



### Folded-Up and Dog-Eared

I enjoyed and read every article of the [March-April] *Mission Frontiers*. My issue is folded up and dog-eared from reading. And I am not a professional missionary [or] teacher of missions but rather a layperson with an interest in the subject. Mark Harris' article about student selection covered a topic with understanding in a manner that I had never thought about.

Dave Fritz  
Tallahassee, FL

### Selling Magazines by Stirring Controversy?

I am writing to respond to your recent [September-October] issue concerning Mission and Media. I think this is a healthy discussion. As one who works in closed countries (Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist), I am keenly aware of the problems and concerns of personnel in these areas. I was approached by TIME through a mission executive to speak with them about our work. I proceeded to tell him why I would not do that during my lifetime or his. The work we do in transformational business development would be jeopardized in every place we work as well as bringing possible harm to those brothers and sisters we work among.

My reaction, while giving respect to the valid criticisms of the TIME article, is that they are only interested in one thing: selling magazines by stirring controversy. We are not starting paper businesses either (a valid critique of some kingdom enterprise work), but real companies that bring wealth and stability to the local economy and that help indigenous people fund

their own kingdom objectives (i.e., evangelism/church planting/recovery).

One observation is that most of the content for the article(s) came from mission executives, not field personnel. Those in the battle know the risks generally, and kept quiet.

For many years the only people who really loved the sons and daughters of Ishmael in the West were and are those brave souls who love Christ and are giving their lives to these that need the Good News of Christ. Recent interest by the secular press and others is filled with self-interest and not the right heart for Christ's transformation of souls and cultures.

Name withheld for security

I do not disagree with many of the facts [TIME author David Van Biema] presents. In his reporting on the issues he has done his homework and certainly raises many of the common concerns with which missiologists and missionaries alike are presently wrestling. In the case of tent-making ministry and so-called "undercover evangelism", certainly Christian integrity demands truth-telling rather than lies and outright deception, and certainly some Evangelicals have stepped over the line in their presentation of themselves and their ministry.

The problem with Van Biema's analysis of this issue is that it doesn't seek to honestly deal with such activities in light of biblical ethics or any other ethical standard. His purpose in reporting on this one aspect of missions in Muslim lands is not to consider its consistency or inconsistency with biblical teaching or ethical standards, but rather to build his case against Christian activity that seeks to convert Muslims (i.e., Christian activity that is

proactively evangelistic). The fact that Evangelicals and other Christian groups (even non-Christian groups) disagree on how Christians living in Islamic countries should practice their faith and fulfill their missionary calling only serves to further his argument that Christians should not proselytize Muslims in such places.

Of course, the undercover nature of how some missionaries operate in Islamic countries is only one area among a host of others that Van Biema briefly addresses in order to build his case. While he doesn't come right out and say that Christians should not convert Muslims, he certainly says so much in the totality of all of the article's sub-topics and the commentary that ties them all together. If one were to recognize the big picture first and read each particular sub-topic in light of the chief topic (Should Christians Convert Muslims?), I believe that the unmistakable conclusion one would draw is that Christians should not evangelize Muslims in Muslim countries (and perhaps anywhere else as well) ...

Should Christians convert Muslims? The Christian answer that is appropriately grounded in the teaching of Scripture is yes. (Of course, it is the Holy Spirit doing the converting.)

*Do you have a response to something you've read in Mission Frontiers? We'd like to hear from you. Send your responses to us either by postal mail (see address below) or by E-mail: (mission.frontiers@uscwm.org).🌐*