

# THE CHRISTIAN CONJURER

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## *HUNT and PECK*



A Director or a well-known Bible Conference does not like Gospel magicians. He has seen some rather shoddy examples of Gospel magic.

A minister friend of mine raised his eyebrows really high when I told him I did Gospel magic. He, too, had seen some shoddy examples of Gospel magic.

Another pastor upon receiving some promotional material from a Christian magician informed him that he did not put on side-shows in his church. This pastor undoubtedly was conditioned by having had contact with a poor Gospel magician.

Why is Gospel magic, magical object lessons, messages in magic or whatever you want to call it, so frequently criticized? Why are we as Christian magicians so often treated in a tongue-in-cheek manner?

I believe that it is because many Christian magicians are unbalanced.

A member of our Fellowship of Christian Magicians who is a long-time minister and magician says the number of Christian magicians he could conscientiously recommend could be numbered on one hand. He, too, sees imbalance as a major problem.

What do we mean when we say a Christian magician can become unbalanced?

We mean simply that his Gospel magic is suffering from one of two bad diseases. Either his Gospel (preaching) is good and his magic (actual technical proficiency in performing magic) is bad or else his magic is excellent and his preaching is very weak.

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I have had new Christian magicians say to me, "It's the Gospel that counts--- I don't worry too much if I goof up the effect!" I've had other minister-magician friends say, "The pressures on me are so great. I hardly have time to think up new applications, much less practice my magic!"

There are those men who have been in magic professionally or semi-professionally who become new creatures in Christ Jesus (some perhaps through the ministry of a Gospel magician) who are so excited about the possibilities of illustrating the Word of God through magic that they launch out to do so before they have memorized a dozen Scripture verses or have ever communicated their new-found faith to people verbally.

These are examples of imbalance.

Not discounting the ability of the Holy Spirit to empower or equip anyone for any task in the Christian life I maintain that verbal communication of the Gospel (including the truths of the deeper Christian life) is at best quite difficult. I also maintain that executing magic effects in a smooth, seemingly-effortless, and convincing manner is also at its best, difficult. Both must be practiced, and practiced and practiced with much dedication.

To stand before a group and illustrate a well-thought-out Scriptural message with a newly-obtained and little-practiced magical effect is bad. To do so with an effect that you've used for years, but still use badly is worse.

To stand before an audience and perform the 20th-Century Silks effect but stumble through the Gospel application by being illogical, unorganized, repetitious, and/or ill-timed is equally inexcusable.

What is the answer to this dilemma? What suggestions does the critic bring forth, you ask.

In the next few HUNT & PECK columns I shall endeavor to spell out some suggestions which I feel have helped me as they have been passed on to me by others and put into practice. Most of these answers and suggestions are NOT easy to put into practice. They need many hours of thought, study, practice and prayerful support.

Rev. Jim Dracup, in his new book "A Magician Goes to Church: A Guide to Gospel Magic" (available from the author, 32 Dolphin Road, Levittown, Penna., \$3.00), reminds us that the late Dr. Harlan Tarbell said that the difference between a magician and a person doing tricks is found in the knowledge of the fundamentals and principles. Magic is a science just as much as chemistry, music, medicine or flying.

I am amazed at the Christian magicians I encounter who have never heard of Dr. Tarbell or his famous 6-volume work on magic. Many magicians believe it to be the single greatest source of material concerning both theoretical and practical aspects of magic in the world. It is available through any magic dealer. The first volume is \$7.50, the other 5 volumes, \$10.00. If you never buy any other reading material in your whole life dealing with magic, your investment in these volumes would outfit you for life! If our President, Jimmy Lake, were looking over my shoulder as I hunt and peck, he would ask right now.... "and how many of our guys who have Tarbell's Course in Magic bother to read it?" And our faces would probably be blushed as we thought of that embarrassing question!

My first suggestion, then, is to STUDY MAGIC AVIDLY!..... basically through reading magic books and/or periodicals. There are other ways to study magic as an art and we'll be developing these ideas in succeeding issues of the CONJURER.

You will notice in back issues of the CONJURER that I have often referred to the F.C.M. as an organization dedicated to the illustrating of Scriptural truths "through the medium of professional-quality magic object lessons..." Does this describe your Gospel magic and mine today? If not, may God grant us whatever we need to make it so!

Bill Oberg  
Membership Secretary/Treasurer  
F.C.M.

## ***ITINERARIES***

JIM DRACUP, Levittown, Penna.

October 10 - Y.F.C. Rally, Camden, N.J.

November 13-14 - Nyack, N.Y. - Christian Endeavor  
Convention

November 27-28 - Philadelphia Christian Endeavor  
Convention

BILL OBERG, Wheaton, Ill.

October 2-4 - First Baptist Church, Kenton, Ohio

November 19 - Middleton Baptist Church, Madison, Wisc.

21 - Marinette, Wisconsin YFC Banquet

8 - Kalamazoo, Mich., YFC Rally

28 - Elkhart County, Ind. YFC Rally

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PLEASE NOTE: All FCM memberships expire December 31st and renewals must be in by January 15th for you to receive the CHRISTIAN CONJURER for the January-February issue. An invoice will be mailed with the December mailing for your convenience.