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**G U A R D I A N**

*As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin; and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will He have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.*

Westminster Confession XXXIII.111

J. Gresham Machen  
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# THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN

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## *Speaking To Our Own Time*

ON another page we publish a letter from one of our readers commenting on certain material in the September GUARDIAN, and more specifically on the responsibility of those who hold the Reformed faith in the present generation.

Though the letter may seem rather critical at points, we prefer to interpret it as a considered effort at constructive comment on the current ecclesiastical situation.

And with the basic argument of the writer we sincerely agree. His basic point is that the true Church must speak its Christian message intelligently to its own generation, including contemporary Christendom. We cannot withdraw into our little corner and contemplate, merely as observers, the struggles of those who have forsaken the Rock, to find solid ground to stand on. Thus every agency devoted to the cause of Christ must engage actively in the current situation.

This does not mean that we throw away our history books. From the past we learn both of success and of failure. We learn the nature of the problem, what has been done to meet it, and the effectiveness of the efforts in this direction. We do not recall the fight in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., for example, simply to rekindle the fires of a conflict of twenty years past, but to understand the nature of the problem that existed then, in its bearing on the nature of the problem as it exists now.

Also to engage actively in the current situation does not mean that we must become a part of the modern "ecumenical movement," so that what we have to say to our generation becomes merged with what others are saying, with the result of a confused babel of voices and a generally "uncertain sound" from the trumpet. He who would move the world must have a place to stand. And he who would speak to a confused Christendom must speak *to* it, not with it or through it.

Finally if one's message to one's own generation or church is to be worth speaking, it must be a redemp-

tive message. And the redemptive message must start with, center in, and end with the Person and Work of Christ in history. The message of redemption has social, political, and cultural implications. These too must have their place. But they must not *replace* the specifically redemptive core of the Christian message. And that redemptive core is personal, individual, particular.

It is right here that the problem of making the Christian message a message to the contemporary world seems so difficult. The social errors of our time loom large. We have wars, racial strife, economic inequalities, political theories, international uncertainties. And the ecumenical church views these as of such importance it cannot believe that there is significance in the problem of the individual soul standing before God. And so when the Christian message directs its attention to this problem of the individual, and insists that redemption starts here, the speaker is accused of withdrawing from the world and occupying a corner apart. Yet this is where the redemptive message must start—this is where the church must speak first. And if the church does not speak truth here, its speaking is in vain.

In speaking the message of redemption through the shed blood of Christ to individual burdened souls, the Church is speaking to its own generation, to contemporary Christendom and contemporary pagandom. There is no such thing as community repentance, community faith, community obedience. There is only repentance, faith and new obedience for the individuals who make up the community. The law of God is set forth in the singular, not the plural. It is, "THOU shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbor as thyself." It is failure on this level that causes the problems on the social level, and it is an effective message on this level that will bring solutions to the problems on the other levels. Here above all the Church must speak in clear, unmistakable tones, to its own generation.

L. W. S.

# The Unknown Christ

*Address of Welcome to  
Entering Students at Westminster*

By C. VANTIL

I HAVE now to address a few words of welcome, in the name of the faculty, and of the older students, to those who have come to us for the first time and in this connection I would like to say a few words about Christ, the Hope of the World.

As you know, that was the theme of the second Assembly of the World Council of Churches which met in Evanston near Chicago last month. There had been an advisory council of thirty-three theologians that had formulated a statement about the church—its task, its unity, its plan. And this advisory committee came in with a report which report was accepted with some modifications, and a statement by the Assembly appears currently in *The Christian Century*.

Quoting from that statement, I read as follows: "We are profoundly grateful for the work of the advisory committee. The report exhibits a substantial ecumenical consensus. It indicates the direction in which we all must move—away from our selves toward Christ, our only hope. Away from human desires, doctrines, ideologies, toward the Word of God which alone has eternal authority and power. Away from the godless, self-centeredness of this world toward the kingdom of Christ."

