing of folk songs—or distinctly ethical humanist songs, usually put to traditional tunes—is typical. Other common elements are readings of poetry and prose, skits, dance performances, and slide and film presentations. They are eclectic affairs, weaving together symbols of varied cultures; a 1974 festival was described in a promotional announcement as an "Ethical-Humanist-Hebrew-Christian-Greco-Roman-Pagan-American" celebration.

Thanksgiving festivals offer expressions of gratitude for the gifts of nature—food, sunshine, rain—and of human workers—farmers, truck drivers, builders—that make life possible and happy. Through choral and communal singing, skits, and storytelling, members deepen their sense of gratitude and wonder. The traditional symbols of the harvest festivals of rural cultures remind the Society's urban membership of its often-obscured interrelatedness with the rhythms of nature. As Leader James F. Hornback noted in a 1976 essay, the Thanksgiving observance readily lends itself to humanistic interpretation:

Among all the great and varied religious holidays, including the recent Hallowe'en before All Saints Day, Thanksgiving is probably the easiest to interpret in universal, human, and natural terms. The usual deference to divine "providence" is so full of simple recognition of the bounties of nature at harvest time, that there is no apparent difference in benefit to believer, agnostic, and atheist. For all the formal reference to supernatural sources, the real preoccupation of Christian and Jewish festivals leading into the American Thanksgiving is with the fruits of the harvest, the reunion of families and friends, and the ceremonies of religious and civic communities.

The liberal theist, who does not view God as a person or an intentional giver of blessings, is in exactly the same position as the non-theist. The blessings just come, to our good fortune, as far as the universe is concerned. They seem to come better, however, to those who try to remain in harmonious cooperation with the natural forces which bring the blessings.

One "providence" too often overlooked in the traditional Thanksgiving is the "providence" of human beings. Capitalist theory has it that farmers, bakers, grocers, and even the "service" professions do not provide their services out of any benevolence, but rather for their own profit or self-interest. But fortunately the pride in productivity, craftsmanship, and even service to humanity beyond the call of wages has not quite been extinguished. For this, too, we can be thankful.

(Ethical weekly, November 28, 1976)

Christmas and Hanukkah are not so easily adapted to humanistic celebration. The Winter Festival, held on the Sunday nearest Christmas Day, substitutes themes of love and peace for the traditional theistic themes of salvation and deliverance. Symbols of pagan winter festivals that later were incorporated into the Christian celebration—for example, evergreen and candles as symbols of hope in the cold and darkness of winter—neatly express humanistic sentiments. Variations of the candle-lighting ceremony introduced by Percival Chubb remain a staple; the ceremony

in the 1982 festival, for example, paid tribute to embodiments of the community's highest values—peace researcher Ted Lentz represented the Light of Peace; Albert Schweitzer, Light of Goodwill; the arts, Light of Joy; Martin Luther King Jr., Light of Hope; and Jane Addams, Light of Love. Christmas carols and Hanukkah songs, with humanized lyrics, are sung by the Ethical Chorus, children's choruses, and the congregation; Percival Chubb's "Light of Ages" and "We Believe in Christmas" have continued to crop up from time to time. The festival traditionally opens with this greeting of anonymous authorship:

To you who gather in this Hall
For our Mid-Winter Festival,
We greetings give, and welcome you
As ancient custom bids us do;
And to this Feast we bid you bring The heart to join us as we sing Our carols, voicing old-time
mirth, And praise of Peace and Joy on earth.

(Ethical weekly, December 18, 1977)

The Spring Festival, held on Easter Sunday, celebrates renewal. Springtime, a time of birth, budding trees, and lengthening days, is a rich source of metaphors for personal and communal growth. Choreographed dances are common, as are plays spotlighting ethical renewal—such as 1979's "The Robin Who Frowned, Bossed Everyone Around, And Didn't Sing All Spring, Almost." The theme of the 1981 festival, "Free to be You and Me," exemplifies the association of the season with a shift in attitude:

As spring arrives, many of us feel an increase in energy and a renewed sense of purpose. We wonder at the beauty of life and feel an overwhelming sense of freedom as we breathe the fresh air and watch the birds spread their wings and fly. Just like the birds, we each want to spread our wings and pursue our self-determined goals.

The annual Spring Festival is celebrating the freedom that each of us has to be who we are now and who we want to be. Each of us is unique. It is this freedom and uniqueness which allows us to determine our own beings. At the same time, we all have something in common. We are all people, free to question and feel and learn from these experiences. Life is a wonderful voyage in self-expression and self-discovery.

Let's all celebrate who you are... and who you want to be!"

(Ethical weekly, April 19, 1981)

The Society's newest festival, the Music Festival, was added to the annual cycle in the early 1980s. While music is a principal element of all festivals, it is often taped or performed by amateurs—of varying ability—and it tends to be subordinated to some overarching theme. The Music Festival brings it front and center. The festival, arranged by the Society's music director, includes performances by professional musicians and advanced music students. Some concentrate on the ethical import of music, such as the 1986 festival, which traced the influence of folk music, and the 1987 festival, which explored the use of song and music in Ethical Culture. In general, though, their purpose is at once more subtle and more direct: They are intended to facilitate a sublime experience in a congregational setting—an experience which, to many, is at—or near—the heart of religion, but which often is lacking in Ethical Culture. An address on the socioeconomic causes of gang warfare is enlightening, but it will never stir the soul like a fine baritone's rendition of "Danny Boy."

Recognition Sunday, usually held on the concluding Sunday of the season, was expanded in 1981 to include the awarding of citations to members who have performed outstanding service to the Society. Tributes to Sunday School graduates, and testimonials from them, have remained the central marks of the "Ceremony of Recognition of Passage." The Chubb tradition of responsive sentences was contemporized in the seventies with the incorporation of affirmations into the service. In the 1979 ceremony, for instance, congregants said these words to the young people: "We have stood by you in all days past and we stand with you now. Our faith is in you. You are our best hope for a future world which will know greater human love and peace on earth than have been so far in the history of the human story." The graduates responded by saying: "We are grateful for your love and support in our growing thus far, and for your faith in us as we move into the future." (Program flyer, May 20, 1979)

In addition to the festivals, several yearly observances are marked by special platform services. On Human Rights Day, observed on the Sunday nearest the December 10, 1948, anniversary of the United Nations' passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, leaders and guest speakers probe such issues as genocide, political imprisonment, and forced labor. That observance often coincides with Bill of Rights Day, the anniversary of the December 15, 1789, ratification of the Bill of Rights, which is similarly marked by addresses on civil liberties issues. United Nations Day was consistently observed by Leader James F. Hornback on the Sunday nearest October 24, the anniversary of the founding of the UN, and has been periodically observed by his successors; Hornback, an ardent advocate of the UN who was active in the St. Louis Chapter of the United Nations Association, frequently spoke and wrote on trends, power plays, and prospects for change in the institution. On occasion, the Society also conducts a Founders Day tribute to Adler, Sheldon, and other early leaders of Ethical Culture and the St. Louis community.

The Society has honored the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. virtually every year since his death. Journalist and political commentator George Hamilton Combs was scheduled to speak at the Society on April 7, 1968, but was called by his network to cover the assassination in Memphis. The platform meeting that day served as a memorial to the apostle of nonviolent resistance to injustice. In 1971 the Society, through the directors of the Sheldon Experiment, hosted the first citywide observation of King's birthday at Sheldon Memorial; the guest speaker at the later ceremony held at the Ladue meeting house was the Rev. Dr. John N. Doggett of Union Memorial Methodist Church. In subsequent years, the observance has been marked by addresses and dramatic presentations on civil rights and African American culture. William J. Harrison, director of Urban Projects in Washington University's School of Continuing Education and chairman of the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Committee, spoke in 1973. In 1976, Lawrence E. Nicholson, professor of psychology at Harris Teachers College, spoke on "The Legacy of Martin Luther King: A Bicentennial Perspective." The 1979 observance consisted of a panel discussion by members of the St. Louis chapter of the Association of Black Journalists; the participants—George Curry of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Cynthia Todd of KSD-TV, Donald Hammond of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Chris Moore of KETC-TV, and Bennie Rogers of the St. Louis American — assessed progress toward King's goals since his assassination. The Richard B. Harrison Players, a black theatrical troupe, presented Edward Albee's "American Dream" in 1977 and Lorraine Hansberry's "Raisin in the Sun" in 1980; the St. Louis Theatre Guild presented a pageant in 1978; and in 1981 actress Vivian Womble gave a dramatic presentation of black history in St. Louis. In 1986, a troupe of Society members presented a dramatization of the Society's deliberations over admitting blacks into membership; the production included modern dance and oral interpretations of King's writings.

Odds and Ends

The sharing of platform speakers during the County Experiment of the 1956-57 and 1957-58 seasons altered the Sunday morning habits of Society members. Members attending the county program at rented quarters grew accustomed to a 9:30 a.m. service, while the platform at the Sheldon remained at 11 o'clock. When the community moved to the Ladue meeting house, it compromised at 10:30, with Sunday School and Adult Association meetings beginning an hour earlier. At the start of the 1976-77 season, the Sunday schedule returned to that used before the County Experiment.

The legal validity of the Ethical wedding remained in doubt even after the departure of J. Hutton Hynd, whose resident alien status was a complicating factor. Although the Society's legal counsel believed that Leader James F. Hornback could legally perform weddings, couples still augmented the Ethical service with a civil ceremony—just to be safe—until the St. Louis Marriage License Bureau indicated in 1952 that Hornback's authority was unquestioned. Because the sanctioning authority of Ethical Culture never had been written into state law—as it had in New York—the issue arose yet again when Leader John Hoad, another resident alien, came to the Society in 1980. Society member Walter Hoops, a naturalized U.S. citizen, was certified as an adjunct leader so that he could perform marriage ceremonies until Hoad became a citizen a few years later. Demand for the services of Ethical leaders rose significantly in the late 1970s when Missouri attorneys general began enforcing a state law forbidding judges to accept gratuities for performing weddings; in addition, non-members with humanist leanings, as well as couples of different religious backgrounds, often are drawn to the pastoral attentiveness of Ethical leaders over the more perfunctory services of judges. By custom, Ethical leaders pocket the fees of non-members and place the gratuities of members in a charitable fund used at the discretion of leaders.

19. PARTNERS WITHOUT PARENT - THE EVOLVING MODEL OF THE NATIONAL UNION

For most members of the Ethical Society of St. Louis, the American Ethical Union is a hazy entity. Though referred to as the Society's "parent" organization, it does not fill the role—or command the respect—of a parent. But for all their complaints about the Union's ineffectiveness, members of ethical societies take pains to limit its authority: It is not permitted to exercise many of the functions of mainline sectarian hierarchies. Because the Ethical movement is non-creedal, the AEU does not sanction doctrine; because the movement is decentralized, the AEU does not assign leaders or meddle in local financial decisions. In fact, "it" is nothing other than a nationwide collective of Ethical communities, and the national ambitions of the St. Louis community have been demonstrably weak.

Through national assemblies and a democratic board of directors, the AEU helps to launch and maintain communities; sustains communications among member societies via meetings and publications; gives voice to members' ethical concerns by passing resolutions, lobbying legislators, and taking part in political action groups; and sponsors social action projects. Through administrative committees and the National Leaders Council, it oversees leadership training and certification; provides intellectual intercourse and ongoing professional grooming; and offers platform resources. And through its paid staff members, it offers administrative and educational guidance. One of its most cherished functions is simply to provide a sense of identification with a national and—through the International Humanist and Ethical Union—international movement.

The Society's lay leaders have consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of those services. Said former President Dennis Owsley in a 1986 interview: "A national organization should be one in which, if you need help in some aspect of your program, they ought to know who to go to to get that help for you—fundraising, adult education and so forth. Those resources ought to be made available. And there ought to be some kind of a real journal that ties together all of the component parts of this national organization. There hasn't been a real journal of that kind for a long time." (Interview with Dennis Owsley, Oct. 20, 1986) From time to time, trustees have suggested that the Society sever its costly ties to the Union, channeling its dues into local projects of more palpable value. The widely felt need for a unifying body and a national voice has consistently overridden that inclination.

The single greatest factor in the Society's sense of alienation from the AEU is the community's relative geographic isolation. Most ethical societies are on the East Coast; the St. Louis Society alone accounts for most of the Ethical membership outside that region. The close proximity and regular intercourse of Eastern societies tend to leave St. Louisans feeling like distant siblings. "My own feeling on the AEU is that they have generally felt that the Ethical movement didn't exist west of the Hudson," said Owsley. Another former president, Robin Jones, said her inability to maintain associations with Eastern leaders seemed an insurmountable obstacle to solidarity with the Union. "I never felt we got much from it," said Jones. "I just felt pretty remote. I always defended belonging to the AEU; I felt it was important. But it's just so difficult. When I was president, all the local presidents would meet once a month and have dinner in New York. Well, I never did. I felt lucky if I went to the annual assembly. So, it was very difficult to get much or to give much. So people resented sending them money." (Interview with Robin Jones, Sept. 24, 1986) Throughout most of the Union's history, the cost of travelling to national meetings—usually in New York and New Jersey — has been borne by individual societies. Historically, many of St. Louis's representatives have been members who have been able and willing to take on that cost themselves. Beginning in the 1970s, the board of trustees began budgeting limited travel funds for representatives. To encourage broader participation in meetings, the AEU board several times has agreed to an "equalization program" in which societies would pool travel funds, but implementation of such plans has been spotty.

Another impression that dampens enthusiasm for the AEU is that the Union is contentious and mismanaged. "The problem with the AEU," said Jan Christiansen, a former St. Louis representative to the Union, "is they're so unorganized themselves that they're incapable of helping others. They've always been like this; you've got an organization of people who are proud of the fact they don't agree on anything. Meetings are horrendous." (Interview with Jan Christiansen, Oct. 1986)

The organizational strife of the Union has arisen, in part, from efforts to attain thorough representation. For decades the board of directors, which meets quarterly, was composed of fifty to sixty people—a lay representative from each of the twenty or so member societies; a professional leader from each society that had one; and representatives of auxiliary organizations within the movement. Because decision-making was slow in such an unwieldy congress, much of the Union's business was conducted at the monthly meetings of the executive committee, which comprised eighteen to twenty members—board officers and directors-at-large elected at assemblies and appointed by the

president and auxiliary organizations. In addition, delegates to the AEU's annual assemblies cast the proportionately weighted votes of their societies in adopting a budget and authorizing by-law changes. A small paid staff, headed up by an executive director, tended to the Union's day-to-day functions at its headquarters in the New York Society's meeting house. Under this model, board meetings were reasonably productive when officers were strong and representatives cooperative. More often they were ambling, even divisive. The difficulty of putting over proposals and engineering workable programs exasperated many of St. Louis's representatives. A few especially devoted representatives, particularly professional leaders, maintained the community's ties to the organization in times of strain.

The frustration of member societies repeatedly spawned proposals to restructure the Union, usually by reducing the size of the board and increasing the authority of the executive committee. A plan that emerged several times called for elimination of the board, the functions of which would be entrusted to an expanded executive committee or transferred to the annual assembly. Many smaller societies, wary of their potential loss of clout in a concentrated authority structure, resisted such efforts.

In 1982, the AEU board of directors formed a Task Force on the Purposes, Priorities, and Structure of the AEU. Over the ensuing few years, the committee examined the goals of the Union and recommended new models for its operation. Its proposals included changes in the make-up of the board and executive committee, the periodicity of meetings, officers' terms, and the appointment of liaisons. Interested St. Louis members discussed the proposals at a membership meeting in May 1983 and at subsequent meetings of the AEU Study Committee and the board of trustees. In a position paper drafted by the executive committee and presented at the 1983 assembly, the St. Louis Society denounced the proposals as too conservative. As Dennis Owsley, the St. Louis president, told AEU President Fred Arden in a letter, "It has been our collective experience that unless the underlying problems of a floundering organization are addressed, any reorganization is an exercise in futility somewhat similar to 'rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.' We are very concerned about the life of the AEU as a viable national organization and want to become reinvolved if we can help address some of the underlying problems." (Letter from Dennis C. Owsley to Fred Arden, dated Oct. 11, 1983) In a letter to Walter T. Lawton, leader of the Westchester Society and chairman of the AEU Task Force, Owsley complained that the AEU was "so top-heavy and bureaucracy-ridden that it is unresponsive to the needs of its members" and noted ominously that the Society was "seriously studying our relationship to the AEU." (Letter from Dennis C. Owsley to Walter L. Lawton, dated Oct. 16, 1983)

St. Louis's position paper called for "streamlining" the organization by reducing the size of both the AEU board of directors and the executive committee. It also called for well-ordered accountability for the use of funds and personnel, consistent publication of a national journal, and firm management of staff members and the Leaders Council by the AEU executive committee. The paper caused a stir at the national assembly, where representatives of other societies expressed similar dissatisfaction with the AEU.

Refusing to surrender representation, AEU board members voted down St. Louis's streamlining proposals in 1984. However, mindful of the long-term need for restructuring, the board continued to consider new management models. The mission of the Task Force on the Purposes, Priorities, and Structure was expanded to Purposes, Priorities, Programs and Organization under the chairmanship of Dr. Tom Harries, a member of the Northern Virginia Ethical Society. Harries argued that discussion of reorganization was premature, that ethical society members around the country needed to take stock of their local congregations before deciding how best to reorganize the national body. Heeding that observation, the task force proposed conducting a yearlong series of discussions at each community. The project would be conducted in three phases:

Each society would assess its values, survey its own programs and plans, and then establish proposals for reorganizing the AEU. Because it sought to encourage the grass-roots expression of perceptions and hopes within the movement, the program was dubbed Project Emerge.

Project Emerge

After overcoming some early apprehensions, the St. Louis Society embraced the project. Working closely with national project leaders Calvin Chatlos and Peggy Hester, Leader John Hoad and members Marian Galvin and Mary Hill laid the groundwork for the project during the spring and summer of 1985. In the fall, Hoad and members Bob Camp and Lee Valentine trained facilitators in group dynamics and communication skills.

In promotional artwork created by member Jack Hill, the project was represented by a butterfly. Said an announcement in the Ethical Weekly: "The emergence of the butterfly from the chrysalis and the caterpillar is one of the ever-fascinating processes of nature.... Locked in the chrysalis of many hearts and minds among us, there are potentialities waiting to take flight. We look forward to their emergence. (Ethical Weekly, Dec. 8, 1985)

Discussion meetings were scheduled for six Sunday afternoons beginning in January 1986. Each Society member, in addition to receiving a written invitation, was asked by a facilitator to join in the discussions. Hoad kicked off the project with a platform talk titled "Inventing Ourselves: The Quest for Lifelong Education." In the first session, more than a hundred members took part in 14 discussion groups. Each participant was asked to list his or her top five goals for the Society, assigning five points to the most important goal and one to the least important. The exercise yielded the following goals, listed by number of points received:

Education

- 1 — Provide a setting and programs for continual education at all stages of life, including specifically a Sunday School for children. (179 points)
- 2 — Provide an organization to promote growth of ethical values in ourselves and the wider community. (170)

Fellowship

- 3 — Provide a system that promotes broad fellowship, observance of passages and celebrations, and that allows for expression and appreciation of the cultural and artistic aspects of life. (138)

Public Education

- 4 — Educate the public at large regarding Ethical Culture. (115)

Religious Experience

- 5 — Provide a non-dogmatic religious experience for individuals and families in a tolerant and accepting environment. (102)

Social Action

- 6 — Provide a setting where social issues can be discussed and social actions carried out either collectively or individually. (90)

Membership Growth

- 7 — Promote membership growth locally and nationally. (79)

Philosophical Exploration

- 8 — Provide a setting for exploration of the philosophical and intellectual aspects of life. (46)

Personal Support

- 9 — Provide a system of personal support in times of stress (emotional, spiritual, material, etc.). (33)

Organizational Strength

- 10 — Provide an adequate financial and organizational basis for the promotion of Ethical Society goals. (20)

Membership Involvement

- 11 — Provide a means or opportunity for members to participate and make a contribution to the Society. (11)

National Body

- 12 — Maintain a relationship with a national body. (6)

Membership Integration

- 13 — Provide a method of effective integration of new members into the life of the Society. (3)

In another session, participants assessed the value of Society programs, both existing and proposed. Again, the programs were listed in order of importance to participants, and in collating the data the responses were weighted to

reflect their relative value. Considering that assessing the national movement was a primary purpose of Project Emerge, the low valuation of AEU relations is striking:

1. Platform — 552.
2. Children's Sunday School — 439.
3. Whole Life (Adult) Education — 414.
4. Special Interest and Multigenerational Groups for fellowship, group activities (Singles, Couples, Middlscence, TWA, Ethicureans, etc.) — 348.
5. Support Groups to deal with life problems (divorce, grieving, serious illness, with counseling and educational opportunities) — 322.
6. Special Events (festivals, ceremonies, dances, music, art exhibits, "peak" experiences) — 307.
7. Membership and Outreach — 220.
8. Public Relations and Public Education — 220.
9. Retreat — 218.
10. Ethical Discussion Groups (on Emerge prototype) — 205.
11. Social Action — 201.
12. Adult Association in a discussion format — 133.
13. Music Programs (apart from Platform) — 127.
14. Data Bank (biographical and other information about and for members) — 120.
15. Outdoor Physical Activities (hikes, picnics, field trips, team games or sports) — 113.
16. First Sunday Luncheon (possibly expanded to "every Sunday" luncheon) — 91.
17. Financial and Administrative Support Functions (including fund-raiser for special projects) — 87.
18. Coffee Hour — 80.
19. (More) Potluck Dinners — 70.
20. Ethical Weekly — 42.
21. Summer School or Camp (K-6 ages) — 46.
22. Pastoral Functions (by Leader) — 32.
23. Liaison to National and International Organization — 22.
24. Weekday Preschool — 19.
25. Bookstand — 18.
26. Private Ethical Junior High and High School — 14.
27. Library Committee — 6.
28. New Projects Committee — 3.

In the penultimate Emerge session, special interest groups, drawing on the broader observations and hopes expressed in previous meetings, wrote specific proposals to be implemented in the Society in the ensuing years:

Financial and Administrative Support Functions

29. To better utilize our building through rental for appropriate activities.
30. To better educate our members regarding Board decisions by printing them in the Weekly.
31. To maintain a current list of Friends of the Society for the purpose of canvassing.

Social Action

32. To educate our members on social action opportunities in the St. Louis area via a Social Action Fair to be held during a Sunday coffee hour.
33. To form a social action legislative tracking system.
34. To make the social action bulletin board more accessible during coffee hour by moving the tables from in front of them.

Support Groups

35. To assist members in transition from previous religious affiliations; to have the Leader be a clearing-house to help members with problems find other members to assist them; to educate our members how to identify and assist those with problems; and to form a humanist-based Alcoholics Anonymous/Alanon organization.

Special Interest and Intergenerational Groups for Fellowship

36. To increase fellowship within the Society and with the wider community through more frequent, more varied, and more widely publicized ethical activities.

Whole Life (Adult) Education

37. To give members a thorough grounding in the history, nature, and characteristics of Ethical Culture and philosophy through various educational methods (e.g., pamphlets, platforms, workshops, orientations, and discussion groups).
38. To assist members with personal ethical growth through ongoing education.
39. To have a library useful to the membership with materials related to their interests in the Whole Life Education Program and other interests.

Membership/Outreach

40. To attract, integrate, and retain members through better utilization or reorganization of our membership, outreach, and newcomer committees.
41. To increase positive exposure of the Ethical Society in the media through expanded outreach committee and greatly increase budget for publicity.
42. To form a subcommittee of the outreach committee to respond regularly and immediately to newspaper articles/letters and radio programs which are detrimental to the humanist perspective.

Platform and Special Events

43. To advise the platform committee to continue to present high general interest topics for inspiration, education, and ethical challenge by speakers who have excellent content and delivery and to bring in national speakers as allowed by the budget—at least twice a year but no more than four per year. Speakers should be chosen by the Leader and the platform committee.
44. To publish copies of the platform talks for sale.
45. To meet the needs of those desiring more ritual and those desiring less, and to develop creative humanist festivals without the traditional religious elements through the formation of an ongoing committee of interested persons on both sides of the issue plus the Leader and Music Director.
46. To have a scrapbook of pictures and information about all members and past members to be initiated by an ad hoc committee and continued under the membership committee.
47. To reinstate previous level of platform publicity by holding a fund-raiser with proceeds earmarked for this purpose.

Children's Sunday School

48. To provide child care during special activities at the parents' expense if there are enough people interested each time.
49. To provide ethical education and goals at each level of the Sunday School curriculum and to give children an explanation of the Ethical Society that they can give to other children—through formation of a curriculum review committee and more input from the Leader.
50. To avoid asking parents new to the Sunday School for major teaching commitments by restructuring to have four or five teachers per grade for six- to eight-week segments, utilizing new parents for substitution, one- or two-week assistants, and teaching special interest classes.

The final Emerge session, held at the end of April, focused on the national movement. Participants named their expectations of the AEU:

- [A] *The AEU to establish a national presence* That is, public relations through all media, assessing our "market," and developing a usable PR program.
- [B] *The AEU to have active development and outreach program.* Including programs for starting groups, teaching them development, fund-raising, site location, administration, lay leadership, and how to qualify for professional leadership.
- [C] *The AEU to provide resources for whole life education.* That is, adding adult education to present religious education program.
- [D] *The AEU to have an administrative office as clearing house for the Movement.* To facilitate networking and handle publications. And national finances.
- [E] *The AEU to increase national political and social action involvement.* With an active lobbyist in Washington, D.C., apprising Societies of legislative matters, and help being given locally to develop skills for such involvement.

Participants also discussed models for the structure of the national body and laid out the essential components of the organization:

- [1] Professionals to be hired full or part-time for areas of responsibility, such as Market/PR, Development/Outreach, Religious Education at Sunday School and Adult level, Administration, and Political/Social Action.
- [2] Professionals accountable to AEU Board, with "department heads" chairing committees for various areas of activity—committee members to be representatives from regions.
- [3] The AEU to be regionalized on geographical basis to reduce number of AEU Board to not more than 20 members. Say, one AEU representative from each region per 150 members.
- [4] National Leaders Council to work hand in hand with AEU Board and to be responsible for philosophical content of Movement and professional leadership training.

