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Lecture I

THE MEANING OF ETHOS

Introduction

The Board of Trustees of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship has invited me to deliver a series of lectures in the field of ethics at your annual study conference. With pleasure I accepted this invitation because I considered it a great honour to be invited from across the ocean to speak to your conference. But at the same time I was a little scared. For who am I that I should cross the Atlantic to teach you ethics? The more so because I do not believe in any European superiority, and certainly not in any ethical superiority.

On second thought, however, I understood that I had put things in the wrong way. For I was not invited as an European to come to you Americans. But we are expected to meet one another as Christians whose commonwealth is in heaven. (Phil. 3:20)

Therefore the attitude in which we have to meet one another should be that of the Apostle Paul (Rom. 1:11,12), who said: "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine". And I must say that I expect much encouragement from your faith!

Concerning our first topic: "the meaning of ethos", it goes without saying that ethos has to do with our behaviour in the world, with our style of living on earth.

Therefore the first question is: what about the world in which we live?

The Standardizing Process

In answer to this question, I shall first refer to the general levelling process which is coming about in this age. An often mentioned symptom of this process is the disappearance of the distinction between ranks and stations. Nor may we under-estimate the fading away of the boundaries between the nations. Considered from the political standpoint, this phenomenon is already most important. I only remind you of the signification of the United States, the Atlantic Charter, and the unifying movements in Europe among which the Benelux and the Coal and Steel Community stand out. I know that these all have a political character. But I am sure you will agree that political organizations usually exert great influence upon the whole framework of human life. We have only to look at the glorious history of America to prove it. The more so since it concerns political unifying movements, which promote to a large degree the exchange of thoughts and customs.

As a matter of fact, the expansion of the possibilities of communication between people from the most remote parts of the world has done much to unify mankind. Who does not think in this context of the enormous increase of traffic? And let us not forget the amazing increase of human knowledge and its communication. The press, the wireless and the television, etc., have made it possible for everyone to get the knowledge he wants about everything

that is worth knowing. Formerly it was the privilege of a select group of people to enjoy works of art on a large scale. Attending secondary schools and universities was also a prerogative of a happy few.

The difference today is quite obvious. Everybody is able to get as much knowledge as he wishes, at least in the civilized areas of our world. In this way - to say no more about it - an impressive process of levelling or standardizing is put into action, a process to smooth out all special features. We are on our way towards the smoothly polished man. This means, especially in ethics, a far-reaching change. The characteristic attitude should be replaced by a standardized one, and in so doing one cannot take into account any special scruples: the pleasure of the majority must serve as the gold standard in the ethical monetary system. But when ethos is regarded only as standardized custom, it is hollowed out. Where then remains man's responsibility and love? You cannot call the goose-step of Hitler's soldiers an ethos can you? It is important to point this out, for when society comes under the management of the jack-screws of apparatus statistics and totalitarian government, will there then be room any longer for the common man with his individual character?

In close connection with the described goose-step-ethos I would like to quote the words of Emil Brunner at the assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam 1948:

"The problem by which our age is dominated is the emerging of the totalitarian state - the new Leviathan begotten by economic materialism and by the deliberate negation of personal freedom and responsibility. The danger of totalitarianism would not be so overwhelming if it were merely a matter of political dictatorship as opposed to democratic forms of government. Totalitarianism is something more pernicious than dictatorship. It is the attempt to direct and mould the entire life of the community and of its individual members in accordance with the dictate of an omnipotent state, using for this purpose all the powerful methods of mass-suggestion and police-control provided by modern technics.

"The disquieting feature of our situation is that totalitarianism - in the sense indicated - is in ascendancy everywhere, even in those countries which are regarded as traditionally democratic".

In my own opinion Brunner here points to a situation which is still characteristic of life today. We only remind you of the many articles, lectures and books about the depersonalization of human life; the dissolution of natural communities such as family and neighbourhood by the impact of modern technics and its creation of mass-man; the predominance of material economic factors and the neglect of spiritual realities; the standardizing influence of modern methods of mass-psychology and mass-propaganda resulting in the destruction of the sense of personal responsibility and of originality of expression.

Modern Uncertainty

In the third place I would refer to a modern way of thinking. The twentieth century has broken deliberately with the rationalistic attitude towards reality. And this new attitude expresses itself most clearly in the post-war triumph of existentialism on several fronts. The main feature of the previous period of thinking was a more or less conscious form of self-confidence. It was seen as if the enormous progress which mankind had achieved in the sphere of science and technology went to its head. In philosophy too, men were much impressed by the unlimited possibilities of human mind. Reason, ratio, was regarded as the most essential and godly feature of man. And reality with all its problems was reduced largely to the creative power of the human ego.

In close connection with this, science itself took lofty flight. It seems to me carrying coals to Newcastle to waste words on the subject of the enormous development of science. America is the most illustrious specimen of this scientific progress.

This attitude of self-confidence of the Western world was vigorously disturbed by the terrible disasters of the twentieth century. 1914 was in this respect the turning point. The two world wars and the genocide of 6,000,000 Jews in the lethal chambers of the German National Socialists blew out all the expectations about the moral standards of mankind.

Moreover, there were also signs of weakening of the human self-confidence in the realm of mathematics and physics. The accepted fundamentals of science proved to be open to dispute. Also in the sphere of psychology new ways were taken, ways which were not suited to set our minds at rest. I only remind you of the results of modern depth psychology.

But what is more: man found himself for the first time homeless. Science stripped nature of its human forms and presented man with a universe that was neutral, or even alien in its vastness and force to his human purposes.

Formerly religion had been a structure that encompassed man's life, providing him with a system of images and symbols by which he could express his own aspirations towards psychic wholeness. In other words, modern man is confronted with the progressive secularization of life. The mass-atheism of today, the disregard of absolute standards of right and wrong, the complete "this-worldliness" of men's outlook are entirely new phenomena. "These things have never existed before either in antiquity or in the so-called Christian era of the West. The modern world has lost the horizon of transcendence. This is the basic fact of the social disorder. If man does not believe in any superhuman moral authority, if he does not believe in the eternal destiny of man, ... how can we expect anything but social chaos or its alternative, tyranny?: (Emil Brunner).

So we may say that our society as a whole has changed the direction of the attention of mankind, no more towards the background, but towards the foreground, not towards transcendence but towards immanence, not toward inside, but outside. The whole mind is monopolized by the craving for a purely man-made world.

Close-to-Life-ness

In close connection with this stands a phenomenon in the philosophy of today. "Modern man seeks in his philosophy a conception which stands close to life. Therefore philosophy had to cross the frontier from the academy into the world at large. And so the themes of philosophy have become very concrete and have close connection with the themes of life. People do die, people do struggle all their lives between the demands of real and counterfeit selves, we do live in an age in which neurotic anxiety has mounted out of all proportion. "...Such matters as anxiety, death, the conflict between the bogus and the genuine self, the faceless man of the masses, the experience of the death of God are scarcely the themes of analytic philosophy" (W. Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 9).

We can summarize and say the divorce of mind from life which was characteristic of the rationalistic age was replaced by the closest connection between mind and life.

Incidentally, I should like to remark that this method of emphasizing the close connection between mind and life, or mind and body, appears to have many points of contact with the Biblical view of man, and the relation between body and soul. But this will be considered in my third lecture.

In consequence of this close-to-life-ness of the modern attitude, several ethical subjects stand in the focus of universal attention today, for ethics dominate practical life. Think of such topics as: overpopulation, technics and war, massman, dread, care, birth-control, sex problems, the ethical aspect of such political subjects as atomic weapons.

Dialogue

In close connection with this close-to-life-ness of philosophy stands a remarkable change in the method of thinking and reasoning. To describe it in one word, you should use the word: 'dialogue'. I may remind you that dialogue is possible only in the I-Thou encounter of two persons. And this sphere of a real meeting between the I and the Thou does not allow for general rules and laws. All the fixed certitudes, truths, data and principles by which one tries to withdraw from the risk of existing are no absolute values applicable to all circumstances. Whether or not an idea is valuable depends on the situation to which it must be applied. Hence the general resistance to the system as such. Kierkegaard called the system an omnibus, and he hated omnibuses. A man who lives according to a system of values or a system of moral principles doesn't live authentically, that is, genuinely. He sacrifices personal veracity to impersonal truth.

Therefore modern ethics favours the attitude of the adventurer who acts spontaneously and impulsively according to the demands of the moment. He doesn't ask for objective norms to direct his actions towards a fixed purpose, but he acts for the sake of acting. The detached morality of the abstract moralist has changed into the behaviour of the adventurer, into the concrete morality of actuality with all its surprising possibilities.

It doesn't matter at all to this man if he fails or succeeds, for every now and again he rushes into a new adventure with the same enthusiasm as the one before. He lives riskily, and accordingly a significant symbol for this attitude is the balance. May I remind you here of your saying: to throw one's life into the balance.

In this context it is interesting to refer to the ethics of dialectical theology with its Gebot der Stunde (the command of the moment). In the Netherlands a wellknown paper of this theology is called In de Waagschaal which means literally: In the Balance.

