

scious walls. If reverence is caught and not taught, the Chapel can become a reverence-creating force in the atmosphere of our daily lives. The hint of the Eternal is here, and as we pass in and out, it awakens the reverential feelings of the soul.

The Chapel also strikes the vital note of beauty. The lovely churches of Sir Christopher Wren were the models of the Georgian epoch. The slender fluted columns crowned with the Corinthian capital, the graceful pilasters and the chain of beads upon the architraves, and the harmonious proportions of the building indicate this quality. Art has always been the handmaiden of religion. From the dawn of history, whether at the Temple of Luxor or the Parthenon, we see how men have employed beauty of line and proportion to excite the religious impulse. A man can lift up his thoughts to the Eternal in a log cabin, but there is no inspiration in the device or design to help him lift them up. The humblest person, however, who stands within the nave of Ely or St. Paul's finds it easier to pray. The purpose of beauty is not to please the eye, but to elevate the spirit to the highest. And so the beautiful that shines forth here from every vista refines the soul and reminds us of that Spiritual Beauty which adorns and uplifts everything it touches.

When you stand before any noble structure, what is the supreme word it speaks to you? The spectacle of a lighted home upon a winter's evening gives you a feeling of warmth. When you step within a majestic cathedral, and see arch pointing upward to arch, and pillar to spire, something within you soars up that cannot be stopped. It is the essence. It is aspiration. So it is here. Column seems to march forward to column, and line rise to line toward the perfect whole. Each springing base and tapering pillar and the great campanile, towering by day like an arm toward Heaven and by night shining like a beacon, unite in one grand ensemble to sound a single note, "Aspire. Thy only greatness is to aspire."

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The Symbolism of Stetson Chapel

Kalamazoo College



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THE SYMBOLISM OF STETSON CHAPEL

Named in Honor of
Herbert Lee Stetson, LL.D.,
President Emeritus.

Architecture is a language and every structure reveals in form and design the purpose for which it was erected. A skyscraper represents commerce, a library knowledge, and the factory utility. But art does not express its meanings with visible letters. It speaks directly to the heart without the agency of words. Architecture is "frozen music" and, like music, strikes the chords of the mind with notes that can only be felt.

Stetson Chapel is like a great organ sounding forth a message of many notes. It rises in the center of the campus like a cathedral such as Amiens or York, central in the hearts of its people. It represents the past, the present, and the future. The great Roman Ionic columns of the portico speak of history. Upon the face of the pediment above them stands forth the college seal. Upon the front of the great tower soaring above all is the inscription, "Koinonia Pneumatas" — Fellowship of the Spirit. The architectural design indicates that this is a Temple of Religion. Day by day the tendrils of our Hearts should twine about the massive pillars and vine-clad walls of the Chapel. For time will hallow it with tender and vivid associations. It has not yet gathered about itself a halo of memory; it rises before us in its newness like a glistening bridal veil. But when the clean white wood has been marred by many hands, and when these aisles have been worn by many steps, a splendor will be added to pillar and vault by the memories of the young hearts that have here beaten out their music.

This Chapel came out of the Puritan epoch, the heroic age of America. The Puritans very consciously tried to build an austere ecclesiastical structure. The unadorned ceiling and white walls are a survival of that spirit of

austerity. The straight pews which leave the middle of the back without support signify moral straightness. The Puritan apparently believed that erect posture would encourage moral perpendicularity. Scoff at them as we may, their civilization produced character, "too straightly piercing perhaps like the steeples of their meeting houses," yet rigorous and uncompromising. The atmosphere of the interior may seem a little cold, but it breathes chaste feeling and fine restraint. Let all who enter here, then, feel the challenge of the rigidly upright man and severely scrupulous woman, who moved grimly about on the stage of early colonial life.

The Chapel also strikes the note of simplicity. The Puritans feared the luxuriant ornamentation of the Byzantine and the elaborate tracery of the Gothic.

They set their churches among the trees and songs of the birds and the odors of the green, living things. The long wall broken by the simple arch of the window, and the plain entablature around the vault reflect their love of simplicity. They dimly realized that the loveliness of plainness surpassed the beauty of ornate decoration. How the simplicity of this structure rebukes the craze for artificial things that has swamped this generation! When we look about us we are amazed to see how little decoration is needed to create a beautiful and satisfying structure. So all the great values are simple. The trees require no embellishments, the lily no rouge, and the lyric that stirs the soul is common as tears. As we go in and out of this temple, let us learn how few are the wants of the great, and that "life does not consist in the abundance of things a man possesseth."

This Chapel also strikes the note of reverence. The succession of stately and dignified columns, the wide sweep of arch and vault, the general air of the sublime speak of the Infinite. Lorado Taft said, "The most precious asset of art is the hint of the Eternal." Even the most sluggish mind must respond with silence to this sensible element. Like a great work of art, this building hushes the noisy tongue and evokes the awe and wonder of the soul. The boisterous and lawless spirit of this generation which respects no moral majesty or sanctity and treats lightly profound things is condemned when it stands within these spa-