From start to finish, the St. Louis Society's participation in Project Emerge project outstripped that of its fellow societies, owing to firm lay leadership and a broad commitment to examine the Society and the movement. The long-term experiment in group dynamics was enlightening to many participants; Society members expressed gratification in their discovery of each other and in the experience of being heard. One oft-repeated comment was that the project underscored the need for sustained communication in the community.

After digesting participants' proposals, the St. Louis Task Force prepared the Society's contribution to the nationwide undertaking. The proposals listed above were incorporated in the AEU reorganization model presented at the 1986 national assembly, held in St. Louis in honor of the Society's centennial. The cornerstone of the St. Louis

proposal was regionalization—restructuring AEU representation according to geographic regions rather than individual societies. The proposal was enthusiastically received, winning overwhelming support from the representatives in attendance. Assembly delegates also approved the concept of “multi-professional staffing,” under which national committees would hire and oversee professionals as needed to fulfill their functions, over the chief executive officer model that centralized authority in a single administrator.

After the assembly, AEU President Sophie Meyer formed a Transition Committee to detail implementation of the regionalization and multi-professional staffing plans. The committee, chaired by St. Louisan Karen Hoad, devised the mechanics of the models and solicited suggestions from member societies. The blueprint for regionalization took into account geography, the size and developmental stage of each society, and regional population. Under the plan, each region would send representatives to the AEU in proportion to its regional population, including members-at-large. The proposed ratio, as noted above, was one representative per 150 members. The proposal, in addition to reducing the AEU Board to a workable size, was intended to encourage networking among societies. It also was hoped that societies pooling resources in a given region would be better able to foster new communities. In addition, the Transition Committee sketched plans for regional and national cooperation on the principle functions of the Union, identified by the 1986 assembly as religious education, membership growth, social action, national presence, resource management, leadership training, and philosophical exploration.

At the 1987 assembly in Riverdale, N.Y., the proposed by-law revisions were debated by pro and con caucuses. Opponents argued that the plan was structurally flawed and that it was undemocratic because it limited representation. Proponents, noting that the restructuring had been bandied about for years and had won the support of Ethical leaders and members, urged ratification of the Transition Committee’s painstaking work. Again, the proposal was overwhelmingly approved.

The six regions delineated in the revised by-laws were:

- [1] New York, Westchester, Northern Westchester, Riverdale-Yonkers
- [2] Boston, Brooklyn, Long Island, Suffolk, Brooklyn, Queens
- [3] Philadelphia, Bergen, Essex, Lakeland
- [4] Northern Virginia, Washington, Baltimore
- [5] St. Louis, Chicago
- [6] Los Angeles, San Francisco

Under the reorganization, each region, as well as the National Leaders Council, selects representatives to the AEU board of directors. The regions form the following committees and send representatives to the corresponding national committees: Religious Education, Membership, Ethical Action, Public Relations, and Resource Management. The AEU also maintains committees on Leadership, Philosophical Exploration, Long-Range Planning, Finance, Law, and Mediation.

In addition to putting the AEU on a new course, Project Emerge spawned salient innovations in the St. Louis Society. The project, said Owsley, “reaffirmed some of the things that a number of us in the leadership had been talking about but really hadn’t seen our way through to do anything about.” (Interview with Dennis Owsley, Oct. 20, 1986) In the following years, the Society hired a full-time program director, Diane Schuch, to orchestrate the community’s educational and social events and oversee non-exempt employees. It hired a public relations firm to publicize community events and garner press coverage. It initiated an annual Social Action Fair to inform members and the public of opportunities to work for social change. And it added to its educational offerings workshops and support groups sought by Project Emerge participants. Other recommendations emerging from the discussions served as guides for countless committees charting the Society’s undertakings.

A Reluctant Contributor

Early on, the St. Louis Society established a tradition of fighting increases in AEU dues, and successive generations of lay leaders have honored that tradition. The community’s frontier mentality—the widely held belief that the Society would continue to prosper without a national affiliation—make it a tough sell when assemblies propose dues hikes.

In the early 1950s, societies were expected to contribute to the AEU \$3 for each member plus 15 percent of their membership contributions per year. For St. Louis, that formula spelled out to \$3,250 per year. That figure rose in increments—and, on occasion, in leaps, as when the New York Society began charging the Union rent in 1963—to about \$20,000 in the mid-1980s. More often than not, St. Louis has opposed increases. At times, the Society has simply refused to honor added assessments until it could do so painlessly. Its protests generally have included sharp criticism of the AEU board’s “unbusiness-like” practices, calls for budgetary restraint, and threats to withdraw from the Union. St. Louis’s recalcitrance, though a bane to the AEU leadership, often has emboldened societies that are similarly strapped for funds, sparking spirited debates at assemblies. Over the years, the Society has assumed the role of watchdog, insisting that increases in the AEU budget be thoroughly justified and democratically approved.

In addition to collecting dues for ordinary expenses, the AEU regularly has sought support for long-term security and expansion. Earlier examples included the 70th Anniversary Fund established in 1946 and the 75th Anniversary Fund in 1951. In the early fifties, the Union established an Endowment Fund—later named the AEU Foundation—to provide annual income for leadership training, ethical humanist publications, social service projects, public relations programs, and assistance to new societies. A committee of seven, not more than three of whom are AEU board members, oversees the raising and investing of funds for the foundation, and a separate board of directors authorizes the expenditure of income. The Union, through local canvassing committees, solicits contributions from ethical society members around the country. At the outset, St. Louisans supported the fund, contributing about \$5,000 toward the AEU’s goal of \$50,000. Another push in 1963 netted a similar contribution from a small group of loyal and well-to-do St. Louisans.

In 1968 the AEU board set a goal of raising the fund to \$2 million by 1976, the movement’s centennial year. Within a year, society members around the country had pledged more than \$100,000—the Union’s annual goal—toward the so-called Century Fund. Subsequent years were less fruitful, prompting Union leaders to scale back the goal to \$500,000. In St. Louis, AEU representative Nick Vasileff began beating the drum for the Century Fund in 1971. A strong believer in the efficacy of the foundation, he urged the Society to go beyond individual contributions, pledging as much as 3 percent of its net worth—at that time, about \$30,000—from the Growth and Development Fund or the Sheldon Fund. The proposal was not well received. He then suggested that the Society launch a capital fund drive to support both the Century Fund and the Society’s Endowment Fund. That proposal also died for lack of support among trustees, who, as always, questioned the value of the Union’s services. In 1975 Vasileff resigned as local chairman of the Century Fund in frustration. “I kept after the board for maybe three years, and nobody would lend an ear,” he said, explaining that “this Society has a big argument with the Eastern Seaboard societies. They think the Eastern Seaboard societies are like an exclusive men’s club.” (Interview with Nick Vasileff, Oct. 25, 1986) In the end, St. Louis members contributed only about \$1,000 to the fund. After the passage of the centennial celebration, the AEU Foundation dropped the Century Fund title and continued to solicit individual donations, with limited success.

The Humanist Subvention

Since *The Standard* ceased publication in the 1950s, national periodicals of Ethical Culture—including *AEU Reports*, *ethical society*, and *American Ethical Union Dialogue*—have risen and fallen like ocean waves. In an effort to establish a stronger and more populist voice, the AEU in 1969 began providing financial support to *The Humanist*, a national bi-monthly magazine of essays and news reports that previously was wholly owned by the American Humanist Association. Beginning with the March-April issue of 1969, the words *and Ethical Forum* were added to the magazine’s title. The Union’s annual contribution ranged from \$6,000 in the first year to \$22,000 in 1977, the final year of sponsorship. At the end of that span, the subsidy accounted for about 20 percent of the AEU budget—roughly \$6 of the \$25 per-capita dues then paid to the Union. In return, all ethical society members received free subscriptions. Ethical societies also helped distribute the magazine by promoting non-member subscriptions and offering copies for sale at their bookstands. During the first four years of the AEU subvention, the magazine’s subscriptions rose from 6,500 to 28,000, reflecting the effectiveness of the distribution network and the heightened quality made possible by the additional funding.

Many ethical society members were dissatisfied with the publication, complaining that it provided insufficient coverage of the Ethical movement. Some member-subscribers also contended that the magazine’s longtime editor, Paul Kurtz, a professor of philosophy at the University of New York at Buffalo, represented a humanist philosophy that was more decidedly secular than that of Ethical Culture. Further, the Ethical Culture hierarchy, including the professional leaders, had no clearly defined editorial control over the publication—a fact that especially rankled former editors of AEU organs. Ethical leaders and AEU directors repeatedly debated whether to maintain the

subsidy. James F. Hornback, a consistent and vocal supporter of *The Humanist*, persuaded the St. Louis board of trustees to fight for retention of the subsidy. In 1974 the board went so far as to state that it would recommend a cutback in AEU dues if the Union dropped its sponsorship. The ploy worked: The subsidy, which had been omitted from the proposed budget, was replaced before the budget was approved at the annual assembly. The following year, the St. Louis delegation—with the solid support of a membership vote—led another successful battle to retain the sponsorship. The fight finally was lost in 1977 when the National Council of Leaders, calling *The Humanist* a “one-man magazine” that was “not interested in AEU problems and Ethical perspectives,” voted to recommend termination of the subsidy. The 1977 assembly, over the dissenting votes of the St. Louis and New York delegations, accepted the recommendation. AEU sponsorship ended effective after the November/December issue of that year, at which time the AHA again became sole owner and sponsor.

Hornback was deeply dismayed by the decision. A confirmed rationalist, he had little sympathy with critics who deemed the magazine excessively hostile to religion. In a May 15, 1977, address titled “The Humanist Magazine: A Sponsor’s Farewell,” he characterized the conflict as one of “‘mystics’ against ‘rationalists,’ ... ‘religious’ humanists against ‘secular’ humanists, debunkers of the occult and fundamentalism against defenders of all things spiritual.” (Promotional synopsis of “The Humanist Magazine: A Sponsor’s Farewell”; Ethical weekly, May 15, 1977) He saw the ending of the venture as a symptom of Ethical Culture parochialism:

The larger issue, as I see it apart from the quality or effectiveness of the particular magazine, is the question of outreach for our movement and its message. For better or for worse, the Ethical movement has chosen over many years to be parish- and person-centered rather than philosophic, missionary, and public. This emphasis has often been justified as the more “religious.” But either emphasis may legitimately be called “religious” in the scholarly and legal usage of that term. The adjective “priestly” or “pastoral” has usually been added for religious organizations which emphasize services for their members, as distinguished from “prophetic” or outward orientation.

* * *

So the debate about “The Humanist” swirled around the budget line, in an AEU Assembly where the decreasing purchasing power of \$25 per person per year... raised a keen sense of conflict in priorities.

* * *

Through it all ran the undercurrent of what I still consider the basic issue—localism and “service to members,” as against a sense of mission and movement. Paradoxically, or so it must seem to some, it is the religious movements which give most to missions and outreach which are growing, and those which concentrate on members’ needs and wishes which are dying. So let us live a little!

(Ibid.)

A Collective Voice for Justice

The American Ethical Union, though hampered by a small and diffuse membership, makes its mark in the arena of social justice. Through pronouncements, lobbying efforts and cooperation with like-minded organizations, the Union brings the collective weight of the membership to widely supported ethical causes.

One of the ways in which ethical society members make their voices heard is through resolutions passed at annual assemblies. A standing committee solicits proposed resolutions from societies year-round. In St. Louis, members submit recommendations to the board of trustees for referral to the AEU Public Affairs Committee, with or without board endorsement. The committee reviews and sometimes revises these proposals, then distributes them to the societies for discussion at membership meetings. The final list of resolutions, in order of priority as established by membership votes, is then presented to assembly delegates. Because discussion of these proposals has at times commanded an inordinate amount of attention at assemblies, in recent years debate has been limited to resolutions opposed by one-third of delegates on first vote. Typical resolutions have called for: state bans on capital punishment, an end to the military draft, an end to the Vietnam War, amnesty for conscientious objectors, abolition of apartheid

in South Africa, a ban on underground nuclear testing, legal protection for the civil rights of homosexuals, stricter controls on gun sales, prohibition of state aid to parochial schools, prison reform, support for public housing, and increased assistance to developing nations. Copies of resolutions are disseminated to policy-making officials in government, industry and religion.

The AEU, sometimes in league with the American Humanist Association and the Unitarian Universalists of America, has launched several Washington-based legislative watchdog and lobbying committees. In 1968, the AEU and AHA jointly established the Council for Humanist and Ethical Concerns (CHEC). Under the chairmanship of Edward Ericson, then leader of the Washington Society, the council represented an ethical humanist perspective in lobbying for measures that enjoyed broad support among the organizations' members. Notably, Ericson successfully argued for changes in a Selective Service form to bring it in line with Supreme Court decisions recognizing the claims of humanist conscientious objectors. The AEU allotted about \$8,000 a year for the work of CHEC.

A successor to CHEC, the Joint Washington Office for Social Concern, was founded by the AEU, AHA, and UUA in the early seventies. The office sought congressional support for racial desegregation, an end to the Vietnam War, and retention of the ban on common prayer in public schools. The office closed in 1975 when the AHA halved its contribution and the UUA withdrew its funding because of financial difficulties. The 1976 AEU Assembly allocated funds to revive the office. For many years the AEU Washington Office was overseen by Raymond Nathan, a retired attorney, public relations man and former president of the Washington Society. Under Nathan, the office fought to protect church/state separation and lobbied for such proposals as national health insurance and nuclear disarmament. Nathan also served as a director of the National Inter-Religious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors (NISBCO), of which the AEU and the National Service Conference were affiliates, representing the rights of humanist objectors. The Washington Office informs ethical society members of pertinent legislation and lobbying activities via a newsletter, "Washington Report."

The Ethical movement has consistently supported the pro-choice movement, fighting for legalization of abortion and—after the landmark *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision—retention of safeguards for abortion rights. Because the battle has been fought largely at the state level since 1973, the AEU—and in particular the National Women's Conference—has supported pro-choice activists in the societies by disseminating information on legislative and court activity, recommending speakers, and filing friend-of-the-court briefs. In 1976 the St. Louis Society, by a near-unanimous vote of the board of trustees, became a member organization of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, a pro-choice coalition endorsed by the National Women's Conference. According to the announcement of the move in the *Ethical Weekly*, coalition members "though they may hold differing views on the morality of abortion... have concluded that the decision concerning abortion can be made only by an individual in accordance with her conscience, consistent with sound medical practices." (*Ethical Weekly*, Jan. 2, 1977) The St. Louis Society, like other ethical societies, has consistently been represented in local chapters of the coalition.⁶¹

The AEU naturally has been in the vanguard of the fight to maintain separation of church and state. In the 1970s and into the eighties, a nationwide swing toward religious fundamentalism spawned legislative proposals to reinstate some form of prayer in public schools and governmental subsidization of parochial education through tax credits or other means.⁶² Fundamentalists generally sought a more prominent role for Christianity in government and public policy. Ethical humanists, vilified for purportedly undermining moral values by advocating self-determination, responded by arguing for the principles of tolerance and pluralism enunciated in the Constitution. In 1981, the New York Society conducted an interfaith rally for Moral Democracy and established a bi-monthly bulletin and a center by that name under Ericson's leadership. The National Leaders Council, for its part, adopted a resolution spelling out the Ethical movement's commitment to church/state separation:

Religious freedom is in danger today. We are deeply concerned about what extreme right-wing religious forces are doing and saying, because we believe that their program threatens values rooted in our Constitution which have sustained the open and democratic character of American

⁶¹ Leader James F. Hornback hedged the Ethical movement's commitment to abortion-rights activism, saying "Our Society and the AEU have gone on record, by substantial majorities, as opposing any law restricting free choice, religious freedom, and medical freedom, in the matter of abortions. But the ethical decision as to the personal and social advisability of abortion in any particular case simply begins where the law leaves off." (*Ethical weekly*, Jan. 22, 1978)

⁶² Bergen leader Joe Chuman in 1983 testified in the landmark federal trial that struck down the use of periods of silence in public school classes as a substitute for oral prayer. In his ruling, Judge Dickinson Debevoise quoted at length from Chuman's testimony.]

society. In opposition to the aims and methods of the extreme religious right-wing, we stand united in affirming the following beliefs:

AS RELIGIOUS HUMANISTS WE UPHOLD a vision of American Society that is religiously pluralistic.

WE STRONGLY BELIEVE that government should be secular and neutral in accordance with the principle of separation of church and state. We are therefore opposed to all efforts to impose religious doctrine and practice upon American government.

WE BELIEVE in the right to intellectual freedom. We support a climate of open discussion and debate of political, social, and religious issues free from intimidating influences or restraint by a political or ecclesiastical censor.

WE AFFIRM that the spirit of religion counsels an appreciation for tolerance, charity, compassion, and understanding — values jeopardized by the objectives and methods of extreme right-wing religious forces.

WE AFFIRM the supreme importance of ethical ideals and practice in all aspects of private and public life, urging ethical growth and the exercise of responsibility in family life, public education, social relationships, and national and international concerns.

WE RECOGNIZE that in the 1980's America faces many different social problems. But we are in agreement that the proposals and tactics of these new religious extremists block the path toward constructive solutions and present grave dangers to the freedom and vitality of American democratic life.

WE INVITE those who support the above principles to join with us in defense of these values.

Just as the St. Louis Society has long sought to commonly undertake a social service project, so the AEU has aimed at launching a nationwide project in which all member societies could participate. The 1984 assembly passed a resolution to search for and implement a national undertaking that would “unify local Societies/Fellowships and identify us nationally as a resource for ethical decisions and behavior.” The following year, the AEU Board decided to make a national project out of developing a model for a School of Ethics that could be adapted by member societies. The St. Louis Society, by sharing the development of its Whole Life Education program—a season-long series of classes, workshops, and seminars—has had a prominent role in creating the blueprint being adopted throughout the movement.

The Encampment for Citizenship, the one truly nationwide project of the Union, enjoyed its heyday in the fifties and sixties. The program expanded in 1965, with encampments conducted at three sites in the continental United States and Puerto Rico; it was pared back to one site in the mid-seventies because of financial constraints. New York leader Algernon Black recruited participants and drummed up financial support for the encampment on his visits to ethical societies; local committees augmented his efforts year-round. The cost of the program—reaching about \$1,000 per person in the late seventies - - deterred many would-be participants, but organizers urged interested youngsters to take advantage of scholarships and local sponsorships. In St. Louis, the board of trustees willingly sponsored participants through grants from the Bullock Fund, which was set up to fund educational undertakings. A drop-off in college-age applicants in the seventies—commonly laid to growing cynicism and avarice in that age group—prompted a shift to recruitment of high school students. In the latter years of the program, organizers noted a diminishment of community feeling among campers. The program petered out in the early eighties. “By the time it hit its demise,” said Virginia Harris, a St. Louis Society member and veteran of the program, “we were into that era on campus where [students] were into getting a degree so they could make a good living. It was not that idealistic period when students wanted to change the world.” (Interview with Virginia Harris, July 31, 1986) After the encampment foundered, conventions of ethical society youth groups at Hudson Guild Farm in New Jersey took its place.

Establishment of a wilderness conference center, a longtime dream of AEU leaders, came to fruition in 1968 when a benefactor deeded to the Union 110 acres in New Jersey, about 30 miles from AEU headquarters at the New York Society. The property, formerly the site of Camp Midvale, a famous socialist camp and cabin retreat, had fallen into disrepair. The AEU borrowed \$100,000 from the New York Society to pay back taxes on the land and make capital

improvements, but those funds were devoured by administrative costs and routine repairs. The 1973 AEU Assembly authorized supplementary fund-raising among ethical society members to put the center in the black, with little success. Shortly afterward, Mr. and Mrs. Walter M. Weis, loyal members of the New York Society and ardent conservationists, paid off the center's mortgage, back taxes, and the debt to the New York Society, with the proviso that 70 acres of the property remain undeveloped. The Weises augmented their gift the following year, providing enough funds to cover the salary of an ecology director for a couple of years. The center, renamed the American Ethical Union Weis Ecology Center, includes sleeping accommodations, a dining hall, meeting areas, hiking facilities, and a swimming pool. It attracts about 10,000 visitors a year, mostly members of conference groups unrelated to Ethical Culture. The Tuesday Women's Association of the St. Louis Society became a supporting member organization of the center in 1974.

A dream that never came to pass was the construction of an Ethical Culture Retirement Center. The project was meant to provide for elderly members of the Ethical movement a home that would embody the spirit of religious humanism. The center, which would have been built in Riverdale (West Bronx), N.Y., was to be a residence for older men and women of limited income; it was to include about 100 apartments for people in good health who sought companionship, security and an atmosphere imbued with "the humanist principles of the worth and dignity of each individual at every period of life." The not-for-profit corporation pursuing the plan, the Ethical Culture Retirement Center Inc., was separate from the AEU but acted with the support of the Union; its principal movers were members of the Riverdale-Yonkers Society. In 1978 the St. Louis Society, like other communities, pledged \$500 toward a total pledge of \$10,000 needed to satisfy a government requirement of proof of financial stability. The corporation initially hoped to build the center on land owned by the Ethical Culture Schools, but the schools' board of governors voted to limit further construction on the property to school uses. The corporation then sought individual contributions to purchase adjoining land but failed to garner sufficient support.

20: TOWARD RESPONSIBLE GIVING - FUND RAISING 1950 TO 1986

The Society's financial well-being in the postwar era and beyond has been considerably more stable than in previous years. Though membership has not dramatically increased, the community's annual budget has risen from about \$25,000 in 1950 to more than \$200,000 in the mid-1980s. However, the Board of Trustees never has had the luxury of operating with a comfortable financial cushion. Deficits have been common; ordinarily, they are covered with transfers from unrestricted funds. The overall level of membership contributions has been poor in comparison with those of similar religious communities, but generous bequests by a handful of donors have gotten the Society through its leaner years. In fact, the existence of the Society's endowments has at times lulled members into believing substantial contributions were unnecessary; only impending crises and persistent educational campaigns have succeeded in cracking that dangerous misconception.

The practice of requiring members to pay a minimum level of "dues" each year ended in the early 1960s. In its place, finance and fund-raising committees have devised suggested giving schedules on a sliding scale. The long-running rule of thumb has been 2 percent of gross annual income for a household. Single members are asked to contribute 75 percent as much as a family, and partial families—in which only one spouse belongs to the Society—are asked to contribute half the amount suggested for a family. Those suggestions are for members in middle economic ranges; detailed giving guides have adjusted them for low- and high-income earners. In the 1970s, the board adopted a policy for exempting certain members from making financial contributions. According to the policy, which has been consistently observed, elderly members of long standing who have limited resources or are no longer administering their own finances are completely exempt. Other members of limited resources are exempt from making contributions so long as they evince interest in the Society through their attendance and participation in Society events. A by-law amendment passed in 1980 empowers the leader, president, and chair of the Membership Committee to jointly decide whether to retain a non-contributing member. In practice, only members who cease attending Society events and fail to respond to inquiries are dropped from membership.

Until the late 1970s, pledge drives were sporadic. Two full-scale drives were held in the 1950s. The first was prompted by a parallel campaign conducted by the AEU: Heartened by participation in the five-year extension program financed by the 60th Anniversary Fund drive, the Union in 1950 began soliciting funds for a 75th Anniversary Fund. In addition to contributing to this fund, the St. Louis Society wanted to increase its expenditures for lectures, building repairs, and the Sunday School. Initially, the local goal was set at \$32,500 — \$12,500 for a five-year annual pledge of \$2,500 to the AEU and \$20,000 for the purposes of the St. Louis Society over the same five-year period. The board later raised the goal to \$40,000, with 40 percent of the total slated for the AEU and 60 percent slated for St. Louis. If the full amount were pledged, the local fund was to provide \$3,000 a year for five

years to the AEU fund and \$5,000 a year for expansion of St. Louis programs. Should the local drive fall short of that goal, those allocations were to be reduced according to the 60/40 formula. The drive was kicked off with a community dinner and rally held in January 1951. Dr. Henry Neumann addressed the rally on behalf of the AEU. Pledges from more than 200 Society members amounted to just under \$29,000 — \$11,000 short of the goal. The board added to the fund several bequests received in the early fifties, bringing the total up to about \$34,000. Throughout the decade, money from the local 75th Anniversary Fund—later merged into the nascent Growth and Development Fund—was used to cover operating deficits and fund modest increases in contributions to the AEU.

The most ambitious fund drive of the decade, held in honor of the 80th anniversary of the founding of Ethical Culture, taught Society leaders the folly of pushing members too far. The Society in 1957 conducted a two-pronged drive for increased dues and special contributions to the Growth and Development Fund. The board hoped the drive would bring in an additional \$10,000 a year in pledges; the goal of the Growth and Development portion of the drive was set at \$125,000. Pledges to the capital fund drive were to be paid over a period of three years and spent over a period of five years. Members were asked to pledge annual dues amounting to one and one-quarter percent of their net income; they were asked to pledge another 2 percent of their net income for three consecutive years to the Growth and Development Fund. The all-member drive was conducted in April 1957 by Society volunteers; a dinner funded by special contributions kicked off the campaign. Of the members who responded to the solicitation, about 43 percent increased their annual pledges; 51 percent maintained their pledge levels; and 6 percent reduced their pledges. The total increase in yearly pledges amounted to only a few thousand dollars; the shortfall forced the executive committee to make severe cuts in the 1957-58 budget. The Growth and Development Fund fared even worse: Of those responding to the drive, 54 percent made three-year pledges; 1 percent made two-year pledges; 6 percent made one-year pledges; and 30 percent made no pledge to the fund. Total contributions to the fund came to less than \$43,000 - - about 34 percent of the goal. The disappointing results of the drive were laid to the relative newness of every-member campaigns and the need to train solicitors more intensively.

