

# Editorial

## DEDICATION OF HEKMAN MEMORIAL LIBRARY



HURSDAY, March 8, marked a red letter day in the history of Calvin College and Theological School, because, as announced in last week's BANNER, it was on the evening of that day that exercises were held in dedication of the new edifice, which has just been completed, to house the library of the institution of learning of our denomination located in Grand Rapids, Mich.

A representative audience was present, filling the entire chapel of the College building. President J. Broene of Calvin College presided on the occasion, and introduced each speaker in a very fitting way. The combined Glee Club of Calvin College opened the program by singing the well known composition of Gounod, "Praise Ye the Father," a very appropriate opening number, since it honored the triune God for his mercies.

Dr. Y. P. De Jong, president of the Board of Trustees gave the invocation. He was followed by Mr. G. L. Daane, who in a brief but well chosen address spoke of the work of the committee of which he had been president. He thanked the architects and contractors as well as the building committee and its advisory members, stating that it had been a pleasure to all of them to cooperate in the erection of the handsome and well equipped building donated by the Hekman family in memory of their departed father, Edsko Hekman.

Dr. De Jong, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, and our denomination, accepted the keys, and in a brief address conveyed his sentiments to the audience. He thanked the building committee for the work which it had performed, the difficulties it had overcome, the patience it exercised, and the valuable time it had given. Then he expressed in the name of the entire denomination his sincere appreciation for the princely gift donated by Mrs. Hekman, Sr., and her family. He said: "I know it, you do not desire the praise of men, and far be it from us to deify the creature, yet, we thank you most heartily for the splendid gift donated to the church and school in loving memory of a beloved husband and dear father.

"It is a well known fact that the Church and School had a large place in his warm heart, and in his days he certainly contributed his share—intellectually, financially and spiritually. And undoubtedly in the devotion shown by you, in your generosity thus displayed and in your loyalty to the cause so dear to him, we are reminded tonight of the principles he stood for, and of the training which you received from him. I dare say, humanly speaking, the library building is at least partly the fruit of his labor, of his loyalty, of his devotion, and of the training which he gave to you."

Dr. De Jong expressed the wish that the sons and daughters of the Hekman family, as well as others, might be found sitting in that library studying those principles and contending for the same faith once delivered to the saints.

He concluded by saying: "Finally, *Soli Deo Gloria*: Unto God be all our praise. He grants us a wonderful development in our glorious country, fittingly called the land of the free and the home of the brave. Compared with many institutions of learning, we are small and insignificant, yet we are thankful for what we possess and are full of courage, knowing that we received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that were freely given unto us of God."

The main address was given by Mr. Samuel H. Ranck, librarian of the Grand Rapids Public Library. President Broene introduced him as just the man for the occasion, a librarian of national reputation. Mr. Ranck alluded to the fact that he was a graduate of Franklin and Marshall College of Lancaster, Pa., of the Reformed Church in the United States. Marshall College, he stated, in its history had a development almost parallel with the Grand Rapids institution. The religious

cornerstones of both are the Heidelberg Catechism and both trace their theological lineage to the Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619.

Before Mr. Ranck discussed his subject, "The Library and Higher Education," he defined a library as a depository of human thought, one of the mainsprings of a free intellectual life, a great instrument of learning. A library building is the body that holds the real thing, viz., the spirit of the human race as expressed in books, carefully selected for and adapted to the needs of the people they are to serve. Books, therefore, he said, and the use made of them determine the character of a library and make it great. Incidentally he suggested that special attention should be paid by any library, including ours, to the publications of their own men and women, faculty and graduates. What our Christian Reformed writers have published so far, he stated, would already make a splendid collection.

Mr. Ranck defined education as a process of mental enlargement and the development of awakened minds, its final product being a well balanced personality.

"Education deals with spiritual realities. It is not a commodity which can be measured or weighed." Hence, the speaker disapproved of it that too many of our institutions of so-called higher education are nothing but educational department stores, where one may go bargain hunting for the required number of credits to get a degree with the least possible effort.

"It is only in relatively recent years," Mr. Ranck continued, "that the library began to play a very active part in our higher education." He quoted a couple of his own experiences to bring out how poorly the library has functioned in former days.

We haven't the space to quote more from this able address, which he closed by saying that the new library, therefore, should be a great powerhouse of ideas and ideals, exerting a lasting influence, a most far reaching influence on every student and teacher on this campus. It should radiate knowledge and culture, which should be transfused into wisdom. But most important of all it should develop character, for character is the flowering of the human soul. Knowledge and education that do not develop character are worse than wasted. "I need not remind this audience," he concluded, "that back of character the soil out of which it grows is a reverent spirit that is profoundly religious."

