



## Finding serendipity *but still seeking biblical ideas*

### Fresh Air

IT WAS A SERENDIPITY to read Samir Selmanovic's article, "The Sweet Problem of Inclusiveness" (summer 2007), which expressed so beautifully conclusions to which I have been coming in recent years.

CARROL GRADY

VIA THE INTERNET

"THE SWEET Problem of Inclusiveness," by Samir Selmanovic, brought a challenge as well as a breath of fresh air!

After my retirement as a Seventh-day Adventist minister, my wife and I had the privilege of visiting countless countries and witnessing many Christian attitudes in beautiful and outstanding ways among people who may never be introduced to Christ. What is their fate?

We were happy to help build a church on the border between Pakistan and India with Maranatha Volunteers and to see it filled at dedication. It was beautiful! However, we left that country realizing that maybe 2 percent of the population is Christian, which includes Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, and Catholics. What happens to the other 98 percent of more than one billion people? We felt blessed personally by so many of these people, most of whom had not been baptized.

A report by the *National Geographic* says that the world population increases by 219,000 each day! Are Seventh-day Adventists responsible for seeing that everyone in the growing population of the world is taught the Twenty-eight Fundamental Doctrines, personally—with literature, radio, television, the Internet, and so forth? Are Adventists expected to then baptize them, help them build churches, and minister to their problems? Is the timing of the Second Advent determined by the effectiveness of Seventh-day Adventists?

Can we accept the possibility that people like Billy Graham are giving at least the basics of a saving relationship

with God? Is God using everyone, as in Bible times?

DICK SERNS

Loomis, Calif.

### Poor Treatment for the Poor

IN THEIR ARTICLE "What is a Christian to Make of Our Flat New World?" (summer 2007), James Walters and David Kim urge us to strive to improve the world through "savvy global reforms." The "realistic Christian," we are told, must learn to embrace a "pragmatic" gospel of open markets, "retail reform," technology, and "democratic capitalism," all of which "can be molded for world betterment" and even the "eradication of world poverty."

But what biblical and theological resources do Walters and Kim muster in their celebration of political "realism" and the dynamism of "democratic capitalism"? The answer is: few if any.

The biblical message, they write, "must be taken seriously without the mistake of taking it literally." There is a great "cultural/scientific gulf between Bible times and our own" and "ancient cultures were relatively content with the status quo... The way to deal with the poor was simple: give them alms."

So much, then, for the prophet Amos (not to mention the radical Jubilee passages of the Hebrew Bible, Christ's teachings on economic justice, the proto-communism of the earliest Christian communities, and the countercultural social ethics of the Adventist pioneers, on to Adam Smith and Reinhold Niebuhr, that great dean of liberal Protestantism, who similarly insisted that the Gospels not be read literally, thus permitting believers to engage in violence in defense of "democracy" and capitalism in the context of cold war power rivalries.

The question that arises in the mind of this reader,  
*Continued on page 7...*