Religion and Life

By Very Rev. George C. Pidgeon, D.D., LL.D.
First Moderator of the United Church of Canada
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"Sir, these pictures are not on trial; you are." So answered the custodian of a great picture gallery to a tourist who complained that he did not think much of what he was being shown. Dr. A. J. Gossip, who tells the story, remarks: "So, to be offered Jesus Christ and turn indifferently away, to see no beauty in Him that we should desire Him, to be irritated and offended by Him is the sin of sins, the most damaging of revelations of what we ourselves are." This is true of all—individuals and nations.

Our thoughts are turned in this direction by some recent studies of the overall subject for next summer's meeting of the World Council of Churches: "Jesus Christ, the Hope of the World." Some of us feared, when this subject was first proposed, that it would turn attention too closely to the Church's inner life and hope, and therefore away from the need of the world today. Far from it. The attention of those who are preparing the program is turning more closely every day to those needs of our time which Christ alone can supply.

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The most glaring example of the truth of Dr. Gossip's illustration is Communism at the present time. They have called religion an opiate of the people, and have often concentrated on the persecution of Christians. Now we see Chinese and Korean prisoners by the thousand refusing to return to homelands dominated by Communism, refugees by the million fleeing from their tyranny, occupied countries like East Germany and Austria demanding liberation from their control. It is surely not Christ who is being judged but those who condemn Him.

The fact that there is a Christian hope and that this hope is based on Christ is an inspiration in itself. "It is the Crucified who reigns. Because He reigns, there is no room for an ultimately tragic interpretation of history. Neither is there room for victory on other terms than His. The responsibility for history is His, and He assigns to us our tasks." So affirm the leaders of the World Church's thinking these days.

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We are distressed by the confusion of our time and the dark outlook before us. The best our statesmen can offer us is negative—a continuance of the present truce between two irreconcileable ideals or ideologies. But Christ is in action in the events of the hour. We may not be able to see His hand in present day movements but we know that when He does not rule, He overrules. That is, when men refuse to bow to His authority, He overrules their opposition to His own ends.

There is a goal before Christ's mind toward which He is always working. He gave His life for the world and has not forgotten or forsaken it. We are not lost in a jungle; we are on the road to an end chosen for us by our Lord. And that end or objective cannot but be good when it is fixed in the mind of the Lord of all.

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An American professor, Robert McAfee Brown, has just written on this subject: "A belief that there is a fulfilment or consummation, without trying to date it, safeguards belief in the meaningfulness of the whole historical enterprise. That is to say, one can affirm that human history under God has direction and purposiveness, that history is going somewhere. Its direction and fulfilment can be understood in terms of Christ. He stands at the 'end'—not chaos or Satan or Senator McCarthy (terms which I do not here suggest as synonymous although I am often inclined to think they are). History is not just a meaningless tragic jumble of events, but the arena in which God is at work."

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Here then is an element in our hope. God is in command; He is active in world affairs, although we may not discern the direction in which His power is moving. "We have but faith; we cannot know." But, when we know Him, we have the assurance that "He will keep what we commit to Him against that day." Meanwhile, He has given us our part to play. We do know the claims of Love and Truth and Right, and what we do must be consistent with the ends we serve. We know the claims of Christ and our love answers His love. And this confidence and commission both strengthens us for our work here and also lifts our eyes above this world to the eternal destiny for which Christ claims His own.

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IN MEMORIAM

In loving memory of our darling wife and mother, Mrs. James Wagner who departed this life, December 18, 1949.

Asleep in God's beautiful garden,
Sheltered from sorrow and pain,
Some day when life's journey is over
We shall meet our loved one again.

Sadly missed by her husband and son, Bill and daughter-in-law Ines and family.

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Dorothy Dix's Column—

Continued from page 2

no longer love my fiance. My parents say if I break the engagement now, people in our community will look down on me, since my fiance holds a responsible position here, and is greatly respected. Will I lose my self-respect if I don't go through with the marriage?

WANDA D.

ANSWER: You're more likely to lose your self-respect if you do enter a loveless marriage. It certainly will be kinder to the man to break the engagement than to marry him under false pretenses. A girl rarely loses the regard of her neighbors by cancelling her nuptials.

Miss Nissen cannot reply personally to readers but will answer problems of interest through this column.

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As no suitable name was sent in for the "PEERLESS" Name Contest the prize money is being divided between Mount Herbert Orphanage and St. Vincent's Orphanage. Each will receive a cheque for $50.00.

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ENGAGEMENT— Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Burke, Charlottetown, announce the engagement of their daughter, Mary Emily to J. Raymond Ryan of Grand Falls, Newfoundland, marriage to take place in Halifax, Dec. 28th.