The Society's history of fund raising, however, indicates that motivation is at least as important as methodology in increasing giving patterns. The yearly pledge campaigns in the 1950s consistently failed to reach their goals, forcing the board to cover operating deficits by drawing on the Growth and Development Fund. On the other hand, the Building Fund campaign conducted in 1961 netted more than \$318,000 — a sum that more than matched the bequest which seeded the fund. After fulfilling pledges to the special fund, however, Society members returned to more accustomed levels of contributing: Once the Society settled into the Ladue meeting house, five-figure operating deficits and interest on the Society's building loan ate into reserves at an alarming rate.

Part of the Society's difficulty in raising giving levels is the natural reluctance of members to directly solicit contributions from fellow members. In the 1960s and early 1970s, affluent members often bailed the Society out of dire straits. While all-member canvasses were not uncommon, members of ad hoc pledge committees usually focused their attention on that handful of reliable benefactors, leaving other members to evaluate their pledging patterns unassisted. The problem started at the start: New members were told they were expected to contribute, but their early mentors did not always spell out recommended giving levels. Inductees were sometimes given pamphlets offering pledge suggestions—usually 1 percent to 2 percent of net income for middle-class families, proportionately less for singles and married members whose spouses did not belong—but in the absence of direct counseling, they tended to take their cue from the comparatively low pledges of longtime members.

To improve communication about things financial, the Board of Trustees in 1976 established the Lay Financial Panel. The five or more members of the panel helped new members formulate fair contributions and called on members who either failed to fulfill their pledges or gave at the same level year after year. The Financial Panel also communicated with the membership through mailings and notices regarding the Society's budgetary concerns. The panel initiated and, for years, oversaw the annual pledge drive, but it functioned throughout the season, ensuring greater continuity in membership contacts.

A survey conducted in the 1977-78 season indicated general agreement, if not compliance, with the panel's giving suggestions. Of the 112 members who returned questionnaires, 55 percent said the 2 percent recommendation was equitable. At the same time, however, the average pledge of the respondents was only 1.4 percent. Asked how the Society should avoid deficits such as the \$30,000 whopper of the previous season, only 30 percent favored increased contributions from present members; twice as many respondents said the better solution was to attract new members. Although the survey was intended, in part, to heighten members' awareness of the Society's financial needs, it determined that members were not nearly as ignorant as trustees had feared: Asked how the Society ought to allocate receipts in excess of operating expenses, 66 percent of respondents said the top priority should be

replenishing the capital funds depleted by years of deficit spending. On that count at least, board and membership were in agreement.

The strengthening of the Society's reserves began in 1978 with a drive to match a challenge grant. In 1977, James S. McDonnell, a Society member and retired chief executive of the McDonnell Douglas Corporation, a St. Louis-based defense contractor, pledged a \$50,000 grant to the Society's Endowment Fund if other donors matched the figure by the end of 1978. The Endowment Fund, started in 1952 with a \$1,000 memorial contribution, had stood at about \$27,000 before the challenge drive. According to the terms of the fund, the Society may spend only interest earned on the capital; a successful fund drive would substantially increase the Society's yearly income.

Contributions toward the challenge were received in late 1977 and throughout 1978, but the formal drive, organized by board treasurer Richard Lockard, did not begin until the fall of 1978. Fearing a broad appeal for contributions would dampen the response to the spring pledge drive, the board required the Challenge Grant Committee to limit its initial solicitation to "approximately 50 families whose business and family status might seem to indicate greatest availability of capital funds." (Minutes of Board of Trustees meeting, Oct. 15, 1978) Contributions from the target group raised the total in the matching fund to \$38,500, and the all-member solicitation that followed pushed the matching fund nearly \$6,000 over the challenge level. The excess was placed in the Growth and Development Fund. With the success of the Endowment Fund drive, the Society's total income from capital reserves grew to about \$12,000 a year—a figure that represented half the community's operating deficit in the 1978-79 season. The Endowment Fund received an unexpected boost when a Society member in 1980 made a year-end contribution of \$49,000 to the fund.

Despite the generosity indicated by the challenge grant drive, the Lay Financial Panel had difficulty spurring long-term changes in giving habits. For the first time in years, an all-member canvass was held in the spring of 1978. The results were heartening: Members increased their overall level of giving by \$9,000, only \$1,000 short of the goal for the drive. Pledges for the 1978-79 season totaled \$68,259. In the next few drives, however, pledges flattened out. In both 1979 and 1980, the Lay Financial Panel asked members to raise their yearly contributions by \$25 for each \$10,000 of income. In the 1979 drive, members raised their pledges by a total of only \$3,000, representing an increase of less than \$10 per giving unit. The 1980 drive fared even worse, with the pledge total rising only \$1,800. Although the Society continued to outspend its receipts, the membership seemed to have reached its contributory limit.

The "YES" Campaign - Raising Consciousness About Raising Funds

Determined to raise consciousness about the ethics of giving, the Society in 1982 conducted its most ambitious fund drive since the 1961 building campaign. The goal of the drive was set at \$360,000; pledges would be paid over a two-year period. The funds were needed to finance extraordinary expenses, the greatest of which was for leadership; with Hornback's return from sabbatical, the board anticipated paying the salaries of two leaders for a transitional period of several years.

The long-term goal of the drive was to change members' pledging habits to more nearly balance yearly income and expenditures. The Society had been running in the red every year: Deficits since 1976 had totaled nearly \$100,000, depleting unrestricted reserves. Further, the recession of the mid-1970s weakened the Society's investment holdings; in the worst slide of that period, the total value of the Society's portfolio dropped from \$319,000 to \$213,000 — a loss of about one-third—between April 1973 and September 1974. At the same time, inflation increased the Society's expenses by an annual average of 7 percent; in unadjusted dollars, expenses had doubled between 1971 and 1981.

The problem clearly was not irresponsible spending: In terms of uninflated dollars, the board had cut expenses every year for more than a decade. Over the same period, contributions—also translated into uninflated dollars—had dropped by about \$7,000 a year. Members had had the impression that contributions were rising, but the purchasing power of those dollars was falling rapidly. Members were stuck in giving patterns that inflation had rendered grossly inadequate. In the 1981-82 season, the average pledge of a giving unit—single, couple, or family—was \$230; by comparison, the average pledges at several area churches surveyed that year ranged from \$400 to \$550. To bring contributions up to a realistic level, members would have to rethink the extent of their financial obligations.

The fund drive—dubbed YES, for Your Ethical Share—was perhaps the most intensive and sophisticated in the Society's history. According to promotional literature for the campaign, "'Your Ethical Share' means that each of us

is being asked to give responsible reflection to the value of the Ethical Society and to translate that into committed and tangible support. We are being asked, as the initials indicate, to say a resounding YES to what the Society both is and can be, and a resounding YES to its support.” To prime the pump, Hoad and Society President Ted Curtis published extensive essays in the Ethical weekly calling attention to the community’s financial plight and urging a heightened sense of responsibility. Hoad addressed the disinclination of free-spirited Society members to maintain an institution. “Liberal minds are often escaping from the restriction and demands of institutions, and one sympathizes,” he wrote. “But unless we are going to pursue a very individual course, we find a need for fellowship and a need to organize to sustain our principles and our way of life. The organization that supports our cause requires our support.” (Leader’s Word, Ethical weekly, December 6, 1981)

Despite considerable resistance from the membership, the board hired a professional fund-raiser, Roger Cowan, to direct the campaign. Cowan, a former Presbyterian minister with 16 years of fund-raising experience, and an administrative assistant devoted their full time to the campaign for seven weeks. Aided by campaign Chairman Frank Nutt, Cowan led off the campaign with an educational program consisting of slide presentations and dinner discussions at members’ homes. At a platform program and luncheon devoted to the campaign, Society leaders detailed the community’s needs. In similar forums, rank-and-file members presented testimonials aimed at focusing appreciation of the community. As attention turned to the nitty-gritty, a ten-member committee helped Cowen evaluate the pledging capability of each giving unit, and well-trained solicitors presented each of the Society’s high-level contributors with a specific challenge—a practice that sparked controversy among members and trustees alike. In all, more than 60 volunteers took part in the all-member canvass.

The campaign netted about \$200,000 — far short of the \$360,000 two-year goal. The shortfall forced deep cuts in the proposed budgets for 1982-83 and 1983-84. On the plus side, however, the drive did succeed in changing members’ giving habits: The average pledge rose from \$279 to \$424, and some members doubled or tripled their pledges. Reaction to the tally ranged from frustration to qualified optimism. Curtis noted that “there is a sense of disappointment among many who worked hard on the campaign,” but hastened to add that “we... should not lose sight of what we have: a viable, dynamic organization, with a large core of dedicated and hardworking members.” (Ethical weekly, March 14, 1982) Nutt saw less cause for encouragement: “All too many members... seemed to have ignored the board’s appeal and are continuing in long-established giving patterns.... Proof that we have no way to continue deficit financing may have been heard but a large number seemed to have decided that it was not their problem. Well, if it is not the members’ problem, then whose problem is it?” (Ibid.) Hoad, observing that the campaign had brought pledges up to “a significantly higher plateau,” urged members to build on that momentum.

In the years that followed, the YES campaign came to be seen as a turning point in the Society’s fund-raising efforts. Though hardly an unqualified success, it did jar Society members out of complacency. Perhaps more importantly, it cut through embarrassment over things financial, setting the tone of directness and enthusiasm that would characterize successive campaigns. In 1983, the Board of Trustees, calling the plan for semi-annual fund drives a mistake, formed a standing Annual Canvass Committee charged with raising all the Society’s operating funds (the raising of capital funds was left to the Finance and Investment committees). Drawing on lessons learned in the YES campaign, committee members incorporated platform talks, member testimonials, and solicitor training in each year’s campaign beginning in 1984. Recognizing that members tend to give more when they feel more a part of the Society’s financial decisions, campaign organizers also began conducting “town hall” meetings at which spending priorities are discussed. In addition, surveys have been conducted to determine members’ support for such expenditures as platform bookings, educational programs, publicity, social activities, community service, music, and participation in the American Ethical Union. Beyond simply raising funds, the canvass has taken on the aura of an annual pep rally, a time for members to reflect on the benefits of belonging to the Society and to reassess their commitment to it.

Reliable Reservoirs: The Establishment of Reserve Funds

Beyond collecting membership pledges, the Society has benefitted enormously from one-time donations and bequests. Some such gifts are given for specific purposes; the use of others is left to the discretion of the Board of Trustees. In addition to helping the Society meet its budget, the reserve funds in which such donations are placed permit the initiation of experimental projects.⁶³

⁶³ More than a few Society members have bequeathed gifts in excess of \$10,000. Because it is not possible to list them all with certain fairness, only those gifts that seeded standing funds have been mentioned.

The John M. Prather Fund for Education in Ethics, the Society's longest-standing reserve fund, was established in 1939 with a \$25,000 bequest from Society member John M. Prather, who had died the previous year. Interest on the principal is intended to be used "for lectures or a series of lectures by eminent publicists, men or women, with a powerful ethical message and with a magnetism and manner of delivery that will attract large numbers of thinking people." The fund, administered by the leader, is used to pay for visiting speakers other than Ethical leaders.

The Endowment Fund was established in 1952 to provide the Society with annual investment earnings. Only interest on the principal may be spent. As detailed above, the fund swelled when Society benefactors matched a \$50,000 challenge grant in 1978. In 1982, the board voted to rename the fund the James S. McDonnell Endowment Fund in honor of the member who engineered the challenge grant.

The Members Relief Fund was begun in 1952 with a \$5,000 donation from Society member Anna Marguerite DuBois. The fund, used for assisting longtime members in financial need because of illness or misfortune, is administered jointly by the leader, the president, and the treasurer. A corollary relief fund for aged and needy members was established in 1983 with a \$10,000 bequest from Paula Wilhelmi Moody. The fund is administered by the leader, the president, and a woman member of the Society named by them; customarily, the president of the Tuesday Women's Association serves in that capacity.

The Tietjens Fund for visiting speakers is administered by the leader. Traditionally, it has been used to pay for the transportation and lodging of visiting Ethical leaders. It was begun in 1960 with a donation from Society member Charlotte Gerhard Tietjens.

The Richard Arthur Bullock Scholarship Fund is intended to promote "the education and ethical motivation of young people." It was established in 1966 in Bullock's memory with a \$10,000 donation from his widow. Income from the fund is administered by the leader in consultation with the Executive Committee; the fund's administrators are not bound to grant awards each year. Scholarships from the modest fund help selected students pay for college tuition, books, or attendance at the Encampment for Citizenship. While the fund was conceived, in part, to help candidates for Ethical leadership to attend AEU-sanctioned training programs, it seldom has been used for that purpose.

The Humanist of the Year Fund was established with a donation from James S. McDonnell after the initiation of the Society's Humanist of the Year Award. Interest from the fund provides a cash award of about \$1,000 to each year's honoree and offsets the cost of the dinner and ceremony.

The Building Access Fund was begun in 1981 with a gift from member Ruthe Nadel. It is used for capital improvements intended to make the building more accessible to handicapped people.

The Sheldon Fund was established in 1961 with a bequest from the estate of Anna Hartshorne Sheldon Chubb. At the time the bequest was received, the securities in the gift had a book value of about \$68,000 and a market value of about \$80,000. The funds, awarded to the Society in a late codicil in the benefactor's will, had been subject to a life estate for Percival Chubb, who died in 1960. According to the terms of the will, the fund was officially named the Walter L. Sheldon Memorial Building Fund. For years, it was believed that the fund could be used only to improve and equip the meeting house. However, the Board of Trustees determined in 1972 that the benefactor, anticipating that the funds might not be exhausted by those purposes, allowed for their use in covering general expenses. Both the principal and income were available for use at the board's discretion.

The Society's Growth and Development Fund has undergone several transformations and shifts in direction. It originally was established in 1955 with a \$25,000 bequest received the previous year from the estate of member Gaston DuBois and \$10,000 worth of contributions to the 75th Anniversary Fund. Several large bequests subsequently were placed in the fund. According to the original terms of the fund, the principal was to be used for exceptional purposes, such as funding innovative programs and making capital improvements; however, income from the fund could be used for ordinary operating expenses.

In 1961, the Board of Trustees, acting on recommendations of the Funds Committee, adopted narrower policies for administering the Growth and Development Fund. First, all bequests not otherwise designated would be placed in the fund. Secondly, both principal and interest were to be used for capital improvements and non-recurring expansion programs, not for ordinary operating expenses. Lastly, the fund—which temporarily included the \$275,000 Sommers bequest received in 1959 — was to be used to finance the new meeting house only to the extent that it was matched by members' pledges.

The fund received a welcome boost in 1971 with a \$26,000 cash donation from the German School Association and Free Community of St. Louis, better known as the Freie Gemeinde. The freethinkers association, which flourished with influxes of German immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, dwindled to a hard core of eleven members by the early 1970s. Several of those members, notably Walter Hoops, also belonged to the Ethical Society, whose aims and ideals are consonant with those of the Freie Gemeinde. The association did not formally disband until 1974, but the members voted to make the 1971 donation to ensure the continued use of those funds for the support of free thought in St. Louis. When the surviving members finally dissolved the association, they also conveyed to the Ethical Society a rental property that later was sold for \$25,000; proceeds from the sale were placed in the Special Gifts Fund, the eventual successor to the original Growth and Development Fund.

The policy limiting use of the Growth and Development Fund was disregarded as the board turned over in the 1960s and 1970s. Society stalwart R. Walston Chubb, who continued to monitor the board's activities long after he completed his record stint on the board, chastised trustees for using the fund to cover operating deficits without informing the membership. In a 1972 letter to the board, Chubb stated that money from that fund might properly be used to cover deficits arising from bona fide growth and development projects, such as assistant leadership, but he contended that members deserved the opportunity to object to use of the fund for what he termed "decline and retrenchment." (In a separate letter to a trustee engaged in managing the Society's finances, Chubb facetiously asked, "Is there an Ethical doctrine that the Lord provides for fools and drunkards?" He proceeded to assert that "the permanence of religious societies is often a function of frugality and good housekeeping and that terrible capitalistic habit of accumulating capital.") (Letter from R. Walston Chubb to Harold Hanke; dated January 25, 1972) Mr. Chubb's fury notwithstanding, trustees felt justified in using the Growth and Development Fund to cover rising deficits because it had become a catch-all for the investment of unrestricted bequests. Halfway measures—such as changing the name of the fund or requiring membership approval for annual disbursements beyond a fixed level—were considered but dismissed in the early 1970s.

In the mid- and late 1970s, proceeds from the sale of the Sheldon Memorial were placed in a fund called the Sheldon Sale Account. In 1977, the board voted to merge the account into the Growth and Development Fund, which thereafter served as the repository of payments on the mortgages held by the Society. In 1981, the Walter L. Sheldon Memorial Building Fund likewise was merged into the Growth and Development Fund; reflecting the board's intention to unabashedly use the fund for operating expenses, the newly formed fund was named the Sheldon General Purpose Fund.

Because the Sheldon General Purpose Fund comprised unrestricted contributions, it eventually came to be known simply as the Special Gifts Fund. In the early 1980s, the Society more intensively solicited gifts to this fund. Frank Nutt, a longtime trustee and fiscal adviser, and fellow members of the Special Gifts Committee offered members instructions on making bequests; contributing appreciated property, such as securities and real estate; and naming the Society beneficiary of life insurance policies that are no longer needed to ensure family security. In addition to providing legal and accounting advice to contributors, the Special Gifts Committee recommends uses for such contributions. According to a policy adopted in 1983 at the committee's recommendation, gifts of \$1,000 or more are used for extraordinary expenses such as building improvements, experimental programs, and the establishment of endowments for new projects. Gifts of less than \$1,000 are deemed contributions to the Tribute and Friendship Fund; such contributions are immediately available for the payment of general operating expenses. The Tribute Fund, initiated in the 1970s, is less a fund than a custom: Contributions to operating revenue in memory of loved ones and in recognition of happy occasions are acknowledged with engraved cards.

In 1981, shortly after the merger and renaming of the original Growth and Development Fund, a genuine—that is, properly circumscribed—Growth and Development Fund was established through the generosity of longtime Society member William R. Stuckenberg. Stuckenberg, a real estate developer, had donated stocks and parcels of investment property to the Society for years, permitting the trustees to invest sale proceeds as they saw fit. However, he was dismayed by the use of such funds for ordinary expenses; he envisioned a fund that would support the forthright "growth and development of the ethical humanist tradition." Consequently, he stipulated that proceeds from the property he donated in 1981 — a parcel worth about \$92,000 — be used solely for the sorts of original projects defined in the deed of gift. Appropriate projects mentioned in the deed include seminars, support of new societies, and improvement of the platform program. Upon receiving the gift, the board voted unanimously to name the new fund the Stuckenberg Growth and Development Fund. The benefactor's stipulations allow the Society to spend up to 5 percent of the fund's principal, in addition to the interest income, annually for at least 20 years. In making the seed donation, Stuckenberg said he hoped the board would "lean over backwards" to ensure that the fund would be used only for its stated purposes. Stuckenberg made subsequent contributions to the fund during his lifetime and left the Society a large bequest upon his death in 1986.

In 1982, the Stuckenberg Review Committee was formed to make recommendations to the board regarding use of the Stuckenberg Growth and Development Fund. Guidelines were drawn up for committee chairs and project leaders who wanted to apply for grants from the fund. The following year, a Stuckenberg Resource and Initiation Committee was formed to foster projects worthy of Stuckenberg funding. Committee members solicit ideas for programs, develop workable schemes, help form committees to implement programs, and make recommendations to the Stuckenberg Review Committee. The Review Committee serves as a watchdog committee to ensure that funds are spent in accordance with the terms of the fund and to verify implementation of approved projects. In a 1984 report to the board, the Resource and Initiation Committee listed seven types of undertakings that merit Stuckenberg funding: membership growth, including publicity; youth education; adult education, including seminars and study groups on personal growth, ethics, and values; platform improvement; communications, including publications and audiovisual materials; “propagation of the faith,” including the encouragement of satellite groups and new communities; and experimental programs. Applicants for funds are required to justify their proposals in light of those spending priorities. The fund often has been used for one-time projects such as audiovisual materials for the Sunday School and this book on the Society’s history. It also is used to seed programs that eventually may merit inclusion in the regular operating budget, such as an experimental advertising program begun shortly after the fund was established.

Keeping track of these reserve funds and their respective limitations is no small task, especially since the Society’s treasurer and Finance Committee members usually serve terms of only a few years. The terms of funds have at times been ignored; bequests and withdrawals have not always been recorded efficiently; and Peter has more than once been robbed to pay Paul. To offset the inconsistencies inherent in the administration of a not-for-profit organization, an unofficial substratum of Society members schooled in finance bolsters the work of incumbent trustees. From time to time, board presidents have convened committees to take stock of the Society’s resources and investment practices; since the early 1970s, annual reports on the status of the Society’s reserve funds have been exhaustive. In the 1980s, the computerization of the Society’s office and the hiring of a professional bookkeeper strengthened the Society’s money management, and a succession of fiscally minded presidents tightened procedures for internal auditing and regular reporting of revenues and expenditures.

21: SERVICE WITH A KNOWING SMILE - SOCIAL ACTION—AND INACTION— 1950 TO 1986

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the Ethical Society’s philosophy of community outreach has oscillated between the “ethical powerhouse” concept spawned in an earlier era and dedication to sponsoring and supporting service programs. As the heady achievements of the Workingmen’s Self-Culture Clubs have faded in the Society’s collective memory, the community’s confidence in its ability to make a mark in the community likewise has waned. Social needs also have changed markedly: Just as public education overtook the role of the Self-Culture Clubs at the turn of the century, increased government intervention in housing, health care, and other human welfare programs since the Great Depression has required many traditional service organizations to revise their objectives. The Ethical Society, never guided by a charter of public service to begin with, has instead been guided by the—often ephemeral—dreams of a few innovative members. The amalgam of programs conducted in the early 1970s under the collective name of the Sheldon Experiment are treated separately, as are educational programs, arguably the community’s most valuable form of outreach. Apart from these activities, the record of the Ethical Society’s “ethics in action” reflects the accomplishments of determined lay leaders who have won the loyalty of volunteers and the support of the board of trustees.

The Society’s principal social action committee in the 1960s had its roots in two discussion groups formed in the previous decade. One, the Ethical Forum, was simply the postwar incarnation of the Adult Discussion Group traditionally held before the weekly platform meeting; group members, most of them parents of Sunday School students, listened to guest speakers and discussed social problems and child-rearing. The other, the Ethical Issues Committee, was a think tank in which Society members examined public issues and hammered out position statements for recommendation to the board of trustees and the AEU; though forbidden by the board to make ethical pronouncements in the name of the Society, the committee did publish its conclusions—along with dissenting opinions—in its newsletter, *Ethics in Action*. The committee sent representatives to local conferences, both to present an ethical humanist viewpoint and to gather information for further debate at its meetings, held monthly on a weeknight. The committee also made tentative forays into social action and service, conducting letter-writing workshops after platform meetings and providing hospitality for foreign students.

Beginning in 1959, the Ethical Issues Committee sponsored an annual public forum. A 1959 forum on capital punishment, co-sponsored by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and featuring the Rev. C. Dismas Clark, the St. Louis prison chaplain profiled in the motion picture "The Hoodlum Priest," drew a crowd of 200. In 1960 the committee sponsored an open forum on the population explosion led by a panel of social scientists. A 1963 forum titled "St. Louis: Rich or Poor in the Year 2000?" was broadcast on a local radio station. The following year, the committee chose to sponsor several series of educational meetings—held during the pre-platform Sunday meetings—instead of holding isolated public events. No public forum was held in 1961, when the Society was host to an AEU convention that included no public events. The Society's public forum in the 1961-62 season was titled, "Are Integrated Neighborhoods Possible?"; John Ervin, professor of education at Harris Teachers College and a television interviewer, moderated a discussion by social scientists and civic activists before an audience of 150. The following year, the Ethical Issues Committee sponsored a forum on poverty titled, "St. Louis—Rich or Poor in the Year 2000?"; it featured a panel discussion by Leigh Doxsee, director of Public Relations for the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce; Prof. Daniel Mandelker, professor of law at Washington University; Chester Stoval, director of welfare for the city of St. Louis; and Eugene Mackey, an architect. In the 1963-64 season, the Society, in the name of the Ethical Issues Committee, jointly sponsored the first of a series of regional consumer conferences with the President's Commission on Consumer Interests and the St. Louis Consumer Federation.

In 1964, leader-in-training Norman Fleishman engineered a merger of the Ethical Forum and the Ethical Issues Committees—which had similar goals and overlapping memberships—into the Public Affairs Committee. The merger allowed for a smooth coordination of discussion topics and funneled more volunteers into the outreach efforts begun by the Ethical Issues Committee. The expanded group conducted clothing drives and sponsored cultural events for children.

The committee carried on the tradition of conducting public forums. In 1965 it sponsored a day-long workshop on the "Triple Revolution," an examination of the interplay of race relations, cybernetics, and nuclear armament. In 1966 the Society, in cooperation with the Metropolitan Union of Liberal Youth, hosted a debate on the Vietnam War. The following year, the community co-sponsored a citywide conference on U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China. In 1968 the Public Affairs Committee conducted an open meeting on black militancy and youth rebellion. And in 1970 the Society, in cooperation with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, sponsored a three-day workshop on peace efforts at Sheldon Memorial.

The Public Affairs Committee also assumed other functions of the Ethical Issues Committee, including sponsoring letter-writing workshops, providing information to Society members on upcoming public elections, conducting petition drives, and urging support for racial equality, anti-poverty programs, and other campaigns of principle. It eventually came to serve as the Society's liaison to the AEU's Public Affairs Committee, holding fund-raisers to support the Union's social service activities and recommending membership action on resolutions coming before the annual assembly. Beginning in 1967, it published a monthly Public Affairs Bulletin.

