

Letter from Arthur to Mary Prior, 29th August 1947¹

CANTERBURY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

CHRISTCHURCH N.Z.

29/8/47

Darling da,

I am bunking Chapel to write this; which is very disgraceful; but it seems to be the only time I have. – At the meeting last night (which was in Trinity Methodist Church)² George Knight³ was extraordinarily impressive. I had a yarn with him at breakfast this morning to. He has seen Eastern Europe as it is now, and has a capacity to make the rest of us see it to, and it's rather incredibly horrible. It is a pretty important fact, I should say, that we have him in this country, to keep us aware of the sort of abys into which people have fallen on the other side of the world.

The meetings today have been very good. We sometime divide into sectional groups, and sometime have “plenary sessions” all together. I'm in a sectional group led by Jack Bates and containing Ian Dickson, Lorry Rodgers, Prof. Allan (John), Fred Robertson, Mr. Burley (the Methodist minister we met at Masterton when we were last up there), the Salvation Army Commissioner, a Bunch of Baptists, one or two Anglicans, and a Quaker. This morning we hoed into {2} baptism. One point that emerged was that all of our denominations have (a) some kind of ceremonial “occasion” soon after a child is born (either Baptism or a “dedication service”), and (b) another “occasion” when a person reaches the age of discretion (confirmation, signing the Salvation Army articles of “War”, reception into communicant membership, or Baptism). We differ about the significance and relative importance of these occasions; the Baptists, while agreeing that children were “in the Kingdom of God”, deny that they stood beside their parents in the “fellowship” of the Church, while some of us insisted that they do. One of the Baps asked me why, in this case, we don't admit children to communion; and I was quite hard put to it to answer him. I then remembered Margaret Mead, and suggested that this dichotomy, common to us all, between “dedication” and “confirmation”, or whatever we call the 2 “occasions” is of no theological importance, but simply reflects one Western way of living and of bringing up our children. In the Eastern Orthodox Churches children do communicate, and also in some of our Churches on the mission field. And as our own habit are altering in these matters (though not as much as old fogies allege), possibly Church's treatment of these “occasions” should alter too. – There are some good social scientists among the clergy here – in informal discussions one gets good analysis of all kinds of New Zealand trends, in both city and country. – This {3} afternoon I went to V.U.C. Library. Didn't have much time, but Harold Miller thinks they may have spares of those volumes of “Mind” that are missing at C.U.C, and could sell them to us. – MacPherson tells me Raphael has received advanced copies of his book, so I

¹ Editors' note: This letter has been edited by Martin Prior, Peter Øhrstrøm and David Jakobsen. It is part of the Martin Prior Collection, presently kept at Aalborg University folder B, item 1-4. The letter is written on Canterbury University College writing paper. The letters B2, item 1 and 2 were enclosed, together with a drawing in an envelope postmarked 29th August 1947. The envelope is from Canterbury University College and addressed to Mrs. I McLaren, Ahi Paku Longbush. Longbush is 25 miles southeast of Masterton. Mrs. McLaren is Arthur's sister Elaine married to Iain McLaren, a farmer from a farming family in the Wairarapa. It is sent from Wellington where Prior apparently attended an Ecumenical conference.

² Editors' note: Prior was most likely partaking in the Faith and Order Conference in Wellington in August 1947, organized by The National Council of Churches.

³ Editors' note: It is quite likely that this is George Angus Fulton Knight (1909-2002), then newly appointed Professor of Old Testament Studies at Knox Theological College, University of Otago in Dunedin.

should be on to that soon. – That’s all the news. It was corking to get your notes today – I hope these Martin
– v. - David scraps⁴ are cooling of, and that Martin is getting absorbed in the animals instead.

Love and Kisses and more Love

- Pigslop.

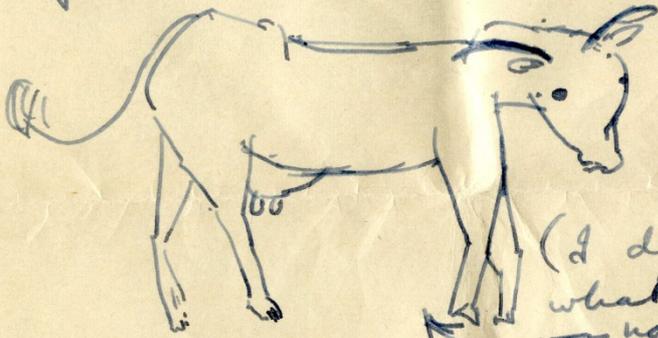
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[Enclosed drawing by Arthur]

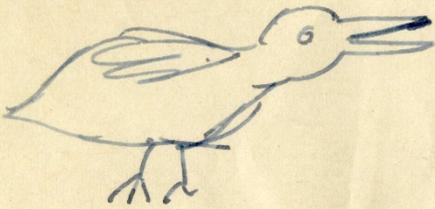
⁴ Editor’s note: According to Martin Prior

CANTERBURY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
CHRISTCHURCH, N.Z.

Dear Martin



(I don't know
what this is
now - it
started off as a cow)



Love from Daddy

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