So then truth is on the move, that is to say, it changes according to the situation. Consequently, morality is an event; it means entering into communication with one's fellowmen. Truth arises out of social intercourse and discussion and therefore truth is relative. One cannot speak any longer of absolute truth. Reasoning according to a straight line of thought can be useful in certain fields of science, but it is utterly useless in matters of truth and religion. For such reasoning sticks to the surface of our life, and it does not reach the depths of our souls. Such a straight-linedness would be an unauthentic attitude, a make-believe, not a genuine expression of the person himself.

The Fourth Man

All the described features of the present world-situation can be summarized in an interesting idea of the post-war period about the 'fourth man'. This idea was suggested in Germany by Alfred Weber: Kulturgeschichte als Kulturoziologie, 1950 and in the Netherlands by Prof. Dr. J. C. Hoekendijk. What is meant with this 'fourth man'?

To understand this question, we should first answer the question: what is meant by the first, the second and the third man?

The first man is the ancient one who first came into touch with the Gospel.

The second man is the Christian.

The third man is he who came into contact with the European spirit, which enriched his Christian inventory with a culture of personality, that made him as Christian anything but acceptable before the bar of the doctrine of Christ.

Among these three types of men there was up to now a relatively busy interaction. The ancient man interfered with the Christian and the Christian with the Europeanized man; also, the other way round.

The fourth man however is absolutely unapproachable for all campaigns of evangelization. He holds no view of his own. He is not revolutionary in the sense that he fights for an ideology, a doctrine with a certain program. He does not know what is. Finally he does not care for all that. He listens

to all kinds of standpoints with more or less bored interest, but he identifies himself with none of them. Hoekendijk mentions four main features of this fourth man:

- 1) He is a post-Christian. 2) He is post-ecclesiastical. 3) He is post-bourgeois. 4) He is post-personal. And perhaps - but this is not certain - he is post-religious.

Post-Christian means that the fourth man is by no means attracted by Christendom. He is totally estranged from it.

For the fourth man the church has passed away. It is a thing of the past. And the churches that still exist in our society are in his opinion museum pieces.

He is post-bourgeois, for the bourgeois society has no significance for him. The preaching of the Gospel has largely assumed the form of bourgeois propaganda. Hence its appeal to decency and to man's ratio, for moralism and rationalism were the two necessities of life for the bourgeois.

Post-personal means that the fourth man is not able to make up his mind or to take a decision. He is a product of collectivization. Therefore we have to approach him via the shaping of small groups.

So far the idea of the fourth man.

It is possible that the authors of this phenomenon exaggerate somewhat. But still we should acknowledge that their description of the fourth man lays bare some very important symptoms of the European religious situation.

This modern man does not know any longer what he ought and what he ought not to do. He only knows how to have a good time. And one thing only is abominable in his thought: to have bad luck or to be short of money. He has neither ideals nor interests. His way of life is boredom. And so he is an easy victim to the so-called 'hidden persuaders'. Who does not think here of the 'motivational research' of modern advertising? Here they take advantage of the moral weaknesses of ordinary man in order to create in him new needs. Vance Packard quotes Dr. Dichter as saying: "We now are confronted with the problem of permitting the average American to feel moral even when he is flirting, even when he is spending, even when he is not saving, even when he is taking two vacations a year and buying a second or third car. One of the basic problems of this prosperity is to give people the sanction and justification to enjoy it and to demonstrate the hedonistic approach to his life is a moral, not an immoral, one."

What this means in practice can be made clear by referring to a phenomenon which is to be noticed especially in the Netherlands. I mean the decline in church memberships in the past decades. In this context I should like to mention a few results of three censuses in the Netherlands, namely, 1930, 1947, and 1960. The whole body of Protestant communions and religious communities in the Netherlands gave the following percentages of the total population:

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| 1930 | 49.2 |
| 1947 | 44.5 |
| 1960 | 41.2 |

On the other hand, it is significant that the total number of people who did not belong to any church or religious community in 1899 amounted to 2.3%, whereas their number in 1960 amounted to more than 18%.

It cannot be shown more clearly the extent of the decline of Protestantism in the Netherlands. Needless to say, this signifies the decline of Christendom!

Departmentalized Retreat

I would now ask: what is the reaction of Christianity to this remarkable situation of our society? Of course this reaction is rather complicated, and it is not possible to describe in few words. I therefore confine myself to three phenomena.

Firstly, there are Christians whom I venture to call mass-Christians. They cut their life into two parts: the smaller realm of their belief and worship and the much larger realm of their every day life, labour and leisure. Generally speaking, these Christians take things easy. They do not trouble themselves about dogmas, confessions or ethics. So far as they are concerned, Christendom can best confine itself to 'the Gospel printed upon a penny', to us a typical Dutch saying.

Consequently they do not interest themselves in the problems of the world situation. They want to be left alone in their money making and their having a good time, for faith is faith and business is business. The Gospel is one thing, but trade is another. They think that communion with God and neutrality in human society can go hand in hand.

In this line of thought - in so far as one can speak here of thought - it may be asked: when Jesus said, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given me" (Matt. 28:18), must we not take this with a grain of salt?

Ecumenical Zest

As a second kind of reaction of Christianity to the world situation described above we note the impressive rise of the ecumenical movement and the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948 in Amsterdam.

With great pleasure large groups of Christians give themselves for the work for this fascinating movement. They regard it as an appropriate answer to the challenge of our exciting time. Of course this movement in some respects has fostered the general levelling which is coming about in this century. And we have many objections in this respect. But we should not ignore the work of the Holy Spirit in this fascinating phenomenon. The more so, since the intensifying of the exchange of thoughts and traditions is about to remove many ethical barriers and to change the whole way of living of Christians all

over the world to make it possible to speak of the coming ecumenical ethos. This implies a common attitude towards several main problems of Christian ethics such as: human rights, responsible society, war and peace, freedom of religion, technics and civilization, and birth-control.

Dialectical Theology

There is, thirdly, the appearance of dialectical theology. It tries to go into the problems of the modern world situation by freely taking advantage of modern philosophical ideas, especially those of irrationalism. You will recall that Kierkegaard is called the father of dialectical theology and of modern existentialism. This great Danish philosopher introduced the idea of God as the 'wholly other' who stands high above all human institutions and styles of living. Accordingly, His commandments cannot be condensed into human regulations. For then they would be a given something that man can handle, and that would be blasphemous because man would be able to manipulate God and God would be the subordinate of man! Consequently the Bible, says Kierkegaard, does not afford us general principles for our own way of life, but we can hear only in Scripture momentary commands in view of the constantly modifying situation. Every moment and situation has its own command.

It is clear that all these ideas accord with modern irrationalistic objections against fixed principles and regulations. For the momentary situation is the gold standard of modern ethics.

But we are not yet finished with this dialectical way of thinking merely by noticing this connection with irrationalism. For we have to acknowledge that these scholars point up certain weak spots in the traditional Christian ethics: the rigidity and immobility of our ethical rules. And chiefly the idolatrous worship many Christians pay to group prejudices and clan-rules. They can seriously remind us of article VII of the Belgic Confession of Faith: "we ought not to 'consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times, etc. of equal value with the truth of God, since truth is above all.'"

There remains however something unsatisfying in the dialectical rejection of general rules and regulations. Later I hope to show that this is due to a failure to distinguish between religion and ethos.

An interesting consequence of the ecumenical and the dialectical reaction to the modern world situation is the general zest for dialogue and talking together. This zest runs the danger that all things are doubted and that the growing discussion-mindedness weakens the capacity of man to make up his mind and take a decision. But it has advantages too; among others, the readiness to listen to one another and a certain flexibility brought about by the willingness to judge oneself critically and to correct his own convictions according to well-founded criticism.

The Reformed Answer

So far we have heard various major questions which the situation of modern society puts to us. We also have noticed some reactions of Christianity to this situation. And now we have to give the answer of the Reformed Christians to these questions. We shall confine ourselves to the principle characteristics of the Calvinistic attitude in the world.

Firstly, Calvinism is dead set against dualism and claims the whole of life for the service of Jesus Christ. From that conviction was born the struggle of Dr. A. Kuyper for Christian politics, Christian university, Christian school, etc. All life is religious, that is to say: there is not portion that is excluded from the religious relationship between God and man. Nowhere does man stand outside the covenant of the Lord. You cannot keep God out of your life and go unpunished. The whole misery of our society is that man forsook God. I remind you of the fourteenth Psalm: "The fool says in his heart 'there is no God'. They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none that does good."

Ponder these words well. For instance, when a business man says: business is business, he likely means that business has nothing to do with God. There is no God. Psalm 14 describes this attitude as leading to abominable deeds; "they eat up my people as they eat bread" (vs.4). In this way Kuyper and his followers offered stout resistance against all Methodist and Mennonite dualism. For in this dualism faith covers only a part of life, only our inner room and not any form of public life. Dualists are not interested in the Christianizing of society. For society is for them the domain of the evil one. They preach that the true Christian has to withdraw from the world. And so they display a kind of other-worldliness, which has no other Gospel for everyday life than to die to the world, because the kingdom of the Lord is not of this world. "Beyond this vale of tears there is a life above."

This attitude of forsaking this life to seek another life above has caused many misunderstandings about the real message of the Bible. I remind you of Nietzsche who said: "Brothers, remain true to the earth." This call of Nietzsche was interred to criticize the other-worldliness of Christendom. In his opinion this attitude rendered Christendom useless for the development of a good society. People like Calvin and Kuyper proved that Nietzsche misconstrued the essence of Christendom. But we have to acknowledge, that he was deceived unconsciously by dualistic Christendom. And therefore it is of great importance to make Christendom stick to the earth by calling the whole of life to universal obedience to the Lord.