After a piano solo by Miss Helene Verspoor came an address by Prof. L. Berkhof on "The Significance of Our Library." He began by stating that it was an evening of rejoicing in God, and of gratitude to Him, showing that our school is still growing and surpassing the expectations of many who in 1892, when the first college building was erected, thought it was too large for our needs, and who uttered something of the same sentiments in 1917, when the present main edifice was erected. But, said he, we discovered in recent years already that we sorely needed a library building such as the one which has now been completed. Prof. Berkhof brought out three main thoughts.

In the first place he stated how the new library building may well be regarded as an expression of faith,—faith in God with reference to our cause and our educational efforts. Faith is not always, he said, the easiest thing in the world. It is often confidence in a thing that seems to be negated by reason. He himself would not have been surprised if there had been considerable hesitation when it came to planning such a building as is now open for inspection. This was to be a building for a small college, and some people had been saying that the small college had had its day. "We are living in an age," they say, "of consolidation, of the establishment of university colleges. The small college is nothing but a waste of money, which can never be as efficient as the larger one. Why then seek to maintain it and develop a small one?"

Moreover, this is a library of a denominational

school, and many, so he declared, claim that the denominational college has served its purpose. It is loudly proclaimed that denominations are essentially sinful and should lose themselves in a higher unity. It is granted that the denominational college in its day served a useful purpose; but now, some folks say, it only serves to generate bigotry, to foster inter-church strife, and to divide the warring host of Jesus Christ. Therefore, away with the denominational college.

Next, Prof. Berkhof stated, this is a library of a Calvinistic institution. And many hold that Calvinism has no future in our beloved land. Calvinists form only a small minority in the world at large. In the Christian world the tide is strongly against them. This is true especially of our country. The traits of the Puritans and the Scotch-Irish are not dominant in the religious life of America. The general trend is strongly against us. And so, on account of these three signs of the times, not to mention more, it certainly required faith to espouse what might be considered a lost cause, and to erect the building we are now dedicating.

In the second place, Prof. Berkhof said he liked to look at the library also as a monument to the cause of Calvinism. He said he was sure that the generous donors meant it to be just that. It is true that it serves the purpose of a memorial to their departed and sainted father, but they might have donated something to the community in the shape of a civic building. They themselves, however, are greatly attached to Calvinism and they knew that they could best honor their father by erecting a monument to it. And that fact, so Prof. Berkhof continued, ought to reveal itself also ever increasingly in its book stacks. It is a matter of course that our library should not be a duplicate of the city library, but must be of a far more academic character. It must not even be a mere duplication of any other college library. Naturally there should be some general resemblance. But it should have something very distinctive, and if it has not, it fails of its purpose in this respect.

We ought not to be satisfied, so the speaker said, by buying a few books on Calvinism, but ought to make it our aim to get, as much as possible, a complete line of Calvinistic publications. It ought to be arranged so that they who desire to study Calvinism cannot afford to neglect our library.

There was a third point brought out by Prof. Berkhof. The new building is to furnish an incentive for wider usefulness. It is through the library, he stated, that the College and Seminary comes into relation with life universal; namely, with the intellectual life of the world. The blood of the world of learning is pulsating in the library. It is only in the measure in which we take count of this world that we can hope to influence it.

A well developed library also opens up opportunities, he continued, for research, so greatly needed by the professors. They best know what a handicap it is that the books for special study are not at hand. Books can often be sent for, but there must be an opportunity to refer to them time and again. Hence, this library opens up new vistas of learning to the student. The instruction given by any school is naturally limited. There are great fields of learning that cannot be traversed in the classroom. The library will enable the industrious student to take a glance at these fields, perhaps to engender new ideals and lead on to greater endeavor.

The speaker brought out one more thought. He hoped that the new building might bring us in touch with the lofty examples of those great men of learning who lived in the past and wrought so well. We can associate with them, commune with them, enjoy their friendship, and such association with the choicest minds of the past cannot but have an elevating influence.

"May our most sanguine expectations of our library," so was his closing sentence, "be a source of intellectual and spiritual blessing, to the glory of God and the perpetuation of our principles."

Both of the addresses from which we have been quoting freely, because we know of our people's interest in the matter, were listened to with rapt

attention, and that was also the case with the musical selections of which a second one was given as a closing number, "Gloria in Excelsis."

Prof. C. Bouma, as rector of the Seminary, after some brief but fitting remarks, offered the closing prayer.

Prof. Broene had called attention to the fact that the men who were composing the building committee were brethren of good Seceder stock, and he called attention particularly to the fact that this pertained to the chairman, Mr. G. L. Daane. He was perfectly right in this. Mr. Daane is the great-grandson of Mr. Gysbert Haan, the initial of whose first name he is bearing. Mr. Haan in his day was the leading member and elder of the little Seceder congregation which was organized in his native town of Hilversum in the days when it meant something to be a Seceder. The little flock there gathered in his home, often driven out by armed mobs and the force of the police.

