

Calvin College by Lester De Koster

Want to find a sermon?

Where might I find a sermon on this text in the Book of Amos? or that text in the Gospel of Mark?

Such questions once posed problems for the Calvin Library staff, but do so no longer. Moreover, locating *all* of the sermons held by the library, in its hundreds of volumes, on any given text or chapter, was probably well-nigh impossible, but that time is past, or almost so.

An index file, composed of some 35,000 cards, reveals to the library patron at a glance all of the sermons held by the library on any biblical text. At least this is the goal of the Sermonic Index, nearing completion. The index is arranged by biblical book, subdivided by chapter and verse, giving a key to every sermon on every verse that the library now holds.

In addition, the Sermonic Index lists all of the preachers whose sermons are indexed. There are some 3,000 of these cards, giving pertinent data on the writer and the publication in which the sermon appears.

The sermons themselves are indexed to indicate the preacher, the title of the volume in which the sermon is found, the pages it covers, and the theme the writer chose for his text. If the sermon is drawn from more than one text, there is cross-referencing to indicate this fact.

This massive accomplishment is the result of some years of dedicated effort by the late Dr. Clarence Bouma and Mrs. Tessie Bouma. Begun by Dr. Bouma soon after his retirement from the Calvin Seminary, the major part of the index became the work of Mrs. Bouma, who is now engaged in bringing it to completion. In addition,

Mrs. Tessie Bouma and the sermonic index file at the Library-Classroom Building, Calvin College and Seminary, Knollcrest Campus.



Mrs. Bouma has undertaken to keep the index up to date by working through new volumes of sermons as they are added to the library.

The range of writers extends from the early church fathers, like Augustine and Origen, through the Reformation preachers like Wyclif, Luther, and Calvin, on to Kuyper and Spurgeon, Sperry and Fosdick, Thielicke and Billy Graham. Included are numerous works by preachers from the Christian Reformed Church.

Most of the sermons held by the library are in English, but there is a liberal sprinkling in the Dutch, and many in German, French, and Latin.

Themes of every kind, rising out of the countless texts of the Scriptures, are treated in simple or exalted language, in plain and ornate style, in fine English and exquisite Dutch.

The index not only guides the user with ease and finality to the total holdings of the library on any given text, but represents a careful combing of the book shelves so that no sermon might escape its net. Not only the collection of sermons have been carefully analyzed, but those appended to or included in books devoted largely to doctrinal and systematic studies have been ferreted out and noted in the file.

The uses of this tool are obvious, and the work of seminary students and faculty, as well as that of visiting patrons, will ever be enriched by this painstaking and comprehensive monument to an effective professor and his tireless helpmeet.