But this call to the universal service of the Lord was not the only merit of Kuyper. He saw clearly that religion is the absolutely central core of human existence. Here man directs himself towards the true or towards a pretended absolute Origin. But when we do not also indicate the ways in which our religion unfolds itself in temporal reality, then our religion hovers in the air, and will produce no effect. That means a new dualism between a universal religious call and a universal non-religious practice.

Therefore Kuyper distinguished between the central area of religion and the different circles of human existence. He held that in each of these circles religion has its own expression, or expresses itself in a special way. This he meant when at the inauguration of the Free University at Amsterdam in 1880 he spoke the winged word: "Sovereignty in its proper sphere".

Consequently Kuyper set himself to find our special appointed task in each area of human existence. It appeared however very difficult to gain the desired results and to define what is the particular Christian task in science, politics and society. The multiplicity of discussions about all kinds of subjects is sufficient evidence to this difficulty. This difficulty however does not remove the importance of this Calvinistic endeavour to subject the whole of temporal life to Jesus Christ. We must maintain such a this-worldliness of Christendom since the whole world belongs to the Kingdom of the Lord. Therefore our most important task in this world is to investigate what our charge is in a particular situation of life. There is one thing however that must be emphasized: in finding out what the special meaning of each circle of human existence is, and in seeking the solution of its special problems, we should seriously take into account the inadequacy and the insufficiency of human endeavour.

This is still another important aspect to our search for the special meaning of ethos. I again refer to our Confession of Faith: "we may not consider any writings of men...of equal value with those divine Scriptures...". This we have to reckon with when we teach ethics and outline principles and rules of behaviour. Being prone to error, we ought to foster a sharp sense for the provisionality of all our principles and regulations. This would provide us with sufficient flexibility to cope with the ever changing situation of this world. This would also remove any unnecessary barrier to finding the appropriate answer to any ethical challenge of our dynamic time. It would finally enable us to enter into conversation with the ethicists of today, without forsaking our religious starting-point.

Sanctification and Morality

We should distinguish clearly between sanctification and Christian morality or Christian ethos. It is my firm conviction that lack of a clear distinction here has caused many unnecessary troubles among Christians. The identification of a Christian ethical style of living with sanctification gives far too much honour to human ethics. In a somewhat peculiar sense I could say: such an identification makes a mountain out of a molehill. This is a very pregnant saying in this context in view of the many quarrels about ethics. We all are obviously prone to semi-pelagianism in this respect.

What now is sanctification? I cannot express it better than by citing the Heidelberg Catechism in its teaching about Gratitude (Lord's Day XXXII): "...Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His Own image...." According to our Catechism, sanctification is a work of Jesus Christ alone by His Holy Spirit, without any merit of ours. Therefore

the transition from the teaching of Deliverance to that of Gratitude does not mean the transition from a work of God to a work of man. On the contrary, both deliverance and gratitude are works of our triune God. Otherwise we would be Pelagians. The deliverance would then not be complete, for we would have to add our good works to God's.

Our first conclusion is: sanctification is a work of God and ethos or morality has to do with acts of man. Closely connected herewith stand another difference. Sanctification concerns man as a whole, whereas ethos or morality has a limited sense. Sanctification expresses itself in all our doings, be it political acting or economic trading or creating works of art. Our whole life in all its aspects should glorify the merciful name of God. Of course it expresses itself also in the ethical style of our life. But that is only one sphere of our existence. And this sphere too must not dominate all the others. Such a domination would be a dangerous legalism. By this I mean an attitude in which man absolutizes human customs and regulations and raises them to the level of divine revelation. We have already seen that this attitude is very dangerous for the development and growth of Christianity. It creates many sinful strains on the family bonds. St. Paul struggled with this legalistic attitude and warned against it in these words: "take heed that you are not consumed by one another" (Gal. 5:15). We understand the sharpness of his remarks when we see the idolatry involved in this attitude. This made it not only dangerous for the society of Christians, but it caused many troubles within the souls of the children of the Lord, over burdening them with precepts that are not commandments of the Lord at all.

Furthermore, a clear distinction between sanctification and morality may give a good answer to dialectical theology. Dialectical theology, especially in its first period, saw sanctification as solely a work of God. It warned against any confusion of divine and human activity but did not see that sanctification has to express itself in the ethical circle of life, albeit provisionally. All the doings of man, including his ethical activity, are imperfect and provisional.

So far we have only tried to describe what ethos is not. We first had to clear away the smudges in order to distinguish better the original pattern. This I hope to describe in the following lectures.

Lecture II

ETHOS AND THE LAW OF THE LORD

Some time ago I talked with a number of Roman Catholic Priests about ethics and technics at a meeting called by the large Dutch company of Philips. There is an important branch of this company in Hilversum, my home town. The managing board of the company established a committee selected from the board of managers, the local Roman Catholic Priests and Protestant ministers. The purpose of this committee is to discuss human relations and good social relationships among labourers and between labourers and management. The subject which we discussed one evening was the well known topic of leisure-time. In order to introduce the subject, a Roman Catholic economist was invited to lecture. One of his starting-points was that the Dutch have much trouble with this subject of leisure-time because of the Calvinistic labour-ethos. Of course he quoted the well-known, though somewhat outdated, German thinkers, Weber and Troeltsch, to confirm this thought, and consequently associated Calvinism and capitalism.

I thought at the time that the cat had been put among the Protestant pigeons. But to my amazement all the Protestants present swallowed these enormities as easily as sweet cake (a literal translation of a typical Dutch saying).

At that moment the priests accosted me, seeing my amazement, and contended that they always thought that Calvinistic Protestants believe in activity. Do you not strive for the assurance of your faith by doing good works? That remark set me thinking about the impression we are making, an impression which is different from what we should expect to result from the confession of being delivered by grace alone.

'Pure Protestant Ethics'

In that context it was a surprise for me to chance upon an American book in which precisely the same opinion about Protestant ethic was expressed, The Organization Man by William H. Whyte. In the second chapter, Whyte deals with the decline of the Protestant ethic. He quotes the words of banker Henry Clews, who gave some fatherly advice to Yale students in 1908. Whyte calls these words "the Protestant Ethic in purest form".

You can understand that I was very anxious to learn this "purest form" of Protestant ethic. I hope you do not blame me for passing it on to you.

The first rule is the survival of the fittest. "You may start in business, or professions, with your feet on the bottom rung of the ladder; it rests with you to acquire the strength to climb to the top....Success comes to the man who tries to compel success to yield to him."

The second rule is thrift. "Put away one dollar out of every ten you earn. The time will come in your lives when, if you have a little money, you can control circumstances; otherwise circumstances will control you...."

Whyte comments here: "As stringently as ever before, the Protestant ethic still counselled struggle against one's environment--the kind of practical, here and now struggle that paid off in material rewards."

The 'pure protestant' banker Clews continues: "Under this free system of government, whereby individuals are free to get a living or to pursue wealth as each chooses, the usual result is competition...anyone...is free to work hard or not....He is free to acquire property to any extent, or to part with it." And further: "Here merit is the sole test. Birth is nothing. The fittest survive. Merit is the supreme and only qualification essential to success."

At first I rubbed my eyes, I read this story once more, took the Belgic Confession of Faith, turned to Art. XXIII and found these words: "And therefore we always hold fast this foundation, ascribing all the glory to God, humbling ourselves before Him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we really are, without presuming to trust in any thing in ourselves, or in any merit of ours, relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours when we believe in Him." I also read Art. XXIV "Therefore we do good works, but not to merit by them (for what can we merit?); nay, we are indebted to God for the good works we do, and not He to us...."

How can the mentioned success-ethic of Mr. Clews be compatible with the well-known ideas of Calvin about the "meditation on the future life"? (*meditatio vitae futurae*) Later I thought that maybe there is an element of truth behind this obvious misunderstanding.

I read Calvin's Commentary on Genesis 2:15 where he says: "...men were created to employ themselves in some work, and not to lie down in inactivity and idleness.... Wherefore, nothing is more contrary to the order of nature, than to consume life in eating, drinking, and sleeping, while in the meantime we propose nothing to ourselves to do.... Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence: but let him endeavour to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated...let everyone regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself dissolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved."

Without a doubt, by means of ideas like these Calvin stimulated the development of an industrious kind of Christian. Several of his thoughts have furthered the social and economic growth in Europe. Who does not think here of his arguments against the prohibition of charging interest?

But still there is something wrong in the above mentioned reasoning about the connection between capitalistic, materialistic labour ethic and Calvinism. Firstly, with at least equal stress you could assert that capitalism originated from Roman-Catholicism since Pope John XXII was the richest banker of his time and had launched fruitful plans for money-making. Secondly, the statements fail to take into account the increasing secularization of Europe. Banker Clews may have been a Christian in his private life, but his talk to the Yale students was positively un-Christian and conducive to selfish individualism. Thirdly, this widespread misunderstanding is likely to originate from a stubborn confusion of the Law of the Lord with human ethos. This confusion has much to do with the erroneous identification of sanctification and Christian ethos which we dealt with in the previous lecture. But the discussion

of the relationship between Law and Ethos will give us a new approach towards the main subject of our lectures.