Books and Bedsprings

Participation in the Public Affairs Committee wavered until 1967, when it asserted its mission under the leadership of Eugene Sunnen. Sunnen formed two subcommittees—a Social Action Committee, which would support activist organizations and provide opportunities to influence government policy, and a Social Service Committee, established to oversee philanthropic activities. The former committee staffed an information table on Sundays to distribute literature on citizen movements and pending legislation. The latter adopted as its principal field of service the Pruitt-Igoe housing project, a venture conceived in idealism that had notoriously deteriorated into a place of degradation and violence.

Society member Margaret Pinkus, named by Sunnen as co-chair of the Public Affairs Committee, had begun efforts to serve the Pruitt-Igoe community a few years earlier, and she remained the driving force in the program after the committee lent its support. Long active in the League of Women Voters, Pinkus decided to take concrete action after years of educating herself and fellow Society members on the squalid conditions that prevailed at public housing projects. "I give tremendous credit to Margaret Pinkus," said Sunnen. "She was ill with cancer, and she devoted herself to this. She was a very public-spirited person." (Interview with Eugene Sunnen, Oct. 25, 1986)

Pinkus formed a committee of Society members and residents of a building in the Pruitt-Igoe complex to coordinate support efforts and mutual education; active volunteers from the Society, in addition to Sunnen, included Garnet Blake, Esther Holsen, Clarence and Leona Klasner, and Caryl Sundland. The committee started slowly and

cautiously, first arranging tours of Pruitt-Igoe for Society members and recreational “Go-See” visits to St. Louis tourist attractions for typically homebound residents of the project. Pinkus helped organize a tenant council that represented residents’ concerns to the St. Louis Housing Authority. She also began assembling a lending library, composed of donated books and administered by the council. In the summer of 1967, the coordinating committee conducted a fashion show, a talent show, and a book sale, as well as several planning meetings, at the project. In the fall, residents were invited to a folk concert and a picnic sponsored by the Public Affairs Committee, and Society volunteers—aided by the Jennings chapter of Future Teachers of America—sponsored a tutorial program at the project. In December the committee helped put on a holiday party for Pruitt-Igoe residents at the St. Louis Arena. The book sales and “Go-See” tours continued into 1968, bringing together adults and children from both the Society and the project. But just as the project was gaining momentum, it was dealt a crippling blow with Pinkus’ death in the fall of 1968. After that, “the rest of the people lost heart,” recalled Sunnen. (Ibid.) Tributes to Pinkus by Society members were devoted to the housing project’s Margaret Pinkus Library, so dedicated on November 16, 1968. A subsequent lack of staffing left the library in disuse for more than a year.

The Society’s association with residents of the project building quickly waned after Pinkus’ death. When Walter Hoops assumed the chairmanship of the Public Affairs Committee in the fall of 1969, he revived the relationship by encouraging the Society to participate in the Block Partnership Program. Block Partnership, which had been headquartered at the Sheldon Memorial since the spring of 1968, paired groups of people from opposite sides of the tracks to heighten the social awareness—and maximize the resources—of both. Under the program, a “resource group”—generally white suburbanites—would pledge money, labor, and expertise in such life skills as home repair and child care; members of the corresponding resident group, in the words of an associate director of the program who spoke before the Ethical Forum, would “join in the labor and share experience with people whose knowledge of poverty had been often only theoretical.” (Ethical weekly, December 7, 1969) The representative, Charles Ackerson, “denied the program was paternalistic: The resource group, he said, was more an enabler than a provider. And most militants, he insisted, do not oppose block partnerships.” (Ibid.)

At a meeting in December 1969, 18 Society members committed to participating in the program; about 30 members were to take part in the project at various times. The core volunteers began undergoing training in January 1970, and within a few months they had secured donations amounting to \$1,000 — the requisite funds for supplies. When the resource and resident groups were paired in March, they selected as their priority projects improving building security, setting up a workshop and a laundry, preparing a recreation area, and beautifying the property. The Pruitt-Igoe contingent consisted of 29 family units—including about 125 children—in the 2409 division of the project. At their first meeting, the groups adopted a remarkably idealistic common name: the Indivisibles. Society members, beyond making monetary donations, were called upon to contribute tools, cleaning supplies, sewing equipment, and athletic gear. The Indivisibles’ first project, described in an Ethical weekly by committee secretary Debbie Curlee, was a cleanup of the building begun on April 25:

With a good turnout by both groups, work began immediately. One group of hardy souls—fresh, energetic, eager—started on the breezeways, washing walls and cleaning away trash. Another group scrubbed down the recreation room and started on the unending stairwell walls—ten flights worth!

The Pruitt-Igoe children all pitched in, led by Twiggy, a two-year-old tiger. Everyone helped. The men—Kent Forrest, Joel Blumhagen, Ted Traeger, Bob Brandmayer, Larry Robertson, and Vince Wilson—helped carry down what seemed like 100 rusty bedsprings. Esther Holsen tackled the floors and I learned how to use a giant mop, and how to slide down the children’s playground slide. “Fang,” a six-week-old puppy, was ever present as mascot. At 12:30 we took a lunch break and collapsed in the recreation room. A general meeting was called, and we had a bit of trouble “getting it together,” until Mr. Wharton, block beautification chairman, came up with the comment of the day: “We can all sing together but we can’t *talk* together.” Our meeting then got under way and a plan of work for the afternoon was agreed on.

We ended our day at 2:30, totally “wiped out,” after ten flights of stairs, well walls, two breezeways, the recreation room, assorted storage rooms, and some outside litter-picking. More remains.

(Ethical weekly, May 3, 1970)

Other workdays and planning meetings were held over the summer, but the project screeched to a halt in October when 2409 Division was closed as part of the Housing Authority's consolidation of units at the project. The Indivisibles parted company at a final meeting held that month at Sheldon Memorial. The Society contingent offered legal assistance should the resident group choose to fight the decision, but the residents chose instead to quietly relocate. The recently reactivated Margaret Pinkus Library was moved, intact, to the Pruitt School Library, where the collection was marked with an inscribed plaque. As a final farewell, the Pruitt-Igoe Children's Choir performed at the Society's 1970 Good Cheer festival.

Involvement in the Pruitt-Igoe project did indeed raise the consciousness of participants. Ludwig "Fred" Hammer, one of the volunteers, said the project gave him "some kind of feel for what it must be like to be black, to live in a situation in which you don't have power." (Interview with Ludwig "Fred" and Corinne Hammer, Aug. 18, 1986) According to Hammer, the project also helped Society members learn to support poor people with sensitivity and respect:

One of the early things we did was to help with a massive clean-up—painting, scrubbing. Then there was a tenant council at Pruitt-Igoe; we would sit in on those meetings. The tenants were feeling very powerless. No matter what they wanted, they weren't getting; no matter what their complaints were, they weren't being listened to. There were broken windows, screens, vandalism constantly, drug dealers, a lot of burglary. They felt they weren't being listened to. We worked with the tenants and helped get proposals to go to the management. Some of us went to the meetings where the tenants met with the management and helped to get their message across.

I think they appreciated that, because it was really working on an equal basis. We didn't go instead of them; we went together, we talked with them....

(Ibid.)

Partnership leaders and housing activist Bertha Gilkey redirected their funds and energies to a youth group at the Cochran housing project. In 1971 the young people, with the assistance of the volunteers, ran a refreshment stand to raise funds for an athletic program. The Public Affairs Committee also provided some assistance to the Darst-Webbe housing project, including organizing an emergency shipment of blankets and food when a cold wave disrupted heating at the project in 1970, but volunteers now lacked the enthusiasm needed for concerted, long-term service to residents of public housing: They had tasted the political bickering and administrative blundering that had engendered a sense of futility in the residents, and most of those who retained the will to change things now sought to do so politically.

Meanwhile the Public Affairs Committee continued its in-house activities—conducting monthly discussion meetings and public forums. Hot topics included the Vietnam War (the committee urged Society members to support moratoriums), youth rebellion, black militancy, and the welfare system; a 1969 forum on the proposed legalization of abortion, co-sponsored with the St. Louis Legal Abortion Committee, drew about 100 community leaders in medicine, law, social work, and education. The committee also provided support for the work of such organizations as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and the ACLU; in 1969 it rallied support for Legal Aid of St. Louis County, which had lost funding from the county and the United Fund because of a perception that its defense of black militants effectively made it a political organization. The committee also served as the Society's communication link with the Committee for Humanistic and Ethical Concerns and the AEU's Washington Office for Social Concern.

Yearning to Breathe Free

The Public Affairs Committee initiated the Society's involvement in settling refugees in the 1970s and eighties. In 1970 the committee orchestrated the Society's assistance to a 17-year-old Nigerian girl whose education had been disrupted by the unsuccessful Biafran secessionist war. The plight of the girl, Grace Ekong, was brought to the Society's attention by a Nigerian immigrant who had taught Ekong's sister. Society members Bernard and Janet Becker donated the \$1,000 the Society needed to sponsor the girl, and other members contributed additional funds as well as clothing, professional services, and hospitality. The Beckers, along with Joy Guze and Charles "Bud" and Garnet Blake, pledged to provide for Ekong's housing, schooling, legal, medical, and dental needs. Ekong lived with a couple in Clayton while completing her high school education in St. Louis. Although she commonly attended a Presbyterian church with her host family, Ekong visited the Ethical Society to speak about her experience in the war with the high school group and the Ethical Forum. After her graduation from Clayton High School in 1972, Ekong

attended Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois, on a full-tuition scholarship. At the request of the college, the Society pledged \$1,000 a year for Ekong's living expenses; the funds were raised through member donations and small allotments from the Bullock Fund. Upon graduating from Blackburn in 1976, Ekong married Emmanuel Akpan, a Georgetown University student.

The International Institute, which long had counted Society members among its supporters, asked the community in 1979 to consider sponsoring refugee families. Accordingly, members Ted Curtis and Dorothy Lockard established a Refugee Committee and solicited help in providing housing, clothing, furnishings, and transportation for refugees. In November the board approved the committee's request to sponsor a Vietnamese family and pledged a contingency fund which soon was augmented by private donations. Thirteen Society families signed up as co-sponsors to share responsibility for the family's needs. The committee rented a two-bedroom apartment from a Society member and furnished it with furnishings and household goods donated by members. Other members pledged medical and dental care and other professional services.

The first family to arrive under the Society's sponsorship, the Pham family, arrived in January 1980. The Phams were ethnic Chinese "boat people" who had fled Vietnam when they learned that the communist regime wanted to send the father, Be, once a soldier in the South Vietnamese army, to "indoctrination school." Be (pronounced as in Beth), was a 24-year-old woodworker with ten years of schooling. His wife, Dao, (pronounced Dow), 24, was a dressmaker with nine years of schooling. Their children were a daughter Hanh, 6; a son, Phuc, 5; another daughter, Oanh, 2; and a two-month-old baby, Choung. Co-sponsoring families divvied up such responsibilities as transportation, marketing, and recreational excursions. Updates on the family's progress—obtaining jobs, learning to drive (and, in Phuc's case, learning to ride a tricycle at the Ethical Society Nursery School), locating lost relatives, entering school—were regularly published in the Ethical weekly, along with requests for various kinds of assistance.

Once the Pham family had become fully independent, the Refugee Committee elected to sponsor another family. The Nguyen family, which arrived in February 1980, included a mother, Hoai, a daughter, Thi Le, 15; a son, Duc Hung, 5; and three nephews, Hong Tuan, 18, Hong Dung, 16, and So Kiet, 14. Hoai's husband had been a major in South Vietnamese army and was being "re-educated" by the communist regime; the family had little hope of reuniting with him. The family stayed at the Central West End home of Society member Bonnie Mills until permanent accommodations were found. Again, Society members donated clothing and household goods and provided transportation and other services until family members learned English and got their footing in their adopted country.

In 1982 the Society, again at the request of the International Institute, sponsored the immigration of a nine-member Afghan family fleeing the Soviet occupation of their country. Society members, chiefly Walter and Eleanor Hoops, helped the family settle and obtain appropriate jobs.

A Gift of Learning

A successor to the Public Affairs Committee, the Urban Affairs Committee, was formed in 1974. For a time, members met weekly to discuss national affairs as well as social problems in the St. Louis community. The committee provided some assistance to SPROG (an acronym for Sponsors PROGram), a Kirkwood-based program aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency and offering support to juveniles who already had run afoul of the law. SPROG, though it had won the praise of the St. Louis County juvenile justice system, was a pilot program whose state funding had ended; at the prompting of Urban Affairs Committee Chairman Alan Ranford, the Society made a modest donation to the program and provided meeting space. In the 1977-78 season, the committee—assisted by the Adult Education Committee under the chairmanship of Dan Vornberg—conducted a series of six weeknight discussion seminars on "Urban Vitality." The series was projected to culminate in a decision to sponsor a common social action project. In the end, however, participants decided the Society lacked the corporate will to start a project of its own and recommended instead that Society members become active in the local chapter of ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now).

In the mid-eighties, a Social Action Committee began forming under the leadership of Virginia Harris and Doris Gilpin. In the 1986-87 season, the committee conducted a special interest group on social action for the Sunday School; students decorated containers for use in food and clothing drives and learned about the nature and scope of social action. The committee also sponsored a series of facilitated discussions on gun control. A subcommittee on Central America distributed a questionnaire asking Society members if they supported an AEU resolution urging passage of a congressional bill that would require the United States to provide political asylum to refugees from

war-torn El Salvador; when the survey indicated overwhelming support for the resolution, the subcommittee launched a petition drive in support of the bill.

Shortly after it formed, the committee took over a food collection and distribution project begun a few years earlier by the Ethical Singles. The committee, through published appeals and platform announcements, has solicited canned goods and cash needed to purchase perishables; members have been asked to make a habit of picking up items to contribute each time they shop. Social service agencies provide the names of families needing emergency or ongoing assistance. Social Action Committee member Sue Bader wrote that the Hunger Project underscored a basic tenet of Ethical Culture: “One of the reasons it is satisfying to work with people to help offset hunger is the opportunity it provides to help maintain health and comfort, and to keep alive the belief that each individual has personal worth.” (Ethical weekly, February 8, 1987)

As the nascent committee sought a project to which Society members could contribute their volunteer efforts, serendipitous circumstances brought forth a natural undertaking: a summer tutorial program for children in the Wellston School District. The project originated with a private undertaking by longtime member Marion Brooks, a “retired” schoolteacher. In 1981 Brooks began conducting an informal summer school in the back yard of her Kirkwood home for youngsters who were struggling academically. For several years, the Society’s involvement was limited to modest allocations from the Bullock Fund authorized by Leader John Hoad. But in 1985, a fallen tree left a crater in Brooks’ yard, rendering it unusable for the summer school. About the same time, the Social Action Committee contacted Brooks, long active in social causes, for her thoughts on a possible all-Society project. When she informed committee members of her suspended activities, they decided to implement the program on a larger scale—and in a place where the need was great. The Wellston district was chosen because both its tax rate and its test scores were the lowest in St. Louis County. After meeting with Brooks and committee chairwoman Lenora Hobbs, officials of the district heartily endorsed the plan. The project was launched that summer. Since then, Brooks has served as the primary teacher, and a disbursement from the Bullock Fund has enabled her to hire high school students from both Wellston and the Ethical Society to serve as aides. The district provides classroom facilities, bus transportation, and snacks. The curriculum includes penmanship, mathematics, composition, word analysis, spelling, problem solving, and the development of healthful relationships. Each day begins with a period of quiet meditation, and lessons are broken up by study periods, vigorous games, and a snack time. Brooks has employed a variety of motivational tools, including songs, awards, and “memory gems”—quotations which extol the value of competence and engender self-esteem. The six-week program is capped by a graduation ceremony attended by the students and their families.

The Social Action Committee, encouraged by the community’s enthusiastic reception of the summer school, has initiated other forms of service to Wellston. When Brooks and Hobbs learned of hungry families in the community through their work in the school, they began diverting resources of the Hunger Project to Wellston residents. And in 1986 Brooks and two Society members, psychotherapists Ann Chism and Walter Vesper, presented a workshop on parenting skills at a Wellston school under the committee’s auspices. The workshop explored such topics as discipline, communication skills, conflict management, budgeting, and helping children with homework.

Apple Butter and Humane Mascara

Apart from the Social Action Committee, several organizations and committees within the Society have worked steadily for social change. The Tuesday Women’s Association, in its quiet way, has remained faithful to the charitable goals of its predecessor, the Women’s Auxiliary. At their weekly gatherings throughout the year, TWA members prepare salable goods—pressed-flower art, greeting cards, apple butter, bread—for the club’s bazaars. One-fourth of the proceeds from these sales is deposited in the group’s Social Causes Fund, from which it allocates donations to service and activist organizations ranging from the Meacham Park Day Care Center and the St. Louis Blues track club to the Reform Organization of Welfare and Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Also at the gatherings, members have undertaken such projects as sewing garments for the Needlework Guild and making cancer dressings for the Peregrine Society. The TWA’s longtime practice of inviting speakers to address its luncheon gatherings led in 1974 to the formation of a Social Legislative and Action Group, which polled Society members on current issues and led petition and letter-writing campaigns.

In the mid-eighties the TWA formed a Literacy Study Group to examine illiteracy in the metropolitan area. At the start of the 1985-86 season the group launched a series of meetings at which Society members could learn about the scope of the problem and ways in which individuals could help alleviate it. The well-attended series funneled

volunteers into programs conducted by the English Language School, the Missouri Coalition for Adult Literacy, the International Institute, and the Literacy Council of St. Louis.

The Committee of Concern was established in the early seventies by member Renate Vambéry to tend to the needs of Society members, particularly elderly and disabled people. This committee maintains contact with sick and shut-in members, providing companionship and transportation to Society events. For several years it conducted weekly post-platform meetings to provide information on food and nutrition, pain management, physical therapy, the Social Security system, and other topics of interest to senior citizens and people with chronic infirmities. In 1975 committee members and other Society members formed a chapter of the Healing Community, an interdenominational program established to bring alienated people into fuller life in their communities. Subcommittees of the Ethical Society chapter have focused on the needs of disabled people and senior citizens. Vambéry, Alan Ranford, and Robert Roades have served as facilitators of the project, putting out calls for assistance to the individuals they looked after.

A concern for the ethical treatment of animals spurred members Jan Christiansen and Karen Hoad to found an Animal Welfare Committee in the 1981-82 season. The committee has worked steadily to raise awareness of animal rights issues and to lobby for humane legislation in the Missouri Legislature. One of its first projects was to collect pet-food coupons for use by a wildlife sanctuary; it soon began selling items with animal motifs—holiday cards, T-shirts, gift stockings for pets—on consignment for animal welfare organizations. The principal feature of the committee's sales stand at the weekly coffee hour has been a complete line of Beauty Without Cruelty products—cosmetics developed without testing on animals and made without the use of animal by-products.

The committee has hosted visits to the platform, Sunday School, and Adult Discussion Group by such organizations as the Humane Society of Missouri, the Animal Rights Alliance, the Wolf Sanctuary, Animal Aid, Wildlife Rescue, the Missouri League for Humane Legislation, the Animal Protective Association, and the St. Louis Zoo. On Endangered Species Day in March 1987, representatives of several organizations spoke and staffed information tables at a concurrent meeting of the Sunday School and Adult Group. According to an account of a presentation by the Raptor Rehabilitation Center, "Adults, youths, and children watched in quiet wonder and admiration as hawks and owls flew low over their heads in the assembly hall, startlingly graceful in their flight from one trainer to the other across the crowded room.... We learned about their behavior, their habitat, the reasons why they have become endangered, and some things that we can do as Ethical Humanists, concerned for our fellow creatures and their place in the environment." (Ethical weekly, April 12, 1987) The Animal Welfare Committee also has brought to the attention of Society members the findings of wildlife research and political action—including product boycotts—aimed at reducing cruelty to animals.

Joining Forces

In addition to directly serving the community, the Society has established liaisons with activist coalitions—eschewing its longstanding policy of refraining from corporate commitments to "outside" causes. In 1969 the board voted to join the Coalition for the Environment, a commitment that included a small annual contribution and the appointment of a representative to attend meetings of the coalition and report back to the membership; Society members had served the coalition as writers, editors, and community organizers from its earliest days, making the formal affiliation a natural progression. In 1972 the Society joined the emergent Missouri chapter of PEARL (Public Education and Religious Liberty), which fought to preserve church/state separation in school funding. Since 1976 the Society has been an active member organization of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR), a coalition of church communities dedicated to protecting the right of women to obtain safe, legal abortions. In 1981 the community joined the Ecumenical Housing Organization (EHO), an advocate of low-cost housing for the poor and aged in St. Louis County; when the organization liquidated its board after launching the Ecumenical Housing Production Corp. in 1984, Leader James F. Hornback and other Society representatives shifted their energies to the Housing Focus and Economic Focus groups of the Interfaith Partnership, to which EHO had transferred its educational and reform activities. In 1982 the Society joined the Coalition for Information on School Desegregation, which member Corinne Hammer served as a public speaker.

Ethical Culture's historical association with the American Civil Liberties Union—Roger Baldwin, founder of the ACLU, was the last director of the Self-Culture Clubs in St. Louis—and a kinship of principle have ensured lasting cooperation between the organizations. The Society frequently has donated use of its facilities for meetings, workshops, and public forums conducted by the Union. Many Society members have been active in the ACLU of Eastern Missouri, including longtime executive director Joyce Armstrong, and they regularly report on their battles

for civil liberties via Society organs. Leader James F. Hornback served as a plaintiff in several ACLU lawsuits, including one aimed at preventing government censorship of the Public Broadcasting Service and several aimed at stopping governmental support of parochial education.

The Society also has long supported the United Nations Association. Leaders Hornback and Tom Ferrick, as well as a number of lay members, have served on the board of the local chapter. Hornback, who served as president of the local UNA in the mid-seventies, represented the organization at international conferences and spoke to local civic organizations on its behalf. Though painfully cognizant of the UN's flaws and weaknesses, Hornback insisted that ongoing international communication and corporate action was "better than war and war politics." (Ethical weekly, October 19, 1975) Hornback often invited representatives of the UN and UNA to speak from the platform and at the Ethical Forum, and he prompted the Society to actively celebrate anniversaries of the founding of the UN. The Society has hosted many meetings and seminars of the UNA, including forums conducted to report on UN conferences on world hunger, population control, and disarmament. The Society's centennial year, 1986, had been declared the International Year of Peace by the United Nations, and the Society donated use of the meeting house for the culminating event of that commemoration—gatherings to meditate on peace, held around the world at noon Greenwich time on December 31.

Through donations, support for political actions, and substantial cross-over membership—including numerous members in leadership roles—the Society also has maintained close ties with the American Humanist Association, the Fellowship of Religious Humanists, the American Rationalists Association, NACH (the North American Committee for Humanism), the St. Louis Peace Research Institute (founded by Society member Theodore Lentz), the Psychoanalytic Institute of St. Louis, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Council for Religious Liberty, the St. Louis Interfaith Committee on Latin America, Planned Parenthood, the League of Women Voters, Confluence St. Louis, Amnesty International, the World Federalists, Beyond War, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Memorial and Planned Funeral Society, the Wolf Sanctuary, and ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now). The Society has hosted or co-sponsored countless public meetings on peace and nuclear disarmament, abortion rights, ecology, gun control, ecumenism, and civil rights. In 1981, for example, the Society, in cooperation with the AHA, presented an informational program on the Moral Majority, a quasi-political, fundamentalist Christian organization that depicted humanism as a diabolical influence on society; that same year the community, in association with the Growth Center of St. Louis, sponsored a lecture by psychoanalyst and author Bruno Bettelheim titled, "Contradictions in the Modern Family and How to Resolve Them."

In 1982 the Society, acknowledging that introducing members to outside organizations actually had become one of its principal social services, held a platform service in which Society members spoke on behalf of groups they served. Since the middle of that decade the community has sponsored an annual Social Action Fair at which organizations make presentations, distribute literature, and sign-up volunteers.

The Sound and the Worry

As the Society's other service programs came and went, the community's most sublime gift to the community remained that which it most cherished: music. The Chamber Music Series continued at Sheldon Memorial throughout the fifties and even after the Society's move to Ladue—hence the series' new name, Chamber Music at Sheldon. The setting was a powerful element of the concerts' attraction. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* music critic Frank Peters wrote that the Sheldon was "acoustically in a class of its own in St. Louis." Critic James Wierzbicki of the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* called it "... one of the city's finest concert halls.... The music that struck the listener's ears was a totally honest projection of what was being produced on the stage." (Quoted in brochure for an October 23, 1981 concert in the newly reopened hall) The three-concert series, under the direction of J.G.W. Schoenthaler, remained strong draws, generally covering production costs and providing small contributions to the Society. Schoenthaler continued his custom of booking out-of-town and European ensembles—notably the Budapest, Griller, Janacek, Hungarian, Lowenguth, Italian, and Paganini quartets. Schoenthaler resigned in 1958 because of failing health; he died the following year. After a few short-term chairmen, the task was taken up by Society members Hans and Dorothy Kirchheimer, who organized the concerts through the 1979-80 season, the series' fiftieth. Stephen Curtis, longtime director of the Ethical Society Chorus, succeeded the Kirchheimers.

Response to a questionnaire distributed during the 1958-59 season indicated overwhelming support for expansion of the series. Accordingly, a fourth performance was added in the 1959-60 season, and the four-concert series—beginning in October and concluding in March or April—remained the staple for the duration of the program.