ARRIVES FOR DOUBLE WEDDING—Miss Helda Brown, Toronto, arrived in the City by plane on Sunday to be present at the marriage of her two sisters, Miss Doris to Mr. Philip F. McQuaid, and Miss Marion to Mr. Thomas A. McAdam, which will take place next Saturday

SAD NEWS—Mr. George H. Kielly, Covehead, received the sad news on Dec. 18 of the death of his aunt, Mrs. David Pangburn (nee Clara Kielly) Covehead, in Sauk Centre Hospital, Minn., following an operation. She is survived by her husband in Sauk Centre and one daughter (Viola) Mrs. Thomas Maddocks, Strawberry Hill, Ohio.

IN MEMORIAM

In loving memory of Archibald Thacker who died Dec. 21st, 1949.

Ever remembered, ever loved.

From his wife and family.

IN MEMORIAM

In loving memory of our dear husband and father

JOHN CHARLES GORDON

who departed this life ten years ago today,

December 21st, 1943.

Lovingly Remembered by Wife and Family.

Tight Little Island

Father Lord in The Pilot, Boston, Mass.

My first personal contact with Prince Edward Island came through the late great Bishop Francis Clement Kelley, founder of Extension—and later Bishop of Oklahoma. Once in my presence he referred to THE Island, with the accent on the article. "What island is that?" I asked naively. "Prince Edward Island, of course," he answered. "Is there any other?"

To the Prince Edward Islanders, that is somewhat the attitude. God may have made other islands, but when He made P.E.I., He reached the climax in island construction. And when you see it from the air, you can understand somewhat how the natives feel. "The million acre farm," they also call it. "The Island Garden of the Gulf" is another name. And from the air, it is really beautiful, a perfect pattern of careful farming, with rectangles of green alternating with squares and circles of forest, and other fields of ploughed land, an amazing red, almost maroon in color. The contrast, as we flew over, of the green pastures and the red ploughed land waiting for the oats and potatoes, the singularly regular windbreaks of evergreens, the frequent interruption of placid little lakes, and the patches of woods, all tied together by red dirt roads, gave me the impression that I looked on agriculture at its most artistic.

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Not too many years ago, I came to the Island by slow ferry. Now the flight from the mainland is a matter of minutes, plus this real bird's-eye view of simple peace and rural charm. They tell us that roads are hard to maintain because the earth is so rich and loamy. But the Canadian Government has promised another stretch of the trans-Canada highway, and that will make travel a joy through the country of Anne of Green Gables.

This is a land that is almost equally divided between the descendents of the Scots and of the Irish. In the main, the Scots are Protestant, and the Irish solidly Catholic; yet just to prove how the pattern can be broken, the first priest I met was Father MacPherson, Scotch and obviously Catholic.

In the beautiful little city of Charlottetown, Canada became a Confederation and a Dominion. The lasting peace that was born between the Canadian Provinces there seems to linger on in a singularly lovely and calm atmosphere.

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It's really a tiny little island, with a jagged shoreline that is one endless filigree of bays and capes. During July and August, I was assured, those beaches would be jammed with swimmers, for the Island has no mountains or hills, and the sand slopes so gently down into the sea that the sun can warm it to a temperature pleasanter than any ocean water north of Florida. As for the sand, a man whose honesty I could trust said, "Father, you could lie down in that black suit of yours, stand up, shake yourself, and you'd not have a grain of the beautiful golden sand left on you, nor a stain of any kind on the cloth." In this summer's heat I should like to return to test the water and the sand.

A magnificent Cathedral dominates the city from the air, the sea, and the land. Its graceful spires proclaim the staunch faith and religious aspiration of a very religious people. For to the Island come Bishops and religious superiors looking for some of the extra vocations in which the Island abounds. It has been a cradle of priests and brothers and nuns, with Cardinal McGuigan of Toronto one of its gifts to the Church.

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Prince Edward Island is one of the most beautiful spots on earth; and once the vacation-minded of the world learn more about it, I've an idea that July and August of each year will see vast pilgrimages heading Island-ward—to a hospitable people on a beautiful pastoral island!

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In Canada I was reminded of the frequently noted fact that fictional characters seem much more real than historic ones. Probably nine out of ten people simply take it for granted (if they think of it at all) that Hamlet lived and that there was a detective named Sherlock Holmes and that Sir John Falstaff really roistered back there in Merry England. William Tell is, of course, one fictional character who actually worked his way into history.

In Canada I came across the trail of Evangeline and Anne of Green Gables. Has anyone any possible doubt that those two charming characters of fiction really lived? There is a lovely monument and the replica of her parish church to commemorate at Grand Pre the memory of a girl who never existed outside the mind of Longfellow. And on Prince Edward Island, Anne is very much alive.

Most real people die and are forgotten. Great characters of our poetry and stories live forever.

GRAIN ELEVATOR BURNS

HIGH RIVER, Alta., (CP)—Fire of undetermined origin destroyed the National Grain Elevator Saturday. The loss, including the grain in crammed storage bins, was estimated at $100,000. James Decolen, elevator agent, was taken to hospital after he collapsed in an attempt to rescue the books and records.

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