Dutch Reformed Contribution

Let us therefore first see in which way some important Dutch Reformed theologians endeavoured to describe the meaning of ethos. Abraham Kuyper in his eminent study, De Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid, regards theological ethics as the second part of Dogmatics in which is investigated the norma agendorum. Ethics in his opinion is the systematic exposition of the will of God that is revealed to us and to which man has to subject himself. Ethics deals consequently with what should be done without qualification. Herman Bavinck has the same conception. According to him ethics deals with the service of God. W. Geesink, whose ethics was published after his death in two big volumes, described theological ethics as, "that part of theology in which is treated the self-determination of the Christian in relation to his fellowmen, as it ought to be according to God's revealed will."

These theologians stood up for the Law of the Lord in ethics. But they did not mark the limits of what is called the sphere of ethics. When they hold that ethics deals with the agenda, with that what ought to be done, it must be said that this field (of what ought to be done) is far too broad. It covers faith, politics, trade etc. For in all those spheres man is obliged to act according to God's will. It is true that Geesink went further in this respect. He restricted "what ought to be done" by adding, "in relation to our fellowmen." This implies that he drew a distinction between a two-fold obedience to God, namely, a vertical obedience directly to God and a horizontal obedience to God by means of good companionship with our fellowmen. But even this restriction does not satisfy us in respect to the meaning of ethos. For there are many relations among men and we cannot possibly say that all these relationships are ethical. We need the particular meaning of ethos whereby we can distinguish between ethical and nonethical human relations.

In order to lay bare the confusion to which this has led, I refer to the fact that all these theologians thought it to be quite normal to treat the Ten Commandments within the framework of their ethics. As a matter of fact, there is no Protestant ethics that does not deal circumstantially with the Ten Commandments. And yet it is not so normal as it may seem at first sight. Let us therefore first investigate the nature of the Decalogue.

The Ten Words

We are accustomed to call this part of God's revelation the 'Ten Commandments'. But when you look it up in your Bible, especially in the original language, you will find them called the ten words. For instance, Exodus 20 gives the following introduction: "And God spoke all these words." And in 34:28 we are told that the Lord "wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." It is a pity that the Revised Standard Version here has 'commandments' instead of the Hebrew 'words'. Consequently the Greek term

'decalogue' is more in harmony with the Biblical language than our customary 'Ten Commandments'.

In my opinion this is not a question of splitting hairs, for it throws light upon the remarkable nature of the so-called 'Ten Commandments'. The word 'commandments' is a far too narrow indication for this revelation which gives much more than a few commands. As a matter of fact, this appears already from a superficial reading of the contents of these 'Ten Commandments'. Only the fourth and the fifth have the form of a positive commandment whereas the other eight are, properly speaking, prohibitions. Moreover there occur, besides commandments and prohibitions very important promises. Consider for example the second commandment where the Lord promises "steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments". And in the fifth: "that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you".

Then too, the 'Ten Commandments' contain several warnings, for instance in the second commandment the Lord describes Himself as "a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me". And in the third commandment: "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain".

Finally, the Lord in the decalogue also gives some important information about Himself. For instance in the preamble of the Law: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of Bondage". And the well known communication in the fourth commandment where the Lord holds up the rhythm of His creation as an example for the rhythm of human labour: "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."

Consequently the name 'Ten Commandments' is not the right title for Exodus 20:1-17. This name expresses far more what we have made of this part of the Bible than what God meant by it. For us it often amounts to a regulation with a certain number of obligations, put down in a sequence of imperatives. And the intelligent moralists among us took possession of these rules and by them taught us our manners. That was however at least a narrowing of the full original meaning of these 'ten words'. It is far more the Magna Carta, the character of the covenant of God with his people against the empire of the Devil. At Sinai the Lord proposed His love to his people and told what he expected of Israel and issued His promises to His people.

Dabar

Consequently the so-called 'Ten Commandments' are not a series of regulations, but the charter of the covenant of the Lord. This charter presents the characteristics of revelation. Hence the term: 'ten words'. In order to determine the meaning of this characteristic I should like to investigate the significance of the Hebrew term for 'word', dabar. This term indicates much more than what we understand by 'word'. You read in Genesis 15:1: "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abraham..." The original Hebrew text says literally: "After these words the word of the Lord came to Abraham."

One time we translate this term by "word" and another time by "thing". For the Old Testament, however, there is, properly speaking, no essential distinction between word and act. To say it with Pederson: "Abraham's servant who returned with Rebekkah told Isaac 'all the debarim he had made' (Gen. 24:66); it means: all he had said, done, heard and experienced. The word means an affair, a matter and all the circumstances attached to it..... For the Israelites there is upon the whole no difference whatsoever between the idea, the name and the matter itself...."

We may therefore say that God's speaking is not only an expression of His inner being, but is at the same time an acting. If a word would only express our inner life then it would not lay hold of the world about us. It would not change anything. It would not cause anything to be brought about. This is simply inconceivable for the Bible in respect to God. Who does not know the words of Ps. 33:6: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth."! Or verse 9: "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded and it stood forth." God does not pronounce empty sounds which lead nowhere. Likewise, we cannot say: God pronounces a command and we have to convert it into actions. As though God's words without our executive power would beat the air. On the contrary, our obedience to God's words is itself the effect of God's word in us. His word impregnates us and makes the new life sprout. It gives what it asks. I may remind you in this context of the touching words of Isaiah: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it (55:10,11)."

When we apply these thoughts to the Ten Commandments it is easy to understand why it is a radical misconception to handle them as though they were a number of moral orders. With a command we have to distinguish between the command itself and the fulfillment of that command. You can think about a command, and you can discuss it. You can hesitate in carrying it out. That is by no means possible in this case. Here God speaks and it comes to pass. The words of God explode. By His word God creates his people and creates new life. His words come down as the rain and the snow from heaven upon Israel making it bring forth and sprout. These 'ten words' of God no less than any other shall accomplish that which God purposes and prosper in the things for which He sends them.

We underscore the fact that the Ten Commandments belong to the revealing Word of God, and that they consequently bear the characteristics of God's sovereign Word, and are not therefore so many moral patterns to be dealt with in textbooks on ethics.

Delivered by Angels

In the context it is important to refer to another phenomenon connected with this Law of the Ten Commandments. In Acts 7:53 Stephen says that this law was "delivered by angels". And Galatians 3:19 says, "it was ordained by angels through an intermediary". Hebrews calls it "the

message declared by angels' (2:2). Apparently God made use of angels when he gave the law. But why?

According to Stephen it was to show the splendour of the Law. It was not an invention of Moses, who was for the Jews the great man of the Law. This Law was not a discovery of the Jews, but it was and is a universal word of God. Paul in his letter to the Galatians and the author of the letter to the Hebrews do not contradict this, when they are a little aloof in respect to this activity of the angels as to the Law. But they compare the Old Testament Law with the New Testament Gospel delivered by Jesus Christ himself. Both parts of God's word (Law and Gospel) are sovereign, (therefore the service of the angels in reference to the law and the service of Jesus to the Gospel). In comparison to the Gospel, the law is preliminary, just as angels are inferior to Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, the service of the angels indicates the revelational value of the law; the heavenly hosts are mobilized to pay honour to this sovereign word of God.

From all this we may draw the conclusion that this Law of the Lord is not an ethical code. It is rather the revealed will of God for the renewal of our life. This renewal moreover is not only a moral change; on the contrary, this renewal concerns the whole of human life. It has to express itself in all the realms of human existence. I should like to give you the following illustration of this statement: John the Baptist preached: "repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand"; he did not preach: "Behave yourself, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand".

Nature Itself

What then is the precise meaning of ethos in connection with the Law of the Lord? In order to make this clear, I refer to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering" (2:14,15).

There are groups of Christians in the Netherlands who think this text expresses the will of the Lord that women should wear their hair long. Consequently these groups forbid the use of the sacraments to women who do not wear long hair.

In my opinion however this is a clear example of a disastrous misunderstanding caused by an erroneous identification of ethos with the will of the Lord. A misunderstanding, as a matter of fact, that would not be necessary at all, if they would only read exactly what Paul has written. What does Paul assert here? Does he appeal to the revealed will of the Lord? By no means.

He appeals to "nature itself". And that is something quite different from the revealed Law of the Lord. It means approximately the common sense of decency that is prevalent at a certain time. To this common sense of decency, short hair was a disgrace to a woman. Properly speaking, Paul says in the mentioned verses that we have to take notice of the prevailing sense of decency. He does not command: wear long hair. But he counsels: follow 'nature itself' in your hairdress. And

of course when this common sense expects women, to wear long hair, then Christian women too had better wear long hair.

The Rules of the Game

The Significance of these remarks of Paul are obvious. It is evident that Paul acknowledges a certain sense of the fitness of things that is not based upon God's revelation to His people. It is a general ethical notion according to which mankind builds up its society. We may call them the rules of the game.

These rules are not divine but human, produced by human sense of morality. But in the Holy Scriptures these human ethical rules are highly appreciated, therefore Paul advises the Christians to take them into serious account. For the church would be an outcast if it did not reckon with the rules of human society. At the bottom of his heart lies this motive: "Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved" (I Cor. 10:32,33). Paul acknowledges the existence of a certain ethos among mankind which he has to reckon with lest the church be unacceptable in society. This ethos is regarded as most valuable and important, though it does not rank with the law of the Lord. The significance of this ethos is that it makes us acceptable for one another.