The ending of the Sheldon Experiment and concomitant closure of Sheldon Memorial forced the relocation of the chamber series to the Ladue meeting house, also an acoustically superior music hall. The last concert in the series performed at Sheldon was held January 22, 1973. According to program notes, the Secolo Barocco quintet was to play compositions by Telemann, Couperin, Scarlatti, Corrette, Rameau, and Vivaldi. However, a January 23, 1973 editorial in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* noted that the last composition in the Chamber Music at Sheldon series was Mozart's Adagio and Rondo for Glass Harmonica—evidently an encore. The editorial mourned the closing of the Sheldon as “another blow to the midtown neighborhood it has ornamented for more than a decade.” (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 23, 1973)

A separate series of concerts, the Rarely Performed Music Series, was inaugurated in the Society's 1966-67 season. Lifelong Society member Elsie Dewald was a prime mover in launching the program, which allowed musicians to perform—and patrons to hear—outstanding but obscure chamber music. A core group of six musicians, augmented by assisting artists, performed works that were rarely performed because they were composed for curious combinations of instruments. The musicians, most of whom were members of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, planned the programs themselves without the supervision of a music director. The series provided the most consistent showcase for local chamber musicians since the Chamber Music Series stopped booking local artists in the mid-forties. From the inception of the program, these three- or four-concert series were presented at the Ladue meeting house. Beginning in the mid-seventies, the series included an annual children's concert, an informal, instructive Saturday matinee.

The relocation of the Chamber Music Concerts to the Ladue site precipitated some friction within the Society. The Chamber Music Committee, which included some non-Society members, previously had scheduled concerts, booked ensembles, garnered sponsors, and set ticket prices independently of the board of trustees. The Rarely Performed Music Committee, by contrast, was headed up by a longtime trustee, Frank Nutt, and remained well within the Ethical Society fold; because performers in the series were local musicians, that committee willingly worked with the Society's in-house music committee to book performers for Sunday platform meetings. Once both series were established at the new meeting house, the board insisted that the Chamber Music Committee cooperate with an overarching Music Committee in planning the Society's religious and public programs. The board also demanded a say in the delicate art of pricing tickets for both series.

Yet a third series of concerts, the Musical Offering series of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, came to the meeting house in 1979. The SLSO originally sought to use the auditorium in 1976, when it left the series' previous venue at Washington University's Edison Theater but was turned down for fear that its 10 performances would drain support from the Rarely Performed Music ensemble—an integral part of the Ethical Society for 10 years. Some Society members also feared that the abundance of concerts at the meeting house would overshadow the community's social and educational programs. Lifelong Society member and longtime trustee R. Walston Chubb, though a music lover and patron of the Chamber Music Concerts, suggested that hosting as many as 17 chamber concerts per year might turn the community into the “Musical Society for Rarely Performed Ethics.” (*Ethical* weekly, April 4, 1976) All the same, the symphony, after presenting the series at Grace Methodist Church for a few years, again asked the Society to host it. The board, with the approval of the Rarely Performed Music Committee, now agreed, but insisted that the Chamber Music and Rarely Performed Music series take precedence over the Musical Offering series in any scheduling conflicts. The Society charged its standard rent, declining to subsidize the series. The board expressed hope that the Musical Offering series, which commonly featured guest soloists who had performed in the previous week's orchestral concerts, would introduce a larger segment of the community to the Society. The first Musical Offering concert held at the meeting house was presented in November 1979.

As the costs of musicians' fees, travel, printing, and publicity steadily rose, fund-raising became a daunting challenge for both of the Society's concert programs. By the early eighties, the cost of producing one season of the Chamber Music Concerts approached \$10,000. Because the Rarely Performed Music series depended largely on sponsors whose first loyalty was to the Chamber Music Concerts, its financing was even more precarious; fund-raising events, such as garden-party concerts, helped keep the series going. The Chamber Music Concerts became a member organization of the Arts and Education Council of Greater St. Louis in 1967 and began receiving direct funding from the council in 1969. In 1975 the council learned through the membership application of the Rarely Performed Music Committee that the Ethical Society is a religious organization, posing at least an apparent violation of a longstanding council policy against funding church-sponsored activities. For several years the council stretched its policy, providing as much as \$1,600 per season to each program. After disbursing grants for the 1982-83 season, however, the council informed the committees that they would receive no more funding unless they incorporated as independent non-profit organizations—a direction supported by the board of trustees.

The music committees were ill-prepared to sponsor additional concerts without funding from the arts council. At a special meeting called in January 1983, Society members were told that the 1982-83 series of Chamber Music Concerts would be the last unless organizers could come up with \$5,000 to cover production costs. In promoting support for the drive, leader John Hoad wrote that the two-concert series "have been part of the cultural stamp that has long characterized the Society, and they have helped to enhance and promote our image, perhaps even to protect it.... Music in general, classical music in particular, belongs with the highest artifacts of Homo sapiens. It comes with the territory at the Ethical Society. May we long enjoy it." (Ethical weekly, November 21, 1982)

The Chamber Music Committee obtained only about half the money it sought, including funds carried over from the previous season, so it arranged to co-sponsor the 1983-84 series with the University of Missouri-St. Louis. The series was a disappointment, both in terms of attendance and private sponsorship. At the recommendation of the Chamber Music Committee, the board of trustees formally terminated the series in May 1984. The Rarely Performed Music series fared no better: In the 1983-84 season, only guest artists were paid. When the committee failed to obtain a \$3,000 Arts and Education Council grant it needed to produce a 1984-85 season, it too called an end to the concerts.

In the ensuing years, the Society has responded to the broadening tastes of members and the public by sponsoring music appreciation programs. These presentations, usually organized by the Society's music director, have included performances of jazz, folk, ragtime, and classical music, and often have been combined with receptions featuring ethnic and regional cuisine. In addition, the Ladue meeting house has continued to serve as a favorite concert hall for organ recitals, benefit concerts, and performances sponsored by the Classical Guitar Society of St. Louis, as well as occasional chamber concerts.

The Nursery School

The Ethical Society Nursery School has been one of the community's most consistent services to the community. Opened in 1968, the school has grown into one of the area's most respected and sought-after preschools.

The idea of starting a nursery was first proposed by Leader-in-Training George von Hilsheimer in 1957, but the plan was not given methodical consideration until 1962, when a board-appointed committee developed a preliminary proposal. Because the financial burdens accompanying the Society's move to the new meeting house dissuaded implementation of the plan, the committee's proposal was put on a back burner. In 1965, a study committee composed of Ethel Sherman, Ruth Anderson, and Garnet Blake investigated the need for such an undertaking. As conceived by the committee, the Nursery School was intended to further the Society's mission by "bringing together children of different racial and cultural backgrounds in an atmosphere which emphasizes individual worth."

For three years, committee members mapped out a plan for the school in consultation with local preschools, Society members, and experts in early childhood education. The committee determined through its wide-ranging interviews that the community equated the Ethical Society with excellence, and its members vowed to establish a school that would honor the community's reputation. The Board of Trustees, after much deliberation, allocated a \$5,000 start-up loan from the Growth and Development Fund. Besides covering modest initial outlays for salaries, supplies, and promotional materials, the money was used to upgrade the Sunday School classrooms and playground facilities that would be used for the school.

As the inauguration of the school approached, the Nursery Study Committee gave way to the governing Nursery School Board, which is made up of 10 or 11 members and friends of the Society who have experience and training in child development. Because the school was spawned as a service project of the Ethical Society, its by-laws require that the Nursery School Board's chairperson and vice chairperson be members of the Society. Initially, the board also was required to include the directors of the Ethical Society's Sunday School and Sunday School Nursery; a later by-law change dropped the Sunday School director from the board, requiring instead that at least one parent of a Nursery School student be included among the directors.

The Nursery School opened on September 9, 1968, under the direction of Joy Mills. In its first year, enrollment averaged 18 children. Tuition was \$45 a month. Then, as now, the school operated five mornings a week from September to June, with a summer camp program lasting four to six weeks. In later years, the school added twice-weekly afternoon sessions for 5-year-olds. In addition to the director, the staff comprised six teachers, allowing for two teachers per classroom.

Because of its high approval rating among parents and the community's increasing need for day-care programs, the school grew rapidly. It began its second year, now under the direction of Margaret Cowan, with an enrollment of 30 children. Within a few more years, the school reached its capacity of 60 children and began running a waiting list. Scholarships provided through private donations have ensured that the list is not restricted to affluent families.

The Nursery School has attained a solid reputation among preschool programs. Mills, Cowan, and their successors—Lilli Kautsky, Nancy Joyner, and Jessica Friedlander—have been selected for their experience and enthusiasm. Most of the school's directors have held master's degrees, and all have been active in professional associations. Under their guidance, the school's teachers have taken part in advanced training programs offered by such organizations as the Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC) and the Psychoanalytic Institute of St. Louis. Visitors such as artists, musicians, and scientists have augmented the staff's expertise.

Beginning in the early 1970s, the school has served as a laboratory for early childhood education. In addition to hiring college students needing to fulfill practicums, the school has welcomed observers from universities, the Psychoanalytic Institute, and other preschool programs. Further, its staff has conducted workshops at conferences of the AEYC. And in 1980, Mary Ellen Finch, who had chaired the Nursery School Board for 10 years, launched a program through which the school staff helped train teachers at the Meacham Park Day Care Center in Kirkwood.

The school received an official stamp of approval in 1986 when it was accredited by the Missouri Board for Voluntary Accreditation of Early Childhood Programs, a body formed in 1984 to promote excellence in preschool programs. It was one of the first 20 programs in the St. Louis area to receive accreditation. The recognition culminated a year of comprehensive study in which the staff examined the health and safety of the learning environment, the interaction of children and adults, the coordination of home and school training, administrative practices, and the quality of programming designed to enhance physical and intellectual growth and creative expression.

The Nursery School has operated in the black almost since its inception. That solvency, however, is somewhat artificial. The Ethical Society, by limiting its charges for rent, utilities, and building maintenance, has subsidized the school. It also has granted the school credit against overhead expenses for capital improvements such as the rebuilding of playground facilities.

That assistance has not always come readily; the school's financial relationship with the Ethical Society has been the source of much friction between the Board of Trustees and the Nursery School Board. The latter body at times has been less than efficient in its bookkeeping. In 1979, for instance, administrators discovered to their chagrin that the school had amassed a surplus of some \$8,000 in unrestricted funds—quite an embarrassment in light of the Society's generous subsidies. An ad hoc committee of trustees formed to investigate the surplus—which came about through accrued interest and unsolicited donations—directed that all funds in excess of a reasonable reserve be used for scholarships for needy families. Through such skillful negotiations, the two boards have prevented periodic disputes from disrupting the program.

Though sponsored by the Ethical Society, the Nursery School was founded as a nonsectarian community service. The school always has been open to children of all faiths, and no religious instruction is provided. Accordingly, though the chief officers of the governing board must be members of the Society, the school's director and teachers are chosen without regard to religious affiliation. The school strives to nurture ethical sensibilities without explicitly advocating humanism:

As stated in the By-Laws of the Ethical Society Nursery School, our basic purpose is "to promote the sound development of the 'total child': physical, intellectual, and emotional, through a program of specifically planned and widely varied activities." We are concerned that each child develop a positive sense of him/herself and we attempt to contribute to all aspects of the child's development in a warm and imaginative way.

In the course of daily interactions with peers and adults, children, even at this young age, begin to view themselves as capable and contributing members of their small community. They begin to develop a value system that accords respect and dignity to each member of the group and allows for the uniqueness of each individual.

Though children between two and one half and five years old are too young to think in terms of abstract concepts like tolerance or justice, the school experience in a setting that acts on these values gives them a sound foundation in an ethical education.

(Ethical Society Nursery School Philosophy, as presented to the Board of Trustees; undated)

Debate and Consensus

The St. Louis Society and the AEU in general have suffered from their failure to adopt formal procedures for studying social issues and making ethical pronouncements. The Public Affairs program hashed out at the local and national levels in 1935 provided a sound framework for debating and voting on proposed resolutions, but spotty adherence to the policy doomed it. In the absence of a clearly defined process, members, committees, and trustees continued to reinvent clumsy wheels.

By custom, the St. Louis board of trustees refrains from instructing delegates to AEU assemblies on how to vote on resolutions. Board members discuss and make recommendations on the proposals but leave delegates free to vote their consciences after taking part in assembly debates. Occasionally, proposed resolutions have been brought before the membership at special meetings, but even membership votes are not binding on delegates. Conflicts are rare because votes—on resolutions calling for such actions as ending the bombing of North Vietnam, proceeding with the impeachment of President Nixon, and pressuring South Africa to end apartheid—usually are overwhelmingly affirmative; apart from Leader James F. Hornback, who officially resigned from the Society over the AEU's refusal to condemn Israeli military action, only a few members have tendered resignations over stated positions of the Society and the Union.

A 1960 report by the AEU Public Affairs Committee recommended a procedure by which local public affairs committees, after conducting written membership polls, could release pronouncements weighted according to voting percentages. The Ethical Issues Committee, which met monthly to discuss questions of politics and social reform, deemed the recommendation unworkable because of the time required to accurately poll all Society members; with the board's approval, it continued its practice of forging resolutions in its own name without implying the full assent of the Society. When the Ethical Issues Committee was going strong in the sixties and seventies, the board often authorized it to advise delegates on behalf of the Society.

In 1974, the abortion issue brought to a head the question of whether the board could or should take stands on public issues. In response to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, which legalized abortion, political activists had begun campaigning for a constitutional amendment to ban abortions. The AEU Board had gone on record as sharply opposed to the amendment proposals and had encouraged ethical societies to counteract the movement. The St. Louis Board, perceiving a strong consensus on the issue among Society members, was inclined to do so. But when an abortion-rights coalition asked the Society to become a member organization, discussion of the invitation led to a broader debate over whether the board had the right—ethically as well as under the Society's by-laws—to commit the community to moral stands. After a lengthy debate, the board agreed to put the question before the membership.

The following amendment to the by-laws was proposed at the annual meeting in May 1975: "The Board may, at any regularly constituted or specially called meeting, vote on any issue or public question presented to it, except for the endorsement of candidates for political or public office. A two-thirds vote of the whole board of trustees shall be required for the adoption of any such issue or public question and the adoption thereof shall be known as the action of the board on behalf of the Society." The membership voted down the proposal by a 2-to-1 vote. However, because many of the meeting participants had left by the time the proposal came up for discussion, the board decided to resubmit it at a special membership meeting held immediately after a platform service in October.

Thirty-two members—only two more than the quorum needed for a membership vote—took part in the October discussion. The author of the amendment, Trustee Michael Wertman, spoke in its favor, arguing that the trust placed in trustees by the members who elected them implicitly gave the board the right to take stands on moral issues; requiring the board to present all such questions to the membership would reduce it to a "caretaker function," he said. Other speakers agreed that membership polls would handicap the board and that the lack of guidelines for acting on public questions had hampered the board's effectiveness as a civic body. Meeting participants questioned the qualifications of trustees to adopt a position on behalf of members, the difficulty of determining a consensus of the membership on any particular issue, and the risk of losing the Society's tax-exemption standing if it should be

ruled a lobbying group. To appease members who worried that the opinions of dissenters would be lost once a vote were publicized, Wertman amended the measure with the following sentence: "The nature of the vote of those voting shall be recorded." The amended amendment was approved by a vote of 22-6 with four abstentions (a two-thirds majority is required for passage of a by-law amendment). Four members had expressed objection to the amendment by mail.

In addition to obtaining the by-law amendment, board President James Comfort sought to ascertain a consensus on the abortion issue among Society members. He asked the TWA's Social Action Group, chaired by Garnet Blake, to conduct a poll on members' opinions on abortion and another controversy of the day, amnesty for draft resisters. The committee distributed the questionnaire at a platform service in January 1975. On the abortion question, members were asked if they favored (1) legalized abortion as defined by the Supreme Court decision; (2) a proposed constitutional amendment that would prohibit abortion except when medically necessary to save the life of the mother; (3) a proposed constitutional amendment that would prohibit all abortions; or (4) a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow states to decide how to regulate abortion. On the amnesty question, members were asked if they favored (1) unconditional amnesty; (2) President Ford's plan to offer conditional amnesty based on earned re-entry; or (3) denial of amnesty. Of the 156 respondents—126 members and 30 non-members — 150 favored legalized abortion as defined by the court; the exact choices of the six respondents who opposed fully legalized abortion were not reported. (Ethical weekly, February 9, 1975) On the question of amnesty, 105 respondents — 89 members, 16 non-members—favored unconditional amnesty; 47 — 32 members, 15 non-members—voted for conditional amnesty; and six—all members—opposed any form of amnesty.

Subsequent to the poll and the approval of the by-law amendment, the board, acting on behalf of the Society, joined an abortion-rights coalition. Since "going on the record" with its stand, the Society has firmly supported the abortion-rights movement by sponsoring platform talks by its leaders—including Faye Wattleton, longtime president of Planned Parenthood of America - - and hosting the city's annual commemoration of the Supreme Court decision. In 1977 the board sent the following letter to members of Missouri's Washington delegation:

The Board of Trustees of the Ethical Society of St. Louis opposes any legislative acts which would have the effect of nullifying, in whole or in part, the Supreme Court decision of 1973 which affirmed a woman's right to choose abortion under medically accepted procedures. Interference with the constitutional guarantees of privacy and separation of Church and State are not to be condoned.

Those who would restrict or prohibit the right to choose abortion cannot be considering realistically the welfare of the woman who must bear the child, the future prospects of the child, and the vital concerns of the family and the society which must support the child. Although it is desirable to prevent problem pregnancies, there is no completely reliable way of doing so short of sterilization. Abortion is the last resort and must, for humanitarian reasons, remain a free choice.

The board has exercised its authority to speak for the Society with extreme caution, limiting its votes to ratifying proposed AEU resolutions and expressing the community's unquestionable support for church/state separation and civil rights. The board has firmly opposed political efforts at the state and federal levels to permit some form of state aid to private and parochial schools and has frequently urged Society members to fight such efforts, as well as attempts to re-establish prayer in public schools or require the teaching of creationism alongside evolution. Hornback, along with several Society members, took part in ACLU lawsuits aimed at preventing state support of private education and keeping sectarian dogma out of public schools. The Society did not lightly assume this combative stance; in a 1976 essay, Hornback described the shift in the Ethical movement's role in church/state controversies from that of mediator to that of fighter:

In the early days of the Ethical movement, the hope was often expressed—by Felix Adler, Walter Sheldon, and others—that the "common ground" we occupy between and among the traditional religions might someday be the basis for a new understanding and cooperation. Our nonsectarian approach to the teaching of ethics, our historical and comparative approach to the bibles and holy days, and our emphasis on the shared and universal qualities of human beings—all these were seen as ways of transcending the sectarianism and divisiveness of Christian and Jew, believer and agnostic and unbeliever.

William T. Harris, the famous superintendent of St. Louis public schools who became the first U.S. Commissioner of Education, was so impressed by this nonsectarian possibility that he

published Adler's *Moral Instruction of Children* (1892) in the International Education Series he edited. He also recommended Sheldon's books on "Habits" to schools and teachers all over the country. And the nonsectarian approach of the Ethical Culture Schools in New York has had its influence on public education.

Percival Chubb's writings and demonstrations on seasonal festivals fall into the same category. But the revived sectarianism and ethnicity of recent years have made our role as mediator, and our claim to "common ground," much more difficult. Dr. V.T. Thayer, who was director of the Ethical Culture Schools when Dr. Adler died (1933) and for a couple of decades thereafter, has continued to warn that our emphasis on being a religion, or a sect among sects rather than nonsectarian, has disqualified us for the role of mediator or guide in the public schools. Recent suits by the more traditional religions, against "humanism" or "ethical culture" as a religion being taught in the public schools, have given poignancy to his warning. We can't have it both ways.

(Ethical weekly, December 19, 1976)

The Society strongly supported the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would have prohibited discrimination on account of sex; the board voted its support of the AEU's endorsement of the drive in 1973, and in 1981, about a year before the extended deadline for ratification, it passed a resolution strongly backing the amendment and urging ethical humanists to work for its passage. Throughout the seventies, the Society co-sponsored educational meetings on the amendment drive with the National Organization for Women, and one platform meeting was devoted to the topic virtually every season. An ERA Committee at the Society promoted petition drives, fund-raisers, phone banking, and a letter-writing campaign.

Because the board's formal endorsements of ethical positions become known in the community and set an agenda for Society action, it has avoided making them when even a substantial minority of the membership stands in opposition. For instance, a 1977 proposal before the board of trustees to register the Society as a member organization of the Missouri Coalition for Gun Control, then headed by Society member Eugene Schwartz, failed to win the necessary two-thirds majority (the vote was 9-4 with one abstention). No more formal action was taken on the issue until a gun-control resolution was proposed at the 1986 annual meeting, when it spawned a debate that indicated a variety of opinions. To more clearly assess the convictions of Society members, the board asked the Social Action Committee to conduct an informational session and facilitated discussion on gun control in the fall of that year. The committee reported to the board that meeting participants held widely divergent viewpoints on gun control; it recommended that the board pursue efforts to educate members on the dilemma but refrain from taking a stand. While not formally endorsing gun control, the board has agreed to allow the publicizing of gun-control meetings and political and educational activities in Society publications.

Similarly, the board and Ethical leaders have permitted—in fact, encouraged—members with strongly held convictions to invite fellow Society members to participate in their causes. In contrast to the parochialism and rigid neutrality of the community earlier in the century, the Society's publications, bulletin boards and platform announcements have become publicity vehicles for causes ranging from election reform to consumer boycotts. It has even become customary for Society publications to print members' viewpoint essays and reproduce their editorial letters to local newspapers.

22: THE SHELDON EXPERIMENT - TAKING A STAB AT SOCIAL SERVICE

The Ethical Society retained Sheldon Memorial for a decade after the move to Ladue. In fact, the dedication of the new meeting house was preceded by a rededication of Sheldon Memorial. Because the hall was renowned for its acoustical purity, music lovers in the Society insisted that it be maintained for the Society's chamber music program and for use by other concert promoters. Hornback, noting that the hall would fit nicely into the city's master plan for a midtown arts complex, likewise urged the board to hold onto the facility as the area developed. Apart from the occasional concerts, however, the building was unused. Overnight, it had become available for use as the community center Society members long had dreamed of, but its potential was only partially cultivated.

In 1964, the Society established a mechanism to facilitate Sheldon-based social services. On the recommendation of the Growth and Development Committee, the board set up a Sheldon Memorial Board of Volunteer Managers; this board was separate from—but nonetheless accountable to—the Society's board of trustees. The Management Board was to oversee the use of the building by Society groups and other interested organizations, giving priority to

activities that would promote civic welfare. It consisted of six to nine Society members, each of whom served three-year terms, and five community representatives, who served one-year terms. The president of the board of trustees appointed two of the Society members to serve as the Management Board's chairman and vice chairman; members of the Management Board elected the secretary and treasurer. The Management Board administered rental fees and a yearly allocation from the board of trustees. Allocations from the Society generally were drawn from the Sheldon Fund; this trust, formally established as the Walter L. Sheldon Memorial Building Fund, comprised the residue of Anna Hartshorne Sheldon Chubb's estate, the reserves of the former Walter L. Sheldon Memorial Library Fund, and the interest that had accrued on those funds over several decades.

Society member Eugene Schwartz, a social worker, sought to make Sheldon Memorial the headquarters of an AEU Social Service Commission (SSC). Schwartz envisioned the commission, which he formed in 1965, as a national network of ethical society service committees. By initiating pilot projects and maintaining communication among participating societies, the commission was intended to make Ethical Culture's contributions to public welfare as distinctive as those of traditional religious denominations. In the 1965-66 season, by Schwartz's estimate, the eight or nine Society members who composed the commission "secretariat" at Sheldon Memorial devoted 1,000 hours of service to the commission and subordinate local projects. The commission's initial expenses were funded by a donation from Society member Max Putzel. The commission established liaisons with social service committees in seventeen ethical societies, as well as with the AEU's National Women's Conference and Commission on Race and Equality. It published bimonthly newsletters that informed service committees of work undertaken by ethical societies and resources available from government agencies and civic and sectarian charities. Included in the newsletters were reports of the St. Louis Society's Public Affairs Committee. [FOOTNOTE] The commission also compiled a directory of social service consultants belonging to the Ethical movement. In the commission's second year, chairman Edgar L. Metzger, also a member of the St. Louis Society, urged the AEU to hire a professional social worker to direct the SSC. Solidarity among ethical society service committees was weak, and Metzger's proposal died for lack of national support.

The commission's first local experiment in social service was the Algoa Project. Beginning in 1964, Society members Schwartz, James Comfort, Ray Buchan and other volunteers assisted men discharged from Missouri's Algoa Reformatory by providing emotional support and help in finding jobs and housing. The group occasionally visited Algoa, offering aid to men scheduled for release. Referrals to the program were provided by reformatory personnel and the relatives of prisoners. Project volunteers produced a thorough handbook intended to help similar committees address the emotional, educational, legal, and material needs of reforming offenders. The Management Board permitted the group to use office space and equipment at Sheldon, and the Society contributed a few hundred dollars to the cause. In a report to the 1966 AEU assembly, Schwartz described the work as "difficult, time-consuming and frustrating." (Social Service Commission Annual Report, April 28, 1966) Finding that volunteers lacked the time and expertise to adequately serve the men, Schwartz concluded that the program could succeed only with the aid of a paid professional. Again, both the Society and the AEU refused to take on the costs Schwartz projected. The program, which boasted few success stories, dissolved about 1967.

The next service project established at Sheldon was a tutorial service begun in 1965. This project, spawned and directed by the Management Board, assigned volunteers to as many as forty struggling high school students from midtown housing projects. The service was offered one or two nights a week in the Assembly Room alcoves. It was directed by educator and Society member Lothar Pinkus. This program also was less than magnetic, volunteers commonly outnumbered students. Some Society members who took part in the project laid its ineffectiveness to weak publicity, the sparse population of the neighborhood, and the transportation difficulties of potential beneficiaries.

The most effective service project conducted at Sheldon in the sixties was a Clerical Upgrading School, a training course in clerical skills for welfare mothers. The program, directed by the Urban League, was funded by a \$56,000 grant from the Sunnen Foundation, a philanthropic fund of the Sunnen Products Company. Begun in 1966, the program consisted of a 40-week course in arithmetic, grammar, typing, shorthand, and record-keeping; it included individual and group counseling aimed at enhancing personal growth and employability. A day nursery was provided for the children of program participants. The Urban League screened applicants and provided equipment and teachers; the Board of Management provided office space and janitorial services.

