

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I am not a particularly religious person, but, nevertheless, I respect those people who affirm the existence of a god. I consider myself as being generous and, as such, I give the same respect to those who maintain that monotheism is the true belief as well as those who argue that pantheism (more than one god) is preferable and more powerful than monotheism – after all, how can one god fight against many gods? As far as I am concerned, one god is just like another: A good thing/man/woman/entity/spirit, etc, etc, etc. In Hongkong, I have noticed that there is a fairly strong belief in gods and fairies – and the belief that some Chinese people from Shenzhen have the right to parade round town, claiming to be god's little helpers. If anything is a sacrilege, that is it. These false monks, dressed in the garb of real monks, hand out little pieces of paper rubbish and, when a person takes the rubbish, they put out their dirty little hands and ask for money. It turns me off religion when I see this happen and, especially, when I note some unsuspecting European tourist, handing over money to these fakes. I have wondered, over and over again, for what reason does not the Hongkong Government arrest these fakes. Aside from giving Buddha a very bad name, they are giving Hongkong a very bad name, too. In China, the police are doing something about this situation, I am happy to tell you. Recently, during the Ching Ming Festival, I went to Dai Pang Bay () in order to pay my respects to my father (your grandfather). We took the family van so that all of our generation could make an outing of this happy day. My father, I determined, would be able to see how the family continues to remember him as he rests in his tomb, enjoying the quiet time. Having swept his grave site and planted some fresh flowers, we all sat down to eat a big meal of freshly cooked chicken, roasted piglet and fresh fruit. I poured some tea on the grave of my father, just in case he was a little thirsty (you can never tell, you know) and, then, I gave him a little Chinese wine (he, always, enjoyed a little nip in the afternoons, as I recall). It was a real jolly time – and, then, along came what appeared to be a monk, dressed in a flowing yellow gown. This monk, without asking for permission, started sweeping father's grave site and, then, brought out a recording machine and played some very weird music, which I assumed by Buddhist music. The entire family looked on in wonderment: For what reason would a monk (a) come to a cemetery without being asked so to do and (b) for what reason would a monk, voluntarily, start to sweep a grave site of a person about whom he/she/it had no knowledge? While pondering the situation, along came a couple of gung an (unarmed police people of China). They rushed over to us, all, as though a crime had been committed. And, according to what I next heard, indeed, a crime had been committed – by the monks! Because they were false monks. How does that English proverb go: Sheep dressed to look like wolves? Or, is it the other way round? Sheep, wolves, monks, who cares, these flowing, yellow-gowned, Chinese false monks were bundled off into a police car, following this conversation:

Gung An Man: Who are you?

False Monk : I am a monk.

Gung An Man: Why are you here?

False Monk : I am touring.

Gung An Man: Why are you bothering these people?

False Monk : I am giving solace, not bothering.

(The Gung An Man looked at us for confirmation and we, all, shook our heads, almost in disbelief at the statement and all in unison)

Gung An Man: Did you ask these people before coming over here?

False Monk : No. We did it out of charity. We love people so we came to help.

Gung An Man: And, I suppose you were hoping to get paid for your charity? You come along with us and we'll see how much love you, really, have.

The false monks were taken away and we, all, went back to enjoying the day with my father. When it was time to leave, I noted that there were gung an people all over the place, at least, 50 of them. They were rounding up many false monks and a complete line of police cars were waiting for the next load of false monks to be arrested and taken to the nearest copshop. I thought to myself that my father would be happy to learn that the Government of China respected the sanctity of the home of the departed. Not so in Hongkong, it appears, however. False monks can be seen, almost daily, begging for money from unwitting people, be they Chinese or European. These false monks are easy to spot because of their shoes and the fact that they, all, carry oversized bags. I, even, saw one false monk, rushing out of a shop in Pacific Place, one day. They are, really, disgusting people because they are preying on the grief of those who have lost a loved one or people, suffering from one malady or another. This should be stopped because it is akin to theft, in my opinion.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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