

East, but other Evangelicals (such as groups like Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding) focus on understanding and cooperation with the ancient churches. Many in the secular press do not fully grasp the diversity and historical developments within Evangelicalism. The breadth of the movement is one factor that has led both to internal tension and external misunderstanding.

Fourth, although the article understandably focuses on Christian efforts to convert Muslims, it does not mention the simultaneous attempts of Muslims to convert Christians. Hence any onus that may be inferred is only on Christians. In reality, both are missionary religions with a message for all people (Qur'an 25:1; 38:87; 3:20; John 3:16). Both faiths claim the final messenger (Qur'an

33:45; Heb. 1:1-2). Both groups are called to be witnesses (Qur'an 2:143; Mt. 28:19-20). Both scriptures make exclusive claims for their message (Qur'an 3:85; John. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Yet both are called to witness in a gracious manner (Qur'an 16:125; 29:46; 1 Peter 3:15).

Although the article understandably focuses on Christian efforts to convert Muslims, it does not mention the simultaneous attempts of Muslims to convert Christians.

Finally, the article raises important issues for Evangelicals, such as the appropriate form of Christian witness at the present time in Muslim areas like Iraq. Jesus certainly showed the importance of timing when he healed a leper and then said: "Tell no one" (Mt. 8:3-4). Factors suggest caution in verbal witness in the current situation in Iraq, where verbal witness can be seen as opportunistic and where American motives are mistrusted. But ultimately witness includes both deed (Mt. 25:31-46) and word (1 Pet. 3:15). We also should note that the Church has been resident in Iraq for years – including the Evangelical (Presbyterian) Church as well as the ancient churches – and therefore whatever is done now by expatriates would be best done in consultation and cooperation with them. 🌐

One Perspective from India

Ralph D. Winter

The *TIME* cover story tells us what many Americans think about missions. People in India may have much more critical views. In the July 12 issue of the *Economic and Political Weekly* (www.epw.org.in, an Indian type of the *Wall Street Journal*), after apologizing for even bothering to read so biased a magazine as *TIME*, one author says,

Western, largely American, Christian evangelist fundamentalists appear to be convinced that the time has now come to wage an all-out spiritual war against Islam. Islam, as many of them see it, is a Satanic-inspired programme of terrorism that bodes ill for all humankind, and represents the greatest challenge to Christianity and Christendom (sic).

Referring specifically to the *TIME* cover story, he observes,

As an American evangelist, identified simply as Barbara, puts it, Islam is in itself the ultimate weapon of mass destruction. Charged with a fanatic zeal to spread their faith to benighted Muslims, the story speaks of scores of Christian evangelists following close on the heels of American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, offering aid, both material as well

as spiritual, with the latter, of course, being tied to the former.

He comments on his own perspective:

Personally, I have no problem at all with anyone wishing to change her or his faith, or even to anyone eager to convince others of the claims of his or her own religion.

What he despises, rather, is:

...any sort of proselytisation that disguises itself and conceals its ultimate goals is thoroughly condemnable.

He speaks of his own experience:

In the course of my travels, which have taken me across large parts of India, I have had numerous encounters with fiery evangelicals on the lookout for unsuspecting victims. Some years ago one could find them loitering around in Connaught Place, Delhi, passing around pamphlets and glossy tracts, proclaiming the end of the world and the impending dawn of the Day of Judgment. This literature was specially designed to catch the unsuspecting eye, keenly aware of the Indian penchant for vibrant colours. They were filled with brightly coloured cartoons of a bearded stern Jesus perched atop a fluffy cloud brandishing a sinister-looking sword; swarms of

red-cheeked, white-faced, distinctly European-looking angels astride galloping horses, their manes blowing wildly in the wind; hordes of men and women wearing crosses around their necks being lifted up to heaven on angelic wings; and a large swathe of humanity, dark-faced ghoulish most of them, going up in a ball of flame and smoke in Hell.

He proceeds to give careful and impressive details about several large Evangelical ministries in India and concludes with the following statement:

I have the most serious differences with right wing evangelist crusaders for whom all those outside their narrowly inscribed circle of chosen followers are doomed to eternal perdition. We have enough of such paranoid megalomaniacs in our country among Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others to deserve any more! If this be the road to salvation, then I, at least, would rather remain among the damned!

He assumes (incorrectly in most cases) that all Evangelical humanitarian efforts in India are mere smokescreens for evangelism rather than concrete ways of portraying the love and concerns of God. 🌐