



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

*At last, there is a fusion between God and Capitalism. It had to come, of course, but it has taken a long time, hasn't it? I am referring to the entrepreneurialism of the Hongkong Adventist Hospital at Number 40, Stubbs Road, Hongkong. I have always maintained that this circular-shaped hospital charges its patients in accordance with 'what the market would bear' (talking as a capitalist), but I had no idea of the forward thinking of the present, God-fearing members of this Seventh Day Adventist lazaretto. The Seventh-Day Adventist 'cult' derives its mandate from the belief that there will be a Second Coming of Christ, who will be visible to all, that the dead are not really dead but only sleeping, allowing them to enjoy a type of conditional immortality when Christ flies back down to earth, and that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. There are only about 6 million Seventh-Day Adventists in the world, which would suggest that they have not been very successful, over the past 160 years in 'spreading the word.' Anyway, things are quite likely to change, now that the Hongkong branch of these people has determined to enter the world of capitalism. You will recall that, during the time that **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome** (SARS) was imported into Hongkong from China, that everybody wanted to buy surgical masks in order to protect the wearer from air-borne viruses (nobody knew how SARS was transmitted, at that time), and garlic cloves were purchased in huge quantities by housewives, who hung them over the front door of their houses, just in case SARS was transmitted via vampires or bats (which are vampires in their flying form, you understand), while other people bought up copious quantities of bleach, which was diluted with tap water and used to mop homes and offices ... just in case the SARS bugs were hiding in the crevices of the floor boards. Well, the Seventh-Day Adventists came up with something even better than surgical masks, garlic, and bleaching agents: The Adventist Hospital offered to assess the physical condition of anybody – at a cost of between \$HK650 and \$HK720 per head. The advertisement, which this hospital placed in a number of newspapers in Hongkong, read as follows:*

NEED A CERTIFICATE OF HEALTH?

<i>Fit for Travel</i>	-- \$650
<i>Fit for Work</i>	-- \$720

Clever, don't you think? So, these clever religious people decided to cash in while the going was good. I wonder whether or not these people determined that God had sent down the SARS disease in order to allow them to capitalise on the sickness by charging fees for services that they ought to do pro bona.

I suppose you know of the history of this Church, don't you, but to refresh your memory, it was started in about 1843 when an American Baptist Minister, a Mr William Miller, who forecast the Second Coming of Christ: The

Son of God. The date that Minister Miller forecast for His appearance was between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. Well, according to history, the Millerites, as the followers of Minister Miller came to be known, waited ... and waited ... and waited. The Son of God deigned not to appear to the Millerites, or to anybody else for that matter, either as a man or any other thing. The event was termed: The First Disappointment. Undeterred, Minister Miller had a second shot at forecasting the Second Coming of Christ. This time, the date was set at exactly October 22, 1844. Many of the Millerites that still stayed with this Protestant schism – some had, already, deserted and gone back to their former churches, having lost a great deal of faith in Minister Miller and his predictions – were said to have disposed of all of their property in anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ because, after all, what are worldly goods in the presence of the Son of God. Well, in case you have not guessed it, October 22, 1844 came and went, and, even though there was a lot of star-gazing and praying for Him to return and bless the Millerites – Zilch! Today, some 160 years later, there are about 6 million Millerites, who are now called Seventh-Day Adventists. Three staunch followers of Minister Miller, namely, Mr Joseph Bates, Mr James White and Ms Ellen White, formally organised the Seventh-Day Adventist Church as we know it today. That was done at the height of the American Civil War, in about 1863.

The fact that there are Millerites in our midst is an accepted fact, as the workings of the Hongkong Adventist Hospital is proof positive. They are still awaiting His return, although I have not heard of any modern-day Millerite predictions as to the exact date. The Millerites maintain more than 360 hospitals and clinics around the world, you know, in addition to missionary work, the establishment of educational facilities, and philanthropic programmes, supported by tithing. Tithing, alone, is not sufficient, it appears to keep the Millerites in cash, so they have turned to cashing in on SARS. I don't know if you are aware of this, but the majority of the Saturday donations that Seventh-Day Adventists receive in Hongkong comes from the Philippine maids. Every Saturday morning, the Filipinas descend upon Stubbs Road in order to attend services at the chapel of the Hongkong Adventist Hospital ... and to make donations to the Church. I have been told that about 90 percent of all of the Church's income is derived from Filipinas. The Filipinas are fair game for modern-day Millerites because most of them have a background of the Christian faith – Catholicism, Methodism, Lutherism, Protestantism, etc. However, Millerites draw the line when it comes to Jews, I have been told, and a good Millerite gets second helpings in Heaven if he has persuaded a Jew to take a swim in the baptismal waters of Seventh-Day Adventism. Millerites do not like the Jews and it is the job of any good, self-respecting Millerite, to convert a Jew to Milleritism.

My God! Look at the time! I must go my dear because Grandpa will be home soon and I have not restocked the toilet with ... you know what.

Love you,

Chief Lady of Hongkong

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