The Nature of Ethos

We shall now see if the Bible tells us more about the nature of ethos. For since the Bible is engaged in the foundation of a new society, namely, the church, it goes without saying that ethos as a kind of connecting link among men is highly appreciated. We confine ourselves to the mere outstanding New Testament comments on this question.

- 1) In the discussion I was asked if by common sense of decency I meant a sort of separate revelation common to all people. This is definitely not the meaning. Let us make a comparison. What is the meaning of fine arts? Let us say it is harmony. Then we are permitted to appeal to the common sense of harmony if we judge a work of art. Or, what is the meaning of economics? Let us say it is value. Then we have to appeal to the common sense of value in order to judge economical phenomena. In the same way we say that the meaning of ethics can be described by 'decency'. Thus we have to appeal to the common sense of decency when we try to judge ethical behaviour. We are not bound to appeal to the Bible in order to ascertain whether a certain picture is a piece of art. In the same way we are not bound to appeal to the Bible in order to ascertain whether a certain deed is ethically justified. An exception must be made, however, when the Bible itself makes certain ethical decisions and gives special ethical advice. Take, for instance, what it says about the position of the woman in marriage. In such cases we are bound to follow God's word. But usually we have the task to find the ethical solutions without a special message of the Bible.

Perhaps you think that love is characteristic of the Biblical conception of ethos. And indeed 'love' is very often mentioned as the most important bond between the members of the church. But just because the same term 'love' is used in the central command of love: "Thou shalt love God above all and thy neighbour as thyself", and 'love' in this central meaning is of fundamental significance in the Holy Scripture, this term is not suitable to indicate the characteristic meaning of the non-central sphere of life which is called ethos.

In my opinion, a basic exposition of the meaning of ethos is to be found in Paul's demonstration of the relations between "the strong and the weak". It is not my intention to present a detailed argument about the exact nature of the questions which had arisen in the churches of Rome and Corinth. I'm only interested in what Paul says about the problem how we have to stand towards each other when there are questions of dispute.

It is important to notice that Paul holds that the questions at issue are not of basic significance. Faith in the Lord was not put in question. Both parties could live in honour of the Lord with their standpoints. "He also who eats, eats in honour of the Lord since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God" (Rom. 14:6). This presence of the common attitude of honouring God means that together they form the one body of Christ. Presuming this basic unity of the one body of Christ, Paul can now give a great deal of ethical advice to express this fundamental unity in good human relations. We are not allowed to reverse this line of thought. Paul does not try to build the unity of the body of Christ by creating good human relations. On the contrary, with an appeal to the original and fundamental unity of Christians Paul gives his ethical advice. Consequently ethos is no central sphere for Paul. It may not be identified with the religious bonds to God and neighbour.

What then is his ethical advice?

Allow me to quote the most prominent statements. "Then let us no more pass judgment on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of a brother" (14:13). Verse 19 says: "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."

Verse 20: "...it is wrong for anyone to make others fall by what he eats"; and verse 21: "it is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble." Paul stresses as his opinion that each Christian in choosing his way of living should answer the question if his manner could lead astray his fellow Christians. This is apparently an essential criterion for a good ethos.

Perhaps you think that he is rather negative. Let me therefore quote some positive utterances: "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to edify him" (Rom. 15: 1, 2).

Here I call your attention to the verb 'to edify'. We shall refer to it later.

Further, "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (15:7). In a similar way Paul speaks about these questions to the Corinthians. So for instance in I Corinthians 8, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up". Here again appears the element of building. There is also the negative element in verse 9: "...take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak."

Finally there is the well-known utterance in I Cor. 10:23, 24: "All things are lawful, but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour." And here we refer to verses 10:32, 33 and 11:1: "Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks...just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved."

Ethos and Togetherness

In sum, I would say that according to these passages ethos has to do with human relations: "welcome one another". But these human relations are not a thing apart. Paul is not a humanist singing the praises of human relations as such and absolutizing them. The presupposition of all these admonitions to welcome one another is the profound unity of the body of Christ. Paul points out to the Christians some of the ethical rules to build up a kind of togetherness in which the unity of the church expresses itself. He wants to edify. We Christians have a firm purpose: the building of a new society. And in his ethical rules Paul gives us the directions which we need to guide human relations into the way which leads to the new society. Ethos is a kind of built-in stabilizer. It brings into equilibrium the different individual strivings. We are to welcome one another in order to be able to fulfill our common task in this world. "United we stand, divided we fall"; in unity there is strength.

Consequently, ethos has to do with solidarity and sense of responsibility. When we have to establish an association it is very important that there be such a team spirit. Therefore we draw up a set of regulations in which we formulate stipulations for mutual faithfulness. Without that togetherness it would not be possible to join in concerted action.

In just the same way a nation would be destroyed if there were no patriotic feeling. The Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes presuppose a kind of national solidarity. And it is the same with the church: it cannot live without solidarity.

There we have the nuclear meaning of ethos: solidarity. And this solidarity expresses itself in certain regulations which we are bound to observe or else community is impossible. Therefore the typical nature of ethos is the I-Thou relation, provided that the 'I' and the 'Thou' can rely upon one another. That is the signification of a set of regulations: it draws up reliable rules for a lasting peaceful relation between people. Moreover, there are also

certain virtues in which the desirable attitudes are condensed, in order to give mankind a clear and attractive image of an ideal society. I mention for instance: peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

So far we have made an effort to distinguish clearly between the Law of the Lord and ethos. The Law of the Lord is a part of the sovereign word of God and ethos -- to say it with Paul, it is "nature itself".

Taking Issue with Dialectical Theology

We now are ready to take issue with dialectical theology in this respect. We have seen that this theology, to make a long story short, holds that we cannot condense the sovereign Law of God into fixed human regulations. In this context it is important to state that its advocates are right in standing for the majesty of the divine Law, which men may not handle arbitrarily.

They are wrong however on two accounts. Firstly: while we admit that we are not allowed to master God's Law, at the same time neither are we allowed to deny the perspicuity of the Law as our guide. When God teaches us, He gives us clear directions as to the way we have to go.

Secondly: while we admit that we have to be very careful in deducing general rules which are valid for all cases and all times, we at the same time have to take into account that the Lord (as appears from His own Word) highly honours the shaping of a certain ethos. The moral nature of mankind is itself highly valued among apostles and prophets. Of course this does not mean an idolatrous worship of moral conduct, and moral codes, for morality remains in human activity. But it is certainly contrary to the intention of the Word of God to object against developing a certain Christian ethos or against drawing up programmes of Christian principles. We must however keep in mind the defectiveness and the changeableness of such programmes. In order to show the significance of these distinctions I should like to touch briefly on a few additional topics.

The Tora

Firstly: the peculiar character of the Law comes out well in the term, Tora (Hebrew for law). Gunnar Ostborn in his interesting study, Tora in the O.T. says that he feels "inclined to regard 'indication with the finger' (as well as 'showing the way') as one of the original meanings of tora". From the meanings 'showing the way' and 'guiding on the way' the other meanings associated with tora can easily be evolved. On the whole, such further meanings resolve themselves into three: 'directive', 'instruction' and 'law'. By 'directive' Ostborn implies "a pronouncement of no great length and of a more elaborate statement intended to inculcate knowledge of some kind. There is a clear connection between tora and 'knowledge'."

The conclusion that we deduce from these remarks is that by the concept 'Law' the Bible understands much more than an ethical code. It presumes personal guidance by a teacher to show the way to his pupils. This personal relation seems to me to be the core of the Law of the

This implies a certain mobility. For the teacher goes with us on our way. We have no 'paper-pope'. It also implies a conspicuous clarity and reliability of thought, because we have our teacher close at hand. Jesus says: "...the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things...." (John 14:26). "All" i.e., those we need for a 'godly walk'; but a 'godly walk', let it be clearly understood, is much more than a good moral conduct.

Secondly: we live in a changing world. In the discussion of a moral crisis today, we have to distinguish between a normal development of the moral pattern of mankind and the features of a moral decay. Many Christians are frightened by the many changes in the surrounding world. But they need not be frightened, for we do not depend on changing ethics for anchorage. We know the Rock of Ages. God's Word does not leave us, and that Word is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

The 'White Lie'

Thirdly: a few remarks about what is called the white lie. In the Netherlands this 'lie' is called an 'emergency lie'. It is a good illustration of what I mean. In wartime the Netherlands belonged to the German occupied countries. This was in all respects an awkward situation, but especially in the ethos. We had, for instance, a typical saying: it was not raining but it was lying. It was at the time when the Germans started the persecution of the Dutch Jews. Many gentiles gave them shelter by concealing them in their houses. Sometimes a traitorous neighbour betrayed them and the Gestapo came to search the house. What should you do if they asked you if you had concealed Jews? ...Of course you should say: no, or: by no means.

Some Christians however thought that such an answer was a lie, and was therefore contrary to the Law of God. Therefore they refused to give shelter to Jews and resistance fighters lest they would come into moral conflicts. What was their error?

They did not walk with the Lord, but with a moral code. The Law of the Lord says: You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbour. This is more than a moral code. It prescribes no fixed rules separated from situations and persons. On the contrary, the words: "against thy neighbour" connect man with his neighbour, and oblige us to defend and to promote, as much as we are able, his honour and reputation. A false witness, then, conflicts with what your neighbour may expect from you by virtue of the bonds of love and faith.

