

# *The Presbyterian*

# **GUARDIAN**

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room that houses our prayer warriors. That box will be opened once every three weeks and for twenty minutes of the service, an attempt will be made to answer the problems—whether pertaining to the Bible or spiritual life in general. Said one of the regulars, "Boy, I'll fill that box after a day at home!"

Said one of the honest people about prayer meeting, "Why are we always getting off the subject and talking about Aunt Minnie's arthritis and Uncle Jim's hog calling abilities? Let's stick to the point." How do you solve that one? Better control over the group, to begin with. Then real and hard planning over the meetings, at least as much as you would devote to picking hymns and sermon subjects and exegetical work for the Sunday services. And when all that is done? A good news hour once every three weeks, in which the people are invited to bring to the group's attention news of note to the whole church—something they saw in the paper about the work of Christ's church, a note in the *GUARDIAN* worth repeating, some new ideas for the church program that might be worth a look-see, something nice about the service that new visitor in the third row from the rear said last Sunday. Make it all good. After all, this service is supposed to be a lift, not a let down.

And when all this is done, and you get down to the Bible study, make it fascinating and suspenseful. Take books or sections or doctrines people have expressed a real interest in or want to study. You'd be surprised how many have been dying to study the character of faith and the assurance of salvation. Keep the study full of questions and discussion. Don't sermonize. You've got all day Sunday for that. Just keep tossing the ball to the group and they'll toss it around and find the answers (which, of course, you must be prepared to lead them to by pointed questions).

And the results? Maybe one Sunday morning you'll hear a regular at prayer meeting tell the adult Bible class in Sunday school how much they've been missing at midweek service. Maybe you'll hear him say how much he misses that service and how his week seems empty without it. I've heard that remark. Liven up your prayer meeting and maybe you will too.

## Westminster Seminary Begins Thirty-First Year

The thirty-first annual opening exercises of Westminster Theological Seminary took place on September 16 in the sanctuary of Calvary Church across from the campus. The invocation was offered by the Rev. Theodore Hard, a missionary to Korea of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, who is home on furlough and has enrolled as a graduate student at Westminster for the year.

The Scripture was read from Ephesians by the Rev. William A. Mahlow, general secretary of World Presbyterian Missions, following which the Rev. Robert E. Nicholas led in prayer.

The address of the afternoon was delivered by the Rev. Roger R. Nicole, Th.D., Professor of Theology in Gordon Divinity School, Beverly Farms, Mass. Speaking to the overflow audience on the subject "The Five Points of Calvinism," Dr. Nicole gave something of the history of the term and captured the interest of his hearers by the manner of his treatment of this stimulating topic. The *Guardian* expects to publish his address in a later issue.

Preceding the address, the Rev. Professor Cornelius Van Til, Chairman of the Faculty, who presided, gave the following words of greeting, directed particularly to the members of the incoming class.

### Van Til's Greeting to the Entering Students

Perhaps your friends at home or at college were surprised to hear that you were planning to attend a seminary. Perhaps they were even more surprised to learn that you were planning to attend Westminster Seminary. If they were I think I know what you told them. In all likelihood you told them that you were planning to teach or preach Christ and him crucified, Christ and the resurrection. Perhaps you quoted Paul's words when he said: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

If these words of Paul truly express the purpose of your hearts then we of the Faculty and of the student body welcome you with open arms. For

there is no greater joy than to set forth Jesus Christ the Savior before lost and dying men. To tell all classes and conditions of men that the "wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23), who would not give his all to do just that? And to lead the people of God in saying the words of Paul's doxology: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39), is there anything better on earth than to do just that? The Seminary stands ready to help you to prepare yourself to do this very thing.