In a book on Hilversum, published a year or two ago to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the founding of that North Holland town, some highly commendatory remarks about Mr. Haan can be found. In 1847 Mr. Haan and his wife and ten children migrated to America, settling in New York, later moving to Michigan. In Grand Rapids he, with Mr. John Gelock and a handful of others, became the leader in the movement which led to the secession of 1857. It can

be said truly, we think, that our church would not have originated in Grand Rapids, Mich., at least not in those early days, if it had not been for Mr. Haan, for many years the leading elder of the Spring Street congregation and one of the leading figures at our classical meetings. Mr. Haan died July 27, 1874. Mr. Daane's mother is his granddaughter.

We are sure of it that the dedication of the new building was greatly enjoyed by people from nearby as well as from far away. May God continue to shower his blessings upon those who donated the building, as well as upon those who use it.

Prof. Berkhof called attention to the fact that a great deal would be needed in years to come to purchase the necessary books. But we feel sure that the fine example of the Hekman family will be followed by others, either by testamentary disposition or by gifts. And it surely was very encouraging to notice from Prof. Wyngaarden's article in last week's BANNER that from far away Kansas came a gift of \$1,000 for the purchase of books, the gift of Mr. Jacob Soodsma of our struggling, but brave Luctor congregation. This brother very recently also remembered the cause of missions by a splendid contribution. Who follows such examples?

*Henry Beets*

## Our Doctrine

By Rev. Z. J. Sherda

### WITHOUT EXCUSE?



AND SO Clarence Darrow and Dr. Wishart debated the other evening. No doubt a large audience was present. Most of whom perhaps were interested not so much in the debate, but they wanted to see the man who cheated the gallows when he defended a couple of agnostics like Leopold and Loeb. How did he do it!

And the gentlemen were to prove or disprove that a belief in a general purpose in the universe is rational and is justified by facts. We shouldn't be a bit surprised if the lawyer had the better of the argument. Why, they say that Darrow can prove any old thing. Besides, who would adduce such proof that the mouth of gansayers should thereby be stopped?

It may not be out of place to quote what a modern exponent of the theological argument has to say in regard to this matter. William Kelly Wright in his *A Student's Philosophy of Religion* writes: "That there is a God of some sort seems almost an inevitable consequence of believing that the world order is purposive in its development. For, wherever we see the evidences of purpose, we are inclined to assume a purposer. If the world order is purposive, this seems to imply a world Purposer. This does not necessarily mean that the world has had a Creator; it is not necessary to believe that there ever was a time when there was no world, and that God afterwards made the world out of chaos, or out of nothing. So far as the argument of the book has yet proceeded, the reader is free to accept or reject the doctrine of creation. The theological evidence merely indicates the probable existence of a Mind that is, at least in considerable measure, in control of the world process—enough so as to account for the amount of teleology apparent in it." Well, this shows you how far all this debating about the existence of God amounts to.

There is, fortunately, another way which is the only way to approach this problem, and that was clearly indicated in the editorial of Dr. Beets when he wrote: "In the last analysis, as well as fundamentally, we hold these basic doctrines because we find them in the Bible."

Darrow is an agnostic. We are indebted to a brother and sister, members of the Evergreen Park Church for a few remarks about the agnostic at a funeral. What is so solemn as death! We are interested in what Darrow has to say in the presence of the dead. The remains of an old man of seventy-two years lay in a casket. Close by stood the famous agnostic. Snapping his suspenders and jingling a bunch of keys in his pocket he remarked that on this occasion he would not dispute the belief in immortality. But as far as he was concerned he did not believe in a future life. As he continued he said that the dead man was the only one in the room who deserved congratulations, for he was the most fortunate person. Life, as the speaker understood it, was one big failure anyway. Since the deceased had devoted much

of his time to nature and to art he got at least some enjoyment out of life. And then he extolled the virtues of the dead. What a good man he had been! But life! What is life but "a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities." We strain our eyes in vain to look beyond the heights. What pessimism!

Is Darrow without excuse? Is any man without excuse? Was the Gentile world in Paul's day without excuse?

Sometime ago we were asked what Paul meant when he wrote, "because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse." How then can any man say that he can find no God or purpose in the universe? Now, whatever Paul's words may mean, it is certain that they are applicable to all men. And throughout the corridors of time there echoes and reechoes "without excuse."

Indeed, what do these words mean? One would almost get the impression that general revelation is sufficient for a true knowledge of God. But then let us see.