The success of the Urban League program precipitated a sticky legal problem. In 1967, the city fire marshal, noting that about 30 people took part in daily classes at Sheldon, insisted that the building be equipped with fire doors and alarm and sprinkler systems. The cost of such improvements was estimated at \$15,000. The board of trustees authorized the \$1,000 needed for an expedient alarm system, but it hesitated to foot the rest of the bill. To help

determine the feasibility of such an investment, the board of trustees obtained a professional estimate of the cost of keeping the building operational for five to ten years; it also asked the Management Board to project building use over that period. There ensued a months-long debate over whether to retain and upgrade the building. Some trustees felt that the Society was obliged to provide space for the Urban League and urged the expenditure of up to \$30,000 to renovate Sheldon. Hornback staunchly opposed abandoning Sheldon; he contended that the Society would never again maintain a presence in the central city once it hoisted anchor. Another contingent, contending that the level of building use did not warrant major improvements, wanted to sell Sheldon forthwith and use the proceeds to expand the staff and programs of the Ladue meeting house.

Hornback had touched the heart of the debate: Was the Society committed to serving the urban community? And if so, what exactly did it hope to accomplish? The usefulness of retaining Sheldon could not be weighed until those questions were answered. For three years, a disheveled amalgam of programs had been conducted at Sheldon, evincing no gusto for community service. Virtually everyone agreed that the Society should either breathe life into the enterprise or discard it altogether; maintaining a half-hearted—and largely symbolic—“commitment” to the city was dissatisfying to all concerned.

The board’s tentative decision was to spend only enough money to make Sheldon usable for concerts; it purchased the fire doors, but not the sprinkler system. It asked the Urban League to fund half the cost of the improvements necessary to continue the training program, offering to apply a portion of the agency’s rent to the tab. In return, the board would permit the league to use the building for at least two years. The league responded that it was able to contribute no more than \$2,500. A board motion to unilaterally fund the safety improvements lost by a vote of 7-6 with two abstentions (November 1967 minutes). To prevent closure of the building, the league agreed to relocate its training facilities.

Even as Sheldon emptied, the AEU Social Service Commission continued to spawn ambitious dreams for its use. Schwartz, Metzger and their supporters regularly proposed projects aimed at serving the poor, the elderly, the educationally disadvantaged, and other needy citizens, including members of ethnic societies. In 1966, the commission had proposed a project called Operation Bootstraps in which young middle-class couples would move to impoverished neighborhoods to “attempt to elevate the interests, behavior, culture and habits of the residents in the area.” (Report by Eugene Schwartz to member committees of the Social Service Commission; dated March 10, 1966) In December 1967, the commission handed the St. Louis board of trustees a resolution calling for the establishment of a neighborhood service organization based at Sheldon. The proposed organization would work toward improved housing, and perhaps even sponsor a low- to middle-income housing project. The SSC asked the St. Louis Society to fund a part-time professional staff to provide such community services as recreation, counseling, and employment referrals. The program would be directed by a trained social worker. The commission estimated the cost of the program at \$5,600 a year. The Management Board, which took in about \$5,000 a year in rent and dividends, offered to fund the project from January through April of 1968 if the board of trustees would agree to underwrite it in the 1968-69 budget. The commission and Management Board proposed a yearlong trial that might be followed by a five-year commitment. In January 1968, the board of trustees indefinitely tabled the proposal. The board included in the Society’s 1968-69 budget a modest allotment for painting and carpentry repairs at Sheldon, but the community service proposal never even came to a vote.

With social welfare programs forming and dissolving in predictable cycles throughout the movement, it became evident that the Social Service Commission had never amounted to more than “a paper structure at best.” (undated report by Eugene Schwartz to AEU President Werner Klugman) Citing an annual AEU allocation of about \$500, Schwartz told the AEU president that the commission’s efforts “in the main have been fruitless because of the unwillingness to give the necessary financial support and the dependency upon volunteer assistance.... The Sheldon Memorial building was to serve as a community center housing the AEU Social Service Commission and local projects. A few services have resulted, but the building again stands empty. This is a tragic waste, since the building has great potential with a public auditorium, several study rooms, a library, and nursery rooms.” (Ibid.)

The debate over what to do with Sheldon’s “great potential” simmered for years. The Block Partnership Program, which paired affluent communities with impoverished neighborhoods in need of human services, established its headquarters in Sheldon in 1968. Apart from the Chamber Music Series, that program alone stirred the stale air in the building. The board considered instituting an Afro-American cultural program at the site, but the idea did not coalesce. In 1969, the board appointed a Sheldon Utilization Committee to make recommendations on the use or disposition of the building. In May of that year, the committee held an all-Society meeting to solicit the membership’s opinions. Those in attendance were evenly divided on the issue, with half favoring the establishment of a social service program and the remainder favoring the immediate sale of the building. The committee also

sought the advice of social service professionals. By summer, attention had turned to a proposal to rent or sell the building to the Community Music School, which had been founded by Society member Edna Lieber. Negotiations continued throughout the year, delaying other considerations, but broke off in early 1970 when the school opted for other quarters.

A Blustery Wind

Meanwhile, a blustery wind shook 9001 Clayton Road. The social and political turbulence of the 1960s had agitated the community's customary placidity. America's conscience was racked over its growing involvement in the Vietnam War. Women and people of color asserted their rights with a vigor that sometimes turned to vehemence. The hippie counterculture reached full flower:

Riots and sit-ins siphoned students from college classrooms; sexual mores were shunted; hallucinogenic drugs were as common as cookies; and rock music pounded out the anger and sorrow of a generation in rebellion. In the Society, passionate crusaders rattled the platform and provoked participants in the Ethical Forum. "The times, they are a changin'," sang Bob Dylan; the Ethical Society belatedly flipped its calendar.

Discontented with simply debating the fiery issues of the day, Society members began shoring up the community's nebulous commitment to social welfare. The Public Affairs Committee, which began as an evening discussion group, took to publicizing controversial ethical stands and digging into nitty-gritty service projects. Under the guidance of Margaret Pinkus, the committee reached out to residents of Pruitt-Igoe, the "model" housing project that had become a hellhole of crime, vandalism, drug abuse, and domestic violence. Committee members took Pruitt-Igoe residents on tours of city attractions; helped clean and paint filthy apartments and corridors; and supported the formation of a tenants council that persistently pushed for humane conditions. Society members also contributed to the project's library, posthumously named in honor of Mrs. Pinkus. Prodded by the committee, the Society formally joined the Block Partnership program; participants began training for their labors in the fall of 1969. These foot soldiers of the would-be revolution, along with veterans of the Alcoa and tutoring projects, were ripe for an innovative, strong-willed leader who could marshal their enthusiasm.

Enter Tom Ferrick, a Roman Catholic priest-turned humanist who hired on as the Society's associate leader in the fall of 1969. Because of his twenty years of ministerial experience, Ferrick had been accorded provisional leadership status—instead of leader-in-training status—as soon as he came on board. An affable, even charismatic man, Ferrick found the community receptive to his keenly worded platform addresses and grateful for his counseling acumen. But Ferrick had a streak of the zeal that fired the Berrigan brothers, and he would not long tend the fires at the Society's halcyon suburban home. A veteran of both urban and suburban parishes in the Boston area, he had come to believe that the American middle class bore primary responsibility for the nation's social decline, and hence for its regeneration as well:

The old New Deal coalition of diverse minorities has passed away. With Nixon's election in 1968, the "middle" American, the suburbanite, has, more by accident than design, assumed political power. Never before in our time has both President and Congress been more responsive to his will. Paradoxically, at his feet must be laid the burden of guilt for our present national distress. During those long years of seeming powerlessness, his enormous self-interest, his fear, apathy, fortress thinking, and deep resentment, allowed pollution, war, and prejudice to play havoc with the quality of American life. If refreshing our total environment is to be the work of the 70s, the key people are that third of our population living in the suburbs. They, more than rural or urban groups, possess the technical know-how, the money, and political muscle to do the job.

Will ghettoizing continue to produce a huge mass of poor blacks in the core cities as the flight of whites to the suburbs accelerates? And as black people come to administer city governments, will the suburbs, ringing them in a steel-like grip, come to control even their breathing in and breathing out? Or is a new framework for multiracial urban living in existing and new cities and regions possible, along with new patterns of political and economic institutions? Can we plan a revolution and at the same time safeguard the continuity of our democratic order and traditions?

Will the victorious and comfortable white suburbanite have the compassionate magnanimity to grant his black brother the freedom to choose his future life style? Our domestic peace depends on it.

(Ethical weekly, January 18, 1970)

Ferrick's words pricked the consciences of Society members, who had individually and collectively joined the "white flight" of the sixties. By all appearances, he was an ideal leader to galvanize the community's latent activism. Just over a month after his arrival, he challenged the community to make Sheldon Memorial a hub of social intervention. "We've long recognized that combatting poverty and injustice must be high on our list of priorities, if our name is to mean anything," he wrote. "While Sheldon Memorial remains in our hands, and because it does represent our presence in the central city, ways should be found to have it contribute to the area's vitalization." (Ethical weekly, November 9, 1969) He began spreading his dream of using Sheldon for public forums, counseling, artistic presentations, and educational and recreational programs that would benefit the poor and enlighten the affluent. Above all, he wanted the site to serve "as a meeting place where urbans and suburbans, blacks and whites mingle freely and productively." (Ethical weekly, December 14, 1969) At his urging, the Public Affairs Committee slated a daylong Conference on Urban (and Human) Blight at Sheldon. From this conference, Ferrick hoped, would emerge a plan of concerted action.

While the details of the conference were being hashed out, the Society began whisking the dust out of Sheldon. Ferrick and Society members Edgar Metzger and Walter Hoops staffed the building three or four days a week, making it available for meetings and counseling sessions. Ferrick and the Board of Management encouraged experimental use of the building by social activists. In November 1969, the Great Issues Committee of St. Louis University sponsored a talk at Sheldon by one of the Chicago Seven—political activists facing conspiracy charges in the 1968 Democratic Convention riots. That same month, Cesar Chavez—engineer of the produce boycotts aimed at humanizing the conditions of migrant workers—spoke at Sheldon under the auspices of the United Farm Workers. In January 1970, a predominantly black drama group from St. Louis University presented a documentary play titled "On White America"; the announcement of the event in the Society's bulletin noted that "a large attendance on the part of our members will be undisputed proof that Sheldon Memorial can become a social, artistic, and intellectual meeting place for whites and blacks." (Ethical weekly, December 21, 1969) Another black drama group, calling itself "The Spirit and Voices of the Revolution," presented a play under the joint sponsorship of the Society and the House of Negro History. Throughout the season, the Society co-sponsored jazz concerts and festivals of dance, drama, music, and poetry presented by the Black Artists Group. The auditorium also was used by choral groups from black churches and colleges. Ferrick caught the interest of the Community Relations Committee of the Ninth Police District, and a girls club organized by the committee put on fashion shows at Sheldon. Other events held at Sheldon that year included a series of experimental art films, a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, and a workshop dedicated to peace initiatives.

The Society's young people, disenchanted with suburban life and itching for a home away from home, took particular interest in Sheldon. The Young Adults Group, which comprised older teen-agers and college students, used the building for a series of discussions on abortion, legal aid, sexual ethics, and political dissent. In the spring, the group sponsored a talk by economist L. Simington Curtis. As a fund-raiser for the Society's Block Partnership contingent, which needed money for fencing, tools, paint, and other maintenance equipment, the group produced a concert by the nationally renowned Mission Singers and a soul group called the Bel-Aires. As the youths' fondness for Sheldon grew, they took to cleaning, painting, and furnishing its cozier nooks. Toward the end of the season, the Sunday School's junior high classes joined in the act, spending a series of Sunday mornings dusting, sweeping, mopping, and moving furniture. In anticipation of renewed activity at Sheldon, the students planned bake sales and car washes to help equip the building.

Preparation for the Conference on Urban Blight foreshadowed the ambiguity and contentiousness of the Sheldon Experiment. Ferrick urged all Society members—and especially those knowledgeable in welfare, housing, crime, education, health care, political action, and other "crisis areas of urban life"—to help plan the conference. By Ferrick's account, the thirty Society members who attended the planning session got a dose of "hard work compounded by frustration. In the absence of fixed guidelines for the day's agenda, the participants expressed so wide a variety of suggestions and comments that only a few conclusive decisions resulted. But such thrashing about is necessary when people want to take hold of the complex problems of the city." (Ethical weekly, December 14, 1969) Exhibiting the highhandedness that would earn him more than a few detractors, Ferrick autonomously filled the conference agenda with "guests representing various interests and needs of the black community—black militants, black politicians, black artists, and black neighbors." (Ethical weekly, January 18, 1970) Clearly, Ferrick felt it was time for whites to shut up and listen.

The conference was indeed the catalyst Ferrick had hoped it would be. Held January 31, 1970, it drew about 125 Society members and representatives of law enforcement, the clergy, the business community, and such community

agencies as Legal Aid, Block Partnership, and the Community Music School. After a keynote address by Alderman Joseph Clark, participants questioned a panel comprising leaders in housing, the arts, and social action. Over lunch, the panelists led discussion groups in their areas of expertise. Representatives of each of the three groups then presented a summary proposal to the general assembly, which included members of the board of trustees. The conference concluded with an address by a black legislator, state Senator Ray Howard.

Though congratulating Society members for engaging in “lively and sometimes sharp dialogue with spokesmen of the black community,” Ferrick acknowledged that the conference failed to produce the sharply defined plan of action for which it was conducted. He added, however, that he “sensed a growing consensus along these three lines: First, at the behest of Alderman Clark, the participants generally agreed that the Society should maintain a visible role in whatever Sheldon Program is devised. Secondly, most felt that any community center there should exclude neither the arts, nor social action, nor neighborhood needs, but [should serve] a combination of all three. Thirdly, there was a growing awareness that we should afford the black community some real control in the center’s operation, the limits of which could be mutually predetermined.” (Ethical weekly, February 8, 1970) The possibility of establishing a satellite ethical society at Sheldon was broached but left hanging.

After digesting the scattered recommendations presented at the conference, the Public Affairs Committee submitted to the board a proposal to develop an extension of the Society at Sheldon. The committee recommended that the center be run by a paid director and an interracial board composed of Ethical Society members and community representatives. According to the proposal, initial funding for salaries and repairs would be provided by a grant from the Sheldon Fund. The committee’s long-range goal was to establish at Sheldon a “self-supporting, broadly based, multi-interest community.” (Ethical weekly, February 15, 1970) Before voting on the issue, the board asked the Growth and Development Committee, the Sheldon Utilization Committee, and the Sheldon Board of Management to refine the proposal. Board president David Carpenter, after announcing that the Community Music School had decided not to rent or buy Sheldon, asked Society members to present their opinions on building utilization to the board and relevant subcommittees.

The board, true to form, tackled the sticky pragmatic questions the dream generated—questions of viability, financing, administration, and function. Some trustees found little promise in the area’s demographic make-up: The 1960 census indicated some 70,000 people lived within a one-mile radius of Sheldon, but many of them lacked transportation, and the area was not hospitable to pedestrians; furthermore, many of the residents nearest the building were transient university students with little time for outside enterprises. Facing these facts, the board acknowledged that the program would thrive only if it drew participants from around the city. Funding the project would be no small commitment. At best, the Board of Management could collect about \$13,000 a year in rental fees, dividends on Sheldon Fund investments, and contributions, but salaries and repair costs were projected at \$15,000-20,000 a year; the experiment would require the Society to dip into the principal of the Sheldon Fund, which then stood at about \$100,000. All agreed that a successful program would require a full-time director; Ferrick was the natural choice, but overtures for his services from the Chicago and Boston societies necessitated a prompt decision. Trustees confirmed the Public Affairs Committee’s assertion that the program’s administrative board should include non-member community representatives, but they were cautious about giving up too much control. As to form, the board was ambivalent: It was inclined to start the project as a non-sectarian community center but was open to the possibility of a neighborhood congregation evolving into a satellite ethical society.

Humanism’s Approach to the Urban Crisis

After mulling over committee recommendations at an open meeting, the board in March 1970 formally backed the proposal to conduct an “experiment in Humanism’s approach to the urban crisis.” (minutes, March 30, 1970) The board envisaged year-round Sunday afternoon platform lectures and discussions followed by community suppers. The project also would include counseling; educational programs for youth and adults; open forums; and “the articulation of a social conscience within the Sheldon community and beyond.” (Ibid.) The focus of the experiment was to be “the politicizing of urban citizens whereby they will have more influence and take increased pride in the organization of their corporate living.” (Ethical weekly, September 22, 1970) The program would be run by Ferrick with the assistance of a secretary and custodian. Ferrick was to be guided by an informal advisory council and the Sheldon Board of Management. The Management Board would include community representatives but remain dominated by Society members; its members would be permitted to elect their own officers, with the proviso that the chairman be a Society member. The president of the board of trustees, the leader of the Society, and the director of the Sheldon program would be ex-officio members of the reorganized Management Board. The board invited further discussion on the plan at an open meeting, and the membership ratified the proposal at the annual meeting in May.

By a substantial majority, members approved the expenditure of \$19,000 — in addition to Ferrick's salary, which was included in the Society's general operating budget—to kick off the project.

Trustees candidly spoke of the project as an experiment, not a firm, long-term commitment. "This was a time when working out those inner-city problems was not being done," recalled former board member Frank Nutt. "We were trying to make an accommodation, trying to be supportive." (Interview with Frank Nutt, September 16, 1986) Robin Jones, who presided over the board during much of the experiment, described the Society's attitude in similarly vague terms:

"It was a time when liberal, good-hearted people were feeling, 'What can we do about the black situation?' We had some funds, and we had the building. And here we were in a beautiful new building that was paid for, and we felt we should make the effort." (Interview with Robin Jones, Sept. 24, 1986) Even the idealistic Mr. Ferrick acknowledged that his expectations were lower than his goals:

This Society is about to invest money, time, and personnel in a program at Sheldon Memorial as a contribution to racial harmony in the Greater St. Louis area. At first glance the experiment may seem to be ill-timed and ill-advised. Hasn't the day of integration passed; hasn't dialogue proved ineffective? The civil rights movement is in disarray. The slick double-talk of the Nixon administration and the trend to black militancy have succeeded in dividing and confusing advocates of racial justice and integration. Well-intentioned people are immobilized, or drift with the latest current. The hour may be late, but we would be morally derelict if we mounted no counterforce to the spreading violence and polarization.

Our work at Sheldon will ignore neither the proven values of tradition and experience nor today's need for some drastic reforms in our system. It will reassert the worth of dialogue and civil discourse. It will be sensitive to assumptions and perspectives growing out of contexts alien to our own. And all of us who become involved have the willingness to learn, as well as share.

(Ethical weekly, May 10, 1970)

The experiment got under way in the fall of 1970. In September, the Management Board and advisory council divvied up responsibilities, hired staff members, and helped Ferrick design a schedule of programs. Society member Adolph Cohen, who had headed the Management Board in the sixties, again was elected chairman; the Rev. Garnet Henning, pastor of St. Peter's A.M.E. Church and director of the Block Partnership program, was elected vice chairman; Terry Peterson was elected treasurer; and Ferrick was asked to fill the role of board secretary. The building's sound and lighting systems were upgraded, donated furnishings were installed, and a banner proclaiming the experiment's overriding theme of brotherhood was hung in the foyer.

A reception was held October 4 to introduce the board and council to interested members of the community, and the first Sunday afternoon platform lecture was conducted on October 18. Macler Shepard, president of the Jeff-Vander-Lou Neighborhood Corporation, spoke about the city's housing problems and invited questions and comments from the audience. Setting the pattern for successive events, the 6 p.m. presentation included music and song and was followed by a dessert reception. In the weeks that followed, Lilyann Mitchell, director of Concerned Citizens for Voter Registration, spoke on "The Black Vote and Who Controls It"; Percy Green, leader of the black activist group ACTION, "diagrammed the interlocking system by which financial and industrial interests control numerous institutions in St. Louis" (Ethical weekly, November 22, 1970); Huella Scales, director of the St. Louis chapter of the National Welfare Rights Association, and two welfare mothers presented an open forum on the welfare program; and a panel of white clergymen spoke on "'Whitey's' Role in the Black Community." The most common topics of Sheldon programs were the Vietnam War; civil rights and the criminal justice system; urban decay, poverty, housing, and the welfare system; drug abuse; and unemployment, labor relations, and boycotts. Occasional forums were given over to encounters with political candidates and debates of proposed bond issues and pending city legislation. Initially, attendance at the forums ranged from about fifty to seventy-five.

During Ferrick's tenure, cultural and social events held at Sheldon included plays, poetry readings, dances, jazz concerts, variety shows, songfests, and film showings. A core group of twenty to thirty regular participants formed what came to be known as the Sheldon Community—alternatively called the Sheldon Family or the Sheldon Community Club. By the middle of the 1970-71 season, the community had begun preparing modest suppers to complement the Sunday forums. As Ferrick had hoped, the Sheldon Community was made up of both urban blacks and suburban whites. Kenneth Webb, who served as chairman of the Sheldon Board of Management in the 1971-72

season, said that white Society members in and out of the Sheldon Community earnestly supported the program, giving financial contributions and volunteering time and professional expertise. “They were very faithful,” he said. “They responded to us, they welcomed us, they worked with us—not only down there [at Sheldon Memorial] but out here [in Ladue]. It was a new awakening for so many of these young blacks, particularly those who had just come up here from the South. They hadn’t been exposed to whites to this extent. This was the only family, the only people they really knew.” (Interview with Kenneth Webb, Nov. 4, 1986)

Programs for youth received enthusiastic support. After the closure of Pruitt-Igoe, the Society’s Block Partnership contingent directed its money and manpower to assisting a youth group at the Cochran housing project. The lack of a sprinkler system precluded the use of Sheldon for a full-scale indoor youth program, but members of the Society committee and the Sheldon Community held brainstorming sessions with the youths at the building. The teen-agers, with the help of Debbie Curlee and other Society members, maintained a refreshment stand and recreation lounge at the housing project to raise funds for an athletic program. The Sheldon Community also aided the St. Louis Blues, a track club that provided athletic training and interstate competition to city youngsters. The club held variety shows and award ceremonies at Sheldon, and the Sheldon Community helped it conduct benefit dances in the fourth-floor hall. Proceeds from a “Las Vegas Night” organized by the Sheldon Community were used to send neighborhood children to summer camp. Society members and city and county merchants donated prizes for the event, which raised about \$800. That sum, augmented by a \$1,000 grant from the Sunnen Foundation, covered the fees of four campers. The Mothers Club and students of Waring School presented a benefit variety-fashion show at Sheldon to raise funds for educational equipment, and yet another fund-raiser was held to benefit a youth program sponsored by the Kinloch Police Department.

In the summer of 1971, the Sheldon Community conducted a daily recreation program for children at Sheldon. The program was funded out of the Sheldon Fund and directed by William Redding, a paid staffer. Redding was assisted by volunteers Debbie Curlee, Jeanne Davis, Carol Raziq, Caryl Sundland, and other Society members. The program, which was held five days a week, gave inner-city children opportunities to visit area attractions most had never seen before. Redding and members of the Sheldon Community took the children on excursions to museums, libraries, and wildlife reserves; the participants heard concerts, saw films, and went on picnics. At Sheldon, the children engaged in arts and crafts, played games, tended a garden, and cared for snakes and other caged animals. Lunch was provided daily. About twenty-five children, ranging in age from 2 to 13, took part in the program; on an average day, ten to twelve children attended. The group was racially mixed and included both residents of nearby housing projects and children of Ethical Society members. According to Redding, the children formed a tight-knit group. The cultural exposure they received in the program, he said, stood them well as they pursued their education:

The crowning touch [of the Sheldon experiment] was the youth program. We’re still in touch with a number of the kids who were in the program—one of them is in Wash[ington] U. on an arts scholarship. They mention some of the places we took them to. That was something I really feel good about it. I got total support from Robin Jones and Frank Nutt—people who were on the board at that time. The money was well spent, I think, when kids even fourteen years later remember the things we did together. That sort of thing really does your heart proud.

(Interview with Bill Redding, Oct. 24, 1986)

The best-attended and most highly publicized event of the 1970-71 season was a tribute to slain civil rights leader Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. The King celebration, organized by Webb, Norman Seay, Society member Elsa Pitts, and a handful of associates, was the finale of St. Louis’s first citywide commemoration of the non-violent martyr. Held January 15, 1971, the event predated the institution of the national holiday by fifteen years. With Hornback’s blessing, the organizers raised hundreds of dollars for the celebration by selling commemorative buttons at the Ethical Society. Clyde Cahill, executive director of the Legal Aid Society and later a federal judge, eulogized King; Jimal Ali of the Black Patriots Party provided a more militant call for civil rights; a troupe led by the trail-blazing choreographer Katherine Dunham presented primitive African and Haitian dances; a black choir and a poet stirred the overflow crowd; and recording artist Arthur Prysock, who was then appearing at a St. Louis nightclub, performed gratis “out of the love of Dr. Martin Luther King.” (Interview with Kenneth Webb, Nov. 4, 1986) “In the long history of Sheldon Memorial,” wrote Ferrick, “[the] salute to Martin Luther King must rank among the highlights. Dr. King’s thought and life experiences are so much in line with Ethical ideals that our members should rejoice in having hosted the large turnout.” (Jan. 24, 1971, weekly)

Ferrick believed that providing meeting and office space for poorly funded groups was one of the experiment’s chief services to the urban community. “By generously making Sheldon Memorial available to a host of near-powerless

organizations,” he wrote, “the Society has (without unqualified endorsements) contributed to their viability and visibility. It must not be assumed (if Sheldon Memorial had been unavailable) that in every case these groups would have received the same reception and assistance elsewhere. Nor should we do these people the disservice of thinking our efforts go unappreciated or that we are being used. For many we have become an important resource; for others, a communications center, or just a reinforcement—but in all instances we have made friends and demonstrated our ethics. And one cannot slight the possible good effects of all of this.” (Ethical weekly, May 30, 1971) The National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) and the United Farm Workers were granted office space in the building. Not-for-profit agencies that used the building for meetings included the Legal Aid Society, the League for Adequate Welfare, the Black Patriots Party, the Baptist Missionary Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, Block Partnership, the Poetry Center of Greater St. Louis, the St. Louis Council of Black People, the National Coalition for a Responsible Congress, and the Black United Front of Cairo, Illinois. The People’s Coalition Against War, Racism and Repression, whose leaders were drawn from the American Friends Service Committee, the Peace Center, ACTION, and NWRO, held weekly meetings at Sheldon in 1971. Various organizations held fund-raisers at Sheldon: The “Free Angela Davis Committee” conducted two benefit rallies in support of the jailed political activist; the Association of Black Collegians held a benefit concert to help meet court costs for seven young people facing criminal charges in connection with a demonstration; and the Black Artists Group presented four concerts to raise funds for the legal defense of a poet charged with attempted rape.