### Prepare Yourself?

But why should you *prepare* yourself in order to speak of Christ? Why should you learn Hebrew and Greek in order to present Christ to men? Do people want you to speak to them in these languages today? Why should you involve yourself in the problems of higher criticism? Can you make men believe that the Bible is the Word of God by showing them from the facts of Scripture that no mere words of men are found in it? Why should you study church history, systematic theology or apologetics? Much learning will only make you mad! There is no need for it; we have enough in Scripture, in Christ and in the promise of his Spirit!

### Confusion

But you know the answer to this sort of reasoning. At least you know it in substance. You know something of the confusion that exists in the minds of men today. Men speak of sin and they speak of Christ as the Savior from sin. But they do not think of sin as making them rightfully subject to the wrath of God. Nor do they think of Christ as the Son of God who, though he knew no sin, was made sin for us "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

When men today speak of sin they tend to mean only that they have not

lived up to their own ideals and ideas of right and wrong. And when they speak of Christ as Savior from sin they tend to mean that he, more than other men, has overcome the battle with evil in himself, and has set us an example that we may follow.

### The Source of Confusion

The source of men's confusion on the questions of sin and salvation lies, of course, basically in their own hearts. Sinners are bound to misconstrue the meaning of sin. The natural man is self-righteous above all else. To maintain himself in his self-righteousness the natural man invents all manner of excuses for his failure to love God above all and his fellow-man as himself. Similarly the natural man, when he hears of Christ, seeks to bring down this Christ so that he too is of the earth alone. A Christ thus brought down to earth cannot convict others of sin nor supply them any help in overcoming it. Or if men raise up the Christ above the earth it is because they think all men, with him, are inherently and essentially from a higher world. Thus always the Christ men naturally think of is at most gradationally higher than other men. For them he is never the one by whom "all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:16-20).

### Yes, Prepare Yourself

You will be called upon in days to come, therefore, to preach Christ to men who are in a state of confusion. And this confusion is traceable, at last, to sin. Men worship and serve "the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

There seems to be no end of the many ways by which men seek to make themselves believe that they are serving God when they are really only



Machen Memorial Hall from the South

serving themselves. Men make bulwarks of defense for themselves by means of science, by means of philosophy, by means of literature, by means of biblical criticism. With great honesty and sincerity but withal in basic self-deception men employ all the artifices of learning to keep from facing God. And thousands there be that follow them.

How can you bring Christ to such men? You cannot effectively do so if you do not know their thoughts. The church of Christ cannot perform its mission in the world without a learned ministry. True, the church needs first of all a pious ministry. The final question is not one of learning. The power of the Holy Spirit regenerating the hearts of men will, in the last analysis, alone enable men to accept the Christ of the Scriptures. Even so, God is a God of order. He would have his church set forth the Christ as the one who "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Corinthians 1:30). Christ said, "I am the Way, the

Truth and the Life." As such he must be presented unto men.

### Christ as Truth

To do so with confidence to all classes of men we must understand for ourselves, so far as we can, what Christ means when he speaks such words. We must understand what this means for the sake of building up the church of Christ. Do you not yearn to lead God's people more deeply into the riches of the meaning of his Word? Is there not a burning desire within your heart to display the risen and ascended Christ before his people that they may be changed from glory unto glory as by the Spirit of the Lord?

All the learning that you may expect to acquire at the Seminary, the languages and exegesis, the church history, the systematic theology, the public speaking and the apologetics, must be subservient to the one purpose of presenting Christ to his church.

And then as you learn more adequately, more truly, by means of

*This address by Dr. Van Til to the entering students helps to make clear part of the reason for and the importance of such a theological training as Westminster provides.*

"much learning" to present Christ to his church you will, at the same time, learn better to present him to lost men in general.

You will then first of all learn true humility. It is not likely that you will be able to compete in learning with the wise men of the world. But even if you could it would still be true that you cannot begin to fathom the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of Christ. You can and must always and everywhere present a sovereign God, speaking of himself to men in Christ. This Christ identifies himself in terms of himself. He tells you who you are and what you are. He alone knows the heart of man. In terms of his Word alone do you know sin and deliverance from sin.