Of course this means in normal times that our words should conform to reality. But when murderers ring the bell and ask for their victim, it would be "against thy neighbour" to tell the murderers where the victim is concealed. In such a case the Lord is my shepherd and not any moral code.

Moral codes should not be stumbling blocks or hindrances in the way of a brother.

There are other cases. For example, we are obliged to obey the civil authorities. That is our Christian moral duty. But a situation can

develop where God himself does not allow us to obey them. "We must obey God rather than men," said Peter (Acts 5:29).

I remind you of the fact that when I here speak of the Law of the Lord I do not mean the Ten Commandments separated from the whole body of the Word of the Lord. We may not separate any part of God's Word from the whole of that Word. Nor are we allowed to separate the Law from the Gospel. Both have two faces: the second face of the Law is the Gospel and the second face of the Gospel is the Law. The message of the Gospel is that we are delivered from slavery to the devil in order to become servants of Jesus Christ.

What now about the labour ethos -- of Calvinists? That is a matter for my last lecture.

LECTURE THREE

ETHOS AND MAN

When he was old and full of years, the Chassidic (East-Jewish) rabbi Bunam said: "I wanted to write a book and in it would be written all about man. That book would be called Ha Adam (Man). Then I thought it over once again ... and I decided not to write it."

This significant tale serves to keep us unpretending and careful when we talk about man. Man is a mystery, and no one is able to reveal all his secrets. Nor is there any science able to investigate all the human aspects, let alone sound the depths of his soul.

The Bible makes it no easier, for it calls man the image of God. And since God is incomprehensible, it is not to be expected that His image would easily be understood.

It is known that the prevailing modern philosophical current is irrationalism. Human reason is not highly valued at present. Still, much attention is paid to the phenomenon man. He is still in great favour. His existence is no longer transparent and understandable by reason. The irrational features of his being occupy the centre of the stage.

Of course it would not be possible to deal with the relationship between modern anthropology and the Biblical view of man and ethos in any satisfactory measure within the scope of one lecture. It is my intention however to bring to your notice some distinctive ideas as well from modern thought as from Biblical revelation about man and ethos. The discussion of man will help to decide our attitude of life in the world.

Kierkegaard

Therefore we first should consider certain ideas of the great Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, born at Copenhagen on May 5, 1813. As you know, his ideas and especially his way of thinking are very influential in our time. Behind modern existentialism and dialectical theology both you will find the driving power of his dialectical method.

Søren Kierkegaard distinguished between three possible ways of living: (1) the aesthetical way, (2) the ethical way and (3) the religious way.

I know that it is not easy to analyze the exact meaning of each of these ways of living; for Kierkegaard has passed through many interesting and far-reaching phases of development. Consequently, the relation of these three phases to one another qualifies each of his works. It is not my intention to go into details, but only to remind you of one of the main distinctions he made. Therefore I should like to restrict myself to a short survey of his ideas on these three ways of living.

To begin with, these three ways of living are not to be ranked along side each other. The aesthetical behaviour does not fade off into the ethical, neither the ethical into the religious. One has to make a

sharp distinction between these three spheres in order to understand Kierkegaard's meaning. It is more in harmony with his opinion to say that these three spheres contrast with one another. This implies that for Kierkegaard, ethics, for instance, is not a certain separate field of living. It is not in accord with his view of life to state that the human being is living at the same time in the fields of living mentioned above. Strictly speaking, the aesthetical life, the ethical life and the religious life are not three distinct fields. Such a manner of thinking would be far too static for this dynamic philosopher. Man is still growing and the ways of living are mere phases in his development. Perhaps you can speak of the first two stages as growing pains rather than of various fields of living. As a matter of fact, such 'ontological' distinctions would be far too limited for Kierkegaard. Indeed he does not mean special spheres, but special ways of living in which the whole person is engaged.

The whole person can act either in the aesthetical or in the ethical way, but in each case the whole person would be wrong.

In Kierkegaard's opinion there is only one good way of living and that is the religious way. So there is something discriminating in his philosophy about aesthetics and ethics. He makes you think of John the Baptists's words about the coming Messiah: "his winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:17). The chaff Kierkegaard will burn with unquenchable fire is, among others, the aesthetical and the ethical way of living. The man or woman who lives in the aesthetical or in the ethical manner is absolutely on the wrong path. He has to give up that way of living and be converted to a religious way.

This condemnation by Kierkegaard of the aesthetical and the ethical way of living has had very important effects on modern thought. Therefore we shall now investigate the way in which he described the characteristics of the three ways of living.

The Aesthetical

The aesthetical person is a thinker without affection. He is able to think about all things but he himself remains outside all that he thinks. He may find the topic most interesting, but it really does not affect him. The motive of all his acting is ultimately pleasure, the pure sensual or intellectual joy of thinking in marked concepts and clear outlines.

Incidentally, it is worth noticing that Kierkegaard, in sifting grain from chaff, discerned a real state of affairs, though it was chaff in his eyes. I refer to the abstract way of scientific analyzing. The scholar, in order to accomplish his scientific task, has to stand at a distance from the concrete facts. A scientist is not to be affectionately engaged in his objects. Otherwise he might confuse the real state of affairs, and the truth would remain unattainable. He would then mix up his personal feelings and interests with the facts which he has to examine impartially.

Kierkegaard was faced here with a real situation, namely, the scientific attitude towards life. This attitude is very important and we ought

to be grateful to Kierkegaard for having described in such a clear way the characteristics of science. Moreover his disapproval should warn us against the real dangers attached to the scientific attitude. But we cannot agree with his absolute condemnation of this attitude. He abhors science, especially theology. Take such typical saying as: "take away the paradox from the human existence and you have a professor." And again: "theological professors are professors in crucifixion of the Lord." If I'm not mistaken, this disapproval of scientific attitude has led in modern dialectical theology to a dualism between faith and science. For on this standpoint a religious and scientific attitude cannot be joined. Religion has nothing to do with science.

The Ethical

We now invite your attention to a short description of Kierkegaard's view of the ethical manner of living.

To begin with, the ethical person concentrates on his own inner reality. He does not consider reality as an external something which can be looked upon interestedly. In the ethical view, reality is one's own inner reality, which he does not look upon, but which he has to change and reform. Here the ethical person is therefore closely concerned with and interested in his reality. He is not an observer of reality, but is engaged in reality.

In Kierkegaard's opinion ethics is preferable to aesthetics because the ethical person is deeply concerned in his ethical reality.

Still, ethics has its drawback for the ethical person does not leave the field of the general norms and the universal rules. The ethical man seeks to justify himself according to general standards and that in Kierkegaard's eyes is the weakness of ethics. The thing that moved Kierkegaard most profoundly in his view of life, in contrast to general standards, was individuality, or as he called it, subjectivity. He was most interested in what does not agree with general rules, but rather arises from the strict individual experience of man in his encountering with God. The highest value he found in religious living. And to this religious way of living, as Kierkegaard saw it, I now devote a few words.

The Religious

The religious man rends the bonds that tie him with universality. As an individual subject he enters into relation with the concrete, historical personality of Christ. But this Christ is not a general, approachable ethical personality. On the contrary, he is the God-man and as such the Paradox in itself. Only in a most individual way can man come into contact with this paradoxical God-man. How could it be otherwise? For in Christ the eternal God comes into touch with temporal man. This contact is only possible in the moment of His grace. And it is by no means possible to generalize this remarkable moment and to give it temporal dimensions. The invasion of eternity into temporality (happening in the 'moment') cannot be fixed in any way whatsoever. Nor would it be possible that anyone would lay hands upon it by drawing up general Christian rules. Kierkegaard would say: no one would reach heaven travelling by bus; we have to make the journey by ourselves.

This individual and paradoxical contact between God and man in Jesus Christ Kierkegaard calls religion. Religion is incomparable, unique and strictly individual.

In religion Kierkegaard is hyper-individualistic. It is not certain if this individualism has had palpable effects on modern thought, for community and unity are prevailing ideals today. I remind you for instance of the term "solidarity" in dialectical theology. But let us not forget that Kierkegaard was individualistic as to religion. And when Karl Barth says: "God speaks only in concretissimo", how does he differ from the individualism of Kierkegaard? Apparently individualism in religion and a kind of collectivism in society can somehow go together.

There is however another question regarding Kierkegaard's view on religion. This question is very important, especially in regard to dialectical theology. Does man still remain a human being in religion? Or does the religious relation alter the human being to such a degree that he is no longer human, but more than human?

In other words: what has the religious relation to do with the earthly existence in which we live, eat, drink, work, love, marry, etc.? You certainly know that it was the dialectical theology, especially in its first stage which in this respect followed Kierkegaard.

Therefore it had to answer the questions mentioned above. But now this question was formulated to read: is it possible to connect the religious relation with an ethical way of life? Has authentic religion anything to do with moulding temporal patterns in which Christians express their religious experiences?

Not only dialectical theology, however, but also modern existentialism owes much to the ideas of Kierkegaard in this respect. In its non-Christian advocates the Christian religion is replaced by the extreme situation. I remind you of topics such as, anxiety, death, nausea, boredom, etc. Such 'last things' now are prevailing themes in modern thought and ethics. Therefore, carefully drawn up and well-considered programmes of principles are of little importance today, for with such programmes men take no risks.