God revealed Himself purposely to the nations and peoples of the earth "that they might be without excuse." Men, insofar as they still believe in a future life, protest loudly against a doctrine which teaches that all outside of Christ are lost. How can the world be held responsible in the day of judgment? There are so many who never heard of the true God. How can these deserve punishment?

Whether we can explain this or not Scripture says that the Gentile nations are without excuse. And if they are, everybody is. It is not entirely correct to say that nothing can be known of God outside of special revelation. There is something that may be known of God through the ordinary channels of the natural and the moral world. The Bible says that it is manifest in them. Though without special revelation, men still have knowledge of God; they are conscious of it, for God manifested it unto them.

That which they know is described as the invisible things of God; that is, His everlasting power and divinity. They are perceived through the things that are made since the creation of the world. God reveals to men by means of creation that which may be known of Him.

Creation is a work of art; it is a mirror in which the Almighty allows us to see His power and majesty. Let us hear our confession in this connection. Article II, which tells us about the means by which God is made known to us, says, "We know Him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible

things of God; namely, His eternal power and Godhead, as the Apostle Paul saith, (Rom. 1: 20)." All which things are sufficient to convince men, and have them without excuse.

Creation is one grand sermon, and God himself is the preacher. It is not an indecipherable document, incapable of being interpreted. It is not something mystic, which only the initiated can understand. No, but it is a revelation of God to mankind which may be understood by any rational being. It is a word of God, through which the Creator gives testimony concerning Himself. Despite all catastrophes and calamities as the issues of sin and curse, of death and devil, creation reveals the glory of God. Unceasingly the Omnipotent causes His handiwork to speak of Him, and even in the year of our Lord 1928 creation witnesses as clearly and strongly as in the day when the morning stars sang. The prophet Isaiah heard the seraphim sing: "The whole earth is full of His glory." And the sweet singer of Israel sang "O Jehovah, our Lord, How excellent is thy name in all the earth." And so unmistakably does creation point its finger to its Creator that though He is spirit, Paul could say that men should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him. Indeed, if they were only wise and had understanding enough to observe that He is not far from each one of us: for in Him we live and move and have our being.

But what knowledge respecting Himself does God bring to men through the instrumentality of creation? Listen. Through it God speaks of His everlasting power. The Father omnipotent, in the exercise of it, never meets with an object that curbs that power. That grand and majestic work which we call creation He produced, so to speak, with his finger tips. It has not exhausted His power. "Let all the earth fear Jehovah. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

And so creation bears the golden hall-marks of divinity. The contemplation of creation is sufficient to evidence the incomparable majesty of God and the divine honor which is His due; for, doesn't creation summon mankind to fear God, and give Him glory, and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth, and sea, and fountains of waters?

Despite what Darrow, Wishart & Co. have to say about men and animals, we still believe they should be carefully kept apart from start to finish. Man has been endowed with the capacity to behold his Creator in the works of His hand. If he does not, something is wrong with man. Your kitten sees creation, but does not observe the Creator. It lives and dies without ever having beheld its Maker. But man can see Him who made the world. He perceives the everlasting power and divinity. He knows that God deserves divine honor and that He is incomparably worthy of it. If he does not render this he is without excuse. It was God's intention to speak to mankind through creation, and He made us so that we can understand its language.

That fact that man can receive this revelation of the everlasting power and divinity in creation rests upon a certain knowledge of God in his inner self, in the very center of his consciousness. We do not mean to say that an infant, for example, has a "conscious conviction of the existence of God." But there is an urge in the soul of every human being to strive after clarity, to get clear knowledge of that Power which stands above all other powers. Nature assists us here. Through it man may acquire certain appropriate conceptions of God. It is full of voices which proclaim the power and divinity of the Creator. Nature itself testifies against Pantheism.

Many people educated and uneducated, wise and foolish, the agnostics of all time, either flatly deny or entertain doubts as to the question whether the Author of creation has a personal existence. Paul, it seems, never had occasion to write against this view. In New Testament times men were not so much thinking of this problem as they were of representing deity in the form of an image, made of wood and stone. The sensual multitude soon identified deity with his image. But image worship is a denial of the divine personality.

Did you ever stop to think how Paul met this error, and how, incidentally, he would have met a Darrow in debate? Let us look into this matter the next time.

P. S.—I must acknowledge the receipt of a letter from Mr. A. Ekkens who advises me as to a possible error which may have crept into one of my articles. Mr. Ekkens writes: "You say that the Word is only a means of grace when it is publicly preached by the minister. That looks to me like Roman Catholicism. Must we get the pope to interpret the Word for us?" There is possibly a slight misunderstanding here. I may quote what Dr. H. Bavinck has to say about the means of grace. In this connection I submit the following: "Alongside of the sacrament the Word is a means of grace in the proper or true sense of the term