Those who were privileged to be present at that conference, as I was for a couple of days, noted, as you may also learn from the many addresses and the press releases, that there was great unanimity present in this council about the fact that Christ is the hope of the world. I read you this statement which indicates that fact, and there are many similar statements in many of the addresses given at Evanston. And the Council even spoke of the *message* and of the *witness* that should go forth from Evanston. There is in *The Christian Century* an article entitled, "The Message, or the Voice of Evanston."

## The Unknown Christ

But if you should ask now, what was the Christ, who is the Christ, of

which Evanston spoke at this great Assembly of the World Council of Churches, you would seek in vain for an answer. It just cannot be found. To be sure, the reason for this is given in one or more of these addresses themselves. Says one of the members who spoke, that every speaker at Evanston at least implicitly and usually explicitly appealed to the Bible, each with a different conception of its authority, and a different principle of its interpretation. How then could they tell us who the Christ is? The Christ they spoke of is the Christ nobody knows anything about, of which nothing can be said in the world. To be sure, they appealed to the Holy Scriptures. We all read the Holy Scriptures and proclaim the general gospel from them. The Word speaking through them draws us to himself and into the apostolic faith.

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**IT is customary at the opening exercises of Westminster Seminary for an address of welcome to be delivered, directed to the entering students. Dr. VanTil, Chairman of the Faculty of the Seminary, delivered the accompanying address this year.**

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But there were many among them, for instance the Greek Orthodox Church, that put tradition on a par with Scripture. And the many Modernists and New Modernists present assumed that Scripture must in any case be interpreted in terms of human experience. The voice of those few who spoke of the Christ of the Scriptures could scarcely be heard. They spoke of the Christ nobody knows.

## The Unknown Hope

And speaking of the Christ nobody knows, they also naturally spoke of the hope nobody knows. Much has been made in the press of the distinction between the American optimists and the European pessimists. The American optimists are said to be people who not having suffered so much as their European brethren from the ravages of recent war have still much hope of

progress of the human race in this world, hope for the removal of interracial and international tensions, and they have a program in this respect. But their European brethren, more sophisticated, more mature, less youthful and enthusiastic, having individually suffered from both the recent wars, expect hope only from some catastrophic, sudden, supernatural event. But even this difference between the so-called European pessimists and the American optimists does not go to the bottom of the matter. For both of them agreed among themselves that we must not start from the Scriptures as from the infallible Word of God, directly given unto the church of Jesus Christ for her instruction, but that we must start from the fact of evident manifest unity such as was here present at Evanston, and that any division that does not start from that fact, any form of confession or ideology as they love to speak of it, that would be disruptive ultimately of this fact of union which has now taken place here in this land is subversive, and there must be as they speak of it a holy impatience to remove such issues and to affect greater harmony.

## The Unknown God

And if they spoke of the unknown Christ and the unknown hope of the Christ with respect to this world, they also spoke of the unknown God. Who is this Christ, and what? Was He God? And if He was God, was He that one who is infinite eternal unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth? No one could presume, certainly, to know of such a God. It was taken for granted that the historic Christian position that God has clearly manifested himself in nature and in Scripture—that no one can today reasonably believe in such a position as that.

There were a few voices, scattered and feeble, who seemed still to speak of such a God. But they were scarcely heard. It was taken for granted that God, the God we speak of, is the God nobody knows.

## The Unknown Kingdom

And then of course much was said in this Evanston conference on the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven. For it is in this kingdom that there lies the hope of the world. So it was said. But who shall tell us the

nature of that kingdom? Are there those in this world who know that they are now in that kingdom, that their sins are forgiven, washed in the blood of the Lamb, that there is now no condemnation for them because they are in Christ Jesus and walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Oh no, for if there were, such people would have to pretend to know the nature of that kingdom. They would have to make believe that their ideas of the kingdom are absolutely true. They are the creed makers, those that are back of such confessions as the Westminster Confession of Faith, and they are the ones that are instituting these divisions against the fact of this manifest unity, and those that believe in it must go forth in holy zeal to destroy these dissidents. And so then of course they could not speak intelligently of this kingdom being at hand. Who knows what it means to be "at hand?" Is that kingdom to be in this world? Is it to be at the end of this world? At the end of this age? Nobody knows. Nobody can pretend to know. It is of the Christ that nobody knows, of the kingdom of Christ of which nobody knows, that Evanston had so much to say.