Only by grace, by his Spirit have you been able to call this Christ your Lord. Only by his Spirit have you been enabled to say "Abba Father." Where then is boasting? It is excluded.

### Humility and Boldness

But though it is in humility that you must learn to present the Christ, you must nonetheless present him as a challenge to the wisdom of the world. Without Christ there is no wisdom. Men must learn to know that all is darkness, and all is unrighteousness and all is despair unless they submit to Christ. "Where there is nothing but oneself, there is nothing." (\*) "The entire human community is (then) in the desert, attempting to build an impious tower of Babel to scale heaven, but really cutting itself off more and more from God . . ." (p. 285). Man then lives in a world in which the church "spire is falling and no adequate substitute has been found for the faith which the spire symbolizes." (\*\*) So you must not only humbly but also boldly challenge

(\*) *The Tragic Vision*, ed. by Nathan A. Scott, Jr. New York, 1957, article by J. Hillis Miller, Jr. on Franz Kafka and the Metaphysics of Alienation; p. 291.

(\*\*) *Ibid.* p. 308.

the wisdom of the world. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:20, 21).

Why then *prepare* for preaching Christ? Why acquire much learning at great expense of energy? It is that God might "grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man . . ." (Ephesians 3:16) "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him (Ephesians 3:10-12).

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Following the closing prayer, the faculty, students, and friends enjoyed tea and a time of visiting in Machen Hall of the Seminary.

### Westminster Alumni Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the Westminster Alumni Association held its stated fall meeting at the Seminary on Wednesday, September 16 prior to the opening exercises. President Albert G. Edwards, III, '52 was in the chair, with a dozen others present besides the faculty representative, Professor John Murray.

The Rev. Raymond O. Zorn, '55, was appointed chairman of a committee to formulate plans for the annual Alumni Homecoming scheduled for February 9, 1960. Assisting Mr. Zorn are the Rev. Robert H. Graham, '32, and Dr. Robert D. Knudsen, '47.

The Rev. Louis T. Tuleja, '56, of Philadelphia, was chosen as editor of the "Alumni News" and he was requested to make an effort to discover if there is enough interest to provide sufficient funds for publication of an-

other issue in the near future. Secretary Ralph E. Clough, '45, reported a favorable response to the query of former editor Edwin H. Palmer, '49, as to alumni interest in such a paper's appearance from time to time. Appointed to assist Mr. Tuleja as an editorial committee for the "Alumni News" were Dr. Palmer, the Rev. Theodore J. Georgian, '48, and the Rev. William L. Hiemstra, '41.

Treasurer F. Clarke Evans, '35, announced that the current balance in the bank is \$41.92.

### Louis Praamsma to Give Worcester Lecture

The Rev. Louis Praamsma, Th.D., pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto, Canada, will give a lecture on the subject, "John Calvin as an Ecumenical Figure," according to an announcement from Westminster Theological Seminary. Given under the Seminary's Harry A. Worcester Lectureship and Publication Fund, the lecture is scheduled for Thursday, October 15, at 8:00 p.m.

The public is cordially invited to hear Dr. Praamsma's address which will be delivered across from the Seminary campus in Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Willow Grove Avenue and Church Road (Route 73). This Calvin Anniversary Lecture is presented in connection with the worldwide observance during 1959 of the 450th anniversary of John Calvin's birth and other significant events of his life.

Dr. Praamsma took his doctoral degree in theology at the Free University of Amsterdam. After graduation he served several congregations of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. He came to his present pastorate in Toronto in March, 1958. Dr. Praamsma is the author of several books. His work entitled *Calvijn* marked him as a notable Calvin student. Currently he is writing a series of books on the Heidelberg Catechism.

### Willis in Rochester

The Rev. George J. Willis and his family arrived in Rochester, N. Y. near the end of July in order that he might assume his duties as pastor-elect of the Memorial Orthodox Presbyterian Church the first of August. His