

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

People, by and large, do not seem to understand and/or appreciate what the Government of China has done by appointing its own bishops, arch-bishops and other Hottentots of the State-approved, Chinese Catholic Church. These actions have been being roundly criticised by the Holy Roman See at The Vatican. Sooner or later, China will be appointing a Chinese pope, also, I would venture to guess. This is not a joke so do not laugh because a religion of China is a religion of the State. And it is written: The State giveth; and, the State taketh away. As such, China should have absolute authority over all of its assets, of which its religions must be included. From the point of view of the Government of China, Vatican City, the official residence of the Pope of Rome, is a foreign power – and a very powerful one at that. The Holy Roman Catholic Church is known to have a membership of more than one billion followers, around the world. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest single Christian body, which comprises those Christians, who acknowledge the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome, Pope Benedict XVI, in matters of faith. The word ‘catholic’ (Greek: ‘Katholikos’) means ‘universal’ and has been used to designate the Church since its earliest period when it was the only Christian Church. The Roman Catholic Church regards itself as the only legitimate inheritor, by an unbroken episcopal succession, descending from St Peter to the present time, of the commission and powers, conferred by Jesus Christ on the Twelve Apostles. The Church has had a profound influence on the development of European culture and on the introduction of European values into other civilisations. Its total membership is equivalent to about nineteen per cent of the world’s total population. Now, one may understand as to the reason that the Government of China is concerned that the Pope could, if he got it under his mitre, cause trouble to the Motherland, using religion as his weapon of choice. In order to counter any prospective move of the Pope, China has decided to appoint its own leaders of the State-owned and controlled, Chinese Catholic Church. These people, of course, will be loyal to the causes of China and of its peoples. Foreign influence must cease in the Chinese Catholic Church because, otherwise, it would be akin to having another political party, sitting down to tea with the Chinese Communist Party. Which would never do, you understand. Of course, people in the Motherland may still worship God, but it will be the Chinese version of God, not the same God as the one in Rome, Italy. History has recorded what one man, one thousand, nine hundred and seventy two years ago did to the once Capital City of the world: Rome. That man was, of course, Jesus of Nazareth, the man who, single-handedly, turned pantheism, the original religion of Rome, into monotheism. About two hundred and seventy two years after the death of Jesus, Constantine the Great, the Roman Emperor between 306 AD and 337AD, converted to Christianity. Ever since then, the influence of Jesus has spread throughout the entire world. In Hongkong, there are powerful allies of the Pope, allies who appear to have the power to influence Hongkong Catholics to take part in demonstrations or to refuse to accept this or that. Some people have termed these Hongkong religious zealots as being trouble-makers, but this is cruel and unfair because these people are merely the sheep of the Pope, their shepherd, and, as such, they are just following orders from on high.

When one listens to people, talking in tea houses in Hongkong about the matter of the Motherland, having the right to appoint its own leaders of the Chinese Catholic Church, one often hears that this is the first time in the history of the world that such a thing has happened. How ignorant of people! Have they forgotten Henry VII of the United Kingdom? King Henry broke with the Church of Rome in 1534 and thus The Church of England was founded. The acts of Parliament between 1529 and 1536 mark the beginning of the Anglican Church as a national Church, independent of papal jurisdiction. Henry VIII, vexed at the refusal of Pope

Clement VII to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragón, induced Parliament to enact a series of statutes, denying the Pope any power or jurisdiction over The Church of England. Henry VIII, thus, reaffirmed the ancient right of the Christian prince, or monarch, to exercise supremacy over the affairs of the Church within his domain. And that is, exactly, what is happening in China, today: The Government of the second super-power of the world has determined that it will, henceforth, exercise supreme power over the affairs of the Chinese (Communist) Catholic Church. I cannot say that I object to the determination of the Chinese Communist Party in electing the heads of the Chinese Catholic Church because, after all, it is only fitting and proper that foreign powers should abstain from interfering in the affairs of other governments. In short, it is a simply a matter of China, telling the Pope to steer well clear of the affairs of state in China. In other words, China is telling the Pope: 'Piss off! This is China.'

China, today, is still suffering from the ignominious acts, perpetrated during the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911) when foreign powers successfully purloined Chinese territories, claiming one thing and another as their excuses for the thefts. One recalls how the British introduced opium to China in order to gain control of vast amounts of international trade and certain trading ports and, at the same time, corrupt the people and the petty government officials of the day by offering them bribes. Only towards the middle of the Seventeenth Century, when opium smoking was introduced into China by English traders, of which Jardine Matheson and Company was but one, did any serious addiction problems arise. In the Eighteenth Century, opium addiction was so serious that the Chinese made many attempts to prohibit opium cultivation and opium trade with Western countries. At the same time, opium made its way to Europe and North America where addiction grew out of its prevalent use as a painkiller. British warships, at that time, you will recall, threatened southern China with complete obliteration of major cities if Beijing did not concede certain ports, such a Hongkong, to Great Britain so that international trade could be conducted with British ease. Never again, will the Government of China face such ignominy, be it from a super-power or from Vatican City.

That is the true reasoning behind the present movement in China, today, a movement which promises a new tomorrow, where the Chinese Catholic faithful will be able to worship the true God whose Holy emissaries on earth owe allegiance to Beijing and the Christian faithful of China.

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

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