Prodded by Ferrick, the Board of Management risked consternating the Society and law enforcement officials by granting use of the building to unpopular political fringe groups. Leftist and black militant groups were among those that certainly would not have received “the same reception and assistance elsewhere.” A salute to Malcolm X raised a few of the grayer eyebrows at the Society, and several members expressed outrage that citizens attending the first Angela Davis rally were frisked by members of the Black Patriots upon entering the building. One trustee curtly asserted that “the Society should support the principle of free speech without sponsoring all varieties of it.” [minutes, Sept. 9, 1971] In a city that recently had barred the production of Broadway’s avant-garde “Hair,” one of the Management Board’s calculated risks resulted in an aesthetic embarrassment:

The emphasis at that time was greatly on art. All over the country, you’d see art — *black* art. An opportunity, finally, to be seen, to be heard. There was a group at St. Louis U.—a dramatic group. There was a person there who was involved in writing and directing plays. Some of his plays had been questioned—the quality of them. I can remember that we took a vote at the [Sheldon] board [of Volunteer Managers] — we were discussing whether or not this guy should be allowed to present his plays [at Sheldon Memorial]. It was approved; some persons pushed it. The play was held, and in the opening scene—the very opening scene—this guy runs out on stage (now a lot of these good people took their children, their families, to see this “great black play”) this guy runs out on stage naked, and stood there in the spotlight. We heard about that. Word got back to the board.

(Interview with Kenneth Webb, Nov. 4, 1986)

Despite all the bustle, Ferrick worried that the experiment had little influence in the community. On January 31, 1971 — a year after the Conference on Urban Blight—he conducted the “second annual Sheldon Conference” to mobilize some form of activism. Out of the conference emerged five working committees—a Social Committee to maintain and beautify the building, provide hospitality, and organize convivial gatherings; a Publicity Committee to increase participation in Sheldon programs; a Political Committee to provide non-partisan civic education, encourage voter registration, and keep a critical watch on city government; an Urban Affairs Committee to directly serve welfare recipients, the unemployed, the homeless, and youth; and an Education Committee to establish a library, examine the city school system, and sponsor seminars in black studies, urban affairs, and radical activism. The chairmen of these committees formed a Policy Committee which was to formulate public statements and coordinate the overall program. In the weeks that followed, the Urban Affairs Committee solicited volunteers from the Society to drive outpatients from their homes to clinics and hospitals and provide transportation to city residents wishing to visit friends and relatives in correctional institutions. In April 1971, the committees took turns developing Sunday evening programs.

The committees dissipated without substantially approaching their goals.

Herdsman or Maverick?

Frustrated in his efforts to stimulate the Sheldon Community, Ferrick put much of his energy into independent activities. He was particularly concerned with the plight of indigents jailed on criminal charges. "When poor people are arrested and unable to pay bond, they frequently lose several days' work, often the job itself," he wrote. (Ethical weekly, April 18, 1971) Ferrick worked to develop a program through which accused criminals would be released on their own recognizance, thereby limiting "the negative education" taught in overcrowded jails. "The accused, whom we hail in rather hollow terms as innocent until proven guilty, would return to family and job almost immediately, the two supports that disintegrate when pre-trial detention is mandatory for lack of a bankroll. Presently, both the innocent and the convicted are thrown together in an unhealthy and stigmatizing crush." (Ethical weekly, March 19, 1972) Experimenting with such a program, Ferrick and three associates, including the Rev. Garnett Henning, formed the Committee for Equal Justice. The committee investigated criminal cases involving indigents and sought to assure the courts that certain suspects could be trusted to appear in court as required. Ferrick also lobbied for legislation that would improve prison conditions and establish statewide mechanisms for the release of criminal suspects on their own recognizance and supported the efforts of the Alliance on Shaping a Safer Community to establish a not-for-profit corporation that would post bond for worthy suspects. In addition, Ferrick participated in the Black United Front of Cairo; the People's Coalition Against War, Racism and Repression; and the human rights committee of the United Nations Association. Over time, he was perceived as being more devoted to such civic and activist organizations than to the plodding but consistent Ethical movement. "Tom was doing so many things, we don't know what the heck he was doing," said Kenneth Webb. "We never saw the results of anything. There were too many groups taking advantage of him, or that he was too responsive to." One of Ferrick's rambling accounts of a typical work week indicates that his attention was indeed splintered:

Becoming addicted to meetings is one of the occupational hazards of an ethical leader. Take last week, for example. The People's Coalition met to discuss law enforcement, housing, and unemployment and heard a report by its peace contingent on the Washington, D.C. march. Then, with the Committee of Clergy and Laymen Concerned, we planned a May 31 Service at Soldier's Memorial to urge setting the date for the war's end. I attended the Franklin Ave. business men's meeting, and there vandalism, crime, drug addiction and shabby store fronts figured in the discussion. At the Teamsters' Plaza, I met with members of a new alliance of labor and university people to plan a retreat weekend for both students and union people to talk out their differences. At Berea Church, I joined hundreds of people concerned about the new lines of Rep. Bill Clay's first district and the possible loss of our black Congressman. A little later on in the week, the Society's Block Partnership group made its introduction to the Cochran youth leadership, the beginning, we hope, of a long friendship. And still later, several new members of the Sheldon Community, brought in through the "Las Vegas" enterprise, planned to sit down socially with Mr. Hornback and me to discuss the Ethical Society's relationship to blacks. This was postponed, but in its place a long dialogue on Sheldon's future was held.

When the Saturday evening play came around, I was ready to sit back, to laugh and relax a little with "Big Time Buck White," and to wonder where all the talking leads to. I tell myself it's all very educational, you meet interesting new people and get to know the old better, your faith in dialogue, civility, and the democratic process is strengthened; you are acting out the "Ethical gospel," despite boredom and frustration, and you get results—maybe! I'm not sure it's all worth it, but then again, I'm sure there's no better way if we are to pull together and shove forward.

(Ethical weekly, May 16, 1971)

Ferrick was an impulsive administrator whose enthusiasm wavered. At a board of trustees meeting in January 1971, he characterized the Sheldon experiment as "fruitful although frustrating, successful yet slow, progressive yet passive regarding participation (by Society members)." He produced publicity brochures, ran updates and reminders in the Ethical weekly, and plugged Sheldon events when he spoke on public affairs radio shows, but he did not inspire allegiance to the program among Society members. He was difficult to contact: He did not keep regular hours, either at Sheldon or the Ladue meeting house, and he was notorious for failing to return messages. His radical political leanings earned him adversaries on the board of trustees and in the Society at large. (Behind his back, he was termed "a Father Groppi, a reference to a politically active Milwaukee Jesuit—but "a Father Groppi who didn't want to go to jail.") His reluctance to forthrightly promote Ethical Culture further undermined his standing: In 1971, he was taken to task for removing a portrait of Felix Adler from the Sheldon Library—by the reckoning of the

Ethical movement's devotees, an act approaching sacrilege. According to Webb, Ferrick estranged members of the Sheldon Community by discounting their suggestions. "He was going in one direction and we were going in another," Webb recalled. "He didn't have the respect, the support of the persons surrounding him." Ferrick, said Webb, was more hotheaded and impatient than most of the people he sought to serve:

He was interested in extreme causes which only a small segment of blacks themselves were interested in. He referred to them—those groups that weren't getting exposure, [as] "those poor blacks." I remember Tom telling me on several occasions that he really wished he was black; he wanted to be oppressed. He was identifying with all these poor, unpopular groups and causes. He referred to me as being middle-class, [and] I'm the one who provided him the entry to the most militant of the black groups.

(Interview with Kenneth Webb, Nov. 4, 1986)

Clearly, Ferrick had not fulfilled the expectations of the experiment's initial backers. "Like any activity, there were a few who carried most of the burden, who were most involved," recalled Jones. "When Tom came, I guess people sat back and waited, to some extent, for him to take over the leadership and direct it. And I don't think he knew how. He knew how to go out and make some contacts on a personal level, but then he didn't know what to do beyond that." (Interview with Robin Jones, Sept. 24, 1986)

At board meetings in August and September 1971, trustees aired their dissatisfaction with Ferrick's management of the experiment. Most felt the program lacked substance and consistency. Trustees who served on the Management Board protested that Ferrick had garnered too much autonomy, and that he was unresponsive to their suggestions and criticisms. Members of the Sheldon Community, contending that their plans for the experiment had been impeded by Ferrick's "negative attitude," asked to be reorganized as a distinct Society subgroup with no direct link to the Management Board. Several trustees charged that Ferrick had alienated the St. Louis Police Department—and thus undermined building security—by renting the building to socialist and militant organizations. Ferrick also was criticized for failing to maintain order at meetings held by outside organizations.

Hornback differed sharply—and openly—with Ferrick's leadership style and administrative discretion. He criticized Ferrick for spending too little time at Sheldon and neglecting day-to-day organizational details. Adding that Ferrick had refused to study Ethical Culture literature recommended by the AEU Fraternity of Leaders, Hornback characterized Ferrick as lazy, willful, and uncooperative. He also charged that Ferrick allocated a disproportionate amount of building use to "dramatically revolutionary" groups, slighting mainstream service organizations, and accused him of being "politically naïve or shrewdly manipulative." [minutes, September 9, 1971] As a result, Hornback said, the Society was failing in its mission to serve the central city. Because of his doubts about Ferrick's potential as an Ethical leader, Hornback recommended that the AEU continue Ferrick's probationary leadership certification rather than according him permanent status.

Ferrick acknowledged that he and Hornback were at odds over the duties of an Ethical leader. He saw himself as the Society's "outside man," whose mission was to manifest Ethical Culture principles in the public arena and reckoned that Hornback's role was to attend to the Society's internal affairs. Hornback, who had conscientiously raised his family in the central city, countered that he intended to share equally in the "outside" role, adding that he expected Ferrick to shoulder a fair portion of "inside" responsibilities.

Ferrick defended the welcome he accorded extremist groups, insisting that providing a forum for minority opinions was a natural function of the Society. In response to criticism that Sheldon had become exclusively "black turf," Ferrick reiterated his hope that the experiment would expose white suburbanites to urban black culture. But for all his defensiveness, Ferrick was conciliatory. "An overly cautious leader tends to arrogate too much decision-making," he humbly admitted. "He closes off the legitimate self-expression of others and soon is isolated." (Ethical weekly, May 30, 1971)⁶⁴

In an effort to exert more control over the experiment, the board of trustees set up a Leadership Committee to supervise Ferrick. The committee passed along criticisms and suggestions from Hornback and Society members and attempted to mediate several tense confrontations between the leaders. It was ineffectual. "There was no supervising Ferrick," said Nutt. "It's like putting a salesman out in Omaha, and he sees the sales manager every fourth month. In

⁶⁴ The undertakings of the Public Affairs Committee are detailed in Chapter 12.

between, he's his own boss, and if he's not conscientious, it's hard as hell to check up on him." Another trustee concurred: "He was pretty much of a loner. He worked as an individual. He didn't want much restraint or guidance."

Tenacious Teamwork

The lax management of Sheldon became increasingly evident over the summer of 1971. The building was commonly unlocked for use by the youth program and outside organizations, leaving it vulnerable to theft and vandalism. Office equipment was stolen, doors were battered, a vending machine was damaged, and the kitchen and central office were ransacked. The board of trustees acted to secure the building, then called upon the Board of Management to take a stronger hand in supervising the project.

The Management Board took up the challenge. In September 1971, Kenneth Webb replaced Adolph Cohen as chairman. A black civic promoter who served simultaneously on the Society's board of trustees, Webb was able to tap key contacts in the urban community and to facilitate communication between the two boards. An intense, charismatic veteran of the civil rights movement and an articulate spokesman for the African American community, Webb was wholeheartedly committed to strengthening interracial ties. Under his leadership, the Board of Management turned from a rather passive advisory role to aggressive administration of the Sheldon experiment. Webb appointed Eugene Schwarz director of social service activities; Cohen and Roma Poole served as rental advisers; Cleveland Mooney and Elsa Pitts coordinated special activities and oversaw fund raising; Harold Rinehart and Bob Christensen spearheaded long-range planning; and William Gandall handled publicity. Among other actions, the Management Board established a rental policy which denied the use of Sheldon to groups in conflict with Ethical Society principles; barred were organizations advocating violence or excluding participants because of race, sex, religion, or political convictions. Furthermore, organizations renting the quarters were forbidden to search attendants.

The Sheldon Community, which had evolved during the 1970-71 season, was formally established in the fall of 1971. Also led by Webb, this group of about twenty-five Society members and community boosters represented the nucleus of a Sheldon "congregation" which hoped to sponsor fund-raising events and educational and recreational programs. The announcement of the group's formation was made at a "Champagne Sip" fund-raiser held at Teamsters Plaza; among the two hundred people attending the event were labor leaders, politicians, athletes, and teachers—a cross-section of the urban community that promised to spur widespread interest in Sheldon programs. In contrast to the urban studies seminars, the Sheldon Community's monthly social gatherings at members' homes were consistently well-attended. The community also held informational meetings at the Society's Ladue meeting house to drum up support for the Sheldon experiment. A newsletter, Sheldon Community News Notes, was published monthly. The Sheldon Community promised to solicit contributions to offset the program's \$27,000 budget for the 1971-72 season, but fund-raising efforts were tepid. Benefit dances and receptions brought in only a few hundred dollars; emergency expenditures prompted appeals to the board of trustees, not the citizenry.

Because attendance at the Sunday evening dinner-forums had abated in the spring of 1971, they were not resumed in the fall. In their place, Ferrick instituted a weekly series of "Urban Ethics in Action" seminars on Wednesday evenings. Ferrick hoped that regular participants would come to speak with one voice on political and social issues. For a time, he released open letters expressing the group's consensus after each meeting. The seminar, he said, "acts after it raps." (Ethical weekly, November 7, 1971) For example, the first seminar of the 1971-72 season, which focused on police brutality and inhumane jail conditions, resulted in a letter supporting further investigation into the case of a young black inmate who had died in confinement; a grand jury later reopened the case, and seminar participants closely followed its findings. Participants in that seminar also wrote to the governor and attorney general to protest the planned construction of a prison in the Missouri Bootheel—a location that would sharply limit visitation by inmates' relatives in St. Louis and Kansas City.

Issues relating to the city's public school system dominated the seminar series in the fall of 1971. With Ferrick's support, Beaumont High School students who regularly attended these forums organized a daylong conference on conflicts in the public school system. The conference, held November 27 at Sheldon, brought parents, teachers, and administrators face-to-face with student leaders from city high schools. Participants discussed students' rights, evidence of racism in school curricula, busing policies, and community involvement. An education instructor from Webster College and an attorney from the Legal Aid Society provided professional consultation. At the conference, the students indicated that they wanted their parents to be "allied with them, well-informed and organized as opposed to the apathy or uncritical support of school policies so widespread now." (Ethical weekly, December 5, 1971) Furthermore, the students asked that their legal rights be written into the city's ordinances, as had been done

in New York and Philadelphia. Those proposals were discussed in depth at subsequent Urban Ethics in Action seminars. In mid-December, Ferrick announced that “a coalition of students and parents, supported by legal scholars, has been formed and will examine all recent suspensions and organize parents of suspended students to demand their rights to due process. Some evidence indicates that reform-minded students, so-called troublemakers, have been effectively silenced by dismissal.” (Ethical weekly, December 12, 1971)

Beginning in January, the seminar series tackled housing issues such as arson, demolition, open occupancy, lead poisoning, discrimination in the building trades, and absentee landlords. “Warm, safe and clean homes uplift a population, and their absence breeds social discontent,” Ferrick asserted. “Too many people in the inner city are growing restive in shanty dwellings.” (Ethical weekly, January 9, 1972) Experts participating in the three-month series included representatives of the St. Louis Housing Authority, the Freedom of Residence Council, the city Planning Commission, the regional office of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agency, the Housing Coalition of the Human Development Corporation (HDC), and the Land Reutilization Authority. At a February seminar, three of the city’s aldermen debated their stands on federal low-income housing guidelines, “straw” ownership of property, and a controversial proposal to grant city residents veto power over the construction of subsidized housing in their wards.

Other Urban Ethics in Action seminars were devoted to racial inequality, the Vietnam War, and the needs of the neighborhood immediately surrounding Sheldon. Always Ferrick spotlighted underdogs—mental patients, the poor, the elderly, the imprisoned, and all other classes lacking in political and economic clout. In addition to the seminars, the Sheldon Community occasionally sponsored addresses by civic leaders under the title of “The Sheldon Forum.” Outstanding speakers included Fania Davis, sister of Angela Davis; St. Louis civil rights activist Percy Green; and the Reverend Charles Koen of the Black United Front of Cairo.

Programs for children and teen-agers continued in the 1971-72 season. Dances were held to benefit area high school programs and the St. Louis Blues. A Christmas party was held for city residents and the children of Society members; the party was underwritten by an anonymous donation given in honor of Edna Gellhorn, who “before her death fifteen months ago [had] expressed a strong belief in Mr. Ferrick’s leadership and a wish for a five-year try.” (Ethical weekly, December 12, 1971) Coincidentally, the party was held on Gellhorn’s birthday, December 18.

Outside groups dominated Sheldon’s calendar in the 1971-72 season. The Black United Front of Cairo held vigils and conferences at the building. The People’s Coalition Against War, Racism and Repression met there weekly. Social welfare agencies conducted seminars at Sheldon, and fund-raisers for neglected causes continued. In January 1972, the Society co-sponsored another commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr.; Ferrick and Norman Seay, chairman of the local King Holiday Committee, coordinated the event. In the spring of 1972, a series of literary presentations—funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities—was conducted in the auditorium.

The deterioration of the building, combined with the dubious value of programs conducted there, forced continual reassessment of the Sheldon experiment’s viability. The underground pipe that served the building’s steam-heating system cracked midway through the season, leaving the building frigid, and melting snow sought out the multiplying leaks in the roof; restrooms were perennially flooded, and shards of cracking paint fell from the ceiling. The Board of Management persuaded the executive committee of the Society’s board to authorize emergency repairs, but the board lacked sufficient confidence in the program to fund a comprehensive refurbishment of the building. The Board of Management was ill able to shore up that confidence. The Management Board’s January meeting “was a stormy affair. Some members were very critical of present programming and urged closer ties with middle-class blacks and establishment groups. The underlying problem is the absence of general agreement on a rationale for the inner-city experiment, and confusion surrounding the role of the Sheldon building itself.” (Ethical weekly, January 23, 1972)

Hoping to redefine its murky rationale, the Sheldon Community conducted a weekend retreat in March 1972. Claude Brown, education director of Teamsters Local 688 and a friend of Webb’s, invited the community to use the union’s health and medical camp at Pevely, Missouri. Brown and Ernest Calloway, associate research director of the Central Conference of Teamsters, helped Webb and Sheldon Community member Allanda Rinehart organize the affair. With the assistance of competent resource people, participants in the “Sheldon Memorial Conference on Polarization” examined racial inequalities in education, criminal justice, and employment, with a view to formulating Sheldon programs that would more effectively address the needs of blacks. Community leaders in labor, business, education, law, medicine, housing, and civil rights addressed the sixty participants and led discussion groups. In addition to Calloway, civic activists who took part in the conference included William Harrison of Washington University’s Department of Urban Affairs; Lawrence Nicholson, professor of educational psychology at

Harris Teachers College; Otis Bolden, director of black studies at Forest Park Community College; Rick Valdez of St. Louis University's Department of Urban Affairs; Bill Fields of KPLR-TV, Channel 11; Dan Williams, director of the Human Development Corporation's Neighborhood Youth Corps; Norman Seay, director of the Health and Welfare Council's social service project and chairman of the police committees of CORE and the NAACP;

James Damas, University City chief of police; Clyde Cahill, director of the Legal Aid Society of St. Louis and St. Louis County; Charles Martin, president of the Rock Hill Municipal Task Force; Charles Scarborough, Assistant County Prosecuting Attorney; Edward Tripp, director of the St. Louis office of the Missouri Department of Probation and Parole; Mary Burger, a Washington University English instructor and co-author of a book titled "Black Viewpoints"; Pauline Border, assistant property manager of the Urban West Housing Corporation; Booker Ford, vice president of the Black Tavern Owners Association; and Bob Williams and the Reverend Charles Koen of the Black United Front of Cairo. Ethical Society and Sheldon Community members who took active roles in the conference included Donald Sundland, a clinical psychologist in private practice; Roma Poole, assistant principal at Sumner High School and director of the St. Louis Blues; Eugene Sunnen of the Sunnen Products Corporation; Ludwig "Fred" Hammer, an industrial engineer for the Proctor and Gamble Corporation and chairman of the Growth and Development Committee; and William Redding, director of the Sheldon Youth Program.

The conference was enlightening for participants, especially suburban whites who had only dimly comprehended institutionalized racism in the city's educational, political, economic, and judicial systems. After digesting the insights spawned at Pevely, Sheldon Community members brainstormed programming ideas for the future of the Sheldon experiment. Potential programs included voter registration drives; a Sheldon conference at which employers would teach unemployed city residents how to apply for jobs; a referral service for both odd jobs and permanent employment; a "Youth Phone Rap Center" in which youths would learn to respond to a variety of concerns from peer callers; an expanded summer youth program; and a system of posting bond for reliable criminal suspects. In their deliberations, community members kept in mind the caveat voiced at the conference by Mary Burger: "Too often the white liberal offers paternalistic help. The bigot in his hate conveys a kind of equality, but the paternalistic love of the liberal makes [the black] feel like a child or younger brother. The most important need right now for blacks is to be independent." (Report of Sheldon Memorial Conference on Polarization, March 1972)

A Discouraging Batting Average

Even as these idealistic plans simmered, a Sheldon Evaluation Committee formed in November 1971 was thoroughly assessing the Sheldon experiment. The committee, chaired by James Comfort, was to advise the board of trustees on whether the project was effective enough to merit continued support. Committee members included Paul Doudna, Walter Hayes, Esther Holsen, Edgar Metzger, Ruth Schwartz, Elizabeth Van Patten, Fritz Waltman, and Vincent Wilson. The committee presented its report in March 1972, shortly after the Pevely conference.

The Evaluation Committee interviewed Sheldon staff members and members of the Board of Management; its chief sources of information were Tom Ferrick, Adolph Cohen, Ken Webb, and Society president Robin Jones. The committee also met several times with Fred Hammer to discuss the manner in which social services jibed with the Society's long-range goals as defined by the Growth and Development Committee. According to the committee's report, "the opinions expressed were extremely diverse and were subjective views from active participants in the program." (Report of the Sheldon Evaluation Committee) In addition, committee members examined documentation and compiled supplementary data such as a comparison of income and expenditures; a listing of programs according to sponsoring groups; a record of attendance at Sheldon meetings over the previous two years; and a report on program administration. The report included an overview of the experiment's initiation and development, comparing plans with results. It presented evaluations of the program's administrative competence, finances, effectiveness, and the degree to which it involved Society members and city residents. Evaluations were made on a five-point scale, with 5 representing excellent; 4, good; 3, fair; 2, poor; and 1, unacceptable.

The committee gave the program's financial management a 3.5 rating. It concluded that money allotted to the experiment had been well managed, but that fund-raising efforts and rental income had been disappointing. It criticized program administrators for granting use of the building free or at reduced rates to organizations that could well afford to pay full fee. If these administrators maintained their methods of operation, the committee said, the program would never become self-sustaining.

In evaluating the experiment's effectiveness, the committee distinguished between Ethical Society programs and programs sponsored by outside groups. Tallies of attendance had not been kept, so the committee compiled

estimates from the recollections of attendants. The effectiveness of Ethical Society programs received a 2.33 rating. While ongoing events—such as the Urban Ethics in Action seminars—were poorly attended, the rating was improved by strong attendance at social events such as the “Las Vegas Night” and the year-end barbecue. By contrast, programs sponsored by outside groups received an effectiveness rating of 4.00. The committee commended the experiment for encouraging frequent use of the building by a diversity of social organizations. While acknowledging that “on rare occasions criticism of some meetings was perhaps warranted,” the committee assured the board that “feelings of deep concern [were] unwarranted.” According to the report, “the use of the building by outside groups as measured by attendees was overwhelmingly the most successful aspect of the Sheldon program.” Depth of involvement, a related measure of the program’s success, was less encouraging. The committee rated involvement by Ethical Society members at 2.33; involvement by non-Society members received a slightly higher rating of 2.50. “We found very little evidence that any deep involvement has occurred except by a very limited few individuals,” the committee reported. “Attempts at formation of committees to further programs have failed, and follow-up on discussion of civic problems has been extremely weak.”

Administrative competence, the touchiest of the committee’s concerns, received a 3.00 rating. Owning that this was “a difficult area to rate without becoming involved in personalities,” the committee laid management shortcomings largely to the relative inexperience of the Board of Management and the Sheldon staff, adding that inadequate funding for secretarial and maintenance help hampered administrators’ efforts. The committee expressed qualified confidence that managerial competence would rise as Ferrick, Webb, and others gained experience.