In summary, we find that Kierkegaard was a precursor of our time as a condemner of general, ethical rules, and in his dualism between the scientific attitude and religion, in his plea for subjectivism and, last but not least, in the attention he drew to the extreme situations. Moreover in theology: his ideas about the paradoxical contact between eternity and temporality and between God and man had far-reaching influence. We may add that since the day of Kierkegaard the question has been under discussion as to the connection between religion and earthly human existence.

The Absurd Man

In order to underscore this argument I should like to discuss briefly a typical theme of modern thought. I mean that of 'the absurd man'. 'Absurd', according to the common opinion means 'preposterous'; it indicates something that you need not take seriously. It is an exception.

Today, writers such as Camus and others, use this term in another sense. According to them the absurd man does not care about the rules of the game of society. The lonely man is a law to himself. This man you have to take seriously and certainly not to ban from life. In his book The Stranger, Camus describes the life of a young man who lands in jail and is sentenced to death. The death sentence follows the murder of an Arab, a murder which is entirely incomprehensible. Camus on purpose does not attempt to account psychologically for this murder. Later, before the law-court, the murderer declares that he had not intended to kill the Arab. When they asked him for his motives, he answers: it was all owing to the sun and the audience laughs. When the sentence is pronounced and he returns to his cell, he meets the chaplain. But he dismisses him by saying that has little time to spare and is not willing to waste it on God. The book ends with a monologue of the murderer concluding with these words: "In order to make all perfect, in order to make me feel less lonely, I could only wish that there would be many spectators at the day of my execution and that they would greet me with cheers of their hatred."

When I read all this, it reminded me of the title of a book of Peter Howard: Ideas have Legs. This is one of the results of the condemnation of the ethical way of living. Credo quia absurdum.

Faulkner in 'The Sound and the Fury' refers to the lines of Shakespeare:

"...Life is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

The Biblical 'Heart'

I would now like to give you a brief survey of some Biblical thoughts about man. My starting point will be a study of mine¹⁾ on the concept "heart in the Old Testament". It seems to me fruitful to compare this concept 'heart' with the concept 'soul' (nefesj) in the Old Testament. Of course I know that this is a limitation, but in these two concepts we are faced with two fundamental Old Testament thoughts about man in the O. T.

Herman Bavinck in his Bijbelsche en Religieuze Psychologie, says that the "heart in Holy Scripture is regarded as the base and the starting-point of the entire physical, and in connection with this, further of the entire psychical life of man" (pp. 59, 60). Herman Dooyeweerd in his A Critique of Theoretical Thought calls it "the religious centre and radix of temporal existence" (I, p. 65). What does the Bible, especially the Old Testament, say about the heart?

1) Het Hart (Leb, Lebab) in het Oude Testament, 1950.

This conception is of crucial importance. The word occurs 854 times, a hundred times more often than the term 'soul' or 'nefesj'. The use of this term, moreover, is many-sided. The great variety of meanings has caused a great variety of opinions. There is a large group of scholars that agrees with the Jewish Encyclopedia that "the whole physical and psychical life is centralized in the heart." But there are also many scholars who say that the heart is "the seat of the understanding". Eichrodt speaks of "die Dominante des Willens". T. K. Cheyne in Encyclopedia Biblica, Vol. II, s.v. says: "Primarily the heart is the seat and principle of vitality, for the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11) and the receptacle of the blood is the heart." Pederson (Israel) says: "the heart is the totality of the soul as a character and operating power, particular stress being laid upon its capacity; ... the heart is the soul in its inner value" (I, p. 104). Norman Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, calls the heart "that which is innermost of all, deepest down, and most important..." (pp. 148, 149)

When we consider this pattern, we are struck by the following peculiarities: Each opinion is comparatively right. When I hear that the heart is the seat of understanding, then I grant that there is something in this description. But when I describe it as the seat and the principle of vitality, then I cannot deny the correctness of this definition either. The same applies to all the remaining opinions. Since the term 'heart' can be used in so many different ways, it stands to reason that every description mentioned has to do with one or another aspect of this many-sided conception.

You can speak of the heart in a biotic sense, in an emotional sense, in a noetic sense, in the sense of will, and in an ethical sense. It can designate the central organ of the body, as the place of deep-seated emotions, as memory, knowledge, insight and consciousness, as conscience, character, etc.

It is clear that it is decidedly incorrect to seek the proper sense of 'heart' in any one of these groups of meaning. It appeared to me moreover that the use of 'heart' in these different groups does not differ much in frequency. Therefore I have sought to found the distinctive characteristic of this term in all the groups mentioned. The result was most interesting. This characteristic was found in what I called the representative use of 'heart'. What is meant by this "representative use of the heart"? In the first place the dignity: the representative organ occupies the place of honour among the organs. It is a V.I.P. among the organs!

In the second place it also means the possibility of distinction between the representative and what is represented. Accordingly, the 'heart' in a certain sense can be distinguished from the person itself. I can "search my heart."

In the third place 'representative' indicates that 'heart' does not just denote a physical or spiritual part of man. It represents the whole person.

In the fourth place the deepest sense: the genuine, the authentic, the essential in contrast to the counterfeit, the bogus. All three previous

meanings are concentrated in the last one. It is, of course, understandable that this deepest meaning does not always appear on the surface. Frequently, the development of the meaning of 'heart' has not gone so far or is already past that point. Nevertheless this deepest meaning must be borne in mind, because it often indicates the fundamental significance. I here remind you of I Samuel 16:7 "man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." Consider also Joel 2:13: "rend your hearts and not your garments."

Here we arrive at a mile-stone in our argument. The deepest sense of 'heart' is the genuine, the authentical man. Here any dualism between a detached body and a separated soul is out of the question. The heart is distinguishable but not separable from the person as a whole. Man is like a world with deepenings. He who is able to penetrate into the deepest depth of this world (the heart) comes to know himself thoroughly.

When we have taken notice of all this, we discover a remarkable state of affairs as to the significance of 'heart'

It appears that all the various meanings we mentioned do not cover entirely the Old Testament usage. For 'heart' is, used very often in a particular religious sense. 'Heart' is very often used when it is a question of man's relationship towards God. In other words, 'heart' has a predominantly religious significance. For instance: 'heart' represents a separate principle toward the Lord. It determines the course of life and is also its origin. The heart is responsible for sin, is the maker of sin, and in particular is the seat of conscious opposition to the Lord. 'Heart' is the subject of idolatry.

But on the other side, it is also the pivot of conversion and the centre of humility. It is the organ for searching for the Lord and for the intercourse with the Lord as well as for the fear of the Lord. Religious feeling and religious knowing are ascribed to it.

It is the nucleus of religious virtue; thus is it also the organ and the place to keep God's commandments.

Finally, it is the organ of trust in the Lord and of prayer.

We may therefore conclude that the central religious functions are ascribed to the heart.

I have found that this religious use of 'heart' is used 318 times. Practically any form of religious activity starts from the heart. Moreover, the revelation of the Lord was aimed at the heart. You can also say that the heart is the receiver of the Word of the Lord. We therefore call the heart: the focus of religion.

To this religious use of the term in the Old Testament special attention was ever paid. All these religious expressions were classified in the groups already mentioned: emotional sense, seat of understanding, seat of the will, etc. They certainly took notice of the religious context, but no one thought to investigate exclusively why 'heart' was used in such various contexts and why it was used so emphatically and so often. It is most interesting to ascertain this neglect of religion in so far as 'heart' is concerned among all the exogetes. The obvious

reason is that the exegetes did not account for the phenomenon 'religion' as it is presupposed in all these places.

Religion is not a certain capacity. It is the relationship between God and man in which man is engaged from his innermost parts to his fingertips. It takes hold of man in the deepest and at the same time in the broadest sense possible. And therefore it is most interesting to examine the point of contact for this religious relation in man.

What does this investigation of the religious use of 'heart' tell us? In my opinion it casts clear light on the question whether the religious relationship annihilates man or not. You know that this is one of our chief disputes with Karl Barth. Barth says of man: when he decides against God, he falls into not-being. "Er greift und fällt damit in doppelten Sinn ins Leere" (Church Dogmatics III, 2 P. 176). Zuidema describes this anthropological thought as follows: "There is in this view of man no room for the history of man: it is overwhelmed by the history of God" (De Mens als Historie, p. 22). I remind you of another saying of Barth: "I am called by this Word, I am in so far within this Word (ich bin durch dieses Wort aufgerufen, ich bin insofern in diesem Wort)" (Idem, III, 2, p. 180). Or elsewhere: "The pre-supposition of man is God in His Word" (Des Menschen Voraussetzung ist Gott in seinem Wort) (Idem, III, 2, p. 181). You may ask: what is left here of the religious subject? Is it God or man? Has man in religion any subject? Or is it God who enters into relation with Himself in religion?

In my opinion this idea lies at the bottom of dialectical theology. There the objections against Christian organizations and Christian regulations start. All of human life and society in this way is detached from religion, at least from its direct influence. Fortunately Barth is not consistent in practice. But here we have to see clearly that his basic idea about religion leaves religion hanging in the air and causes a kind of dualism between religion and society, science, etc.

What now can the Bible's use of 'heart' teach us about the significance of religion?