### Repentance

And then finally, of course, something was said about repentance. How much is there not in the New Testament about repentance for those that would enter into that kingdom. But the only repentance Evanston knows of is to confess to one another that we have not recognized this manifest fact of unity, that we have separated one from another because of our creeds, our ideologies, our stubbornness in thinking that in them we have the truth, and that there are any who are not in the church of Jesus Christ potentially, if not actually. And that is the only repentance that one could hear of at Evanston. The idea of repentance as the Scripture speaks of it—it was faintly spoken of, suggested now and then, but it was scarcely heard at all.

### The Christ of the Scriptures

But surely the Christ nobody knows, is after all the Christ that is known all too well. The Pharisees stood before Jesus of Nazareth, and they disputed His claim to be the Messiah. They asked Him for a sign from heaven. He had done many signs and wonders to prove that He was that Messiah. But

they said—who knows? Can any good come out of Nazareth? How do you people know that this is Jesus of Nazareth. They relativized the Absolute One that stood in their midst. It is in similar fashion that today in the so-called church of Jesus Christ those that are in this church relativize the Christ. The Pharisees put Him to shame, nailed Him to the cross. They looked for another one. It was not He. They said there was no hope in Him. Their hope was in some other one. And so they despised this Christ. The unknown Christ is the well-known Christ despised by His church.

Now it is in such a time as this, my friends, that you have come to prepare yourselves for the gospel ministry. And I welcome you in the name of the faculty. We rejoice that you have come to us, for we know the Christ, we know where He is to be found. We have not discovered Him. We have turned to the Scriptures, with other

faithful institutions of learning. By the grace of God this institution was raised up by Dr. Machen and others, to go back to the Scriptures, there to find the Christ. And so I welcome you to a reading of that Scripture, to a careful reading of it, an exact reading of it, to find Him who is clearly to be found, and then our hope and prayer for you is that with others thus preparing themselves to preach this Christ of the Scriptures as the hope of the world, you may go forth with joy and with peace of mind eventually proclaiming this Christ who is the hope of the world to a world that knows Him not and to a church that pretends to know Him but has set Him aside. May God grant that you with us may grow in the grace and knowledge of that Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and that together by His grace and benediction we may understand His Word, love Him, and serve Him to His glory, and to our rejoicing in the faith.

## Westminster Seminary Observes Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

WEDNESDAY, September 22, 1954 dawned clear and cool, but with the forecasters promising cloudy and windy in the afternoon, with possible showers. The weather was of some importance, for this was the day on which Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia was observing its twenty-fifth anniversary, with the opening convocation in the afternoon, and an anniversary banquet in the evening.

In view of the slight uncertainty in the weather, the opening convocation was held in Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church, adjoining the campus. Over two hundred persons managed to find seats in the auditorium, which normally seats about 150. A number of others heard the service over the loud speaker in the social hall of the church.

### Opening Convocation

Professor C. Van Til, Chairman of the Seminary faculty, presided. The Scripture lesson was read by the Rev. Yune Sun Park, President of Korea Theological Seminary, and prayer was offered by the Rev. Robley J. Johnston, pastor of Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Middletown, Pa.

Dr. VanTil gave a brief address of welcome to the incoming students. Referring to the World Council Assembly held in Evanston in August, he said that that organization was proclaiming a Christ nobody knows, a God nobody knows, and a hope nobody knows. He declared that, by the grace of God, Westminster Seminary believed in and taught the living God who is known through His revelation of Himself to men. He welcomed the students to a fellowship of study and increasing knowledge of the true God and His gracious works of redemption.

The convocation address was delivered by the Rev. John P. Clelland, pastor of Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Valdosta, Georgia, on the subject, "Presbyterian Dissent." Mr. Clelland pointed out that Westminster Seminary and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with which it is closely related stand in the line of "dissent" which has characterized those in the history of the church and of Protestantism who were concerned with maintaining purity of doctrine through close adherence to the Scriptures. He criticized what he described as a