Performance in the area of long-range planning received a rating of 2.0 — the lowest of all the criteria judged. Plans for the experiment were “at best nebulous,” the committee said. “It is difficult at this point to predict whether or not the Sheldon Community is a nucleus for a future Ethical Society — or just what its role is. It is also questionable whether the Sheldon Memorial building can be of any meaningful service in the immediate neighborhood. Seminar-type meetings inspired only a handful of followers but no plans for substitutes have been forthcoming—and it is questionable whether any other type of Ethically sponsored meetings would do better. Unfortunately, the results of this experiment to date are of little help in outlining directions for future effective programming.”

The committee gave the Sheldon Experiment an overall effectiveness rating of 3.00. While that figure designated a “fair” degree of success, it was skewed by the relatively high effectiveness of programs conducted by outside organizations. Considering that imbalance, the committee recommended that the Society find a way to maintain Sheldon Memorial for use by urban groups without attempting to sustain a substantial program of its own. Its primary proposals were to hand over administration of the building to an outside organization or to create a professionally operated social agency funded by an independent community foundation. Expressing a deep conviction that the Society should maintain some form of community service, the committee also urged the board to consider selling the building and using the proceeds of the sale to finance more practicable social service projects. Drawing on lessons learned in the Sheldon Experiment, the committee urged that any new ventures undertaken be well-defined and focused on “limited, obtainable goals”; it further stressed the need to treat the targets of such programs—especially disfranchised blacks—as dignified cohorts rather than as subordinate recipients of paternalistic beneficence. Finally, the committee meekly suggested the possibility that the Society develop a program at Sheldon which would “justify the retention of the building” at considerable cost.

The report was surprising only in its even-handedness. In the midst of the conflict between emotional attachments to the building and program and stern objections to the financial drain, the committee had succeeded in coolly evaluating the program’s strengths and shortcomings. Because the committee was so credible, its findings swayed sentiment against continued high-level support of the project. The Growth and Development Committee—at that time, the Society’s catch-all steering committee—and the Management Board’s Budget and Planning Committee found in the report little cause for hope; in the 1971-72 season, the Society had covered a \$36,000 deficit—arising from both the Sheldon Experiment and ordinary operating expenses—by drawing on the Sheldon Fund and the Growth and Development Fund. In strained board meetings that sometimes lasted until midnight, the consensus arose that the Society ought not brook another such deficit to maintain the project’s qualified “fair” rating. Even Ferrick, who had undertaken the experiment with fervor and broad support, had grown disenchanted with the project and often was at odds with the Sheldon Community. But while he found the Evaluation Committee’s recommendations worthy of consideration, he continued to promote the ideal floated at the outset of the experiment. “It’s my personal opinion that the Ethical Society must retain its involvement in the central city—where all social problems seem to verge—and that no better base is available to us than Sheldon Memorial,” he wrote. “Two societies, separate and unequal, are taking shape in metropolitan St. Louis—let’s not burn one of the last remaining bridges.” (Ethical weekly, March 12, 1972) At the same time, Ferrick let it be known that he no longer would direct the project. The Boston Ethical Society—which had struggled along for four years without a full-time leader—had

requested his services, and Ferrick, wearied of criticism and personality conflicts, was more than ready to undertake a fresh venture.

Accordingly, the Management Board recommended to the board of trustees that the Sheldon budget be slashed by more than one-third for the 1972-73 season. Instead of a director, the program would be managed by a part-time administrative secretary. Banking on an increase in rental fees and private contributions, the Management Board predicted that the program would require an allotment of no more than \$6,000 from the Sheldon Fund. Excluding capital improvements, major repairs, and insurance, the total budget would be reduced to \$16,500. Seminars, social and cultural events, and youth programs would continue, but they would be expected to pay for themselves. Furthermore, the Sheldon Community hoped an alliance with the Pan-Hellenic Council—a non-profit coalition of eight community organizations comprising a total of 3,000 members—would bring renewed vitality to the decentralized program. The Sheldon Community had few firm plans for the upcoming season, but it assured the board of trustees that it was eager to take on the responsibility of planning and directing the program. Generally, the Management Board believed the project could be strengthened with less money and more volunteer effort.

On the recommendation of the board of trustees, the Society's members agreed to continue funding a scaled-down Sheldon Experiment. At the annual meeting in May 1972, the membership approved an interim budget of only \$3,500 for the project. This allotment was to maintain the building for twelve months, providing only the refurbishment absolutely required for projected programs. As the Management Board presented specific plans for enhanced programming, concomitant expenditures were to be subject to membership approval. The experiment and budget were to be reevaluated in the fall, after the Management Board had had time to develop new programming.

Too Little, Too Late

When Ferrick resigned as program director in the summer of 1972, the administration of Sheldon was taken over by a committee headed up by Terry Peterson, a long-time member of the Sheldon Community and a businessman with more tenacity than tact. Peterson rankled trustees by forcefully arguing for support—and by insolently resting his feet on the conference table during board meetings—but he was credited with putting the experiment's finances in order and facilitating the team approach to managing the project.

Despite the loss of a full-time leader, ambitions for the continued use of Sheldon ran high. The Summer Youth Program, aided by a \$1,500 grant from the Sunnen Fund, was repeated in an expanded form. Thirty-seven children ages 6-12 signed up for the ten-week program, and daily attendance hovered around thirty. In addition to five volunteers from the Sheldon Community—Jerri Althage, Debbie Curlee, Donna Dana, Jean Davis and Caryl Sundland—director William Redding was assisted by four teen-agers supplied by the Mayor's Youth Corps, a program funded by HDC. The Sheldon Community also helped organize a "Kids and Cops" program, which brought together some fifty city and county teen-agers and ten police officers for a weekend conference at the Teamsters camp.

At the urging of Roma Poole, a community member of the Sheldon Board and a counselor at Vashon High School, the Sheldon Community undertook to provide ongoing cultural activities for black students. In the fall, weekly sewing and knitting classes for girls were conducted at Sheldon; the women's club of the Society donated the machines and materials, and classes were taught by Sheldon Community members Ruby Cozart, Genevieve Hail, Mary Holliday, Carolyn MacLeod, Carol Nutt, Mavourneen Poole, Beverly Smith, Elizabeth Strange, and Maggie Webb. Meanwhile, Gerald Cozart organized a children's choir, and Walter Hayes initiated a chess class. Project volunteers began enacting plans for other youth programs—such as a debate club, a charm class, an art class, a cooking class, and skating and bowling groups. The Sheldon Community and radio station KATZ jointly sponsored Saturday night dances; meager proceeds were divided between the Sheldon Fund and participating high schools. In addition, the Sheldon Community planned to sponsor a high school career day; develop an apprenticeship program in conjunction with the Junior Chamber of Commerce; reinstitute a tutoring program; and promote a chapter of the Big Brother program.

The community also continued to sponsor programs for adults. A second Sheldon conference, held at the Teamsters camp the weekend of August 4-6, again examined inner-city problems and continued the search for ways to use the Sheldon Memorial building. Ernest Calloway, the keynote speaker, presented a tough analysis of economic, political, and social tasks facing citizens committed to justice and equality. During the holiday season, the Sheldon Community collected food, clothing, and toys for distribution to inner-city residents. Management Board members

also proposed instituting a voter registration and education program and a Sheldon “Think Tank” that would disseminate cultural information and serve as a hothouse for welfare reform efforts.

At the start of the Society’s 1972-73 season, Ken Webb began hosting a bi-weekly phone-in and audience-participation program broadcast live on KATZ. Dubbed the “Sheldon Community Forum,” the program featured expert panelists responding to a variety of social issues. The forums drew audiences of up to a hundred. “A lot of the black community, black radio, benefited as a result of that,” Webb said. “They began doing things differently. We found ourselves emulated on KMOX (St. Louis’s dominant talk radio station). There had been no black talk shows, especially call-in. All of that started at Sheldon.” (Interview with Kenneth Webb, Nov. 4, 1986)

Despite the laudable services and ideals of these volunteers, the building remained relatively unused, and its obsolescence dissuaded further support of the project. At its December meeting, the board of trustees expressed approval of the programs evolving at Sheldon but recoiled from funding crucial repairs in the building’s plumbing, heating, and electrical systems. Peterson and Webb, two of the program’s most active directors, complained that the Society’s uncertain commitment made it impossible to develop long-term programming; other trustees, stressing the Society’s yearly deficits, refused to strengthen that commitment. “By the time of the January Board meeting,” recalled Robin Jones, “it had become evident that the Sheldon Board had no more funds and that most members of the Sheldon Board were discouraged and reluctant to continue. A few persons, some members of the Sheldon Board and some others, especially Sheldon Board Chairman Ken Webb, had put in a very great deal of time trying to develop a program and maintain the building and they, for the most part, were ready to give up.” In January 1973, the board officially terminated the Sheldon Experiment. The board’s resolution dissolved the Board of Management, placing its financial and administrative responsibilities in the hands of the trustees. The building was ordered shut down, and, over the objections of a handful of stalwarts, a committee was formed to recommend ways to dispose of the property.

Postmortem

The death of the Sheldon Experiment was a disheartening event. Describing an experience of his late wife, Frank Nutt recalled that “one of the saddest things that Carol ever went through was the day they closed [the building] down. She went down the following Saturday just in case some of the kids came - - and, by God, they did. They hadn’t heard that the place was closed. They came because they conducted art classes, cooking classes, sewing classes—all these things that these kids ought to be taught, but nobody was teaching them.” (Interview with Frank Nutt, Sept. 16, 1986) On reflection, however, the program’s supporters balanced their sadness with satisfaction in the experiment’s marks of success. Jones, for one, acknowledged her exasperation. “There was a just a feeling that we tried,” she said years later. “We got the feeling this is beyond something we can do much about.” (Interview with Robin Jones, Sept. 24, 1986) All the same, she insisted in her announcement of the closure that that project had not been a washout:

As an individual who has enthusiastically supported the Sheldon Experiment, I am disappointed that it is ending. However, I do not feel that it can be called a failure: The new-found associations and the heightened awareness of community problems are too valuable for the effort to be called a failure. It is quite possible and to be hoped that the associations developed in the course of the experiment will continue, and that some of the programs may be continued—or new programs initiated—in a different setting.

(Ethical weekly, January 21, 1973)

Similarly, Ferrick, in an epistle mailed from his new post, said that “while I regret that Ken Webb and his valiant associates were unable to maintain the Sheldon program, I’m confident that it inspired a healthy social conscience in all members which will find more successful avenues as visible proof of the Society’s commitment to the ‘wider community.’” (Ethical weekly, March 4, 1973) Inevitably, some Society members blamed Ferrick for the project’s demise, citing obstinacy and managerial incompetence. Asked 14 years later to respond to such criticisms, Ferrick simply replied that “there may be some scapegoating afoot here.” (Letter to the author, dated February 17, 1987) Indeed, many members involved in the project contended that no leader could have overcome the abysmal condition of the building, the inconsistency of volunteer help, and the changing social climate. Urban blacks, recalled Society member Corinne Hammer, “didn’t want any more ‘Lady Bountifuls.’ Any help you gave had to be on the terms on which the blacks wanted it—which is only right. But this made it more difficult to find worthwhile projects that enough of the members could participate in. The Sheldon experiment failed because it was a time of blacks

attempting to gain their own identities. I think Tom Ferrick gave it the college try.” (Interview with Ludwig “Fred” and Corinne Hammer, Aug. 18, 1986) R. Walston Chubb agreed with that assessment. “I never had any idea that the Ethical message would appeal to the black community,” he wrote to fellow trustee Thor L. Anderson, “and it seems that has proved to be the case—except as it has given an outlet to the urge of people like the Sundlands to seek a sort of fellowship in the cause of integration. I was partly right, I think, in suggesting the problem is to generate energy in letting the blacks ‘do their own thing.’” (Letter from R. Walston Chubb to Thor L. Anderson, dated December 11, 1972)

For his part, Webb, who had invested hundreds of hours of volunteer labor, looked back on the project with a wistful mixture of lassitude, bewilderment, and pride:

We saw persons tiring. The demands were great. I was tired. I knew it wasn’t going to fly. It had lived its life. I didn’t want to just continuously keep these people coming out. I just let the group dissipate.

While I was there, I thought, “What the heck are we trying to do?” All these beautiful people, all these activities... you’re moving in this direction, that direction. But what the heck were we really trying to do? We wrestled over that. We were just doing something, you know? What purpose? I don’t know. But the people respected each other, they liked each other. Certainly it [the experiment] had substance. The networking — how persons even today talk about their experience. It was a respected group that was doing something. Nobody knew what in hell they were doing, except they were a group of blacks and whites who were doing it together.

We had some outstanding persons there, and some outstanding programs—some that couldn’t be held any other place. Persons who were in disagreement with the mayor, with city politics, the police department—there they could come and speak their minds. I have friends now—I’m very close to persons on the police department — and they listened to my radio call-in show. They thought it was a valuable tool, because it let them know what was on the minds of individuals, what people were saying. Persons who had no other forum had an opportunity there to express their causes. There were various groups, particularly those in public housing, that received some support.

It was beautiful. We had fun. We felt we were accomplishing something.

(Interview with Kenneth Webb, Nov. 4, 1986)

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, in an editorial published January 23, 1973, voiced the community’s sense of loss:

While there is nothing particularly appropriate to the occasion in Mozart’s Adagio and Rondo for Glass Harmonica, several hundred St. Louis lovers of chamber music will remember it as the last composition to be played at the Sheldon Auditorium after 43 seasons of concerts sponsored by the Ethical Society. It was announced during the intermission of Monday’s performance by the Secolo Barocco quintet that the auditorium, whose acoustics are as bright as its seats are hard, would be closed.

Since moving eight years ago to its new meeting hall on Clayton Road, where future concerts will be given, the Ethical Society has tried to maintain the Sheldon Auditorium, at 3648 Washington Boulevard, as a civic responsibility as well as for sentimental reasons. But continued financing of the project proved impossible and the trustees voted early this month to close the building and try to dispose of it.

The Ethical Society is to be commended for its conscientious effort, but it is regrettable nonetheless that a way could not be found to keep this splendid music hall in use. The structure is 60 years old and needs extensive rehabilitation. Perhaps another organization can undertake the task. We hope so, for the closing of Sheldon is another blow to the midtown neighborhood it has ornamented for more than a half a century.

The *Post-Dispatch* music critic who reviewed the final concert wryly noted that the auditorium, “a great chamber-music environment in a decaying neighborhood, commented on its own imminent abandonment last night with noisy convulsions in the heating system.” (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 23, 1973)

A Heavy, Heavy Gem

Disposing of the grand old building was a grand task. Its assessed valuation was about \$150,000. Had it been in another neighborhood, it might have brought such an offer, but in its fallen state, and surrounded by blocks of blight, it was no bargain at any price; there were clear indications that the area would make a comeback, but the Society could hardly afford to retain the building indefinitely while waiting for its value to rise. To make Sheldon usable, a buyer would have to undertake a costly renovation, and the malaise of the area made returns on such an investment a long shot. Further limiting Sheldon’s salability, the board, wary of letting the building be turned into a pornographic theater or some other seedy enterprise, stipulated in the deed that the building must be used solely for civic, religious, and educational purposes for at least ten years after the sale. Hoping to pass the building along to a worthy civic organization, the board opened negotiations with the Arts and Education Council, the Urban League, the Institute of Black Studies, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis University, the St. Louis Public Schools, the nascent Culture Center Institution, and several other not-for-profit institutions.

Meanwhile, the building remained idle and vulnerable. The board voted to sponsor enough activities at Sheldon to protect the Society’s interests, but it did not act quickly enough. In the summer of 1973, the building again was burglarized and vandalized; the Society lost more than \$4,000 worth of furnishings, and the building sustained about \$5,500 in damages. The company that insured the building against vandalism covered the damages. Neither of the two firms that insured the building cancelled the Society’s coverage, but, given that the building was not occupied as per the terms of the policies, it was doubtful that they would honor any more claims. With the building effectually uninsured, fears arose that board members might be held personally susceptible to liability suits arising from fires and accidents. Furthermore, because the building no longer was used for religious and charitable purposes, the Society faced forfeiture of its property tax exemption. The building had become an insufferable millstone, and most trustees were willing to sell it to just about any bona fide civic organization for as little as \$1.

With the dream of putting the hall to the best possible use, some trustees and Society members urged that it be sold or given to the symphony—one institution that would treasure the structure and ensure its continued use by the public. Peter Pastreich, executive director of the symphony, and Stanley Goodman, a key member of the symphony board, expressed strong interest in acquiring the building for use as an auxiliary chamber music hall. However, the St. Louis Symphony Association was burdened with the costs of renovating the nearby Powell Symphony Hall, and its directors ultimately indicated that they would accept Sheldon Memorial as a gift only if the Society agreed to help finance its renovation by simultaneously donating the remainder of the Sheldon Fund—whose invested funds then amounted to about \$76,000. R. Walston Chubb, a longtime supporter of the symphony, vigorously advocated compliance with that request, arguing that furthering the community’s cultural welfare was a fitting use of his stepmother’s estate. In this extreme stance, he stood alone. Some trustees were amenable to donating a modest portion of the fund to the symphony, but legal counsel Harold Hanke insisted that the board could not legally or ethically donate funds from that trust to an outside organization without the overwhelming consent of the membership. Accordingly, the board voted not to offer the symphony any funds. The symphony was given until April 1, 1974, to accept the building “as is.” The deadline passed without a firm decision from the symphony, and the Society thereupon sold the building to the one institution that had made a serious offer.

Only desperation can explain the building’s fate. With grave philosophical reservations, the board in May 1974 won the membership’s approval to sell Sheldon to St. Michael’s Spiritual Organization, a Christian fringe congregation popularly known as St. Michael’s Church of the Expanded Mind. Although the assessed valuation of the building was about \$150,000, the Society sold it for \$25,000. Even collecting that piddling amount turned into a laborious task. The buyer was to pay \$10,000 up front, and the Society was to carry the mortgage on the remaining \$15,000. St. Michael’s, most of whose members were working-class or indigent, was able to pay less than \$6,000 of the agreed-upon down payment; the board took up a second deed on the down payment, but the congregation consistently missed its payment deadlines on both deeds. The board, not wanting to retake ownership of the building by default, granted the church repeated extensions. “I don’t think we felt at all confident that they would pay,” recalled Jones, “but to get rid of [the building] was an asset.” (Interview with Robin Jones, Sept. 24, 1986)

A year after the sale, the board filed a lawsuit to collect payment on the second deed of trust. In the fall of 1975, the Society received a judgment against St. Michael’s and its principal guarantor, an affluent mortician named G. Wade

Granberry. (A painting firm which the institute owed \$1,500 received a similar judgment; the church satisfied the judgment the day before the city sheriff was scheduled to auction off Sheldon Memorial from the steps of the building.) After the board threatened to foreclose, Granberry paid the congregation's debt on the second deed of trust in late 1975. However, a schism halved the organization's membership, and the remaining members could ill afford to pay off the first deed of trust. In 1976, the building's gas and water were temporarily shut off for non-payment, and the congregation was able to pay its insurance premiums only with short-term loans from the Ethical Society.

After paying off the second deed of trust, Granberry offered to buy the first deed at a 10 percent discount. The Executive Committee initially approved the offer, but the full board overturned the decision when it became evident that Granberry intended to foreclose on the mortgage and disband the church; most trustees felt that, although the Society had only a slim chance of collecting its due directly from the congregation, they did not want to precipitate the collapse of the church. A Society contingent, concerned primarily with avoiding repossession, denounced the board's action as a dereliction of duty. Once the congregation reimbursed Granberry for the second deed of trust, some trustees suggested that the Society forgive the balance owed on the first deed. The majority, however, insisted that the board had no right to give away Society assets without membership approval.

An ad hoc committee formed in late 1978 recommended that the Society foreclose and repossess the building, then raze it, sell it for cash, or give it to a worthy civic organization. None of those proposals was compelling:

Proceeds from the sale of the lot could not cover the cost of razing, and destruction of a fine music hall seemed distasteful, if not unethical; because no institution wanted to assume the tax and insurance liability that came with the white elephant, the salability of the building and land was dubious; and giving away the building would, of course, represent a total loss of the asset. Payments from St. Michael's barely covered delinquent interest on the mortgage, and the building continued to deteriorate, but the board, determined to avoid repossessing the building, declined to foreclose on the deed of trust. Instead, the board in November 1979 moved to file suit against the congregation's seven guarantors. Holding that threat as an inducement, the board authorized legal counsel Harold Hanke to waive the interest debt and negotiate with Granberry—the only guarantor of adequate means—a slightly discounted settlement of the mortgage. Proceeds from the sale, minus legal fees, were deposited in the Growth and Development Fund.

As expected, Granberry sold the building to yet another unorthodox community, the Reverend Floyd T. Oldham's First Church Divine, in the summer of 1980, shortly after paying off the debt. The Society's trustees bore little remorse over the fate of St. Michael's. "When we got our money from Wade Granberry, we closed the book," said Hanke. "That was the end of it, and we felt we had no further responsibility. We had tried hard. We'd spent \$100,000 [on the building and program] over ten years. We'd made a valiant effort to keep the program going. We'd sold [Sheldon Memorial] to a church, we'd put this restrictive covenant in to protect it from being used for some purpose other than religion, and that was all we could do. We were just washing our hands of it. You can say that wasn't ethical, but I think we'd done more than could be expected." (Interview with Harold and Jane Hanke, Sept. 22, 1986)

During the years the second congregation occupied the building, Sheldon's grandeur gave way to more bohemian tastes. When California attorney and concert promoter Eugene Golden bought the structure in August 1984, he winced at the zebra-striped seats, the pink-and-green trim, and the rainbows painted on the foyer walls; prominent amid the graffiti was the slogan, "Love is the Way."

A Graceful Phoenix

In the decade following the sale to St. Michael's, the area surrounding Sheldon Memorial began evolving into a performing arts complex known as Grand Center. In the seventies, New Town St. Louis, a not-for-profit organization aimed at revitalizing the midtown neighborhood, included Sheldon Memorial in its long-range plan for the cultural district. The Civic Center Redevelopment Corporation (CCRC), a coalition of arts institutions and real estate concerns, furthered New Town's mission in the early eighties, encouraging banks and developers to invest in the area. The nascent Grand Center is dominated by two of St. Louis's most outstanding architectural structures—Powell Symphony Hall, the elegant baroque home of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra; and the Fabulous Fox, a Byzantine movie theater whose extravagant Hindu motif was faithfully restored for the presentation of musicals and

concerts. Golden intended to make Sheldon an integral element of the complex. He, like the CCRC and patrons of the Society's chamber concerts, considered the intimate hall a perfect complement to Powell and the Fox.⁶⁵

Sheldon Memorial, renamed simply The Sheldon, was renovated under the direction of Walter Gunn. The electrical, plumbing, and heating systems were overhauled, Spartan toilet facilities were expanded, and conference rooms were refashioned as dressing rooms and administrative offices. To ensure that the auditorium would retain its lauded acoustical attributes, Gunn matched original building designs and materials wherever possible. He replaced the skylight and refinished the flooring in the fourth-floor hall, turning the prosaic Assembly Room into an elegant ballroom. Gunn oversaw the project with something approaching tenderness; his favorite compliment was a former Ethical Society president's remark that the foyer and auditorium looked exactly as they had in the building's prime. In 1985, after partial renovation costs had surpassed half a million dollars, Golden flinched and put the building up for sale (the asking price was \$675,000 — more than five times the Society's building costs, and twenty-seven times what the Society received for it). Officially, at least, Golden reasoned that a St. Louis-based owner would be better able to complete the renovation and direct use of the hall. In 1986, however, he took the building off the market. Later that year, the building was designated an historic landmark, ensuring that Golden would retain it for at least five years.

Gunn, after completing the renovation, became the building's supervisor and booking agent. In addition to renting the building to outside concert promoters, Gunn and his associates began producing shows in the name of The Sheldon. He likened the building to a Stradivarius and insisted that only the finest performers were worthy of using it. In the 1986-87 concert season, The Sheldon hosted both the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's On-Stage series and the University of Missouri's prestigious Chancellor's Series. In December 1986, motion picture superstar Cary Grant was booked to present a reminiscence of his career at The Sheldon; tragically, the actor died the day before the scheduled performance. In March 1987, the hall received nationwide exposure when the ABC television network filmed an audience-participation program titled "Ask the Media" there. Gunn also negotiated with theatrical companies interested in making the Sheldon their home; in 1987, the Holy Roman Repertory, a dramatic and musical troupe whose productions are broadcast over National Public Radio, adopted The Sheldon as its recording site. With The Sheldon's revival as a first-rate concert hall, Society members' fondest hopes for the building were realized.

Gunn conscientiously spotlighted the hall's heritage. "Sheldon Memorial" and "Ethical Society of St. Louis" remain engraved in stone over the building's entrance, and the cornerstone laid over the ashes of Walter L. Sheldon is clearly marked. Gunn kept intact the stained-glass windows honoring Anna Hartshorne Sheldon Chubb, Washington Fischel, and the Mincke sisters. In addition, a massive bronze plaque honoring Mr. Sheldon—a plaque that had been gathering dust in the furnace room of the Ladue meeting house since the evacuation of Sheldon Memorial—was returned to its native berth in the Walter L. Sheldon Library, now the hall's green room. The plaque was rededicated after a nostalgic platform meeting held at The Sheldon at the start of the Society's centennial season.

⁶⁵ As of 1987, the redevelopment corporation's dreams for Grand Center remained inchoate. Apart from the three concert halls and a few restaurants and apartment buildings, the neighborhood remained a dismal area through which theater and concert patrons scurried with over-the-shoulder glances. In the fall of 1985, about 120 architects and city planners gathered at The Sheldon for a two-day brainstorming session on development of the district. Participants dreamed of filling the neighborhood with offices, condominiums, hotels, cinemas, and coffeehouses connected by trolley car lines or canopied walkways. The sponsors of the brainstorming session—the American Institute of Architects, the Ralph P. Ranft Foundation, the Missouri Arts Council, and the Regional Cultural and Performing Arts Development Commission - - publicized the various schemes in a "catalog of opportunities" for use by developers.