To begin with, the religious use of 'heart' is not something apart, an addition to the non-religious use. For in the religious use, all the other uses return in 'heart' as seat of the emotions, understanding, will, etc.

Moreover the religious use agrees very well with the non-religious use. For we saw that the deepest sense of 'heart' in non-religious use is: the genuine, the authentic, the essential in contrast to the counterfeit. I quote for instance Psalm 55:22: "His speech was smoother than butter, yet war was in his heart;" And it is this meaning, this deepest significance of 'heart' in non-religious contexts, to which the religious use of 'heart' appeals. I remind you also of Ezekiel 11:19: "...I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh." Remember also the many places about the 'uncircumcised heart'. Circumcision is obviously not good if it is a circumcision only of the flesh and not of the authentic, genuine representative of man, namely, the heart.

It follows then that religion designates man in his genuine existence. Man is what he is in relation towards God. Religion is not one of man's many capacities. No, religion is a matter of the authentic, unadulterated man; in other words: religion is a matter of the heart. Since there is continuity between the non-religious and the religious use of 'heart', religion cannot be severed from the rest of life. The whole, genuine man, is concerned in religion. Whoever severs man or human life from religion, mutilates man terribly. Man cannot develop his true humanity without religion.

It is said that the ancient Aztecs cut the heart out of the living bodies of their war-prisoners. That was a very cruel custom. I'm sure that cutting out the human heart from the body of man's cultural and social life is much more cruel. Life without religion is completely and radically inhuman.

Nefesj

Let us now compare the concept 'heart' with the other very important indication of man, namely, nefesj or soul. Our exposition of the concept nefesj need not be as extensive for it is not such a specific religious term as 'heart'. It ranks along with many Hebrew terms and the whole Hebrew language that is intensively interested in concrete, earthly life. There are interesting studies on this subject. In the Netherlands one was made by Dr. J. H. Becker, another in Finland by Dr. A. Murtonen.

Its principal meaning is "the living and/or acting being of its possessor" or "its possessor described as living and acting", in which the body ... is the most important factor."

"This life is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11). Or "the blood is the life" (Deut. 12:23). Accordingly it indicates the breath. Job 41:21 says: "his breath kindles coals."

From this it is clear that nefesj in its its principal meaning is as it were a "here and now" - concept, denoting this-worldliness. It "remains true to the earth." It denotes full life on this earth in this age.

Further, nefesj indicates the seat of emotions, desire, sympathy and in a few instances, of knowledge, just as 'heart' does. Then however you have to take into account that it attaches to all those emotions, desirings, etc. the distinguishing mark of intensity. So for instance I Sam. 20:17: "for he (David) loved him (Jonathan) as he loved his own soul." In the Hebrew text you find literally: "with the love of his nefesj he loved him," that is: he loved him dearly.

Thirdly, nefesj denotes the individual personality. But this is not meant in a deep sense, but as emotional subject, as a personal pronoun and as an appearance. It is a concrete indication of a living man. It may be so superficial as to denote a dead body (Lev. 19:28).

Summarizing, we could say that nefesj deals with the concrete, earthly personality for whom breathing and the circulation of blood are most important, and who lives intensely emotionally. It indicates the man of this world.

Heart and Soul

When we now compare briefly both heart and soul in the Old Testament, we find (1) that 'heart' is man, properly speaking, and (2) 'soul' is man concretely speaking.

We hereby attain a good understanding of the well-known Biblical saying: "with heart and soul", for instance "to love the Lord with heart and soul." This expression indicates the whole man in his proper and in his concrete existence.

The heart is man "in a nutshell, the whole man; not only the seat of his activity, but its summary" (K. Barth, Idem, III. 2, p. 521).

The 'soul' is the whole man in his full concrete development, his total appearance.

The consequences of the religious use of these two conceptions are most interesting.

The heart is behind all man's doings; that is to say, all man's doings are religiously determined. There is no neutrality. Man cannot be loosened from his religious responsibility.

Man is every inch a 'soul'; and 'soul' is every inch man. That is to say, the 'soul' is not a vague and shadowy something, but the 'soul' is in the blood and needs the breathing-space of our good earth. It denotes our concrete and emotional earthly existence. Likewise the 'soul' craves flesh (Deut. 12:20), and "thirsts for God" (Ps. 42:2).

We must say that in religion man remains true to God and to earth. Any dualism is extremely unbiblical. There is no dualism between body and soul. Neither is there a dualism between religion and earth, or between religion and society, or religion and culture. Nor is there a dualism between reason and religion. 'Heart' is often used for understanding. I remind you of the command of Jesus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37). Man is a religious totality.

This has important ethical implications. I think of what is called the phenomenon of mass-man. This term indicates the man-without-heart. Mass-man is dominated by what people say and controlled by collectivity. His heart is not active, it plays no part in the shaping of his life. He is irresponsible and an easy victim of any hidden persuader. You can also call him with H. Whyte, 'the organization man': his heart has lost control of him, and is, as his pilot, replaced by his employer and his colleagues.

Incidentally, you could deduce from this an important ethical principle for Christian organizing and Christian leadership. Christian leaders ought to take into full consideration the responsibility of the human heart. It is the ancient question of the Reformation and its rejection of the contrast between clergy and laity. In our time a new contrast between a new laity and a new clergy is developing. Let us take care lest in the building up of our organizations and

churches we "be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). Better a defective than a bureaucratic organization, in which the responsibility is shared only by a happy few. Our organizing must be rooted in the hearts of all our members. Otherwise it becomes a worldly limited liability company.

As for Kierkegaard, we have already seen that there is no room for his dualism in Holy Scriptures. But it is good to listen to him when he shows us the limits of ethics. The ethos of man is one of the many sides of life.

It must be distinguished from the religious contact with the Lord. A Christian ethos without personal contact with Jesus Christ with all our heart, is a dreadful way of life.

But on the other hand a Christian who loves Jesus Christ but does not concern himself with a Christian ethos, is neglecting an important aspect of life and believes in dualism. His heart must be in his ethos. A 'heartless' ethos is surely a dreadful thing, but so also a 'moral-less' heart. Therefore allow me a final word about a 'full-hearted' Christian ethos.

An Ethos of the Heart

In our preceding lecture we saw that the root-meaning of ethos is solidarity. Petersen says: "The basis of all Israelitic ethos is the common feeling, love, and according to the nature of the compact it must in its innermost essence, be a family feeling. One of the Hebrew denominations of love rahamin, perhaps points directly to the relationship through its context with rehem, mother's womb. As the mother's womb is the source of the formation of families, so it is also the fountain of family feeling" (Israel, I-II, p. 309). According to Petersen we can denote the meaning of ethos as family-feeling. In connection with this you could also describe it as self-control, or restraint.

The Lord has given us the whole good earth. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). But the earth is still occupied territory. Christ is not yet acknowledged to the ends of the earth. "Fight the good fight of faith" says Paul to Timothy (I Tim. 6:12). That means we are not yet ready to enjoy unhindered the joys of Christ's universal kingdom. The war is still going on. And therefore Christians have to restrain themselves and to put on their battle-dress. It is not yet time for the festival attire.

At the beginning of our second lecture we quoted the fatherly words of banker Clews, which Dr. Whyte calls "the Protestant Ethic in purest form." In his opinion the chief principle of Protestant ethos is the survival of the fittest in a struggle for materialistic or capitalistic prosperity. The Protestant struggle for life would be carried on in the expectation that the strugglers would be paid off in material rewards. Such is said to be the Protestant labour-ethos.

William Barrett in his study: "Irrational Man" says that "for several centuries capitalism and Protestantism went hand in hand, ravaging and rebuilding the globe, conquering new continents and

territories, and in general seeming triumphantly to prove that this earth is itself the promised land where zeal and industry really pay off" (p. 29).

I have already said that this widespread idea is quite beside the mark both in respect to history and confession. But perhaps we have made an impression like that! Perhaps there has been a great gulf fixed between our heart and our ethos. That we did not control our ethos by our heart. That we twisted the well-known beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" into: "Blessed are the die-hards for they shall conquer the earth."

Such a twist would be demonic. It creates demons for work, but not "fellow workmen for God" (I Cor. 3:9). The earth is for the meek and for the merciful, the pure in heart and the peacemakers. They can wait, for the Lord Jesus says: "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). We should not behave as if we have to conquer this world. We have to follow in the wake of Him who has said: "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

It follows then that the gap between heart and ethos is a symptom of a serious frustration. When our heart is near Christ, then our style of living will be in harmony with that situation. We need not rush into the world in order to grasp all that is nice and enticing regardless of what lies at the bottom of our heart. Moderation characterizes the disciple of Jesus. We must be His witnesses to the end of the earth. This impressive task requires many restraints. The battle for the Kingdom of Jesus is very expensive. There is very much to do, not for the expansion of our prosperity, but for the sake of Christ. "He must increase, but I must decrease." Let that word of John the Baptist be our battle-cry. It does not depersonalize us by the brainwashing of hidden persuaders playing on the key-board of our passions. We are not "gone with the wind", but controlled by our own heart.

Therefore we concentrate ourselves on the treasure which is where our heart is, according to the word of Jesus (Matt. 6:21). That is also the best description of the meaning of ethos: concentration. It directs our way of life upon the heart of the matter. And this is possible only when ethos is a matter of the heart.