

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

*On Easter Sunday, I went to have luncheon at a 5-star hotel at Pacific Place – Conrad Hongkong. I chose the coffee shop of the hotel in order to watch the little children at play (it reminds me of the time when I, too, had young children of my own). I was not at all disappointed with that which I witnessed. Some of the youngest children were given balloons with which to play while the older toddlers went chasing around, looking for Easter eggs. As one young boy passed by my table, which had been placed, outdoors, next to the swimming pool, I heard him tell his mother: 'Look! Flowers, growing on the table!' Then, it was off again to look for Easter eggs or to sample some more ice cream and chocolate-covered fruit. It was the children that fascinated me. The children did not care about Easter or what it was meant to represent to many adults. Their only thoughts were the hunt for Easter eggs and the filling of their little bellies. It was the jolly time that they wanted; nothing more than that. The religious aspect of Easter meant nothing to these children. I thought to myself: 'These children have the correct perspective about life – the beauty of a flower, growing in a pot; the titillation of one's taste buds; the security of a parent's loving and strong arms; the joy of play with a newly found friend, regardless of that new friend's skin colour, the language that he or she spoke, or the cut of his or her clothes; and, of course, the love for life and all that there is to discover about living.' I thought, also: 'What, exactly, is Easter?' In the Christian belief, Easter is the annual festival to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and, in the Christian year, it is the principal feast. However, the roots of Easter are found in the pagan world – the pre-Christian period when pantheism, as opposed to monotheism, flourished in the world, from China to Europe and the Americas. The word, Easter, probably comes from the name of a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility, according to The Venerable Bede, an English scholar who lived from 673 A.D. until 735 A.D., later beatified. This Benedictine monk is chiefly known for his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*). According to St Bede, the Anglo-Saxon word of Easter in the 5th Century B.C. was *Ēostre*. As for the Easter rabbit (now known as the Easter bunny to children), the belief of the Anglo-Saxon's was that it was a symbol of fertility, while the brightly painted eggs represented the sunlight of spring. It was Constantine The Great, the Roman Emperor, who, in 325 A.D. convoked the Council of Nicaea when it was determined that the Easter Festival should be celebrated throughout the Christian world on the first Sunday after the full moon, following the vernal equinox. Constantine I, who became known, later, as Constantine The Great, was the first Roman Emperor to embrace monotheism, because, prior to that time, Rome embraced pantheism, exclusively. Actually, as I recall from my studies of comparative religions, it was the wife of Constantine, who persuaded her husband to embrace Christianity. So you see, My Dear Grandchild, Easter, actually, is not an invention of the Christians, but a pagan belief which predates Christianity by at least 500 years.*

I love the little children and marvel at their honesty and lack of pretension. On Easter Sunday, their priorities, as I observed, were to eat, to play, and, then: 'Where's mom? I'm tired!' They don't know or care about Jesus and could care less about Heaven and Hell. But they do know that there is a game: Find the Easter eggs! That is enough for fun-loving children. It is only when children grow to be adults that they lose their simple outlook on life, which is replaced by mythology and/or fallacious logic to be used as answers for matters about which the riddles of life cannot be answered, readily. It seems to me that when man cannot find an answer to a riddle, he tends either to lie to himself, or to invent myths. To me, it appears that religion to many is simply a mental crutch on which to lean. When a person finds it difficult to comprehend that which appears to be the incomprehensible, he looks hastily for the first available mental crutch. The

one that is most readily available, today, is monotheism. In the Pagan world of centuries past, the priests had very logical arguments to prove that there exist gods, goddesses and their offspring in all of nature and that man was derived from the forests where trees grow tall and straight due to the gods, blessing them with sunlight and water. Parmenides, a Greek philosopher who lived in about 500 B.C., maintained that an Absolute Being – a god, if you will – is inconceivable. Although there is no evidence to prove this, he is known to have accepted the limitation of man's ability to think and to understand and, therefore, if an Absolute Being does exist, then, man may not know it or even the effects of the works of such an Absolute Being. Parmenides, also, believed that nature is only apparent, but in and of itself, it has no real existence, while reality – the existence of the real – may only be found in reason and may not be found in the senses. Another of the discoveries of Parmenides was that nothing comes from nothing, or, put another way, being cannot come from non-being. That being the case, then, life cannot die, but passes on from one soul to another. Great stuff for a man with no formal education who lived more than, 2,500 years ago, isn't it? Today, the thinking of this great philosopher continues to be studied although there is precious little left of his great thoughts save the didactic poem, entitled: 'On Nature'. When one compares the thinking of this great man of Greece to that of priests and ministers of Christianity of today, what arrogance does man discover? Judaism, Christianity, Catholicism, Islam and all of the other great monotheistic religions of today would have us believe that they have found the answers to all of the riddles about life and death, creation and destruction, and, even, the afterlife. But there is a constant factor of inanity in the thinking of these adherents of modern religions: They admit to limitations in their thinking, but refuse to accept that, by this very admission, they cannot know that which is not apparent to the senses. The infinite, My Dear Grandchild, may not be known by the finite.

So, give me the purity and innocence of children instead of the pretensions of educated proliferators of myths, cloaked in the popular religions of the day.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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